



SCVAA Youth Football – Official Rules as agreed by: 2007 Northeast Football Alliance Tackle Football Rules – Grades 3rd – 8th

There will be a goal of 17-22 players per team (3rd grade 12-15 players), plus or minus players as necessary to provide for an equal number of players on competing teams. The league schedule will consist of 8 league plus playoff games. Any rule is under the discretion of the directors. The goal of the **NFA** football program is to encourage sportsmanship, teach the fundamentals of football, and allow all players the opportunity to participate in each game. Players and parents need to realize that failure to show up for practice without notifying the coach prior to that practice or failure to show commitment to the team/coaches/fellow players and the game could disqualify them from participation on game day.

Coaches are required to abide by the spirit of these rules and regulations and overall philosophy of the league. The coaches must always remember that the program is for players and not the coaches. There shall be a limited number of coaches per association rules on the sidelines during any game. Coaches can assist the captains when making penalty decisions. All players must use League approved equipment. Players not equipped as outlined below will be sent off the playing field until the necessary changes have been made. Coaches are expected to see that each player is fitting properly in approved equipment. Any player wearing faulty or ill-fitting equipment will not be allowed to play.

Both participating teams will take position on one side of the field (No Exceptions) with a **RED ZONE Player Box** for substitutions (25 yard line to 10 yard line at either end) and all parents and spectators will share the opposite sideline. A maximum of 5 coaches are allowed on the team side of the field.(Including on Field)

All locations: The home team responsible for down marker and chain attendants

There will be two referees assigned to each 3rd-6th grade game and 3 refs for 7th and 8th grade games. At least one coach on each team must have current NYSCA football course and certification or equivalent. Coaches of each team are responsible for the conduct of their players, other coaches and, to a limited extent, all spectators on their side of the field. The referees shall have the right to ask any player, coach, or spectator displaying unsportsmanlike conduct to remove themselves from the playing and viewing area, and can suspend play until this is done.

Schedules, playing fields, playoff parings and all other matters relating to the **NFA** football program shall be determined prior to each season in meetings between the area directors, to assure there is no conflict with individual Association rules. Coaches' input will also be reviewed. All players will be weighed in at time of registration, or at a designated time after registration, and their weight recorded on their official registration form.

Practices 3rd – 6th grade. No more than 4 practices/events in a 7-day week before school starts. After school begins no more than 3 practices/events/games in a 7-day week including playoffs.

3rd Grade League Pee Wee ball 9-Man with no special teams

All 3rd graders, restricted "Striper" over 95 lbs.*

4th graders 70 lbs. or less (coach/director/parents discretion)

Players weighing 150% of "Striper" weight or above (142.5 lbs +) Must move up one level

4th Grade League Junior ball with no special teams

All 4th graders, restricted "Striper" over 105 lbs.*

5th graders 75 lbs. or less (coach/director/parents discretion)

Players weighing 150% of "Striper" weight or above (157.5 lbs +) Must move up one level

5th Grade League Junior ball

All 5th graders, restricted "Striper" over 125 lbs.*

6th graders 80 lbs. or less (coach/director/parents discretion)

Players weighing 150% of "Striper" weight or above (187.5 lbs +) Must move up one level

6th Grade League Youth ball

No coaches on the field beginning September 28th and extending thru the playoffs.

All 6th graders, restricted "Striper" over 135 lbs.*

5th graders weighing over 120 lbs. Not a restricted "Striper" if under 135 lbs. (coach/director/parents discretion)

Players weighing 150% of "Striper" weight or above (202.5 lbs +) Must move up one level

7th Grade League Youth ball

No coaches on the field after the 2nd regular season game

All 7th graders, restricted "Striper" over 150 lbs.*

6th graders weighing over 130 lbs. Not a restricted "Striper" if under 150 lbs. (coach/director/parents discretion)

8th graders 100 lbs. or less (coach/director/parents discretion)

Players weighing 150% of "Striper" weight or above (217.5 lbs +) Must move up one level



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8th Grade League Youth ball

No coaches on the field

All 8th graders

7th graders weighing over 150 lbs. No Restrictions. (Coach/director/parents discretion)

No 9th Graders

No Restrictions

Note: Players are to be weighed with shoes but without football equipment. Players above the stated weight are not permitted ball carriers. Weights for lower grades adopted from USA Football.

