

The logo features the word "GO" in large, blue, 3D block letters. A red ribbon banner wraps around the right side of the "GO", containing the words "PLAY" and "FLAG" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

GO **PLAY FLAG**

— **OFFICIAL** —

5v5 PLAYING RULES

2026–2027 EDITION

— **OFFICIAL RULEBOOK** —

POWERED BY

— **LSX** —

ABOUT THIS RULEBOOK

These rules constitute the complete playing rules for Go Play Flag 5v5 competition. They are based on the 5v5 playing framework contained in the NFL FLAG Official Playing Rules, adapted and modified for Go Play Flag competition. Coaches, players and officials should use this document as the primary rules authority at Go Play Flag events.

Rule hierarchy: When a published Go Play Flag Event Supplement conflicts with this rulebook, the Event Supplement controls for that event. All provisions not specifically modified by the Event Supplement remain in force.

Core Go Play Flag Modifications

All Go Play Flag fields use a two-way field format. One-way field rules are not used.

Direct quarterback rushing is prohibited in 6U, 7U and 8U. Rushing begins in 9U and older divisions.

No-run zones are eliminated in the 6U and 7U divisions.

The mandatory five-yard defensive cushion is eliminated in the 6U and 7U divisions; defenders must still remain on their side of the line of scrimmage and allow a free release.

There is no automatic replay/do-over for a dropped center-to-quarterback exchange in 6U.

Interceptions may be returned during regulation scrimmage downs, but interceptions on extra-point attempts are dead and may not be returned.

All coaches must be off the field before the ready-for-play signal and remain off the field during live play, except that one 6U offensive coach may remain on the field if safely out of the play.

Round-robin games may end in a tie. Go Play Flag bracket games use the overtime procedure contained in Section 18.

Revision Control

Version	Effective Date	Description
1.0	October 2026	Comprehensive Go Play Flag 5v5 rulebook incorporating the base 5v5 playing framework, Go Play Flag modifications, final consistency and enforcement clarifications, and enhanced equipment, flag-system and game-administration standards.

Reference framework: NFL FLAG Official Playing Rules, revised March 24, 2025. This Go Play Flag document is the controlling rules document for Go Play Flag competition.

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1. AUTHORITY, ADMINISTRATION & RULE HIERARCHY

1.1 Controlling Rules

This rulebook governs all Go Play Flag 5v5 competition unless a specific Event Supplement states otherwise. Event Supplements may modify game timing, timeout allocation, roster limits, advancement procedures, venue operations or other event-specific procedures. They do not replace any rule that is not expressly modified.

1.2 Officials and Tournament Administration

Game officials administer the playing rules and penalties on the field.

The Tournament Director or designated Site Director has final administrative authority over event operations, eligibility, scheduling, discipline and matters not assigned to game officials.

Officials determine judgment calls, incidental contact and whether conduct constitutes a foul. Judgment calls are final.

Only the head coach may formally request clarification of a rule interpretation. A designated team captain may communicate with officials regarding normal on-field game administration. Arguments over judgment calls are not permitted.

A head coach may use an available timeout to question a rule interpretation. If the ruling is correct, the timeout is charged. If the rule was misapplied, the timeout is restored and the proper ruling is enforced.

1.3 Team Responsibility

Teams are responsible for knowing the rules, arriving ready to play and using legal equipment.

The head coach is responsible for the conduct of players, assistant coaches, team personnel and spectators associated with the team.

Eligibility, roster size, credential limits and check-in requirements may be established by the Event Supplement.

2. TERMINOLOGY

Term	Definition
Boundary Lines	The sidelines and end lines that mark the perimeter of the playing field. A player touching a boundary line is out of bounds.
Line of Scrimmage (LOS)	The imaginary line passing through the point of the football and extending across the width of the field.
Line-to-Gain	The line the offense must reach to earn a first down, normally midfield.
Rush Line	An imaginary line seven yards from the line of scrimmage on the defensive side when quarterback rushing is permitted.
Neutral Zone	The space immediately separating the offense and defense at the line of scrimmage before the snap.
Offense	The team in possession of the ball.
Defense	The team attempting to stop the offense and gain possession.
Quarterback	The offensive player who receives the initial snap, either under center or in shotgun.
Passer	Any offensive player who legally throws a forward pass.
Rusher	A defender who legally crosses the line of scrimmage to pressure the passer.
Live Ball	The period beginning with a legal snap and ending when the play is ruled dead.
Dead Ball	The period between plays when the ball is not live.
Charging	Illegal action by a ball carrier who runs directly into a defender with an established position or initiates avoidable contact.
Flag Guarding	Any act by the ball carrier that obstructs a defender from accessing the flags, including stiff-arming, lowering an arm or shoulder, using the ball as a shield or intentionally covering the flag.
Shovel Pass	A legal forward pass, including an underhand or push pass, released from behind the line of scrimmage and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
Lateral / Backward Pass	A pass, pitch or toss that travels backward or parallel to the line of scrimmage.
No-Run Zone	A five-yard area before midfield and before the opponent's goal line in which the offense must execute a legal forward pass that crosses the line of scrimmage. No-run zones do not apply in 6U or 7U.
Spot Foul	A foul enforced from the location where the foul occurred rather than from the line of scrimmage.
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	Confrontational, abusive, taunting, threatening or otherwise inappropriate behavior or language.

