



**Diocese  
of  
Cleveland  
CYO**

**2024**



**RULES**

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**ROOKIE  
TACKLE**

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SECTION 1 - OFFICIAL TEAM	PAGE 3
SECTION 2 - OFFICIALS	PAGE 3
SECTION 3 - EQUIPMENT & UNIFORMS	PAGES 3-4
SECTION 4 - PRE-CONTEST COACHES RESPONSIBILITIES	PAGE 4
SECTION 5 - PARTICIPATION	PAGES 4-5
SECTION 6 - GAME & TIME LIMITATION	PAGE 5
SECTION 7 - LIGHTNING & INCLEMENT WEATHER	PAGE 5
SECTION 8 - PRACTICE AND COACHING GUIDELINE	PAGES 5-6
SECTION 9 - COMPETITION RULES	PAGE 6-7
SECTION 10 - MERCY RULE	PAGE 7
SECTION 11 - SUPPLEMENTAL RULES	PAGES 7-10
SECTION 12 - CAUTION AND DISQUALIFICATION	PAGE 10

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The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Football Rules apply in this league with the exceptions contained within. CYO game rules may not be altered by mutual consent of the coaches. Only the CYO office may authorize changes.

The purpose of this program is to serve as a bridge between flag football and 11-player tackle football. This program will take a developmental approach to the game of football by focusing on participation, safe blocking and tackling techniques, skill development, position placement, and improve the experience for younger players.

### **SECTION 1 - OFFICIAL TEAM**

- A. Defined as an individual or group of children from one or more Members listed on the team roster that meet the eligibility rules and are approved by the member athletic director, Parish Administrator, and CYO Office.
- B. A CYO Team refusing to continue playing a scheduled game for any reason without the consent of the game official or CYO representative may be subject to penalties outlined in Bylaw 10. This also applies to CYO Sanctioned Events.
- C. 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Division
  - 1. An official 7-man Rookie Tackle football team will consist of a minimum of 7 boys or girls.
  - 2. There minimum roster size of 11 athletes. There is a maximum number of 18 unless all are from the same member.
- D. 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Division
  - 1. An official 8-man Rookie Tackle football team will consist of a minimum of 8 boys or girls.
  - 2. There minimum roster size of 12 athletes. There is a maximum number of 18 unless all are from the same member.
- E. A partial roster or combined roster cannot be entered into any tournament or sanctioned event.

### **SECTION 2 - OFFICIALS**

- A. Officials that are certified and registered with the Diocese of Cleveland CYO will be assigned to each game.
- B. Officials have the power to warn or disqualify from the competition anyone who commits acts which intend to influence their decisions.
- C. Officials have the authority to call or suspend a game if conditions warrant.
- D. The following officials will be assigned to each regular season game and sanctioned events: Two (2) officials will be assigned to Rookie Tackle football games.
- E. The head coach and the team captain are the only persons that should speak to the officials before, during, or after the game.

### **SECTION 3 - EQUIPMENT & UNIFORMS**

- A. Game Ball:
  - 1. All grades will use a junior size ball.
  - 2. Teams are permitted to use either a composite or leather ball.
- B. Electronic Devices:
  - 1. Walkie-talkies, cell phones, or any other electronic communication systems are not permitted within the competition area.
  - 2. Droids are not permitted.
  - 3. Teams are permitted to only videotape their games.
    - a. Videotaping is only permitted from areas approved by the facility but is never permitted from within the competition area, team bench area or other unapproved areas.
    - b. Individuals videotaping or photographers must be positioned at least two yards from the sideline or end zone.
    - c. Coaches, Fans, etc. are not permitted to videotape an opponent's game or practice.
- C. All athletes are required to wear member issued uniforms.
- D. Numbers on the jersey are MANDATORY. A number shall be printed on the front and back of each jersey. The number on the back of the jersey shall be at least 10 inches in height, while the number on the front of the jersey shall be at least 8 inches in height. The bars or strokes should be approximately 1-1/2 inches wide.

