**New Albany Youth Flag Football League**

***Gold League Rules***

July 2023

# Our Mission

New Albany Youth Flag Football League’s (NAYFFL) mission is to teach the youth of New Albany and surrounding communities the fundamentals of flag football.

This instructional league is designed to promote good sportsmanship, teamwork, safety, balanced competition and the respect for teammates, coaches, opponents, parents, and the community.

All participants are guaranteed playing time under the league’s constitution with a great deal of emphasis placed the participant’s safety & wellbeing.

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# General Rules

***Playing Time***

It is the objective of the NAYFLL that all attempts will be made to provide EQUAL playing time for all participants. While it will not be possible to exactly provide the same minutes, each coach will make every effort for the participants to be equally represented on the field of play

***Flag, Flag Belts and Balls***

All players must wear the league issued, regulation flags or flag belts. The flags must hang down from both sides of the waist – on the hips. The flags may not be rolled, tied, pinned or sewn on the belt. Shirts will be tucked so as to allow flags to hang completely unobstructed. No shirts / jerseys are allowed to obstruct the flag or “flag guarding” will be called. Footballs issued by the league will be the official game ball – no exceptions

***Uniform***

All athletes must wear their league-issued jersey on game day. League issued shorts are recommended but not required. Only tennis shoes & rubber cleats are allowed. Winter hats will be allowed at the discretion of the official during a game – no baseball hats will be allowed under any circumstances. No jewelry or necklaces are allowed.

***Game Duration***

The game is divided into two halves – each lasting 25 minutes with a 5-minute halftime. The clock is a running clock and will only be stopped at the discretion of the official for injury, etc. With one minute left in the game, two more offensive plays are guaranteed. Extra points are an untimed down if a touchdown is scored on the last play of the of the first half or the last play of the game.

***Field Dimensions***

The playing field is 25 yards wide by 50 yards long

***Kickoffs***

There are no kick-offs in flag football. Instead, the ball is placed on the 20-yard line of the offensive team. The clock will start upon placement of the ball.

***Scrimmage Play***

The offensive team has 25 seconds to put the ball into play after the official whistles the ball ready to play. Failure to do so may result in loss of down.

***First Down***

Each team will have four plays to attempt a first down. First downs will be achieved by getting to mid-field – where a new set of downs will be provided to score a touchdown. If the offensive team fails to gain a first down or fails to score a touchdown, the ball will change possession with the defensive team taking position at their own 20-yard line. A 1st down is gained (or a touchdown/2 pt. conversion is scored) when the ball carrier’s flags cross the 1st down line or goal line. Reaching just the ball over the line is not sufficient.

***Rushing the Ball***

The ball must be snapped from the ground to the QB at the start of every play. Direct hand-offs, toss or pitch behind the line of scrimmage are all legal. Anyone behind the line of scrimmage can receive a hand-off, toss or pitch. The QB cannot take a snap and hand it back to the center – the center is only eligible for a pass beyond the line of scrimmage.

Also, spinning is allowed but players cannot leave their feet (officials’ discretion) in order to avoid a tackle. No flag guarding the hands, arms or elbows is allowed. Stiff-arming is not allowed.

***Offensive Blocking***

Shield Blocking / Screen Blocking is the only acceptable form of blocking allowed with no exceptions! Shield blocking is defined as a blocker impeding the defender’s line of play. The blocker may put their body between the ball carrier and the defender. The blocker’s arms may be elevated to form a “T” with fists abutting their chest, but the blocker may not extend their arms to interfere / shove the defender accordingly. Blocking below the waist is not permitted.

***Tackling***

A tackle is made by removing one flag from the belt of any player advancing, holding or carrying the ball. At no time may a player push/bump any player out of the field of play resulting in a dead ball. If flag falls off the ball-carrier on its own, the ball-carrier is still live, and must be “tackled” by one-hand tag.

***Charging/Diving***

Charging and Diving are not allowed at any time. Charging is defined as running into another player to avoid being tackled, to make a tackle or to make a block. Diving will be defined as willfully diving to make a defensive or offensive play.

***Pass Eligibility***

All players are eligible to receive a pass, including the center. Players must have one foot in-bounds when making a catch. An incomplete pass behind the line of scrimmage is an incomplete pass and not a fumble. The down will be lost, and the ball spotted at original line of scrimmage.

***Scoring***

A touchdown is equal to 6 points. Interceptions can be returned for touchdown, also for 6 points.

Two-point conversions are worth 2 points and will be attempted after each touchdown.

An interception made on a two-point conversion that is returned for a touchdown will also be worth two points.

***Extra Points***

After scoring a touchdown in both first half and the second half, the scoring team must attempt a two-point conversion.

* 1. The ball will be placed at the 2-yard line and a play will be run (and defended).
  2. The play can be a forward pass only.
  3. Defensive penalties during the play will result in a successful attempt. Offensive penalties will result in a failed attempt.
  4. Defensive interceptions can be advanced. If TD is scored, it is worth two points.

In addition, two-point conversions at the end of the first half and the end of the game are untimed downs. If a team scores on the last play of the first half or the last play of the game, they can and must attempt a two-point conversion.

***Dead Ball***

The ball will be declared “dead” when:

* 1. Either flag on the ball carrier is pulled,
  2. The ball is fumbled and/or hits the ground.
  3. The center does not get the ball to the QB.
  4. The ball carrier’s knee hits the ground
  5. The ball carrier steps out of bounds
  6. A touchdown is scored

***Punts***

There are no punts in flag football. All teams will have for downs to score either a first down and / or touchdown (as outlined above).

