



## 2009 INTRAMURAL SPORTS FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

The rules for the University of Iowa Intramural Flag Football program are derived from the National Intramural Recreational Sports Association's rules with the following exceptions. The current NIRSA Flag and Touch Football Rules Book will apply in all cases not specifically covered below. Copies of the rules are available at [www.nirsa.org](http://www.nirsa.org). *Recent rule changes appear in hi-lighted and italicized font.*

### **RULE 1. THE GAME, FIELD PLAYERS AND EQUIPMENT**

- 1) **ELIGIBILITY:** All eligibility rules apply. Consult the Intramural Rules in regard to these rules.
- 2) **NUMBER OF PLAYERS:** The game shall be played between 2 teams of 7 players each. Co-Rec will consist of 8 players. A minimum of 5 players (Co-Rec-6; can be 3 men/3 women, 2 men/4 women, or 4 men/2 women) is required to prevent a forfeit.
- 3) **EQUIPMENT:** Each player on the field must wear a one-piece belt at the waistline with three flags permanently attached, one flag to each side and one to the center of the back. Cleats are limited to studs or projections that are not to exceed ½ inch in length and are made with non-abrasive rubber or rubber type synthetic material, which does not chip or develop a cutting edge. *No metal cleats will be allowed.* Players may wear a stocking cap. It is allowed to have a knit ball attached. The cap must have no bill. Bandannas are permitted provided the knot is not exposed. Players may wear a headband no wider than 2 inches and made of non-abrasive single-colored cloth, elastic, fiber, soft leather, or rubber. Rubber or elastic bands may only be used to control hair. Illegal equipment consists of pads, shoulder pads, **JEWELRY**, or any unyielding or dangerous equipment, which include shoes with detachable cleats unless the screw is part of the cleat. Any slippery or sticky substance of a foreign nature on equipment or exposed parts of the body is illegal.

**NO JEWELRY WILL BE PERMITTED.** This includes, but is not limited to, earrings, wedding rings or bands, other rings, necklaces, bracelets, rubber bands, and metal barrettes. The only exception to this rule is a medic alert bracelet or necklace. In that specific case, it must be taped down. When any illegal equipment is found on any player or incoming substitute, the illegal equipment must be removed before participation. If illegal equipment removal takes more than 25 seconds, that player must be replaced for at least one down, or the team may call a team time-out. **TAPING OF JEWELRY TO THE BODY WILL NOT BE PERMITTED. ALL JEWELRY MUST BE REMOVED PRIOR TO THE INTRAMURAL EVENT.**

**ALL PLAYERS MUST KEEP SHIRTS TUCKED IN AT ALL TIMES.** A cut-off shirt short enough not to interfere with the flags is permissible. *A cut-off shirt must be at least 4" from the bottom of the jersey to the player's waistline.*

**(Illegal equipment - PENALTY: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards)**  
**(Failure to wear required equipment – PENALTY: 5 yards)**

- 4) **TEAMS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PLAYERS AND FANS:** Players and fans must remain at least three (3) yards from the sideline. **(PENALTY: First Offense - warning, Second Offense – 5 yards, Thereafter – 10 yards)**
- 5) **GAME BALL:** Men shall use the regular size ball only. The regular, intermediate, youth, or junior size football shall be used for Women's and Corec games.
- 6) **WEARING FLAGS:**
  - a) All players must wear flags while on the playing field.
  - b) The flags will be fastened to the belt in such a manner as not to be twisted under or fastened to the inside of the belt.
  - c) The two flags are to hang down vertically along the side seam of the trousers and one down the center of the back.
  - d) Solid belts will be comprised of three flags. The ball carrier will be declared down when the belt clip becomes unfastened when pulled by a defensive player, *the belt is torn into more than one piece, or the flag is torn off the belt*. If the defensive player pulls the belt and it does not immediately become unfastened, the ball carrier will not be considered down until the belt does become unfastened.
  - e) If the flag belt should become unfastened without being pulled by a defensive player, the play will remain alive until a defensive player contacts the runner *between the shoulders and knees* with one hand.
  - f) If a defensive player unfastens an offensive player's belt after throwing a forward or backward pass, the player is still eligible to advance the ball. He/she must be tagged with one hand *between the shoulders and knees* if he/she catches a pass.
  - g) A defensive player intentionally pulling a flag from an offensive player without the ball is illegal. **(PENALTY – Personal Foul - 10 yards)**
  - h) It is illegal for any player to participate in a play with an illegally secured flag belt. **(PENALTY – Personal Foul – 10 yards from previous spot – player ejection – loss of down if player is on offense, automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down if player is on defense)**

