

2025 Southwest Michigan Rocket Football Rules

The following rules have been discussed and agreed upon by all of the communities in the Southwest Michigan Rocket Football League. If you have any questions concerning rules, see your community league director for any clarifications. All referees should have a copy of these rules well in advance of any game. These rules are set up in such a way to provide a safe, fair, and fun learning experience for all of those involved in Rocket Football. If at any time you observe any of these rules not being followed, please contact your community director.

Southwest Michigan Rocket Football League will use MHSAA football rules.

The following are rule variations that have been adopted specifically for this league.

Section I: Equipment and Facilities

A. Every player must be equipped with the following:

- 1) Gym shoes, soccer shoes, or football shoes with rubber cleats that are no more than 5/8" long. Metal cleats of any kind are NOT allowed.
- 2) Shoulder Pads
- 3) Football Helmet with face guard that meets playing standards.
- 4) Pants with knee, thigh, hip and kidney pads. Pads do not have to conform to MHSAA regulations.
- 5) Mouth guard. The mouth guard must be attached to the helmet unless the player is using a prescribed orthodontic mouth device. If not attached, the player must leave the field of play until the mouth guard is legally in place. The mouth guard should be in place when the offensive team breaks the huddle. If not in place when the team takes a set position, the official will enforce a 5-yard penalty.
- 6) All equipment should be checked by each community before distributing.

B. If the team's jerseys are the same color, the home team will provide and wear pullover vests of a different color.

C. Football: Both Minor and Major teams will use a junior size football ball.

Section II: Practices

A. Teams may have a maximum of **8 fully padded practice sessions prior to the jamboree. Pre-season practices will be limited to 120 minutes per session. Fully padded practices can begin on August 1st. For conditioning purposes, teams can have helmet only practices prior to August 1st.**

B. After the first game, teams may have three (3) practices per week consisting of 90 minutes per practice, or two (2) practices per week of 120 minutes per practice.

C. Non-contact sessions or non-contact camps are not counted as practice.

D. No two- a-day practices are permitted.

Section II: Practices (continued)

E. All community programs will adopt the MHSAA policy for Managing Heat & Humidity. Each community may decide to adopt a more stringent policy, lowering the temperature for practice cancellation, for example. The MHSAA policy includes cancellation of practices and games if the Heat Index is above 104 degrees and no equipment practices when the Heat Index is 99 to 104 degrees. It is recommended that equipment be removed when not involved in contact if Heat Index is 95 to 99 degrees.

F. All communities will comply with the Michigan Sports Concussion Law, which includes mandatory concussion awareness through an on-line training program for coaches, a signed statement from parents acknowledging receipt of educational materials and written clearance from a health professional for any player suspected of sustaining a concussion.

Section III: Participants

A. All participants must be registered and have **guardian signed permission** and birth certificate **or other official proof of age** on file with their league director or coach before practicing or playing in a game.

B. Each community league will keep registration information with participant's name and birth date on file with league director or coach.

C. Each team will have an official league approved roster signed by the community league director. The roster will contain the following information: number, player name, birth date, age and weight. Only players on the official roster may play. To make things run smoother, team rosters will be shared electronically between league directors prior to the season to share with coaches. **Rosters are due on the Tuesday after Labor Day Weekend. Any subsequent roster changes must be communicated and approved by the League.**

D. League age and restrictions: League age determined by player's age on August 1st.

MINOR: AGES 8-9, See Rule concerning AGE 7*

MAJOR: AGES 10-12

*** PLAYERS AGE 7 ARE ALLOWED TO PLAY IN MINOR LEAGUE with approval of community league director.**

**** PLAYERS AGE 9 WEIGHING MORE THAN 200 LBS WITHOUT EQUIPMENT WILL PLAY IN THE MAJOR LEAGUE.**

*****10 YEAR OLD PLAYERS MAY PLAY IN THE MINOR LEAGUE WITH LEAGUE APPROVAL. THE GUIDELINE FOR LEAGUE APPROVAL IS WEIGHING UNDER 70 LBS WITHOUT EQUIPMENT. THESE PLAYERS MAY NOT ADVANCE THE BALL ON OFFENSE AND MUST BE TAPED.**

******PLAYERS AGE 12 MUST BE IN 6TH GRADE OR LOWER.**

E. Weight Restrictions are with Equipment **except Helmets and allowing a 1 lb variance.**

1) Mandatory weigh in for all teams. Home team will provide scale that is to be used for all weigh-ins. At least one coach from each team must be present before weigh in can start. No bathroom scales allowed. Scale must be placed on a hard and flat surface.

Section III: Participants (continued) *The following weights are with equipment without helmets.*

- 2) Once a game has begun it will not be stopped to weigh in a participant. If a player arrives after kickoff, they may play as an overweight player and then weigh in at halftime.
- 3) Using the stipulations listed above: a player that is over 115 pounds in the Minor league and a player that is over 140 pounds in the Major league may NOT advance the ball on offense. A taped defensive player may advance the ball as a result of an interception or fumble. It is required that all players exceeding the weight limit for advancement of the ball are identified by a mark of visible tape placed on their helmet from front to back prior to the start of the game.
- 4) All taped players are restricted to playing on the line from tackle to tackle in a 3 or 4 point stance.
- 5) All taped players may punt, kickoff and attempt field goals and extra points. They may also play on the kick off and kick return teams but may not advance the ball. The ball is spotted where the taped player fields it.
- 6) Unbalanced line requirements: If a team lines up in an unbalanced line where the center is the last player on the end, the center will be an eligible receiver as long as he reports to the official and meets the weight restrictions for ball advancement. Although the center will be an eligible receiver, teams may only play up to two overweight players to the left or right of the center on the line of scrimmage depending on the unbalanced line direction. The defense may line up two overweight players to the left and right of the center or 4 overweight players from the center to the next player on the line.