3. FIELD & GAME SETUP

3.1 Two-Way Field Requirement

The offense advances toward one end zone and teams switch directions at the half.

3.2 Standard Field Dimensions

Option	Field Width	Total Length	End Zones
Preferred	25 yards	64 yards	7 yards each

No-run zones are located five yards before midfield and five yards before the opponent's goal line, except in 6U and 7U.

Stepping on or beyond a boundary line is out of bounds.

Before the ready-for-play signal, the official places the ball near the middle of the field. The spot may not be closer than 10 yards to a sideline.

Field markings, cone placement and end-zone depth may be adjusted slightly by the Site Director when venue conditions require, provided both teams play under the same conditions.

3.3 Coin Toss and Starting Direction

Before the game, team captains meet at midfield for the coin toss. The designated visiting team calls the toss.

The winner chooses offense or defense. There is no option to defer.

The loser chooses the direction of play.

Teams switch directions for the second half. The team that began the first half on offense begins the second half on defense.

4. EQUIPMENT & UNIFORMS

4.1 Required Player Equipment

Every player must wear a properly fitted mouthguard while on the field.

Every player must wear an approved two-flag belt using traditional smooth popper-style detachable flags, one on each hip. Flags must be readily accessible to defenders, contrast with the player's shorts or pants, and measure at least 14 inches from the attachment point to the bottom edge.

Only traditional smooth poppers are permitted. Mushroom-style, expanded-head or other non-standard poppers designed to resist removal are prohibited unless an Event Supplement expressly authorizes an alternate system. Flags may not be cut, shortened, tied, knotted, reinforced or otherwise altered.

The male and female portions of each popper/attachment must match in color, must be fully seated before the snap, and each flag must release with one hand in a smooth, fluid motion.

The Tournament Director or designated Site Director may require event-issued or event-approved flag belts for any competition.

Players must wear an event-approved team jersey. Teams must have contrasting light/dark options if required by the event. Jerseys must be tucked in or otherwise secured so they do not cover or obstruct the flags.

Shorts or pants may not have open pockets or exposed belt loops. The Tournament Director or designated Site Director may permit permanently closed/taped pockets only if announced before play.

4.2 Standard Game Ball Sizes

Division	Standard Ball Size
6U-8U	Pee Wee – Size 6 (9.1 – 9.75 inches and weighs 9 to 11 oz)
9U-10U	Junior – Size 7 (9.8 – 10.5 inches and weighs 11.3 to 12.3 oz)
11U and older	Youth – Size 8 (10.75 – 11 inches and weighs 12.3 to 13.4 oz)

Equivalent manufacturer size names are acceptable; no specific brand is required. Event staff may supply or approve game balls.

4.3 Footwear, Protective Equipment and Personal Items

Players must wear athletic shoes. Cleats are permitted unless prohibited by the venue. Exposed metal cleats are never permitted.

Gloves, elbow pads and knee pads are permitted. Braces may be worn only when all hard or exposed metal is safely covered and approved by an official.

Jewelry must be removed before play. Hard-brimmed hats are not permitted. Soft headbands and cold-weather beanies may be permitted.

Soft-shell protective headgear and secured sports eyewear may be worn. Prescription glasses are permitted.

Officials may remove any item they judge unsafe or likely to interfere with flag pulling.

4.4 Equipment Check

Officials may inspect mouthguards, flags, belts, pockets, footwear and other equipment before the game and at any time during play.

A player who is not properly equipped may not participate until the issue is corrected.

Games will not be delayed for a player to correct avoidable equipment violations.

A player using an illegal or improperly secured flag system may not participate until the equipment is corrected. Intentional alteration or tampering intended to make a flag more difficult to remove is unsportsmanlike conduct and may result in ejection or additional tournament discipline.

5. GAME FLOW, DOWNS & POSSESSION

5.1 Starting Possession

The offensive team begins a normal possession at its own 5-yard line unless a penalty, turnover-on-downs rule, overtime procedure or Event Supplement establishes another spot.

