

## **2025 Tri-County Flag Football League Rules**

### **ALL AGE DIVISIONS – Sections 1 - 12:**

#### Section 1: Game

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams will meet at midfield for the coin toss; visiting team will call the toss. Winner of the toss will choose either offense or defense; loser of the toss has choice of direction. Teams may not choose to defer.
2. Offensive team will take possession at the 5-yard line and has 4 plays to cross a marked first down line. First down lines will be at the 20-40-20-yard lines. Once a team crosses the first down line, they have 4 downs to cross the next marked first down line or score a touchdown if inside the 20- yard line.
3. If after 4 downs the offense fails to cross a first downline or score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
4. All possession changes, except interceptions, start at the offense's 5-yard line.
5. Teams change sides after the first half. The team that started the game on defense will have the first possession of the second half.
6. In 8u, one coach is allowed on the field to instruct his/her players but by the snap he/she must be 10- yards behind the deepest players (must make every effort to be out of the way while the ball is live.) Coaches that fail to move or intentionally interfere with the play will be removed from the field and into the team box for the remainder of the game. This does not mean that a team has to play without a coach on the field; the coach that was removed from the field may be replaced by another coach.
7. Teams may play with 5 players but no less, in the event a team drops below 5 players, the game is over.
8. There is a 10-minute grace period for the first game only. If a team has 5 players there at game time, the game will start on time; 6<sup>th</sup> player/other players can be added during a dead-ball once they arrive.

#### Section 2: Eligibility

1. The age cut-off is the player's age as of April 30, 2025.
2. There are 5 age divisions: 6u (4 on 4), 8u (6 on 6); 10u, 12u, and 14u (7 on 7). Some departments allow 6-year-olds to play in the 8u division; players must be 6 years old by March 1 in order to be old enough to play.
3. Each department is required to submit rosters to the league before the first game of the season. Each department should keep copies of the rosters at their field.
4. No players may be added to a roster for any reason after the start of the season (i.e. start date of the first league game) except in extreme circumstances with league approval.
5. Players may play on only 1 team and in one age division during the regular season and playoffs. Whatever team a player is on during the regular season is the team he/she must play on during the tournament.

#### Section 3: Equipment

1. Players must wear shoes; football cleats are encouraged but cleats with exposed metal are not allowed.

2. Players may tape their forearms, hands and/or fingers. Players may wear sunglasses, gloves, elbow pads and/or kneepads. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed. Soft shell helmets are approved for play in all age divisions, but are not mandatory.
3. Players MAY NOT wear watches, earrings and other jewelry deemed hazardous by the officials.
4. Players on the field should make every effort to be legally and properly equipped prior to the ready for play signal. Players causing unreasonable delay, at an official's discretion, may be sent off the field for a play or until the issue is resolved. Examples would be jewelry removal, flag belt malfunctions, uniform issues, etc.
5. Players may wear a wrist coach but play cards, books, etc MAY NOT be taken onto the field except in the 8U division which only the coach may use play sheets or play cards.
6. Player's jerseys must be tucked into the shorts/pants if they hang below the belt line.
7. Players MAY NOT wear shorts or pants with pockets and/or belt loops.
8. Flag belts must be the break-away belt type with three flags.
  - a. The flags must be permanently attached to the belt (i.e. may not slide while on the belt.)
  - b. Flags must be at least 14" in length. Flags must be worn so that there is a flag on each hip and in the middle of the backside.
  - c. Flag belts must be worn as designed and intended by the original manufacturer and may not be altered to gain an unfair advantage. (e.g. folding them in a way that they don't hang as designed.)
  - d. It is recommended that both teams come together at mid-field with one official before the game, during the coin toss, so that coaches and the official may do a visual equipment check to avoid delays during play.
  - e. If an opposing coach or field director has reasonable suspicion that the flag belts of his or her opponent are tied, rolled, folded, shortened, altered, or anyway modified as to gain an advantage, they can ask for a flag check of said player(s).
  - f. **If a player is found by an official to have altered the belt, the head coach will receive an unsportsmanlike penalty and will be reported to a league official. If the team is reported a second time within the season, the head coach will be suspended for the next game (to include tournament games). A third violation is suspension for the remainder of the season.** It is up to the coaches to teach good sportsmanship and ensure his or her players adhere to this rule.
9. Flag colors must contrast with the shorts colors and should not be the same or similar color as the shorts.
  - a. If a team shows up for a game with shorts in a similar color as their flags, the head coach will receive a warning, it will be reported to the league director or league official following the game, the game will be played, and the opposing coach can protest the outcome following the game. If a team receives a second warning for violation of this rule, the game will be an automatic forfeit (to include tournament games).
10. All teams in the league are required to wear reversible jerseys or have Dark/Light Jerseys. Home team will wear dark color and the visiting team will wear light color. Jerseys must have a number on the back.
11. All players are required to have and wear mouthpieces during play.
12. Please note that ball sizes vary from manufacturer to manufacturer, as long as the ball is stamped with the

