



South Valley Flag Football League.
16755 Jackson Oaks Dr.
Morgan Hill, CA 95008
www.svflagfootball.net



Officiating Guidelines

Overview

Consistency is the key to our success in officiating these games. All officials are expected to read the rule book thoroughly and enforce the rule set as instructed. Officials are the FACE of the NFL FLAG and USA Flag Football. Give ALL our customers, kids, coaches and especially the parents a “PROFESSIONAL” experience. Sell Your Call!

Talk to the kids and coaches, ADDRESS the parents! They are listening and watching all the time.

Call out the down, score and time frequently and clearly. Dress professionally with black shorts or pants, black and white striped shirt-tucked in, and a black with white stripes officiating baseball cap. Conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times. Being approachable, friendly and always IN CONTROL is the best way to manage the game and control the coaches, players and fans.

Respond to inquiries promptly. Listen to feedback courteously. You can expect many coaches to take the game too seriously. Help them understand the importance of being good role models in sportsmanship, behavior and language.

Remember most of all, you are in charge! You do not need to confront people to manage the game. The rule set allows for penalties which gives all the power to the officials. When working with people cannot be achieved, use the penalty flag. Attitudes change quickly when teams lose yardage, downs and eventually the game. However, do not overuse it.. You will lose control even quicker if you resort to flags too often. Use reason and professionalism at all possible.

Your behavior should be professional, but with good humor. Our focus is to ensure the safety of the game, enjoyment of the players and their family, and to provide a quality football experience.



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Uniform

- Black and whites striped football officiating shirt
 - Tucked into pants or shorts
- Black shorts or sweats with pockets or
 - White Knickers with white and black striped long socks
- Black hat
- White socks
- Black athletic shoes
- No jeans, dress shoes, baggy clothes or T-shirts
- No cell phones, PDAs or Ipods
- Look professional, be viewed professionally!

Equipment

- (2) FOX 40 regulation whistles
- (2) Yellow penalty flags
- Clock with stop watch function
- Wrist Down Indicator
- Puck and/or Bean Bag
- Pencil and small pad to write on

Structure

- Officials are responsible for keeping games on time and players safe, assisting coaches, reporting scores and controlling crowds.
- Score sheets are provided for every game and must be submitted to the runner at the end of the game.
- Score sheets must be signed by both coaches and the **Referee (white hat)** at the end of each game.

Field Guidelines

- Players and coaches ONLY on sidelines – No parents or fans.
- Two coaches limit per team.
- All fans are required to remain 10 yards back from the end zones.
- The NFL Youth Football Department does not allow spectators to stand in between fields during competition.
- Teams should be on opposite sides of field where possible.
- No chairs, strollers or coolers on sidelines.
- Encourage each team to pick up their trash pick up at end of their game.
- Teams arriving for the next game should wait until the current teams have cleaned up their sideline and left the field.



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Game Flow – (See Mechanics for specific responsibilities)

Starting the game

- Make sure teams are on opposite sidelines with only players and 2 coaches present.
- Perform the coin toss quickly
- Announce the result of the coin toss.
- Start the game on time.
- Blow the whistle and start 30 second huddle clock immediately upon placement of the ball.

Moving from play to play

- Offensive players are responsible for returning the ball to the line of scrimmage(LOS).
- Congratulate players for good plays.
- Have players hand the ball to you, don't chase it. KEEP YOUR SPOT!
- Place the ball and then blow the whistle to indicate start of 30 second clock.
- Notify coaches and sidelines what the down and distance is after each play.
- Notify coaches if No Run Zone exists.
- March off 7 yard rush line, notify defense and then move to LOS.
- Make sure coaches move off the field before the beginning of the play.
- Don't let play start until you are ready.

30 second huddle

- 30 second huddles equal more plays for the kids. Make sure coaches understand this.
- Notify coach when 15 seconds are remaining.
- Keep to the spirit of the 30 second rule, however, do not keep too precise of a count. The purpose is to keep the game moving. Not enough enforcement and the kids don't get enough playing time. Too much enforcement and the coach will become confrontational. It is your job to strike a balance while keeping control of the game.

Working together

- Notify each other of the down.
- Control the sidelines.



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Ending one game, starting another

At the END: This is when the rubber hits the road. Teams will be moving quickly to score before the end of the half. Help them get there. Place the ball quickly, count off the 7-yard rush line. Do not let the play start until you are ready. Call out the time every 30 seconds. Remind coaches if they have not used their timeout.