5.2 Downs to Midfield and the Goal Line

The offense has four downs to cross midfield.

Once the offense legally crosses midfield, it receives three downs to score a touchdown.

A team earns only one line-to-gain first down per possession: midfield.

After the offense crosses midfield, failure to score by the end of third down results in a change of possession and the new offense begins at its own 5-yard line.

5.3 Fourth-Down Punt or Play Declaration

If the offense has not crossed midfield after third down, the head coach must immediately declare either "Punt" or "Play" for fourth down when asked by the official.

There is no physical punt. A "Punt" declaration ends the possession and the opponent begins at its own 5-yard line.

If the offense declares "Play," runs a fourth-down play and fails to cross midfield, the opponent takes possession at the spot where the play ends.

A team may use an available timeout to change a "Play" declaration before the play clock expires. A "Punt" declaration is final once accepted by the official unless the Event Supplement states otherwise.

Failure to make a prompt declaration may result in delay of game.

5.4 Substitutions

Substitutions may be made during any dead-ball period. Substitutions must be completed promptly and may not be used to delay the ready-for-play process.

5.5 Team Size & Minimum Players

Games are played 5v5. A team may start or continue a game with a minimum of four eligible players.

A team with fewer than four eligible players forfeits the game unless the Tournament Director determines that extraordinary circumstances justify another administrative ruling.

6. TIMING, PLAY CLOCK & TIMEOUTS

6.1 Standard Go Play Flag Game Timing

Default standard: Unless the published Event Supplement states otherwise, Go Play Flag games use two 14-minute running-clock halves, no halftime break, an immediate change of direction, a 25-second play clock and one 30-second timeout per team per half.

The game clock runs continuously during each half.

There is no special clock stoppage during the final minute of either half.

The clock stops only for a charged team timeout, a player injury, an official timeout or another situation in which the referee determines a stoppage is necessary.

At the end of the first half, teams immediately switch directions and prepare for the second-half possession. There is no scheduled halftime.

Unused timeouts do not carry over to the second half unless an Event Supplement expressly provides otherwise.

The 25-second play clock begins when the official signals the ball ready for play.

6.2 Event-Specific Timing

A published Event Supplement may change game length, timeout allocation, scheduling block, halftime procedure or other timing rules. For example, an outdoor tournament may allow additional timeouts while retaining the same underlying playing rules.

6.3 End of Half or Game

A half or game may not end on an accepted defensive penalty. The offense receives an untimed down unless it declines the penalty.

An inadvertent whistle on the final play is administered under Section 8.4.

Round-robin tie games and bracket overtime are governed by Section 18.

7. SCORING

Scoring Play	Points	Rule
Touchdown	6	Ball carrier or receiver establishes possession of the ball in the opponent's end zone.
1-Point Try	1	Snap from the 5-yard line. Pass only; the play must result in a legal forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage.
2-Point Try	2	Snap from the 10-yard line. Run or pass permitted, subject to all other rules.
Safety	2	Awarded when the offense is ruled down in its own end zone under the safety provisions.

7.1 Extra-Point Procedures

After a touchdown, the scoring team must declare a 1-point or 2-point attempt.

A team may use an available timeout to change its declaration before the ready-for-play period expires. The choice may not be changed after a penalty is accepted unless the official's enforcement requires a re-declaration.

A defensive interception on any extra-point attempt is immediately dead. The interception may not be returned and no defensive conversion points are awarded.

7.2 Safety

A safety is awarded when the ball becomes dead in the offensive team's own end zone because the ball carrier's flag is pulled, the ball carrier is otherwise ruled down, a fumble or bad snap becomes dead in the end zone, or the ball is snapped into or beyond the end zone under circumstances that make the offense responsible for the ball being there.

Following a safety, the team awarded the safety receives possession at its own 5-yard line.

7.3 Tournament Mercy Rule and Forfeits

Unless an Event Supplement states otherwise, a tournament game ends when one team establishes a 35-point lead.

Unless an Event Supplement states otherwise, a forfeit is recorded as 35-0.

Tournament standings may cap point differential at 35 points per game even when administrative scoring produces a different recorded score.

8. LIVE BALL & DEAD BALL

8.1 Live Ball

The ball becomes live on the legal snap and remains live until an official rules the play dead.

The official identifies the line of scrimmage and neutral zone before the snap.

An offensive or defensive player entering the neutral zone before the snap may cause an automatic dead-ball foul.

Officials may provide a courtesy warning when practical before the snap.

A player who gains possession while airborne is in bounds if the first foot or other body part, other than a hand, touches in bounds while the player maintains possession.

