

## **OPS YOUTH FOOTBALL LEAGUE RULES AND REGULATIONS**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

OPS Youth Football Leagues focus on building passion and excitement for the game of football in a controlled environment. Winning is important, but not paramount. Equal participation is a key focus, as well as teaching the game of football and its various positions through practices and games.

The foremost goal of OPS Youth Football is for every athlete and parent to leave any session of our program feeling it was worth it, that the knowledge and experience gained made an impact in how they view the game compared to when they arrived.

### **FIELD PARAMETERS (for indoors at Ash Center)**

- Each game will be held on the turf at OPS Ash Center. One game will be played at a time.
- Possessions always start at the goal line. Teams can achieve two first downs per possession, at the 15-yard line and at the opposite 10-yard line. Achieving a first down in three plays or less resets the downs. Not scoring or picking up a conversion within three plays results in a turnover on downs.
- Players are marked down the first instance in which they are touched with **TWO (2)** hands on any part of the body.

### **TEAM MEMBERS**

- Teams can have max of 6 players on the field at once.
- Teams do NOT have to utilize an offensive center. QB will hunch over as if he is getting the snap from a center, but then pull the ball on his command to start the play.
- The side official will be responsible for setting or re-positioning the football at the line of scrimmage.

### **COACHES**

- Each team has a maximum of 2 coaches in which kids are protected. Only coaches are allowed in the designated team area during games. Additional coaches may assist on bench for player rotation, etc.
- One offensive coach may be in the huddle with players between plays but must stand behind and aside the play to avoid interference.
- **NEW:** The defensive coach on the field **MUST** be out of the field of play prior to the snap. One warning will be given, then delay of game penalties will be issued. (Does not apply for age 7-8 division).

## OFFICIALS

- Each game will have a minimum of two (2) OPS-approved officials. Positions are referee/field judge and back judge.
- Each game will have a **FIELD MANAGER** to assist with issues that arise. The field manager will also be responsible for making sure score is updated. He/she will also be in communication with officials.
- All officials calls are FINAL. OPS will NOT overturn or challenge any rulings by officials unless there is a blatant misunderstanding of the rules.
- Any issues with the score MUST be brought to the attention of the officials and OPS field manager at the time they arise, NOT at the end of the game.

## GAME TIMES

- Teams must be on site and ready to start on time. If a team is late or cannot start on time, the game clock will begin and whatever time is left on the clock will be where the game starts. The team that is late will begin on defense.
- Games are played with two halves of 18 minutes each, running clock. Game time will be kept by field manager and WILL NOT stop unless in the event of an injury or a timeout.
- Play clock is set at 35 seconds and will be enforced at age divisions 9-10 and above. Referee discretion will be used at Age 7-8. Play clock begins once ball is set at line of scrimmage.
- Teams are allowed one 45-second timeout per half. This will stop the game clock and reset the play clock.

## OVERTIME

- Each team will be given one play. Longest gain from scrimmage is awarded 3 points and the win.
- On **CHAMPIONSHIP SATURDAY**, teams will each get one possession from the 10-yard line with three downs to attempt to score. On conversions, teams may elect to go for one from the 3-yard line or for two from the 10-yard line.
- Beginning in the third overtime, teams are REQUIRED to go for two.
- Overtime periods are not timed.
- Each team is awarded one timeout during overtime period.

## **SCORING**

- Six (6) points for a touchdown
- One (1) point for a PAT from 3-yard line
- Two (2) points for a PAT from 10 yard line
- Three (3) points for an interception. Interceptions cannot be returned.
- NO points awarded for defensive stops.
- Turnover on a PAT is a dead ball and no points are awarded.

## **PENALTIES**

### **Offense**

- False start/offside = Loss of Down
- Delay of Game = Loss of Down
- Each team will have 35 seconds (**ages 7-8: 45 seconds**) to snap the ball once it has been marked ready for play; delay of game penalty will be assessed.
- Pass interference = 5-yard penalty and loss of down
- No penalty may be assessed in excess of the 40-yard line. If a penalty would move the offense beyond the 40-yard line, the offensive team shall be charged with a loss of down.
- **FOUR-SECOND RULE (Age divisions 9-10 and up):** If the referee sees that the clock has exceeded 4 seconds without a pass being thrown, the play is blown dead. The ball should be returned to the original line of scrimmage with loss of down. **NOTE:** Officials WILL be counting 4 seconds verbally on all fields. (**Age 7-8: 6 seconds**)

### **Defense**

- Offside = 5-yard penalty
- Defensive Holding = 5-yard penalty
- Defensive pass interference = spot foul (1st down at the spot).
- If defensive pass interference occurs in the end zone, it will result in a first down at the 1-yard line.

- Any dead ball penalty on the defense AFTER a change of possession would result in a loss of down for that team's offense when they begin their ensuing possession.
- Responsibility to avoid contact is with the defense. The defense is allowed an INITIAL disruption, and then must cover. Excessive or prolonged contact will result in a "tack on" penalty at the end of the play (5-yard penalty).

**NOTE:** Officials will be directed to call games with a firm attention to detail. **NO taunting or unsportsmanlike behavior will be tolerated.**

### **TURNOVERS/DEAD BALLS**

- Receiver is legally down when touched below the neck with **BOTH** hands. (Excessive and purposeful force by shoving, pushing, or striking a blow will be penalized by automatic first down and 5 yards.)

Players **CAN AND WILL** be expelled from league if ruled unsportsmanlike & flagrant.

