

# SARPY COUNTY YOUTH FLAG LEAGUE FOOTBALL RULES 2026

## ● GENERAL RULES

- A coin toss determines first possession. The team winning the coin toss has the options of Offense, Defense, Direction of play, or to defer till the second half. Halftime is a true halftime where possession will change based on the coin toss.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) downs to cross midfield. If the offense has not crossed midfield after third down, it must declare 'Punt' or 'Play' on fourth down. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield after third down, the Head Coach must immediately declare either "Punt" or "Play."
  - Punt: Possession changes to the opposing team, which will begin its drive at its own 5-yard line. If the Mercy Rule is in effect and the team receiving possession is behind by three (3) or more scores, that team will instead begin its possession at midfield.
  - Play: The offense may attempt a fourth down play. If the offense successfully advances the ball beyond midfield, the drive continues with three (3) plays to score. If the offense fails to reach midfield, possession changes to the opposing team at the spot where the ball became dead.
  - Once the offense crosses midfield and earns a first down, it has three (3) downs to score a touchdown. There is no fourth-down “Punt or Play” option during this scoring series. If the offense fails to score after third down, possession changes and the opposing team begins its possession at its own 5-yard line.
- Teams will provide the game ball. Each team uses their own ball.
- All footballs must be approved by an official – all decisions by the official are final.
- Game ball sizes are:
  - Pre-K / K: Mini/Pee Wee (Mini Red NFL Ball only, PeeWee Blue/Black NFL, PeeWee Wilson K2)
  - 1<sup>st</sup>- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade: Pee Wee (Blue/Black NFL, PeeWee Wilson K2)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> Grade: Pee Wee (Blue/Black NFL, PeeWee Wilson K2)
  - 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> Grade: Junior (Brown/White NFL, Junior Wilson TDJ)

## ● FLAGS

- Must be 2” or more below knee.
- Flags cannot be the same color as the team shorts colors (EX. Yellow shorts cannot have yellow flags) flags must be an alternate color of the shorts worn.

## ● PLAYERS/GAME SCHEDULES

- Teams must field a minimum of five (5) players at all times. If (due to unforeseen circumstances) a team cannot field 5 players, they may play 1 member down (fielding 4 players).

## ● TIMING

- Games are played to 40 minutes (two 20-minute halves), running time, with a 5-minute halftime.

There will be a 2-minute warning for each half where the clock will stop at 2:00 and re-start with the next snap of the ball.

- Each time the ball is spotted a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
- Offensive huddles should only last 30 seconds.
- Each team has one 60-second and one 30-second time out per half.

## ● SCORING

- Official will turn in score to Director after each game – Official will flip scores on scoreboard
- TD- 6pts
- Extra Pt 10 Yard Deep – Pass or Run 2pts
- Extra Pt 5 yard Deep – Pass ONLY 1pt.
- Safety – 2 points awarded to the defensive team that stops a team behind their own endzone. The ball will then be turned over and given to the defensive team.
- There are NO Points awarded for Interception return on an extra point. The ball is dead.

## ● SNAPS

- Shotgun snaps - the ball must be snapped from the ground and off to one side, to start play (no snaps between the legs).
- Direct snaps – the ball may be snapped either between the legs or from the side
- The ball must be snapped in one continuous motion from the ground.
- The center may adjust and grip the ball prior to the offense becoming set. Once players are set, the ball may not be lifted, repositioned, or adjusted before the snap.  
Each team will receive one warning per game for this infraction. Any subsequent violation will result in a dead ball and loss of down.

