



# City of Austin

## Parks and Recreation Athletics

### 4 on 4 FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

### NIRSA Rules will govern this activity

#### I. GENERAL

Rosters will be capped at 10 players. If you need to add someone to the roster and your roster is already maxed at 10, someone must be subtracted from the roster. **Players may play on multiple teams during the same night, but no more than 2 teams.**

Rosters will be closed after 5 games played in the season. Meaning, after your 5th game played you can no longer add players to your roster, or pick up players to avoid a forfeit. You are given plenty of time to get players on your roster that can show up to play.

**Players must play in at least 1 regular season game to be eligible to play in the playoffs.** If you have a player on the roster, but never showed during the regular season, he/she is not eligible for the postseason.

Suspended players may not be replaced. Three (3) players are required to avoid a forfeit (this is for all divisions). A forfeit will count if no one shows up for the game. If a team does not have the required number of players, but makes an effort to show up, the 10 minute rule will begin for remaining players to arrive. **If you know you have to forfeit a game, the Athletics Office must be notified by noon of gameday.** Email us at [pardathletics@austintexas.gov](mailto:pardathletics@austintexas.gov)

#### II. Check-In/Identification Policy

- 1) ALL PLAYERS WHO ENTER THE GAME MUST CHECK-IN WITH THE SCOREKEEPER BEFORE THE GAME.
- 2) Scorekeepers will check-in players according to roster. Players are required to show an official valid ID, Driver's licenses, ID card, student ID, and work ID, will be acceptable as long as ID has player name and picture. **Social Media profiles will not be accepted.**
- 3) After an ID has been reviewed by the Scorekeeper the player is required to sign the roster/waiver. Player doesn't have to sign each game, only the first game played. However, ID is required for every game!
- 4) Players who fail to show proper ID WILL NOT be allowed to play.
- 5) Players who arrive late will be allowed to play, however they must check- in during a timeout, in between plays when there is a delay, or at halftime. Failure to do so will result in a forfeit for team.



### III. General Rules

- The offensive team starts from their 5 yard line and must have at least 2 players on the line of scrimmage.
- The offensive team has 3 plays to cross mid field (20 yard line) to gain a new set of downs. Once they have crossed mid field, they now have 3 plays to score a touchdown.
- There are no punts; if a team fails to cross the next zone line to gain in their 3 plays, then it is a turnover on downs.
- On any turnover on downs, the ball will be spotted on the offense's 5 yard line. Any turnover such as an interception or fumble (that goes directly into the defense's hand) can be returned. Play will result in either a touchdown, or play will begin where the player was deflagged.

#### **Scoring:**

- Touchdown- 6 points
- Extra point or try after point- 1 point from the 5 yard line or 2 points from the 10 yard line
- Safety- 2 points
- Mercy Rule- if a team is up by 19 or more points with 1 minute remaining in the game, the game will be declared over.

#### **Running the ball:**

- The quarterback (person receiving the snap) must be at least 2 yards behind the center.
- No offensive player may run the ball across the line of scrimmage.
- **Absolutely NO HANDOFFS, LATERALS, OR PITCHES OF ANY KIND AT ANY POINT ON THE FIELD**

#### **Passing/Receiving the Ball:**

- All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Shovel passes are allowed, but must be beyond the line of scrimmage.
- If a ball is intercepted, it can be returned. Play will either result in a touchdown or play will begin where the player was deflagged. If the ball is intercepted in the end zone, it can be returned. Once the player breaks the plain of the goal line play will begin wherever the player is deflagged. If the flag is pulled in the endzone, or the player takes a knee, play will begin at the 5 yard line.
- All players are eligible to receive a pass, provided they are beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Only one player may be in motion at a time.
- For a catch to be legal, the receiver must have at least one foot in bounds.

#### **Rushing the Quarterback:**

- All players that rush the passer must be a minimum of 7 yards off the line of scrimmage and 1 yard over from the center position (either side) when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the QB



- Players that are not 7 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped may not enter the backfield
- The rusher is allowed a direct line to the quarterback as long as they rush from either side of the center or a bunch formation. The offense must avoid interfering with the rusher if they have established a lane.
- A special marker, or the referee, will designate 7 yards from the line of scrimmage.

