



## Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Department Six-Player, Non - Contact Flag Football Rules

National Federation of State High School Association Football Rules will govern play with the following variations listed below.

### **I. Field and Equipment**

- A. Every member of a team must wear Triple Threat flag belts provided by the Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Department. Belts and flags must be exposed. Failure to do so is subject to an eight (8) yard penalty.
- B. Teammates will be required to have similar colored jerseys by first scheduled game. Home team will have choice of colors. If teams of a similar color are scheduled to play each other, the visiting team must wear a different colored shirt/jersey.
- C. Helmets, shoulder pads, thigh pads, or the use of any hard substance is prohibited.
- D. No metal cleats allowed. Players wearing illegal shoes will be ejected from the game.
- E. No "stick-um" or other foreign substances are to be used on hands by any player.  
Exception: Players may wear gloves.
- F. The official length of the field shall be seventy-four (74) yards, which includes two seven (7) yard end zones. The width of the field shall be thirty (30) yards.
- G. The official league game ball is an intermediate size or larger football. Teams will provide game balls while on offense. If a ball is not available at the start of a game or the ball becomes defective during use, the officials will make a decision on a ball use procedure.

### **II. Starting the game**

- a. 5 min before game time, Captains meet with both officials at midfield.
- b. Visiting team calls a single coin toss (heads or tails)
- c. Team that wins the toss may decide: Offense or Defense. Losing team decides on goal to defend.
  - i. Defense gets ball in 2<sup>nd</sup> half, and goals defended are switched.
- d. Game time: Start game on 10yrd line, game clock starts at 1<sup>st</sup> snap

### **III. Player Requirements**

- A. Roster is limited to fourteen (14) players; all must have graduated from high school or their class must have graduated from high school. Rosters may be revised up to **5:00 p.m. Friday, Jan. 21** ; following that time rosters become final.
- B. The Team/Manager/Coach/Player is responsible to supply proof of team roster and player additions (e.g. carbon copy of roster/player add form or receipt) in the event of team/player eligibility questions.
- C. A team must start and finish with no less than five (5) players. If at any time a team drops below five (5) players the game becomes a forfeit. **NO GRACE PERIOD.**
- D. A player may play on only one (1) team in the Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Adult Flag Football - Winter League. If a player is found to have played on two teams **both games** played in will be forfeited and the player will be suspended one game. ***If an illegal player is found to have participated in a game, the team they represented will forfeit the game.***

- E. All players will be required to carry picture I.D. (i.e. driver's license with picture). Players must be able to produce I.D. if requested by game official, field supervisor, or league coordinator(s). If a player's identity and proper identification is not available, player will be ejected from the game.

#### IV. Rules of Play

- A. Only team captains who are so designated before the game begins may speak to the officials during the game.
- B. Proximity of players to sideline - At the start of each play, no players may attempt to deceive the defense. Players must position themselves in such a manner that is easily distinguished as a player.
- C. The ball will be put into play at the offensive team's ten (10) yard line.
- D. All players are eligible to receive a pass.
- E. First downs may be gained by advancing the ball into the next twenty (20) yard zone.
- F. Once the ball is passed over the line of scrimmage, it may not be brought back over and passed. Play will be allowed to continue until play is dead. If intercepted play stands. An illegal forward pass penalty will be enforced from the line of scrimmage.
- G. A forward pass that is received behind the line of scrimmage may be passed again.
- H. If the ball is advanced over the line of scrimmage by any other means than passing, the play is dead. No yardage penalty. **EXCEPTION:** If a forward pass is completed behind the line of scrimmage, ball carrier may advance over the line of scrimmage by running.
  - a) **Clarification:** If player "A" receives the ball from a forward pass or a forward pitch behind the line of scrimmage only player "A" can advance the ball by running over the line of scrimmage. If player "A" chooses to lateral the ball to player "B" before crossing the line of scrimmage, than player "B" becomes a quarterback and the ball must be passed prior to crossing the line of scrimmage.

You must be a receiver from a forward pass or forward pitch (includes multiple passes) behind the line of scrimmage to be able to run across line of scrimmage. No Exceptions.
  - b) **Clarification:** A forward pass received across the line of scrimmage may be lateraled back across the line of scrimmage and advanced by running ball only. The ball cannot be passed when lateraled back. **Play will be allowed to continue until play is dead.** If intercepted play stands.
- I. Screening in the backfield for the quarterback and downfield for the ball carrier is legal but the player setting the screen must give defensive players a chance to avoid the screen. If contact is made, a penalty will be assessed. Feet must be set to be a legal screen.
- J. Between downs, any number of eligible substitutes may replace players, provided having the replaced players off the field before the ball is snapped completes the substitution. Players must report to their team's side of the field. Substitutions may not be used in any manner to deceive your opponents.
- K. The last down in either half will be replayed if there is a penalty by either team (offense or defense) and it is accepted by the other team (offense or defense).