## ● OVERTIME

- Regular Season: There will be no overtime during regular-season games. Any regular-season game that is tied at the end of regulation will be recorded as a tie.
- Bracket Play: Overtime will be used during bracket play when a game is tied at the end of regulation.
- A coin toss will be conducted before the first overtime. The team winning the coin toss may choose to begin overtime on offense or defense.
- Each team will receive one possession beginning at the 10-yard line and will have three (3) downs to score a touchdown.
- Normal extra-point rules apply following a touchdown during the first overtime.
- Each team must receive an opportunity to possess the ball. If the score remains tied after both teams have completed their first overtime possession, another overtime period will be played.
- Beginning with the second overtime and for all subsequent overtime periods, the same possession format will be repeated; however, after scoring a touchdown, teams must attempt a two-point conversion. One-point conversion attempts are not permitted.
- Overtime periods will continue until both teams have had an equal number of possessions and one team finishes the overtime period with more points than its opponent.

- **RUNNING**

- The quarterback (the offensive player that receives the snap) cannot run with the ball. (First person to receive the ball after the snap. Direct snaps to the running back, turn the running back into the quarterback) cannot run the ball unless another player has possession of the ball (from a handoff or lateral) and the ball is given back to the quarterback (pass, handoff, lateral).
- The center is allowed to run with the ball. However, hand off to the center may not be made by placing the ball between the center's legs.
- Direct handoffs and laterals behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Offense may use multiple handoffs.
- Laterals, backward passes and pitches are allowed, however forward laterals must be received beyond the line of scrimmage. Forward laterals have to originate behind the line of scrimmage. If received behind, can only pass backwards.
- Backward laterals beyond the line of scrimmage are allowed (hook and ladder play).
- You may not do a hand-off beyond the line of scrimmage.
- The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- Spinning is allowed, but offensive players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player (no diving/hurdling). Defensive players may dive to pull an offensive flag.
- The ball is spotted where the BALL is when the flag is pulled.

- **RECEIVING**

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time.
- ⊖ A player must have at least one foot inbound when making a reception.

- **PASSING**

- Shotgun formation is allowed by the quarterback.
- The quarterback has a 10 second "pass clock" for PreK -2<sup>nd</sup> grade
- 7 second "pass clock" for 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade.
- If a pass is not thrown within 10 or 7 seconds depending on the ages, play is dead, loss of down. Once the ball is handed off, the 10 or 7 second rule is no longer in effect.
- Interceptions change the possession and are returnable except on extra points.
- All forward passes must be caught beyond the line of scrimmage.

- **DEAD BALLS**

- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
- Play is ruled "dead" when:
  - Ball carrier's flag is pulled.
  - Ball carrier steps out of bounds.

- Touchdown or safety is scored.
- A fumbled ball (fumbles are not live – play is dead at the spot where the ball was dropped – but cannot be forward)
- Pre K – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teams if a ball is dropped on the snap the play may be retried without penalty. 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and higher if a snap is dropped it will be a loss of down.
- Ball carrier's knee hits the ground.
- Ball carrier's flag falls out. Ball is returned to the spot the flag fell
- Flag guarding
- Down field Offensive Blocking

## ● RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK

- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
- Any number of players can rush the quarterback.
- Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect, and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- A special marker, or the referee, will designate seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
- Absolutely no blocking or tackling is allowed, which includes down field situations. If you initiate contact it is considered blocking.
- Mercy Rule Blitzing – a team with a three score lead will not be permitted to rush past the line of scrimmage. However, if the lead at any time should fall under three scores they will then be permitted to rush once again. If there is a rush within the three score lead or more an illegal rush penalty of 15 yards will be enforced.
- Mercy Rule – If a team is behind by 3 or more scores they will always start at MID FIELD – while the team that is up by 3 or more scores must always start at the opposing 5-yard line

## ● SPORTSMANSHIP/ROUGHING

- Coaches, Assistant Coaches, Parents, and Spectators must not use any foul or offensive language that may be offensive to the officials and the players.
- If the field monitor or referee witness any acts of tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player, coach or spectator will be given a warning, and the next unsportsmanlike act, the player, coach or spectator will be ejected and sit out for the next scheduled game. **Foul play will not be tolerated. Officials are authorized to eject for profanity without warning.**
- Trash talking is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. (Trash talk is talk that may be offensive to officials, opposing players, teams, or spectators) If trash talking occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game and sit out for the next scheduled game.
- Celebration: Official(s) have the right to determine if acts are perceived to be excessive celebration or taunting. These can be enforced after the play, as a 15-yard penalty. If it is after a score, the penalty will be enforced after the change of possession.