## **RULE 2. DEFINITIONS OF PLAYING TERMS**

- 1) **CATCH:** A catch is the act of establishing player possession of a live ball which is in flight, and first contacting the ground inbounds or being contacted by an opponent in such a way that he/she is prevented from returning to the ground inbounds while maintaining possession of the ball. Sideline cones are considered out-of-bounds.
  - a) If one foot first lands inbounds and the receiver has possession and control of the ball, it is a catch even though a subsequent step or fall takes the receiver out-of-bounds.
- 2) **FIGHTING:** Fighting is an attempt by a player or non player to strike or engage an opponent in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include, but are not limited to: attempts to strike an opponent(s) with the arm(s), hand(s), leg(s), or foot (feet) whether or not there is contact.

### **RULE 3. PERIODS, TIME FACTORS, SUBSTITUTIONS**

- 1) STARTING THE GAME:
  - a) Before the start of the game the referee shall toss a coin in the presence of the opposing captains, after first designating which captain shall call the coin toss.
    - i) The captain of the winning toss shall choose one of the following options.
      - (1) Offense.
      - (2) Defense.
      - (3) To designate which goal his/her team will defend.
      - (4) To have the choice of the above options to begin the second half (*defer*).
    - ii) The loser of the toss shall make a choice of the remaining options.
  - b) Putting the ball into play. The ball shall be put into play at the beginning of the game, at the beginning of the second half, after a score and a safety by a scrimmage down on the 14-yard line.
  - c) *Before the coin toss, the referee will approve each team's game ball.* If needed, a football will be provided by the Recreational Services Intramural Sports Department.
- 2) LENGTH OF GAME: Playing time shall be 40 minutes, divided into 4 periods of 10 minutes each. There will be a 5-minute intermission between halves. Between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> period and between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> period, the teams shall change goals. Team possession, number of the next down, and the zone line-to-gain remain unchanged. The time between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> period and between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> period shall be no more than 1 minute. At approximately 2 minutes before the end of each half the referee shall stop the clock and inform both captains of the playing time remaining in the half. The starting of the clock depends on the previous play.
  - a) During the final 2 minutes of each half the clock stops for:
    - (1) Incomplete Pass – starts on the snap.
    - (2) Out-of-bounds – starts on the snap.
    - (3) Penalty and Administration – depends on the previous play. (Exception: following delay of game, clock starts on the snap).
    - (4) Touchdown – starts on the succeeding snap after the try.
    - (5) Team Time-out – starts on the snap.
    - (6) First down – depends on the previous play.
    - (7) Official's Time-out – starts at the referee's discretion.
    - (8) Touchback – starts on the snap.
    - (9) Safety – starts on the snap.
    - (10) New series for Team B – starts on the snap.
  - b) The clock will start when the ball is legally snapped and run continuously during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> periods, and during the first 8 minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> period, except for a team time-out or official's time-out.
- 3) TIME-OUTS: Each team is entitled to two (2) time-outs during each half. Time-outs will be no longer than one minute. The time-outs not used during the first half may NOT be used in the second half. No time-outs will be granted after a team uses both their time-outs. In case of overtime, each team is entitled to only one time-out per overtime period.
- 4) TIES: If the game is tied at the end of the second period the following procedures are used:
  - a) Overtime Periods – All overtime periods are played towards the same goal line. A coin toss, as in the beginning of the game, will determine the options. If additional overtime periods are played, field captains will alternate option choices. Each team will have a series of downs to score a touchdown beginning from the 10-yard line.
  - b) Penalties – Penalties shall be assessed according to the regular rules of the game.