### **Rules of Play**-continued

- L. Non-playing team members and spectators must remain inside the team box, which is the distance between the twenty (20) yard lines and two (2) yards outside the sidelines.
- M. The offensive team is responsible for returning the ball to an official or the line of scrimmage promptly. This includes attempt during fourth (4th) down.
- N. For a player who is bleeding, or has an open wound or found to have an excessive amount of blood on his/her clothing. This player **MUST** leave the field to:
  - 1. Cover the wound; 2. Stop the bleeding; 3. Change soiled clothing.

### **V. The Clock**

- A. Each half will consist of 25 minutes running time with the following exceptions:
  - 1. The last minute of the **1<sup>st</sup> half** will be stop clock only on change of possessions and timeouts.
  - 2. The last minute of the **2<sup>nd</sup> half** will be played "stop clock". If a team is ahead by 25 points or more prior to the last minute, there will be no stop clock in the fourth quarter.
- B. Stop Clock Period - The clock will stop at the completion of every play and start with the snap. The clock will not run for extra point conversion during the stop clock period.
- C. The game is divided into two (2) halves. There will be a five (5) minute half-time intermission.
- D. Each team may have one (1) time out per half. A time out is one (1) minute. Teams can accumulate timeouts and use both in second half.
- E. The ball must be put into play within 25 seconds of placement at the line of scrimmage by the referee when teams are ready to play. The referee will blow his/her whistle when the 25 seconds is to begin.
- F. If a team fails to put the ball into play within 25 seconds, it will be a five (5) yard penalty. Any other delay-of game infractions during the same possession will result in loss of down and five (5) yards.
- G. If, in the judgement of the game officials, a team is delaying in an effort to run down the clock, the team will receive one warning and then receive an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. (See IX Penalties, A.3) Continued infractions could result in a player or team being disqualified and the game forfeited.

### **VI. Line of Scrimmage**

- A. Players on the line of scrimmage:
  - 1. The offensive team must have at least three (3) players on the line of scrimmage to begin a play.
  - 2. There must be a one (1) yard space between offensive linemen.
  - 3. Three point stances are not allowed on either offense or defense. (Except center snapping the ball.)
- B. Only players lined up behind the line of scrimmage may be in motion; limit one player in motion each play. Player in motion must move parallel to or away from line of scrimmage.

**Line of Scrimmage** *continued*

- C. All fumbled balls are dead immediately. Exception: When offense has declared a punt, the punter may fumble or muff the ball until a legal punt has been made. (Refer to Rule VII.)
- D. Muffed Balls: All muffed balls will be put into play at point of contact with field except a ball fumbled forward - ball will be placed where player lost possession.
- A. Forward handoffs are only allowed behind the line of scrimmage. Player in control of the football is now the quarterback. (See Rule III.H.)

VII. **Ball Handling**

- A. Open field tackling: If the ball carrier is tackled in the open field, ball carrier will be awarded an automatic touchdown.
- B. Bumping-Out on the sidelines is not permitted, unless in the judgment of the referee:
  - 1. No block was thrown.
  - 2. Unnecessary roughness is not employed.
  - 3. An attempt to pull the flag is made.
- C. If the ball carrier's flag inadvertently falls off, they may be downed by a one-hand touch by the defense. If any member of the defense pulls flags from offensive players not in possession of the ball intentionally, the offensive team shall be awarded a major penalty. (See IX Penalties, C.7)
- D. Tackling and carrying ball: The ball carrier may not run through a defensive player (they may not charge) and must attempt to evade the defense whenever possible. The defense may not hold or run through a ball carrier, but must "play the flag" rather than hold the player. In contact between the ball carrier and the defense when both are the aggressors, the ball shall be dead at the spot of contact. The official shall decide those situations just as a basketball referee rules on charging versus blocking. May result in unnecessary roughness and/or ejection.
- E. The ball carrier will be allowed to spin to elude the defense. Runner must have at least one foot on the ground.
  - 1. A ball player running with the ball may not hurdle, dive or jump in order to score or avoid having flags pulled. Penalty - Loss of eight (8) yards.
  - 2. A runner may not intentionally guard flag with arms or hands to prevent them from being pulled.  
Penalty - Loss of eight (8) yards from point of infraction. (If a player has altered the flag belt in any way to prevent an opposing player from successfully pulling off the belt, they will be ejected from the game. (See X. Player Suspension, item A.)
- F. Quarterbacks will be protected from any contact after they have thrown the ball even if the ball has been tipped. The quarterback in flag football should be treated like the basketball player shooting the ball. Contact is not allowed even after the quarterback releases the ball. Penalty for contact will be an eight (8) yard illegal use of hand or arm penalty and automatic first down -roughing the passer. *Quarterback will be considered down when flag is pulled before the ball is released.*
- G. Touchbacks - the ball will be put into play at the offensive team's ten (10) yard line. (Interceptions may be advanced out of the end zone.)
- H. The center-snapper may adjust the ball and/or pick it up to dry off prior to the snap.