Restricted players must wear a colored tape stripe down the center of the helmet (referred to as “Striper”).

On offense, they must play on the line of scrimmage. They may play tight end as an ineligible receiver** and they must play tight, not split or wide. They may also be a Punter or Kicker. ** A “Striper” can be an eligible tight end receiver only on extra point plays (3rd – 6th grade). They may catch the ball, but the ball becomes dead where they catch it. *7th grade striper may line-up as Tight End and are eligible receivers anytime (*see Rule O*). On defense, restricted players **CAN NOT** play linebacker, corner, or safety. They must play on the line of scrimmage, i.e. Nose Guard, Tackle, Defensive End. **Offensive line splits can not exceed normal spread length (wrist to wrist) to circumvent the “heads up” rule. (First violation-Warning, Second - 15 yard penalty)**

Minnesota High School Rules apply with the following exceptions by Grade:

A. ALL Grades Mandatory Coaches meeting with referee’s at center of field will precede game. (Coaches debriefed by referee’s)

B. 3rd Grade – 9-man football will be played.

C. 3rd Grade: There will be a balanced, **5-man offensive line** at all times.

Offensive and defensive ends must be on the line of scrimmage, but they can be split and they need not be in a down position. (The tight end DOES NOT have to be in a three-point stance) **(5-yd penalty)**

D. 3rd Grade: On defense, only a **4-man balanced line is allowed (No player lined up across from center)**.

Linebackers must be at least 3 yards off the line of scrimmage and two safeties must be at least 7 yards off the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. You can move your safeties up to **three (3) yards** off the line of scrimmage within your own 10-yard line. NO Blitzing – see rule L below.
(5-yd penalty)

E. 3rd-4th Grade shall play on 80-yard x 40-yard fields whenever possible. (3rd-4th) Grade can play on 60-yard x 40-yard fields if space is limited) No kickoffs: to begin play at the start of each half and following touchdowns, the offensive team will start play at their own (25-yard line on a 60x40 field/30-yard line on a 80x40 field) 1st & 10 yards for another 1st down. **Penalties are enforced normally.**

No punts. Offense has 30 seconds to signal the referee of their intention to punt to avoid delay of game penalty **(5-yd penalty)**. When a punt is called, the referee shall move the ball 15 yards for a change of possession. (Half the distance inside the receiving team’s 30-yard line.)

F. 4th Grade: Defense must be in a 5-4-2 formation:

5-man balanced front line with Defensive Nose Guard across from the offensive Center, defensive Tackles must align across from offensive Tackles (not guards) and defensive Ends must shade the offensive Tight Ends. If the offensive Ends are split, the defensive Ends may line up anywhere on the line of scrimmage outside the defensive Tackles. No shooting gaps-must make an attempt at contact. Heads-up*(see rule G) defensive players must advance directly forward across the line of scrimmage until they have completely crossed the original line, then they may angle to assume gap responsibility or pursue. **(5-yd penalty, Then 15yd Unsportsmanlike)** 4-Linebackers, 3 yards off the LOS / not stacked, interior LB’s must be head up off the guards 3 yards off the LOS. Linebackers must be coached to READ and REACT, there will be NO CALLED BLITZES. Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalties will be called at the official’s discretion. (15-yd penalty) 2-Safeties 7 yards off the LOS. The safeties can move up to 3 yards off the line of scrimmage within your own 10-yard line.