- E. Because of the “all players, all positions, all skills philosophy, there are no restrictions on jersey numbers or player positions.
- F. The NFHS jersey number requirements by position and the requirement of the visiting team to wear a white jersey do not apply to CYO competitions.
- G. All players must have the CYO Emblem on their uniform either sewn or stenciled.
- H. All participants must be properly equipped and fitted by the member with the following items:
  1. Helmets that are NOCSAE certified. All helmets must have the certified imprint and special warning stickers related to injuries. At least a four snap chin strap shall be required to secure the helmet.
  2. Shoulder pads.
  3. Football pants with pads for the hips, tailbone, thighs, and knees.
- I. A maximum of 3/4 inch rubber or plastic cleats are permitted. Cleats may screw-on or be molded into the shoe. Metal cleats are prohibited.
- J. A mouthpiece must be secure in the player’s mouth during the game. If a mouthpiece is not orthodontist designed it must be attached to the face-guard and be of any readily visible color. A mouthpiece cannot be white or clear in color.
- K. Chains, earrings, other jewelry, glitter, face paint, or other inappropriate items may not be worn during the game.
- L. An American flag and or a commemorative/memorial patch not to exceed 2 by 3 inches and with the approval of the CYO Administration may be worn on each of the uniform apparel provided neither the flag nor patch interferes with the visibility of the player’s number.

#### **SECTION 4 - PRE-CONTEST COACHES RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. All head and assistant coaches must be CYO certified and **re-certified every season to have access to the sideline.**
- B. CYO Credentials are to be worn and visible at all times.
  1. Credentials cannot be given to another coach at any time.
  2. Coaches who give their credentials to another coach, even for one game, will have their coaching privileges revoked for one year.
  3. If a coach has lost or forgotten their credential, they must inform the Site Director and show proof of certification with a photo ID and either the photo of the credential or the coach’s name on the certification list.
- C. Coaches are responsible for the supervision of their team before, during, and after the game.
- D. At each game and practice, coaches are to have in their possession: an official team roster, a copy of each athlete’s Pre-participation Form and Emergency Medical Authorization Form and a first aid kit.
- E. A pre-game conference will be held between the officials, coaches, and captains.
- F. Bench personnel are limited to:
  1. Players listed on the eligibility roster, two (2) water personnel under the age of 16 and four (4) non-players (coaches).
  2. Non-players 16 years of age or older must be CYO certified.
  3. Non-players under the age of 9 are not allowed in the bench area.
- G. Chains and Down Marker Crews:
  1. The 3 personnel must be at least a high school senior or older. The crew must report to the game officials at least ten (10) minutes before the start of the game.
  2. If the team assigns individuals to serve in this capacity, the head coach is responsible for the actions, verbal or otherwise, of the people assigned.
  3. The visiting team will provide the chain and down marker crew and will be positioned on the visiting sideline.

#### **SECTION 5 - PARTICIPATION**

- A. Each athlete must be treated with dignity regardless of their ability.

- B. A player on a CYO team may not participate on any other football team during the CYO season. For purposes of defining eligibility, a player may not be on another team from the published CYO roster due date and the completion of the team's final game.
- C. Each member of the team must play a minimum of one quarter per half.
- D. All players should have at least one offensive and defensive line position as well as one offensive and defensive backfield position to play each game.
- E. Guest Player Rule: Guest Players may be moved from the member's other CYO Rookie Tackle football team(s) to fill the positions at the start of a game under the following restrictions:
  1. If a 7-man or 8-man Rookie Tackle football team has fewer than 12 athletes at a game.
  2. The athlete meets the age/grade restrictions of the squad the athlete will assist.
  3. The guest player is reported by means of the button on the Coaches Information page:
  4. [Guest Player Link](#) The same individual may be moved as a guest player for no more than two (2) games during the season.
  3. The athlete complies with the number of games per day competition limits as outlined in Section 6.
  4. Guest players cannot be used for sanctioned event or CYO championship competitions.

