UVM Intramural Sports • Flag Football Rules

The rules governing this intramural sport activity are derived from rules used by the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) and rules unique to the UVM Intramural Sports Program. This rules sheet is not meant to be all-inclusive; rather it is a summary of the more common rules, policies, and procedures used by the Intramural Sports Program. All important policy information can be found in the Intramural Sports Handbook. All team managers and players are responsible for reading this document and understanding the rules, policies, and procedures prior to participating in this activity.

General/Eligibility

See the Intramural Sports Handbook for complete listing of eligibility.

Club Player Eligibility:
- Members of the UVM Club Football Team are eligible to participate in intramural flag football; however these players are subject to the following participation guidelines:
  - A-League Teams – No more than three (3) club players may be listed on a roster.
  - B-League Teams – No more than two (2) club players may be listed on a roster.
- **Penalty:** Any team that is in violation of the club player participation guidelines will automatically forfeit every game in which the ineligible player(s) participated. During playoffs, use of an ineligible player will result from the team being removed from further competition.

Intramural Team Participation: Individuals may only play on one same sex team and one co-rec team per flag football season.

Identification: All players MUST present a UVM Cat Card to the IMS Supervisor prior to each game. Players who do not have their Cat Card will be subject to the terms of the Campus Recreation ID Policy.

Team Rosters: The official team roster consists only of those individuals who are eligible and who have signed the official roster/waiver. Individuals must be listed on the official roster by the end of regular season play in order to be eligible to participate in playoffs. Confirming that all players are listed on the official roster is the responsibility of the Team Manager.

Players and Substitutions

Players: Teams will be comprised of seven (7) players; however rosters may list as many players as desired. A team may start with no less than five (5) players. In the event a team is playing with the minimum number (5) of players, and a player becomes injured or has to leave (for a reason other than an ejection) the game will continue until it is deemed a farce as determined by the officials and supervisor.
- **Co-Rec** teams are comprised of eight (8) players (4 males, 4 females). A team may start with no less than six (6) players. In the event a team is playing with the minimum number (6) players, teams may play with one of the following combinations (includes a minimum of two (2) females):
  - Four (4) males and two (2) females
  - Four (4) females and two (2) males
  - Three (3) males and three (3) females
Substitutions: Teams are allowed unlimited substitutions. Substitutes can enter on any dead ball situation. The substitution must be completed before the ball is put in play (when ball is dead). Existing players must go directly to their sideline.

Communication with IMS Staff: Team managers are the only individuals permitted to speak with the officials regarding calls or questions. If another player attempts to dispute, a warning may be issued. Subsequently, an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty may be called followed by a possible ejection.

Equipment

Game Jerseys: Game Jerseys are provided by the IMS program. All jerseys will have numbers on them and each person will be required to record their name and number with the score keeper for their game at each scheduled match. The team captain/team representative must leave their ID with the Intramural Sports Supervisor as they are responsible for all jerseys. The player’s ID will be returned upon return of all jerseys. Replacement costs for any equipment missing will be billed to the individual’s Campus Recreation account. Jerseys MUST be tucked in at all times during flag football. If your team would like to purchase “team jerseys” the intramural sports office encourages you to do so but you must make sure that these jerseys have numbers and are all the same color.

Shorts/Pants: Each player must wear pants or shorts with NO belts, belt loops, or pockets, and must be a different color than the flags.

Footwear: Turf shoes, cleats, and soft, pliable, rubber bottom shoes are permitted. METAL CLEATS, SANDALS & OPEN TOED SHOES ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED. Shoes must be worn. If there are any questions concerning footwear, contact the supervisor/official.

Jewelry: All jewelry must be removed. This includes, but is not limited to, necklaces, earrings, newly pierced earrings, facial piercings, bracelets and watches. Individuals will not be allowed to tape over any jewelry item. If you cannot remove the item then you CANNOT play (exception: Medical or Religious jewelry that has been approved by the IMS professional staff).

Footballs: Teams are encouraged to bring their own football(s) to practice (warm-up) with and use in the game if agreed upon by both teams. A regular size football will be used for all Men’s games. An intermediate size football will be used for all Women’s and Co-Rec games.

Equipment Warning: If any player is issued an equipment warning after the start of a game, the offending player’s team will receive a 5-yard penalty and the player will be asked to sub out of the game until the problem has been corrected.

