Flag Football Rules

We know this is an adult social sports league. However, no alcohol is permitted on Johnson City parks, school, and church grounds. Help us in protecting access to these facilities by waiting until you get to the sponsor bar after the game.

Behavior

Each player is required to display good sportsmanship and respect to the Game Officials, league staff and other players at all times. Rude/aggressive/vulgar language, fighting, or other negative behavior will result in ejection from the game or by being banned from the league and/or Tri-Cities Social Sports (TCSS) altogether based on the severity of the incident. If information needs to relayed to the referee, that should be via the captian. A yellow/red card system will be used to address unsportsmanlike issues. Two yellow cards in the same game automatically result in a red card and ejection from the game. Egregious behavior can result in issuance of a red card directly and ejection from the game. Two red cards in a season result in ineligibility to play for the remainder of the season and playoff.

Equipment/Jerseys

Games will be played with a TCSS issued ball.

Players must tuck in their shirts during play; no article of clothing may cover any part of the flag belt.

Steel cleats are prohibited.

Players must wear the League provided flag belts and flags. Minimum of 3 flags must be attached. One on center of back and one in line with each leg.

Players must wear their League-Provided T-Shirts of the appropriate color for their team (exception being substitute players).

Roster

Team rosters shall include a minimum of 12 players, including at least 4 of each gender.

Teams may use a substitute player as long as they are registered as a substitute or are a registered player in the current league.

The maximum number of players on the field is 7, including at least 3 of each gender.

If a team does not have 7 players and at least 3 players of each gender, they may start with as few as 4 players (if all 4 players are guys, they will lose a down every third play).

When a team has fewer than the required number of players of a specified gender available, players of one gender may not be substituted for members of another gender. For example, if a team has 7 total players available at game time, but only 2 are female, the team must play short with 6 players and so on.

One team having less than 7 players on the field does not obligate the opposing team to reduce their players on field.

Players may be substituted for each other at any time between plays, provided the on-field gender requirement is met at all times.

Coin Toss/Game Start

A coin toss or a game of 'Rock, Paper, Scissors' will be used to determine first possession and side of field.

The winner of the toss shall choose between possession first OR which side of the field that team wants to start on. The loser gets the option the coin toss winner did not select.

Team to start with possession will alternate at half time and teams shall switch sides of the field between each half.

Play will begin at the 5-yard line of the team with possession.

Officials

Each game shall be officiated by a League-assigned referee. Referees are responsible for:

-Keeping game time.

-Enforcing all game rules.

-Calling points, errors, and faults.

-Recording the game score.

Field

The football field shall measure approximately 60 yards long and 40 yards wide, or as close to those measurements as the game field will allow, with cones marking each 20-yard line and 5-yard line on both sides of the field.

End zones shall extend an additional ten yards past the goal line. The dimensions may vary depending on the size and dimensions of the field.

Play will begin at the 5-yard line of the team with possession.

Game Clock

Each game consists of two 20-minute halves, with a 5-minute halftime.

Each team is allowed one one-minute time out per half. Unused timeouts in the first half do not carry over into the second half.

The game clock shall be a running clock, except in these cases:

-A team uses one of their 1-minute timeouts

-The difference in the score is 14 points or less and it is the last two minutes of the second half. In this case, the clock shall stop in the event of an incomplete pass, a team scores, if the ball carrier goes out of bounds, a change of possession, or a penalty. The clock shall be resumed upon the snap at the start of the next play. The clock shall not be stopped in the first half except in the case of a timeout, regardless of the score.

The extra point conversation attempt shall be permitted after a touchdown regardless of the time on clock.

There will be no overtime in Regular Season Games.

Line of Scrimmage

The referee shall mark the line of scrimmage and the offensive team shall place the ball in the middle of the field after the end of each play.

The offensive team may only have one player in the backfield/in motion other than the quarterback. All others must be set on the line of scrimmage. Players in motion are not considered set.

Once the center has placed his or her hands on the ball no player may enter the neutral zone until the snap occurs.

The referee shall blow his or her whistle to signify the beginning of each drive.

Four second count before defense can cross the line of scrimmage and rush the quarterback.

The quarterback may not run for positive yards unless rushed after the four-second count. The Center may not go out for a pass or beyond the line of scrimmage until after the four-second count but can be thrown to at which point they can run up field with the ball.

Passing

The offense has a seven second clock to advance the ball past the line of scrimmage.

Any underhand pass or pitch must be done behind the line of scrimmage and in a lateral or backwards direction. This does not stop the 7 second clock.

A pass is completed when the ball is caught by any player of the passing team who has at least one foot in-bounds.

All forward passes must be overhand.

An eligible receiver becomes ineligible if he leaves the field during the play and remains ineligible until the ball is touched by an eligible receiver or any defensive player. However, if an eligible receiver is forced out-of-bounds he shall be considered eligible as soon as he returns inbound.