8.2 When a Play Becomes Dead

The football touches the ground, including an incomplete pass, fumble, dropped snap, backward pass, pitch or lateral. There are no live-ball fumble recoveries.

The ball carrier's flag is legally pulled.

The ball carrier steps on or beyond a boundary line.

A touchdown, extra point or safety is scored.

The ball carrier's knee, shin, leg, forearm or arm touches the ground.

The ball carrier loses a flag inadvertently.

A player who has one flag or no flags takes possession of the ball.

The seven-second pass clock expires.

An official blows the whistle.

The ball carrier commits an illegal advancing action under Section 9.5, including diving through, leaping over or hurdling a defender to gain yardage. Legal jump cuts and leaving the feet solely to avoid a collision are permitted if no illegal contact is created.

8.3 Fumbles and Bad Snaps

A fumble is dead when the ball contacts the ground. If the loose ball travels forward from the point where possession was lost, the ball is returned to the point of loss of possession. If the loose ball travels backward or parallel before contacting the ground, the ball is spotted where it contacts the ground. Safety provisions apply when appropriate.

A dropped or mishandled snap is dead when it touches the ground. The down counts. Go Play Flag does not use an automatic 6U replay/do-over exception.

A backward pitch or lateral that touches the ground is dead at the spot of ground contact.

8.4 Inadvertent Whistle

If an official inadvertently whistles while a team has possession, that team may accept the ball at the spot of the whistle with the down counting, or replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

If an inadvertent whistle occurs while a legal forward pass is in flight and no team possesses the ball, the down is replayed from the previous line of scrimmage.

If the inadvertent whistle occurs on the last play of a half or game, the offense receives the same choice and, if it chooses replay, one untimed down.

9. RUNNING & BALL MOVEMENT

9.1 Ball Spot

The ball is spotted based on the location of the football when the ball carrier is ruled down, including when the flag is pulled. The position of the player's feet does not determine forward progress.

9.2 Quarterback Running

The quarterback may not directly advance the football across the line of scrimmage after receiving the initial snap. The quarterback may become an eligible receiver or ball carrier only after a legal exchange as permitted by these rules.

9.3 Handoffs, Pitches and Laterals

Direct handoffs, pitches, laterals and backward passes are permitted only behind the line of scrimmage.

A handoff requires complete transfer of possession from one offensive player to another.

A center sneak is not permitted. The quarterback may not immediately hand, pitch or lateral the ball back to the center as the first exchange of the play.

Any player who receives a legal handoff, backward pass, pitch or lateral behind the line of scrimmage may throw a legal forward pass from behind the line of scrimmage.

Once a legal handoff, backward pass, pitch or lateral occurs, the seven-second pass clock ends and all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage.

If an offensive handoff, pitch or lateral occurs after the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage, the play is dead at the spot and the appropriate illegal procedure/forward progress ruling applies.

9.4 No-Run Zones

In 8U and older divisions, the offense may not run the ball across the line of scrimmage when the line of scrimmage is inside a no-run zone.

A play from a no-run zone must result in a legal forward pass that crosses the line of scrimmage.

No-run zones are eliminated in 6U and 7U. Those divisions may run anywhere on the field.

9.5 Runner Conduct

Ball carriers may spin and make jump cuts, and may leave their feet when clearly avoiding a collision, provided they do not create illegal contact.

Ball carriers may not hurdle, leap over or dive through a defender to gain yardage.

Ball carriers must make a reasonable effort to avoid defenders who have established legal position.

Flag guarding is prohibited.

No blocking or screening is permitted at any time. Offensive players near the ball carrier must stop advancing with the ball carrier once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage and may not impede defenders.

Once the ball is advanced beyond the line of scrimmage, only the current ball carrier may possess the ball until the play ends.

10. PASSING & RECEIVING

10.1 Forward Pass

Only one forward pass is permitted on each offensive play.

The forward pass must be released from behind the line of scrimmage.

The pass must cross the line of scrimmage unless it is touched by a defender. A forward pass caught or landing behind the line of scrimmage is an illegal forward pass.

There is no intentional grounding. A passer may throw the ball away beyond the line of scrimmage to avoid a sack.

Shovel passes are permitted when they are forward passes released from behind the line of scrimmage and received beyond the line of scrimmage.

10.2 Seven-Second Pass Clock

The quarterback has seven seconds after the snap to release a legal forward pass.

If the seven-second clock expires before a pass is released, the play is dead, the down counts and the ball returns to the line of scrimmage.

If the quarterback is in the offense's end zone when the seven-second clock expires, the ball returns to the line of scrimmage; the expiration itself is not a safety.