***Penalties***

The following penalties will be assessed for the infractions defined above:

1. Charging (offensive and defensive) - five-yard penalty from the spot of the foul
2. Diving – called at the discretion of the referee, and starts with a warning to player and coach, will then result in 5-yard penalty from spot.
3. Illegal/incorrect offensive blocking - five-yard penalty from the spot of the foul without a loss of down
4. If an offensive player leaves their feet in an attempt to avoid a tackle - play will be blown dead at the spot of the foul
5. Flag guarding - the play being blown dead at the spot of the foul
6. Blitzing/offsides will result in a five-yard penalty from the spot of the foul without a loss of down.
7. Failure to rotate will result in the loss of the subsequent down – if the current down is 4th, then the penalty will result in a turnover.
8. Unsportsmanlike Conduct – called at the discretion of the referee and may result in loss of down or expulsion of the player or coach.

***Mercy Rule***

The Mercy Rule will be enforced in the second half only. A team must use one less player when/if they are winning by 18 or more points. The winning team will return to “full strength” once the point differential shrinks to less than 18.

Example – A team scores its third touchdown to make the score 18 – 0. They must use one less player on the 2-point conversion try and the ensuing defensive series. This rule still applies to the ensuing offensive series, provided the team is still up by 18 or more points.

***OT Rules***

There is no overtime during the regular season. These games can end in a tie. During the play-offs, however, games will be allowed to go into overtime if the score is tied at the end of regulation. College football overtime rules will apply. Each OT session will have alternating possessions at the 20-yard line. Each team has four downs to get the ball into the end zone, followed by extra point attempt. Game over when one team has scored more points at the end of that OT session.

# Gold Specific Rules

***Purpose***

The Gold League is an instructional and recreational league. For most of the players this is their third or fourth year playing organized football. The #1 objective of this league is to instruct and prepare the players in the game of football. All coaching efforts should be to instruct and include – therefore all rules should be interpreted accordingly.

***Equal “Touches”***

Teams should distribute offensive opportunities across the entire team. Once a player has had a touch – they should rotate out. A snap taken at QB can constitute as a touch but does not require that player to exit the game. Coaches should call plays that distribute touches. Each player must have at least one touch per half. At least two players must take a snap at QB each game.

***Number of Players***

All teams must play 5 players on defense and 6 players on offense (5 plus youth QB) – unless the Mercy rule is in effect (see above). A team must be able to field an entire starting line-up to begin the game. If a team will have less than 6 players at game time, they can “call up” a number of players from Maroon League. The number of called-up players plus the number of players present from the original roster will not exceed 6 players.

***Coaches on the Field of Play***

One offensive coach (calling plays/non-participating) will be permitted on the field of play – however they must be well behind the “action” once the ball is snapped. A (single) defensive coach may enter the field in-between plays but must exit before the ball is snapped. Coaches must make every effort to avoid interfering with active play during a game. If a play is impacted or obstructed by a coach – the play will be replayed. Referees have discretion to award loss of down or eject coaches for infractions.

At no time, are additional coaches permitted on the field of play during a game.

***Time Outs***

Each team is allowed one 30-second time out per half

***Offensive Alignment***

All teams will be required to play with 6 players. Any and each formation must include a Center and aQB. Each snap must be from the ground directly to the QB but can be either under center or shotgun. Any formation is available and is at the discretion of the offensive coordinator. Motion and trick plays **are allowed**.

***Motion***

There can be only 1 player in motion at any given time. Prior to starting the motion, all players on the offensive side must be come to a set position. The player in motion must be a) moving parallel to the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped or b) come set on the line of scrimmage for at least one second prior to the snap.

***QB Play***

The QB may handoff, pitch or pass from anywhere in the backfield. However, he/she may not run forward for yardage or interact in the play after the ball leaves their hand. The only exception is after throwing an interception, when the QB is permitted to tackle the ball carrier.

***Possession Count***

There is a 7 “Mississippi” count before which the QB must be rid of the football either by passing or handing off. Referees will make the count out loud and will blow the play dead accordingly. The ball will be placed back at the line of scrimmage with a loss of down.

***Fumbles***

A fumbled snap will result in single “warning” with a 10 second count initiated by the referee, the ball MUST be snapped by the end of the count, a second fumbled snap results in a loss of down. A fumbled backfield exchange will result in a dead ball and loss of down with the ball being placed back at the original line of scrimmage

***Defensive Alignment***

Defensive alignment is at the discretion of the defensive coordinator. “Zone” as well as “Man to Man” can be played.

***Defensive Rushing/Rushing the QB***

Players may cross the line of scrimmage to “rush” the backfield only in the following conditions:

1. Once the ball is handed off to a ball carrier
2. If a pass is thrown behind the line of scrimmage

Otherwise, all athletes play man to man or zone, and defend the line of scrimmage accordingly. There is no blitzing nor rushing a passing QB.

***Tackles for Losses***

There are no negative plays in the Gold league. If a tackle is made behind the line of scrimmage, the ball is placed at the original line of scrimmage.

***Interceptions***

Interceptions may be advanced ending in only 2 results: 1) A touchdown or 2) A touchback resulting in the defending team taking over on offense from their own 20-yard line

***Inside the 5***

When the ball is downed on the five or inside the five-yard line, forward pass plays only will be allowed. The offense cannot rush the ball, and no screen passes.