- c) Running and Passing – Each play shall begin from scrimmage and shall be limited to running and passing plays. No kicks from scrimmage are permitted.
- d) Intercepted Passes – Intercepted passes may be returned. If the ball is not returned for a touchdown, the ball will be placed at the ten (10) yard line and play will begin as in a) above.
- e) The goal line shall always be the line-to-gain in overtime.

**RULE 4. BALL IN PLAY, DEAD BALL, OUT-OF-BOUNDS**

1) **DEAD BALL:** A live ball becomes dead when an official sounds the whistle or declares it dead:

- a) When the ball goes out-of-bounds or when it touches the ground beyond the goal line of the opponent.
- b) When any part of the ball carrier’s person other than the hand or foot touches the ground.  
NOTE: The ball carrier may contact the ball to the ground and the ball will remain live *as long as the ball carrier maintains possession of the ball* and as long as no other body parts other than the foot or hand are in contact with the ground. The ball is considered to be part of the hand.
- c) When a touchdown, touchback, safety, or try for point is made.
- d) When a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
- e) When a backward pass or fumble by a player touches the ground, this includes a snap.

**EXAMPLE:** *On protected scrimmage kicks, the ball will be considered dead if it hits the ground at any time after the snap and before it is kicked.*

NOTE: Backward passes and fumbles may be caught in flight, in-bounds by any player and advanced.

- f) When a ball carrier has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player.
- g) When a ball carrier is legally touched with one hand below the shoulders once the flag belt is no longer attached.
- h) A muffed scrimmage kick is dead when it strikes the ground.
  - i. When the kicking team touches a scrimmage kick, the receiving team can take possession at the point of first touching by the kicking team.
- i) When an inadvertent whistle occurs.

NOTE: A scrimmage kick that falls to the ground untouched will remain alive *until the ball comes completely to rest.*

2) **BALL BLOWN DEAD:** In flag football, it is not uncommon for a play to be mistakenly blown dead. In these cases, the offensive team shall have the option of replaying the down or accepting the ball at the spot where it was blown dead. On loose balls such as a pass in flight, the down must be replayed. After a change of possession the team in possession at the time the ball is blown dead shall have the option of accepting the play or replaying the down.

3) **INBOUNDS SPOT:** *If the ball becomes dead between the inbounds lines (hash marks), the ball shall be placed at that approximate spot. If the ball becomes dead in a side zone, place the ball at the nearest inbound line (hash mark) at the corresponding yard line.*

**RULE 5. SERIES OF DOWNS, NUMBER OF DOWN AND TEAM POSSESSION AFTER PENALTY**

- 1) **YARDS AND DOWNS:** When a first down is gained in a zone, the team in possession of the ball is allowed four (4) downs in which to move it from that point into the next zone.

**RULE 6. KICKING THE BALL**

- 1) **PROTECTION OF PUNTS FROM SCRIMMAGE:** The kicker on punts from scrimmage shall have absolute protection if a request is made to the referee before the ball is declared ready for play. The referee shall notify the defensive team of the declaration to punt. All punts must be declared to the referee, before the ready-for-play whistle. Players on either team may not pass the line of scrimmage until after the ball has been kicked. **(PENALTY –Illegal procedure (live ball) – 5 yards and the offensive team retains the down.)**
  - a) The kicker after possessing the snap must kick the ball *immediately in a continuous motion*. **(PENALTY –Illegal Procedure– 5 yards).**
  - b) If the ball *hits the ground at any time after the snap and before it is kicked, it is dead at that spot*.
  - c) A ball that is snapped out of the back of the end of the end zone will be ruled a safety.
  - d) Quick kicks are not allowed. All punts must be declared to the referee prior to the down.
  - e) Players may run kicks out of the end zone. They may also stay there and accept a touchback.