The seven-second pass clock is eliminated once a legal handoff, pitch or backward lateral occurs behind the line of scrimmage.

If the quarterback throws the ball and then catches the same forward pass, the play is dead and treated as an incomplete pass.

10.3 Eligible Receivers and Catches

All offensive players are eligible receivers, including the quarterback after a legal handoff, pitch or lateral.

A receiver must secure possession and have at least one foot or another body part, other than a hand, contact the ground in bounds.

An offensive player who voluntarily steps out of bounds during a play may not be the first player to touch or possess a forward pass after returning in bounds. A receiver who is forced out by a defender remains eligible if the receiver promptly re-establishes in bounds and otherwise completes a legal catch.

If an offensive player and defensive player simultaneously establish possession, possession is awarded to the offense.

Interceptions during regulation scrimmage downs may be advanced. Extra-point and bracket-overtime interceptions are governed by Sections 7 and 18.

When a regulation interception return ends in the field of play, the intercepting team begins its offensive possession at the dead-ball spot.

If a regulation interception becomes dead in the intercepting team's own end zone, the intercepting team begins its possession at its own 5-yard line.

If a regulation interception is returned into the opponent's end zone, a touchdown is awarded.

11. RUSHING THE PASSER

Go Play Flag modification: Direct quarterback rushing is permitted only in 9U and older divisions. 6U, 7U and 8U defenders may not cross the line of scrimmage to rush the quarterback before a legal handoff, pitch or backward lateral.

11.1 Legal Rusher Alignment - 9U and Older

Up to two defenders may be designated as rushers on a play.

Each designated rusher must begin at least seven yards from the line of scrimmage.

Rushers must identify themselves before the snap by clearly raising a hand or otherwise communicating with the official.

A designated rusher who elects to rush must begin the rush immediately after the snap. Delayed quarterback rushing is not permitted.

The defense is never required to rush while the seven-second pass clock is in effect.

11.2 Rush After a Backfield Exchange

Once the offense completes a legal handoff, backward pass, pitch or lateral behind the line of scrimmage, all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage regardless of age division and regardless of their pre-snap alignment.

11.3 Illegal Rush

A designated rusher who leaves the seven-yard rush line early may not cross the line of scrimmage until a legal handoff, pitch, lateral or pass occurs.

A defender who was not legally positioned as a designated rusher may not cross the line of scrimmage before a legal handoff, pitch, lateral or pass.

Crossing the line of scrimmage illegally is an illegal rush and is enforced under Section 16.

If the offense draws a rusher forward before the snap, the rusher may not reset behind the seven-yard line. Merely stepping forward is not a foul until the player illegally crosses the line of scrimmage.

11.4 Rusher Path and Contact

The offense may not intentionally impede a legal rusher's direct pre-snap path to the quarterback.

If an offensive player moves into that path after the snap, the offensive player is responsible for avoiding the rusher. Illegal obstruction may be called as impeding the rusher.

If an offensive player is stationary before the snap and remains stationary, the rusher is responsible for avoiding that player.

A rusher may attempt to block a pass, but avoidable contact with the passer may be called roughing the passer.

11.5 Sack

A sack occurs when the quarterback's flag is pulled behind the line of scrimmage before the ball is released. The ball is spotted where the football was when the flag was pulled. A sack in the offense's end zone is a safety.

12. FLAG PULLING & CONTACT

12.1 Legal Flag Pull

A defender may legally pull a flag only when the opponent has possession of the football.

Defenders may dive to pull a flag, but may not tackle, hold, wrap, trip or run through the ball carrier while doing so.

Stripping or attempting to pull the football from the ball carrier is prohibited.

12.2 Missing or Lost Flag

If a ball carrier's flag inadvertently comes off, the player is immediately down. The ball is spotted at the location of the flag as determined by the official.

If a player with one flag or no flags gains possession, the play is immediately dead at the spot of possession.

A defender may not intentionally pull the flag of a player who does not possess the football.

12.3 Flag Guarding and Obstruction

A ball carrier may not stiff-arm, lower an arm or shoulder over a flag, use the football as a shield, swat a defender's hand away or intentionally cover the flags with a jersey.

Flags must remain on the hips and unobstructed. Deliberately obstructed flags may be treated as flag guarding.

12.4 Contact Standard

Flag football is a limited-contact game. Incidental contact may occur during normal play, but blocking, tackling, charging, holding, illegal contact and intentional physical play are prohibited. Officials determine whether contact is incidental or illegal.

13. FORMATIONS, SHIFTS & MOTION

The offense must have at least one player on the line of scrimmage: the center. Up to four offensive players may align on the line of scrimmage.

The quarterback must align off the line of scrimmage.

