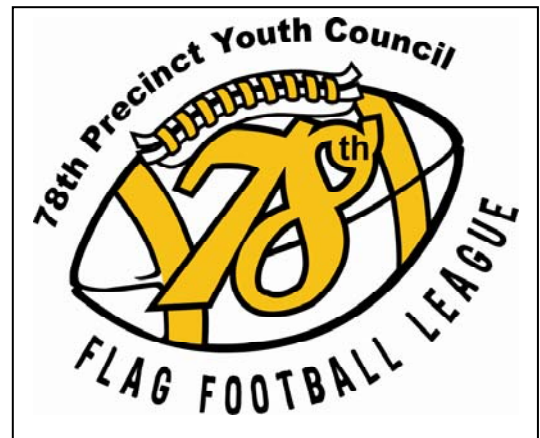


# Flag Football Rules



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## I. GAME

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss decides whether to take first offense possession or to defend first. The loser of the coin toss chooses the end zone it would prefer to defend in the first half. Teams change sides after the first half. The team that defended first gets the ball to start the second half.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (3) plays to score a touchdown.
4. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 5-yard line.
5. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 5-yard line.
6. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.

## II. TERMINOLOGY

- **Boundary lines** – the outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines, and the rear end zone lines.
- **Charging** – the movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, chest or forearm.

- **Dead Ball** – the period of time immediately before or after a play.
- **Defense** – the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.
- **Downs (1-2-3)** – the offensive squad has three attempts or “Downs” to advance the ball. They must cross the Line to Gain to get another set of downs or to score.
- **Flag Guarding** – an act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier’s flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head, or by blocking access to the runner’s flags with a hand or arm. Jumping, leaping and diving to avoid a defender’s flag pull will also be considered flag guarding.
- **Inadvertent whistle** – an official’s whistle that is performed in error.
- **Lateral** – a backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier. It is not considered a Pass.
- **Line of Scrimmage (“LOS”)** – an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
- **Line-To-Gain** – the line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
- **Live Ball** – the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regards to penalties, Live Ball Penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
- **Neutral Zone** - the designated one-yard area in front of the line of scrimmage (i.e., from the front nose of the football).
- **Offense** – the squad with possession of the ball.
- **Passer** – the offensive player that throws the ball who may or may not be the QB.
- **Rush Line** – an imaginary line running across the width of the field 7 yards (into the defensive side) from the Line of Scrimmage.
- **Rusher** – the defensive player assigned to rush the Quarterback to prevent him/her from passing by pulling his/her flags or blocking the pass.
- **Shovel Pass** – a legal pass attempted behind the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot put type manner. It can be received behind and beyond the line of scrimmage.
- **Touchback** – any fumble that lands in or beyond the end zone shall be a touchback and shall result in a change of possession to the team that did not fumble, with placement of the ball at the non-fumbling team’s own 5 yard line.
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** – rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language, including trash talking and taunting.

- **Whistle** – the sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for timeout, half time or the end of the game.

### **III. ELIGIBILITY**

1. A player's age must fall within the specified age-range as of September 1st of the current year. Age will be verified by a valid birth certificate.
2. All players must present a waiver that is signed by a legal guardian or parent.

### **IV. EQUIPMENT**

1. The League provides each player with flag belts and each team with two footballs.
2. Players may wear rubber or plastic cleats; no metal cleats are allowed.
3. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
4. Players must remove all watches and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous. Notwithstanding the foregoing, players are permitted to wear earrings provided that they tape over the entire earring for the entire game.
5. Official NFL FLAG jerseys must be worn during play.
6. Players' jerseys must be tucked into the pants if they would hang below the belt line.
7. No pants or shorts with pockets or belt loops are permitted.
8. Players on the field of play (i.e., not on the sidelines) must wear mouth guards at all times.

### **V. FIELD**

1. No Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No Run Zones (a 5 yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the offensive team's scoring end zone), teams may not run the ball in any fashion. All plays, including those that begin with a handoff, must be pass plays.
2. The boundary lines are out of bounds.
3. Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No Run Zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

### **VI. ROSTERS**

1. Home teams wear dark jerseys, visiting teams wear light jerseys.
2. Roster maximum is 10 players per team. The games are played with five (5) players on the field for each team. However, teams must field a minimum of four (4) players at all times.