Captain’s Meeting and Coin Toss

Captains’ Meeting: Five (5) minutes before the game, the officials will conduct a ‘Captain’s Meeting’ with the team captain/representative of each team. Home team calls toss (team listed first on schedule, if overtime then opposite team from first half). The team winning the toss shall have their choice of the options for the first half or second half. The options for each half shall be:

- Team winning the toss: chooses possession of the ball, chooses to defer choice to the second half or chooses the end zone to defend
- Team losing the toss: the captain shall choose the remaining option

Duration of Game

Game Length: Two twenty (20) minute halves with a running clock. During the final two (2) minutes of the second half, the clock will stop for the following:

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- Incomplete pass—starts on the snap
- Out of bounds—starts on the snap
- Score—starts when the kick is legally touched
- Team time-out—starts on the snap
- Penalty—starts on the snap
- Officials time-out—starts on the ready
- Touchback—starts on the snap
- 1st Down—starts on the ready

**Game Time is Forfeit Time!** All intramural events are tightly scheduled based on facility availability to allow for maximum participation, so keeping the games on schedule is very important. Please have your team at the field checked-in and ready to play at least ten (10) minutes before your scheduled game time.

If one team is late/is not present, the captain of the team that is present and has the minimum number of participants required to play will be given two options (once a decision is made it cannot be changed):
- Take the forfeit immediately
- Give the team five (5) minutes to show
  - If the team shows, the game must be played with only the remaining amount of time left. If the team still does not show, it will be a forfeit.

**Half Time:** Half time will not exceed three (3) minutes.

**Time-outs:** Two (2) per team per half (1 minute in length). Unused time outs do not carry over into the 2nd half or into any overtime period.

**Mercy Rule:** Upon the two-minute warning of the second half, if a team is leading their opponent by nineteen (19) (Co-Rec 25) or more points the game clock will not stop. If a team scores DURING the last two minutes of the second half and that score creates a point differential of nineteen (19) (Co-Rec – 25 points) or more the game clock will not stop.

**Reserve Clause:** the IM Staff reserves the right to make time adjustments to accommodate scheduling conflicts

**Playing Rules**

Games are governed by NIRSA Flag & Touch Football Rules with a few modifications/exceptions for intramural play as outlined below.

The ball is dead on ALL running plays and passing plays as soon as the ball touches the ground. Teams cannot recover a fumble.

On punts, players may advance the ball after it hits the ground but not after the ball hits a player then the ground.
- If a ball is muffed (does not touch the ground)—during a running or passing play or similar loose ball situation—the ball is live and may be gained by the defense (as long as the ball remains in the air). During a punt, if the ball is muffed and caught by the kicking team then the ball is DEAD at the spot and the kicking team gains possession.

The offense has twenty-five (25) seconds to put the ball in play after the official declares it ready. **Penalty: 5 yards.**

The offense has four (4) consecutive downs to advance to the next zone line. Zone lines are the 20-yard, 40-yard, and the goal lines.

Only one forward pass is allowed per play (down). All players are eligible receivers.

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**Snapping the Ball:** Direct snaps are not permitted. Snaps do not need to be through the legs. However, the ball must remain on the ground and motionless until the actual snap. The snap must be received at least two (2) yards behind the line of scrimmage.

**Scoring**

**Touchdown = 6 points* / Safety = 2 points**

There are no field goals or kicking for a point after a touchdown; however teams will have an opportunity to score on a “try” by choosing the distance from the goal line in which they would like to attempt to score. Teams have the choice of three (3) different distances:

- Try from (3yds) = 1 point
- Try from (10yds) = 2 points
- Try from (20yds) = 3 points

If the defense intercepts a pass attempt on a Try, the ball is dead.

**Penalties during a Try:**

- If on defense:
  - If the attempt was unsuccessful, then replay the down and add the penalty enforcement.
  - If the attempt was successful, the points are awarded to the offense. The penalty will still be enforced on from the succeeding spot.

- If on offense:
  - If the attempt was unsuccessful and the penalty declined, the play is over and the attempt will not be repeated.
  - If the attempt was successful, take the converted score away, mark off the penalty and the attempt will be repeated.

A player must have at least one foot in bounds for a catch to be legal. The line is considered out.

