

NATIONAL FLAG FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

Version 3.7

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# OFFICIAL RULE BOOK



# NATIONAL FLAG FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

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### FORMAT

- Teams will play three games of round robin play with the top half of each division advancing to single elimination play.
- Games are scheduled every 30 minutes.
- The game is played with five (5) players. However, a minimum of four (4) players must be on the field at all times.
- A player may only appear on one roster per division.
- If a player is found playing on a team illegally, the coach, illegal player, and/or team may be removed from the event.

### PLAYER ATTIRE

- Players must provide light and dark shirts or jerseys.
- Players are designated as home or away based on the schedule.
- The away team will wear the light side of the shirt/jersey and the home team will wear their dark side.
- Players are required to wear protective mouthpieces at all times during both games and practices.
- The belts that hold the flags (not the flags themselves) must be secured to ensure they do not hang appearing to be a flag. If the belt is hanging, flag guarding may be called.
- Shirts/jerseys must be tucked in at all times. If a shirt/jersey is hanging out, flag guarding may be called.
- Molded and screw-in cleats are permitted. No metal cleats are allowed.
- No jewelry is permitted during the games.
- Shorts and pants cannot have open pockets. All open pockets must be taped.

### EQUIPMENT

- Teams are required to bring their own flags. If you do not have flags, we have them available for purchase. Flags must be the NFL FLAG style. Only yellow, green, red or blue flags are allowed.
- **Team shorts and flags cannot be the same color.** If your flags are blue, you cannot wear blue shorts or pants.
- Coaches are responsible for having a rulebook and knowing their schedule.
- Only the official balls listed below may be used. Balls may be purchased at the tournament.
- **BALL TYPE:**

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Lombardi and U6 Divisions:     | FRANKLIN – AIR TECH or MINI (9 INCH)                   |
| Shula and U7 and U8 Divisions: | WILSON – WTF 1523 (NFL FLAG “Junior” BLUE BALL)        |
| Madden and U9+ Division:       | WILSON – WTF 1305 (NFL FLAG “Intermediate” BROWN BALL) |
- **Flags and balls may be preordered through the event office.**

### COACHES

- Teams may ONLY have 3 coaches. These coaches must be identified on the team roster to be an official coach.
- All coaches, both offensive and defensive, must move to the **sidelines** prior to the snap of the ball.  
**Exception: Lombardi and U6 division coaches** may remain on the field during a play on **offense only**.
- Each team is responsible for cleaning up the field and sidelines, after the game.

### POSSESSIONS

- There will be no coin toss to start the game.
- During round-robin play, the HOME team will start on Offense for the First Half and the AWAY team will choose which direction to defend. The second half teams will switch.
- During the playoffs, the highest seed, will choose whether they want to start on Offense the first or second half. The lower seed will choose direction. The second half teams will switch.
- For each possession the offense has **three downs** to obtain a first down at midfield, if midfield is obtained, the offense then has three more downs to reach the end zone.
- A first down is only obtained one of two ways; the offense reaches midfield within three downs or a defensive penalty occurs with the result being an automatic first down.
- If the offense fails to reach midfield (first down line) or fails to reach the end zone within three downs, the result is a turnover.
- **There are NO fourth downs in tournament play.**

