



MYRTLE BEACH FOOTBALL LEAGUE (MBFL) OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

MISSION STATEMENT

The Myrtle Beach Football League (MBFL) is a competitive flag football league established to deliver an organized, disciplined, and authentic football experience while serving as a safer alternative to traditional tackle football.

MBFL is founded on the belief that flag football can retain the structure, strategy, physical engagement, and competitive intensity of the sport without reliance on tackling or excessive force. The League utilizes clearly defined flag-based downing rules, controlled physical engagement standards, and enforced safety limits to preserve the integrity of football while reducing unnecessary risk to participants.

Player safety and long-term well-being are fundamental priorities of the League and supersede competitive outcomes in all circumstances. MBFL emphasizes proper technique, spatial awareness, controlled contact, and responsible play, and prohibits actions that create avoidable danger or undermine participant safety.

The League is committed to fair play, competitive balance, and consistent governance across all divisions and formats. MBFL contests are conducted under uniform rules and procedures designed to reflect the organization, accountability, and professionalism of established football governing bodies.

MBFL promotes respect for the game, for opponents, and for officiating authority. All participants—players, coaches, officials, and spectators—are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds the integrity of competition and the spirit of football.

Through disciplined structure, principled leadership, and clear standards of play, the Myrtle Beach Football League seeks to provide a flag football environment that is challenging, credible, and sustainable for athletes of all ages.

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SECTION 1 — LEAGUE PURPOSE, PHILOSOPHY, SAFETY STANDARDS & SPIRIT OF PLAY

1.1 Purpose of the League

1.1.1 Foundational Purpose.

The Myrtle Beach Football League (MBFL) is organized to provide a structured, competitive flag football environment that reflects the strategy, discipline, and intensity of American football while serving as a safer alternative to traditional tackle football.

1.1.2 Nature of Competition.

MBFL contests are designed to preserve authentic football concepts, including formations, quarterback decision-making, defensive pressure, situational awareness, and clock management. The League intentionally avoids recreational or novelty formats and instead emphasizes rules and structures that maintain the integrity and credibility of the sport.

1.1.3 Scope of Play.

All MBFL activities are conducted under uniform rules applicable across divisions and formats, with age-appropriate adjustments only where expressly stated. All play occurs under the authority of MBFL officials and staff.

1.2 Flag Football Identity

1.2.1 Method of Downing.

MBFL is a flag football league. A play is terminated by the legal removal of a ball carrier's flag or by application of defined touch rules when applicable. Tackling is strictly prohibited.

1.2.2 Distinction from Non-Contact Formats.

While flag removal determines the end of a play, MBFL is not a non-contact league. Limited, controlled physical engagement is permitted within clearly defined boundaries to preserve realistic football movement, leverage, and positioning.

1.2.3 Responsibility of Participants.

Players are expected to pursue flags rather than bodies and to avoid actions that are unnecessary to legally terminate a play under flag football principles.

1.3 Controlled-Contact Philosophy

1.3.1 Definition of Controlled Contact.

Controlled contact consists of limited, non-forcible physical engagement occurring naturally

within the flow of play. This may include screening, body positioning, incidental contact, and brief hand engagement within permitted areas.

1.3.2 Prohibited Conduct.

Any action involving excessive force, launching, driving, tackling, or reckless disregard for an opponent's safety is prohibited, regardless of intent or competitive circumstance.

1.3.3 Lower Tolerance Standard.

Because MBFL participants do not wear helmets or pads, contact standards are intentionally more restrictive than those found in tackle football. Actions legal in tackle football may be illegal under MBFL rules.

1.4 Player Safety Standards

1.4.1 Safety as a Primary Principle.

Player safety is the overriding principle of all MBFL rules and enforcement decisions. Safety considerations supersede possession, advantage, field position, timing, and scoring opportunity.

1.4.2 Preventative Authority.

Officials and referees are empowered to take preventative action, including early termination of plays, warnings, penalties, or removal of participants, when necessary to reduce injury risk.

1.4.3 Injury and Health Management.

When an injury or potential injury is observed, officials may stop play immediately. Players deemed unable to continue safely may be withheld from participation at the discretion of officials or MBFL staff.

1.5 Competitive Integrity

1.5.1 Equal Application of Rules.

All rules shall be applied uniformly to all teams and participants. No individual or team is entitled to special consideration based on age, experience, or competitive status.

1.5.2 Emphasis on Execution.

MBFL rules are structured to reward preparation, technique, awareness, and execution rather than reliance on unsafe physical advantage.

1.5.3 Prohibition of Unsporting Advantage.

Actions intended to intimidate, deceive officials, exploit unsafe situations, or undermine fair competition are inconsistent with League philosophy and subject to enforcement.

1.6 Spirit of Play

1.6.1 Responsibility of All Persons Present.

All players, coaches, officials, referees, and spectators are subject to MBFL rules, authority, and conduct standards while present at any MBFL-sanctioned event, including games, practices, warm-ups, and intermissions.

1.6.2 Shared Obligation.

Each group bears responsibility for maintaining a safe, respectful, and orderly environment. Misconduct by any individual—whether participating in play or observing—may result in penalties, removal from the venue, or further disciplinary action as determined by MBFL.

1.6.3 Attribution of Conduct.

The conduct of spectators, parents, or other non-playing individuals may be attributed to the team and/or player with whom they are affiliated when such conduct impacts game administration, participant safety, or the orderly conduct of the contest.

1.7 League Discretion and Intent

1.7.1 Authority to Act.

MBFL reserves the right to take any action necessary to protect participants, preserve competitive integrity, and maintain orderly operations, even in situations not explicitly detailed elsewhere in this Rulebook.

1.7.2 Intent-Based Interpretation.

All rules shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the purpose, safety standards, and spirit of play established in this section.

1.7.3 Foundational Control.

This section serves as the philosophical foundation for all subsequent rules. When ambiguity arises, interpretations consistent with the principles outlined herein shall control.

SECTION 2 — LEAGUE AUTHORITY & RULE INTERPRETATION

2.1 Governing Authority of the League

2.1.1 Ultimate Authority.

The Myrtle Beach Football League (MBFL) is the sole governing authority for all MBFL-sanctioned games, practices, events, and activities. All rules, interpretations, enforcement decisions, and disciplinary actions are issued under MBFL authority and are binding on all persons subject to this Rulebook.

2.1.2 MBFL Representatives.

For the purposes of this Rulebook, MBFL Representatives shall include MBFL referees, officials, staff, and any individual formally designated by the League to administer, enforce, supervise, or govern MBFL-sanctioned activities.

2.1.3 Scope of Authority.

MBFL authority extends to all players, coaches, MBFL Representatives, and spectators while present at any MBFL-sanctioned activity or venue. This authority includes, but is not limited to, rule enforcement, eligibility determinations, game administration, safety decisions, discipline, and removal of individuals from participation or premises.

2.1.4 Supremacy of MBFL Rules.

MBFL rules supersede all other football rulesets, including those of other flag football leagues, tackle football organizations, recreational programs, or informal local practices. No external rule, custom, or interpretation shall apply unless expressly adopted by MBFL within this Rulebook.

2.2 Authority of MBFL Referees and Officials

2.2.1 On-Field Finality.

MBFL referees and officials assigned to a contest have full and final authority over all on-field decisions, including rulings on fouls, ball placement, down and distance, clock status, possession, eligibility during play, and player safety.

2.2.2 Judgment Decisions.

Judgment decisions made by MBFL referees and officials—including but not limited to determinations of controlled versus excessive contact, flag pulls, touch rulings, possession, in-bounds or out-of-bounds status, and timing—are final and not subject to protest or appeal.

2.2.3 Safety Authority.

MBFL referees and officials are empowered to terminate plays early, stop games, or remove participants when necessary to protect player safety. Safety-based decisions shall not be questioned, delayed, or reversed due to competitive impact.

2.2.4 Crew Administration.

The designated head referee or lead official has primary responsibility for game control, penalty enforcement, timing coordination, and communication with coaches and MBFL Representatives. Officials may confer as necessary, and the crew's final determination shall stand.

2.3 Authority of MBFL Staff and Representatives

2.3.1 Administrative Control.

MBFL staff and other MBFL Representatives retain authority over league administration, venue management, eligibility enforcement, discipline, and spectator control. This authority applies before, during, and after contests.

2.3.2 Concurrent Authority.

Authority of MBFL staff and Representatives operates concurrently with officiating authority. While referees and officials control on-field rulings, MBFL staff and Representatives may direct play to pause, address unsafe or disruptive conditions, or remove individuals when necessary.

2.3.3 Binding Directives.

Directives issued by MBFL staff or other MBFL Representatives in the interest of safety, order, or administration are binding and shall be followed immediately. Failure to comply may result in penalties, removal, suspension, or forfeiture.

2.4 Rule Interpretation Standards

2.4.1 Plain Meaning and Intent.

Rules shall be interpreted according to their plain language and the intent expressed in the Mission Statement and Section 1 of this Rulebook. Where ambiguity exists, interpretations that best promote safety, fairness, and enforceability shall control.

2.4.2 Safety-First Interpretation.

When a rule permits multiple reasonable interpretations, the interpretation that minimizes risk to participants shall prevail, even if such interpretation negates possession, advantage, or scoring opportunity.

2.4.3 No Exploitation of Technicalities.

Rules shall not be interpreted to permit actions that technically comply with wording but violate the spirit, safety standards, or intent of the League. Attempts to exploit loopholes, gray areas, or enforcement limitations are prohibited.

2.4.4 Uniform Application.

Unless explicitly stated otherwise, interpretations apply uniformly across all MBFL divisions and formats. Adjustments based on age group or format must be expressly provided within the Rulebook to be valid.

2.5 No Protest or Appeal of Game Rulings

2.5.1 No Game Protests.

MBFL does not recognize protests of game outcomes or on-field rulings. Decisions made by MBFL referees and officials during the course of play are final.

2.5.2 Administrative Review Only.

MBFL may review contests post-game solely for administrative matters such as eligibility violations, roster compliance, discipline, or forfeiture determinations. On-field judgment calls shall not be revisited.

2.5.3 Effect of Errors.

Inadvertent errors by officials, including premature whistles or misjudgments, do not invalidate a contest or justify replay of completed portions of a game, except as expressly provided elsewhere in this Rulebook.

2.6 Communication and Conduct Expectations

2.6.1 Coach Communication.

Only designated head coaches or captains may seek clarification of rule application from referees, and only during dead-ball situations. Requests must be respectful and limited to rule application, not judgment.

2.6.2 Prohibited Conduct Toward Authority.

Arguing judgment calls, persistent questioning, confrontation, or attempts to influence MBFL referees, officials, staff, or other Representatives are prohibited and subject to penalty or removal.

2.6.3 Spectator Conduct.

MBFL referees and officials are not required to engage with spectators. Misconduct by spectators may be addressed by MBFL Representatives and may be attributed to the affiliated team and/or player.

2.7 Finality and Condition of Participation

2.7.1 Binding Decisions.

All rulings, interpretations, and enforcement actions taken by MBFL Representatives under this Rulebook are final and binding.

2.7.2 Acceptance of Authority.

Participation in MBFL constitutes acceptance of League authority, rule interpretations, and enforcement outcomes, regardless of competitive impact.

2.7.3 Enforcement Foundation.

This section governs authority and interpretation throughout the Rulebook. Where questions arise, authority rests with MBFL, and compliance is mandatory.

SECTION 3 — DIVISIONS & AGE GROUPS

3.1 Purpose of Divisional Structure

3.1.1 Competitive Balance and Safety.

MBFL divisions are established to promote competitive balance, age-appropriate participation, and player safety. Divisional separation is intended to reduce physical mismatches, align contact standards with participant maturity, and preserve fair and orderly competition.

3.1.2 Mandatory Compliance.

All participants shall be assigned to and compete within an MBFL-approved division. Participation outside an assigned division is prohibited except as expressly authorized under this section.

3.1.3 League Authority.

MBFL retains exclusive authority to establish, modify, combine, or dissolve divisions based on registration numbers, safety considerations, or competitive necessity.

3.2 Official MBFL Divisions and Age Ranges

MBFL recognizes the following standard divisions:

- **11U Division:** Players ages **8 through 11**
- **14U Division:** Players ages **11 through 14**
- **18U Division:** Players ages **14 through 18**
- **Adult Division:** Players ages **18 and older**

These age ranges define eligibility parameters only and do not guarantee placement absent MBFL approval.

3.3 Age Determination

3.3.1 Age Determination Date.

A participant's age for divisional eligibility shall be determined by the age the participant will be

on the **final scheduled date of the MBFL season**, as established by the League prior to the start of competition.

3.3.2 Frozen Eligibility for the Season.

Once a season begins, a participant's age eligibility is fixed for the duration of that season. A participant shall not change divisions due to a birthday occurring during the season.

3.3.3 Verification of Age.

MBFL reserves the right to verify age eligibility at any time and may require documentation to confirm compliance. Failure to provide requested verification may result in removal or other administrative action.

3.4 Division Assignment

3.4.1 Initial Assignment.

Participants shall be assigned to divisions based on age eligibility, registration information, and MBFL placement guidelines.

3.4.2 MBFL Discretion.

MBFL reserves the right to assign or reassign a participant to a division it deems appropriate to preserve safety or competitive integrity. This authority applies regardless of participant preference, parental request, or prior participation.

3.5 Playing Up and Playing Down

3.5.1 Playing Up Permitted.

Participants **may be permitted to play up** into a higher age division only with express approval from MBFL. Approval is discretionary and may be denied or revoked at any time based on safety, experience, physical development, roster balance, or competitive considerations.

3.5.2 No Playing Down.

Participants **may not play down** into a lower age division under any circumstances. Requests to compete below a participant's age-eligible division shall not be granted.

3.5.3 Dual Division Participation.

A participant may not compete in more than one division during the same season **unless**:

- (a) the participant is properly registered and **paid for each division**, and/or
- (b) the participant receives **express approval from MBFL**.

MBFL retains sole discretion to approve or deny dual-division participation based on safety, workload, competitive balance, scheduling conflicts, or any other League concern. Approval may be limited or revoked at any time.

3.6 Division-Specific Adjustments

3.6.1 Rule Modifications by Division.

Certain rules, including but not limited to blitz limitations, contact standards, and loose-ball treatment, may vary by division as expressly stated elsewhere in this Rulebook.

3.6.2 Safety Priority.

Divisional adjustments shall always err toward increased safety in younger divisions. Expanded gameplay options in older divisions are permitted only within controlled-contact standards.

3.6.3 No Implied Permissions.

The absence of a divisional restriction does not imply permission. Only adjustments expressly stated in this Rulebook are authorized.

3.7 Contingency and Modified Divisions

3.7.1 Contingency Formats.

When registration numbers require, MBFL may authorize contingency formats or modified divisional groupings to allow play to proceed.

3.7.2 Temporary Application.

Contingency or modified divisions are temporary measures and do not establish precedent for future seasons.

3.7.3 Safety Review.

All contingency formats shall be reviewed and approved by MBFL to ensure compliance with safety standards and competitive fairness.

3.8 Final Authority and Enforcement

3.8.1 Final Determination.

All divisional placement decisions are final and rest solely with MBFL.

3.8.2 Ineligible Participation.

Participation in an incorrect division or unapproved dual-division participation constitutes an eligibility violation and may result in removal, forfeiture, or disciplinary action.

3.8.3 Condition of Participation.

Registration and participation in MBFL constitute acceptance of divisional placement, age eligibility standards, payment requirements, and MBFL authority.

SECTION 4 — SEASON STRUCTURE, STANDINGS & PLAYOFFS

4.1 Season Structure

4.1.1 Defined Season Format.

An MBFL season shall consist of a **six (6) game regular season**, followed by postseason playoff competition culminating in a division championship.

4.1.2 Season Calendar.

The official start date, end date, and championship date for each season shall be established and published by MBFL prior to the start of competition.

4.1.3 Uniform Scheduling.

All teams within the same division shall be scheduled to play six (6) regular-season games. No team shall play more or fewer games unless modified by MBFL due to extraordinary circumstances.