#### **Open/Closed (For Co-Rec games only)**

- The term "closed," means a male player may not throw a forward pass completion to any other male player. The term "open" means any player can complete a forward pass to any other player.
- If the crew of officials erroneously indicates the "open/closed" status of a down, then Team A has the option to repeat the down or take the result of the play. This must be done prior to the next snap.
- During the offensive team's possession there may not be 2 consecutive forward pass completions from a male passer to a male receiver. This rule applies to the try-for-point.
- If a male passer completes a forward pass to a male receiver, the next forward pass completion must involve either a female passer or female receiver for positive yards. The spot where the ball becomes dead by rule must be beyond the team (A) scrimmage line (first ball spotter). There is no foul for a female receiver being tagged or deflagged behind the team (A) scrimmage line. The next forward pass completion remains "closed".
- There are no other restrictions concerning a male passer completing forward passes to a female receiver, or female to female, female to male.
- Any foul, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the next forward pass completion is "open" or "closed".

#### **Ball declared dead:** A live ball becomes dead and an official shall sound the whistle or declare it dead:

- When it goes out-of-bounds.
- When any part of the runner other than a hand or foot touches the ground.
- When a touchdown, touchback, safety, or successful try-for-point is made.
- When a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
- When a fumble by a player touches the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players. A ball snapped, which hits the ground before or after getting to the intended receiver, is dead at the spot where it hits the ground. NOTE: If in doubt, the snap close to the ground remains alive.
- When a forward pass is legally completed, or a player catches a loose ball on, above, or behind the opponent's goal line.
- When a runner has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player. A flag belt is removed when the clip is detached from the belt.
- When a runner is legally tagged with one hand between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm, once the flag belt is no longer attached.
- When a passer is deflagged/tagged prior to releasing the ball. NOTE: If in doubt as to the release or not, the ball is released.



- When an official sounds his/her whistle inadvertently during a down or during a down in which the penalty for a foul is declined, when:
- The ball is in player possession - the team in possession may elect to put the ball in play where declared dead or replay the down.
- The ball is loose from a fumble, backward pass, illegal kick, or illegal forward pass - the team in possession may elect to put the ball in play where possession was lost or replay the down.
- During a legal forward pass or a free or protected scrimmage kick - the ball is returned to the previous spot and the down replayed.

#### **IV. FIELD AND GENERAL GAME SPECIFICATIONS**

4 on 4 Flag Football is played on a field 40 yards long and 25 yards wide, with 7 yard end-zones.

The game shall be played under the supervision of 2 officials. The officials are: referee and back judge. Each coach shall designate to the referee the team captain or captains. If more than one player is designated, a speaking captain must be selected to make all decisions. The captain's first choice of any penalty option shall be irrevocable; decisions involving penalties shall be made before any charged time-out is granted to either team. Team representatives, including players, substitutes, replaced players, coaches, trainers, spectators, and other persons affiliated with the team are subject to the rules of the game, and shall be governed by decisions of officials assigned to the game.

The lines bounding the sidelines and the end zones are out-of-bounds in their entirety, and the inbounds area is bound by the lines. The entire width of each goal shall be a part of the end zone.

Three (3) ball spotters (rubber disks) are required; one will mark the team [A] (offensive team) scrimmage line. The second will mark the team [B] (defensive team) scrimmage line. The third will mark the defensive rush line. The defensive scrimmage line will be one (1) yard off of the offensive scrimmage line, and the rush line will be seven (7) yards off of the offensive scrimmage line. The referee can either mark the defensive rush line with a marker or walk it off themselves.

#### **V. PERIODS, TIME FACTORS, SUBSTITUTIONS**

Before the start of the game the referee shall toss a coin in the presence of the opposing field captains, after first designating which captain shall call the fall of the coin. All officials shall be present at the coin toss.

