

# Norman Optimist Club

## *Flag Football Rules* 2008

## I. NOC FLAG DIVISIONS:

The Norman Optimist Club offers three flag football divisions.

- K and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Division (K<sup>st</sup>-1)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Division (2nd)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Division (3rd / 4th)

Each division has specific rules that apply and these rules will include the reference to the appropriate division.

## II. GENERAL NOC FLAG FOOTBALL REGULATIONS

### *A. Conduct*

**Inappropriate Conduct** – All games will be conducted and ruled on by the referees and all persons must respect their authority.

Unsportsmanlike conduct, rough or profane language, or fighting of any nature will not be tolerated. The entire team will be held responsible for the actions of any individual player on their roster.

**Verbal Threats** – Any physical threat to the person or property of an official shall result in automatic playing field and ball park ejections and any additional sanctions as decided by the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

**Physical Abuse** – Any physical harm done to an official shall result in ineligibility for the remainder of the year plus a review by the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE for additional sanctions. In addition to these penalties, this type of altercation may involve criminal charges.

### *B. Referee's Decisions*

The referee's decisions shall be final on all decisions of fact. Any discussion concerning interpretations of the rules must be made by the Head Coach only. Continued debate after a final decision has been rendered will constitute delay of the game and penalized appropriately.

### ***C. Game Times***

Games must be started at official time as set forth in the official schedule. Teams will be allowed five minutes warm-up drill. If the start is delayed by the previous game, the start time will be five minutes after the end of the previous game. Games are subject to forfeiture ten minutes after the official start time if a team does not have the required five players.

### ***D. Player Eligibility***

At all times the responsibility of the eligibility of players will rest with the team managers/coaches.

### ***E. Game Ball***

Game balls will be furnished by the NOC.

### ***F. Schedule Changes***

Any and all changes to the schedule, if warranted, will be made through the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

## **III. PARTICIPATION**

### ***A. Players***

**Eight players** – This applies to both offense and defense.

On offense, all eight players are “**eligible**” and may catch, run, or throw the ball as well as shift or go in motion.

On defense, **ONLY TWO** of these players may **rush** (cross the line of scrimmage prior to the offense advancing the ball across this same line).

### ***B. Substitutions***

No incoming substitute shall be on the field of play when the ball is in play. No player may line up closer than five yards from the sideline unless he came out of a huddle or he was on the field of play during the previous play and did not leave the field of play.

### *C. Eligibility*

This will be determined by the grade of the participant during sign-up. Any situations beyond this will be decided by the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

### *D. Team Roster*

Rosters will be determined by prioritizing teams by the participants' current school, then common middle-schools, and high school.

## **IV. EQUIPMENT**

### *A. Ball*

The ball used is the same for K, 1, 2, 3 & 4.

- K and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Division (K-1st) - Nike PeeWee football (1000 Spiral Tech)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Division (2nd) - Nike PeeWee football (1000 Spiral Tech)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Division (3rd / 4th) - Nike PeeWee Football (1000 Spiral Tech)

### *B. Uniform*

**Jersey** – NOC will provide each team colored jerseys with numbers. This jersey should be worn on the outside of any other shirt or jacket to avoid confusion. All shirts worn, including the jersey **MUST** be tucked into the pants or shorts worn by the participant at all times.

**Shorts/Pants** – Each team should choose a color for the shorts or pants worn during competition. This color shall **NOT** be close to the color of the flags worn (typically yellow or red).

**Shoes** – Each participant must wear any flat-soled or completely-molded cleat or athletic shoes. This includes standard tennis shoes and cleats appropriate for soccer, football, or youth baseball. **NO REMOVEABLE CLEATS, STEEL BASEBALL SPIKES, OR ANY SHOES THAT HAVE STEEL OR METAL TIPS ARE ALLOWED.**

**Flags** – Each team member will wear a flag belt with the two flags positioned so that one is on each hip. This belt must be worn snugly on

the outside of the uniform with any extra belt length tucked into the shorts or pants. The individual flags are each 12” long and 2” inches wide. **DO NOT ALTER THE WIDTH, LENGTH OR THE POSITION OF THE FLAGS!** (Intentional disregard to this equipment standard will result in an immediate forfeit.).