A set player who makes a movement that simulates the snap commits a false start.

The center must snap the football in one rapid, continuous motion between the legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave the center's hands.

Only one offensive player may be in motion at the snap. That player must be off the line of scrimmage and moving parallel to or backward from the line of scrimmage.

Multiple players may shift before the snap, but all players must reset and remain set for at least one second before the snap unless one player then goes legally in motion.

13.1 Defensive Cadence and Signal Mimicry

Defenders may not deliberately simulate or mimic the quarterback's cadence, snap count or other offensive signals in an attempt to induce a false start or create confusion. A deliberate violation is unsportsmanlike conduct and is enforced under Section 16.

14. COACHES, SIDELINES & COMMUNICATION

14.1 Coaching Location

Coaches must remain in the designated team area and be off the field before the ready-for-play signal. They must remain off the field during live play except as specifically permitted for 6U.

Exception: one 6U offensive coach may remain on the field after the snap if the coach stays safely out of the play and does not interfere with players or officials.

No 7U or older coach may remain on the field after the snap unless attending to an injured player or directed by an official.

Teams may huddle near the sideline to receive a play call, but the play clock continues after the ready-for-play signal.

14.2 Credentialed Team Personnel

Roster limits and the maximum number of credentialed coaches are established by the Event Supplement. Only properly credentialed team personnel may occupy the team area.

14.3 Electronic Communication

Electronic communication between an on-field player and a coach, spectator or other team representative is prohibited during competition. Use of electronic communication to relay play calls or competitive information is grounds for immediate team disqualification and additional discipline by the Tournament Director.

14.4 Rule Questions

Only the head coach may formally approach an official for a brief, respectful rules clarification. A designated team captain may communicate with officials regarding normal on-field game administration. Coaches may not prolong the game by repeatedly debating judgment calls.

A request to review a rule interpretation must be made before the next legal snap. Once the next play begins, the previous ruling may not be challenged. If necessary, the Tournament Director or designated Site Director may be consulted, and that administrative ruling is final.

15. SPORTSMANSHIP & CONDUCT

Zero tolerance: Go Play Flag events are intended to be safe, competitive and first-class. Fighting, threats, abusive language, repeated arguing, intimidation and deliberate dangerous play are not acceptable.

15.1 Player and Coach Conduct

Intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, deliberate blocking or other dangerous physical acts may result in immediate ejection.

Players and coaches may not verbally or physically abuse opponents, officials, event staff or spectators.

Taunting, baiting, profanity directed at another participant, discriminatory or threatening language, or confrontational behavior may be penalized as unsportsmanlike conduct.

Two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties charged to the same player or coach in one game result in disqualification from that game and may result in additional event discipline.

The Tournament Director may impose additional sanctions, including game suspension, event suspension or forfeiture, for serious or repeated misconduct.

15.2 Spectator Conduct

Spectators must remain in designated viewing areas and keep playing areas clear.

Spectators may encourage their teams but may not harass officials, opponents or event staff.

Coaches are expected to assist event staff in controlling their team's spectators when necessary.

16. PENALTIES & ENFORCEMENT

16.1 General Enforcement

Game officials administer all penalties and determine incidental contact arising from normal play.

Unless identified as a spot foul, penalties are enforced from the line of scrimmage.

Live-ball penalties are enforced before dead-ball penalties when both occur on the same play.

When the prescribed yardage exceeds half the distance to the goal, the penalty is enforced half the distance to the goal.

A half or game may not end on an accepted defensive penalty.

Spot fouls committed by the defense in its own end zone place the ball at the 1-yard line with an automatic first down. An offensive spot foul in the offense's own end zone results in a safety when applicable.

Only the head coach may formally request clarification of rule administration. A designated team captain may communicate with officials regarding normal on-field game administration and may communicate a penalty acceptance or declination when requested by the official.

The offended team may accept or decline a penalty unless enforcement is automatic by rule or involves disqualification or ejection.

If both teams commit live-ball fouls before a change of possession, the fouls offset and the down is replayed.

Dead-ball and unsportsmanlike-conduct fouls are enforced separately.

Automatic first down: before the offense has crossed midfield, the offense receives a new set of four downs to cross midfield. After the offense has crossed midfield, the offense receives a new set of three downs to score. If enforcement moves the ball across midfield, the offense receives three downs to score.

Loss of down: the penalized play counts as the applicable down. No additional down is deducted beyond that play unless another rule expressly provides otherwise.

16.2 Defensive Spot Fouls

Foul	Enforcement
Defensive pass interference	Spot foul; automatic first down.
Defensive holding / illegal contact	5 yards from the spot; automatic first down.
Stripping / attempting to strip the football	5 yards from the spot; automatic first down.