#### **SECTION 6 - GAME & TIME LIMITATION**

- A. No team or player is permitted to play more than 10 games in a season.
- B. No team or player may play in more than 1 game in a day.
- C. No team or player may play more than 2 games per weekend.
- D. Events on Sunday cannot begin until 1:00 PM.
- E. Events cannot start after 8:00 PM.
- F. Practice sessions must be completed by 9:00 PM.

#### **SECTION 7 - LIGHTNING & INCLEMENT WEATHER**

- A. The OHSAA lightning & inclement weather policy is in effect.
- B. When thunder is heard or a lightning bolt is seen at a practice or competition, the teams must suspend play and take shelter immediately. Once play has been suspended, a period of at least 30 minutes after the last thunder heard or lightning flash is witnessed must be honored prior to resuming play/practice.
- C. Contest or CYO officials assume authority for competitions when they arrive on the field. When the officials recognize inclement weather they are duty bound to suspend the game. Coaches and member athletic directors are responsible for application of this policy at practice.
- D. Announcements related to the status of competitions will be posted on the main page of the schedule website or telephone announcement lines and media as needed.
- E. Contests that are suspended as a result of inclement weather and cannot be resumed with-in a reasonable time at the same site will be cancelled, unless deemed necessary to reschedule by the CYO Administration.

#### **SECTION 8 - PRACTICE AND COACHING GUIDELINE**

- A. Practice or any organized team conditioning cannot start prior to the CYO published first day of practice.
- B. Practice sessions shall be limited to one (1) session per day not to exceed two (2) hours in duration.
- C. Uniforms and equipment may be distributed three (3) weeks prior to the official first day of practice. **No conditioning or coaching instructions may take place until approval of CYO Administration.**
- D. All athletes must participate in five days of physical acclimation prior to any physical contact. Athletes reporting late must have at least five days of physical acclimation prior to any physical contact. This rule applies to all teams & participants.
  1. Days 1 & 2 – No Pads. Shorts, helmets, and shoes can be worn, no physical contact.
  2. Days 3 & 4 – Shoulder pads may be added, but no contact is permitted.
  3. Day 5 – Full equipment may be worn, but contact is prohibited.
  4. Athletes must complete 2 days of **no pads**; shorts, helmets, shoes can be worn, but no physical contact before moving onto adding shoulder pads. Once shoulder pads are added, no contact is permitted. After at least 2 days of shoulder pads and no contact, full equipment may be worn but contact is prohibited.

E. Limited Contact during Practice:

1. No intentional head-to-head contact is permitted during practice.
  - a. Full speed head-on-blocking or tackling drills in which the players line up more than three (3) yards apart are prohibited.
  - b. Having two (2) linemen in stances immediately across from each other is permitted.
  - c. Having full speed drills where the players approach each other at an angle, but not straight ahead in to each other is permitted.
2. The amount of contact at each practice cannot exceed 1/3 of the daily practice time.

F. Scrimmages:

1. Three (3) pre-season scrimmages are permitted.
2. Officials may be used during scrimmages provided both sets of coaches remain on the field. No score or time limits will be kept. Use of officials is the decision and cost of the teams involved.

## SECTION 9 - COMPETITION RULES

A. Field Size:

1. **5<sup>th</sup> Grade:** 40 yards in length and 30 yards in width.
2. **6<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Regulation field.

B. Play Clock:

1. The length of the four (4) quarters shall be ten (10) minutes running clock, with a one-minute rest period between quarters.
2. Half time will be eight (8) minutes in length.
3. The game clock will stop for change of possession, injury, after a touchdown, or at the official's discretion.
4. The clock does not run during extra point attempts.

C. Time Outs:

1. Each team will be allowed three (3) sixty (60) second time-outs per half of a game.
2. Unused time-outs do not carry over to the second half.

D. Scoring:

1. Touchdown will award 6 points
2. PAT-Run/Pass will award 1 point from the 3 yard line
3. PAT-Run/Pass will award 2 points from the 5 yard line
4. Changing PAT type
  - a. Once a decision on the type of PAT to attempt has been made, in order to make a change, a timeout must be called.
  - b. The decision of PAT type can be changed after a penalty.