## V. FIELD

### *A. Field of Play*

The length of the fields will be 80 yards. Each field will be divided into 8-yard playing zones and two 10-yard end zones.

## VI. GAME OPERATION

### *A. Quarters*

**Three 10-minute quarters (1, 2 & 3).** A "running clock will mark the time. The clock will stop only for a team time-out or a referee's request.

**One 8-minute quarters** – A “running” clock will mark the time. The clock will stop only for a team time-out or a referee’s request.

**“Seven-Play Rule”** – This rule will go into effect when the fourth-quarter play-clock reaches 0:00. These additional seven plays represent the two-minute warning. The referee will announce the number of each play prior to the snap. The game score and the team with possession of the ball dictate whether some of all of these plays are required.

**Exchanging Ends** – Teams will exchange ends of the field between the first and second quarters and the third and fourth quarters.

### *B. Half Time*

The half time period will be five minutes.

### *C. Time Outs*

**Two time outs per half** – In addition to these two, each team shall have one time out during “Overtime” if required. Time outs may be called by a coach, team captain, or QB. Time outs shall be one minute in length.

**Other play stoppages** – These may be called at the discretion of the referees or officials. Officials may order the game clock stopped or started when, in their opinion, either team is trying to conserve or consume playing time by tactics obviously unfair. This could also result in a delay penalty of five-yards.

NOTE: SPECIAL CONSIDERATION AND CARE SHALL BE GIVEN TO ALL INJURIES. THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IS HOW AN INJURED PLAYER IS REMOVED.

### *D. Play Clock*

**30 seconds** – Each team will have this time to put the ball in play after an official has marked the ball and whistled the ball ready for play.

## VII. SCORING

### *A. Touchdowns*

**Six points** – Touchdowns occurs when the team possessing the ball, advances across their opponent’s goal line. The team scoring a touchdown then receives an opportunity for point(s) after the touchdown.

### *B. Point after Touchdown*

**Three-Yard Spot** – The scoring team gains **one point** by running the ball across the goal line or **two points** by passing the ball across the goal line.

**10-Yard Spot** – The scoring team gains **two points** by either running or passing the ball across the goal line.

### *C. Safety*

**Two points** – A safety occurs when the defense downs the ball in their opponent's end zone. They then receive a free kick from the opponent (begin possession of the ball on their own 20 yard line).

## **VIII. SPECIFIC PARTICIPATION RULES**

### *A. Minimum number of participants*

**Five players** – Games can begin with a minimum of five players per team.

### *B. Substitution*

**First three quarters** – Player who starts a quarter must play the entire quarter. No player may play more than one quarter MORE than any other player. No player may quarterback more than three quarters. Injured players may return that quarter or trade quarters with another player (coach's choice). Players who miss practice may play only one quarter in the next game (coach's choice).

**Final (4<sup>th</sup>) quarter** – Coaches may substitute freely in the fourth quarter if either team is 17 points or more ahead.

### *C. Rushing the Opposing Offense*

**Two players** – Only two players may cross the line of scrimmage (LOS) to rush the opponent prior to the ball crossing that same point. If the ball carrier crosses the LOS and then retreats back behind it, ALL defensive players may cross the LOS.

### *D. Specific Offensive Rules*

**1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Divisions** – Teams must attempt a forward pass on either first or second down. On fourth down, teams may choose to punt normally, or move the ball forward 20 yards in place of their punt to exchange possession.

**The Snap** – The ball must be left at the official mark and to begin the play, the center must snap the ball between center's legs and continuous to the receiver of the ball.