If an ineligible receiver catches the ball the pass shall be considered incomplete.

Downs

The offensive team will have four downs to achieve a first down.

A first down is achieved by crossing either that 20 yard lines or the 40 yard line (midpoint of the field).

Gender Rule

Female players must participate in a play at least once every three downs as either the quarterback, ball carrier or receiver. The “gender count” shall be the number of successive downs made involving males.

If the gender count is 2, i.e. if the offensive team has not played a female during the first two downs, the referee shall announce a “gender play,” and the offensive team must play a female in one or more of the following ways:

-As quarterback; passes the ball to a receiver beyond the line of scrimmage.

-As ball carrier; carries the ball across the line of scrimmage.

-As receiver; receives or is intended to receive a pass from beyond the line of scrimmage.

-Ball must be in a reasonably catchable vicinity of the female (referee’s discretion)

-If an offensive penalty is committed during a closed play, the closed play is still in effect.

If there are no players of the required gender available, the offensive team will lose a down.

If a player of the required gender is not utilized as described in these rules during an announced gender play, any passes shall be considered incomplete, i.e. the offensive team will lose a down.

Punting

The offensive team may punt on any down.

All punts must be kicked and declared to the opposing team and to game officials.

Fake punts are not permitted.

Punts may not be blocked by the receiving team. However, the punter has a 4 Second Count before the play is dead and the line of scrimmage for the opposing team is where the punter was standing.

All members of the punting team must remain behind the line of scrimmage until the ball is punted.

The receiving team may have a maximum of two players to receive the punt. All other players from the receiving team must be on the line of scrimmage until the ball is punted.

The receiving team may either call for a fair catch or may catch and advance the ball.

Ball is dead on contact with the ground.

Ball that lands out of bounds will be spotted at the point of exit.

Ball will be placed at the 5 yard line if it lands in or beyond or inside the end zone.

Turnovers and Stoppage of Play

Possession will change from one team to the other when:

-A team scores. Play will start again at the 5 yard line.

-Four downs are counted without obtaining a first down. Play will start at the previous line of scrimmage.

-A forward pass is intercepted (play does not stop).

On Change of Possessions, the official will set the ball and give 10 seconds for teams to substitute and get off the field. If there is less than 1 minute, in either half, it will be untimed and not count towards the game clock.

Play will stop when:

-The ball carrier cannot leave their feel to advance the ball. The play is dead at the spot. Hurdling a player is not allowed and will automatically result in a yellow card. The play is dead at that spot.

-When ball carrier's belt is removed by an opposing player or falls off.

-Receiver catches the ball while not having belt attached.

-The ball carrier leaves the field of play.

-A team scores a touchdown or extra point.

-The ball touches the ground because of a fumble or incomplete pass.

-Any part of the ball carrier's body, including hands, other than his or her feet touch the ground.

-A defensive player intercepts an extra point pass attempt.

-If a referee inadvertently blows his whistle and the offensive team has gained positive yards, the team has the option of taking the result of the play or replaying the down.

Penalties

All penalties may be declined by the opposing team should the penalty be to their detriment.

All penalties will be imposed at the line of scrimmage (pre-snap or post-completion). Should the full imposition of the penalty carry the line into an end zone, the ball will be spotted at the one-yard line.

The following shall incur a ten-yard penalty:

Any player:

-Running into an opponent, including using a "stiff-arm.", without having made a reasonable effort to avoid contact.

-Reckless play. Players must make every effort to avoid contact.

-Blocking. Players may not use their hands, elbows, or any other part of their body to block opponents.

-Flag guarding. Players may not intentionally block access to their belt, including those worn by teammates.

-Stripping the ball from the ball carrier.

-Intentionally removing an opponent's belt who has not yet taken possession of the ball.

-Intentional foul.

-Unsportsmanlike conduct/Personal Foul. (Yellow/Red card). Unsportsmanlike conduct or a Personal foul can result in a yellow card. Two yellow cards equal a red card. A red card means ejection from the game. If a player is ejected(Red card) twice in one season, they will be ineligible the rest of season and tournament. Note that an egregious/hard foul can be an automatic red card without needing a yellow card (ref's discretion).

Defense:

-Holding. Defenders may not touch the receiver prior to catching the ball.

-Face guarding. Players may not use their hands to block the sight of the receiver.

-Pass interference. Defender can not make contact with the reciever unless they have taken possession of the ball.

Egregious contact will be a spot foul or first down whichever on is greater. Inside the final first down marker the ball will be placed at the 1-yard line and a new set of downs.

Offense:

-Offensive pass interference. the offensive player cannot engage in any act to gain an unfair advantage. No player shall obstruct another player from obtaining a position from which to go to and catch the ball, given that neither shall any player be obligated to give up such a position once gained.