correct size it is legal for play. Teams may play with a bigger size ball but cannot play with a smaller ball than what is required.

- a. 8 & Under Division uses the Pee Wee size football (K2).
- b. 10 & Under Division uses the Junior size football (TDJ).
- c. 12 & Under Division uses the Youth size football (TDY).
- d. 14 & Under Division uses the Youth size football (TDY).

#### Section 4: Field

1. Field dimensions are to be consistent with the Fall Tackle Football Tri-County dimensions. The width varies dependent to department but must be 40-53 yards wide and must be 80 yards long goal line to goal line. (End zones must be 10 yards deep.)
2. First down lines will be marked at the 20-yard lines on both halves of the field and midfield. (20-40-20)
3. Team boxes should be clearly marked on each sideline from the 20-yard line to the 20-yard line.

#### Section 5: Timing and Overtime

1. Games are divided into 2 halves that are each 20 minutes in length. The clock will be a continuous running clock, except in the last 1 minute of each half. In the last minute of each half if a team has a 24 or more-point lead, the clock will run continuously unless the margin drops below 24 points.
2. The clock stops only for timeouts and at the discretion of the officials. In the event of an injured player, the clock shall stop and then restart once the injured player has been removed from the field of play.
3. During the last 1 minute of each half the clock will stop for:
  - a. Change of Possession – clock starts on the snap.
  - b. Incomplete legal or illegal forward pass – clock starts on the snap.
  - c. Out-of-bounds – clock starts on the snap.
  - d. Safety – clock starts on the snap.
  - e. Team Timeout – clock starts on the snap.
  - f. Touchdown – clock starts on the next offensive snap (P.A.T.'s are untimed).
  - g. Penalty and Administration – clock starts on the snap (except delay of game – starts on ready for play).
  - h. First down – clock starts on the ready for play.
  - i. Referees' Timeout – starts at his/her discretion.
4. Halftime is 5-minutes long. Regular season games played through the end of the first half but that are then subsequently stopped for weather safety at any point after the first half will be counted as final.
5. Once the ball is spotted, the offensive team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay of game penalty is enforced.
6. Each team has 2 timeouts per game; timeout is 1-minute in length.
7. Overtime
  - a. Overtime will begin with a coin toss, winner chooses offense or defense, and loser chooses which end

- of the field to play on.
- b. Each team will have a possession from the 15-yard line and will have 3 plays in which to score. **YOU MUST GO FOR 2 POINTS IF YOU SCORE A TOUCHDOWN IN OVERTIME.**
- c. Only 1 overtime period during the regular season.
- d. Interceptions in overtime are live and can be returned (except on PAT which are dead and cannot be returned – see section 6.2.d)
- e. Each team will have 1 timeout per overtime period; timeouts do not carry over from regulation.