4.1.4 League Adjustment Authority.

MBFL reserves the right to reschedule games, adjust dates, or modify the season timeline due to weather, safety concerns, venue availability, or other circumstances beyond League control. Such adjustments do not alter the defined six-game season unless expressly declared by MBFL.

4.2 Regular Season Standings

4.2.1 Official Record.

Standings shall be determined by each team's win-loss record over the six (6) regular-season games.

4.2.2 Wins and Losses.

A win is recorded when a team scores more points than its opponent at the conclusion of regulation play. A loss is recorded when a team scores fewer points.

4.2.3 Ties.

MBFL utilizes overtime procedures to eliminate ties whenever practicable. Regular-season games are intended to be decided by overtime as defined elsewhere in this Rulebook.

A game may be recorded as a tie **only** when extraordinary circumstances require the game to be ended abruptly and overtime cannot be conducted, including but not limited to weather conditions, safety concerns, venue restrictions, or administrative necessity as determined by MBFL Representatives.

4.2.4 Forfeits.

A forfeited game shall be recorded as a **win for the non-forfeiting team and a loss for the forfeiting team.**

No score shall be recorded for a forfeited game, and the game shall not be included in point differential or other scoring-based tiebreakers.

MBFL retains authority to impose additional administrative or disciplinary consequences for forfeits as appropriate.

4.3 Tiebreaker Procedures

When two or more teams are tied in the standings following the regular season, the following tiebreakers shall be applied **in order** until the tie is resolved:

4.3.1 Head-to-Head Result.

The outcome of regular-season games played between the tied teams.

4.3.2 Point Differential.

Net point differential across all regular-season games. Forfeited games are excluded from this calculation.

4.3.3 MBFL Determination.

If a tie remains unresolved, MBFL shall determine final placement using criteria it deems appropriate to preserve competitive integrity, safety, and fairness.

4.4 Playoff Qualification

4.4.1 Postseason Eligibility.

Teams shall qualify for postseason play based on final regular-season standings within their division.

4.4.2 Number of Playoff Teams.

The number of playoff teams per division shall be established by MBFL prior to the season based on total team count.

4.4.3 Eligibility Compliance.

Teams found to have used ineligible participants during the regular season or postseason may be disqualified from playoff participation at MBFL's discretion.

4.5 Playoff Structure

4.5.1 Single-Elimination Bracket Format.

All MBFL postseason games shall be conducted using a **single-elimination bracket format**. A loss in postseason play results in immediate elimination from championship contention.

4.5.2 Seeding.

Playoff seeding shall be determined by final regular-season standings after application of all tiebreaker procedures.

4.5.3 High Seed vs. Low Seed Matchups.

The playoff bracket shall be structured so that the **highest-seeded team competes against the lowest-seeded team**, the second-highest seed against the second-lowest seed, and so forth, based on the number of qualifying teams.

4.5.4 Reseeding.

Following each playoff round, remaining teams shall be reseeded as necessary to preserve the high seed versus low seed matchup structure in subsequent rounds.

4.5.5 Byes.

When the number of qualifying teams does not allow for a complete bracket, the highest-seeded team(s) may receive a bye in the opening round as determined by MBFL.

4.5.6 Advancement.

Winning teams advance through the bracket until a championship matchup is determined.

4.5.7 No Consolation Games.

Unless expressly authorized by MBFL, no consolation or placement games shall be conducted outside the championship pathway.

4.6 Championship Structure

4.6.1 Championship Game.

The final remaining teams in each division shall compete in a **championship game** to determine the division champion.

4.6.2 Determination of Champion.

The winner of the championship game shall be declared the official MBFL Champion for that division.

4.6.3 Overtime Application.

Championship games shall utilize overtime procedures as defined elsewhere in this Rulebook and shall not end in a tie.

4.6.4 Championship Authority.

MBFL retains authority over championship scheduling, venue selection, officiating assignments, and ceremonial elements.

4.7 Withdrawals, No-Shows, and Season Disruptions

4.7.1 Team Withdrawal.

A team that withdraws from a season may forfeit remaining regular-season or postseason games. MBFL may remove the team from standings or adjust results as necessary.

4.7.2 No-Shows.

Failure to appear for a scheduled game without MBFL approval shall result in forfeiture and may result in additional disciplinary action.

4.7.3 Extraordinary Circumstances.

In the event of widespread disruption, MBFL may modify standings, playoff qualification, or postseason structure as necessary to conclude the season safely and fairly.

4.8 Final Authority

4.8.1 MBFL Discretion.

All determinations regarding season structure, standings, playoff qualification, and championship designation rest solely with MBFL.

4.8.2 Condition of Participation.

Participation in MBFL constitutes acceptance of the six-game regular season, single-elimination playoff bracket, high-seed-versus-low-seed structure, overtime application, and championship determinations made by the League.

SECTION 5 — TEAMS, ROSTERS & PLAYER PARTICIPATION

5.1 Team Formation and Recognition

5.1.1 League-Formed Teams (Standard Model).

MBFL teams are primarily formed, organized, and assigned by the League. Most participants register as individuals and are placed onto teams by MBFL in a manner intended to promote competitive balance, safety, and equitable participation.

5.1.2 Player Requests.

Participants may request to play with specific individuals at the time of registration. Such requests are considered but are not guaranteed. MBFL retains final authority over all team assignments regardless of player requests.

5.1.3 Pre-Formed Team Entry.

A pre-formed team seeking to participate in MBFL must receive **express approval from the League** and must be **fully registered with MBFL**.

Pre-formed teams must be approved and registered **no later than the League's registration deadline when uniforms are being produced**, or by another date expressly approved by MBFL. Teams submitted after the applicable deadline may be denied entry or required to participate under League-assigned team structures.

5.1.4 Team Identity Approval.

Team names, colors, logos, and identities are typically assigned by MBFL. Any pre-formed team or group requesting to use its own team identity must obtain MBFL approval.

MBFL reserves the right to modify or reject any team name, logo, color scheme, or other identifier that, in the League's judgment, is inappropriate, misleading, confusing, or inconsistent with League standards, including but not limited to inappropriate or offensive content, duplication or similarity to an existing team, or use of primary colors already assigned to another team for that season. MBFL determinations regarding team identity are final.

5.2 Player Registration and Eligibility

5.2.1 Registration Requirement.

All players must be properly registered with MBFL for the applicable division and season prior to participation in any game, scrimmage, or official football activity.

5.2.2 Official Indicators of Registration.

Players who are properly registered and eligible shall:

- Appear on the official MBFL-issued team roster; and
- Be issued an official MBFL game jersey for the applicable season.

These indicators serve as the primary means of identifying eligible participants.

5.2.3 No Unregistered Participation.

Participation by any individual who is not properly registered with MBFL for the applicable division and season is strictly prohibited.

Any individual who is not listed on the official MBFL-issued roster and/or not issued an official MBFL jersey shall not be permitted to play and is in direct violation of League rules.

5.3 Responsibility for Eligibility and Verification

5.3.1 League-Issued Roster Authority.

MBFL shall issue and maintain the official roster for each team. The official MBFL-issued roster is the **sole authoritative record** of player eligibility.

5.3.2 Roster Availability.

Official team rosters shall be maintained by MBFL and made available on-site through MBFL Representatives for verification upon request.

5.3.3 Volunteer Coach Consideration.

Coaches serve in a volunteer capacity and are not expected to memorize rosters. However, coaches and team representatives are expected to recognize whether a participant is properly rostered and equipped and to seek verification from MBFL when questions arise.

5.3.4 No Defense Where Indicators Are Present.

The presence or absence of official indicators of registration may be considered when determining whether ineligible participation was knowing or intentional.

5.3.5 Verification Authority.

MBFL Representatives may verify eligibility at any time and may remove any individual whose eligibility cannot be confirmed.

5.4 Roster Composition

5.4.1 No Maximum Roster Size.

There is **no maximum number of players** permitted on a team roster. MBFL typically balances roster sizes when forming League-created teams. This provision primarily applies to pre-formed teams entering the League.

5.4.2 Minimum Roster Requirement (Pre-Formed Teams).

Pre-formed teams must register a **minimum of seven (7) players** on their official roster prior to the start of the season unless otherwise approved by MBFL.

5.4.3 Official Roster Control.

Each team shall compete using the official MBFL-issued roster. Only players listed on that roster are eligible to participate.

5.4.4 Roster Changes.

All roster additions, removals, or substitutions must be approved by MBFL and reflected on the official roster prior to participation. Unauthorized roster changes are prohibited.

5.5 Dual Division Participation

5.5.1 General Rule.

A player may not participate in more than one division during the same season unless permitted under this section.

5.5.2 Permitted Dual Participation.

Dual-division participation is permitted only if:

- (a) the player is properly registered and paid for each division; and/or
- (b) the player receives express approval from MBFL.

5.5.3 MBFL Discretion.

MBFL retains sole discretion to approve, limit, or revoke dual-division participation based on safety, workload, scheduling conflicts, competitive balance, or administrative considerations.

5.6 Playing Up and Playing Down

5.6.1 Playing Up.

Players may be permitted to play up into a higher division only with express MBFL approval and only when such participation does not compromise safety or competitive integrity.

5.6.2 No Playing Down.

Players may not play down into a lower division under any circumstances.

5.6.3 No Implied Approval.

Approval to play up in one season does not imply approval for future seasons.

5.7 Game-Day Participation Minimums

5.7.1 Minimum Players to Compete.

The **minimum number of players required to participate in a game is four (4)**, corresponding to the lowest contingency game format utilized by MBFL.

5.7.2 Game Start Grace Period.

A team shall be afforded **fifteen (15) minutes** from the game's scheduled start time to field the minimum required number of players.

5.7.3 Automatic Forfeit.

If a team is unable to field **at least four (4) eligible players** within the fifteen-minute grace

period, and has not provided **ample advance notice** to MBFL to allow for rescheduling, the game shall be declared an **automatic forfeit**.

5.7.4 MBFL Discretion for Rescheduling.

MBFL retains sole discretion to determine whether notice was sufficient to justify rescheduling rather than forfeiture.

5.8 Ineligible Participation

5.8.1 Definition.

Ineligible participation includes use of any individual not listed on the official MBFL-issued roster and/or not issued an official MBFL jersey.

5.8.2 Immediate Action.

Any ineligible participant discovered shall be removed immediately.

5.8.3 General Consequences.

Ineligible participation may result in forfeiture, removal from standings, playoff disqualification, and additional disciplinary action as determined by MBFL.

5.8.4 Intentional Ineligible Participation.

Any team that knowingly or intentionally permits an individual not listed on the official MBFL-issued roster and/or not issued an official MBFL jersey to participate **without MBFL knowledge or consent** commits a direct violation of League rules.

Such violations **may result in** an automatic loss for the game or games in which the individual participated, regardless of the on-field result, and may include additional disciplinary action.

MBFL shall determine intent based on conduct, circumstances, and the presence of eligibility indicators. All determinations are final.

5.9 Condition of Participation

5.9.1 Acceptance of Rules.

Registration and participation in MBFL constitute acceptance of all roster, eligibility, team formation, participation minimums, and enforcement requirements set forth in this Rulebook.

5.9.2 Final Authority.

All determinations regarding team formation, player eligibility, roster status, participation minimums, forfeiture, and enforcement rest solely with MBFL and its Representatives.

5.10 Substitute or Borrowed Players

5.10.1 Limited Availability Provision.

Substitute or borrowed players are permitted **only** when a team does not have a sufficient number of eligible players available to participate in:

- a. the **preplanned game format** for the scheduled contest; and/or
- b. the **lowest allowable game format** available for that division.

Preplanned game formats include:

- 5v5 and 7v7 for all applicable divisions; and
- 9v9 **for the Adult Division only**.

Substitute or borrowed players may also be utilized when **both teams mutually agree not to move to a lower game format** and instead elect to maintain the preplanned format, subject to approval by MBFL.

This provision exists solely to allow a game to be played as scheduled and shall not be used to gain a competitive advantage.

5.10.2 General Prohibition.

Except as expressly permitted under this section, substitute or borrowed players are not allowed.

5.10.3 Eligibility Requirements.

A substitute or borrowed player must:

- Be properly registered with MBFL and/or expressly approved by MBFL;
- Belong to the same age group or division unless otherwise approved; and
- Meet all participation and safety requirements of this Rulebook.

5.10.4 Required Approvals.

Use of a substitute or borrowed player requires prior approval from:

- Both participating teams;
- Both head coaches or designated team representatives;
- The officiating crew assigned to the game; and
- An MBFL Representative.

5.10.5 Enforcement.

Any violation of this section constitutes **ineligible participation** and shall be enforced under Section 5.8.

SECTION 6 — FIELD LAYOUT & YARDAGE STANDARDS

6.1 General Field Requirements

6.1.1 Field Availability and Use.

MBFL utilizes playing fields based on seasonal availability, venue constraints, and scheduling needs. Field size, configuration, and markings may vary by location and event.

6.1.2 Baseline Field Standard.

All MBFL rules are written and enforced based on a **traditional full-size American football field**, consisting of **one hundred (100) yards between goal lines with two ten-yard (10-yard) end zones**, and a standard sideline-to-sideline width.

This baseline standard governs all rule concepts involving yardage, spacing, line-to-gain distance, scoring placement, field position, and drive structure.

6.1.3 Field Adjustments and Yardage Modifications.

When a smaller, shared, or alternate field is used due to availability or venue limitations, **yardage-based rules may be altered by MBFL** to accommodate the available space.

Such adjustments may include, but are not limited to:

- First-down distance
- Conversion distances
- Drive starting points
- Ball spotting locations
- Punt and kicking placement

All adjustments shall be applied evenly to both teams and communicated prior to play.

6.1.4 Safety and Authority.

MBFL Representatives and officials may delay, relocate, modify, or cancel play if field conditions, dimensions, or surroundings are deemed unsafe. MBFL retains final authority over all field-related determinations.

6.2 Field Dimensions (When Space Allows)

6.2.1 Length Reference.

When space allows, the field shall approximate a traditional layout of **100 yards between goal lines with 10-yard end zones**.

6.2.2 Field Width.

Field width shall be determined by venue availability. Reduced widths may be used when necessary, provided boundaries are clearly defined and applied equally to both teams.

6.3 Yardage Markings

6.3.1 Required Markings.

The field shall be clearly marked with identifiable:

- Goal lines
- Sidelines
- End lines
- A midfield reference when practicable
- Yardage or line-to-gain reference markers

6.3.2 First Down Distance.

The standard distance required for a first down is **ten (10) yards**, unless adjusted by MBFL pursuant to Section 6.1.3 due to field size limitations.

6.3.3 Goal Line Authority.

The goal line is part of the end zone. A score occurs when the ball breaks the plane of the goal line in accordance with scoring rules defined elsewhere in this Rulebook.

6.4 Starting Point of a Drive

6.4.1 Baseline Starting Reference.

When a traditional full-size field is used, offensive drives shall begin with the ball placed at the **twenty-yard line (20-yard line)** unless otherwise specified by rule or penalty enforcement.

6.4.2 Applicability.

The baseline starting reference applies to possessions beginning:

- At the start of each half
- Following scores
- Following touchbacks
- Following changes of possession when no return occurs

6.4.3 Field Size Adjustments.

When a smaller, shared, or alternate field is utilized, the starting point of a drive **may be adjusted by MBFL** to maintain proportional field spacing, competitive balance, and game flow.

Adjusted starting positions may differ from the 20-yard line and shall be based on the available field length.

6.4.4 Communication and Authority.

Any adjusted drive starting point shall be communicated to both teams prior to play. MBFL retains final authority over all drive starting locations.

6.5 Ball Placement Reference

6.5.1 Hash Marks.

Hash marks are not required for MBFL play. When present, they may be used as reference points for ball placement.

6.5.2 Placement Without Hashes.

When hash marks are absent, officials shall spot the ball at a location that provides reasonable spacing from each sideline and allows legal formation alignment.