16.3 Offensive Spot Fouls

Foul	Enforcement
Screening / blocking	5 yards from the spot; loss of down.
Charging	5 yards from the spot; loss of down.
Offensive holding / illegal contact	5 yards from the spot; loss of down.
Flag guarding	5 yards from the spot; loss of down.

16.4 Defensive Penalties

Foul	Enforcement
Defensive unnecessary roughness	10 yards; automatic first down.
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	10 yards; automatic first down.
Offside / illegal substitution	5 yards from the line of scrimmage; automatic first down.
Illegal rush	5 yards from the line of scrimmage; automatic first down.
Illegal flag pull before possession	5 yards from the line of scrimmage; automatic first down.
Roughing the passer	5 yards from the line of scrimmage; automatic first down.
Taunting	10 yards from the line of scrimmage; automatic first down.

16.5 Offensive Penalties

Foul	Enforcement
Offensive unnecessary roughness	10 yards; loss of down.
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	10 yards; loss of down.
Offside / false start / illegal substitution	5 yards from the line of scrimmage; loss of down.
Illegal forward pass	5 yards from the line of scrimmage; loss of down.
Offensive pass interference	5 yards from the line of scrimmage; loss of down.
Illegal motion	5 yards from the line of scrimmage; loss of down.
Delay of game	5 yards from the line of scrimmage; loss of down.
Impeding the rusher	5 yards from the line of scrimmage; loss of down.
Illegal procedure	5 yards from the line of scrimmage; loss of down.
Taunting	10 yards from the line of scrimmage; loss of down.

16.6 Disqualification and Ejection

Penalties listed above do not limit the authority of an official or Tournament Director to eject a participant for fighting, intentional dangerous contact, repeated unsportsmanlike conduct or other behavior that threatens safety or event integrity.

An ejected player, coach or spectator must leave the playing area and any restricted team area before play resumes. Failure to comply may result in delay-of-game penalties, forfeiture, removal from the event premises or additional tournament discipline.

17. 6U & 7U DEVELOPMENTAL RULES

Purpose: These modifications simplify the game for younger players while preserving the core Go Play Flag structure. Unless a rule is specifically modified below, all other sections of this rulebook remain in effect.

Rule Area	6U	7U
No-Run Zones	Eliminated. The offense may run anywhere on the field.	Eliminated. The offense may run anywhere on the field.
Five-Yard Defensive Cushion	Not used. Defenders may align anywhere on their side of the LOS.	Not used. Defenders may align anywhere on their side of the LOS.
Direct QB Rush	Not permitted before a legal handoff, pitch or backward lateral.	Not permitted before a legal handoff, pitch or backward lateral.
Coach on Field	One offensive coach may remain on the field during live play if safely out of the play.	Coach must be off the field before the ready-for-play signal.
Dropped Initial Snap / Do-Over	No replay/do-over. Ball is dead where it touches the ground and the down counts.	No special replay rule. General dead-ball rules apply.

17.1 Defensive Alignment and Free Release

Eliminating the five-yard cushion does not permit press coverage or jamming.

Defenders must remain on their side of the line of scrimmage until the snap and must allow offensive players a free release.

Defenders may not initiate contact with receivers at the line of scrimmage.

Once a legal handoff, pitch or backward lateral occurs, all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage.

17.2 8U Reminder

8U follows the standard no-run-zone rules. Direct quarterback rushing is not permitted in 8U, but all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage after a legal handoff, pitch or backward lateral.

18. TOURNAMENT & BRACKET PROCEDURES

18.1 Round-Robin Play

Round-robin games that are tied at the end of regulation are recorded as ties. No overtime is played unless an Event Supplement states otherwise.

Tournament standings, advancement criteria and complete tiebreaker order are published in the Event Supplement or event schedule system.

Unless otherwise published, point differential used for tournament standings is capped at 35 points per game.

Coaches and officials should verify the final score before leaving the field. Once the score is accepted and posted, corrections are made only for clear administrative error.

18.2 Bracket Advancement

Unless an Event Supplement states otherwise, all teams advance from round-robin play to single-elimination bracket play. Bracket seeds are determined first by overall round-robin record, with the better record receiving the higher seed.

Two-Team Tie

1. Head-to-head result.
2. Points Against - the team allowing fewer points.
3. Point Differential - the team with the higher point differential. Point differential remains subject to the 35-point per-game cap in Section 18.1.
4. If the teams remain tied after the criteria above, the higher seed is determined by an Overtime Playoff ("Longest Yard").