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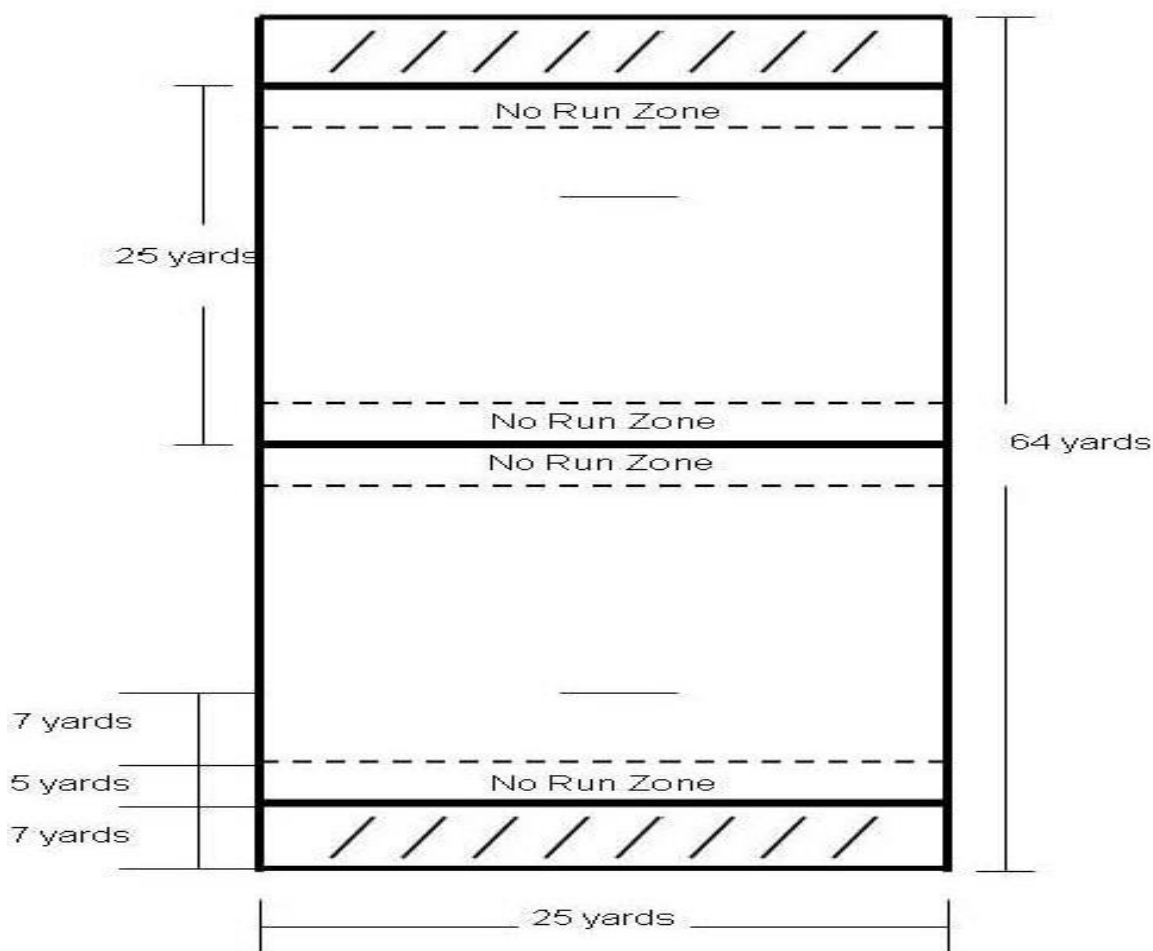
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### FIELD SET UP

- The field is roughly 64 yards in total length by 25 yards in total width.
- Teams must choose opposite sides of the field to watch the game. **Exceptions:** Games that are played on the turf field may require parents to view the games from the end zones.
- Most possession changes will start at the offensive team's 5-yard line. **Exception:** Interceptions.
- A 5-yard (15 feet) buffer zone is in place during all games. This buffer zone completely surrounds the playing field. This zone assists in maintaining the safety of our players and spectators during game play. Only coaches and players of the current game, as well as league personal are allowed within this zone during the game. Coaches are asked to assist us with the enforcement of this rule. This may be enforced by a delay of game or too many men on the field penalty.

#### The Field Dimensions

- 50 yards long x 25 yards wide with 7 yard end zones.
- Total length of the field is 64 yards.



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### GENERAL OFFENSE

- **NO INTENTIONAL CONTACT** of any kind is permitted.
- Downfield blocking is illegal. Any offensive player who continues running **AND** impedes the progress of a defensive player who is attempting to pull the ball carrier's flag will be called for illegal blocking.
- All offensive players must start with their mouth pieces in, shirts/jerseys tucked in, flag belts on, and flags properly secured at the hips of each player.
- The ball must be snapped between the center's legs to start a play. Shotgun snaps are allowed.
- There is a **30-second huddle clock**, which starts once the line of scrimmage is marked and the ball is spotted.
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted towards the line of scrimmage. A motion player does **NOT** need to stop, prior to the snap of the ball.
- No laterals of any kind, anywhere on the field are legal.
- Spinning is permitted.
- Jumping or diving to **ADVANCE** the ball is illegal. However, an offensive player may jump over a defensive player on the ground to avoid a collision. Jumping or diving to catch a pass is permitted.
- The ball will be spotted at the location of where the flag was when it was separated from the belt.