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- G. 3rd -6th Grade** required that the **Defensive line fires straight across the line before making any left or right (lateral) move. Defensive Down lineman MUST be lined up head-to-head (aka Helmet-to-Helmet) from their counterpart on the Offensive side of the ball. D-End can be shaded outside eye of Offensive End.**
- H. 3rd & 4th Grade:** There will be a balanced, **7-man offensive line** at all times. **No motion or resetting.** Offensive and defensive ends must be on the line of scrimmage, but they can be split and they need not be in a down position. (The tight end DOES NOT have to be in a three-point stance) **(5-yd penalty)**
- I. 3rd & 4th Grade:** After a **safety** (2 points), 4th Grade: the ball shall be put on the 25-yard line (60 yd field) 30-yard line (80 yd field) of the team scored on and they shall become the defense.
- J. 3rd - 5th Grade:** All interior lineman must be in a 3 or 4-point down set position at the snap of the ball. Defensive ends, linebackers, and safeties can move laterally; linebackers and safeties can move backwards; but defensive position **can not false start** or move with the intent of drawing offside. **(5-yd penalty)**
- K. 3rd - 5th Grade:** Defense **CAN** advance a fumble. Offense backs & ends can advance a fumble only if recovered behind their line of scrimmage. Restricted players, both offense and defense, cannot *advance* the ball at anytime. Ball becomes dead where recovered.
- L. Grades 3rd -6th:** Because of the "NO BLITZ" rule and having the linebackers 3yrs.OLS there will be **NO QB sneaks (Inside the tackles)** when there is less than 3yrs. for a first down or the ball is inside the 5yd. line for a touchdown (which includes extra points). **(5 yard Penalty)**
- M. 5th & 6th Grade:** There will be a balanced, **7-man offensive line** at all times. Motion and resetting is allowed. Three backs must be in backfield between the tackles at the snap of the ball. Offensive and defensive ends must be on the line of scrimmage, but they can be split and they need not be in a down position. (The tight end DOES NOT have to be in a three-point stance) **(5-yd penalty)**
- N. 5th & 6th Grade:** On defense, only a **5-4-2 or 6-3-2 man balanced line** is allowed. Defensive Nose Guard must be across from the Offensive Center (*on 5 man front*), Defensive Tackles must align across from the offensive Tackles and Defensive Ends must shade the offensive Tight Ends. Down Lineman must be lined up **Helmet-to-Helmet directly across from their Offensive counterpart.** If the Offensive Ends are split, the Defensive Ends may line up anywhere on the line of scrimmage outside the defensive Tackles. Linebackers must be at least **3** yards off the line of scrimmage with **lateral movement allowed** and **two safeties** must be at least 7 yards off the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. You can move your safeties up to 3 yards off the line of scrimmage within your own 10-yard line. **Linebackers and Defensive Backs must be coached to READ and REACT, there will be NO CALLED BLITZES. Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalties will be called at the official's discretion. No forward movement by any Linebacker or Defensive Back is allowed until the snap. (15-yd penalty)**
- O. 5th – 8th Grade:** 100 yd fields. Kick-offs at the 40-yard line, per High School rules. **Onside kicks are permitted at 5th – 8th grade level.** No blocking below the waist. **(15 yard penalty)**
- P: Punting: 5th – 6th grade.** The offense must signal the referee of their intention to punt or not and must follow their intention. (5-yd penalty) i.e. No fake punts and no punting when they said they would go for it. The ball is snapped to the punter but the play is not live or started until the punter has either caught or picked up the ball and has successfully punted it away. This means all players on offense must remain set until the ball is kicked and the defense must remain set and may not rush the punter. The defensive interior lineman must be in a 3- or 4-point stance until the ball is punted. The objective is to allow our players to learn the basic fundamentals of hiking, catching, and punting the ball away without the pressures of an onslaught of opposing players rushing in to block the punt to tackle the punter. All players are eligible to punt or kick the ball; there is no weight restriction to be a punter or kicker.
- Q. 7th-8th Punting** is live.
- R. 7th-8th** any defensive or offensive formation may be used, per High School rules.