6.5.3 Consistency.

Ball placement methodology shall remain consistent throughout the game.

6.6 Boundaries and Sideline Areas

6.6.1 Sidelines.

Sidelines define the lateral boundary of the field of play.

6.6.2 Boundary Area.

A reasonable buffer beyond each sideline is recommended when space permits. When space is limited, officials shall consider proximity when enforcing out-of-bounds and safety-related rulings.

6.6.3 Sideline Control.

Non-participating players, coaches, staff, and spectators shall remain outside the field of play. MBFL may restrict sideline access as necessary.

6.7 Goal Posts and Scoring Apparatus

6.7.1 Goal Post Use.

When available, goal posts may be used for field goal and conversion attempts.

6.7.2 Alternate Scoring Standards.

When goal posts are not available, MBFL may approve alternate scoring standards. Such standards shall apply equally to both teams.

6.8 Format Compatibility

6.8.1 Supported Formats.

Field layouts must support the scheduled game format, including:

- 5v5
- 7v7
- Contingency formats (4v4, 6v6)
- 9v9 (Adult Division only)

6.8.2 Neutral Application.

Any field or yardage adjustments shall be applied equally to both teams.

6.9 Obstructions and Environmental Conditions

6.9.1 Authority.

MBFL may adjust, suspend, or terminate play due to obstructions, weather, or environmental concerns.

6.10 Authority and Final Determination

6.10.1 MBFL Authority.

MBFL has final authority over all field layout decisions, dimensions, markings, yardage adjustments, and drive starting positions.

6.10.2 Condition of Participation.

Participation in an MBFL game constitutes acceptance of the field layout and yardage standards approved for that contest.

6.10.3 Non-Protestable Matters.

Field layout and yardage determinations are administrative in nature and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 7 — GAME LENGTH, CLOCK & TIMING PROCEDURES

7.1 Game Duration

7.1.1 Regulation Game Length.

A regulation MBFL game shall consist of **two (2) halves**, each **twenty (20) minutes** in length.

7.1.2 Halftime.

Halftime shall be **five (5) minutes** in duration unless shortened by MBFL for scheduling, weather, or field-availability reasons.

7.1.3 Authority to Modify Length.

MBFL may modify game length, halftime duration, or intermission timing due to scheduling constraints, weather, field availability, or safety considerations. Any modification shall be applied evenly to both teams.

7.2 Clock Operation

7.2.1 Running Clock Standard.

The game clock shall operate as a **running clock** except as otherwise provided in this section.

7.2.2 Stop-Clock Conditions.

The game clock shall stop only for:

- Scores
- Team timeouts
- Injuries
- Official timeouts
- During the final two (2) minutes of each half as governed by Section 7.3

7.2.3 Official Control of Clock.

The game clock shall be maintained by a designated official or MBFL Representative. All timing decisions are final.

7.3 Final Two-Minute Timing Procedures

7.3.1 Stop-Clock Mechanics.

During the final **two (2) minutes of each half**, the clock shall stop for the following events only:

- Incomplete passes
- Plays ending out of bounds
- Scores
- Penalties that require clock stoppage
- Change of possession
- Team or official timeouts

The clock does not stop for first downs.

7.3.2 Clock Restart.

Unless otherwise specified, the clock shall restart on the ready-for-play signal following administrative stoppages.

7.3.3 MBFL Authority.

MBFL may modify or suspend final two-minute timing procedures to maintain game flow, scheduling integrity, or safety.

7.4 Timeouts

7.4.1 Regulation Timeouts.

Each team is allotted **three (3) timeouts per half** during regulation play.

7.4.2 Overtime Timeouts.

Each team is allotted **one (1) timeout during overtime**, regardless of the number of overtime periods played, unless otherwise specified in Section 21.

7.4.3 Carryover Prohibited.

Unused timeouts do **not** carry over between halves or from regulation into overtime.

7.4.4 Timeout Duration.

Timeouts may be **up to one (1) minute** in duration. Officials or MBFL may shorten timeout duration as necessary for game flow or scheduling.

7.4.5 Who May Call a Timeout.

Timeouts may be requested by the head coach, a designated team representative, or the quarterback while in possession of the ball.

7.5 Mercy Rule and Clock Acceleration

7.5.1 Mercy Threshold and Timing.

A mercy clock shall be applied when a team leads by **twenty-one (21) points or more** and **ten (10) minutes or less remain in regulation play**.

7.5.2 Mercy Clock Operation.

When the mercy clock is in effect, the clock shall run continuously except for:

- Timeouts
- Injuries
- Necessary official stoppages

7.5.3 Removal of Mercy Rule.

If the point differential falls below **twenty-one (21) points**, normal clock procedures shall immediately resume.

7.5.4 Automatic Application.

The mercy rule is automatic and does not require consent from either team.

7.6 Delays and Administrative Stoppages

7.6.1 Injury Stoppages.

Play shall be stopped immediately for any injury. Player safety takes precedence over all timing considerations.

7.6.2 Equipment and Field Issues.

Officials may stop the clock to address equipment malfunctions, field hazards, or administrative issues.

7.6.3 Delay of Game Authority.

Officials may assess delay-of-game penalties or take administrative action if a team repeatedly or intentionally delays play.

7.6.4 Absence of a Play Clock and Delay of Game Enforcement.

MBFL does not utilize a visible or fixed play clock.

Teams must make a reasonable and continuous effort to align and initiate the next play. If an official or MBFL Representative determines that a team is taking an excessive or unreasonable amount of time to prepare for a play, a delay-of-game penalty may be enforced.

This determination is a judgment call. No specific time count is required. A warning may be issued but is not mandatory.

7.7 Game Start and Timing Relationship

7.7.1 Start of Game Clock.

The game clock shall begin only after minimum participation requirements defined in Section 5 have been satisfied.

7.7.2 No Game in Progress.

Failure to meet minimum participation requirements does not constitute a game in progress and shall be enforced under Section 5.

7.8 End of Half and End of Game

7.8.1 End of Half.

A half ends when time expires for that half.

7.8.2 End of Game.

A regulation game ends when time expires in the second half, unless overtime is required under Section 21.

7.8.3 Administrative Completion.

Officials may declare a game complete due to weather, safety, or administrative necessity.

7.9 No Replay and Judgment Calls

7.9.1 No Instant Replay.

MBFL does not utilize instant replay or video review.

7.9.2 Judgment Calls.

All timing-related judgment calls made by officials are final and not subject to protest.

7.10 Authority and Final Determination

7.10.1 MBFL Authority.

MBFL retains final authority over all game timing, clock operation, and administrative timing decisions.

7.10.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

Timing and clock administration decisions are administrative in nature and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 8 — COIN TOSS & START OF GAME

8.1 Coin Toss Procedure

8.1.1 Method of Coin Toss.

The coin toss may be conducted using a **physical coin or a digital coin flip**, at the discretion of the officiating crew or MBFL Representative.

8.1.2 Timing of Coin Toss.

The coin toss shall be conducted prior to the scheduled start of the game at a time and location designated by the officiating crew or MBFL Representative.

8.1.3 Participants and Call Authority.

Each team shall designate a captain or representative to participate in the coin toss.

The officiating crew shall determine **which team calls the coin flip**. The decision of the officials regarding who calls the toss is final.

8.1.4 Finality of Toss.

The result of the coin toss and all procedural determinations made by the officiating crew are final and not subject to protest.

8.2 Coin Toss Options and Choices

8.2.1 Choice of Possession Timing.

The team that wins the coin toss shall choose **one** of the following options:

- To receive the ball to start the **first half**; or
- To receive the ball to start the **second half**.

8.2.2 No Decline of Choice.

The coin toss winner must make a selection when prompted. If the team fails to clearly declare its choice, officials may assign a default option.

8.2.3 Effect of Choice.

The team that does not receive the ball to start one half shall receive the opening possession of the other half.

8.3 Direction of Play

8.3.1 Directional Authority.

The team with possession to start a given half shall determine the **direction of play for that half**, subject to field availability and safety considerations.

8.3.2 Second-Half Direction.

The team receiving the opening possession of the second half shall determine the direction of play for the second half.

8.3.3 Official Override.

Officials or MBFL Representatives may assign or modify direction of play if required due to field conditions, safety, or venue constraints.

8.4 Start of the Game

8.4.1 Opening Possession.

The team designated to receive shall begin the game on offense at the starting position defined in Section 6, unless adjusted due to field size or penalty enforcement.

8.4.2 No Kickoffs.

MBFL does not utilize traditional kickoffs. All games begin with an offensive possession.

8.4.3 Ready-for-Play Signal.

The game shall officially begin when the officiating crew signals the ball ready for play and the game clock is started in accordance with Section 7.

8.5 Start of the Second Half

8.5.1 Possession Determination.

The opening possession of the second half shall be awarded based on the coin toss selection made prior to the game.

8.5.2 Second-Half Procedures.

Second-half play shall begin using the same procedures applied at the start of the game, including ball placement, direction selection, and clock operation.

8.6 Delayed or Irregular Game Start

8.6.1 Participation Requirements.

The game shall not begin until minimum participation requirements defined in Section 5 have been satisfied.

8.6.2 Delay Due to Team Readiness.

If a team is not ready to begin play at the scheduled start time, officials may delay the start, take administrative action, or enforce forfeiture procedures as applicable.

8.6.3 No Competitive Advantage.

No team may gain a competitive advantage through intentional delay, refusal to participate in the coin toss, or failure to comply with start-of-game procedures.

8.7 Authority and Final Determination

8.7.1 MBFL Authority.

MBFL and the officiating crew retain final authority over all coin toss procedures, possession determinations, direction assignments, and start-of-game administration.

8.7.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

Coin toss results, possession assignments, direction of play, and start-of-game determinations are administrative in nature and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 9 — GAME FORMATS & LINEUPS

9.1 Authorized Game Formats

9.1.1 Standard Formats.

MBFL utilizes the following standard game formats:

- **7v7**
- **5v5**

These formats are the default structures for all scheduled games unless otherwise modified pursuant to this section.

9.1.2 Contingency Formats.

When teams are unable to field the required number of players for a standard format, MBFL may authorize the following contingency formats:

- **6v6**
- **4v4**

Contingency formats exist solely to allow a game to be played safely and fairly when roster availability is limited.

9.1.3 Adult Division Expanded Format.

The **9v9 format is permitted only in the Adult Division** and only when scheduled or approved by MBFL. Youth divisions shall not utilize 9v9 under any circumstances.

9.1.4 MBFL Authority.

MBFL retains final authority over the selection, approval, or modification of game formats for any contest.

9.2 Preplanned Format and Game-Day Adjustments

9.2.1 Preplanned Format.

Each game shall be scheduled with a designated preplanned format determined by MBFL prior to the event.

9.2.2 Adjustment for Player Availability.

If one or both teams are unable to field the required number of eligible players for the preplanned format, MBFL may approve a transition to a lower authorized format as defined in Section 9.1.

9.2.3 Mutual Agreement Not Required.

A team may not refuse to play in a lower authorized format solely to gain a competitive advantage. MBFL shall determine whether a format adjustment is necessary.

9.2.4 Lowest Allowable Threshold.

The lowest allowable format for any game is **4v4**. No game may be played with fewer than four (4) players per team.

9.3 Lineup Requirements

9.3.1 On-Field Player Count.

Each team shall field the number of players required for the approved game format for that contest.

9.3.2 No Short-Handed Advantage.

A team may not intentionally play with fewer players than the approved format to gain a strategic advantage. Officials may require a team to add available eligible players to the field.

9.3.3 Minimum Participation.

All players on the field must be eligible and properly registered in accordance with Section 5.

9.4 Offensive and Defensive Alignment

9.4.1 Neutral Alignment Requirement.

Teams shall align in a manner consistent with flag football principles, spacing requirements, and safety considerations.

9.4.2 Line of Scrimmage.

Each play shall begin with a clearly defined line of scrimmage. Offensive and defensive players must align on their respective sides of the line.

9.4.3 Encroachment Prohibited.

Defensive players may not line up in an encroached position that creates immediate contact or safety risk at the snap.

9.4.4 Official Enforcement.

Officials may require alignment adjustments prior to the snap to maintain legality, spacing, and safety.

9.5 Substitutions

9.5.1 Unlimited Substitutions.

Unlimited substitutions are permitted between plays, provided substitutions do not delay the game.

9.5.2 Substitution Timing.

Substitutions must be completed prior to the ball being declared ready for play.

9.5.3 No Deceptive Substitution.

Substitutions intended to deceive officials or delay play may be penalized as unsportsmanlike conduct or delay of game.

9.6 Position Neutrality

9.6.1 No Fixed Positions.

MBFL does not mandate fixed offensive or defensive positions. Players may align in any legal formation consistent with the approved game format.

9.6.2 Quarterback Designation.

Each offensive play must include a clearly identifiable quarterback to receive the snap, subject to the snap and quarterback rules defined later in this Rulebook.

9.7 Uniform Participation Standards

9.7.1 Eligible Equipment.

Only players wearing required game equipment, including an official jersey and flag belt, may participate in a play.

9.7.2 Removal from Play.

Any player not properly equipped at the time of the snap shall be removed from the play until compliance is achieved.

9.8 Refusal or Inability to Participate

9.8.1 Refusal to Play.

A team that refuses to participate in an approved game format may be subject to forfeiture or disciplinary action.

9.8.2 Inability to Field a Team.

Failure to field the minimum number of players within the allotted grace period shall be enforced under Section 5.

9.9 Authority and Final Determination

9.9.1 MBFL Authority.

MBFL and the officiating crew retain final authority over all game format determinations, lineup requirements, substitutions, and alignment enforcement.

9.9.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

Game format and lineup determinations are administrative in nature and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 10 — SCORING SYSTEM & POINT VALUES

10.1 Touchdowns

10.1.1 Touchdown Value.

A touchdown is worth **six (6) points**.

10.1.2 Scoring Plane.

A touchdown is scored when the ball, while in possession of a player, **breaks the plane of the goal line** in accordance with ball-carrier and possession rules defined elsewhere in this Rulebook.

10.1.3 Player Status.

A touchdown may be scored by an offensive or defensive player following a legal play, including an interception or live-ball recovery, unless otherwise restricted by rule.

10.1.4 Safety Priority.

If a play is terminated early for safety reasons, a touchdown shall be awarded only when clear possession and plane-breaking occurred prior to the whistle.

10.2 Point-After-Touchdown (PAT) Options

10.2.1 General Rule.

Following a touchdown, the scoring team shall be entitled to attempt a point-after-touchdown (PAT), unless exempted under Section 10.2.5.

10.2.2 Available PAT Options.

The scoring team may choose **one** of the following conversion options:

- a. **Kicking Conversion** — worth **one (1) point**, attempted via place kick from the **fifteen-yard line (15-yard line)**;
- b. **One-Point Conversion Play** — worth **one (1) point**, run from the **five-yard line (5-yard line)**;
- c. **Two-Point Conversion Play** — worth **two (2) points**, run from the **ten-yard line (10-yard line)**.

10.2.3 Declaration of Choice.

The scoring team must declare its PAT option to the officiating crew prior to the attempt. Once declared, the choice may not be changed except due to penalty enforcement or administrative necessity.

10.2.4 Fixed PAT Distances.

The designated yard-line distances for all PAT attempts are **fixed standards** and **do not change based on field size**, alternate field layouts, or yardage adjustments made under Section 6.

10.2.5 PAT Exemption.

A PAT **is not required** if **time has expired** and the outcome of the game **cannot be affected** by the result of the conversion attempt.

The determination of whether a PAT may be waived rests solely with the officiating crew.

10.3 Defensive Scores on Conversion Attempts

10.3.1 Defensive Return Value.

If the defense gains possession during a conversion attempt and legally returns the ball into the opponent's end zone, the defense shall be awarded **two (2) points**.

10.3.2 Defensive Safety During Conversion.

If the defense causes the offense to commit a safety during a conversion attempt, the defense shall be awarded **one (1) point**.

10.3.3 End of Attempt.

Any defensive score immediately ends the conversion attempt.