## **VII. TIMING**

1. Games are played in two 20 minute halves on a continuous clock during each half separated by a five minute halftime. Other than when an injury occurs (as per Section V below) or the referees confer to discuss a ruling, the clock stops only for timeouts. However, during the final two minutes of each game, the clock will also stop when: (i) there is an incomplete pass, (ii) when a ball carrier runs out of bounds or (iii) when there is a change of possession.
2. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced. The offensive team does not have to wait for the defensive team to get ready, it is the responsibility of the defensive team to be ready to defend the play when the ball is snapped.
3. Each team has one 30-second time out per half and one 60-second time out per half.
4. In addition to the reasons listed in item 1 above, officials can stop the clock at their discretion at any time during the game.
5. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is off the field of play.
6. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, the game will be determined a tie. There is no overtime play unless the league specifically allows it for playoff games.

## **VIII. SCORING**

1. Touchdown: **6 points**
2. PAT (Point After Touchdown) – a team that scores a Touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a **1-point conversion** (from the 5-yard line) or a **2-point conversion** (from the 12-yard line).
  - a. A 1-point conversion is pass only (since the play is in the No Run Zone). A 2 point conversion can be either pass or run.
  - b. Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged time out.
  - c. Interceptions on conversion attempts cannot be returned.
  - d. Decision to go for 1 point or 2 points cannot be changed after a penalty has been assessed after the initial conversion attempt.

3. Safety: **2 points**

A Safety occurs in the following instances:

- a. When the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. This can occur when, in the end zone, the flag is pulled by a defensive player, or the flag falls out, or the ball carrier steps out of bounds or hits the ground with a knee, arm (at or above the elbow) or any part of the upper body.

- b. When there is an offensive penalty committed by a player in the end zone. An offensive penalty committed by a player outside the end zone while another offensive player is in his/her end zone with the ball during the play is not a safety.
- c. When the ball is fumbled in the end zone or out of the back or side of the end zone.

It is NOT a safety if the 7-second clock expires and the quarterback still has the ball (the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage).

## **IX. COACHES**

1. Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game. Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all time.
2. Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need for the first three regular season games. Coaches must move to the sidelines before the snap of the ball. Coaches may, of course, enter the field to address an injury or other emergency situation.
3. Coaches are expected to adhere to NFL FLAG philosophies and coaching guidelines and codes of conduct.
4. Coaches are also expected to follow the 78<sup>th</sup> Precinct Youth Council Code of Conduct and become certified in positive coaching.
5. Only three coaches per team are allowed on the sidelines. One coach shall be designated the head coach prior to the game. Only the designated head coach may interact with the referees during the game.
6. Parents may not to interact with referees for any reason. Any parent who refuses to abide by this rule after a warning will be asked to leave the field. If that parent refuses to leave the field, the team for which the parent's child plays will forfeit the game.

## **X. LIVE BALL / DEAD BALL**

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the "neutral zone" and line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. The referee will give each team a "warning" for its first neutral zone violation to allow their players to move back beyond the line. Thereafter a penalty will be assessed.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as the first foot lands in bounds before the second foot lands out of bounds.
4. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals, by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. However, the defense may call its own signals if it so chooses.
5. Substitutions may be made whenever there is a dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.

7. Play is ruled "dead" when:

- a. The ball hits the ground.
- b. The ball carrier's flag is pulled.
- c. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- d. A touchdown, PAT, or safety is scored.
- e. The ball carrier's knee or arm (from the elbow and up) hits the ground (if a ball carrier's hand touches the ground in an effort to balance the play will continue)
- f. The ball carrier's flag falls out.
- g. The receiver catches the ball while wearing only one flag.
- h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
- i. An dead ball penalty is called on the offensive team by the referee – either Offsides or Illegal Motion.
- j. An inadvertent whistle is performed.

8. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:

- a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle was blown.
- b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

9. Fumbles: There are no fumble recoveries. The play is dead when a ball is fumbled and the ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground with a loss of down. However, a lateral may be intercepted by the defensive team and returned as an interception. A shovel pass is a pass that if dropped is an incompleteness and if caught by the opposing team is an interception.

10. A team is allowed to use a time out to question an official's rule interpretation. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should agree on any controversial call. If the ruling is correct the team will be charged a time out.

## **XI. RUNNING**

1. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled. If one foot precedes the other, the forward foot marks the spot.

2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball beyond the line of scrimmage unless the ball has been released in any manner to another player first.

3. Direct handoffs, shovel passes, and laterals behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Offense may use multiple handoffs and laterals but **only** behind the line of scrimmage.
4. "No-Run Zones," located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield, are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run (i.e., no runs resulting from handoffs or laterals) in these zones (Reminder: Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No Run Zones in each drive - one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD). Shovel passes are permitted in No-Run Zones.
5. The player who takes the handoff or lateral can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
6. Once the ball has been handed off in front or behind the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
7. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping is considered flag guarding and is not permitted. (Note: By definition, running requires a person to leave his/her feet. To be considered illegal, the diving, leaping or jumping must be a directed movement to dive, leap, or jump.) Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
8. No blocking is allowed at any time; however, basketball-type screens are permitted provided that the screening player is not moving at the time of the screen and does not extend his hands or arms.
9. Once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage, the offensive players are prohibited from running with the ball carrier. There shall be no convoys (i.e. running with the ball carrier).
10. Flag Obstruction – All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered Flag Guarding.