All Grades



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- S. **Face Mask.** Any and all grabbing of the helmet opening, no matter how significant, shall be always a **15-yard penalty**. Not an automatic 1st down. (A stiff arm by a running back is allowed as long as the ballcarrier doesn't grab the defensive player's mask, and a tackler can put their hand on the ballcarrier's helmet provided they don't grab an opening.)
- T. One coach per team is allowed (optional) on the field during play (except 6th grade 4th game(until)Sept.28th), (7th grade 2nd game), (8th grade- No coaches). That coach must be positioned at least 15 yards behind the line of scrimmage and must remain **silent** once the offensive players are in position and cadence has begun. The on-field coach **MAY NOT** shout instructions to his players AFTER the ball is snapped and until the whistle blows to end the play. Only one coach is allowed in the huddle at any time during the game. **(5-yd penalty)**
- U. A restricted player "Striper" may play anywhere on the defensive line including defensive end. On offense, all restricted players must play on the line of scrimmage. They may play tight end as an ineligible receiver and they must play tight, not split or wide. **(5-yd penalty)** No "Striper" Tight End may run with the ball or catch the ball – the ball is dead as soon as the restricted player touches it. One Exception: on extra points after a touchdown, a "Striper" can be an eligible tight end receiver only on extra point plays. They may catch the ball, but the ball becomes dead where they catch it. They may not advance the ball after the catch. ***7th Grade, Tight Ends are always eligible receivers for forward pass's beyond line of scrimmage (No screens), 8th grade is exempt**
- V. All games shall consist of four (4) 9-minute stop-time quarters. 3 minutes for half-time. Stop time means: ball carrier goes out of bounds, incomplete pass, change of possession, etc., if tackled in bounds the clock keeps running, etc.) Referees should notify when 1.5 hour time limit will effect the 4th quarter and a 5 minute notification should be given. Running time in 2nd half if team is ahead by 21 points or more. .
- W. **Running-up the score.** While hopefully no coach would intentionally do this, if a team is ahead by 21 or more points in the second half, (same as running time rule) there is to be no passing or on-side kicks by the team that's ahead. **(5-yd penalty)**
- X. Overtime: After a tie game, a coin toss determines who goes first. Spot the ball at the 10-yard line and it's first and goal. If you get a touchdown you also get an extra-point attempt. If the defense gains possession, the ball becomes dead immediately and the offensive team's series is ended. Both teams get one offensive attempt unless time remains before the next game is scheduled to begin. If after both teams have had one offensive attempt and the game is still tied, the result is a tie.**(Except playoffs)**. Once time limit is reached, only one OT set of downs per team allowed. Limit of three overtimes for each game. (Normal Tie Breaker Rules apply for seeding purposes)
- Y. Failure to wear a **mouthguard** at time of the snap is a **5-yard penalty** (whistle blown and play stopped at the snap of the ball). **Mouthguards must be attached to the helmet and have some color.** Specially fitted dental mouthguards must be reported to the referee.
- Z. The offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball after the referee signals the ball is ready. **(5-yd penalty)**
- AA. **Extra Points:** (3rd-6th Grade) 2pts. for pass, 1pt. for run. (Except 7th and 8th Grade All Extra Points are 2 points.)
- BB. **Illegal Participation.** Rule 9-6-4: To have 12 or more players at the snap or free kick. **(5-yd penalty)** Not 15.
- CC. **Illegal Substitutions.** Rule 4-1-1: To have 12 or more players break from the huddle, line up before the snap, or not leave the playing field before the snap. **(No penalty)** (unless it happens a lot – warning, then 5-yd penalty)

Some Helpful High School Rules:

1. Rule 1-1-3: The referee has authority to rule promptly, and in the spirit of good sportsmanship, on any situation not specifically covered in the rules. The referees' decisions are final in all matters pertaining to the game.
2. Each team is allowed 3 first half and 3 second half time-outs of 60-seconds each. Time-outs do not carry over. Teams are allowed one time-out per overtime period
3. **Time out.** Rule 3-5-11: (paraphrased) A team may take a time-out to review a decision or problem with the rules. If the conference results in the referee altering his ruling, the opposing coach will be notified, the revision made, and the time out shall be an official's time-out. If the referee's ruling prevails, the time-out remains charged to the team requesting the time-out.



