**2016 AV Flag Football Rules**

**I. GRADE-LEVEL-SPECIFIC RULES (Grade level 3-6)**

1. Blitzing is allowed, and the rush line is 10 yards from the line of scrimmage.
2. All players who rush the passer must be behind the Rush Line 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.
3. Once the ball is handed off, the rush line rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may go across the line of scrimmage.
4. A special marker, or the referee, will designate the Rush Line from the line of scrimmage.
5. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
6. A legal rush is:
	1. Any rush from behind the rush line.
	2. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
	3. If a rusher leaves the rush line early, they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback. If the defender starts his rush early, it is not a penalty if he does not actually cross the line of scrimmage.
	4. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the quarterback.
7. A penalty may be called if:
8. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down).
9. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Offsides (5 yards LOS and first down).
10. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down).
11. Any defensive player lines up in the neutral zone (1 yard from the line of scrimmage) – Offsides (5 yards LOS and first down).
12. Special circumstances:
13. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback as the pass clock is still in effect.
14. If rusher leaves the rush line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as a defender with no offside penalty enforced.
15. Players rushing the Quarterback may attempt to block a pass. However, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way.
16. Blocking the pass and then striking the passer will result in a 10-yard penalty.
17. A Sack occurs if the QB’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the QB’s feet are when the flag is pulled.
18. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.

**II. Game**

1. Game length is 40 minutes – four 10-minute quarters.
2. Game play is 5 on 5
3. Teams must field a minimum of four (4) players at all times
4. 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.
5. The winner of the coin toss gets to choose if they want to play offense or defense first. The loser of the coin toss chooses the end zone it would prefer to defend. Teams may not choose to defer to second half. Each team starts one half on offense.
6. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
7. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the other team takes over on its 5-yard line (unless there is an interception).
8. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 5-yard line.
9. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense’s 5-yard line.
10. Teams change sides after each quarter. Even if a TD was scored on the last play of the first or third quarter, teams would change ends and player groupings prior to the conversion attempt (but not at the end of the second or fourth quarter).
11. After halftime, possession changes to the team that started the first half on defense.

**III. Equipment**

1. MOUTHGUARDS ARE MANDATORY. Players will not be allowed to play **or practice** without a mouth guard. No exceptions!!
2. The League provides each player with flags and jerseys.
3. The League will provide game balls each week. Teams CANNOT use their own ball.
4. Players must wear shoes. Molded rubber cleats are allowed and strongly encouraged. Metal cleats are not allowed.
5. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
6. Players must remove all jewelry including but not limited to watches, earrings, bracelets, and necklaces.
7. Official jerseys must be worn during play. Two flags (one on each side) are worn by each player.
8. Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets must be taped.
9. Players may NOT wear pants or shorts that are orange or have any orange on them.

**IV. Field**

1. The field size is 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones and a midfield line-to-gain. No Running Zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards.
2. No Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No Run Zone teams may not run the ball in any fashion. Screen passes are NOT allowed in the No Run Zones. All plays must be pass plays completed beyond the line of scrimmage.
	1. Laterals, hand-offs, backward passes and pitches are allowed in the no-run zone, but only if followed by a forward pass at some point that goes beyond the line of scrimmage.
	2. A screen pass - a forward pass that does not go beyond the line of scrimmage - is not allowed.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. 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).

**V. Rosters**

Team size is a maximum of 10 players.

**VI. Playing Time and Participation**

1. The rules under this section must be strictly adhered to. Failure of any coach to follow these rules will result in corrective action up to and including removal of the coach and/or coaches responsible for the violation.
2. Every player must receive at least one direct hand-off or make a catch every game. Being the target of a pass does not count. The player must take (and keep) a handoff or make a catch to fulfill this requirement. Taking a handoff and then handing to another player (a reverse) does not count.
3. The only exception to this rule is a player who plays quarterback for all or the vast majority of his playing time does not have to get a carry or a catch.
4. Teams should strive for as close to equal playing time as possible.

**VII. Timing and Overtime**

1. The clock stops for timeouts; change in quarters, and halftime, as well as for injuries or referee conferences.
2. Halftime is five minutes long.
3. 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.
4. Each team has three (3) 60-second timeouts per half.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
7. If a team scores as time expires in the 1st or 3rd quarter then the PAT will be held at the beginning of the 2nd or 4th quarter after the teams have changed players and sides of the field. This is done due to the game having a running time clock. There are no changes for conversions coming at the end of either half.
8. During the regular season, if the score is tied at the end of regulation the game will be determined a tie.
9. In playoff situations, an Overtime (OT) Period will be used to determine a winner. The college-like OT format is as follows:
	1. A coin toss called by the visiting team will determine who starts the first OT period. The winner of the toss chooses whether to be on offense or defense first. All subsequent OT possessions will alternate as necessary until a winner is determined.
	2. Both teams will get an offensive possession. However, if the team starting on defense intercepts the ball and returns it for a TD, the game is over and they are the winner.
	3. Offensive possessions will start on the opponent’s 20-yard line, and the offense will have four downs to score a TD. If they score a TD, they can choose to go for a one- or two-point conversion.
	4. The team starting on defense will then get an opportunity for a possession on offense. Neither team is ever forced to “go for the win” on their conversion attempt. They can always go for 1 or 2 on any conversion attempt.
	5. The team with the most points at the end of any “round” is the winner. Rounds will continue until a tie is broken.