F. There are to be no compromises regarding weight and age restrictions except for very special circumstances agreed to unanimously on an individual basis by the SMRF community directors. Any coach not abiding by the weight rules will receive a 15 yard penalty and on the 2nd offense will be suspended from the game.

G. Players must warm up before each game. A mandatory 3 minute warm up will take place after the 7 minute halftime talk.

H. Coaches are expected to play every player at least four (4) plays per half. There may be exceptions to this rule when players have missed practice or are otherwise not prepared to play. Kickoffs and punts do not count as a play. Failure to comply with this rule could lead to the dismissal of the coach.

I. If play has stopped for an injured player, that player must leave the game for at least one play. The head coach must approve re-entry before player is allowed to return.

J. All players moving from Minor to Major League will go into a draft. Once on a Minor or Major team, players may stay together the following season.

Section IV: Game Rules

MHSAA rules apply with the following exceptions. Officials are expected to abide by the following rule modifications for the Southwest Michigan Rocket Football League and report

any problems to the field director.

Section IV: Game Rules (continued)

A. At least one registered official and field director must be present for a game to begin. A minimum of two officials should be on the field. In the event of unforeseen circumstances and if both coaches are in agreement, a game can be played without a registered official. The home team's program is responsible for paying referees.

B. Every effort should be made to keep the games moving efficiently. Playing facilities should be accessible 45 minutes prior to the start of the game.

C. Games will consist of four (4) ten (10) minute quarters. Time is kept based on MHSAA rules. The halftime shall be 7 Minutes, with the clock being re-set for a mandatory three (3) minute warm-up. Timers should be familiar with MHSAA clock management rules and referee signals.

D. A mercy rule will go into effect any time during the 2nd half when either team has a lead of 35 points or more. At that time, the game clock will run continuously until the margin is reduced to less than 35 points or until the game ends except for TIPS (Timeouts, injuries, penalties or scores.) The clock may run continuously at any point during the game if both coaches are in agreement.

E. Teams will have 30 seconds to snap the ball after the referee signals ball ready for play. Coaches will receive a warning for violation and then the result will be delay of game.

F. Two coaches from each team are permitted on the playing field for the minor league and one coach for the major league. A coach is allowed on the field during special teams. Coaches must remain 15 yards behind the line of scrimmage when the huddle breaks. This rule must also be observed in a no huddle offense. Coaching will stop at the snap of the ball.

G. SPECIAL TEAMS:

1) All punts, kicking the point after touch down, and field goals must be announced. Kicking and receiving teams must be set until the ball is kicked. The ball must be kicked from a point at least 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage and in between the tackles. No rushing is allowed. When kicking a field goal or PAT both teams on the line must be in a 3 or 4 point stance when the ball is kicked.

2) Point After Touchdown:

Kicking an extra point = 2 points Successful run or pass to end zone = 1 point

3) **When punting in the Minor or Major League**, the option to punt or place the ball 20 yards from the spot of the ball will be given. If inside the 40 yard line, the ball will be placed half the distance to the goal line.

4) No kickoffs allowed in the Minor League. Teams will take possession at their own 35 yard line to start the game, to start the 2nd half and after scores.

5) Kickoffs must be kicked using a regulation kicking tee.

6) Kick receiving team must have at least 5 players between the 45 and 50 yard line and kickoff team must be spread out from sideline to sideline.

H. No ring neck tackling is allowed outside the free blocking zone (3 yards either side of the line of scrimmage from tackle to tackle). Ring neck tackling is defined as any tackle made by

grasping the runner **above** shoulder pads. Referee discretion.

I. The center is allowed to turn the ball parallel to the line of scrimmage in order to snap it

Section IV: Game Rules (continued)

J. No defender will be allowed to line up over the center in the Minor League. This area consists of the distance from outside shoulder to outside shoulder.

K. Visiting team no shows will pay a fee of \$100 to cover referee expenses.

L. No defensive player may advance towards the line of scrimmage before the snap of the ball. Standing defensive players lined up tackle to tackle must be a minimum of 3 yards off the ball.

1st offense: Warning, additional offenses: 5 yard encroachment penalty

M. All offensive and defensive lineman, tackle to tackle, must be in a 3 or 4 point stance. Ends can be in a standing position or 3 point stance. Once set, they are not allowed to move until the ball is snapped, this includes any lateral movement. There is no shifting, jumping or movement to simulate the start of play. Any of these activities will result in a penalty.

N. Field coaches, head coach in the field box and players may call time out.

O. If a player's helmet comes off during play, the play will be whistled dead and the player comes off the field for one play.

P. If a coach is ejected from a game by an official for any reason they are suspended for the rest of that game plus the next two games. If the ejection occurs at the end of the season the suspension carries over to the next season.

Q. Team size is limited to 35 players on the roster.

Section V: Miscellaneous

A. League rules may be changed at any time by a majority vote of the Southwest Michigan Rocket Football League Community Directors. In addition, any league approvals must be by majority vote.

B. No venue may charge for admission or parking for a league game without prior notification to both teams.

It is very important that these rules are distributed to all involved with Southwest Michigan Rocket Football. The rules must be followed strictly to ensure safety and consistency at various playing locations. If you do not understand a rule please contact your community league director for clarification. Failure to comply with league rules could result in forfeiture of games or dismissal from league play.