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4. Rule 2-27: The Neutral Zone is as wide as the length of the ball, and is expanded following the snap up to 2 yards on the defensive side of the line of scrimmage.
5. **Illegal Blocking-Blocking in the Back.** Rule 2-5-2 Blocking in the back is a block against an opponent when the initial contact is in the opponent's back, inside the shoulders and below the helmet and above the waist. Except in the free blocking zone. (See below) **(10-yd penalty)**
6. **Illegal Blocking-Clipping.** Rule 9-3-5: A player shall not clip except in the free blocking zone (rectangular area 4 yards either side of the ball and 3 yards behind the line of scrimmage) In this zone, only players who are in the zone at the snap may clip others that are also in the zone at the snap. Rule 2-17-3: May also clip when tackling a runner or pretend runner; or recovering a loose ball. Such cases shall not be ruled clipping unless the official sees the initial contact. When in doubt, or the opponent turns his back, or the block is from the side, it is not clipping if the opponent was able to see the blocker.

Rule 2-5-1 **Clipping** is a block against an opponent when the initial contact is from behind, at or below the waist, and not against a player who is a runner or pretending to be a runner. **(15-yd penalty)**

7. **Illegal Blocking-Below the Waist.** Rule 9-3-2: A player shall not block an opponent below the waist, except: a. in the free blocking zone (See 6) when contact meets requirements (Rule 2-17)
b. to tackle a player with, or pretending to have, the ball. **(15-yd penalty)**
8. **Illegal Blocking-Chop Block.** Rule 9-3-6: Blocking by offense or defense is illegal when it is a chop block. Rule 2-3-9 Chop Block is a block at the knees or below against opponent who is in contact with a teammate of the blocker in the free blocking zone. This block is NEVER legal. **(15-yd penalty)**
9. **Illegal Personal Contact.** Rule 9-4-2: No player shall:
 - b. **Charge into or throw an opponent to the ground after he is obviously out of play, or after the ball is clearly dead either in or out of bounds. In other words, players shall not HEADHUNT away from the play and coaches should teach their kids that such an activity is illegal and dangerous.**
 - c. Pile on any player who is lying on the ground.
 - i. Butt block or **spear.** (Butt Block is a blow driven directly into an opponent with the face mask, frontal area, or top of the helmet as the primary point of contact.)
 - j. Intentionally use his helmet to butt or ram an opponent.
 - k. Hide the ball under a jersey.
Rule 9-4-7: A defensive (and offensive) player shall not use his hands to strike (an opponents) head.
(all 15-yd penalties)
10. **Noncontact Unsportsmanlike Conduct by Non players.** Rule 9-8-1: No coach, substitute, trainer or other team attendant shall act in an unsportsmanlike manner. Example are, but not limited to:
 - a. Using Profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.
 - b. Attempting to influence a decision by an official.
 - c. Disrespectfully addressing an official.**(15-yd penalty and if flagrant-disqualification and ejection. The second unsportsmanlike foul with a 15-yard penalty results in disqualification. Failure to comply, the referee may forfeit the game.)**
Between the 25-yard lines. No Coach, substitute, trainer or other team attendant shall be outside the team box.
(1st offense warning-2nd 5 yards, 3rd and so on 15 yards)
11. **Parents and spectators.** Rule 9-9-1: A player or nonplayer or person not subjected to the rules shall not hinder play by an unfair act which has no specific rule. **(Penalty-the referee enforces any penalty he considers equitable including the award of a score. Zero Tolerance enforced, spectator ejected from facility.)**
12. **Inadvertent Whistle:** Rule 4-2-3: During a down, or during a down in which the penalty for foul is declined, if an inadvertent whistle occurs while:
 - a. A legal forward pass or snap is in flight, or during a legal kick, the down shall be replayed.
 - b. The ball is loose following a backward pass, fumble, illegal forward pass or illegal kick, the team last in possession may choose to put the ball in play where possession was lost or replay the down.
 - c. The ball is in player possession, that team may choose to accept the play at that spot or replay the down.