**VIII. Scoring**

1. Touchdown: **6 points**
2. PAT (Point After Touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (12-yard line) *.Note: 1 point PAT is pass only, 2 point PAT can be run or pass.*
3. Safety: **2 points**
4. A Safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out, they step out of bounds or they hit the ground with their knee or arm. A Safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone, as well as when a fumble is declared dead in the end zone.
5. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-pt. conversion (from the 5 yard line) or a 2-pt. conversion (from the 12-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged time out. Decision cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned.
6. If the defense commits a penalty on a conversion attempt that results in the attempt being run again, the offense can still run even if the penalty moves the ball into the no-run zone as long as the offense had initially chosen to go for 2, which gave them a run-pass option.

**IX. Coaches**

1. Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players. Defensive coaches must move to the sidelines before the snap of the ball. Offensive coach can remain on the field but must be out of the way.
2. Only three coaches per team are allowed on the sidelines.

**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. All Center snaps must go through the center’s legs (not off to the side)
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
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.
5. Any official can whistle the play dead.
6. Play is ruled “dead” when:
	1. The ball hits the ground (unless it’s a fumbled snap during QB-center exchange).
	2. The ball carrier’s flag is pulled.
	3. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
	4. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
	5. The ball carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
	6. The ball carrier’s flag falls off.
	7. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one flag.
	8. The seven-second pass clock expires.
	9. An inadvertent whistle is performed (at the spot where the ball was whistled dead).
7. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
	1. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew.
	2. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

***Note: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground. If the fumble occurs in the end zone, the defense is awarded a safety****.* ***Exception: If the ball is fumbled on the QB-center exchange, the QB – and only the QB – can pick it up one time and continue with the play. If the QB’s knee is on the ground when he touches the ball, the play is dead there. If anyone (on either team) other than the QB touches the ball, the play is dead there. If the QB re-establishes possession after a fumbled exchange but then fumbles it himself, the play is dead there. If it is a pass play, the seven-second clock starts at the initial snap and does not stop while the QB attempts to recover the fumbled exchange.***

**XI. Running**

1. The ball is spotted where the runner’s feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball. If one foot precedes the other, the forward foot marks the spot.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball.
3. Direct handoffs, pitches and laterals behind the line of scrimmage (LOS) are permitted. Offense may use multiple handoffs, pitches and/or laterals behind the LOS. No laterals are permitted beyond the LOS.
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. (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 5 yards).
5. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
6. Once the ball has been handed off from 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.
8. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
9. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
10. No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.
11. **Offensive players must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier.**
12. Flag Obstruction –The flags must be on the player’s hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
13. No direct handoffs to the center unless the Center runs into the backfield.

**XII. Passing**

1. All passes must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage.
2. A screen pass - a forward pass that does not go beyond the line of scrimmage – is allowed when not in the no-run zone. It is not allowed in the no-run zone.
3. Shovel passes are allowed, but if in no-run zone, it must go past line of scrimmage.
4. The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within seven seconds of the snap, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the pass-clock rule no longer is in effect even though that player may pass.
5. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the pass clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. It is NOT a safety.

**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 at a time. All motion must be parallel or away from the line of scrimmage, and no motion is permitted towards the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception and neither foot can touch down out of bounds prior to or at time of catch.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions change the possession of the ball where the intercepting player’s flag is pulled. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
6. Interceptions are returnable, but not on conversions after touchdowns.

**XIV. Flag Pulling**

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders cannot tackle, hold or run through ball carrier when pulling flags.
3. Diving is not allowed. This is a judgment call from the referees and is not up for dispute.
4. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier’s possession at any time.
5. If a player’s flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
6. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
7. Flag guarding 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.

**XV. Formations**

1. An offensive team must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the Center) and one player (the quarterback) must be in the backfield off the line of scrimmage. All other players may be lined up in any formation.
	1. One player at a time may go in motion one yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
	2. 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. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
4. The center must snap the ball 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.
5. Picking up the ball and/or partially snapping the ball will be considered a false start and a penalty will be enforced.

