

# LANCASTER FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION, INC.®

## LFA®

### JUNIOR FLAG FOOTBALL DIVISION

#### *JUNIOR FLAG FOOTBALL RULES AND REGULATIONS*

1. Each game shall consist of two (2) twenty-five (25) minute halves using a running clock. Halftime will consist of three (3) minutes.
2. Each team is allowed two (2) timeouts per half. A timeout consists of thirty (30) seconds.
3. Each team shall consist of a maximum of fourteen (14) players with seven (7) field players on offense, defense, and special teams. All players on offense are eligible receivers. There must be at least one lineman (snapper) for each offensive play. **At the snap, there must be at least one defensive lineman within the "imaginary tackle box (TGCGT) and the distance should not exceed two (2) yards laterally from either side of the center/snapper and no more than one (1) yard beyond the line of scrimmage.** Each team can substitute/rotate players as necessary.
4. If a team cannot field a complete team for a particular game, i.e., seven (7) players, then that team can either: play with less than seven (7) players but no less than five (5) players or forfeit the game. Under no circumstances shall an opposing team with a full complement of players be forced to play with less than seven (7) players in order to accommodate a team with less than a full complement.
5. The defense can rush the passer only after a "five (5) second" count. The defense can immediately rush on all running plays. Conversely, the quarterback cannot run the ball/cross the line of scrimmage until after the five second count. The count will be announced by the referee, or alternatively, by an LFA® designee.

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6. A snap to anyone other than the quarterback is allowed and that player can immediately run the ball without waiting for the five (5) second count (i.e., direct snap to a running back). The defense can also rush without waiting for the five (5) second count.
7. The game will begin with the ball being placed on the receiving team's 20 yard line.
8. Thirty-five (35) seconds shall be the maximum time that shall elapse from the point when the official signals "ready to play" and the ensuing offensive snap. **This rule will be strictly enforced. Exceeding the time limit shall result in a five (5) yard penalty. The game clock shall be stopped when enforcing the delay of game penalty.**
9. Each team has four (4) downs to move the ball. If that team reaches the line to gain ("1<sup>st</sup> down spot") then a new series of four downs will be awarded. The 1<sup>st</sup> down spot will be clearly marked on the field. **In order to receive a new set of downs, teams must have initial possession on their own side of the field.**
10. A play is over whenever the flag is removed from the ball carrier. A player is not down until the flag has been removed. In addition, one foot must be in bounds in order for a pass completion to occur. **If a player's flag falls off without any contact by the defending player (i.e., equipment malfunction), the play continues until that player is tagged (one-hand touch) by the defense.**

All coaches and players have a responsibility to ensure that the **flag belts are securely and properly attached and all game shirts are fully tucked in**. Any improperly attached flag belt worn by a field player and/or un-tucked game shirt will result in a **five (5) yard penalty** and is considered to be a **"dead ball" foul**.

11. On 4<sup>th</sup> down, the offense may opt to run a play or they can choose to spot the ball at mid-field. **Punting the ball is not an option for this age group. The coach must notify the official of his choice.**

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12. Each touchdown is worth six (6) points.
13. A team may convert for an extra point using a run or a pass play. The ball is spotted at the three yard line. A run play will result in one (1) extra point; a pass play will result in two (2) points. There is no kicking for this division.
14. All incomplete passes are returned to the line of scrimmage and a down is charged.
15. A safety is worth two (2) points and the team that scored the safety will receive the ball on the next play on the LFA-designated yard line.
16. All fumbles are dead balls. If the fumble occurs past the line of scrimmage, then the offense retains possession and will be charged with a down. The ball will be spotted at the point of the fumble. **If the fumble occurs behind the line of scrimmage, then the ball will be spotted at the point of the fumble and the offense will be charged with a down.**
- A backwards pass that is incomplete is a fumble and the result is that the ball will be spotted at the point of the fumble.**
17. The ball may be advanced on an interception.
18. Only one forward pass is allowed per down. Laterals and pitches behind the line of scrimmage are always allowed.
19. An unsuccessful snap to whoever receives the ball is a dead ball and the offense shall be charged with a down. The ball will be re-spotted at the prior line of scrimmage. **Exception: IF THE FUMBLED SNAP IS IN THE END ZONE THEN IT IS A SAFETY.**

## LFA® JUNIOR FLAG FOOTBALL RULES AND REGULATIONS 4

20. Any attempt to stop the forward progress of a ball carrier without a reasonable good faith attempt at grabbing that player's flag will carry a 10 yard penalty (**illegal use of hands, enforced as a spot foul**) and any other penalty that is deemed appropriate by the referee. An example of this includes a defender pushing an offensive player out-of-bounds without an attempt to first grabbing the offensive player's flag belt.