## **XII. PASSING**

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed and can be received behind and beyond the LOS. Forward screen passes can be received behind the LOS as well.
3. The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the LOS. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule no longer is in effect.
  - a. If the quarterback is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the LOS and the down is consumed. There is no safety.
  - b. The referee closest to the LOS shall call out "1 Mississippi, 2 Mississippi, etc." to apprise the quarterback of how much time is left to release the pass, hand-off, or lateral the ball.

### **XIII. RECEIVING**

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line).
2. Only one player is allowed in "motion" (defined hereafter) at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage; no "motion" is permitted towards the line of scrimmage. To be in "motion" means movement that begins before the ball is snapped and continues as the ball is snapped. All "motion" must be sideways or backward.
  - a. Prior to the snap, one or more players may move or shift individually or simultaneously in any direction behind the line of scrimmage provided that if two or more players shift or any player shifts toward the line of scrimmage, the players must completely stop the movement or shift for at least one second before the ball is snapped.

(Examples: If two players start moving before the ball is snapped and they are still moving when the ball is snapped (regardless of direction), it is an Illegal Motion penalty. If one or more players are moving toward the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped, it is an Illegal Motion penalty. If two players move (in any direction behind the line) prior to the snap but then stop, it is a legal shift and not a penalty. If one player is moving sideways or backwards and the ball is snapped, it is legal motion and not a penalty.)

3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as the first foot lands in bounds before the second foot lands out of bounds.
4. A player cannot run out of bounds and then re-enter the field of play and make a reception.
5. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
6. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the spot that the flag is pulled from the player intercepting the ball.
7. Interceptions are returnable, but not on conversions after touchdowns.

### **XIV. RUSHING THE PASSER**

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a Rush Line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.

a. A legal rush is:

- i. Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
- ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been released in any manner by the quarterback.
- iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early, he may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback, provided that he resets before the ball is snapped. If he is unable to reset prior to the snap, he cannot rush on that play (unless the ball is released in any manner). It is an Illegal Rush (5 yards from LOS and first down).
- iv. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage, the rusher may legally rush the quarterback.

b. A penalty may be called if:

- i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – Illegal Rush (5 yards from LOS and automatic first down).
- ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Defensive Offsides (5 yards from LOS and automatic first down).
- iii. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line, crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed – Illegal Rush (5 yards from LOS and automatic first down).

c. Special circumstances:

- i. Although teams are not required to rush the quarterback, the seven second clock and 7-second rule remain in effect.
- ii. If rusher leaves the 7-yard line before the snap, that rusher may immediately drop back to act as a defender and not incur an offside penalty.

4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass. However, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Any such contact with the quarterback shall be a "Roughing the Passer" penalty even if the pass is tipped or blocked.

5. On pass plays, no offensive player is permitted to run and stop in front of the defense's oncoming rusher to impede the rush to the quarterback. If the referee observes a violation of this rule, he will give a warning to the offense and the next violation of this rule by that team will result in an Impeding the Rusher penalty which is 10 yards from the LOS and loss of down. If the ball is lateralled or handed off, this rule shall not apply.

6. Blocking the pass and then striking the passer will result in a Roughing the Passer penalty.

7. A Sack occurs if the quarterback's flag(s) are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback's feet are when the flag is pulled.
8. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

## **XV. FLAG PULLING**

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle or hold the ball carrier when pulling flags.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time (Stripping penalty).
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the play ends: (i) upon possession of the ball by that player if the flag fell off prior to possession of the ball, or (ii) when the flag falls off while that player is in possession of the ball.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball (Illegal Flag Pull penalty).
6. Flag Guarding is a penalty that is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping of head, hand, arm or shoulder, or intentionally covering flags with the football or jersey, or jumping, leaping or diving to avoid having the flag pulled by a defender.

## **XVI. FORMATIONS**

1. An offensive team must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the Center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
  - a. One player at a time may go in "motion" (as defined in section XIII (2)) one yard behind and parallel to, or moving away from, the line of scrimmage.
  - b. No "motion" is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.
2. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the one player in motion.
3. The center must snap the ball from the ground with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands. Once the center lifts the ball from the ground it must be snapped. If the center snaps the ball from the air, he/she shall be given a warning and the down will be replayed. If it happens again, that team will be assessed an Illegal Motion penalty. If the center double clutches when snapping the ball, it will be ruled Illegal Motion, and a penalty shall be assessed with no prior warning.