### ***E. Coaches in the Huddle (on the field)***

**1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Divisions** – Two coaches per team can be on the field/in the huddle.

**3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Divisions** – One coach can be on the field/in the huddle.

**Shirt color** – Coaches should avoid wearing the same color top as their team to avoid confusing the opposing quarterback.

### ***F. Suspensions***

**Participation Suspensions** – The officials may suspend any player for unsportsmanlike conduct, rough or profane language or fighting of any nature. Suspended players and coaches will need to meet with the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE to determine if additional sanctions apply.

### ***G. Forfeits***

**Participation Forfeits** – If one of the teams can not field the required five players, the game will be forfeited with the other team winning “7 to 0”.

**Conduct Forfeits** – If through an action of a coach, fan, or participant, the referee determines a forfeit is appropriate, the game will be considered as a win for the opposing team with the current score (if the opponent is leading), or by one point (if the opponent was behind).

Conduct requiring forfeit decisions include unsportsmanlike conduct, rough or profane language, or fighting of any nature.

## IX. SPECIFIC GAME RULES

### *A. Coin Toss*

At the beginning of the game, a coin is tossed and the winner gets his choice of goals, the option of offense or defense, or the option to defer his choice to the beginning of the second half.

### *B. Ball in Play*

The ball shall be put in play at the beginning of the game, beginning of the second half, and after a score by placing the ball on the 20 yard line of the offensive team and play shall begin with first down.

### *C. First Downs*

The offense has four downs to advance the ball across the next line on the field. After third down, if a first down has not been gained, the offense must declare their intention to either go for the first down or exchange possession by punting. If in four downs, the ball has not crossed the line, possession will go over at that spot.

**Marking the Ball** – The ball will spotted based on the spot a flag(s) were pulled or dropped, the ball touched the ground from a legal pitch or was dropped (after possession was gained), or the ball carrier or ball crossed the side line. In order to rule on goal line and first-down line spots, BOTH FLAGS must cross the line in question.

### *D. Offensive Formations*

The offense may line up in any desired formation (no line or backfield requirements), but someone other than the center must receive the snap (and the snap must occur between the center's legs).

**Stances** – Any stance is permitted, although the center must address the ball squarely and the snap must pass between his legs.

**Motion** – One offensive player may be moving at the time the ball is snapped IF that movement is parallel or away from the line of scrimmage.

**Shift** – Two or more offensive players may change positions after the center has touched the ball (addressed the snap), IF all players except a player in motion are set for one count before the snap is made and the play began.

### ***E. Defensive Formations***

The defense may line up in any desired formation EXCEPT that no defensive player may line up directly over the center.

**Rushing** – ONLY TWO defensive players may cross the LOS prior to the offense doing so (see next paragraph for more information).

### ***F. Encroachment & Offsides***

A five-yard penalty will be called when either an offensive or defensive player crosses the plane of the LOS prior to the center snap. A center that falsely moves the football will also result in a five-yard penalty.

If a player on either side LINES UP OFFSIDES, the Line-Judge will point down 45 degrees toward that player's team. If that player does not get back on-sides before the ball is snapped, he will be considered as having encroached at the moment of snap. If an official has not "warned" the team for lining up offsides by pointing at them, he should not call encroachment on them at the snap of the ball. They should be warned first and given a chance to move back.

### ***G. Screening & Rushing***

The effort of the rushers to disrupt the play combined with the effort of any screeners attempting to prevent this from occurring can be the source of most of the official's judgment calls and the coaches and players frustration. This struggle between screener and rusher needs to be clear in all participants, and is most analogous to basketball's use of the "charging/blocking" fouls. If the screener has a solid position, the rusher can not go through him. If the rusher has the advantage then the screener cannot slide into him.

**Screener** – Screen blocking shall be defined as obstructing the rusher's **path** to the quarterback or ball carrier.

ALL SCREENING MUST BE BEHIND THE LOS. NO  
DOWNFIELD SCREENING IS ALLOWED!