**Repeated violations will result in an unsportsmanlike penalty.**

21. **No full contact blocking is allowed.** Permitted blocking is limited to the blocker's **hands not extending outwards** towards the defender in order to avoid and/or minimize potential injuries to players. "Pick" blocking is not permitted.

**Offensive holding is subject to a five-yard penalty (spot foul). This rule will be reinforced prior to the game's coin toss.**

22. Beginning with the first game, all team rosters will be frozen. No additional players may be added to the team roster.

23. At the conclusion of each game or shortly thereafter, a "Game Certification" form will be completed by a LFA® representative.

24. **Diving by a ball carrier** is not permitted and will result in a **five (5) yard penalty**. Additionally, officials have the discretion to determine whether or not a player dove in order to avoid imminent bodily harm or to gain an advantage.

A penalty shall be assessed only when a player dove for gaining an advantage and to not to avoid imminent bodily harm (**spot foul**).

If a player dives into the end zone and the diving was for gaining an advantage, then the score will be waived off and the penalty enforced.

25. Spinning by the ball carrier is not permitted.

This infraction shall result in a **five (5) yard penalty (spot foul)**.

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26. On all plays where the offense has possession and that play results in a score in conjunction with a penalty committed by the offense and the defense accepts the penalty, the ball will be spotted at the previous spot. The down may or may not be replayed dependent upon the nature of the penalty.
27. All coaches must be off the field by the time the ball is snapped and must remain on their side of the mid-field line.

If the ball has been snapped (live ball) and coaches have not yet left the field of play, then a **five (5) yard penalty** shall be assessed. Coaches may not re-enter the field until the down has been completed (**previous spot enforcement**).

The officials will determine whether or not a good faith effort has been made by the coach exiting the field

28. All players must wear shorts, whose colors **shall not** include red, blue, or yellow or any other colors similar to red, blue or yellow. This rule is in place to ensure that the flag colors are clear and are not camouflaged by wearing similarly colored shorts.

The field official will determine whether or not a player's shorts are in violation of this rule.

**Players wearing shorts that are non-conforming shall not be allowed to participate in the game.**

29. In the interest of good sportsmanship, a "mercy rule" shall be in effect as follows: **if the winning team is ahead by 18 points or greater they will continue to play with a full complement of seven (7) players but the team that is behind shall receive four (4) additional downs upon reaching the mid-field line.**

**The official's call on the field is final.**

**POINT SCORING SYSTEM**

Since field time is limited to exactly one hour, there shall be no play beyond the scheduled two halves.

**The game shall be divided into halves. The team scoring the most points in a half (i.e., winning the half) will be awarded two (2) points. The losing team receives zero (0) points. If a half ends in a tie, then both teams each shall receive one (1) point.**

If a team wins both halves then that team will be awarded four (4) points.

**Final regular season standings shall be determined as follows:**

1. The team with the most points is the regular season winner.
2. If two or more teams have the same points as described in 1 above, then the tie-breaker is based upon head-to-head competition.
3. If two or more teams have the same total points, and even in the head-to-head competition, then the tie-breaker is based upon the total **“POINTS ALLOWED”** (as appearing in the **LFA® OFFICIAL STANDINGS**) will determine the tie breaker.
4. If two or more teams have the same number of points, and even in head-to-head competition and even in **“POINTS ALLOWED”**, then the won-loss record for common opponents shall determine the winner.
5. If after exhausting the above four tie-breaking rules, a “best of two out of three” coin flips shall decide the first place winner. The LFA® Director shall decide which team “calls first.”

**Playoff and Championship Tie Breaking Rules**

The top four (4) teams shall advance to the playoffs with the 1<sup>st</sup> seed hosting the 4<sup>th</sup> seed, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> seed hosting the 3<sup>rd</sup> seed.

If a playoff game ends in a tie score, then the following shall apply: each team will have one offensive possession consisting of four (4) downs with the ball spotted at the LFA-designated yard line. The team that scores (including “PATs”) shall then play defense and try to stop the opposing team from scoring. The team with the most points after each having one offensive possession shall be the winner. If a tie exists after the first offensive possession then the process is repeated until there emerges a winner. Each team shall have one (1) time-out per possession.

**The ball will be spotted at the LFA-designated mark.**

Initial ball possession during this overtime process is determined by a coin flip. The “visiting” team shall call first, **and then additional overtime periods will be determined by use of alternating possessions.**

**RULE VIOLATIONS AND PENALTIES**

A rule violation **may** result in a five (5) yard, 10 yard, or 15 yard penalty. **The referee has the discretion to penalize a team five (5) yards, 10 yards, 15 yards, AND loss of down when deemed necessary** (examples include: unsportsmanlike conduct, intentional fouls, taunting, and other behavior that the official judges to be worthy of this penalty). See below for specific examples of rule infractions.