**XVI. Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

1. If the field monitors or referees 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.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent or official.
4. Swearing by any coach or player will result in an automatic ejection in addition to a penalty.
5. Ball carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
6. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
7. Flag spiking will not be tolerated. After pulling an opponent’s flag the player must either hand the flag back to the player or drop the flag where it was pulled. Any throwing or spiking will be considered unsportsmanlike conduct and will be penalized accordingly.
8. Showboating will not be allowed. This will include but is not limited to: spiking the ball, high stepping into the end zone, raising your hand in celebration prior to entering the end zone, and any end zone “dance.” High-fiving and short celebrations with teammates will be allowed.
9. Taunting, name-calling, and threats will be cause for immediate ejection from the game and possible additional game suspensions to be determined by the football board.
10. If a player who is out of the game and on the sidelines interferes with a live play on the field in any way, be it accidental or intentional, the following will occur:
	1. If the team of the offending player is on offense there will be a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty from the spot of the foul and loss of down.
	2. If the team of the offending player is on defense there will be a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty from the spot of the foul and an automatic first down.
	3. If it is deemed an intentional act by the referees, the player will also be ejected.

**XVII. Parents and Spectator Conduct and Responsibilities**

1. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship:
	1. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
	2. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
	3. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
2. Parents / Guardians are responsible for the actions of any family or friends that may be attending the game. It is your responsibility to inform them of the expectations regarding their behavior.
3. Any unsportsmanlike behavior be it verbal or physical will result in a penalty assessed against your team and may result in ejection and removal from the field and it’s property.
4. Fans are not to talk to, make comments about, yell at, or in any other way address the referee’s at any time. This includes before, during, or after the game. Any questions about rules or penalty’s should be directed to your coach or one of the flag football board of directors.
5. NO DOGS OR OTHER PETS ARE ALLOWED AT ANY FIELD LOCATIONS. The only exception is for service animals.
6. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly. Please keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents away from the sidelines.
7. **ANY ABUSIVE OR DISRESPECTFUL LANGUAGE USED TOWARD THE OFFICIALS, COACHES, OR PLAYERS WILL RESULT IN IMMEDIATE EJECTION AND REMOVAL FROM THE FIELD AND THE PROPERTY WHICH IT IS ON. VAA Flag FOOTBALL HAS A ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICY. THE FIRST OFFENSE WILL RESULT IN EJECTION. THE SECOND OFFENSE WILL RESULT IN SUSPENSION FROM VAA FOOTBALL GAMES FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE SEASON. THIS RULE APPLIES TO SPECTATORS, COACHES, AND PLAYERS.**

**XVIII. Penalties**

1. **General**:
	1. The referees will call all penalties.
	2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
	3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted (spot fouls).
	4. **Only the head coach** may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgment calls.
	5. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
	6. Penalties are assessed Live Ball then Dead Ball. Live Ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered completed.
	7. 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. If the defense commits a penalty that moves the ball from outside a no-run zone to inside a no-run zone, the offense will still get one play (the very next play only) to run a running play if it chooses. This is to prevent teams from intentionally committing penalties to force the offense into no-run situations. If the offense begins a play in the no-run zone and commits a penalty or loses yardage that brings them out of the no-run zone, they still must pass on the ensuing play.
2. **Unsportsmanlike conduct**:
	1. After scoring and touchdown is good, offense receives a 10 yard penalty from the yard line of PAT attempt after touchdown (one warning to the player and team before ejection)
3. **Spot Fouls**
	1. Flag guarding..........................................................................10 yards & loss of down
	2. Charging..................................................................................10 yards & loss of down
	3. Diving......................................................................................10 yards & first down
	4. Defensive Pass Interference....................................................Spot of four & first down
	5. Stripping..................................................................................10 yards & first down
	6. Offensive Unnecessary Roughness........................................10 yards & loss of down
	7. Screening, Blocking or Running with the ball carrier............... 5 yards & loss of down
	8. Defensive Unnecessary Roughness.......................................10 yards & first down
4. **Defense**
	1. Offside……............................................................5 yards from the LOS & automatic first down
	2. Illegal contact (Holding, blocking, etc.)…...……....5 yards from the LOS & automatic first down
	3. Illegal flag pull (Before receiver has ball)……....…5 yards from the LOS & automatic first down
	4. (or 5 yards added to the end of the play if the offense catches the ball)
	5. Illegal rush (Starting rush from inside the rush line).5 yards from the LOS & automatic first down
	6. Roughing the passer ...............................................10 yards from the LOS & first down
	7. Taunting ..................................................................15 yards from the LOS & first down
	8. Unnecessary Roughness..........................................Spot foul, 10 yards & first down
	9. Diving (Grades 1-4)..................................................Spot foul, 10 yards & first down
	10. Stripping...................................................................Spot foul, 10 yards & first down
	11. Defensive Pass Interference.....................................Spot foul & first down
5. **Offense**
	1. Illegal motion…………………………………………...5 yards from the LOS & loss of down
	2. Offensive pass interference……………………..….. 5 yards from the LOS & loss of down
	3. Flag guarding............................................................Spot foul, 10 yards & loss of down
	4. Screening, Blocking or Running with ball carrier..... Spot foul, 5 yards & loss of down
	5. Charging...................................................................Spot foul, 10 yards & loss of down
	6. Delay of game.......................................................... 5 yards from the LOS & loss of down
	7. Unnecessary Roughness………….......................... Spot foul, 10 yards & loss of down
	8. Offside.......................................................................5 yards from the LOS & loss of down