Getting RE-STARTED: In addition to the exciting finish, there is also the start of the next game. Moving from game to game is where we lose a lot of time. While the Referee is getting signatures on the game card, the other two officials should go to the new teams take them through their pre-game activities.

Your next two teams should already be nearby. Get them to the field quickly. The Line Judge should take the home team and the Back Judge takes the visitors. Check for the following items:

- Correct Flags
- Correct Cleats
- Mouthpiece
- Correct jersey side
 - Home Team wears black;
 - Visiting team wears white.

Conduct a coin toss in the end zone, if needed. Finishing and starting games on time will be one of our biggest challenges.

Communication

- Always direct your comments to the coach, not players or fans.
- Be courteous and professional at all times.
- Remember you are in a fish bowl. EVERYONE is watching what you do. Coaches, players and parents from your field and others will be watching you.
- Make yourself heard! Speak clearly and loudly so parents in the end zone can hear you.
- Be demonstrative. Make sure everyone sees your down indication, touchdown signal and penalty signal.



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Game Mechanics

Rule Highlights

- Player can attempt to block pass, however, any contact with QB is a penalty.
- Remember that the rush has an unabated path to the quarterback. Players cannot get in the way of his/her path.
- Offside by either team kills the play.
- Forward handoffs are okay behind line of scrimmage.
- Inadvertent whistles kill plays - Offense is given the choice of a result of play at the spot of the whistle or replay of down.
- A 28 point lead by any team at any time ends the game.
- Concentrate on flag guarding. Not doing so can make the game get physical in an instant. Hit it hard and early.
- This isn't tackle! No charging opposing defenders or running through ball carriers when pulling flags. ANY contact with the passer is roughing the passer.
- Watch for screening and blocking. Offensive players cannot impede the defenders from reaching ball carrier at ANY time. This is another way to get the game real physical in a hurry.
- Simultaneous possession by offense and defense goes to the offensive players.

Scenarios:

Plays to Watch For:

- 1) Numbers of players on line of scrimmage
 - a) Only the center is required to be on the line of scrimmage
- 2) Third and long/last minute plays
 - a) Back Judge sets 7-yard rusher, transfers rush control to Line Judge, then moves immediately downfield to Line-To-Gain. Back Judge should be standing on that line.
- 3) Interceptions in the end zone
 - a) Live unless on a PAT. No safety for attempting to run the ball out. Touchback is the correct call if the defender intercepts ball in the end zone and attempts run it out.
- 4) Shovel and underhand passes are legal as long the ball goes beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 5) Defender and receiver both obtain possession of the ball while in the air.
 - a) Both players retain possession when they hit the ground. Possession goes to the offense.
 - b) Defender comes away with the ball when both hit the ground. Possession goes to defense unless official has clear indication that the ball was possessed by both when play was whistled dead.

Potential Penalties:

- 1) QB/Center Handoff
 - a) Legal as long as center and QB complete the snap, the QB has sole possession and the center steps BACK and off the line of scrimmage before receiving handoff. Penalty: Illegal handoff – 5 yards LOS and loss of down
- 2) QB Passing at the line of scrimmage
 - a) Flags and both feet must be BEHIND the line of scrimmage at the time of release for a legal pass. Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards LOS and loss of down
- 3) Breaking the huddle
 - a) Teams may huddle on sideline with coach or have QB obtain play from coach. Count players when they line up for the play. All players must report to huddle or to LOS each play. Players must exit on their sideline. Penalty: False start, 5 yards LOS and loss of down



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- 4) Flag guarding on first down gain
 - a) Live ball spot foul; play isn't complete until penalty is enforced. Penalty is spot foul and loss of down. There is no first down if the ball does not end up past the Line-To-Gain. First down if Line-To-Gain is passed.
- 5) Charging
 - a) Player with established position has the right of way, defense or offense. Penalty: 10 Yard from spot and loss of down.
- 6) Offensive player screens rusher, thereby impeding the rush.
 - a) Rusher has right of way. Penalty: Illegal screening, 5 yards LOS and loss of down
- 7) Rusher must not intentionally line up opposite an offensive play to initiate contact. Penalty: Illegal Contact, 5 yards LOS and automatic 1st down
- 8) Defense cannot impede receiver route. No contact can be made while receiver is running. Penalty:
 - a) Pass Interference if ball is in the air, Spot Foul, 10 yards and automatic 1st down.
 - b) If ball is not in the air, Illegal Contact, 5 yards LOS and automatic 1st down
- 9) Screening is ONLY called when an offensive player is DIRECTLY impeding a defender's access to the ball carrier. Running downfield is okay if the player does not impede defender's access ball carrier.