**Simultaneous Catch:** If a legal forward pass is caught by members of opposing teams at the same time, the ball shall become dead and belongs to the offense.

The defense may not bat, hit, strip, or swat at the ball while it is in possession of the ball carrier. **Penalty: 10 yards from the end of the run**

**Line of Scrimmage:**

- Only one (1) player (the snapper) is required to be on the line of scrimmage at the snap
- Only one (1) player may be in motion at the time of the snap.
- No player may be in forward motion at the time of the snap.

**Ball Responsibility:** it is the responsibility of the OFFENSE to get the ball.

**Flag Rules**

No article of clothing may cover any portion of the player's flag (**ALL SHIRTS MUST BE TUCKED IN AT ALL TIMES**). **Penalty: 5 yards**

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**Wearing Flag Belt:** Each player on the field must wear the flag belt provided by Intramural Sports. Belt must be properly attached at the waistline—one flag should be placed over the center back with one flag over each hip.

**Removing Flag Belt:** When the belt is clearly taken from the ball carrier, the down shall end and the ball will be declared dead. The belt should be held over the head to assist officials with the call; however, if the flag belt is delayed in falling off as a direct result of an attempt by the defensive player, the play will be whistled dead where the flag belt first starts to fall.

**Legal Tag:** If a player has inadvertently lost the flag belt, then a one (1) hand tag between the shoulder and knees constitutes a capture. NOTE: The play is NEVER over until the officials blow their whistles. No player shall intentionally pull or remove a belt from any player that does not have possession of the ball. **Penalty: 10 yards**

**Contact:** In an attempt to remove the belt from a ball carrier, defensive players may contact the body and shoulder of an opponent with their hands, but not their opponent's face or any part of the neck or head. A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock the ball carrier down in an attempt to remove the flag. **Penalty: All tackles will be penalized by a 10yd penalty and a possible ejection.**

**Diving:** Players may dive to catch a pass, defend a pass, to remove an opponent’s flag, and to gain yardage; however, no player may intentionally dive into another player to gain yardage.

**Flag Guarding:** Ball carriers shall not guard their flags in a manner that would prevent an opponent the opportunity to pull or remove the flag belt. A ball carrier may not use straight arm tactics, swing arm to deflect, or use other means to keep an opponent from pulling a flag. This style of running constitutes flag guarding. A ball carrier may not lower the head or run in a bent over fashion that hinders an opponent from pulling a flag. This style of running constitutes flag guarding with the intent to injure another. **Penalty: 10 yards from spot of foul.**

**Falling Player:** If the ball carrier touches a knee, elbow, hip, forearm (i.e., any body part that is NOT the hand or foot) to the ground, the play will be whistled dead and spotted there. If the ball carrier slips and falls, but regains balance with the ball in contact with the ground (ball is extension of the hand), play shall continue.

**Blocking**

**Blocking Guidelines:**

- Screen blocking only. Hands and arms must be behind and within should width of your body, allowing one normal step between the blocker and an opponent.
- Individuals are not permitted to use feet, knees, elbows, dip shoulders, trip, or kick legs to initiate contact or perform a block.
- Contact with an opponent on the ground is prohibited.
- Helping a ball carrier through pushing or contact is prohibited.
- Defensive players must go around a block—no holding, tackling, aggressive pushing or other use of arm and hands—no holding or obstructing the ball carrier to remove the flag.
- The ball carrier may not run into or hurdle a defensive or offensive player. **Penalty: 10 yards from the previous spot**
- Any contact not consistent with the screen blocking tactics will be penalized ten (10) yards from the previous spot or point of infraction (whichever is greater).

**Punts (Post Scrimmage Kick)**

**Intention to Kick & Kicking Procedure:** The kicking team must announce intention to kick and then must kick (unless time-out or defensive penalty, then re-Declare). Quick kicks are not permitted at any time.

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- The ball must be snapped to the punter. The punter must immediately kick the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Neither team may advance past the line of scrimmage until the ball has been punted.
- All offensive players on the line of scrimmage must remain motionless until the punt has been contacted.

**Muffed/Fumbled Punts:** Muffed punts are dead. If the kicking team fumbles in their own end zone, a safety will be awarded.

If the snap before a punt extends beyond the back of the end zone, or if the punter steps on the end line while in possession of the ball, the ball is dead and a safety awarded.