#### Section 6: Scoring

1. A touchdown is worth 6 points.
2. Point After Touchdown (PAT): Teams have two PAT options after scoring a touchdown:
  - a. 1-point conversion attempt from the 5-yard line, this is in the no-run zone
  - b. 2-point conversion from the 15-yard line
  - c. Once a team declares their PAT attempt, they cannot change their choice unless they call a timeout. Decisions cannot be changed after a penalty.
  - d. Interceptions on PAT conversions are dead and cannot be returned.
3. A safety is worth 2 points. A safety occurs when the ball or ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. A safety can also occur as the result of an offensive penalty in the end zone.

#### Section 7: Flag Pulling

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled. Forward progress is measured by the foremost part of the ball.
3. Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
4. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
5. If the player's flag inadvertently falls off during 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 the head, hand, arm or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the jersey.

#### Section 8: Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The official will determine the line of scrimmage (all ages) and rush line (8U, 10U & 12U only) using markers provided by each department.
2. Defense may not mimic or call out signals in an effort to confuse the offense. This will result in an unsportsmanlike penalty.
3. Play is ruled dead when:

- a. The ball hits the ground on an incomplete pass or fumble. In the event of a fumble, the ball is placed where the ball carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble. On a snap that hits the ground, the ball is spotted where it hit the ground, if it hits in the end zone, it is a safety.
- b. The ball carrier's flag is pulled.
- c. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
- e. The ball carrier's knee or arm hits the ground.
- f. The ball carrier's flags fall off.
- g. The receiver catches the ball without his/her flags on.
- h. Pass clock expires:
  - a. 7 seconds (8U & 10U)
  - b. 5 seconds (12U & 14U only)
- i. Inadvertent whistle.
  - a. There are 2 options on an inadvertent whistle:
    - j. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew and the down is counted.
    - k. . Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
- 4. A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged with a timeout. If the rule was interpreted incorrectly, the team will not be charged with a timeout. If a team has used their two timeouts, they cannot question the official's rule interpretation.

#### Section 9: Formations

- 1. Offense must have at least 2 players (6v6) and 3 players (7v7) on the line of scrimmage. The QB must be off the line of scrimmage.
  - a. Only one player in motion at the snap. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
  - b. The ball must be snapped from within 1-yard on either side of the line of scrimmage marker.
- 2. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for 1 second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the only 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 from the ground 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. Players may also choose to snap the ball from the side but it still must be a rapid and continuous motion and must completely leave his/her hands. As long as the center is compliant with the above, body parts (feet, head, knees, etc.) beyond the nose of the ball are not considered offside.

## Section 10: Personal Fouls and Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. Flag football should be a non-contact sport, although incidental contact can occur. Any acts of intentional physical contact, that are deemed flagrant by the officials, results in an immediate ejection of the player from the game. If the field monitor or officials witness any acts of intentional tackling, offensive charging, 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 discretion of the field monitor and/or officials. At the discretion of the league directors, egregious flagrant foul ejections could be carried over or enforced on following game (e.g. flagrant personal foul committed on the last play of a game.) No appeals will be considered. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!**
2. Offensive or confrontational language will also not be tolerated. Players using offensive or confrontational language may be ejected from the game.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
4. Ball carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
6. Fans must adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
  - a. Yell to cheer on your players not to harass officials or the other team.
  - b. Keep comments clean and free of profanity.
  - c. Compliment **ALL** players, not just one child or team.
7. Fans are required to keep fields safe:
  - a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field and in the end zone areas.
8. If a parent or coach is ejected for unruly behavior, the player associated with that parent or coach must leave also. Ejected persons must leave the facility grounds immediately.
9. Any player or coach that is ejected from a game will be suspended for the next game. A second ejection will result in a 2-game suspension or possibly suspension from the league for the remainder of the season.