Escalation Process

- Get control of situation quickly. Don't let it fester. Take quick action.
- Make coaches responsible for parents and players behavior.
- Move discussion to sidelines. Don't confront coaches on the field.
- Listen to the coach. Don't preempt or cut off their complaint.
- Speak in a normal voice, don't yell.
- Get feedback from all parties. Get the other officials involved.
- Referee should handle all issues first, then escalate to field director. Officials should provide a clear, concise account to the field director.
- Don't leave the field. Send a runner to get field director.
- Control the sidelines. The Line Judge should take the home team and the Back Judge should take the visitors.

Penalties

General:

- The referee will call all penalties.
- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted (spot fouls).
- Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgment calls.
- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
- Penalties are assessed Live Ball then Dead Ball. Live Ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered completed.
- Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage if the distance to goal is less than the penalty yardage.



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Officiating Guidelines

Three Man Crew Mechanics

Narrative

Operate in a triangle formation with Line Judge and Back Judge on one sideline and the Referee on opposing side. Referee and Back Judge should move with the ball while the Line Judge holds the line of scrimmage until moved forward. Don't make calls outside your area unless ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. Referee should keep eyes on the QB even after ball is released. Once the ball is past the line of scrimmage and the QB is safe, the Referee moves downfield.

Referee (White Hat)

- Handles the coin toss
- Handles the 30 second and 7 second clocks
- Watches offensive backfield (PROTECT THE QB!)
- Calls out down and distance
- Calls out time and score from center of field after every TD/PAT and at the 2 minute warning
- Makes penalty declaration, explanation and enforcement
- Verifies Line and Back Judges' placement and mechanics
- Counts Offensive players
- Confirms down with Line Judge and Back Judge

Line Judge

- Marks and controls line of scrimmage, stays put until moved up
- Watches rush, line of scrimmage
- Watches backside of downfield plays
- Keeps game sheet and score, notifies referee of score after every TD/PAT and at 2 minute warning
- Manages the sideline and marks out of bounds placement
- Take all penalties to the White Head. Do not tell players, coaches or fans first.
- Confirm down with White Hat

Back Judge

- Counts Defensive players
- Signals TD
- Places ball after every play
- Marks off 7-yard rush line
- Watches rush, initial offense movement and ALL down field action
- RUN with the play, don't get beat to the goal line!
- Take all penalties to the White Head. Do not tell players, coaches or fans first.
- Confirm down with White Hat
- Manage sideline and mark out of bounds placement



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Officiating Guidelines

Two Man Crew Mechanics

Narrative

One official on the line of scrimmage watching for offside, illegal motion, illegal forward pass, roughing the passer and counting out the 7-second time limit the quarterback has to throw the ball. (Cadence will be 1001, 1002, 1003, etc.) Watch for early rush (player can return to rush line and then proceed to rush the quarterback) and after the ball crosses the line of scrimmage watch for flag guarding. Also, make sure the players retrieve the ball for the officials, which will keep the game rolling. Fast placement of the ball allows these kids more opportunity to play the game

After the second official spots the ball, he walks off the 7-yard rush line, then notifies the defense of the 7-Yard mark (the player must be behind official's mark). After the snap, shuffle four yards down field watching for defensive holding or contact on the line as well as bumping, holding, pass interference, flag guarding, screening defenders or taunting. Also make sure the player retrieves the ball. This keeps the game moving.

Line Judge (White Hat)

- Handles coin toss
- Handles game clock, 30 second and 7 second clocks
- Marks line of scrimmage
- Watches rush, line of scrimmage and offensive backfield
- Calls out down and distance
- Calls out time and score from center of field after every TD/PAT and at 2 minute warning
- Makes penalty declaration and explanation
- Keeps score, compares with back judge
- Verify back judge placement and mechanics
- Manage sideline and mark out of bounds placement

Back Judge

- Keeps game sheet and score, Signal TD
- Places ball after every play
- Marks off 7 Yard rush line
- Watches rush, initial offense movement and ALL down field action
- RUN with the play, don't get beat to the goal line!
- Take all penalties to the White Head. Do not tell players, coaches or fans first.
- Confirm down with White Hat
- Manage sideline and mark out of bounds placement