

## **FLAG FOOTBALL**

### **No qualifier required for state competition**

### **Specific Division Age Requirements**

Junior (8 – 21)

Senior (22+)

### **Entries:**

- Each individual's skill level on a flag football team is assessed by the delegation manager prior to submitting the team competition entry form. This ensures that everyone is competing against teams with similar skill level. The individual flag football assessment is on the next page & included with the entry forms for [Flag Football](#).

### **Events:**

- Traditional Team
- Unified Team

### **Rules:**

- The Official Special Olympics Sports rules for Flag Football shall govern all Special Olympics competitions. Special Olympics has created these rules based upon rules from a National Flag Football Organization.

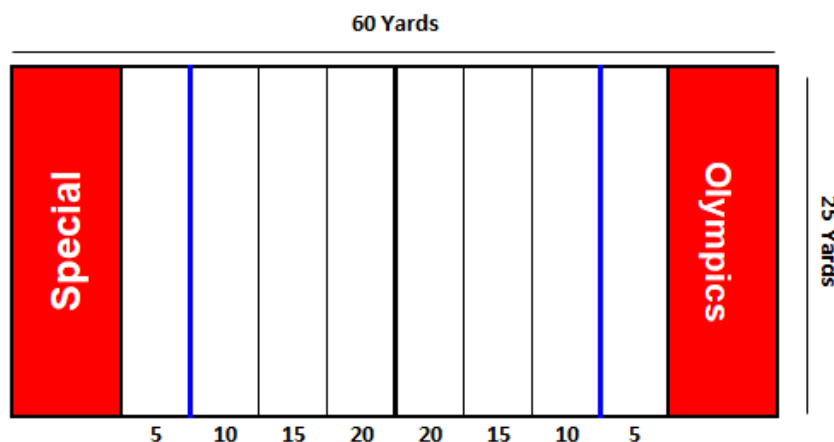
### **Equipment:**

- Athletes must wear a mouthpiece throughout the competition
- Athletes must wear a flag belt
- No cleats or hiking boots may be worn
- Team Jerseys – same color with numbers on the front and back
- Shorts may not have pockets
- Developmental teams will use a Junior size ball
- All other teams will use a Youth size ball

### **Competition:**

- **Level 1 – High:** Plays by regulation rules; high to excellent skills and athleticism; implements strategies; runs specific plays; several players can catch a pass while running; quarterback with accurate and strong arm; defense able to play aggressively without being physical
- **Level 2 – Intermediate:** Plays by regulation rules; average skills and athleticism; some strategy; runs general plays; a couple of players can catch a pass while running; limited ability to react to the way the other team plays.
- **Level 3 – Developmental:** Following rules is difficult; low skills and athleticism; little strategy; difficulty running organized plays; quarterback with limited accuracy; defensive skills limited. The coach will be on the field at all times

- I. **Pre-Game Coin Toss-** Officials will meet with (2) team captains prior to the start of the game. Visiting team is given the choice of heads or tails.
  - a. The winner of the coin toss will determine whether their team will start on offense or defense/or choose the goal their team will defend.
  
- II. **Game Timing -** SOIA football games consist of two (2) 20-minute halves (running clock) until the last (1) minute of each half.
  - a. During the last (1) minute of each half the clock stops for incomplete passes, scoring plays, changes of possession, out of bounds, or first downs.
  - b. Clock restarts on the snap.
  - c. Does not start for extra point attempts (untimed down).
  
- III. **Overtime**
  - a. All regulation rules and penalties are in effect during overtime.
  - b. There are no time-outs.
  - c. A coin toss is held to determine the first possession (flip called by the home team).
  - d. Each team receives two (2) downs beginning at midfield to score or gain the most yards.
  - e. If the team with the first attempt in overtime scores on the first play, the opposing team must score on its first play also. There are no attempts at extra points in overtime.
  - f. If both teams score a touchdown, or gain the same yardage, the procedure is repeated until one team wins. The team that started with the first overtime possession will possess the ball second in the next overtime.
  - g. The team gaining the most points or gaining the most yards is awarded one (1) extra point to the tied score and wins the game.
  - h. Exceptions to this rule- Interceptions: The team that intercepts the pass automatically wins the game.
  
- IV. **Possessions**
  - a. All possessions, except following an interception, start at the offensive team's 5-yard line.
  - b. The offense has four (4) downs to cross mid-field.
  - c. Once the offense crosses mid-field, they have four (4) additional downs to score a touchdown.
  - d. If the offensive team fails to cross mid-field or score a touchdown in a prescribed number of downs, possession of the ball changes and the opposite team starts at their 5-yard line.



## V. Scoring

a. **Touchdown:** six (6) points.

b. **Extra Point's**

One (1) point from the 6-yard line.

Two (2) points from the 12-yard line.

\* Penalty enforcement will change the spot of the attempt, not the point value of the extra point attempt.

c. **Safety:** two (2) points.

\*A safety is scored when the ball becomes dead in the defense's end zone.

d. **Mercy Rule:** If a team is up twenty-five (25) or more points in the last minute of the game, the clock will continue to run.

## VI. Dead Ball- Refers to the period of time immediately before or after the play.

a. A pass is intercepted (no returns).

b. An offensive receiver without a flag belt catches a ball.

c. A snapped ball touches the ground.

d. The ball is immediately dead if fumbled (hits the ground).

e. If fumbled forward, the ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble. If the ball falls backwards, it is marked where it hits the ground.