- The captain winning the toss shall have choice of options for the first half or shall defer their option to the second half. The options shall be:
  - To choose whether his/her team will start on offense or defense.
  - To choose the goal his/her team will defend. The captain, not having the first choice of options for a half, shall exercise the remaining option.

**Forfeit time:** Game time is forfeit time if no players from team are on site. If players are on site, the game clock will begin and the team has 5 minutes to arrive and begin play. If play has not initiated at the 5 minute mark then the game is a forfeit. Team that forfeits receives an "F" rating for that game. Team



that is forfeited against will receive an “A” rating. **If you forfeit 2 games or more, YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PLAYOFFS!!**

**Game time:** Playing time and intermissions: Playing time shall be 30 minutes, divided into two (2) halves of 15 minutes each. The intermission between the halves shall be two (2) minutes. When overtime is used, there will be a two-minute (2) intermission.

**Extension of periods:** A half must be extended by an untimed down, except for unsportsmanlike or nonplayer fouls, if during the last timed down, one of the following occurred:

- A) There was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted unless the penalty is a loss of down penalty.
- B) There was a double foul.
- C) There was an inadvertent whistle.
- If a touchdown was scored, the try-for-point is attempted unless the touchdown is scored during the last down of the 2nd half and the point(s) would not affect the outcome of the game.

If (a), (b), or (c) occurs during the untimed down, the procedure is repeated. Apply the “extension of periods” rule prior to enforcing the mercy rule.

**Game Clock:** The clock will start on the snap. It will run continuously for both halves with the exception of:

- Team time-out - starts on the snap.
- Referee's time-out - starts on ready for play.

**Ending a half:**

- No foul has occurred.
- No request for a coach-referee conference has occurred.
- No other irregularity has occurred.
- Tie Game

**Pre-toss:** In a case of a game ending in a tie score, the official's must bring all players and coaches of both teams to the center of the field. They will discuss the tiebreaker procedures and answer all questions prior to the coin toss. After this meeting the field captains will stay while the remaining players and coaches return to their respective sidelines.

**The coin toss:** A coin will be flipped by the referee to determine the options as in the start of the game. The visiting team captain shall call the toss. There will be only one coin flip during the overtime. If additional overtime periods are played, field captains will alternate choices. The winner of the toss shall be given options of offense, defense, or direction. The loser of the toss shall make a choice of the remaining options.

**Tie Breaker:** Each team will get a possession in the overtime periods. All overtime periods are played toward the same goal line. Unless moved by penalty, each team will start 1st and goal from the 5 yard line. The object will be to score a touchdown within 3 downs. Once a team does so, the series is over. An



overtime period consists of a series of 3 downs by each team. If the score is still tied after one period, they go to a second overtime, and the team that was on offense to start the first overtime will start on defense for the 2nd overtime. If the first team which is awarded the ball scores, the opponent will still have a chance to win the game. Unless moved by penalty, they will start 1st and goal from the team 5 yard line. Try-for-points will be attempted and scored just like in regulation, for the 1st overtime period. However, the 2nd overtime period, teams must go for 2 points. If the defense intercepts the ball, it is declared dead and that series is over. If the score remains tied after the 2nd overtime, the game ends in a tie. Each team is entitled to one (1) time-out per overtime period. In case of overtime in a playoff game, play will continue until a winner has been determined.

**Time Outs:** The referee shall declare a time-out when he/she suspends play for any reason. Each time-out shall be charged either to the referee or one of the teams.

**Charged time-outs:** Each team is entitled to one (1) charged time-out during each half. Successive charged timeouts may be granted each team during a dead ball period. If the ball is dead and a team has not exhausted its charged time-outs, the referee shall allow a time-out and charge that team or complete a coach-referee conference.

**Length of time-outs:** A charged time-out requested by any player shall not exceed one (1) minute. Other time-outs may be longer only if the referee deems it necessary to remove an injured player.