## **XVII. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT**

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals! FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.
2. Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game. No taunting or trash talking.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent or official.
4. Ball carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position. Failure to make an effort to avoid defenders shall constitute a Charging penalty.
5. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship:
  - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
  - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
  - c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly:
  - a. Keep younger kids and equipment (such as coolers, chairs and tents) away from the sidelines.
  - b. Stay away from the end zone area and not on the field of play.

## **XVIII. PENALTIES**

### **A. General:**

1. The referees will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. If a penalty is designated a "Spot Foul," the loss of yardage is marked off from the spot on the field where the penalty occurred. Otherwise the loss of yardage is marked off from the LOS.
4. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. No one can challenge or argue judgment calls.
5. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.

6. Penalties can be declined.

7. Unless otherwise indicated above, penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

8. Penalties that occur after a play is over (i.e. taunting or other unsportsmanlike conduct) will not invalidate the play. The penalty is assessed on the next play. If an offensive penalty occurs after a touchdown, the penalty shall be assessed, at the defensive team’s option, either on the offensive teams’ conversion or on the defensive team’s next possession by starting at their 20 yard line. If a defensive penalty occurs after a touchdown, the offense has the option of taking the penalty on the conversion (half the distance to the goal line) or on the other team’s next possession by placing the ball half the distance to the goal.

9. Illegal Motion and Delay of Game on the offense results in a dead ball. They are the only penalties that result in an immediate stoppage of play. Defensive Offside, Offensive Offside or an Illegal Rush does not result in a stoppage of play.

10. If there are penalties on both teams during the same play, they are offset and the down is replayed from the original line of scrimmage.

**B. Defensive Penalties**

1. **Offsides** (Crossing LOS before snap)..... 5 yards from LOS & automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down

2. **Illegal Contact** (Holding, blocking, etc)..... 5 yards from LOS & automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down

3. **Illegal Flag Pull** (Before receiver has ball)..... 5 yards from LOS & automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down

4. **Illegal Rush** (Crossing 7 yard line before snap)..... 5 yards from LOS & automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down

5. **Pass Interference** (Defensive)..... Spot Foul & automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down

6. **Roughing the Passer**..... 10 yards from LOS & automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down

7. **Stripping**..... Spot Foul, 5 yards & automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down

8. **Tackling a Player during Ordinary Play**..... Spot Foul, 10 yards & automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down  
*(Any player guilty of intentionally tackling will receive a warning and any further incidents of intentional tackling will result in an automatic ejection.)*

9. **Tackling a Player with a Clear Path to the End Zone** ..... Automatic Touchdown & 2 pt conversion

*(If a defensive player intentionally tackles or holds an offensive player who, in the judgment of the referee, otherwise had a clear path to the end zone, the offensive team will be awarded a touchdown and successful 2 point conversion.)*

10. **Taunting (Defensive)**..... 10 yards from LOS & automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down

11. **Unnecessary Roughness (Defensive)** ..... Spot Foul, 10 yards & automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down

C. Offensive Penalties

1. **Charging**..... Spot Foul, 10 yards & loss of down
2. **Delay of Game** ..... 5 yards from the LOS (no loss of down)  
**(Results in immediate stoppage of play)**
3. **Flag Guarding**..... Spot Foul, 10 yards & loss of down
4. **Illegal Motion** ..... 5 yards from the LOS (no loss of down)  
**(Results in immediate stoppage of play)**
5. **Illegal Forward Pass** (Throwing a pass  
beyond the LOS) ..... 5 yards from the LOS & loss of down
6. **Illegal Screening, Blocking or Running with  
the Ball Carrier** (i.e. "convoying")..... Spot Foul, 5 yards & loss of down
7. **Impeding the Rusher** .....10 yards from the LOS & loss of down
8. **Offsides (Offensive)** ..... 5 yards from the LOS (no loss of down)  
**(Results in immediate stoppage of play)**
9. **Pass Interference (Offensive)** (Illegal pick  
play, pushing off/away defender) ..... 5 yards from the LOS & loss of down
10. **Taunting (Offensive)**.....10 yards from the LOS & loss of down  
  
*(If taunting occurs after scoring a touchdown, the defensive team may choose to either (i) penalize the offensive team 10 yards from the yard line of PAT attempt after touchdown or (ii) start its next offensive drive from the 15 yard line instead of the 5 yard line. (Note - one warning to the player and team before ejection))*
11. **Unnecessary Roughness (Offensive)** ..... Spot Foul, 10 yards & loss of down