## **Ball Handling** continued

- I. An offensive player who is bumped out of bounds by a defensive player does not lose eligibility to receive the ball. Penalty will be assessed to the defense for illegal use of hand or arm.
- J. If an offensive player goes out on own accord then back into play to catch a pass. No catch-loss of down, no yardage penalty.
- K. The defense cannot cross the line of scrimmage before the snap. It is encroachment for any player to cross the neutral zone. (See IX Penalties, B.10.)

## **VIII. Punting**

- A. The offensive team must notify the defense whenever they want to punt. Neither team may cross the line of scrimmage until the ball is punted. The defense must maintain three players on the line of scrimmage and they may not attempt to block the punt.
- B. Teams may return punts from the end zone provided the ball was not muffed. Otherwise ball will be put into play at the offensive team's ten (10) yard line.
- C. After a punt, the ball may be picked up (off the ground) and advanced provided the ball was not muffed.

## **IX. Scoring**

- A. Scoring shall be six (6) points for a touchdown and one (1) point for the extra point conversion from the three (3) yard line and two (2) points for extra point conversion from the ten (10) yard line.
- B. Two (2) points will be awarded to the defensive teams returning the ball for a touchdown if they intercept the ball while the offense is attempting extra point conversion.
- C. When the flag is pulled, the position of the runner's hip shall determine placement of the ball, unless ball has crossed goal line resulting in a touchdown.
- D. Forward motion of the ball carrier into the end zone after flag has been pulled is not counted as a touchdown. The ball is downed at the point where the flag is pulled free.
- E. A safety is scored only when the team defending the goal causes a live ball to go back over the goal line. Two (2) points are scored on a safety if the ball becomes dead in the end zone in their possession.
- F. Following a safety, the team scored against must punt the ball to the other team. (Punting from ten (10) yard line.)
- G. A forfeited game will be recorded as 14 – 0.
  - 1. If the team ahead causes the officials to forfeit the game for any reason, the score will be recorded as a 14 – 0 win for the opposing team.
  - 2. If the team behind causes the officials to forfeit the game for any reason, the score will stand.

**X. Penalties**

- A. Loss of down and yardage for the following violations:
1. Illegal forward pass - 5 yards
  2. Flag Guarding - 8 yards
  3. Offensive pass interference - 8 yards
- B. Loss of 5 yards:
1. Delay of the game
  2. Illegal substitution
  3. Offside
  4. False start or any illegal act by snapper /Encroachment
  5. Free-kick infractions
  6. Not enough players on the line of scrimmage
  7. Illegal motion
  8. Team box violation – 1st offense
  9. Illegal team/personal action or conduct
- C. Loss of 8 yards:
1. Persons illegally on field
  2. Illegal use of hand or arm
  3. Striking, kicking, kneeing, tackling or tripping (Automatic First Down)
  4. Illegal blocking
  5. Charging
  6. Pushing ball carrier
  7. Intentionally de-flagging
  8. Team box violation - 2nd offense
  9. Flag guarding
  10. Pass interference (Automatic First Down)
  11. Roughing the Passer (Automatic First Down)
  12. Unsportsmanlike conduct

Any of the preceding fouls or any foul not covered herein: If in the judgement of the game officials the foul is flagrant and/or deliberate, player shall be ejected from the game.

- D. Any distance penalty shall be no greater than half the distance to the goal line.
- E. Offensive penalties occurring in the offenses' own end zone, if accepted will result in a safety.
- F. No blocking by the offense or using hands by the defense. This is a non-contact league.
- G. Illegal team/personal action or conduct penalty. The intent of this penalty is to warn players/coaches that their action(s) are escalating towards unsportsmanlike conduct.