- Fumbles that hit the ground are dead balls at the spot with the last team retaining possession. Muffed snap/hand-off is a dead ball at all age levels.
- The QB is allowed 4 seconds to throw the ball at age 9-10 and above (age 7-8: 6 count). Time starts on the snap and stops as soon as the QB releases the ball. If release is under 4 seconds, the play continues. Play is blown dead after 4 seconds.
- Interceptions may not be returned – 3 points are awarded on interception.
- The offense must gain at least a first down or score in the first 3 or less plays or the defense takes over. No 4th downs. (3) downs in all zones.

### **APPEALS**

- There will be **NO** unsportsmanlike behavior tolerated when it comes to coaches, players or fans arguing a call, either with officials, team managers or any OPS event staff. Coaches may discuss calls and the score in an adult manner with officials, but will carry themselves in a mature and respectable manner.

### **ADDITIONAL RULES**

- No kicking or punting, blitzing or blocking (players can "get in the way" of opposing players but cannot engage with their arms/hands)
- No quarterback runs

- Once the QB hands off or tosses the ball to a back, defenders can cross the line of scrimmage, NOT before.
- No tosses or handoffs allowed past the line of scrimmage (hook and ladders, etc)
- Players **MUST** be rotated on a regular basis. Any negligence to this rule and teams may be punished up to and including forfeiting games.

### **"MERCY" RULES**

- Once a team is up 25 or more points, they cannot go for a two-point conversion.
- Once a team is up 30 points, a rotation must be implemented at QB. No player can be QB on successive possessions.
- Point differential for tiebreaking purposes is maxed out at +25 per game. Example: If a team wins a game 40-0, the maximum is +25 for the winning team and -25 for the losing team.

**NOTE:** Coaches, PLEASE use proper discretion when you are leading by a significant amount. Think about why you are here and why this league exists – to foster continued love of the game of football for everyone both on your team AND the opponent.

### **BEHAVIOR**

- Teams and programs competing in OPS events will be held to the highest standard of Optimum Performance Sports and Lutheran Health Network. All attendees are subject to disciplinary action and expulsion from the event and the facility based on their behavior.
- No taunting, vulgarity or trash talking permitted. Teams will be assessed an immediate penalty if either takes place. Celebrate with YOUR team, NOT in the face of the opponent.
- Any singular player, coach or fan that involves himself/herself in any kind of disruptive behavior deemed extreme will be removed from the event and the facility.
- Any team or group that involves itself collectively in any kind of disruptive behavior deemed extreme will be immediately dismissed from the league. NO refunds will be given.

### **PLAYBOOKS**

- Coaches have autonomy to build their own playbooks. However, use discretion on age and experience level of your team. Remember, this league's primary focus is on TEACHING!

## **Guidelines on advisable number of plays in playbook per age division**

**Age 7-8:** 8

**Age 9-10:** 10

**Age 11-12:** 12

**Age 13-14:** 15

## **SAFETY**

- Cleats are encouraged.
- Mouthpieces are not mandatory but HIGHLY suggested. Even in a touch league, collisions do happen.

## **SKILLS FOCUS PER AGE GROUP**

The development of young football players is predicated on teaching the fundamental aspects of the game. It begins early. OPS strives to make training and developing kids as consistent as possible.

Priorities for each age division are as follows:

### **Age 7-8**

- Kids are beginning to come into their own – focus on refining the fundamentals
- Will have some first-timers to the sport. Do not lose sight of the fact that you're a teacher first and foremost
- Give feedback! Kids at this age begin to seek praise and acceptance, no matter the skill level

### **Age 9-10**

- Most of these kids have had experience playing football before. Focus on the elements to which they will need at the middle school level
- Begin to hold the kids accountable
- Keep the positive momentum going by adding to the foundation of skill work

### **Age 11-12**

- Competitiveness truly comes to the forefront around this age
- Challenge your kids without setting unrealistic expectations
- This is arguably the most important age when it comes to sport. Make it a GREAT experience and these kids can truly take off in terms of their love of the game.
- Continue to hammer on winning with class and losing with grace. Life is full of wins and losses. How YOU handle the results of the games will set the expectation for how your kids handle results.

### **Age 13-14**

- The fundamental building blocks have been laid and refined for years at this age for most kids.
- These kids are searching for their personal identity. Be a great role model. In some cases, you may be the only one a kid has.

- Improvement is paramount. Soon, these kids will enter the unforgiving setting of high school.

### **FOOTBALL SIZE TO BE UTILIZED**

**Age 7-8:** Pee Wee

**Age 9-10:** Junior

**Age 11-12:** Junior

**Age 13-14:** Youth

### **PLAYER DRAFT PROCESSES**

- During evaluations, every coach will use a number system to rate all players – one (below-average), two (average) and three (above average).
- Using those ratings, teams will be drafted by the coaches via an order that will be **RANDOMLY GENERATED** prior to draft night.
- Draft will go in the order generated via a snake format. (1, 2, 3, 4, 4, 3, 2, 1, etc.)
- The amount of “protected” players are immediately applied to the draft order. Reminder, family members **ONLY** are protected by coaches.
  - For instance, if the Warriors have 2 protected players and the Spartans have 1, the Warriors will not make a player selection until the third round, while the Spartans will begin in the second round.
- Protected players affect draft picks **REGARDLESS OF PLAYER RATING**
  - **Example:** If the Irish coach has a kid who is rated a 3, but the Tar Heels coach has a kid rated a 1, it still affects the draft order the same.
- The draft continues until every player **WHO WAS AT EVAL DAY** is taken.
- All players who were NOT at evaluation day will be put into a pool of players and randomly selected by the commissioner by using the highly-scientific “Wheel of Names” randomizer online.

**Questions? Concerns? Contact Justin Kenny at (260) 479-3497 or [skenny@lhn.net](mailto:skenny@lhn.net)**