10.4 Field Goals

10.4.1 Conditional Authorization.

Field goals are permitted **only when physically available** based on the field being used for the contest, including the presence of goal posts or an approved scoring apparatus.

If the field does not support safe and verifiable field-goal attempts, field goals shall **not** be permitted for that game.

10.4.2 Field Goal Value.

A successful field goal is worth **three (3) points**.

10.4.3 Line-of-Scrimmage Placement.

All field goal attempts shall be executed from a point **ten (10) yards behind the line of scrimmage**.

10.4.4 Attempt Mechanics.

Field goal attempts shall be executed as place kicks in accordance with Section 13.

10.4.5 Defensive Restrictions.

No rush is permitted on field goal attempts. Defensive interference shall be enforced under penalty provisions.

10.5 Safeties

10.5.1 Safety Value.

A safety is worth **two (2) points** and is awarded to the defensive team.

10.5.2 Definition.

A safety occurs when the ball becomes dead in the offensive team's own end zone as a result of:

- A ball carrier being downed in the end zone;
- A flag pull or legal touch in the end zone;
- A foul by the offense in its own end zone; or
- Any other condition defined as a safety under this Rulebook.

10.5.3 Subsequent Possession.

Following a safety, possession shall be awarded in accordance with start-of-drive procedures defined in Section 6 unless otherwise specified.

10.6 Scoring Adjustments for Field Size

10.6.1 General Rule.

Except as expressly stated for PAT attempts under Section 10.2.4, MBFL may adjust yardage-based scoring mechanics due to field size limitations pursuant to Section 6.

10.6.2 Neutral Application.

Any approved scoring adjustments shall be applied evenly to both teams and communicated prior to play.

10.7 Invalid or Nullified Scores

10.7.1 Fouls Affecting Scores.

If a foul directly affects a scoring action, enforcement shall be administered under penalty rules and may result in nullification of the score.

10.7.2 Premature Whistle.

If a play is blown dead prematurely, scoring shall be governed by the inadvertent-whistle provisions of this Rulebook.

10.8 Authority and Final Determination

10.8.1 MBFL Authority.

MBFL and the officiating crew retain final authority over all scoring determinations, point values, and enforcement related to scoring plays.

10.8.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

Scoring determinations are judgment calls and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 11 — UNIFORM & EQUIPMENT STANDARDS

11.1 General Equipment Authority

11.1.1 MBFL Standards.

All uniforms and equipment used in MBFL competition must comply with MBFL standards. MBFL retains final authority to determine whether any item of equipment or apparel is unsafe or presents an unreasonable risk.

11.1.2 Safety Supremacy.

Player safety shall override all other considerations. Any equipment deemed unsafe by an official or MBFL Representative may be removed from play at any time.

11.1.3 No Protective Pads or Helmets.

MBFL is a flag football league. Helmets, shoulder pads, and hard-shell protective equipment are prohibited unless expressly approved by MBFL for medical or safety reasons.

11.2 Jerseys

11.2.1 Required Jersey.

All players must wear an official MBFL-issued jersey unless otherwise approved by MBFL.

11.2.2 Team Identification Standard.

The base portion of the jersey must remain intact and clearly identifiable at all times. Team color, design, and player number must remain visible and distinguishable to officials and opponents.

11.2.3 Permitted Jersey Alterations.

Cosmetic alterations, including but not limited to cutting or removing sleeves, adjusting collars, or minor tailoring, are permitted provided they do not interfere with flag access, obscure identification, or create a safety risk.

11.2.4 Prohibited Jersey Alterations.

Any alteration that restricts flag access, creates entanglement risk, introduces hard or sharp edges, or obscures identification is prohibited.

11.2.5 League Override.

MBFL or the officiating crew may require a jersey to be modified, replaced, or removed if deemed unsafe or misleading.

11.3 Flag Belt Requirements

11.3.1 Required Flag Belt.

All ball carriers must wear a two-flag belt with one flag on each hip, securely fastened prior to the snap.

11.3.2 Proper Positioning.

Flags must hang freely and remain clearly visible. Flags may not be tucked, wrapped, or obscured.

11.3.3 Illegal Modification.

Any modification that reduces flag accessibility or provides an advantage is prohibited.

11.3.4 Equipment Check.

Officials may require adjustment or replacement of a flag belt at any time.

11.4 Pants, Shorts, and Apparel

11.4.1 Pocketed Apparel Permitted.

Players may wear pants or shorts with or without pockets.

11.4.2 Player-Assumed Risk.

Players who wear pocketed apparel do so at their own risk. Incidental grabbing, pulling, or tearing of pocketed apparel during legal play shall not be considered a foul absent intentional holding or unsafe contact.

11.4.3 Prohibited Apparel.

Apparel containing hard, sharp, or rigid components that create a safety risk is prohibited.

11.5 Footwear

11.5.1 Permitted Footwear.

Rubber-cleated football or soccer cleats, turf shoes, and athletic sneakers are permitted.

11.5.2 Prohibited Footwear.

Metal or detachable cleats are prohibited.

11.6 Protective Equipment

11.6.1 Permitted Soft Protection.

Soft-shell headgear, mouthguards, and soft padding are permitted provided no hard components are present.

11.6.2 Medical Exceptions.

Medical equipment may be permitted with MBFL approval and must be padded and secured.

11.7 Jewelry and Accessories

11.7.1 Jewelry Permitted at Player's Own Risk.

Jewelry is permitted and worn entirely at the player's own risk.

11.7.2 No Liability.

MBFL, officials, and opposing players assume no responsibility for injury or damage resulting from jewelry worn during play.

11.7.3 Safety Override.

Officials may require removal of jewelry that presents an immediate safety hazard.

11.8 Footballs and Game Balls

11.8.1 Approved Materials.

Game balls may be **leather or composite footballs** approved by MBFL.

11.8.2 Standard Ball Size by Division.

The standard football size by division is as follows:

- **11U and 14U:** Youth or Junior size football
- **18U and Adult:** Collegiate or Official size football

11.8.3 Optional Upsizing for Youth Divisions.

Teams in the **11U and 14U divisions** may elect to use a larger football than the standard size for that division if both teams agree and the ball is approved by MBFL.

11.8.4 No Downsizing for Older Divisions.

Teams in the **18U and Adult divisions** may **not** use a football smaller than the collegiate or official size under any circumstances.

11.8.5 MBFL Game Ball.

MBFL may designate an official game ball for use during the contest. When in use, this ball shall be used for all offensive possessions unless otherwise authorized.

11.8.6 Secondary or Team-Provided Footballs.

Any secondary football or team-provided football used during a game that is **not designated as the official game ball** is the **sole responsibility of the team providing it**.

The providing team is responsible for:

- Maintaining possession of the ball when not on offense

- Retrieving the ball after plays
- Replacing the ball if lost or damaged

MBFL officials, referees, and staff **have no responsibility** for tracking, holding, retrieving, or safeguarding secondary footballs, **even if the football is owned by MBFL.**

11.9 Illegal Equipment Enforcement

11.9.1 Removal from Play.

Any player wearing equipment deemed unsafe shall be removed from play until corrected.

11.9.2 No Competitive Advantage.

A player removed for equipment issues may not gain a competitive advantage.

11.10 Authority and Final Determination

11.10.1 MBFL Authority.

MBFL and the officiating crew retain final authority over all uniform and equipment standards and enforcement.

11.10.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

Uniform and equipment determinations are administrative and not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 12 — SNAP PROCEDURES & BALL PLACEMENT

12.1 Line of Scrimmage

12.1.1 Establishment of the Line of Scrimmage.

Each play shall begin from a clearly established line of scrimmage designated by the officiating crew. The line of scrimmage is determined by the spot of the ball at the conclusion of the previous play, enforcement, or administrative placement.

12.1.2 Neutral Zone.

A neutral zone shall exist between the offense and defense at the line of scrimmage. No player may enter or encroach into the neutral zone prior to the snap.

12.1.3 Official Authority.

Officials have final authority to adjust or clarify the line of scrimmage at any time to ensure proper alignment, fairness, and safety.

12.2 Snap Method

12.2.1 Legal Snap Required.

All plays must begin with a legal snap.

12.2.2 Snap Execution.

The snap may be executed in one of the following ways:

- A direct snap from a physical center; or
- A quarterback taking possession of the ball from an approved quarterback tee, when permitted.

12.2.3 Backward Motion Requirement.

All snaps must move the ball backward from the line of scrimmage. Forward movement of the ball at the snap is prohibited.

12.2.4 Grounded Snaps Prohibited.

Snaps may not be rolled, dribbled, or intentionally bounced along the ground.

12.3 Center Position and Movement

12.3.1 Center Definition.

A center is the offensive player responsible for snapping the ball to the quarterback when a physical snap is used.

12.3.2 Center Restrictions.

The center may not simulate the snap, use deceptive snap motions, or delay the snap in a manner intended to draw the defense offsides.

12.3.3 Post-Snap Status.

Unless otherwise restricted by formation rules, the center becomes an eligible player after the snap.

12.4 Offensive Alignment and Motion

12.4.1 Set Requirement.

All offensive players must be set and stationary for a brief moment prior to the snap, except for one player in motion.

12.4.2 Motion Restrictions.

Only one offensive player may be in motion at the snap. Motion must be lateral or backward.

12.4.3 Illegal Motion.

Forward motion at the snap, multiple players in motion, or abrupt movement intended to deceive officials constitutes illegal motion.

12.5 Defensive Alignment

12.5.1 Defensive Side of the Ball.

All defensive players must be fully on their side of the line of scrimmage at the snap.

12.5.2 Encroachment.

Defensive players may not enter the neutral zone or cross the line of scrimmage prior to the snap except as permitted under blitz rules defined later in this Rulebook.

12.6 Ball Placement

12.6.1 Spot of the Ball.

The ball shall be spotted at the location where the ball carrier is ruled down, where a flag is pulled, or where the ball otherwise becomes dead.

12.6.2 Forward Progress.

Forward progress shall be determined by the position of the ball at the moment the ball carrier is stopped or ruled down.

12.6.3 Boundary Placement.

When a play ends out of bounds, the ball shall be placed at the point where the ball crossed the boundary.

12.7 Start of a Drive

12.7.1 Standard Starting Position.

Unless otherwise specified by rule, penalty, or field-size adjustment, all new offensive drives shall begin at the standard starting position defined in Section 6.

12.7.2 Field Size Adjustments.

When alternate or reduced fields are used, the starting point of a drive may be adjusted by MBFL and communicated prior to the game.

12.8 Inadvertent Whistle and Ball Placement

12.8.1 Inadvertent Whistle Defined.

An inadvertent whistle occurs when an official mistakenly blows the play dead while the ball is live.

12.8.2 Enforcement Authority.

When an inadvertent whistle occurs, the officiating crew shall determine the appropriate remedy based on fairness, competitive balance, and safety.

12.8.3 Ball Not in the Air.

If an inadvertent whistle occurs when the ball is not in the air, officials may declare the play dead at the spot where the whistle sounded or order the down replayed.

12.8.4 Ball in the Air.

If an inadvertent whistle occurs while a forward pass is in the air, the down shall be replayed.

12.8.5 Mistaken Flag Pull Whistle.

If a whistle is blown under the belief that a flag was pulled and it is later determined that no flag was pulled, the play shall be treated as an inadvertent whistle and enforced under this section.

12.8.6 No Advancement After Whistle.

No advancement, score, or change of possession may occur after an inadvertent whistle.

12.9 Quarterback Tee and Center Usage

12.9.1 Quarterback Tee Defined.

A quarterback tee is a stationary device used to hold the football at the line of scrimmage in place of a physical center.

12.9.2 5v5 Tee Requirement.

In **5v5**, use of a quarterback tee is **mandatory**. A physical center may not be used.

12.9.3 7v7 Optional Tee Usage.

In **7v7**, use of a quarterback tee is optional and must be agreed upon by both teams prior to the game. The chosen snap method shall apply equally to both teams for the duration of the contest.

12.9.4 7v7 Alignment Requirement When Using a Tee.

When a quarterback tee is used in **7v7**, **one offensive player must line up adjacent to the tee** at the line of scrimmage and is considered the functional equivalent of a center for alignment purposes.

12.9.5 9v9 Physical Center Requirement.

In **9v9**, use of a quarterback tee is prohibited. All plays must begin with a physical center snapping the ball.

12.9.6 Ball Live Status with Tee.

When a quarterback tee is used, the ball becomes live only when the quarterback touches or secures the ball. Movement of the ball off the tee prior to quarterback contact does not constitute a live snap.

12.9.7 Defensive Interaction with Tee.

The quarterback tee may not be contacted, displaced, or interfered with by the defense prior to the snap.

12.9.8 Deceptive Actions Prohibited.

No player may use the quarterback tee, ball placement, or simulated movement to deceive the defense into believing a snap has occurred.

12.10 Administrative and Safety Whistles

12.10.1 Safety Whistles.

Officials may terminate a play immediately for safety reasons regardless of possession, advantage, or scoring opportunity.

12.10.2 Administrative Stops.

Officials may stop play to address alignment, equipment, substitutions, or administrative issues.

12.10.3 Finality.

All whistle determinations related to safety or administration are final.

12.11 Authority and Final Determination

12.11.1 MBFL Authority.

MBFL and the officiating crew retain final authority over all snap procedures, ball placement, and whistle enforcement.

12.11.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

Snap mechanics, ball placement, and whistle-related determinations are judgment calls and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 13 — KICKING & PUNTING PROCEDURES

13.1 General Kicking Authority

13.1.1 Permitted Kicks.

MBFL permits the following kicking actions when authorized by rule:

- Field goal attempts
- Point-after-touchdown (PAT) kicking conversions
- Punts

No other kicking actions are permitted.

13.1.2 No Kickoffs.

MBFL does not utilize kickoffs. All possessions begin with an offensive snap in accordance with Sections 8 and 12.

13.1.3 Safety Priority.

All kicking and punting procedures are subject to immediate termination if officials determine a safety risk exists.

13.2 Ball Placement for Kicks and Punts

13.2.1 Placement Behind the Line of Scrimmage.

All field goal attempts, PAT kicking conversions, and punts shall be executed from a point **ten (10) yards behind the line of scrimmage**.

13.2.2 Placement Authority.

The officiating crew shall spot the ball for all kicking and punting plays. The spot may be adjusted due to field markings, field size, or safety considerations.

13.3 Setup and Initiation of Kicks

13.3.1 No Snap Required.

Kicks and punts do **not** require a snap.

The ball shall be placed at the designated spot and may be:

- Placed on a kicking tee; or
- Held by a player acting as a holder.

13.3.2 Initiation of the Play.

A kicking play begins when the ball is kicked.

13.3.3 Holder Restrictions.

A holder may not simulate a snap, pump, roll, or otherwise attempt to deceive the defense. The holder's sole function is to place or steady the ball for the kick.

13.4 Defensive Restrictions and Ball Blocking

13.4.1 No Rush Rule.

No defensive player may rush, charge, or cross the line of scrimmage on any kicking or punting play.

13.4.2 Defensive Alignment.

All defensive players must remain on their side of the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked.

13.4.3 Blocking the Kicked Ball Permitted.

Defensive players may attempt to block the kicked ball provided they:

- Do not cross the line of scrimmage; and
- Do not make contact with the kicker or holder.

13.4.4 Line of Scrimmage Restriction Absolute.

At no point may a defensive player cross the line of scrimmage during a kicking or punting play, regardless of jump timing or ball trajectory.

13.4.5 Kicker and Holder Protection.

Any contact with the kicker or holder prior to, during, or immediately after the kick is prohibited.

13.5 Prohibition of Fake Kicks and Punts

13.5.1 No Fake Kicks or Punts.

Because no defensive rush is permitted on kicking plays, **fake field goals, fake PAT kicks, and fake punts are prohibited.**

13.5.2 Mandatory Kick Requirement.

When a team lines up for a kicking play, the ball **must be kicked**. The ball may not be advanced, passed, or otherwise played as a designed offensive play.