## Section 11: Terminology

- o Boundary lines are the outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and end lines.
- o Line of scrimmage is the imaginary line running through the point of the ball and across the width of the field.
- o Line-to-gain is the line the offense must reach to gain a first down or to score.
- o Rush line is an imaginary line running across the width of the field 3 yards from the line of scrimmage.
- o Passer is the offensive player that throws a legal forward pass; the passer may or may not be the quarterback.
- o Rusher is the defensive players(s) assigned to rush the QB to prevent him/her from passing the ball.
- o Downs (1-2-3-4) are the number of attempts the offense has to cross the line-to-gain.
- o Charging is the movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, forearm or the chest etc. This is not incidental, is flagrant, and is excessive physical contact and falls under rule 14.1 and results in

an ejection of the charging player.

- o Flag guarding is an act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling his/her flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner's flag with a hand or arm.

#### Section 12: Penalties

1. Officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal play.
2. All penalties are assessed from the line of scrimmage except those noted (spot fouls). Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal except for rule 12.7 below.
3. Only the team captain or head coach may ask questions about rules clarifications or interpretations.
4. Players/coaches may not question judgment calls.
5. Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless it is declined by the offense.
6. Penalties will be assessed as half the distance to the goal when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
7. Defensive pass interference in the end zone results in the ball being placed at the 1-yard line.
8. Unsportsmanlike penalties will be 15 yards penalties.

#### **12U & 14U AGE DIVISION ONLY – Sections 13:**

##### Section 13:

1. No handoffs, running plays, double passes, or shovel passes behind the line of scrimmage allowed. All pass plays must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. All players are eligible to receive passes, excluding the QB. A player must come down with 1 foot inbounds when making a reception.
3. In the event of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
4. No-run zones (NRZ) do not apply to 12U & 14U.
5. Offense has 4 downs to cross the line to gain.
6. The QB has a 5-second pass clock. If a pass is not thrown with the 5 seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. It is not a safety if the QB is standing in the end zone when the pass clock expires. Pass clock starts on the snap, not when the QB receives the snap.
7. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding. Spinning is allowed.
8. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that they did so to avoid a collision with another player.
9. No blocking, screening, or interfering with defensive players is allowed at any time by offensive players without the ball.
10. Defense may line up anywhere on their side of the Line of Scrimmage. Defenders may not play press or bump and run coverage.

- a. Per Section 10, rule 1, Flag Football is generally a non-contact sport with players not wearing protective equipment. Therefore, press coverage and/or bump and run coverage is not legal.
  - b. Contact that is deemed flagrant by the officials, results in an immediate ejection of the player from the game.
11. No rushing the quarterback (QB) by defense.
  12. Interceptions change possession of the ball at the point of the interception or at the end of the return after the interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
  13. Interceptions are returnable but not on PATs (per section 6.2.d)

### **8U & 10U AGE DIVISIONS ONLY – Sections 14-18:**

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#### **Section 14: No-Run Zone (NRZ)**

1. No-run zones (NRZ) are 5 yards in front of the first down lines, midfield, and the goal lines. (see field diagram in appendix) and will be marked on each field either by a dotted line or by painting the line a different color.
2. The offense approaches only 4 NRZ on each drive; in front of the first down lines, midfield, and the goal line.
  - a. Ex. If a team has passed midfield, received a first down and then has a penalty that puts the ball back in the NRZ, the NRZ is not in effect and they can use a running play if they so choose.
3. The offense must use a legal forward pass play (rule 15.1) in the NRZ to advance the ball beyond the Line of Scrimmage. The Offense is not allowed to use running plays which are defined as a player receiving a handoff or backward pass behind the line of scrimmage and then running the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.
  - a. Handoffs or backward passes are permitted in NRZ but the offense must throw a forward pass to advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.
4. **NO RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK (QB) BY THE DEFENSE**
5. The defense cannot cross the line of scrimmage inside the no-run zone, except once the ball is handed off or a backward pass thrown, then the rush rules are no longer in effect and all defenders may rush or go behind the offensive line of scrimmage. The offense must still throw a forward pass to advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage

#### **Section 15: Passing**

1. All forward passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, are thrown forward and must be received beyond the line of scrimmage. Shovel passes (a type of forward pass) are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. **Backwards passes** are permitted only behind the line of scrimmage. **Backward passes** must be behind or to the side of the offensive player **passing** the ball but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple **backwards passes**.
3. A player who takes a handoff or receives a backwards pass may throw a forward pass from behind the line of scrimmage.