**RULE 7. SNAPPING, HANDING AND PASSING THE BALL**

- 1) **FORWARD PASS:** Any member of the passing team is eligible. All forward passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage. Only one forward pass per down is permitted.
- 2) **BALL IN PLAY:** A team gets 25 seconds to put the ball in play after it is signaled ready for play by the referee. **(PENALTY –Delay of Game– 5 yards)**
  - a) The snapper need not have his/her shoulders parallel to the line of scrimmage or snap the ball between his/her legs in order for the snap to be legal.
  - b) Ball must be snapped to a player at least two yards behind the line of scrimmage.
  - c) The snapper may not snap the ball to him/herself.
  - d) A team may legally spike the ball to prevent loss of time in the final two (2) minutes of each half.
  - e) **(PENALTY 7-2b-c – Illegal Formation – 5 yards)**
- 3) **LEGAL POSITION:** Anytime on or after the ball is marked ready for play, each offensive player must momentarily be within 15 yards of the ball before the snap. **(PENALTY – Illegal Formation - 5 yards.)**
- 4) **MINIMUM LINE PLAYERS:** The offensive team must have at least 4 players (Co-recreation rules require 5 players) on their scrimmage line at the snap. The remaining players must be either on their scrimmage line or behind their backfield line. All players must be inbounds. A player in motion is not counted as one of the 4 (5 co-rec) on the scrimmage line. **(PENALTY – Illegal Formation – 5 yards.)**

### **RULE 8. SCORING PLAYS AND TOUCHBACK**

- 1) SCORING: Touchdown – 6 points; Extra point try 1 point from 3 yards; 2 points from 10 yards; 3 points from 20 yards; safety – 2 points. (After a safety, the team who scored the safety will put the ball into play on their own 14 yard-line with a new series of scrimmage downs.) In Co-rec, a touchdown scored by a female or is the result of a pass thrown by a female is worth 9 points. The defense scores 3 points, on any try by returning an interception or backward pass for a touchdown.
- 2) MERCY RULE: If a team is 19 or more points (25 in Corec) ahead when the referee announces the two (2) minute warning for the second half, or any time after that, the game is over.
- 3) FOULS ON A SCORE: If there is a foul by the defensive team during a down that results in a successful touchdown, the scoring team may choose to have the foul enforced at the succeeding spot or after the try on the 14 yard line. If there is a foul by the defensive team during a successful try, the scoring team may choose to have the foul enforced at the succeeding spot.

### **RULE 9. CONDUCT OF PLAYERS AND OTHERS**

- 1) BLOCKING: Offensive screen blocking should take place without an attempt to make contact with an opponent. The screen blocker shall position her/his hands and arms at his/her sides or behind his/her back. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during a screen block is illegal. A player must be on his/her feet before, during, and after screen blocking. *Some legal incidental contact may occur.* **(PENALTY – Personal Foul – 10 yards)**
  - f) Screen Blocking Fundamentals. A player who screens shall not:
    - i) Take a position closer than a normal step when behind a stationary opponent.
    - ii) Initiate contact when assuming a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent.
    - iii) Take a position so close to a moving opponent that his/her opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing direction. The speed of the player to be screened will determine where the screener may take his/her stationary position. This position will vary and may be 1 to 2 normal strides from the opponent.
- 4) DEFENSIVE RESTRICTION: Defensive players may not use their hands on blockers. They must attempt to avoid blockers. Incidental contact with the hands will be allowed, but should the defender gain an advantage by use of the hands, he will be penalized. **(PENALTY – Personal Foul – 10 yards)**
- 5) TACKLING: It is a foul to tackle, trip, kick, push, shove, or elbow the ball carrier or blocker. It is also a foul for a defensive player to strip or attempt to strip the ball by punching, striking, or stealing it. The runner's forward progress cannot be impeded in any way. **(PENALTY – Personal Foul - 10 yards. If flagrant ADDITIONAL PENALTY – Disqualification)**
- 6) BALL CARRIER AND RUNNING WITH THE BALL: It is a penalty for the ball carrier to "stiff arm", charge into, knee, kick or try to knock over a player at anytime. **(PENALTY – Personal Foul– 10 yards).**

This is judged like a block/charge foul in basketball.