13.6 Field Goals

13.6.1 Attempt Authorization.

Field goals may be attempted only when field goals are physically available based on the field being used, including the presence of goal posts or an approved scoring apparatus.

13.6.2 Successful Field Goal.

A field goal is successful when the kicked ball passes through the uprights or otherwise satisfies the approved scoring method for the field being used. A successful field goal immediately ends the play.

13.6.3 Unsuccessful Field Goal — Live Ball Exception.

An unsuccessful field goal attempt that is **short of the uprights** and **has not touched the ground** may remain live **only if the ball is cleanly caught in the air**.

13.6.4 Blocked or Tipped Kicks.

Any field goal attempt that is **blocked or tipped** by the defense is **dead immediately**, unless the ball is caught in the air **before touching the ground**.

13.6.5 Advancement Conditions.

When a field goal attempt is legally caught in the air before touching the ground, the ball may be advanced by the recovering team in accordance with ball carrier and contact rules.

13.6.6 Dead-Ball Conditions.

An unsuccessful field goal attempt becomes dead when:

- The ball touches the ground;
- The ball goes out of bounds;
- The ball carrier is ruled down; or
- Officials terminate the play for safety.

13.7 Point-After-Touchdown (PAT) Kicks

13.7.1 Authorization.

Kicking conversions following touchdowns are permitted in accordance with Section 10.

13.7.2 Dead-Ball Status.

All PAT kick attempts are **dead-ball plays**. No return, advancement, or change of possession may occur.

13.8 Punting Procedures

13.8.1 Physical Punt Definition.

A physical punt is a kicked ball released from the kicker's hands.

13.8.2 Dead-Ball Punt Rule.

All physical punts are **dead-ball plays**. The ball becomes dead when:

- It is caught;
- It goes out of bounds; or
- It **comes to rest** on the field of play.

13.8.3 No Return or Advancement.

No player may return, advance, or attempt to possess a punt for advancement purposes.

13.9 Spot Punt Option

13.9.1 Spot Punt Authorization.

In lieu of a physical punt, a team may elect a **spot punt**.

13.9.2 Spot Punt Placement.

A spot punt advances the ball **twenty-five (25) yards** from the line of scrimmage.

13.9.3 Spot Punt Resulting in End Zone.

If a spot punt placement would result in the ball being placed in the opponent's end zone, the play shall be ruled an **automatic touchback**.

13.10 Touchbacks

13.10.1 Touchback Definition.

A touchback occurs when a kicked ball or spot punt results in the ball becoming dead in the opponent's end zone without a score.

13.10.2 Touchback Placement.

Following a touchback, the ball shall be placed at the **twenty-yard line (20-yard line)**.

13.11 Illegal Kicks and Fouls

13.11.1 Illegal Kick.

Any kick executed in violation of this section is illegal and subject to penalty enforcement.

13.11.2 Enforcement.

Penalties on kicking and punting plays shall be enforced in accordance with Sections 23 and 24.

13.12 Authority and Final Determination

13.12.1 MBFL Authority.

MBFL and the officiating crew retain final authority over all kicking and punting procedures, enforcement, and safety determinations.

13.12.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

All rulings related to kicks and punts are judgment calls and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 14 — QUARTERBACK TIMING & PASSING RULES

14.1 Quarterback Designation and Status

14.1.1 Quarterback Defined.

The quarterback (QB) is the offensive player who initially receives possession of the ball at the start of a play, whether by snap from a physical center or by possession from a quarterback tee.

14.1.2 QB Status at Start of Play.

The player who first possesses the ball following the snap or tee pickup is considered the quarterback for that play and is subject to all quarterback timing, passing, and running restrictions defined in this Rulebook.

14.1.3 Transfer of Quarterback Status.

If the quarterback legally hands or laterals the ball to another offensive player, quarterback-specific timing and running restrictions no longer apply to the new ball carrier unless otherwise stated by rule.

14.2 Throw Clock

14.2.1 Seven-Second Throw Clock.

The quarterback has **seven (7) seconds** from the moment the ball becomes live to release a legal forward pass or otherwise relinquish possession through a legal handoff or lateral.

14.2.2 Start of the Throw Clock.

The throw clock begins:

- When the quarterback secures the ball from a physical snap; or
- When the quarterback touches or secures the ball from a quarterback tee.

14.2.3 Expiration of the Throw Clock.

If the quarterback remains in possession of the ball after the throw clock expires without releasing a legal forward pass or transferring possession, the play shall be blown dead.

14.2.4 Result of Throw Clock Violation.

A throw clock violation results in the play being ruled dead immediately. Ball placement and loss-of-down enforcement shall be governed by the penalty structure defined later in this Rulebook.

14.3 Effect of Defensive Pressure on the Throw Clock

14.3.1 Pressure Nullifies the Throw Clock.

The seven-second throw clock is **nullified** once defensive pressure is applied.

14.3.2 Definition of Pressure.

Pressure is defined as **a defensive player clearly crossing the line of scrimmage** in a legal manner under the rush or blitz rules applicable to the division.

14.3.3 Unlimited Time Under Pressure.

Once pressure occurs, the quarterback is no longer restricted by the throw clock and may continue the play in accordance with passing and running rules.

14.3.4 No Simulated Pressure.

Defensive movement that does not involve crossing the line of scrimmage does not constitute pressure and does not nullify the throw clock.

14.4 Forward Pass Rules

14.4.1 One Forward Pass per Play.

Only **one (1) forward pass** is permitted per play.

14.4.2 Location of Forward Pass.

The quarterback must release the forward pass from **behind the line of scrimmage**. A quarterback who crosses the line of scrimmage forfeits the right to throw a forward pass.

14.4.3 Forward Pass Defined.

A forward pass is any pass that travels forward relative to the line of scrimmage. All other passes are considered laterals.

14.4.4 Incomplete Pass.

An incomplete forward pass is ruled dead and results in the next down at the previous line of scrimmage.

14.5 Batted, Tipped, and Deflected Passes

14.5.1 Defensive Batting Permitted.

Defensive players may bat, tip, or deflect a forward pass, provided such action does not involve illegal contact with the quarterback.

14.5.2 Live Ball Status.

A tipped or deflected pass remains live and may be intercepted or caught by either team unless ruled dead by an official for safety reasons.

14.5.3 No Avoidance of Rules.

The quarterback may not intentionally throw the ball into a defender or into the ground to avoid a throw clock violation or negative yardage.

14.6 Passer Protection & Contact Standards

14.6.1 Flag Football Contact Standard.

MBFL is a flag football league. Defensive players are not permitted to tackle, hit, or initiate forceful contact with the quarterback. Defensive actions must be focused on **flag pulls and legal positioning**, not body contact.

14.6.2 Controlled and Incidental Contact.

Incidental contact with the quarterback may occur as a natural result of:

- Attempting a legal flag pull;
- Legal screening or blocking engagement (where permitted by division); or
- Player momentum during normal football movement.

Such contact is permitted only when it is **minimal, non-forceful, and not the primary action**.

14.6.3 Prohibited Contact with the Quarterback.

The following actions against the quarterback are prohibited in all divisions:

- Forcible body contact intended to displace, stop, or punish the quarterback;
- Driving the quarterback backward or to the ground;
- Lunging, launching, or lowering the shoulder into the quarterback;
- Wrapping, tackling, or attempting to tackle the quarterback;
- Contact to the head or neck area.

14.6.4 Contact During the Act of Passing.

The quarterback is considered a **protected player** while in the act of throwing and immediately after the ball is released. Any avoidable or forceful contact during this window shall be penalized.

14.6.5 Incidental vs. Illegal Contact Determination.

Officials shall evaluate contact based on:

- Degree of force;
- Player intent;
- Whether the contact was avoidable; and
- Whether the defender was making a legitimate attempt to pull a flag.

Contact that exceeds what is reasonably expected in flag football shall be penalized regardless of intent.

14.6.6 Enforcement.

Illegal contact against the quarterback shall be enforced under the appropriate penalty category, including illegal contact, unnecessary roughness, or unsportsmanlike conduct, as defined in Sections 23 and 24.

14.7 Intentional Grounding

14.7.1 Intentional Grounding Defined.

Intentional grounding occurs when the quarterback deliberately throws the ball away to avoid pressure or a throw clock violation without a realistic attempt to complete a pass.

14.7.2 Determination.

Officials shall consider receiver location, pass trajectory, and game context when determining intentional grounding.

14.7.3 Enforcement.

Intentional grounding results in a dead ball and penalty enforcement as defined in the penalty sections of this Rulebook.

14.8 Authority and Final Determination

14.8.1 Official Authority.

Officials and MBFL Representatives retain full authority over:

- Throw clock enforcement;
- Pressure determination;
- Pass legality; and
- Quarterback contact rulings.

14.8.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

All quarterback timing, passing, and contact determinations are judgment calls and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 15 — QUARTERBACK RUNNING RULES

15.1 General Quarterback Running Authority

15.1.1 Quarterback as a Ball Carrier.

The quarterback may become a ball carrier only under the conditions expressly permitted by this Rulebook. Quarterback running is regulated to balance competitive fairness, player safety, and the integrity of passing-based play.

15.1.2 Distinction from Other Ball Carriers.

Quarterback running privileges and restrictions are distinct from those applied to other offensive players and shall be enforced independently of general ball carrier rules.

15.2 Quarterback Run Window

15.2.1 Four-Second Run Window.

In formats where a run window applies, the quarterback is permitted to initiate a direct run **only within the first four (4) seconds** of the play, beginning when the ball becomes live.

15.2.2 Definition of a Direct Run.

A direct run occurs when the quarterback advances the ball as the primary action of the play, rather than as a reaction to defensive pressure.

15.2.3 Expiration of the Run Window.

If the quarterback has not clearly initiated a run by the end of the four-second run window, the quarterback forfeits the right to run unless otherwise permitted under pressure rules.

15.3 Declaration of Intent to Run

15.3.1 Clear Declaration Required.

Where a run window applies, the quarterback must **clearly declare intent to run** to execute a legal quarterback run.

15.3.2 Methods of Declaration.

A declaration of intent to run may be demonstrated by:

- Immediate and decisive forward movement;
- Securing the ball in a running position; or
- Other unmistakable action indicating abandonment of the passing posture.

15.3.3 Ambiguous Actions.

Hesitation, lateral movement, pump fakes, or delayed forward motion without clear commitment shall not constitute a declaration of intent to run.

15.4 Prohibition of Delayed Quarterback Runs

15.4.1 No Delayed Runs Without Pressure.

In formats with a run window, the quarterback may not delay beyond the run window and then initiate a run unless defensive pressure is applied.

15.4.2 Enforcement.

A delayed quarterback run without qualifying pressure shall result in the play being blown dead at the spot of the ball **with loss of down**.

15.5 Effect of Defensive Pressure on Quarterback Running

15.5.1 Pressure Overrides Run Window.

When a run window applies, defensive pressure permits the quarterback to run **at any time**, regardless of whether the run window has expired.

15.5.2 Definition of Pressure.

Pressure is defined as **a defensive player clearly crossing the line of scrimmage** in accordance with blitz and rush rules applicable to the division.

15.5.3 No Simulated Pressure.

Defensive movement that does not involve crossing the line of scrimmage does not constitute pressure and does not permit a delayed quarterback run.

15.6 Format-Specific Quarterback Run Rules

15.6.1 7v7 Format.

In **7v7**, quarterback runs are permitted:

- Within the four-second run window; or
- At any time following defensive pressure.

15.6.2 5v5 Format.

In **5v5**, quarterback runs are **not permitted** unless defensive pressure occurs.

If no defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage, the quarterback may not run, regardless of timing or declaration.

15.6.3 9v9 Format (Adult Division Only).

In 9v9, no quarterback run clock applies.

The quarterback may run at any time, subject only to:

- General ball carrier rules;
 - Contact and safety standards; and
 - Loss of forward passing privileges once beyond the line of scrimmage.
-

15.7 Quarterback Beyond the Line of Scrimmage

15.7.1 Loss of Passing Privileges.

Once the quarterback crosses the line of scrimmage, the quarterback forfeits the right to throw a forward pass.

15.7.2 Lateral Passes.

The quarterback may lateral the ball beyond the line of scrimmage in accordance with lateral and backward pass rules.

15.8 Quarterback Protection While Running

15.8.1 Transition to Ball Carrier Status.

When the quarterback becomes a runner, the quarterback is treated as a ball carrier and is subject to ball carrier contact and flag rules.

15.8.2 No Special Exemption.

While running, the quarterback does not receive special protection from legal flag pulls.

15.8.3 Continued Safety Standard.

Forcible contact, tackling, or unsafe engagement against a running quarterback remains prohibited.

15.9 Illegal Quarterback Runs

15.9.1 Illegal Run Defined.

An illegal quarterback run includes, but is not limited to:

- A run initiated after the run window without defensive pressure;
- A quarterback run in a format where such a run is prohibited absent pressure; or
- A deceptive or delayed run intended to exploit timing or enforcement rules.

15.9.2 Enforcement.

An illegal quarterback run results in:

- The play being blown dead immediately;
 - The ball being spotted at the point of the illegal run; and
 - **Loss of down.**
-

15.10 Authority and Final Determination

15.10.1 Official Authority.

Officials and MBFL Representatives retain final authority over:

- Timing of run windows (where applicable);
- Determination of pressure;
- Evaluation of run declarations; and
- Enforcement of quarterback running restrictions.

15.10.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

All determinations regarding quarterback running eligibility and enforcement are judgment calls and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 16 — DEFENSIVE RUSH & BLITZ REGULATIONS

16.1 Purpose and Philosophy

16.1.1 Controlled Pressure Model.

Defensive rush and blitz regulations are designed to preserve player safety, maintain competitive balance, and prevent immediate line-of-scrimmage collisions, while still allowing defensive disruption consistent with football principles.

16.1.2 Safety Priority.

Player safety supersedes tactical advantage. Any rush or blitz action that creates unnecessary risk may be restricted or terminated by officials regardless of technical compliance.

16.2 Definitions

16.2.1 Line of Scrimmage (LOS).

The line of scrimmage is the vertical plane through the foremost point of the ball at the moment the ball becomes live.

16.2.2 Rusher.

A rusher is any defensive player who crosses the line of scrimmage with the intent to pressure the quarterback.

16.2.3 Blitzer.

A blitzer is a rusher who crosses the line of scrimmage during a blitz window in formats where such a window applies.

16.2.4 Pressure.

Pressure is established when a defensive player clearly crosses the line of scrimmage. Pressure affects quarterback timing and running rules as defined in Sections 14 and 15.

16.3 Blitz Window (Non-9v9 Formats)

16.3.1 Blitz Window Defined.

In all formats **except 9v9**, the blitz window is the first **four (4) seconds** of the play, beginning when the ball becomes live.

16.3.2 Legal Rush Timing.

Only designated blitzers may cross the line of scrimmage during the blitz window.

16.3.3 End of Blitz Window.

Once the blitz window expires, additional defensive rushers may cross the line of scrimmage as permitted by rule.

16.4 Alignment and Pre-Snap Requirements (All Formats)

16.4.1 Minimum Alignment Requirement.

Prior to the snap, **any defensive player eligible to rush** must be aligned **either**:

- **At least five (5) yards off the line of scrimmage, or**
- **Outside the offensive hashmarks (goalposts).**

Meeting either condition independently satisfies alignment eligibility.

16.4.2 No Creep Rule.

Defensive players may not creep, lean, or step forward to reduce required alignment depth prior to the ball becoming live.

16.5 Blitzer Limitations (Non-9v9 Formats)

16.5.1 One Blitzer Per Play.

In all formats **except 9v9**, only **one (1) defensive player** may blitz per play during the blitz window.

16.5.2 Designation Requirement.

The blitzer must be clearly identifiable to officials prior to the snap through alignment and positioning.

16.5.3 Multiple Blitzers Prohibited.

Two or more defenders crossing the line of scrimmage during the blitz window constitutes an illegal blitz.