4. The quarterback has a 7-second pass clock. If a pass is not thrown with the 7 seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off or a backward pass thrown, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect. It is not a safety if the QB is standing in the end zone when the pass clock expires. Pass clock starts on the snap, not when the QB receives the snap.

#### Section 16: Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes, including the QB.
2. A player must come down with 1 foot inbounds when making a reception.
3. In the event of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
4. Interceptions change possession of the ball at the point of the interception or at the end of the return after the interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
5. Interceptions are returnable but not on PATs (per section 6.2.d)

#### Section 17: Running

1. The QB cannot directly run with the ball. The QB is the offensive player that receives the snap.
2. Handoffs are permitted only behind the line of scrimmage. Handoff may be in front, behind or to the side of the offensive player but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
  - a. Center Sneak Play-The ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap and he/she must step backwards off the line of scrimmage in order to receive a direct handoff from the QB before advancing the ball.
3. A player who receives a backwards pass may run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage as long as the offense is not in a NRZ per section 14.
4. Absolutely no handoffs, laterals, or **backward passes** of any kind beyond the line of scrimmage.
5. Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
6. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding. Spinning is allowed.
7. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that they did so to avoid a collision with another player.
8. No blocking, screening, or interfering with defensive players is allowed at any time by offensive players without the ball.

#### *Section 18: Rushing the Passer*

***RUSHING THE QB IN ALL AGE DIVISIONS IS NOT ALLOWED.***

#### **Spot Fouls**

Defensive Pass Interference	Automatic First Down
Holding	+5 yards & Automatic First Down
Stripping	+10 yards & Automatic First Down

Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	+10 yards & Automatic First Down
Screening, Blocking, or interfering with a Defensive player	-5 yards & Loss of Down
Flag Guarding	-10 yards & Loss of Down
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	-10 yards & Loss of Down