E. Overtime: If at the end of regulation, the score is tied, the game will result in a tie. There is no overtime at these grade levels.

F. Placement of the ball:

1. **5<sup>th</sup> Grade:**
  - a. Each possession starts with the ball on the 40 yard line, regardless of whether there is a score, turnover, or turnover on downs. **There are no safeties.**
  - b. After each play, the ball is spotted in the middle of the field. **Hash marks are not used.**
  - c. There are no field goals or extra-point kicks.
2. **6<sup>th</sup> Grade:**
  - a. There are no kickoffs. The game begins and restarts after a score with the ball on the 30-yard line.
  - b. After each play, the ball is spotted in the middle of the field. **Hash marks are not used.**
  - c. After a Touchback the ball will be put in play on the 30 yard line.
  - d. After a safety the ball will be put in play at the 50-yard line.
  - e. After a change of possession the ball is placed on 30 yard line.

G. Kicking: Special teams are **NOT** permitted. NO Punting



#### H. Coach on the field

1. 5<sup>th</sup> Grade - One coach is allowed on the field during play.
2. 6<sup>th</sup> Grade - No coach is allowed on the field during play.

### SECTION 10 - MERCY RULE

#### A. 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

1. There is no Mercy Rule as outlined at other levels. The goal of this division is skill development and overall positive experience. In the event of a lopsided game, the winning team is expected to conduct themselves in a manner that the game officials and CYO administration feel show respect and dignity towards its opponent.

#### B. 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

1. When a team reaches an 18-point spread differential over their opponents, the team is expected to conduct itself in a manner that the game officials and CYO administration feel show respect and dignity towards its opponent.
2. THE MERCY RULE IS IN EFFECT ANY TIME IN THE SECOND HALF.
3. The leading team must give up the ball on any 4<sup>th</sup> down. The ball is given over to the other team and placed at the opponent 30-yard line.
4. The team with the 18+ point lead cannot throw the ball, however they may run the ball, but must run between the tackles.
5. The Mercy Rule cannot be waived for playoffs, championship games or sanctioned events.
6. Penalty for Violation of the Mercy Rule
  - a. First Offense – Warning
  - b. Second Offense - Unsportsmanlike conduct penalty on the head coach.
  - c. Third Offense - Unsportsmanlike conduct penalty and ejection of the head coach.
  - d. Fourth Offense - Forfeit Loss and head coach removed for the remainder of the season.

### SECTION 11 - SUPPLEMENTAL RULES

#### A. Turnovers:

##### 1. Interception:

- a. 5<sup>th</sup> Grade - The play is blown dead immediately. Defensive team will begin set of downs on offense from 40 yard line.
  - b. 6<sup>th</sup> Grade - The interceptor may return the ball on an interception. **The ball will be placed where the ball is returned.**
2. **5<sup>th</sup> Grade-Fumble past the line of scrimmage – Maybe recovered by either team but not advanced.**
  3. **6<sup>th</sup> Grade- Fumbles caused by the defense may be recovered and returned.**

4. Fumble behind the line of scrimmage - Loss of down.

5. Fumbled snaps are dead - the next down will start from original Line of Scrimmage.

#### B. Penalties:

1. **Targeting: No player shall target and make forcible contact to the head or neck area of a defenseless opponent with the helmet, forearm, hand, fist, elbow or shoulder. Penalty: Ejection & suspension.**

##### 2. 5<sup>th</sup> Grade:

- a. Because of limited field size, all 15 yard penalties are enforced as 10 yard penalties.
- b. No penalty on offense can take the ball beyond the 40 yard line.
- c. Penalties on the offense that are called and accepted on or behind the 40 yard line result in a loss of down.
- d. Penalties on the offense called between the 40 yard line and the end zone in which yardage is lost, even if limited in enforcement by the 40 yard line, are enforced as written in terms of down lost or replayed.