**Coach-Referee Conference:** When a team requests a charged time-out for a rule interpretation, the referee will confer with the team captain or coach. The request must be made prior to the time the ball becomes alive following the play to be reviewed unless the period has officially ended. If the referee changes his/her ruling, it is an official's time-out. If the ruling is not changed, it is a charged time-out to the team. If the team has used its two (2) timeouts, a delay of game penalty will be assessed.

**Notification:** The referee shall notify both teams 5 seconds before a charged time-out expires. The team then has 25 seconds to put the ball in play. When 1 time-out has been charged to a team in a half, the referee shall notify the field captain and both head coaches.

**Injured player:** An injured or apparently injured player who is discovered by an official while the ball is dead and the clock is stopped, shall be replaced for at least 1 down unless the half-time or overtime intermission occurs. A player who is bleeding, or has an open wound, or has an excessive amount of blood on the uniform shall be considered an injured player, and must be replaced until bleeding has stopped. If this puts the team to only 3 players, they must continue to play until the injured player has stopped the bleeding.

ALL PLAYERS THAT RECEIVE ANY INJURY TO THE HEAD AND/OR FACE ARE NOT PERMITTED TO CONTINUE IN THAT GAME.

A time-out occurs when an unconscious or apparently unconscious player is determined by the game officials. THE INJURED PLAYER MAY NOT RETURN TO PLAY IN THAT GAME.

**Delay of game:** The ball must be put in play promptly and legally and any action or inaction by either team, which tends to prevent this, is delay of game. This includes:



- Failure to snap within 25 seconds after it is declared ready for play.
- Putting the ball in play until it is declared ready for play.
- Deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead.
- A coach-referee conference after all permissible charged time-outs for the coach's team have been used, and during which the referee is requested to reconsider the application of a rule and no change results.
- Illegally Conserving or Consuming time: The referee may order the game clock started or stopped whenever, in his/her opinion, either team is trying to conserve or consume playing time by tactics obviously unfair.

### **Substitutions:**

**Eligible substitutions:** No substitute shall enter during a down. Between downs any number of eligible substitutes may replace players provided the substitution is completed by having the replaced players off the field before the ball becomes alive. An incoming substitute must enter the field directly from his/her team area. A replaced player must leave the field at the sideline nearest his/her team area prior to the ball being snapped. An entering substitute shall be on his/her team's side of the neutral zone when the ball is snapped or free kicked.

**Legal substitutions:** During the same dead ball interval, no substitute shall become a player and then withdraw, and no player shall withdraw and then re-enter as a substitute unless a dead ball foul occurs, there is a charged timeout, or a period ends.

### **VI. Penalties**

There is no contact whatsoever allowed

All penalties are 5 yards, with the exception of unsportsmanlike penalties. Unsportsmanlike penalties are 10 yard penalties. There are no automatic first down penalties, unless the penalty puts you past the line to gain.

### **VII. CONDUCT OF PLAYERS AND OTHERS**

#### **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:**

**Non-contact player acts:** No player shall commit non-contact acts during a period or intermission. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Refusal to comply or abide by the request or decision of an official.
- Using words similar to the offensive audible and quarterback cadence prior to the snap in attempt to interfere with team (A)'s signals or movements.
- Intentionally kicking at the ball, other than during a legal punt.
- Leaving the field between downs to gain an advantage unless replaced or with permission of the referee.
- Intentionally kicking at any opposing player. (DQ)
- Intentionally swinging an arm, hand or fist at any opposing player. (DQ)



- Participate while wearing illegal player equipment.

**Dead Ball Player Fouls:** When the ball becomes dead in possession of a player, he/she shall not:

- Intentionally kick the ball.
- Spike the ball to the ground.
- Throw the ball high into the air.

**Prohibited Acts:** There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct by players, substitutes, coaches, or others subject to the rules. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Attempting to influence a decision by an official.
- Disrespectfully addressing an official.
- Indicating objections to an official's decision.
- Holding an unauthorized conference, or being on the field illegally.
- Using profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.
- Intentionally contacting a game official physically during the game by persons subject to the rules (DQ).
- Fighting an opponent (DQ).
- Leaving the team area and entering the playing area during a fight (DQ).