**XI. Player/Coach Suspension**

- A. A player who is ejected will be suspended a minimum of one (1) game. League Coordinator will decide on length of suspension. End of the season suspension will carry over into the following season.
- B. Players or coaches ejected from the game will leave the park immediately or automatically forfeit the game and face possible expulsion from the league.
- C. Any player or coach ejected from a game for physically abusing an official or player will be suspended from all Mercer Island Parks and Recreation activities for a minimum of one (1) year.

**Player/Coach Suspension** continued

- D. Players and coaches are responsible for the actions of their spectators. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties will be assessed against the team the spectator(s) represents. The spectator(s) will be asked to leave the park immediately or the team will automatically forfeit the game.
- E.
  - 1. Two (2) unsportsmanlike penalties in one game, on one player, shall result in an automatic ejection. Each additional unsportsmanlike penalty on any player shall result in an ejection for that player.
  - 2. An accumulation of three (3) unsportsmanlike penalties on an individual player during the season shall result in an automatic suspension from all remaining games and playoffs.
- F. Any player suspended cannot accompany the team to any scheduled games during the suspension.

**XII. Team Suspension**

Teams accumulating four (4) or more unsportsmanlike penalties during the season will be automatically suspended from all remaining games and playoffs.

**XIII. Protests**

- A. To file a protest, a coach/captain must inform the game officials and/or field supervisor that a protest is being filed and the reason. A protested game must be declared before the next play following the incident. Judgement errors on the part of the officials are not protestable.
- B. Teams must submit protest forms and filing fees \$50 check with the Recreation Coordinator within twenty-four (24) hours. Failure to submit a written protest within twenty-four (24) hours will result in cancellation of any filed protest at the game site.
- C. If the protest is granted or declared valid, the protest fee will be refunded. Should the protest be rejected, the protest fee is automatically forfeited.

**XIV. Tie Games**

In the event that a game is tied at the end of regulation time, an overtime period will be played.

- A. An additional coin toss will be held. The winner of the coin toss will choose either offense or defense, or which end of the field overtime will take place. The loser will have the choice of the remaining options.
- B. Each team will be granted 1 time out per overtime period. Time outs will not carry over from regulation or previous overtime periods.
- C. To start overtime, the offensive team shall put the ball in play, 1<sup>st</sup> and goal, on the defensive teams twenty (20) yard line. The first offensive team shall have a series of four (4) downs. The series will end if: 1. Offensive team scores. 2. Defensive team gains possession. 3. Offensive team fail to score after four (4) downs.

**Tie Games** *continued*

- D. If the offensive team scores a touchdown, it will be entitled to its extra point, unless the game is already won with the score. *If defensive team gains possession extra point try is complete.*
- E. After the first team on offense has completed its series of downs, the first defensive team will become the offensive team and the procedure shall be repeated, at the same end of the field.
- F. If the game is still tied after overtime, the procedure shall be repeated until a winner is determined.
- G. The loser of the first overtime coin toss will now be given first choice of options. If additional overtimes are required, then first options are alternated, no coin-toss.
- H. All points scored in overtime(s) will count as part of the final score.

**XV. Tie in League Standings**

Teams are seeded into the playoffs based on final league record. If a tie exists at the end of the league, the following methods will be used to break ties:

- A. The team that won the league game(s) between tied teams will be awarded the higher position.
- B. If a tie still exists, point differential (difference between points scored and points against) in games between tied teams will be determined.
- C. If a tie still exists, point differential between all common competitor league games will be used.

**XVI. Alcoholic Beverages**

Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.

**XVII. Miscellaneous**

The Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Department's Program Coordinators and Field Supervisors have the authority to make rulings on any and all dealings regarding this league. All decisions are final.



**CITY OF MERCER ISLAND PARKS AND RECREATION**  
**Adult Flag Football Rule Supplement**  
**CASUAL PROFANITY RULE**

Casual Profanity pertains to expletives and verbal unsporting language that is not directed at officials or opposing players, but rather is being uttered by a player out of frustration. This type of behavior is penalized by "Loss of Eight (8) Yards" being declared against the offending team.

1. If the act is committed by the offensive team the penalty will be a loss of eight (8) yards for the offense.
2. If the act is committed by the defensive team, the offensive team will be awarded eight (8) yards.
3. If the violation occurs at the end of the game the ejection rule will be applied.

***Purpose:*** The "Casual Profanity Rule" provides a lesser penalty for the gray area between accepted conduct and those situations where the offender must be ejected. This rule is to discourage the ball players from saying things, which others may feel are offensive. It has been discovered that the players will police themselves when this rule is applied.

**Profanity directed at officials or others will result in ejection.**

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