THE SCREENER MUST BE HOLDING ON TO HIS FLAG BELT  
OR HAVE HIS THUMBS HOOKED INTO HIS PANTS WITH  
EACH HAND WHILE SCREENING.

A penalty will be called if screener's hand leaves his flag belt or pants  
while in the process of screening within two yards of the rusher.

**Rusher** – The restrictions places on the screener places him in a very  
vulnerable position and therefore restrictions also apply to the rusher.

THE MAIN RESPONSIBILITY OF AVOIDING CONTACT RESTS  
WITH THE RUSHER!

The rusher may not run over or through the screener. The rusher may  
not pull or push the screener with his hands or arms. The rusher is  
entitled to his path if both shoulders are outside the closest shoulder of  
the screener.

A penalty will be called if the rusher touches the head or neck of an  
upright screener.

### ***H. Rushing & the Quarterback***

The other area of safety applies to the upper-body contact between  
rusher and the quarterback.

**Roughing the Quarterback** – If in an attempt to block a pass, a rusher  
touches the quarterback's HEAD, THROWING ARM or the rusher's  
momentum carries him into the quarterback a penalty will be called.

The rusher can pull the quarterback's flag however as with any other ball  
carrier.

### ***I. Behind the LOS Exchanges***

**Forward pass** – ONLY ONE forward pass is allowed per play whether  
it is completed behind or beyond the line of scrimmage (LOS)

**Laterals and Throw-Backs** – Up to two laterals and/or throwbacks (ball pitched or thrown parallel or away from the LOS) are allowed behind the LOS.

**Examples:**

- LEGAL – throwback – run (sideways) – lateral – run across the LOS
- LEGAL – completed pass behind LOS – lateral – run across the LOS
- ILLEGAL – completed pass behind LOS – completed pass downfield
- ILLEGAL – throwback – throwback – lateral – run across the LOS

***J. Beyond the LOS Exchanges***

**Forward pass** – NO FORWARD exchange (pass, pitch, kick, slap, or inadvertent toss) is allowed. The play will be dead from the point it occurred and the penalty marked off from this spot.

**Laterals** – Any number of legal (behind the ball carrier) laterals may be performed beyond the LOS. Any lateral not caught will be marked where the ball hit the ground. Any lateral juggled downfield and eventually dropped, will be marked where first contacted.

***K. Receiving***

**Eligibility** – All players of both teams are eligible pass receivers. Each player is eligible, even if he steps out of bounds or out of the end-zone as long as he made an immediate attempt to get back in bounds, and is in bounds prior to making an acceptable catch.

**Acceptable Catch** – A reception will be considered good if the receiver has full possession (one or more hands solidly on ball) of the catch and is in bounds or makes a leaping catch where at least one foot comes down in bounds.

Two or more receivers (including same or opposing team players) may touch (tip) a pass before a reception is made.

**Unacceptable Catch** – A pass shall be ruled incomplete if the receiver touches to any degree the lines marking the sidelines and the

end zone boundaries by both feet or the first foot to come down if attempting a leaping reception.

### ***L. PASS INTERFERENCE***

**Definition** – Contact between the offensive and/or defensive players where an unfair receiving advantage is gained. Pass interference rules shall apply to any pass made from behind the LOS, whether it is a forward pass, a throwback, or lateral. Pass interference applies equally to both the offensive and defensive player.

**Rule** – After the pass is in the air, neither the pass receiver nor defender may touch the other until one of them touches the ball. Whoever initiates contact during this time is guilty of pass interference.

**Stripping** – Neither the receiver or defender may attempt to dislodge a ball held by the other.

**Intentional vs. Non-Intentional Contact** – After the initial touch but before a reception is made, the official must use his best judgment to determine any contact as either non-intentional (both players attempting to play the ball) or intentional or avoidable contact which would result in a penalty.

**The Penalty** – No matter when or what type of pass interference occurs, this type of penalty will be offered as a choice to either accept the play as it stands or take the penalty.