- **PENALTIES**

- All penalties will be called by the referee.
- **DEFENSE**
  - Offsides - 5 yards
  - Interference - 10 yards and automatic first down
  - Illegal contact (holding, blocking, etc.) - 10 yards and automatic first down
  - Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball) - 10 yards and automatic first down
  - Illegal rushing (starting rush from inside 7-yard marker) - 5 yards and automatic first down
  - Tackling – 15 yards spot of foul and automatic first down. Warning with subsequent objection.
  - Roughing the passer – Any contact with the quarterback above the chest – 15 yards previous spot and automatic first down.
- **OFFENSE**
  - Loss of a down penalties mean that if you are on the 2<sup>nd</sup> down and commit a penalty you are now on 3<sup>rd</sup> down. All offensive penalties are enforced from the previous spot.
  - Illegal motion (more than one person moving, false start, etc) - 5 yards and replay of down
  - Illegal forward pass (forward lateral beyond line of scrimmage) - 5 yard and loss of down
  - Offensive pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender) - 10 Yards and loss of down
  - Flag guarding - 10 yards (from the spot of the foul) and loss of down
  - Delay of game - clock stops, 10 yards and replay of down
  - Down field blocking – an offensive player who is down field and not moving (IE: set) by rule is not blocking – 5 yards from spot and loss of down.
  - Defensive players MAY NOT initiate contact to draw downfield blocking penalties.

- **BLOCKING**

- Blocking is not permitted at any time.
- Offensive players may run routes in front of defenders, including rushers. Incidental contact may occur during normal play and is not a penalty.
- A penalty for illegal blocking will be called when a player:
  - Initiates contact
  - Alters their route to impede a defender
  - Moves laterally suddenly or stops in front of a defender and doesn't attempt turn towards QB
  - Extends arms or body to create contact

- Is not running a legitimate route
- Officials will determine intent. If the action is to impede a defender rather than run a route, it is illegal blocking.

## ● NOTES

- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- The coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players and coaches cannot question judgment calls.
- For the PreK-4th grade divisions, one coach is allowed to be on the field of play during the game. For the 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> grade division, coaches are not allowed on the field.
- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
- There are no kickoffs.
- PreK-2nd Rule: If a team fumbles the snap, the whistle will blow and the play will be dead. The official will re-set the ball and the team may, without entering the huddle, re-snap the ball without a loss of down. If the team goes into the huddle, they are charged with a down.

## ● ATTIRE

- Mouthpieces are optional for play but are strongly encouraged.
- Official jerseys and flags must be worn during play.
- All T-shirts must be tucked in during play.
- No shorts or pants with pockets will be allowed. NO Pockets!!
- No jewelry of any kind is allowed.

## ● ELIGIBILITY

- All age divisions are combined (Pre K / K), (1<sup>st</sup> /2<sup>nd</sup> Grade), (3<sup>rd</sup> /4<sup>th</sup> Grade), (5<sup>th</sup> /6<sup>th</sup> Grade).
- Division is determined by the grade your player/team is in at the time the season starts.
- Players/team may play up in a division higher than their grade.
- Players/teams may not have a higher-level grade player while playing in a younger division
- Players are permitted to play on multiple teams, provided these teams are not within the same grade level division

- **FIELD DIAGRAM:**

- 60-yards long x 30 yards wide.
- Field of Play is 50 yard long, with first down at midfield, 25 yards.
- 5-yard end zones.
- 5-yard no running zones heading into end zone and approaching midfield for 1<sup>st</sup> down.