### PASSING GAME

- QB has a seven (7) second "pass clock."
- If the pass is not thrown within seven seconds, the play is ruled dead, with a loss of down. The ball is placed at the original line of scrimmage.
- If the ball is handed off, the seven-second pass rule is no longer in effect.
- Passes must be thrown behind the line of scrimmage, including feet. Failure to comply, results in a loss of down.
- Only one forward pass per down. All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.

### RECEIVING GAME

- All players are eligible to receive passes, including the QB, but only if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage first.
- A receiver must have at least one foot in bounds when making a catch.
- A receiver is down where his or her flag belt is pulled. Exception: In order to achieve a first down, or a touchdown, the ball carrier's flag belt and ball, must cross the plane of the first down line and/or goal line.
- If a receiver's flag inadvertently falls off, even without contact from another player, that player is ruled down at the spot the flag fell off.
- If a receiver's flag inadvertently falls off prior to receiving the ball and later in the same play catches the ball without replacing the flag, the receiver will be down immediately at the point of reception.
- In the event that a receiver and defender both catch the ball at the same time and both retain possession to the ground, then the tie would go to the receiver, with receiver being down at the point of the tied reception.
- A receiver cannot run out of bounds and then come back in bounds to catch a ball.

### RUNNING GAME

- Only "direct" handoffs (player to player, hand to hand) behind the line of scrimmage are legal. Anyone behind the line of scrimmage can receive a handoff. A player must completely let go of the ball to be considered a legal handoff.
- There is no limit to the amount of handoffs that can be performed by the offense in a single play, so long as the ball never crosses the line of scrimmage.
- The QB can run the ball only if he/she has first handed the ball off behind the line of scrimmage and then taken a "direct" handoff back from another player before the ball has ever crossed the line of scrimmage.
- The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball, as long as he or she does not pass the line of scrimmage first.
- It is the responsibility of the ball carrier to avoid colliding with defenders that lie in his/her path. Unintentional contact will not be penalized, provided the ball carrier makes an effort to avoid it. Failure to attempt to avoid contact with a defender (charging) may be penalized. Intentional contact will not be tolerated, and may also result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, and/or player ejection.

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### GENERAL DEFENSE

- **NO INTENTIONAL CONTACT** of any kind is permitted.
- Defensive players cannot pass the line of scrimmage, until the ball is handed off. **\*Exception: Divisions with a rush.**
- Defenders must only attempt to grab an offensive players flags when trying to get them down.
- If a defender attempts to pull an offensive player's flags and inadvertently grabs their jersey, the defender must immediately and completely release the jersey before they can reattempt to pull the flag. Failure to do so will result in a holding penalty.
- All defensive players must give the offense a one yard cushion prior to the snap of the ball.

### FLAG PULLING/GUARDING

- A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- **Flag Guarding** is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm, or shoulder or covering the flags with the football jersey.

### INTERCEPTIONS

- Interceptions are returnable but not on conversions after touchdowns.
- You cannot return an interception during overtime. The play will just result in a loss of possession.
- In the event of an interception, all other defenders on the field must stop and cannot block or impede the offensive players from pursuing the ball carrier.
- The ball will be spotted at the point the ball carrier is ruled down.

### NO RUN ZONES

- **"No Run Zones" are only enforced in the Madden and U9+ Divisions.**
- "No Run Zones" are designed to avoid short-yardage situations.
- "No Run Zones" come into effect only when the offensive team is approaching a first down or the end zone. Exception: If the offensive team has already achieved a first down, but has been pushed back into a "No Run Zone", then the "No Run Zone" is no longer in effect.
- Whenever within the "No Run Zone" the offense must pass.
- If a run play occurs while inside the "No Run Zone", the play is immediately dead with the consumption of a down.

### RUSHING OF THE QUARTERBACK

- **You may only rush the quarterback in the Madden and U9+ Divisions.**
- The rush marker will be designated by the referee seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
- Any number of players may rush the quarterback as long as they are beyond the rush marker at the time the ball is snapped.
- If the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump the seven-yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, that rusher(s) **CANNOT** rush during that play. However, any other defender that is seven yards back may rush instead. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the hand off or passed ball.
- The rusher must take an angled path to the QB. If this path is crossed AND contact is made involving the rusher and any offensive player then an offensive impeding penalty will be assessed.
- Once the rusher angle is set, he/she cannot change their path to the QB. If the path is changed, they will lose right of way privileges. This means that if any contact is made, it will be called against the initiating player.
- The rusher **CANNOT** run straight into the center. The center has the right away so long as the center remains in his/her original spot at the time the ball was snapped.
- If contact is made with the center by the rusher who has not taken an angle to the quarterback, a defensive impeding penalty will be assessed.
- Players not rushing the quarterback may defend the line of scrimmage.
- The rusher may attempt to block the pass but it is a penalty to make contact with the quarterback's arm.