3. **6<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Penalties will be enforced per regulation tackle football rules.
  4. All personal foul penalties require an immediate substitution from the field for a minimum of one play to allow coaches to address misconduct and promote good sportsmanship. This is referred to as a ‘cooling off period.’”
- C. Offensive adjustments:
1. Each play must include three offensive linemen – a center, and two guards, one on either side of the center. These players are ineligible for first touch as the receiver of a pass regardless of the numbers on their jerseys. Player rotations may result with traditional non-lineman numbers at these positions for the purpose of fundamental skills development.
  2. Guards are required to play from a two-point stance. There are NO three-point stances.
  3. The center may use one or two hands to snap the ball.
  4. The distance between the guard and center may not exceed three feet (1 yard), but may be closer.
  5. **Offensive Linemen**
    - a. The three offensive linemen must identify themselves on each play by raising their hands as they break the huddle and approach the line of scrimmage.
    - b. Once identified as an offensive linemen, players may not shift to another position.
    - c. All three offensive linemen are ineligible for first touch on a pass.
    - d. 5<sup>th</sup> Grade ONLY – A guard who is uncovered by an end is ineligible for a first touch on pass.
  6. The quarterback-center exchange may be direct, pistol or shotgun.
  7. Quarterback sneaks are prohibited in all situations because the defense is not allowed to have players aligned over the center or center-guard A gap.
  8. At least two different quarterbacks must be used each half; position time as quarterback must be balanced.
  9. **Offensive Line**
    - a. **5<sup>th</sup> Grade**
      - i. The offense must have four players on the line of scrimmage. No more, no less. The fourth player can be a tight end or split end.
      - ii. The four offensive players who are not playing guard or center may be deployed in positions at the coach’s discretion as long as one is on the line of scrimmage.
    - b. **6<sup>th</sup> Grade**
      - i. The offense must have five players on the line of scrimmage. No more, no less. The fourth and 5<sup>th</sup> players can be a tight ends, split ends or a combination of the two. Only the two end players on the line of scrimmage are eligible for first touching of a pass.
      - ii. There are no unbalanced lines. The split ends/tight ends must be on the opposite sides of the center.
      - iii. The five offensive players who are not playing guard or center may be deployed in positions at the coach’s discretion as long as two on the line of scrimmage.
  9. **No trips formation is allowed.**
    - a. For the purpose of Rookie Tackle, “trips” is defined as any three players outside the guard-to-guard box.
  10. Motion is allowed by a backfield player as long as it does not create a trips formation.
  11. All blocks below the waist are illegal.
- D. **Blocking:**
1. Contact blocking is allowed between the shoulders and waist only (a.k.a. “inside the frame”).
  2. All blocking outside the notional or traditional ‘free blocking zone’ must INITIATE with open hands and not the elbows/shoulders (i.e. players cannot begin a block with their shoulders). The ‘free blocking zone’ is a rectangular area extending four yards on either side of where the ball is snapped and three yards on either side of scrimmage.
  3. Blockers must be on their feet before, during and after contact is made with their opponents.
  4. No contact of any kind is allowed above the shoulders of an opponent.