The following shall incur a five-yard penalty:

Defense:

-Offsides. A defensive player is offsides when any part of his body crosses the line of scrimmage before the four-second count is called.

-Encroachment. A defensive player may not enter the neutral zone prior to the snap.

Offense:

Offsides. An offensive player is offsides when any part of his body crosses the line of scrimmage before the snap.

-Delay of game. The offensive team has 30 seconds from the referee's placing the ball to the snap the ball.

-Illegal participation. Teams may not have more than 7 players on the field, including at least 3 of each gender, or in accordance to the on-field rules per the "Team" section of these rules.

-Illegal cadence. The player calling the cadence must receive the snap.

-False start. Teams are only allowed to have two players in the backfield, including the quarterback. All other players must be at the line of scrimmage, not lined up in the neutral zone.

-Illegal motion. No player is permitted to move forward toward the goal line until the snap.

-Illegal forward pass. The ball may be passed forward only once and only from behind the line of scrimmage. A forward pass must cross the line of scrimmage.

-Intentional grounding. A passer may not throw the ball without a realistic chance of completion, with the exception that a passer may ground the ball to stop the clock with less than two minutes to play in the game. Also penalized as a loss of down.

Scoring

A player shall score when and only the player's flags has crossed the plain of the goal line. The ball crossing the goal line is insufficient for a score.

A touchdown shall count for 9 points when scored by a female player, or by a male player who catches a forward pass (beyond the line of scrimmage) from a female quarterback.

All other touchdowns shall count for 6 points.

A ten-yard conversion shall count for 1 point.

A twenty-yard conversion shall count for 2 points.

A "safety" counts for 2 points.

Mercy Rule

A game shall be immediately called whenever a team achieves a 50-point or more advantage.

Forfeits

Teams must be ready to play and meet game start requirements at the posted game time. Maximum of five additional minutes, from the posted game time can be requested by team captain during the coin toss. Any team not ready to play at this time shall forfeit, and the opposing team shall take a default win. (25-0)

If neither team is ready to play, both teams shall forfeit.

Any team found to be playing with a player not registered with the League or team for the current season or substitute list shall forfeit that game.

Tournament

Ties are not permitted in playoff games. If a playoff game ends in a tie, it shall be broken using the following method: The winner of a coin flip will have the option of starting on offense or defense. The ball will be put into play at the 20-yard line. Each team will have 4 downs to advance the ball past the goal line. If a team does not score by four downs, their total yardage is counted. If a team loses possession of the ball, the opposing team takes over on offense and the ball will be placed again on the 20-yard line; all the opposing team will have to do is advance the ball past the yardage mark where the team who had the ball first ended their possession. If there is an interception that results in a touchdown, that team will win. If the ball is intercepted and not returned for a touchdown, the opposing team will just have to advance the ball past the line of scrimmage from where the ball was thrown from. A team that loses possession does not regain their downs. In the playoff tiebreaker, when a team scores there will not be 1 or 2 point conversions. If both teams score, the team that scored in the fewer amount of plays wins. If both teams scored in the same amount of plays, the tiebreaker will be repeated including a new coin flip.

In lieu of stated rules stated above, NFHS governing rules will be followed.

Rules Quick Reference Cards

Abbreviation Key: LD (Loss of Down), RD (Replay Down)

10 Yard Penalties

Enforced from the line of Scrimmage	Either Pre snap or New line	Footnote

General (Offense or Defense)	
Intentional Fouls (LD or RD)	Warning or Yellow Card must be issued
Unsportsmanlike conduct (LD or First down awarded)	Yellow or Red Card must be issued
Egregious Contact (LD or First down awarded)	10 Yards and loss of Down (Offense) spot foul or first down whichever on is greater. Inside the final first down marker the ball will be placed at the 1-yard line and a new set of downs. (Defense)
Blocking (RD)	An opponent
Pass Interference (Spot Foul LD or RD)	Offensive Pass Interference is loss of down in addition
Holding (RD)	
Offense only	
Flag Blocking (Spot Foul RD)	
Defense only	
Stripping the Ball (Spot Foul)	
Stripping of the Belt without possession of the ball (RD)	
Face Guarding (RD)	

5 Yard Penalties	
Enforced from the line of Scrimmage Either Pre snap or New line	Footnote

General (Offense or Defense)	
Off side (RD)	Offense before the snap Defense before the 4 Seconds after the snap
Delay of Game (RD)	
Illegal Participation (LD or RD)	
Offense only	
Illegal Cadence (RD)	
False Start (RD)	
Illegal Motion (RD)	Only 2 Players are allowed in the Back Field
Illegal Forward Pass (LD)	
Intentional Grounding (LD)	
Defense only	
Encroachment	