- a) Spinning is legal; however, the ball carrier must be in control of his/her person at all times.
- b) Diving is allowed, however, the ball carrier cannot make contact with a defender while in the act of diving.

**THE BALL CARRIER MUST TRY TO AVOID CONTACT WITH ALL DEFENSIVE PLAYERS AT ALL TIMES.**

- 7) UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS: For unnecessary roughness, the penalty is 10 yards and disqualification if flagrant.
- 8) ROUGH TACTICS: Such as attempting to run over or batter down an opponent must be penalized as flagrant and unnecessary roughness. **(PENALTY –Personal Foul– 10 yards, ejection, and suspension)**
- 9) DISQUALIFICATION: Whenever in the judgment of the officials, or field supervisor, player or players may be involved in any deliberate or flagrant violation of the rules, the person will be ejected and their team penalized 10 yards. This includes foul, dirty or abusive language or violent protest by either word or action against any official or other players. In the judgment of any official or supervisor any type of unsportsmanlike conduct by any player or team will be penalized by a 10-yard penalty and if the official feels it necessary, he/she can eject players or forfeit the game. Players or spectators will be automatically ejected if they physically (or attempt to) contact an official or supervisor. Any player ejected will be required to sit out the next scheduled game for his/her team. Repeat disqualifications will result in expulsion from the league and future intramural sports.
- 10) FOULS TO PREVENT PLAY: If the defensive team commits a foul so near its own goal line that they can be penalized only by halving the distance to the goal line, the object being (in the opinion of the referee) to consume time, it shall be regarded as a refusal to allow play to proceed. In that event, the referee shall warn the offending team once and then if the offense is repeated, it will be a touchdown.

## **RULE 10. ENFORCEMENT OF PENALTIES**

### 5 Yard Penalties:

1. Delay of Game
2. False Start
3. Encroachment (10 yards for 2 or more consecutive encroachments by the same team)
4. Illegal Procedure
5. Illegal Motion
6. Illegal Shift
7. Illegal Snap
8. Illegal Formation
9. Illegal Forward Pass\*
10. Illegal Backward Pass\*
11. Intentional Grounding\*
12. Illegal Substitution
13. Failure to wear required equipment
14. Illegal Advancement
15. Helping the Runner

### 10 Yard Penalties:

1. Illegal Contact
2. Illegal Participation
3. Offensive Pass Interference\*
4. Defensive Pass Interference^
5. Roughing the Passer^
6. Unsportsmanlike Conduct\*^
7. Sideline Interference
9. Illegal Equipment
10. Kick Catch Interference
11. Holding
12. Flag Guarding
13. Illegal Batting
14. Illegal Kicking
15. Illegally Secured Flag Belt\*

### \*Loss of Down Fouls:

1. Illegal Forward Pass
2. Illegal Backward Pass
3. Intentional Grounding
4. Offensive Pass Interference
5. Illegally Secured Flag Belt
6. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

### ^Automatic First Down Fouls:

1. Defensive Pass Interference
2. Roughing the Passer
3. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- 1) **POST SCRIMMAGE KICK ENFORCEMENT:** A post scrimmage kick (PSK) foul is any live ball foul by a player on the receiving team that occurs on the receiver's side of the neutral zone prior to the end of the kick during a punt that ends beyond the neutral zone and the kicking team does not have possession at the end of the down. The enforcement spot is the spot where the kick ends. The receiving team retains possession of the ball after enforcement, first down and one line to gain. If the spot of the PSK foul is behind the spot where the kick ends, the enforcement spot will be from the spot of the foul. If the kick ends in the end zone, any PSK foul will be enforced from the succeeding spot, the 14-yard line.