If the ball is kicked and crosses the plane of the receiving teams goal line, the ball is dead and will be placed at the 14 yard line

**Blocking:** During punts teams are to use screen blocking only. Any contact not consistent with screen blocking tactics will be penalized followed by a possible ejection.

**Fair Catch:** During any punt, the kicking team members must allow receivers an attempt to make a play on the ball. The kicking team shall not obstruct their path to the ball. This applies even if a fair catch signaled and opponents have not yet touched the ball. **Penalty: 10 yards from previous spot and replay of the down OR choose an awarded catch on the spot of the foul.**

**Co-Rec Rules**

All rules as stated above apply with the following exceptions:

**Male Runner:** Males on the offensive team cannot advance the ball across their line of scrimmage. There are no restrictions on a male runner once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage, a run by a female runner or any runner after a change in possession. **Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards form the previous spot.**

**Male-to-Male Completion:** During the offensive team’s possession there may not be two (2) consecutive legal forward pass completions from a male passer to a male receiver. Each possession starts with the play being deemed “Open”. After a completed Male-to-Male pass, the play then becomes “Closed”. During a “Closed” play, the only legal plays are:
- A completed pass from a male to a female gaining positive yards
- A completed pass from a female to a female gaining positive yards
- A completed pass from a female to a male (ball must be caught beyond the line of scrimmage)
- A run by a female (will not “Open” the next play)
- This rule applies to the Try attempt (extra point).

Any foul, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the next legal forward pass completion is ‘Open’ or ‘Closed.’

**Mercy Rule:** If a team is twenty-five (25) or more points ahead when the referee announces the 2-minute warning for the second half the game clock shall not stop. If a team scored DURING the last two minutes of the second half and that score creates a point differential of twenty-five (25) or more the game clock will not stop.

**Overtime**

There is no overtime during regular session. Games that end in a tie will be recorded as such. During tournament play the following apply:

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- A new coin toss will occur.
- The away team captain will call the toss and the winner has the option of offense, defense, or direction.
- All overtime periods will be played toward the same goal line.
- Each team will start 1st and goal from the opposing team’s 10 yard line (unless moved by penalty).
- The object will be to score a touchdown (followed by a Try).
- An overtime period consists of each team receiving a set of 4 downs.
- If the team that is awarded the ball scores, the opponent will still have a chance to re-tie, or lose the game.
- If the defense intercepts a pass or fumble, the ball is dead.
- If the score is still tied after one period, the teams will go to a second overtime period, or as many as needed to determine a winner.
- Each team is entitled to one time-out per overtime period.

**Summary of Penalties:**

**5 Yard Penalties:**
- Equipment worn illegally (previous spot - replay down)
- Delay of game (previous spot - replay down)
- Illegal substitution (previous spot - replay down)
- False start (previous spot - replay down)
- Encroachment (previous spot - replay down)
- Illegal snap (previous spot - replay down)
- Illegal formation (previous spot - replay down)
- Illegal shift/motion (previous spot - replay down)
- Illegal forward pass (spot of foul or previous spot, whichever is greater - loss of down)
- Intentional grounding (previous spot - loss of down)

**10 Yard Penalties:**
- Quick Punt (previous spot and re-kick OR take kick)
- Offensive pass interference (previous spot - replay down)
- Defensive pass interference (previous spot – replay down)
- Illegally secured belt on touchdown (previous spot and loss of down and no score if on TD, ejection)
- Spiking, kicking, throwing ball by offense (succeeding spot)
- Illegal batting (spot of foul - replay down)
- Holding/Pulling another player = Personal Foul, Holding (spot of foul - replay down)
- Illegal Contact (spot of foul - replay down) ex. Illegal screen block/use of hands
- Contact with opponent on ground [unsportsmanlike]
- Hurdling player (spot of foul—replay down)
- Illegal removal of belt (spot of foul - replay down)
- Flag guarding (spot of foul - replay down)
- Illegal participation (previous spot - replay down)
- Unsportsmanlike player/coach/bench conduct – verbal (taunting) or physical abuse of an official (from the line or end of play, whichever is greater—possible ejection)
- Roughing the passer (previous spot or end of the run (if caught) - automatic 1st down)
- Half the distance penalty is enforced half the distance to the goal when:
  - 5 yard penalty—on or inside of the 10 yard line
  - 10 yard penalty—on or inside of the 20 yard line

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