16.6 Set-of-Down Blitz Restrictions (Non-9v9 Formats)

16.6.1 Younger Divisions (11U & 14U).

In 11U and 14U divisions:

- Only **one (1) blitz is permitted per set of downs**.
- Once used, no further blitzes are allowed until a new set of downs is awarded.

16.6.2 Older Divisions (18U & Adult, Non-9v9).

In 18U and Adult divisions **other than 9v9**:

- Blitzes are **unlimited per set of downs**, subject to the one-blitzer-per-play rule.

16.7 Post-Blitz Window Rushing (Non-9v9 Formats)

16.7.1 Unlimited Rushers After Blitz Window.

After the blitz window expires, any number of defensive players may cross the line of scrimmage.

16.7.2 Effect on Quarterback Rules.

Once any defender legally crosses the line of scrimmage, pressure is established, nullifying the throw clock and enabling quarterback running under Sections 14 and 15.

16.8 9v9 Defensive Rush Rules (Adult Division Only)

16.8.1 No Blitz Window.

In 9v9, no blitz window applies.

16.8.2 Unlimited Rushers.

In 9v9, any number of defensive players may rush or blitz at any time, provided alignment requirements under Section 16.4 are satisfied.

16.8.3 Alignment Still Required.

All rushers in 9v9 must comply with the **five-yard or outside-the-hashmarks alignment rule** prior to the snap.

16.8.4 Pressure Always Applicable.

Any defensive player crossing the line of scrimmage in 9v9 immediately establishes pressure for quarterback timing and running purposes.

16.8.5 Safety and Contact Still Governed.

All rush actions in 9v9 remain subject to quarterback protection rules, contact standards, and general safety enforcement.

16.9 Prohibited Defensive Actions**16.9.1 Early Rush.**

Any defensive player crossing the line of scrimmage before the ball becomes live is illegal in all formats.

16.9.2 Illegal Alignment.

A defensive player who does not meet the alignment requirements of Section 16.4 is ineligible to rush.

16.9.3 Deceptive Rush Conduct.

Defensive actions intended to obscure rusher eligibility or timing may be penalized.

16.10 Enforcement and Penalties**16.10.1 Illegal Rush or Blitz.**

An illegal rush or blitz shall be enforced under Sections 23 and 24 and may include yardage penalties, automatic first downs, or additional discipline at MBFL discretion.

16.11 Authority and Final Determination

16.11.1 Official Authority.

Officials and MBFL Representatives retain final authority over all rush and blitz determinations.

16.11.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

All rulings related to defensive rushing and blitzing are final and not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 17 — BLOCKING & PHYSICAL ENGAGEMENT STANDARDS

17.1 Purpose and Scope

17.1.1 Controlled-Contact Philosophy.

Blocking and physical engagement in MBFL are permitted only to the extent necessary to execute football actions safely in a flag football environment. The objective of all engagement is positional advantage and access to space, not displacement through force.

17.1.2 Safety Supremacy.

Player safety overrides advantage, possession, or scoring opportunity. Any block or engagement that places a player at unreasonable risk shall be prohibited regardless of intent or outcome.

17.2 General Blocking Principles (All Divisions)

17.2.1 Blocking Defined.

Blocking is a legal attempt by an offensive or defensive player to obstruct or redirect an opponent's path using body positioning or permitted hand placement.

17.2.2 No Tackling or Driving.

Blocking may not resemble tackling. Players may not:

- Wrap or encircle an opponent;
- Drive an opponent backward or to the ground; or
- Use momentum to overwhelm an opponent.

17.2.3 Upright Requirement.

All blocking must occur with both players attempting to remain upright. Any engagement that results in a player being taken to the ground due to forceful action is illegal.

17.3 Division-Specific Blocking Standards

17.3.1 Younger Divisions (11U & 14U) — Screening Only.

In 11U and 14U divisions, **screen-style blocking only** is permitted.

Screen blocking consists of:

- Establishing a stationary or lateral body position;
- Allowing the opponent to choose a path around the blocker; and
- Avoiding forceful or extended contact.

Hands may be used only to brace or protect oneself and may not be used to push, extend, steer, or grab an opponent.

17.3.2 Older Divisions (18U & Adult) — Controlled Blocking.

In 18U and Adult divisions, **controlled blocking** is permitted.

Controlled blocking allows:

- Initial hand contact to the torso;
- Brief, controlled engagement to maintain position; and
- Movement consistent with flag football safety standards.

Forceful extension, lunging, or aggressive shoving remains prohibited.

17.4 Hand Usage and Contact Zones

17.4.1 Legal Contact Area.

Legal blocking contact must be made:

- Above the waist;
- Below the shoulders; and
- To the front or side of the opponent.

17.4.2 Prohibited Contact Areas.

Contact to the following areas is illegal:

- Head or neck;
- Back;
- Below the waist; or
- Any area that creates a blind-side collision.

17.4.3 Hand Fighting Near the Line of Scrimmage.

Hand fighting within **five (5) yards of the line of scrimmage** is permitted, provided it does not escalate into holding, grabbing, or forceful engagement.

17.5 Holding, Jersey Grabbing, and Clothing Restriction

17.5.1 Holding Defined.

Holding occurs when a player restricts an opponent's movement through physical restraint rather than positioning.

17.5.2 Jersey or Clothing Grabbing.

Grasping, pulling, hooking, or holding an opponent's **jersey, shirt, pants, or any article of clothing** is illegal.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Pulling a jersey to slow or redirect an opponent;
- Grabbing clothing to prevent separation; or
- Using clothing to gain leverage or control.

17.5.3 Incidental Contact Exception.

Incidental contact with an opponent's jersey or clothing while:

- Attempting a legal flag pull; or
- Briefly maintaining balance or position

is legal **only if** the contact is momentary and does not restrict the opponent's movement.

17.5.4 Automatic Illegal Action.

Any prolonged, intentional, or restrictive jersey or clothing grab shall be ruled holding, regardless of intent.

17.6 Blind-Side and Peel-Back Blocks

17.6.1 Blind-Side Blocks Prohibited.

Blind-side blocks, where the opponent does not see the blocker prior to contact, are prohibited in all divisions.

17.6.2 Peel-Back Blocks Prohibited.

Blocking back toward the original line of scrimmage or into the path of pursuit is prohibited.

17.7 Engagement by Defensive Players

17.7.1 Defensive Engagement Permitted.

Defensive players may engage blockers to disengage and pursue the ball carrier, provided all engagement complies with this section.

17.7.2 No Forcible Shed.

Defenders may not violently shed blocks using forceful swats, throws, or techniques that endanger the opponent.

17.8 Blocking on Passing, Running, and Kicking Plays

17.8.1 Passing Plays.

Blocking on passing plays is permitted within division standards and must not violate quarterback protection rules.

17.8.2 Running Plays.

Blocking on running plays must prioritize angles and positioning. Leading with the shoulder or initiating contact at speed is prohibited.

17.8.3 Kicking Plays.

Blocking during kicking plays is limited to positional engagement only. All kicker and holder protections remain in effect.

17.9 Illegal Blocking Actions

The following actions are illegal in all divisions:

- Launching or leaving one's feet to block;
 - Lowering the head or shoulder into an opponent;
 - Charging with momentum;
 - Tripping or leg blocking;
 - Blocking an opponent who is on the ground;
 - Grabbing or restricting an opponent by jersey or clothing; or
 - Any action deemed unsafe or excessive by officials.
-

17.10 Enforcement

17.10.1 Immediate Dead Ball for Safety.

Officials may immediately stop play if an illegal or unsafe block or grab occurs.

17.10.2 Penalty Classification.

Violations of this section shall be enforced under Sections 23 and 24 and may include:

- Yardage penalties;
 - Loss of down;
 - Automatic first down; or
 - Unsportsmanlike conduct for severe or repeated violations.
-

17.11 Authority and Final Determination

17.11.1 Official Judgment.

Officials and MBFL Representatives retain full authority to determine legality of blocking, engagement, and jersey or clothing contact.

17.11.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

All rulings related to blocking, physical engagement, and jersey or clothing grabbing are judgment calls and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 18 — CONTACT PHILOSOPHY & PLAYER SAFETY

18.1 Foundational Safety Principles

18.1.1 Safety as the Primary Standard.

MBFL is a flag football league that permits limited, controlled physical engagement. Player safety is the highest priority and supersedes possession, competitive advantage, yardage gained, or scoring opportunity in all circumstances.

18.1.2 No Tackle Football.

MBFL is not tackle football. Any action that resembles or functions as a tackle is prohibited, regardless of intent or outcome.

18.1.3 Safety Overrides Continuation of Play.

Officials may stop play immediately when player safety is at risk, even if the ball remains live or a competitive advantage appears imminent.

18.2 Definition of Legal Contact

18.2.1 Controlled Contact Defined.

Controlled contact is incidental, minimal, and non-forceful contact that occurs as a natural result of football movement, flag-pulling attempts, legal blocking, or positional engagement.

18.2.2 Intent Matters but Outcome Governs.

Officials shall consider player intent when evaluating contact; however, the **resulting force, risk, and outcome** of the contact govern enforcement.

18.2.3 Upright Play Requirement.

Players must make all contact while attempting to remain upright. Any contact that results in lifting, driving, or taking an opponent to the ground through force is illegal.

18.3 Prohibited Contact Actions

The following actions are prohibited in all divisions and formats:

18.3.1 Tackling and Wrapping.

Wrapping arms, encircling the body, or otherwise restraining an opponent in a manner consistent with tackling.

18.3.2 Driving or Finishing Through a Player.

Driving an opponent backward, downward, or through contact rather than disengaging after flag pull or positional engagement.

18.3.3 Launching or Lowering the Body.

Leaving one's feet, launching, or lowering the shoulder or head to initiate contact.

18.3.4 Head and Neck Contact.

Any contact to the head or neck area, whether intentional or incidental.

18.3.5 Blind-Side Contact.

Contact initiated against an opponent who does not see the engager prior to contact.

18.3.6 Contact Against Defenseless Players.

Contact against a defenseless player, including but not limited to:

- Quarterbacks in the act of throwing;
 - Receivers attempting to catch a pass; or
 - Players on the ground.
-

18.4 Ball Carrier Safety

18.4.1 Flag Pull as the Primary Method of Stopping Play.

The ball carrier shall be stopped by pulling the flag. Body contact is not a substitute for a flag pull.

18.4.2 Guiding Out of Bounds.

Light guiding or steering a ball carrier toward or out of bounds is permitted, provided no forceful contact is used.

18.4.3 No Stripping the Ball.

Stripping or forcibly removing the ball from a ball carrier is prohibited, except as expressly permitted in adult divisions when the ball is loosely held with one hand.

18.4.4 Protection While on the Ground.

If a ball carrier is on the ground, play continues under touch rules, and defenders must avoid any forceful contact.

18.5 Contact During Flag Pull Attempts

18.5.1 Incidental Contact Allowed.

Incidental contact occurring while attempting a legal flag pull is permitted if it is minimal and unavoidable.

18.5.2 Excessive Contact Prohibited.

Contact that goes beyond what is reasonably necessary to attempt a flag pull is illegal, regardless of whether the flag is ultimately pulled.

18.5.3 No Diving Through the Body.

Diving at or through an opponent's body to reach for a flag is prohibited.

18.6 Player Vulnerability and Awareness

18.6.1 Responsibility of the Initiating Player.

The player initiating contact bears responsibility for avoiding unsafe engagement.

18.6.2 Smaller or Younger Players.

Officials may apply a stricter safety standard when evaluating contact involving smaller, younger, or clearly disadvantaged players.

18.6.3 Loss of Balance or Control.

A player who loses balance, trips, or falls into an opponent must immediately disengage and may not continue contact.

18.7 Injury Prevention and Game Management

18.7.1 Immediate Stoppage for Injury Risk.

Officials may immediately stop play if a player appears injured, stunned, or in a vulnerable position.

18.7.2 Equipment or Environment Concerns.

Play may be halted due to equipment issues, field conditions, or environmental hazards that pose a safety risk.

18.7.3 No Advantage from Unsafe Play.

No team may gain an advantage from unsafe or prohibited contact. Officials may nullify plays resulting from such actions.

18.8 Escalation and Repeated Violations

18.8.1 Pattern of Unsafe Contact.

Repeated borderline or unsafe contact by a player or team may result in escalating penalties.

18.8.2 Authority to Remove Players.

Officials and MBFL Representatives may remove a player from the game if continued participation poses a safety risk, regardless of whether a formal ejection standard has been met.

18.9 Enforcement

18.9.1 Penalty Application.

Violations of this section shall be enforced under Sections 23 and 24 and may include:

- Yardage penalties;
- Loss of down;
- Automatic first down;
- Unsportsmanlike conduct; or
- Ejection for severe violations.

18.9.2 Judgment-Based Enforcement.

All safety-related contact rulings are judgment calls and are not subject to protest or appeal.

18.10 Authority and Final Determination

18.10.1 MBFL Authority.

MBFL officials, referees, and representatives retain full authority to interpret and enforce all contact and safety rules.

18.10.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

All determinations regarding contact, safety, and player protection are final.

SECTION 19 — BALL CARRIER CONTROL & END OF PLAY

19.1 Definition of a Ball Carrier and Possession

19.1.1 Ball Carrier Defined.

A ball carrier is any player who has secured possession of the ball and is advancing or attempting to advance it.

19.1.2 Possession Requirement.

Possession requires control of the ball in a manner sufficient to perform a football act. A player does not need to be upright to be considered in possession.

19.1.3 Completed Catch and Inbounds Requirement (NFL Standard).

A legal forward pass is ruled complete only when a player:

1. Secures control of the ball; and
2. Establishes inbounds status by:
 - Placing **both feet in bounds, or**
 - Placing **one foot in bounds and any other body part in bounds**, including but not limited to the knee, buttocks, elbow, forearm, hip, or shoulder, prior to any part of the body touching out of bounds.

If an official cannot clearly determine that the inbounds requirement was satisfied prior to boundary contact, the pass shall be ruled incomplete.

19.2 Method of Ending a Play

19.2.1 Flag Pull as Primary Method.

The primary and preferred method of ending a play is the removal of **any one flag** from the ball carrier's two-flag belt.

19.2.2 Default Dead Ball Rule.

By default, the play is dead at the **location where the flag is pulled**, provided the action occurs within the field of play.

19.3 Spot of the Ball and Reach Determinations

19.3.1 Default Spot of the Ball.

Unless a clearly defined exception applies, the ball shall be spotted at **the location of the flag pull**, not the location of the ball.

19.3.2 Reach Across a Plane.

A ball carrier may be awarded forward placement only if the ball is **clearly extended across a recognized plane** prior to the flag being pulled.

Recognized planes include:

- The line of scrimmage;
- The line to gain (first down); or
- The goal line.

19.3.3 No Automatic Reach Award.

Reaching the ball forward does not automatically result in forward placement. The reach must be clear, controlled, and observable to the official.

19.3.4 Standard of Clarity.

Forward placement shall be awarded only when the official clearly determines that:

- The ball fully crossed the relevant plane; and
- The reach occurred before the flag pull.

19.3.5 Unclear or Simultaneous Action.

If the official cannot clearly determine whether the ball crossed the plane prior to the flag pull, the play is ruled dead at the **location of the flag pull**.

19.3.6 No Benefit of the Doubt.

Uncertainty defaults to the flag pull location. No benefit of the doubt is awarded to the offense.

19.4 Flag Belt and Flag Loss Situations

19.4.1 Proper Equipment Requirement.

All ball carriers must wear a two-flag belt with one flag on each hip. Flags must be visible and unobstructed.

19.4.2 Accidental Flag Loss Prior to Pull.

If a flag or flag belt falls off prior to a defensive attempt to pull it, the play does not automatically end.

19.4.3 Touch Rule Applies.

When a ball carrier is without a flag due to accidental loss, the defender must touch the ball carrier with one hand to end the play.

19.4.4 Intentional Flag Removal.

Intentional removal or alteration of a flag belt results in an immediate dead ball and enforcement under the penalty structure.