The third unsportsmanlike foul by the same team results in their forfeiture of the game.

**Unfair Acts:**

**Refusal to Play or halving the distance:** If a team refuses to play within two (2) minutes after ordered by the referee, or if a team repeatedly commits fouls which can be penalized only by halving the distance to its goal line, the referee may enforce any penalty he/she considers equitable, including the awarding of a score. For refusal to play, or for repeated fouls, the referee shall, after one warning, forfeit the game to the opponents.

**Unsportsmanlike Penalties:** Player Restrictions: No player shall commit a personal foul during a period or an intermission. Any act prohibited hereunder or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul: No player shall:

- Strip or attempt to strip the ball from a player in possession by punching, striking or stealing.
- Contact an opponent who is on the ground.
- Throw the runner to the ground.
- Hurdle any other player.
- Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead.
- Make any contact with an opponent, which is deemed unnecessary of any nature including using fists, locked hands, elbows, or any part of the forearm or hand, except according to rule.
- Deliberately drive or run into a defensive player.
- Position himself/herself on the shoulders or body of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage.





- Tackle the runner by grasping or encircling with the hand(s) or arm(s) and taking the opponent toward the ground as in tackle football. (DQ)

**Use of Hands or Arms by the Defense:** Defensive players must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arms and hands may not be used as a wedge to contact the opponent. The application of this rule depends entirely on the judgment of the official. A blocker may use his/her arms or hands to break a fall or retain his/her balance.

**Runner:** Guarding the flag belt:

- Runners shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. Flag guarding includes:
- Swing the hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- Place the ball in possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- Lower the shoulders in such a manner that places the arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.

**Stiff Arm:** The runner shall be prohibited from contacting an opponent with extended hand or arm. This includes the use of a "stiff arm" extended to ward off an opponent attempting to deflag/tag.

**Helping the Runner:** The runner shall not grasp a teammate or be grasped, pulled or pushed by a teammate.

**Obstruction of Runner:** The defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when in the act of removing the flag belt or making a legal tag.

**Charge:** A runner shall not charge into nor contact an opponent in his/her path nor attempt to run between two opponents or between an opponent and a sideline, unless the space is such as to provide a reasonable chance for him/her to go through without contact. If a runner in his/her progress has established a straight-line path, he/she may not be crowded out of that path, but if an opponent is able to legally establish a defensive position in that path, the runner must avoid contact by changing direction.

**Batting and Kicking:**

**Batting a free ball:** Players shall not bat a loose ball other than a pass or fumble in flight. A backward pass in flight shall not be batted forward by the passing team. A ball in player possession shall not be batted forward by a player of the team in possession. EXCEPTION: The kicking team may bat a grounded protected scrimmage kick beyond the team (A) scrimmage line toward their own goal line.

**Illegal Kicking:** No player shall intentionally kick a ball

**Illegal Participation:**

**Blocked or pushed out-of-bounds:** Prior to a change of possession, no player of (A) or (K) shall go out-of-bounds and return during the down unless blocked out-of-bounds by an opponent. If a player is blocked



out-of-bounds by an opponent and returns inbounds during the down, he/she shall return at the first opportunity. During the down, no player shall intentionally go out-of-bounds and return.

**Hinder an Opponent:** No replaced player or substitute shall hinder an opponent, touch the ball, influence the play, or otherwise participate.

**Flag Belt Removal:** There are basic rules, which are established for flag football because of legal or illegal removal of the flag belt:

- Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be deflagged.
- When a runner loses his/her flag belt either accidentally, inadvertently (not removed by grabbing or pulling), or on purpose, play is dead where the flag falls off, if the player is in possession of the ball. If the player's flag comes off before they are in possession of the ball, play is dead once they receive the ball.
- In circumstances where a flag belt is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of the penalty or the play.
- Defensive player intentionally pulling a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball is illegal.
- Tampering with a flag belt in any way to again an advantage including tying knots, using foreign materials, or other such acts is illegal.
- A non-player that deflags or interferes with a runner is illegal.
- Player is down where the flag has been removed, not where the ball was at the time of the flag being removed.