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### INADVERTENT WHISTLE

- If there is an inadvertent whistle during a play, the offense has the choice of either the result of the play at the **point** the whistle was blown or replaying the down.
- If there is an inadvertent whistle during a passing play and the ball is in flight, the down is replayed.

### DEAD BALLS

- A play is ruled dead when the ball carrier's flag is pulled, the ball carrier's flag inadvertently falls off, the ball carrier steps out of bounds, any part of the ball carrier's body other than hands touch the ground, the ball carrier lets the ball hit the ground, a penalty occurs, QB runs out of time or after a touchdown or extra point is scored.
- There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the player loses control of the ball.

### SCORING

- A touchdown is equivalent to 6 points.

### EXTRA POINTS

- Following a touchdown the offensive team is given an opportunity to score an extra point.
- 1 Extra Point is attempted five yards out from the goal line. **This is a "NO RUN" zone in the Madden and U9+ Divisions.**
- 2 Extra Points is attempted 12 yards out from the goal line.
- An interception on an extra point will result in a failed attempt.

### SAFETIES

- A safety occurs when one of the following happens; the QB or ball carrier is downed in his/her end zone, the QB or ball carrier runs out of bounds inside his/her end zone, the quarterback or ball carrier fumbles the ball in his/her end zone, a bad snap resulting in the ball landing in offensive end zone, and an offensive penalty occurring inside the offensive end zone.
- If a safety occurs, the team that scored the safety will be awarded 2 points and will receive the ball on their 5 yard line.

### TIME SITUATIONS

- The referee may stop the clock at their own discretion.
- Each team is allowed **one 30-second** timeout per game.
- Games are played with two **12-minute halves**. **There is no halftime**. Teams will immediately switch direction for the second half.
- The clock will automatically stop at the one-minute warning of the second half only if the score of the game is within an 8-point differential.
- The clock will **NOT** stop in the final minute of the second half. Use your one timeout wisely!
- A Mercy is declared once a 35-point differential has been obtained. The game is officially declared over, a maximum of 35 points will be listed for the point's differential.

### OVERTIME

- There is no overtime in Round Robin Play.
- If the score is tied at the end of regulation during Bracket Play, teams move directly into overtime.
- Coin toss determines possession. The team that did not call the opening coin toss will call the overtime coin toss.
- The ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line. Teams will be driving away from the end zone. Each team will receive two plays to go as far as they can. The team that gains the most yards, wins. If tied after Sudden Death, the process will be repeated.
- Interceptions cannot be returned. If there is an interception on a team's first attempt, this will result in 0 yards total for that team, they will not get a 2nd attempt.

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### OVERTIME (CONTINUED)

- If there is an interception on a team's second attempt, this will result in 0 yards for that attempt, but the team's yardage on their 1st attempt will still count. If the score is still tied after the first overtime, the team that didn't have the choice in the first overtime will make the call for the beginning of the second overtime.
- The team that was just on defense during the second overtime will start on offense.
- There must be positive yards to win the Sudden Death. Interceptions result in zero yards for the possession.

### FORFEITS

- In order to keep games on time, teams arriving more than ten minutes later than their originally scheduled start time will forfeit the game unless coming directly from a different field at the tournament.
- Event Liaison not field official will make that determination.
- Teams are required to have a minimum of four players to play a game; if a team is unable to field at least four players the game will be forfeited.
- A forfeit will result in a 21-0 result.

### PROTEST RULE

- A coach has the right to protest one rule interpretation per game. The head coach **MUST** have a **copy of the rules present** and call a "**Protest Time Out**". The protest must take place before the next play is started. The official must stop the clock and read the rule in question. If no agreeable solution is determined, then an event liaison may arbitrate and will have the final say. If a team protests a rule interpretation and is proven wrong, the team will be charged a timeout. If the team doesn't have a timeout then that team will be penalized for delay of game.