19.5 Ball Carrier on the Ground

19.5.1 No Automatic Down by Contact.

A ball carrier is not down solely because a knee, hand, or other body part touches the ground.

19.5.2 Touch Rules Apply.

If the ball carrier is on the ground, **touch rules apply**.

The play ends when a defender touches the ball carrier with one hand. A flag pull is not required.

19.5.3 Intentional Knee Down.

A ball carrier who **intentionally takes a knee** is immediately ruled down at that spot.

19.5.4 Accidental Contact with the Ground.

Accidental slips, trips, or loss of balance resulting in the ball carrier being on the ground do not end the play by themselves and are governed by touch rules.

19.5.5 Safety Override.

Officials may immediately rule the play dead if continued action while the ball carrier is on the ground creates a safety risk.

19.6 Forward Progress and Assisted Advancement

19.6.1 Limited Use of Forward Progress.

Forward progress may be used only to stop a play early for safety reasons and shall not be used to award additional yardage.

19.6.2 No Pushing, Pulling, or Carrying Teammates.

Ball carriers may not be **pushed, pulled, lifted, or carried** by teammates to gain yardage.

Any act of lifting, supporting, or transporting a ball carrier forward by one or more teammates is illegal.

19.7 Out-of-Bounds Ball Carrier

19.7.1 Boundary Determination.

A ball carrier is out of bounds when any part of the body touches outside the boundary.

19.7.2 Spot of the Ball.

The ball is spotted at the point where the ball crossed the boundary.

19.7.3 Defensive Contact Near Boundary.

Defenders may lightly guide a ball carrier toward the boundary but may not forcefully drive the ball carrier out of bounds.

19.8 Illegal Actions by the Ball Carrier

19.8.1 Flag Guarding.

Ball carriers may not block, shield, or protect their flags using hands, arms, elbows, the ball, or body positioning.

19.9 End of Play by Official Whistle

19.9.1 Whistle Authority.

The play ends when an official sounds the whistle for a flag pull, touch, intentional knee, forward progress stoppage, or safety reason.

19.9.2 Premature or Inadvertent Whistle.

If an official sounds a premature or inadvertent whistle, the play is dead immediately.

19.9.3 Remedy Determination.

The officiating crew shall determine the appropriate remedy, which may include replaying the down or accepting the result at the spot of the whistle.

19.10 Authority and Final Determination

19.10.1 Official Authority.

Officials and MBFL Representatives retain final authority over all end-of-play and ball placement determinations.

19.10.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

All rulings under this section are judgment calls and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 20 — TURNOVERS & LOOSE BALL RULES

20.1 General Philosophy

20.1.1 Possession-Based Enforcement.

Turnovers and loose-ball rulings in the MBFL are governed by possession, control, and safety. A turnover occurs only when possession is clearly established by the opposing team in accordance with this Rulebook.

20.1.2 Safety Supersedes Continuation.

Officials may terminate loose-ball action early if continued play presents a safety risk, regardless of potential competitive outcome.

20.2 Interceptions

20.2.1 Interception Defined.

An interception occurs when a defensive player legally catches a forward pass in accordance with the catch and inbounds requirements of Section 19.

20.2.2 Live Ball Return.

An intercepted pass is a **live ball**. The intercepting player may advance the ball until:

- A flag is pulled;
- The interceptor is touched while on the ground;
- The interceptor intentionally takes a knee;
- The interceptor goes out of bounds; or
- The play is ruled dead by an official for safety or administrative reasons.

20.2.3 Interception Returned for a Score.

If the intercepting player advances the ball into the opponent's end zone and the ball breaks the plane of the goal line prior to the play being ruled dead, a **touchdown shall be awarded**.

20.2.4 Spot of the Ball.

If an interception return does not result in a touchdown, the ball is spotted in accordance with Section 19 end-of-play and ball placement rules.

20.3 Fumbles — General Provisions

20.3.1 Fumble Defined.

A fumble is the loss of possession of the ball by a player after possession has been established, other than by a forward pass or legal kick.

20.3.2 Division-Based Treatment.

Fumbles are enforced differently by division to balance player safety and competitive integrity, as outlined in this section.

20.4 Fumbles — Younger Divisions (11U & 14U)

20.4.1 Immediate Dead Ball.

In 11U and 14U divisions, any fumble results in an **immediate dead ball**.

20.4.2 Retention of Possession.

The offense retains possession following a fumble.

20.4.3 Spot of the Ball.

The ball is spotted at the location of the fumble unless the official determines that an alternate spot is required for safety or clarity.

20.5 Fumbles — Older Divisions (18U & Adult)

20.5.1 Live Ball Fumbles.

In 18U and Adult divisions, a fumble is a **live ball** and may be recovered by either team.

20.5.2 Advancement.

A player who legally recovers a live fumble may advance the ball in accordance with all ball carrier, contact, and safety rules.

20.5.3 Safety-Based Early Whistle.

Officials may whistle the play dead early during a loose-ball situation if player safety is compromised or a pile-up is imminent.

20.6 Bobbled or Mishandled Snaps

20.6.1 Younger Divisions (11U & 14U).

A bobbed or mishandled snap is **not a fumble**. The quarterback may recover the ball and continue the play.

20.6.2 Older Divisions (18U & Adult).

A bobbled or mishandled snap is treated as a **fumble** and is subject to live-ball enforcement.

20.7 Loose Ball Recovery and Scramble Prevention

20.7.1 Legal Recovery.

A loose ball may be recovered by a player who secures possession without creating unsafe contact.

20.7.2 No Diving Through Players.

Players may not dive onto, through, or over other players to recover a loose ball.

20.7.3 Pile Prevention.

Officials may immediately rule the play dead if multiple players converge in a manner that creates a pile or unsafe scramble.

20.8 Loose Ball Out of Bounds

20.8.1 Out-of-Bounds Determination.

When a loose ball goes out of bounds, the ball becomes dead immediately.

20.8.2 Placement Based on Direction.

The ball shall be awarded and spotted based on:

- The direction of the fumble; and
- The last team in possession,

as determined by the official.

20.8.3 No Advancement.

A loose ball going out of bounds may not be advanced.

20.9 Simultaneous Recovery

20.9.1 Simultaneous Possession.

If opposing players simultaneously secure possession of a loose ball and no clear recovery can be determined, possession is awarded to the team that last had possession.

20.9.2 Immediate Dead Ball.

The play is ruled dead immediately in all simultaneous recovery situations.

20.10 Turnovers on Downs

20.10.1 Failure to Reach the Line to Gain.

Failure to advance the ball to the line to gain within the allotted downs results in a **turnover on downs**.

20.10.2 Spot of the Ball.

The opposing team takes possession at the dead-ball spot of the final play.

20.11 End Zone and Safety Considerations

20.11.1 Defensive Scores.

Any defensive return (interception or fumble recovery) that results in the ball breaking the plane of the opponent's goal line is a **touchdown**.

20.11.2 Offensive Fumble into Own End Zone.

If the offense fumbles the ball into its own end zone and the ball becomes dead there, the result is a **safety**.

20.11.3 Offensive Fumble into Opponent's End Zone.

If the offense fumbles the ball forward into the opponent's end zone and the ball becomes dead without clear possession in the end zone, the ball is returned to the spot of the fumble.

20.12 Authority and Final Determination

20.12.1 Official Authority.

Officials and MBFL Representatives retain full authority to determine:

- Possession;
- Live versus dead ball status;
- Early whistles for safety; and
- Turnover enforcement.

20.12.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

All rulings under this section are judgment calls and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 21 — OVERTIME PROCEDURES

21.1 Purpose and Applicability

21.1.1 Purpose.

Overtime procedures are designed to determine a winner in a fair, efficient, and safe manner when a game is tied at the conclusion of regulation play.

21.1.2 Applicability.

Overtime is used in all MBFL games when time and conditions permit. In rare circumstances where a game must end abruptly due to field availability, weather, safety concerns, or administrative requirements, a game may be declared a tie at the discretion of MBFL Officials.

21.2 Overtime Format (College-Style)

21.2.1 Structure.

MBFL overtime follows a **college-style alternating possession format**.

21.2.2 Starting Position.

Each team begins its offensive possession at the opponent's **25-yard line**, unless field size limitations require an adjusted starting point as determined by MBFL Officials.

21.2.3 Equal Opportunities.

Both teams shall be given an equal opportunity to possess the ball in each overtime period, unless the game ends earlier due to a defensive score as defined in this section.

21.3 Coin Toss and Choice

21.3.1 Overtime Coin Toss.

A coin toss shall be conducted prior to the start of overtime.

21.3.2 Choice Options.

The winner of the overtime coin toss shall choose one of the following:

- To play offense or defense first; or
- To select the end of the field on which overtime will be played (if applicable).

21.3.3 Alternating First Possession.

If additional overtime periods are required, first possession shall alternate between teams.

21.4 Offensive Series and Downs

21.4.1 Standard Downs Apply.

Each team receives the standard number of downs to score, consistent with regulation play.

21.4.2 Turnovers End the Series.

A turnover ends the offensive series immediately, except where a defensive score occurs.

21.5 Scoring During Overtime

21.5.1 Touchdowns.

Touchdowns are worth six (6) points.

21.5.2 Post-Touchdown Attempts (First Three Overtime Periods).

During the first three (3) overtime periods, a team scoring a touchdown may choose **one** of the following:

- A **kicked extra point** worth one (1) point, attempted in accordance with MBFL kicking rules;
- A **1-point conversion play** from the 5-yard line; or
- A **2-point conversion play** from the 10-yard line.

21.5.3 Conversion-Only Overtime Periods.

Beginning with the fourth overtime period, all scoring shall be determined by **alternating 2-point conversion attempts only**, attempted from the 10-yard line.

No kicks or field goals are permitted during conversion-only overtime periods.

21.5.4 Field Goals.

Field goals are permitted during the first three (3) overtime periods, provided field conditions allow for a legal attempt.

21.6 Defensive Scores and Safeties

21.6.1 Defensive Touchdowns.

A defensive touchdown during overtime — including an interception return or fumble recovery returned into the opponent's end zone — **immediately ends the game**.

21.6.2 Safety During an Overtime Possession.

If a safety occurs during an overtime possession (other than during a conversion attempt), the game **immediately ends**, and the team scoring the safety is declared the winner.

21.6.3 Safety on a Conversion Attempt.

A safety occurring during a conversion attempt results in **one (1) point** awarded to the defense.

The game does **not** end as a result of a safety on a conversion attempt, and overtime proceeds in accordance with the established format.

21.7 Overtime Progression Limits

21.7.1 First Three Overtime Periods.

During the first three overtime periods, teams may score by touchdown, conversion, or field goal.

21.7.2 Overtime Period Four and Beyond.

Beginning with the fourth overtime period, teams alternate **2-point conversion attempts only**.

Each team receives one attempt per overtime period.

21.7.3 Winner Determination.

The team that outscores the opponent during a conversion-only overtime period is declared the winner.

21.8 Timeouts During Overtime

21.8.1 Timeout Allocation.

Each team is granted **one (1) timeout per overtime period**.

21.8.2 Duration.

Overtime timeouts may last up to **one (1) minute**.

21.8.3 No Carryover.

Timeouts do not carry over between overtime periods.

21.9 Clock Status

21.9.1 No Game Clock.

There is no running game clock during overtime.

21.9.2 Administrative Timing.

Officials may manage play tempo for safety, field availability, and game flow.

21.10 Enforcement and Penalties

21.10.1 Penalty Enforcement.

All penalties during overtime are enforced in accordance with Sections 23 and 24.

21.10.2 Dead-Ball Fouls.

Dead-ball fouls may be enforced on the succeeding possession as determined by the officiating crew.

21.11 Authority and Final Determination

21.11.1 Official Authority.

MBFL Officials and Representatives retain final authority over:

- Overtime administration;
- Field placement adjustments;
- Safety-based decisions; and
- Termination of overtime due to external conditions.

21.11.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

All overtime rulings are judgment calls and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 22 — ONSIDE ALTERNATIVES & SPECIAL SITUATIONS

22.1 Purpose and Scope

22.1.1 Purpose.

This section establishes an alternative method for a trailing team to retain possession following a score and governs special situations that arise due to clock status, score differential, field limitations, or safety considerations.

22.1.2 Authority.

All determinations under this section are subject to the authority of MBFL Officials and Representatives, whose decisions are final.

22.2 No Kickoff Structure

22.2.1 No Kickoffs in MBFL.

MBFL games do not utilize kickoffs to start halves or following scores.

22.2.2 Possession Restart Philosophy.

All changes of possession and restarts of play are administered through ball placement and scrimmage plays as directed by MBFL Officials.

22.3 Onside Alternative — Retention Attempt

22.3.1 Availability.

Following a scoring play, a team that meets the requirements of this section may elect an **onside alternative retention attempt** in lieu of a standard possession change.

22.3.2 Trailing-Team Restriction.

Only the **trailing team** is eligible to attempt the onside alternative.
A team that is tied or leading may not attempt it.

22.3.3 One Opportunity Per Game.

Each team is permitted **one (1) onside alternative attempt per game**, regardless of outcome.

22.3.4 Eligibility Window.

The onside alternative may be used only in the **final five (5) minutes of the second half**.

22.3.5 No Overtime Use.

The onside alternative is **not permitted during overtime**.

22.3.6 Declaration Requirement.

The scoring team must clearly declare its intent to attempt the onside alternative to the officiating crew **immediately following the score and prior to the next scrimmage setup**.

Once declared, the decision may not be reversed.

22.4 Retention Attempt Mechanics

22.4.1 One-Play Scrimmage Attempt.

The onside alternative consists of **one (1) untimed offensive scrimmage play**.

This play is **not a standard down**, but is enforced as the **functional equivalent of a 4th-and-20 situation**.

22.4.2 Spot and Distance.

The ball shall be placed at the scoring team's **own 20-yard line**, and the offense must gain **twenty (20) yards** to retain possession.

If field size limitations prevent exact placement or distance, MBFL Officials may adjust the spot and/or distance while preserving the intended level of difficulty.

22.4.3 Live Ball.

The play is live and governed by all standard offensive and defensive rules, including quarterback timing, blitz regulations, and contact standards.

22.5 Results of the Retention Attempt

22.5.1 Successful Attempt.

If the offense gains the required yardage:

- The offense retains possession; and
- Play continues with a new set of downs from the dead-ball spot.

22.5.2 Failed Attempt.

If the offense fails to gain the required yardage:

- The defense is awarded possession at the dead-ball spot; and
 - The game proceeds accordingly.
-

22.6 Mercy Clock Interaction

22.6.1 Mercy Clock Applicability.

The use of the mercy clock does **not** restrict or eliminate eligibility for the onside alternative, provided all other requirements of this section are met.

22.6.2 Post-Attempt Timing.

All standard mercy-clock timing mechanics apply following the conclusion of the retention attempt.

22.7 Field Size and Facility Limitations

22.7.1 Adjustments Permitted.

When field dimensions do not support the standard placement or distance described in this section, MBFL Officials may adjust:

- The spot of the ball; and/or
- The distance to gain.

22.7.2 Competitive Neutrality.

Any adjustment shall preserve the **competitive difficulty** of the attempt and shall not materially advantage either team.

22.8 Administrative and Special Situations

22.8.1 Administrative Dead Balls.

Officials may declare an administrative dead ball and reset play when confusion, substitution errors, or equipment issues materially affect fairness or safety.

22.8.2 Unforeseen Circumstances.

Situations not expressly covered by this section shall be resolved by MBFL Officials in a manner consistent with league philosophy and safety standards.

22.9 Unsportsmanlike Use of the Onside Alternative

22.9.1 Prohibited Conduct.

Teams may not exploit the onside alternative to:

- Delay the game;
- Circumvent timing rules; or
- Create unsafe situations.

22.9.2 Enforcement.

Violations may result in:

- Loss of the onside alternative;
 - Enforcement of unsportsmanlike conduct penalties; or
 - Additional discipline under Section 25.
-

22.10 Authority and Final Determination

22.10.1 Final Authority.

MBFL Officials and Representatives retain final authority over:

- Administration of the onside alternative;
- Field and distance adjustments; and
- Resolution of special situations not expressly covered by this Rulebook.