## COREC FLAG FOOTBALL DIFFERENCES

The Co-Rec game will use the same rules as the Men's and Women's game with the following modifications.

- 1) **NUMBER OF PLAYERS:** Eight (8) players (4 men and 4 women) constitute a team. Teams with 7 players shall be 4 men and 3 women or 4 women and 3 men. Six players, 3 men and 3 women, 2 men and 4 women, or 4 men and 2 women are required to start the game and avoid a forfeit. The game may be continued with less than 6 as long as the team has a chance to win. **(Penalty: Illegal participation, 10 yards.)**
- 2) **THE BALL:** The regular, intermediate, youth or junior size football shall be used in co-rec play.
- 3) **MINIMUM LINE PLAYERS:** The offensive team must have at least 5 players on their scrimmage line at the snap. **(Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards.)**
- 4) **MALE RUNNER:** An offensive male runner cannot advance the ball through Team A's scrimmage line with possession of the ball. There are no restrictions: during a run by a male runner once the ball is *possessed* beyond the Team A scrimmage line; during a run by a female runner; and after a change of possession. **(Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.)**
- 5) **MALE TO MALE COMPLETION:** During the offensive team's possession there may not be 2 consecutive legal forward pass completions from a male passer to a male receiver. This rule also applies to a try. If a male passer completes a legal forward pass to a male receiver, the next legal forward pass completion must involve either a female passer or a female receiver for positive yards. **(Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards from the spot where the second consecutive male to male completed forward pass is released, and a loss of down.)** Any pass caught simultaneously by male and female teammates is considered a female reception. Any foul, whether accepted or declined shall have no effect on whether the next legal forward pass completion is "open" or "closed." The term "open" means any player may complete a forward pass to any other player. The term "closed" means a male player may NOT throw a forward pass completion to any other male player.
- 6) **ILLEGAL FORWARD PASS:** If a female passer completes a forward pass to a male receiver behind the Team A scrimmage line and he runs beyond this scrimmage line, it is an illegal forward pass. **(Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards from the spot of the pass and loss of down.)**
- 7) **MERCY RULE:** If a team is 25 or more points ahead when the Referee announces the 2-minute warning for the second half, the game shall be over. If a team scores during the last two minutes and that score creates a point differential of 25 or more points, the game shall end at that point.
- 8) **TOUCHDOWN VALUE:** If a female passer, female receiver, or female runner scores a touchdown, the point value is 9 points.

### OTHERS

- 1) **PROTESTS:** If a team feels that an official has made a misinterpretation or misapplication of the rules, they should lodge a protest immediately with the official. The official must (1) stop the game and (2) bring the rule in question to the attention of the Field Supervisor who will make his/her ruling on it. His/her ruling will stand. If the team questioning the rule believes the Field Supervisor is incorrect, they must lodge a written protest along with \$5.00 to the Recreational Services Office (FH E216) within 24 hours of lodging the original protest. The Recreational Services Office will then make a ruling. If the protest is upheld, the \$5.00 will be refunded.

**NOTE:** Arguing over a call does not constitute lodging a protest. Protests on judgment calls will not be considered. Play must be stopped. If the protesting team allows subsequent action without talking to the Field Supervisor, they forfeit the right to protest.

- 2) **POSTPONEMENTS IN CASE OF WEATHER:** Should a postponement be necessary due to inclement weather, the teams must contact the Recreational Services Office in regards to the make-up time and place. Games will not be cancelled before 3:00 PM (Monday-Thursday) so each team must call the info line **353-3000** to obtain information on rainouts. Sunday cancellations will be made by 12:00 PM.