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13. **No Walk-Ons.** Rule 7-2-1: After the ball is ready for play, each player of the offense must have been, momentarily, within 15 yards of the ball before the snap. **(5-yd penalty)**
Also, Rule 9-6-4c: To use a replaced player or substitute in a substitution or pretend substitution to deceive opponents at or immediately before the snap or free-kick. **(15-yd penalty)**
14. **Assist the Runner:** An offensive player shall not push, pull or lift the runner to assist his forward progress. Rule 9-1 **(5-yd penalty)**
15. **Footwear.** Molded rubber cleats only. (does not apply to 7th & 8th grade, HS standards are followed)
16. **Illegal Personal Contact.** Rule 9-4-1: No player or non-player shall fight (striking, kicking, kneeing, intentionally contacting an official.) **(15-yd penalty & disqualification)**
17. Rule 7-5-1: More than one **forward pass** may be thrown during the down provided the passer has both feet in or behind the neutral zone when the ball is released. (You can pass or lateral the ball backwards as many times as you want also.)
18. **Pass Interference** restrictions only apply beyond the neutral zone and only if the forward pass crosses the neutral zone.

Pass interference restrictions begin for offense at the snap and for defense at the release of the pass.

It is forward-pass interference if any player, offense or defense who is beyond the neutral zone interferes with an eligible opponent's opportunity to move toward, catch or bat the pass.
(15-yards from previous spot and automatic first down if by defense or 15 yards from previous spot and loss of down if by offense)

It is not pass interference if unavoidable contact occurs when two or more eligible are making a simultaneous, bona fide attempt to move toward, catch or bat the pass.

It is not pass interference if contact by the offense is immediately made on the defense and the contact does not continue beyond the neutral zone.
19. **Roughing the Passer.** Rule 9-3-3: Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer, after it is clear the ball has been thrown. **(15-yards and automatic first down from previous spot or from completion.)**
20. **Noncontact Unsportsmanlike Conduct.** Rule 9-5: Baiting, taunting, insignias worn that engenders ill will; embarrass, ridicule or demean on the basis of race, gender, religion, or national origin; profanity, insulting, language or gestures; spiking or kicking the ball, throw it in the air; any delayed excessive or prolonged act by which a player attempts to focus attention upon himself. **(15-yards & disqualification if flagrant, The 2nd unsportsmanlike foul results in disqualification.)**
21. **Personal Injury.** Rule 3-5-10: An injured player, for whom the clock is stopped, must be replaced for at least one down, unless the halftime or overtime intermission occurs.
22. **Roughing the snapper.** A defensive player shall not charge directly into the snapper when the offensive team is in a scrimmage-kick (punt) formation. **(15-yard penalty and 1st down)**
23. **Snap** Rule 7-1a: The snapper may be over the ball...and no part of his person, other than a hand(s) on the ball, may be beyond the foremost point of the ball.
 - b. The snapper **may lift the ball** for **lateral rotation** but may not rotate end-for-end or change the location of the ball.
 - c. The snapper may not remove both hands from the ball, make a false snap or fail to pause before the snap.
 - d. An act clearly intended to cause the defense to encroach. **(5 yards penalty)**
24. **QB** Rule 7-1-7a: Jerky movements by a quarterback which, simulate the beginning of the down or acts clearly intended to cause the Defense to encroach, are false starts. No head-bobbing, but hard counts are okay. **(5-yard penalty)**



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25. **Coin toss:** One coach is allowed on the field & up to 4 captains. Visitors call. The winner of the toss has 3 choices: 1. Defer choice to 2nd half; 2. Choose whether to kick or receive; 3. Choose the goal to defend. (i.e. if team A wins toss – defers - and team B elects to kickoff – team A has choice in 2nd half and may choose to receive – meaning team B has to kickoff both halves.)
26. **Helmets.** Rule 1-5-1b: A visible, exterior warning label is required on each player's helmet.
27. After a **safety** (2 points) The team whose goal line was involved shall put the ball in play on the 20-yard line by a free kick after a safety. **3rd Grade:** the ball shall be put on the 25-yard line of the team scored on and they shall become the defense.
28. **No interior offensive lineman can run with the ball. (center, guards & tackles) No fumble-ruskies (planned loose balls) Too many rules apply. (5-yd penalty)**