**PROHIBITIVE ACTIONS**

**ENFORCEMENT**

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| • Holding by the offense  | spot foul     |
| • Holding by the defense  | spot foul     |
| • Spinning, diving, or similar activities                       | spot foul     |
| • Off-sides   | previous spot |
| • Delay of game   | previous spot |
| • Flag belt improperly attached                                 | previous spot |
| • Failure to wear a mouthpiece                                  | previous spot |
| • Illegal substitution  | previous spot |
| • Illegal procedure   | previous spot |
| • Coach (es) on the field of play during a live ball            | previous spot |
| • Any and all other actions as determined by the PIAA rule book |               |

**The above-listed prohibitive actions are subject to a five-yard penalty. This list is not meant to be all-exhaustive, but rather, to serve as examples of typical rules violations.**

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- Illegal forward pass.  
**10 yard penalty AND loss of down** previous spot

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- “Chop-blocks”, stiff arming, batting away the opponent’s hands to prevent the flag to be removed from the player/preventing a defender from removing an offensive player’s flag (“flag guarding”).
  - Illegal blocking/illegal use of hands.
  - Any and all other actions as determined by the PIAA rule book.

**The above-listed prohibitive actions are subject to a 10 yard penalty and are enforced as spot fouls.**

Taunting/trash-talking and other similar acts and activities (including excessive/unreasonable end zone celebrations) or a similar penalty assessed against the offense after any score will be enforced by placing the ball at the ten (10) yard line for purposes of the conversion attempt or have the penalty enforced on the ensuing kick-off (ball placed five (5) yards behind the normal kick-off spot).

The offended team has the choice.

**LIVE BALL PLAY**

- Unruly, disruptive player behavior (taunting/trash talking).
- Unruly, disruptive coach behavior (see directly above).
- All other actions that are intended to cause or may cause harm to a player (such as “clothes-lining” a player, flagrant fouls, intentional tackling, etc...) as determined by the referee.
- **Point of emphasis:** A player for example, who initiates an illegal block that, in the judgment of the game officials, may cause danger of bodily harm or a risk of bodily harm to another player may be **ejected from the game and possibly then serve a one (1) game suspension.** The game officials will determine the level of severity warranting an ejection but the LFA Director will determine the game suspension, if any, after conferring with the game officials.

The above-listed prohibitive actions are subject to a **five-yard (5) penalty AND a loss of down AND ejection from the game.**

- |                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Tackling                    | enforced as <b>spot foul</b>       |
| • Offensive pass interference | enforced as <b>spot foul</b>       |
| • Defensive pass interference | enforced as <b>spot foul</b>       |
| • Kick catching interference  | enforced as <b>spot foul</b>       |
| • Roughing the passer         | enforced from <b>previous spot</b> |
| • Roughing the kicker         | enforced from <b>previous spot</b> |

The above-listed prohibitive actions are subject to a **15-yard penalty but may carry enhanced penalties including game ejection dependent upon the game officials’ judgment.**

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### DEAD BALL FOULS

- Unsportsmanlike conduct; one (1) warning will be issued to the head coach prior to assessing the penalty. All subsequent unsportsmanlike fouls will cause the head coach to be ejected from the game. If the penalty is assessed against a player(s) then there is no warning; the penalty will be assessed and the player(s) may be ejected from the game based upon the official's discretion.

**Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties are 15 yards.**

- **The game officials have the discretion to impose whatever penalty (ies) deemed appropriate.**

**Ejection and/or suspension from the game will not entitle any player to receive a monetary or like-kind refund for that game or for the balance of the season. It is expected that all coaches and players will act with civility and respect to all parties (players, coaches, officials, and spectators). **The PIAA Sportsmanship message will be read before the start of each game.****

**If the ejection occurs within the last five (5) minutes of the game then that individual (coach or player(s)) will be disqualified to coach or play in the next game. This includes an ejection during the playoff games resulting in disqualification in the championship game, if applicable.**

**The official's call on the field is final.** However, if it is determined that the ruling on the field is based upon an incorrect application or interpretation of the rules then the LFA® Director, Joseph J. Galante, or his designee shall clarify the rule dispute with the referee(s) and a revised call if any, **will be made by the official.**

These rules shall be reviewed periodically by the LFA® Director to ensure that they adequately reflect and address game day situations.

In the absence of specific language, Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association ("PIAA") and National Federation of State High School Associations ("NFHS") Football Rules shall apply.

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