Three or More Teams Tied

When three or more teams are tied with the same record, head-to-head is used only if one tied team defeated every other tied team. If so, that team receives the highest remaining seed and the tiebreaker process restarts for the teams still tied. If no tied team defeated every other tied team, head-to-head is eliminated and the tiebreaker moves directly to Points Against.

1. Points Against - the team allowing fewer points.
2. Point Differential - the team with the higher point differential. Point differential remains subject to the 35-point per-game cap in Section 18.1.
3. Overtime Playoff ("Longest Yard").

Longest Yard: Unless an Event Supplement states otherwise, a Longest Yard seeding playoff uses the same cumulative two-play net-yardage procedure described in Section 18.3. When three or more teams remain tied, each tied team receives an equal series; the team with the greatest net yardage receives the highest remaining seed, and unresolved ties repeat among the teams still tied.

18.3 Bracket Play Overtime - Yardage Sudden Death

Standard Go Play Flag bracket overtime: This procedure replaces the NFL FLAG overtime format for Go Play Flag elimination games unless an Event Supplement states otherwise.

1. A coin toss determines which team has the first offensive possession.
2. The overtime series begins at the team's own 5-yard line, with the offense moving toward midfield.

3. Each team receives up to two offensive plays in the series. Unless Play 1 ends the series under Rule 7 below or must be replayed, Play 2 begins at the dead-ball spot following Play 1 and any penalty enforcement.
4. After both teams complete their opportunity, the team with the greater cumulative net yardage, including applicable penalty enforcement, wins the overtime series.
5. If the teams remain tied, the process repeats until a winner is determined.
6. Interceptions may not be returned in overtime.
7. If the offense throws an interception on Play 1, that team records 0 total yards for the series and does not receive Play 2.
8. If the offense throws an interception on Play 2, that play is scored as 0 yards; the net yardage from Play 1 still counts.
9. Standard offensive and defensive penalties remain in effect with these overtime modifications: a defensive pre-snap foul is enforced before the snap and does not consume an overtime play; an offensive pre-snap foul carrying a loss of down consumes the applicable overtime play; an automatic first down does not create an additional overtime play; a replay required by offsetting live-ball fouls, an inadvertent whistle or an official administrative error does not consume an overtime play; and team timeouts are not permitted during bracket-play overtime.

18.4 Event Supplements

Event Supplements may modify timeout allocation, scheduling block, roster limits, field operations, advancement procedures or other tournament-specific rules. Examples include a 30-minute stadium scheduling block or a 40-minute outdoor tournament scheduling block. The published Event Supplement should be reviewed before every event.

APPENDIX A. GO PLAY FLAG RULES QUICK INDEX

Topic	Standard
Game length	Two 14-minute running-clock halves unless Event Supplement states otherwise.
Halftime	No scheduled halftime; teams switch directions immediately.
Play clock	25 seconds.
Timeouts	Default: one 30-second timeout per half; Event Supplement may modify.
First down	Four downs to cross midfield; three downs to score after midfield.
QB pass clock	7 seconds until a legal handoff, pitch or backward lateral.
Direct QB rush	9U and older only; up to two rushers from 7 yards.
6U / 7U no-run zones	Eliminated.
6U / 7U cushion	No mandatory five-yard cushion; free release still required.
6U dropped snap	No replay/do-over; dead ball and down counts.
PAT interception	Dead; no return.
Regulation interception	Returnable; new possession begins at the dead-ball spot. If dead in the intercepting team's own end zone, possession begins at its 5-yard line.
Round-robin tie	Game ends in a tie.
Bracket overtime	Cumulative two-play net-yardage sudden death from own 5-yard line; Play 2 begins where Play 1 ends unless the series ends or the play is replayed.
Blocking / screening	Not permitted.
Flag guarding	5-yard offensive spot foul and loss of down.
Mercy rule	35-point lead unless Event Supplement states otherwise.
Minimum players	5 players standard; a team may start or continue with 4 eligible players, but not fewer than 4 absent an administrative exception.
Flag system	Two traditional smooth popper flags, minimum 14 inches, fully seated, one-hand fluid release; altered or mushroom-style poppers prohibited.
Game ball size	6U-8U: Pee Wee; 9U-10U: Junior; 11U and older: Youth unless Event Supplement states otherwise.
Forward fumble	Forward loose-ball gain is not awarded; spot returns to point possession was lost. Backward/parallel loose ball is spotted where it contacts the ground.
Out-of-bounds receiver	A player who voluntarily steps out may not be first to touch/possess a forward pass after returning; forced-out exception applies.
Defensive cadence mimicry	Prohibited; deliberate mimicry is unsportsmanlike conduct.

Important: This appendix is only an index. The complete rule language in Sections 1-18 controls.



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