## VII. Ball Carrying, Passing, & Receiving

a. The quarterback (first player gaining possession of the snap) cannot advance the ball across the line of scrimmage at any point during a down even if a legal handoff has occurred (illegal procedure).

b. ALL handoffs must be direct. No pitches or lateral handoffs allowed.

c. Backwards passes (laterals or pitches) are illegal regardless of field location.

d. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.

e. **Center Sneak** – The ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap, and the center must step back off the line of scrimmage in order to receive the direct handoff from the quarterback before advancing the ball.

## VIII. Rushing the Quarterback

a. All defensive players who rush the quarterback must be a minimum of seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.

b. A special marker, placed by the official, will designate the spot seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.

c. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend the line of scrimmage.

d. Once the quarterback hands off the ball, all defenders are eligible to rush.

## IX. Screen & Downfield Blocking

a. Screen blocker- Must have their arms extended to the ground at their side, in front, or behind the back. Arms may also be crossed over the chest with hands near the shoulders.

b. Screen blocking is the only form of legal blocking that can be used by any player.

c. Downfield Blocking (during a run)- Basketball style (non-moving) screen is the only acceptable form of downfield blocking.

## X. Flag Pulling

a. It is illegal to pull or strip the ball from the carrier's possession at any time (penalty).

b. Defenders may not dive in an attempt to pull flags (illegal procedure).

c. **Flag Guarding-** runners shall not shield (flag guard) by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove their flag. **Contact must occur for a flag guarding penalty to be called.**

## XI. Shifts & Motions

- a. **Motion-** Only one (1) offensive player may be in motion at the snap. This player must be behind and not moving toward the line of scrimmage at the time the ball is snapped.
- b. **Shift-** Occurs when more than one offensive player is in motion simultaneously prior to the snap. It is a penalty if the ball is snapped when more than one player is in motion (illegal shift).

## XII. Snapping the Football

- a. The ball may be snapped between the center's legs or to the side.
- b. The snapper's feet must be behind the line of scrimmage.
- c. The snapper shall transfer the ball from its position on the ground in a continuous motion to the quarterback to legally start a play.
- d. The snapper is the only player required on the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap

## XIII. Penalties

- a. Offensive pre-snap penalties are five (5) yards, replay the down.
- b. Offensive post-snap penalties are five (5) yards, loss of down.
- c. Defensive pre-snap penalties are five (5) yards, replay the down.
- d. Defensive post-snap penalties are five (5) yards, automatic first down.
- e. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties are ten (10) yards, loss of down or automatic first down.

Special Olympics Iowa football is played 5 vs. 5. Below are the positions played on offense & defense.



<b>Offense Pre-Snap Penalties</b> <b>(Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and replay down)</b>	
<i>Delay of Game</i>	<i>Failing to snap within 30-seconds of ready for play whistle.</i>
<i>Illegal Motion</i>	<i>Moving forward at the snap; snap not in one (1) motion.</i>
<i>Illegal Shift</i>	<i>More than one (1) player moving at the snap.</i>
<i>Offsides</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Beyond the line of scrimmage at the snap.</i></li> <li>• <i>False start.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Offense Post-Snap Penalties</b> <b>(Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down)</b>	
<i>Flag Guarding</i>	<i>Warding off or shielding a flag pull through contact.</i>
<i>Illegal Contact</i>	<i>Setting a pick, holding, illegal blocking, bumping, stiff arming.</i>
<i>Illegal Pass (Backward)</i>	<i>All backward passes/pitches regardless of field location.</i>
<i>Illegal Pass (Forward)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Pass not completed beyond line of scrimmage.</i></li> <li>• <i>Passer's foot is beyond line of scrimmage when passing.</i></li> <li>• <i>Two (2) forward passes in a down.</i></li> <li>• <i>Intentionally grounding the ball.</i></li> </ul>
<i>Illegal Pass (Unified)</i>	<i>Unified: Partner-to-partner pass.</i>
<i>Illegal Procedure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Quarterback run.</i></li> <li>• <i>Handoff beyond the line of scrimmage.</i></li> <li>• <i>Diving.</i></li> <li>• <i>Hurdling.</i></li> </ul>
<i>Pass Interference</i>	<i>Contact that interferes with a receiver.</i>
<b>Unsporting Conduct – Offensive</b> <b>(Ten (10) yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down)</b>	
<i>Unsportsmanlike Conduct</i>	<i>Poor behavior.</i>
<b>Defensive Pre-Snap Penalties</b> <b>(Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and replay down)</b>	
<i>Offsides</i>	<i>Beyond the line of scrimmage at the snap.</i>
<b>Defensive Post-Snap Penalties</b> <b>(Five (5) yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down)</b>	
<i>Illegal Contact</i>	<i>Holding, blocking, bumping, stripping the ball, roughing the passer.</i>
<i>Illegal Procedure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Rushing quarterback inside seven (7) yards.</i></li> <li>• <i>Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball).</i></li> <li>• <i>Diving in an attempt to pull a flag.</i></li> </ul>
<i>Pass Interference</i>	<i>Contact that interferes with a receiver.</i>
<b>Unsporting Conduct – Defensive</b> <b>(Ten (10) yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down)</b>	
<i>Unsporting Conduct</i>	<i>Poor behavior.</i>