**Accepted Offensive Pass Interference** – Penalty will be marked 10 yards from either the point of infraction (P.O.I) or line of scrimmage (LOS) whichever is more severe and includes a loss of down (and play number if in a numbered play situation).

**Accepted Defensive Pass Interference** – Penalty will be marked 10 yards from the point of infraction (P.O.I.) or line of scrimmage (LOS) whichever is more severe, an automatic first down will be awarded (and the play number repeated if in a numbered play situation).

If infraction occurs on the playing field during a point after touchdown (P.A.T.) the ball will be placed at the one yard line and a new try will be awarded if needed.

If infraction occurs in the end-zone during normal play, the ball will be placed at the one yard line and a first down will be awarded.

**Screening** – The defender or offensive player that blocks the other's view of the ball without playing the football is guilty of pass interference.

**Bump & Run** – A defensive player intentionally using contact at or near the LOS to hinder the receiver's route will be guilty of a 10-yard penalty.

### ***M. Deflagging***

**Definition** – A ball carrier is downed and the ball is dead when either flag is detached from his belt or when the ball or either knee touches the ground. A defensive player may leave his feet to pull the offensive player's flag, but may not make contact while doing so. When a defensive player pulls the ball carrier's flag, he should stop and hold it above his head.

**Tackling** – Any form of physically grasping the ball carrier or otherwise intentionally hindering his progress will result in a 10-yard penalty added onto the point of infraction or the LOS whichever is more severe to the penalized team. If the official deems that the tackle prevented a score, the ball will be placed on the defender's one yard line, and awarded a first down. Flagrant physical contact will result in a 15-yard penalty and a possible suspension from the game.

Pushing or knocking the ball carrier out of bounds also constitutes tackling and will receive a 10-yard penalty.

**Illegal Pulling** – Any player that pulls a flag from an opposing player when he does not have the ball or with the intent to make that player an ineligible receiver will commit a 10-yard penalty.

**Legal Pulling** – Any defender may pull the ball carrier's flag only after the offensive player's initial touch of the football. If a legally flagged receiver catches the ball or receives a lateral, the ball is dead at that point. The quarterback whose flag is pulled while his arm is moving forward will be allowed to complete the throw. If he then receives the ball again, he will be treated as a legally deflagged player and the ball will be marked where he touched it.

**Flag Guarding** – A ball carrier cannot use his hands, arms, or head to prevent access to his flags. This action would result in a 10-yard penalty from the point of infraction.

**Quick Whistle** – If an official whistles the play dead prematurely, the offense shall have the choice of a) accepting the ball where it was prematurely whistled dead with loss of down or b) running the play over.

### ***M. Ball Carrier***

The responsibility of avoiding contact rests with the ball carrier. The ball carrier must show an effort to avoid contact and cannot deliberately run or drive into a defensive player. The ball carrier must also allow free access to his flags and not protect them with his hands, arms or head. No stiff-arming is allowed.

The ball carrier can attempt to spin, or jump to avoid defenders, but while doing this he is considered “out of control” and any contact caused by these movements will result in a 10-yard penalty.

### ***N. Fumble***

When a backward pass or fumble hits the ground between the goal lines, it becomes dead and belongs to the team last in possession at the spot where it hits the ground or at the inbounds line opposite the spot where it left the field of play. Offensives fumbles which go forward and hit beyond the next line-to-gain will result in the ball being marked dead at the point FROM WHICH IT WAS FUMBLED, and the play ended. When the ball is fumbled into or out of the opposing team’s end zone by the offensive team, it will be ruled a touchback. The opposing team gains possession on their 20 yard line.

### ***O. Center Snap***

A center snap MUST go between the center’s legs and may touch the ground before it gets to the quarterback and remain playable if the quarterback fields it cleanly off of a bounce or from the ground. However, if the quarterback muffs the ball to the ground it is dead where it first touches the ground. A false movement of the football by the center after he is set shall constitute encroachment. A DIRECT snap (directly from the center’s hands to the receiver’s hands) may be used.