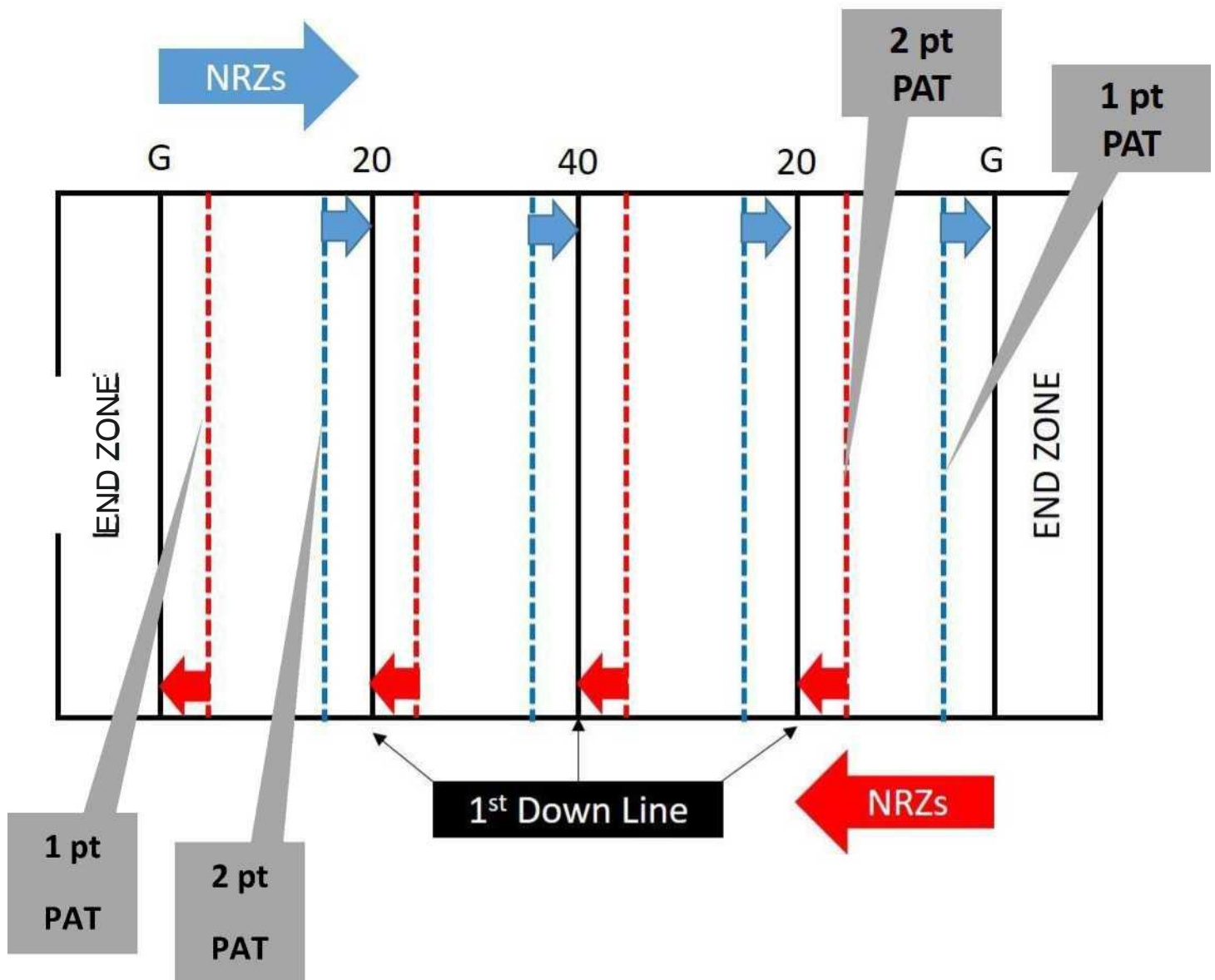
#### **Defensive Penalties**

Offside / Lined up in the Neutral Zone	+5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Illegal Rush	+5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Illegal Flag Pull (before the receiver has the ball)	+5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Roughing the passer	+10 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Taunting	+10 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Defensive Pass Interference	SPOT FOUL, Automatic First Down
Holding	SPOT FOUL, +5 yards & Automatic First Down
Stripping	SPOT FOUL, +10 yards & Automatic First Down
Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL, +10 yards & Automatic First Down
Unsportsmanlike	+15 yards & Automatic First Down

#### **Offensive Penalties**

Offside / False Start	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Illegal Forward Pass (pass received behind the LOS or throwing a pass from beyond the LOS)	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Offensive Pass Interference	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Illegal Motion (more than one person moving)	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Delay of Game	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Impeding the rusher	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Screening, Blocking, or interfering with a Defensive player	SPOT FOUL, -5 yards & Loss of Down
Charging	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down
Flag Guarding	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down
Unsportsmanlike	-15 yards & Loss of Down

**\*Any fouls not specifically listed will defer to NFHS Football Rulebook**



Red and Blue colored NRZs used for illustrative purposes only to show the when the NRZ comes into play for the Offense. Not all fields will have multicolored lines, they may use one paint color however NRZs will be dashed.

Example: Team on offense is going the direction of the blue arrows, they will only face 4 NRZs, (the blue dashed lines) before the 20-40-20 and G line. The red NRZs dashed lines are only when going the other direction.