## **VIII. SPORTSMANSHIP**

The purpose of City of Austin Flag Football league is to provide a recreational environment for the community which is safe and enjoyable. While the game atmosphere is often competitive, ensuring participant safety, providing a fun social atmosphere, and promoting sportsmanlike behavior among participants, spectators, and team is our primary concern. The game atmosphere should remain good natured at all times. Participants shall maintain good sportsmanship throughout their participation in all facets of the league.

The Sportsmanship Rating System is intended to be an objective scale by which teams' attitude and behavior is assessed throughout the league and playoff seasons. Behavior before, during, and after a contest is included in the rating. The team captain is responsible for educating and informing all players and spectators affiliated with his/her team about the system.

A team is responsible for the actions of the individual team members and spectators. Only the team captain shall speak to the officials regarding administrative matters (protests, ejections, disqualifications, etc). Furthermore, the team captain's efforts in assisting officials/staff to calm difficult situations and to restrain troubled teammates are key to controlling team conduct.

Sportsmanship is vital to the conduct of every contest. In order to encourage proper conduct during games, officials, administrative personnel, and supervisors shall make decisions on whether to warn,



penalize or eject players or teams for poor sportsmanship. These decisions are final. The City of Austin Athletics administrative staff will rule on further penalties as a result of unsportsmanlike conduct.

Protests or appeals of sportsmanship ratings will not be recognized. The City of Austin Athletics administrative staff reserves the right to review any rating given to a team.

Teams are graded by the officials on a scale of A-F, A team must obtain a letter grade of C or higher to maintain their playoff seeding based on wins/losses. If you drop below C, you will be the lowest seed in the playoffs regardless of your win loss record.

### **Ratings Breakdown**

#### **“A” - Good Conduct and Sportsmanship**

Team/fans cooperate fully with the supervisors and officials and show respect for opposing team members. The Team Captain has full control of his/her teammates/fans. If the captain converses with the officials about rule interpretations and calls he/she does so respectfully and calmly. A team winning a game due to a forfeit will receive an “A” sportsmanship rating.

#### **“B” - Average Conduct and Sportsmanship**

Team/fans complain about some decisions and or display minor dissent. These complaints may have been voiced verbally or non-verbally toward officials, opposing players or opposing fans. The Team Captain exhibits major control over teammates and him/herself.

#### **“C” - Below Average Conduct and Sportsmanship**

Team/fans (on or off the playing area) show continuous or sustained verbal dissent towards officials, supervisors, and/or the opposing team. The Team Captain exhibits minor control over teammates and him/herself. Teams that receive one unsportsmanlike penalty or technical foul during the game will receive no higher than a “C” rating. Each additional unsportsmanlike penalty will result in the grade being lowered by one letter grade.

#### **“D” - Poor Conduct and Sportsmanship**

Team/fans complain excessively to officials and/or the opposing team. The Team Captain exhibits little control over teammates and him/herself. Teams that have a player ejected will receive no higher than a “D” rating. Any player that is ejected from the game will automatically be suspended for their next scheduled game played. Suspensions can be protested by with a written statement emailed to the Athletics supervisor at [PARDathletics@austintexas.gov](mailto:PARDathletics@austintexas.gov)

#### **“F” - Unacceptable Conduct and Sportsmanship**

Team/fans are completely uncooperative. Team Captain has no control over team, fans and/or him/herself. Teams that have multiple players ejected, receives three unsportsmanlike penalties or cause a game to be forfeited shall receive an “F”.

### **XIII. PLAYOFFS**



The playoff schedule and seeding will be determined by the number of teams and their win/loss record, or by the ratings scale. There are no guaranteed times once the playoffs start, teams must do what they can to make their games. If you forfeit a game, that is tie breaker number 1. If you end up with the same record as someone and you beat them head to head, you automatically lose the tie breaker because of your forfeit.