**New Albany Youth Flag Football League**

***Mini 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 NAYFFL 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.

**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 45 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. This will be entirely at the discretion of the referee.

***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-off, toss or pitch behind the line of scrimmage are all legal. Only the running backs 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 with the hands, arms or elbows is allowed. Stiff-arming is not allowed.

***Offensive Blocking***

No Blocking of any kind is allowed in Mini. The expectation that no blocking, shielding, or picking will be taught or encouraged

***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***

There is no scorekeeping in Mini League.

***Extra Points***

After scoring a touchdown, 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 run or pass
	3. Defensive penalties during the play will result in a successful attempt. Offensive penalties will result in a failed attempt.
	4. Defensive interceptions simply result in a failed attempt and cannot be “advanced.”

***Dead Ball***

The ball will be declared “dead” when:

* 1. A 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 discretion of 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. Trick play calling (as defined by the respective league) will result in loss of down and the ball being placed back on the previous spot
8. 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.
9. 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***

As there is no scorekeeping in Mini League, the Mercy rule is not enforced.

Mini Specific Rules

***Purpose***

The Mini League is an instructional and recreational league. For most of the players this is their first 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”***

Coaches must distribute offensive opportunities across the entire team. Once a player has had a touch – they should rotate out. Coaches should distribute touches – linearly meaning no player has should have 2 touches before any one player has 1 touch. Further, no player should get their 3rd touch before each player has 2 touches, etc. An assistant coach should keep track to ensure equity.

***Number of Players***

All teams must play 5 players on both sides of the ball at all times. Coaches will serve as Quarterback (QB) and NOT count as one of the five offensive players. A team must be able to field an entire starting line-up to begin the game.

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

One offensive coach (playing QB) and one defensive coach (non-participating) will be permitted on the field of play at any given time during games. With the exception of a coach playing QB, coaches should not directly impact play on the field. Coaches must make every effort to avoid interfering with active play during a game. If a play is impacted or obstructed by a defensive 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***

There are no time outs in Mini League.

***Offensive Alignment***

There is a single allowed formation. All teams will be required to play with a Center, a coach QB, 2 receivers, and 2 split running backs. Snaps must be directly from center – no shotguns.



***Trick Plays***

Trick plays are counter to the mission and purpose of the league and are strictly forbidden in Mini league. They are defined as any play designed to intentionally misdirect the defensive player on the direction of the play, using deception and/or unorthodox play-calling. Common trick plays include:

1. Play action pass / fake handoff
2. Pump fake
3. Halfback pass/option
4. Wide receiver pass/fake reverse
5. Reverse
6. Motion, bunch or other unorthodox formations
7. Counter plays

Trick plays will result in loss of down. Multiple infractions may be deemed Unsportsmanlike Conduct by the referee. “Jet sweeps” (where WR receives a toss from the QB are allowed. The WR must catch the ball beyond the nose guard cone, and it must be a toss from the QB. If the ball hits the ground, it is an incomplete pass.

**Coach QB Play**

Coach QBs are not permitted to run play-action (fake run, turn into a pass). If a handoff is faked & the coach QB pulls up for a pass (or vice versa), the play will be ruled immediately dead with the ball spot at the original line of scrimmage with a loss of down. Coach QBs are not permitted to pump-fake or in other ways “trick” the defense. When the coach is the QB, a pass cannot cross 2 lines in the air. If the ball is on the 20-yard line, the pass cannot cross midfield in the air. If the ball is short of midfield, it cannot cross the opposite 20. If the ball is past midfield, the pass cannot cross the goal line in air.

***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 or a fumbled backfield exchange will result in a dead ball and a replay of the down.

***Defensive Alignment***

There is a single allowable formation. All teams will be required to play with a Nose guard, 2 Cornerbacks, and 2 Linebackers. All defensive alignments must align in “man coverage”, however, man coverage after the snap will not be enforced, and coaches should not teach zone coverage. All players will be 6 yards off the line of scrimmage as designated by the defensive alignment cone.

***Defensive Rushing***

At the snap of the ball all players are live and there are no limitations to crossing the defensive cone line of scrimmage

***Tackles for Losses***

There are no negative plays in the Mini 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 providing the player has two eligible flags legally attached to their belt. If not, the interception will stand, and the ball will be declared dead at the spot of the interception.

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