### GENERAL PENALTY INFORMATION

- If the offense throws an interception and commits an infraction after the interception, when the opposing team takes offensive possession they will get an additional 5 yards from the line of scrimmage.
- Only head coaches may approach the referee. Judgment calls cannot be argued.
- A game or half will not end on any accepted live ball defensive penalty.
- Any offensive penalty in your own end zone results in a safety (2 points).
- A second defensive penalty on an extra point, will equate to the number of points the offensive team was attempting and be awarded.

### WARNINGS

- At the official's discretion, a warning may be given in place of a penalty to a player or coach for any of the stated rules. Coaches and players should not expect to receive more than one warning if any.

### OFFENSIVE PENALTIES - 5 Yards from Line of Scrimmage and Loss of that Down

- False start
- Off-sides
- Illegal motion
- Offensive impeding
- Delay of game
- Attempting to run from a "No Run Zone"
- Offensive pass interference
- Too many players on the field
- Improper equipment - (equipment tampering, lack of mouth guard, pants or shorts with pockets, jersey un-tucked, illegal cleats, missing or improperly placed flags)



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### **OFFENSIVE PENALTIES - 5 Yards from the Spot of Infraction and Loss of that Down**

- Flag guarding
- Illegal ball advancement – (jumping or diving to advance the ball, laterals)
- Intentional contact – (blocking, charging, tackling, tripping, pushing, holding, obstructing, stiff arming)

### **OFFENSIVE UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT - 15 Yards from Line of Scrimmage and Loss of that Down**

- Unsportsmanlike conduct – (using profanity, taunting, insulting or vulgar gestures, disrespectfully addressing any persons, illegally stripping, or attempting to strip the ball, spiking, or kicking the ball, spiking, or throwing flag, fighting, excessive celebrations.) This includes all team members, coaches, and families/fans representing the team.
- Depending on severity of incident, players, coaches, family members, and/or fans may be subject to ejection.

### **DEFENSIVE PENALTIES - 5 Yards from the Line of Scrimmage, Automatic First Down**

- Roughing the passer
- Intentionally removing a receiver's flag belt before he/she contacts the ball
- Illegally rushing the quarterback
- Too many players on the field
- Coach interference – (remaining on the field during a play)
- Improper equipment - (equipment tampering, lack of mouth guard, pants or shorts with pockets, jersey un-tucked, illegal cleats, missing or improperly placed flags)

### **DEFENSIVE PENALTIES - 5 Yards from the Spot of Infraction, Automatic First Down**

- Defensive Pass Interference
- Intentional contact – (blocking, charging, tackling, tripping, pushing, holding, obstructing, stiff arming)

### **DEFENSIVE UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT - 15 Yards from End of Play, Automatic First Down**

- Unsportsmanlike conduct – (using profanity, taunting, insulting or vulgar gestures, disrespectfully addressing any persons, illegally stripping, or attempting to strip the ball, spiking, or kicking the ball, spiking, or throwing flag, fighting, excessive celebrations.) This includes all team members, coaches, and families/fans representing the team.
- FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!
- Depending on severity of incident, players, coaches, family members, and/or fans may be subject to ejection.

### **EJECTIONS**

- Flagrant Unsportsmanlike Conduct or Personal Fouls (Tackling, Pass Interference, and Charging)
- Intentionally Tampering with Equipment
- Bad Sportsmanship
- At the official's discretion, a player, coach, or fan may be ejected from the field for unsportsmanlike conduct or any flagrant violation of the rules. To eject a player, coach, or a fan the referee will call an official's time out and get an event liaison **PRIOR** to making this call.
- Any person ejected will be asked to leave the field before play resumes.
- Any person ejected may be put on probation with possible suspension, depending upon the severity of incident. NFF will have full discretion when imposing penalties.
- Any person ejected may be asked to leave the event premises.

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## SPORTSMANSHIP

- Trash talking is not allowed. Trash talking is offensive language used against opposing coaches, players, officials, league personnel or fans. Officials will give one and only one warning. If this trash talking continues, the offender may be ejected from the game.
- If any league personnel or official witness any act of rough housing, including but not limited to, tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, or any other unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and that player may be ejected. Further disciplinary action may follow including event expulsion.
- After the game, teams are expected to form a line at midfield and congratulate the opposing team regardless the outcome of the game.

NATIONAL FLAG FOOTBALL has and always will provide an atmosphere where players, friends and families can feel comfortable enjoying a day of football. Any players, teams, or family members that jeopardize that environment will be asked to leave.

NATIONAL FLAG FOOTBALL operates under a **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY**.