5. Illegal blocks include:

- a. Leading with the shoulder outside the 'free blocking zone'
  - b. Low/chop/cut blocks: An attempt by a player to block an opponent at the thigh level or lower.
  - c. Crack-back block: A blind-side block on a player by an opponent who starts downfield and then cuts back toward the original spot of the ball to make contact.
  - d. Blind-side block: Engaging an opponent who does not see the blocker approaching with anything other than fully extended arms and open palms. Any block against an opponent other than the runner, who does not see the blocker approaching unless it is initiated with open hands.
  - e. Clipping: A player hitting an opponent from behind.
  - f. Tripping: A player using their leg or foot to stop an opponent's forward motion.
  - g. Hook or hug block: A player gaining advantage of an opponent by turning or detaining the opponent by illegally tackling or using arms around the body, waist, shoulders or arms.
  - h. Rolling blocks: A player on the ground attempting to block or engage an opponent by moving or turning over and over on an axis.
  - i. Dive blocks: A player leaving their feet to engage an opponent.
  - j. Making contact with an opponent while swinging or flipping hands, arms or elbows.
  - k. Slapping, punching, or swinging at an opponent with hands, arms or elbows.
  - l. Grabbing or holding an opponent's jersey while blocking.
  - m. Interlocking of blocker's fingers or hands.
  - n. Laying on a downed defender
6. Swim moves (a player using a maneuver similar to a freestyle swimming stroke to get past an opponent) are legal. However, if the swim move results in contact to an opponent above the shoulder (neck, head, or face) it is illegal.
7. Downfield blocking for the ball carrier is allowed.
8. Blocking downfield while the ball is in the air is pass interference except if the pass is behind the line of scrimmage.
9. Two-on-one blocking is permitted as long as both blockers are engaging the opponent above the waist.
10. If a player turns to expose their back, it is not an illegal block as long as their opponent maintains contact with the player from the initial block.

E. Defensive Adjustments:

1. Defense may only have two defensive linemen unless an offensive formation includes a tight end. In that case, a third defensive linemen may line up over the tight end.
  - a. 6<sup>th</sup> Grade ONLY - Two tight ends allow the defense to use four defensive players on the line of scrimmage.
2. Defensive linemen must be in a two-point stance.
3. Defensive linemen over the guards must be aligned in a head up or outside shade position.
4. Players in an outside shade must always have one foot aligned inside the stance of the opposing guards.
5. The Defensive linemen's first movement is to play the outside gap, cannot stunt into the "A" gap.
6. The defense must have one player at least 10 yards from the ball.
7. 5<sup>th</sup> Grade ONLY - The remaining four players can be deployed at the coach's discretion but must be four yards off the line of scrimmage unless covering a tight end or split end on the line of scrimmage.
8. 6<sup>th</sup> Grade ONLY - All remaining players not on the line of scrimmage or at ten-yard deep safety must be a minimum of four yards off of the line of scrimmage.
  - a. Defenses that choose to not match the eligible receivers on the line of scrimmage may position those players on the second level as long as they are at least four yards from the line of scrimmage.
9. **NO blitzes are allowed.** Players within the tackle box at the snap can penetrate upon the snap. Linebackers, safeties and cornerbacks (both on the line and at depth) can flow to the ball naturally after the handoff is made, but predetermining penetration to a specific gap is illegal.
  - a. The box includes offensive players who line up within two yards of the ball and on the line of scrimmage along with the defensive players lined up directly over them.

- b. On pass plays, anyone outside of the box on the snap cannot rush the quarterback and must remain behind the line of scrimmage in pass coverage.
  - c. Coaches are encouraged to be creative with their formations but not use “the box” to delay defensive penetration.
  - d. NOTE: The restriction on blitzing is intended to encourage skill development within the passing game and allow young players to execute a successful handoff with limited penetration.
  - e. The penalty for blitzing any player other than the defensive lineman will be a 15 yard penalty.
10. If the ball is inside of the 4-yard line, the four non-linemen, non-deep players may align on the goal line.
11. Hurry up offenses are NOT permitted.

## **SECTION 12 - CAUTION AND DISQUALIFICATION**

- A. Teams are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that the game officials and CYO administration feel shows respect and dignity towards its opponent.
- B. Athletes, coaches, parents, or fans who are removed from a game for any reason shall be suspended for the next scheduled game. The ejected person may not associate with the team during the duration of the suspension, this includes practices and scrimmages. The individual must meet with the member administrator about the incident and obtain a signed letter from the member administrator requesting CYO Administration to permit the individual to rejoin the team.
- C. Athletes, coaches, parents, or fans that are removed from a match for a second time will not be permitted to attend any competitions for the remainder of the season. The individual must meet with the member administrator about the incident and obtain a signed letter from the member administrator asking the diocesan administration to permit the individual to attend events in the subsequent season.