The center may not again receive the ball from the receiver through his legs, but can receive a normal handoff, throwback, pass or lateral.

### ***P. The Punt***

If a punt is to be made, the offense must announce it to the official before the ball can be declared ready for play. The offense must declare within 10 seconds after being asked by the official. After the offense declares, the official will mark the ball ready for play whereupon the offense will have 15 seconds to punt the ball. ONCE DECLARED THE OFFENSE MUST PUNT THE BALL!

**Punting Team (Offense)** – The offense then gets into their punting formation and the punter receives the ball (any method) from the center. The punter then punts the ball with the other players “covering the punt”. If the punt is CAUGHT IN THE AIR OR ON THE FIRST BOUNCE, the opposing team may attempt to return punt and the punting team must deflag the ball carrier.

**Receiving Team (Defense)** – After the punt is declared, the defense must move five players within five yards of the LOS. These players can not move from this zone, but may try to block the punt without crossing the LOS. If the punt is fielded and advanced past this zone, the five players may move freely for laterals.

**Returning Punts** – The receiving team may place the remaining three players of their choosing back deep to receive the punt. In order to successfully field a punt and advance it, a player must catch the punt in the air or on the first bounce. Once the punt hits the ground the second time it is dead at that spot. Once fielded, the returner is treated as a ball carrier and the other two returners may move for laterals or throwbacks, but MAY NOT DOWNFIELD SCREEN.

If a returner touches the ball in the air on or on the way up on the first bounce, ALL PLAYERS become eligible to receive the ball (even the punting team).

**Unfielded Punts** – If the receiving team fails to field the punt in the air or on the first bounce the ball is marked where it hit the ground after the first bounce or the point where it left the field of play.

**Punts Falling into the End Zone** – Any unfielded punt that enters the end zone will be brought out to the 20. Any punt returner that fields a punt in the end zone and is deflagged before crossing the goal line will be considered a touchback.

**Penalties on Punts** – Penalties on the defense (receiving team) prior to the change of possession will allow the offense (punting team) to reconsider their declaration in light of the new field position.

### ***Q. Penalties***

After a penalty is called, only the captain/coach of the penalized team may discuss it with the officials. The official making the call is obligated to give the description of the infraction along with the rule and the player or players involved, to the captain/coach of the penalized team. The official will then give the opposing captain/coach his choices on the penalty. **THE CAPTAIN'S/COACH'S FIRST CHOICE WILL BE FINAL.**

Whenever a penalty would normally be marked off past the goal line, the ball will be placed on the one yard line.

Whenever inappropriate conduct is performed by a player or coach, the official will use their judgment to include penalties, suspensions or forfeitures based on the severity of those acts.

**Offsetting Penalties** – If offsetting fouls occur **DURING** a down, or while the ball is ready-for-play for such down, that down shall be repeated. If offsetting fouls occur **BETWEEN** successive downs, the next down shall be the same as it would have been had no fouls occurred.

**Exceptions** – If there is a change of team possession during a down or at the end of a down, the team last gaining possession may decline the offsetting foul and retain possession after accepting the penalty for its own infraction providing that infraction did not occur before the change of possession.

Example: “Team A is guilty of illegal screening on a play that resulted in a pass interception by Team B. After the interception occurred, Team B’s ball carrier was penalized for illegal flag guarding.” – Team B could

retain possession by accepting their penalty and declining Team A's penalty.

**Change of Possession Penalties** – A team that commits a penalty AFTER gaining possession will retain possession and the penalty will be marked from the point of infraction.

**Forward Laterals** – Any pitch, throw, or toss that occurs beyond the LOS and is forward of the ball carrier shall be penalized from the P.O.I with loss of down. The point of infraction in this case will be the spot where the forward lateral originated.