22.10.2 Non-Protestable Matters.

All rulings under this section are judgment calls and are not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 23 — PENALTIES & ENFORCEMENT STRUCTURE

23.1 Purpose and Enforcement Philosophy

23.1.1 Purpose.

This section establishes the structure by which rules violations are identified, categorized, enforced, and administered. The intent is to ensure consistency, fairness, safety, and game flow while minimizing ambiguity and discretionary disparity.

23.1.2 Safety Priority.

Player safety supersedes competitive advantage, field position, clock status, or scoring implications. When safety is implicated, officials shall prioritize immediate risk mitigation over continuation of play.

23.1.3 Preventive Officiating.

Officials may issue verbal warnings for minor, non-safety infractions when appropriate to prevent escalation. Warnings do not replace enforcement when a rule is clearly violated.

23.2 Authority to Enforce

23.2.1 On-Field Authority.

Game officials have full authority to:

- Identify rule violations;
- Determine enforcement options;
- Declare dead-ball or live-ball status; and
- Assess penalties in accordance with this Rulebook.

23.2.2 League Authority.

MBFL Officials and Representatives retain overarching authority to:

- Modify enforcement for safety or administrative necessity;
- Correct misapplication of rules; and
- Issue supplemental discipline as outlined in Section 25.

23.2.3 Finality of Decisions.

All penalty enforcement decisions are final and not subject to protest or appeal.

23.3 Types of Fouls

23.3.1 Live-Ball Fouls.

Live-ball fouls occur during a play while the ball is live and action is ongoing.

23.3.2 Dead-Ball Fouls.

Dead-ball fouls occur:

- After a play has ended;
- Before the snap; or
- During administrative stoppages.

Dead-ball fouls do not negate the result of the previous play unless explicitly stated.

23.3.3 Safety Fouls.

Any foul involving excessive force, unsafe contact, or dangerous conduct is classified as a safety foul and may carry enhanced enforcement and disciplinary consequences.

23.4 Enforcement Spot and Measurement

23.4.1 Basic Enforcement Spot.

Unless otherwise specified, penalties are enforced from:

- The previous spot for pre-snap fouls; or
- The dead-ball spot for post-play fouls.

23.4.2 Spot Fouls.

Certain fouls may be enforced from the spot of the foul when doing so more accurately reflects the competitive impact of the violation.

23.4.3 Half-the-Distance Principle.

When a penalty distance would place the ball beyond the goal line, enforcement shall be reduced to half the distance to the goal line.

23.5 Acceptance, Declination, and Offset

23.5.1 Option to Accept or Decline.

The non-offending team may accept or decline a penalty unless enforcement is mandatory due to safety or administrative reasons.

23.5.2 Offset Fouls.

When live-ball fouls by both teams occur during the same play and neither has clear precedence, the fouls offset and the down is replayed.

23.5.3 Dead-Ball Offset.

Dead-ball fouls by opposing teams may offset or be enforced in sequence, at the discretion of the officiating crew.

23.6 Loss of Down and Automatic First Down

23.6.1 Loss of Down.

Certain offensive fouls may include loss of down as part of enforcement, as defined in Section 24.

23.6.2 Automatic First Down.

Certain defensive fouls may result in an automatic first down regardless of yardage gained.

23.7 Advantage and Clean Hands Principle

23.7.1 Advantage Rule.

Officials are not required to allow play to continue to preserve advantage if doing so creates confusion or safety risk.

23.7.2 Clean Hands.

A team committing a foul may not benefit from the outcome of the play in which the foul occurred.

23.8 Multiple Fouls by the Same Team

23.8.1 Single Play, Multiple Fouls.

When multiple fouls by the same team occur during a single play, only the most severe foul shall be enforced unless safety dictates otherwise.

23.8.2 Repeated Infractions.

Repeated minor infractions may be escalated to unsportsmanlike conduct at the discretion of the officiating crew.

23.9 Bench, Sideline, and Non-Player Fouls

23.9.1 Responsibility.

Teams are responsible for the conduct of:

- Players;
- Coaches;
- Staff; and
- Affiliated spectators.

23.9.2 Attribution.

Unsportsmanlike actions by non-players may be attributed to the affiliated team and enforced accordingly.

23.10 Delay of Game and Administrative Fouls

23.10.1 Delay of Game.

A delay of game may be called when a team:

- Fails to promptly line up;
- Delays substitutions; or
- Repeatedly disrupts the flow of play.

23.10.2 Administrative Enforcement.

Administrative fouls are enforced to maintain game integrity and tempo and may include warnings, penalties, or clock adjustments.

23.11 Safety Overrides and Early Whistles

23.11.1 Safety-Based Whistles.

Officials may immediately stop play when a situation presents an unreasonable risk of injury.

23.11.2 Enforcement Following Early Whistle.

If a safety-based early whistle affects competitive outcome, officials may:

- Replay the down; or
- Accept the result at the spot of the whistle.

The determination rests solely with the officiating crew.

23.12 Discipline Beyond Yardage

23.12.1 Non-Yardage Sanctions.

In addition to yardage enforcement, officials may:

- Issue warnings;
- Remove a player temporarily; or
- Recommend further discipline.

23.12.2 Escalation.

Penalties that indicate intent, retaliation, or repeated disregard for rules may be escalated under Section 25.

23.13 Authority and Final Determination

23.13.1 Final Authority.

All penalty enforcement decisions are final and rest with MBFL Officials and Representatives.

23.13.2 No Protest.

Penalty enforcement, spot, and judgment calls are not subject to protest, appeal, or replay review.

SECTION 24 — PENALTY DEFINITIONS & YARDAGE

24.1 Purpose, Philosophy, and Application

24.1.1 Purpose.

This section defines all rule violations, classifications, and enforcement standards used by the Myrtle Beach Football League (MBFL). Penalties are structured to reflect traditional football enforcement principles while accounting for the flag football format, safety priorities, and the absence of instant replay.

24.1.2 Governing Model.

Unless otherwise stated, penalty yardage and enforcement philosophy are based on **NCAA / NFHS football standards**, modified only where necessary for MBFL gameplay.

24.1.3 Strike-Based Discipline.

Any foul classified as **Unnecessary Roughness** or **Unsportsmanlike Conduct**:

- Is enforced as **15 yards**
- Results in an **automatic first down** if committed by the defense
- Results in a **loss of down** if committed by the offense
- Counts toward the MBFL **three-strike disciplinary system**

24.2 General Enforcement Principles

24.2.1 Spot Enforcement Standard.

Unless specifically designated otherwise, live-ball fouls are enforced from the **spot of the foul** when the location of the foul directly affects player positioning, ball location, or competitive advantage.

24.2.2 Pass Interference Exception.

All pass interference fouls are enforced as **flat yardage penalties** and are **not spot fouls**, regardless of where the foul occurs.

24.2.3 Half-the-Distance Limitation.

Half-the-distance enforcement applies only to penalties that impose yardage advancement. Half-the-distance **does not apply** to penalties in which the ball is declared dead at the spot of the foul.

24.3 Pre-Snap and Administrative Fouls (5 Yards)

24.3.1 False Start (Offense).

Any offensive movement that simulates the start of the play prior to the snap.

Penalty: 5 yards from the previous spot. Dead-ball foul.

24.3.2 Offside / Neutral Zone Infraction (Defense).

A defensive player enters the neutral zone prior to the snap and causes disruption.

Penalty: 5 yards from the previous spot. Dead-ball foul.

24.3.3 Encroachment (Defense).

A defensive player enters the neutral zone and makes contact with an offensive player prior to the snap.

Penalty: 5 yards from the previous spot. Dead-ball foul.

24.3.4 Illegal Formation (Offense).

Failure to meet alignment, personnel, or snap requirements for the declared game format.

Penalty: 5 yards from the previous spot.

24.3.5 Illegal Motion / Illegal Shift (Offense).

Improper movement prior to the snap, including failure to become set or illegal simultaneous motion.

Penalty: 5 yards from the previous spot.

24.3.6 Illegal Substitution / Too Many Players (Either Team).

More than the allowed number of players on the field at the snap or improper substitution creating an unfair advantage.

Penalty: 5 yards from the previous spot.

24.3.7 Delay of Game (Either Team).

Failure to put the ball in play within a reasonable time as determined by the official.

Penalty: 5 yards from the previous spot.

24.4 Offensive Live-Ball Fouls

24.4.1 Holding (Offense).

An offensive player materially restricts a defensive player by grabbing jersey, clothing, body, or equipment, preventing pursuit or the ability to make a play.

Penalty: **10 yards from the spot of the foul.**

24.4.2 Illegal Block (Offense).

A block that exceeds permitted contact standards, is blindside, or is delivered with excessive force.

Standard Penalty: 10 yards from the spot of the foul.

If forceful or dangerous, the act is **Unnecessary Roughness**.

24.4.3 Flag Guarding (Ball Carrier).

Any act by the ball carrier using hands, arms, ball, or body to shield, swat, stiff-arm, or otherwise obstruct access to the flag belt.

Flag guarding is a **play-ending violation**.

Penalty:

- Ball declared dead at the spot of the foul
- **Loss of down**

24.4.4 Illegal Forward Pass.

A forward pass thrown:

- Beyond the line of scrimmage
- After the passer has crossed the line of scrimmage
- As a **second forward pass during the same play**

Penalty:

- Ball declared dead at the spot of the foul
- **Loss of down**

24.4.5 Intentional Grounding.

A deliberate forward pass thrown to avoid loss of yardage without a realistic chance of completion to an eligible receiver.

Penalty:

- Ball declared dead at the spot of the foul
- **Loss of down**

24.4.6 Illegal Quarterback Run.

A quarterback run executed outside authorized timing, declaration, or format rules.

Penalty: Play declared dead immediately. Loss of down at the previous spot.

24.4.7 Offensive Pass Interference (OPI).

After the ball is thrown, an offensive player materially restricts a defender's opportunity to play the ball through pushing off, picking, or initiating illegal contact.

Penalty: **15 yards from the previous spot.**

No loss of down.

24.5 Defensive Live-Ball Fouls

24.5.1 Defensive Holding / Illegal Restriction (Non-Ball Carrier).

A defensive player grabs, restrains, hooks, or materially impedes an eligible receiver or potential ball carrier prior to possession.

Penalty: **10 yards from the previous spot.**

Down: Replay the down.

No automatic first down.

24.5.2 Holding on the Ball Carrier (Defense).

A defensive player illegally restrains or impedes a runner who has already established possession.

Penalty: **10 yards from the spot of the foul.**

24.5.3 Defensive Pass Interference (DPI).

After the ball is thrown, a defensive player materially restricts an eligible receiver's opportunity to catch the pass.

Penalty: **15 yards from the previous spot and an automatic first down.**

24.5.4 Illegal Contact Beyond Allowed Zone.

Contact initiated beyond permitted engagement areas.

Penalty: 10 yards from the spot of the foul.

If forceful, reclassified as **Unnecessary Roughness**.

24.5.5 Illegal Blitz / Rush Violation.

Any rush or blitz that violates alignment, depth, timing, or frequency rules.

Penalty: 5 yards from the previous spot.

24.5.6 Roughing the Passer.

Avoidable or unnecessary contact with the quarterback after release or when clearly protected.

Penalty: **Unnecessary Roughness.**

24.6 Kicking and Punting Fouls

24.6.1 Illegal Rush on Kick or Punt.

A defender crosses the line of scrimmage to rush or block when rushing is prohibited.

Penalty: 5 yards from the previous spot. Replay of the attempt.

24.6.2 Illegal Contact on Kicker or Holder.

Contact with the kicker or holder during a kick attempt.

Penalty: 10 yards from the previous spot.

If forceful, reclassified as **Unnecessary Roughness.**

24.7 Personal Fouls and Safety Violations

24.7.1 Unnecessary Roughness.

Any forceful or violent contact exceeding permitted standards, including launching, driving a player to the ground, or forceful boundary contact.

Penalty:

- **15 yards**
 - **Automatic first down (defense)**
 - **Loss of down (offense)**
 - **Counts as a strike**
-

24.7.2 Targeting.

Forcible contact to the head or neck area or leading with the head.

Penalty: 15 yards and automatic ejection.
Minimum one-game suspension.

24.7.3 Fighting.

Punching, striking, kicking, or retaliatory physical altercation.

Penalty: Immediate ejection.
Minimum one-game suspension or greater.

24.8 Unsportsmanlike Conduct

24.8.1 Unsportsmanlike Conduct.

Taunting, abusive language, threats, disrespect toward officials or opponents, or any act deemed unsportsmanlike.

Penalty:

- **15 yards**
 - **Automatic first down (defense)**
 - **Loss of down (offense)**
 - **Counts as a strike**
-

24.8.2 Bench, Sideline, or Spectator Conduct.

Unsportsmanlike actions by coaches, staff, or affiliated spectators may be attributed to the team.

Penalty:

- **15 yards**
 - **Counts as a strike**
 - Additional discipline may apply.
-

24.9 Ejection-Level Infractions

24.9.1 Automatic Ejection.

Targeting, fighting, or flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct results in immediate ejection.

24.9.2 Supplemental Discipline.

Ejections carry mandatory suspensions as outlined in Section 25 and may be extended by MBFL.

24.10 Authority and Final Determination

24.10.1 Final Authority.

Officials and MBFL Representatives retain final authority over foul classification, enforcement, and strike designation.

24.10.2 Non-Protestable.

All penalty rulings are final and not subject to protest or appeal.

SECTION 25 — DISCIPLINE, CONDUCT & SPORTSMANSHIP

25.1 Purpose and Scope

25.1.1 Purpose.

This section establishes standards of conduct and disciplinary procedures for the Myrtle Beach Football League (MBFL). Its purpose is to preserve player safety, competitive integrity, respect for officials, and a professional football environment while recognizing the emotional and competitive nature of the game.

25.1.2 Scope of Authority.

This section applies to all individuals participating in or **associated with a player and/or team**, including but not limited to:

- Players
- Coaches
- Team staff
- Referees and officials
- MBFL staff and representatives
- Parents, guardians, spectators, and other affiliated individuals

Conduct may be attributed to a player or team based on affiliation, **regardless of whether the individual is actively participating in the game.**

25.1.3 Safety and Control Priority.

At all times, **safety overrides competitive advantage, possession, scoring opportunity, and game outcome**. MBFL retains full authority to act in the interest of safety, order, and league integrity.

25.2 Standards of Competitive Conduct

25.2.1 Permitted Competitive Expression.

MBFL recognizes that football is a physical, emotional, and competitive sport. The following are generally permitted, provided they do not escalate or target individuals:

- Celebration of plays or scores
- Competitive trash talk related directly to game performance
- Spontaneous or situational profanity not directed at a specific individual
- Emotional reactions to game events

Officials are instructed to allow reasonable latitude for competitive expression consistent with the spirit of the game.

25.2.2 Prohibited Conduct.

The following behaviors are prohibited and subject to penalty or discipline:

- Personal insults, slurs, or derogatory remarks
- Bullying, harassment, or intimidation
- Repeated or targeted verbal abuse
- Threats of violence or physical harm
- Directed profanity toward officials, opponents, or spectators
- Conduct unrelated to the game intended to demean, embarrass, or provoke
- Retaliation after a play or after a ruling

Determinations are based on **intent, repetition, and effect**, not solely on language used.

25.3 Three-Strike Disciplinary System

25.3.1 Strike-Eligible Infractions.

The following count toward the MBFL three-strike system:

- **Unnecessary Roughness**
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

- Any act reclassified by officials into one of the above categories due to severity or escalation

Celebration, competitive trash talk, or incidental profanity **do not automatically constitute** Unsportsmanlike Conduct.

25.3.2 Strike Accumulation.

Strikes are assessed on an **individual basis** and may accumulate within a single game or across multiple games in the same season.

25.3.3 Strike Consequences.

- **First Strike:** Formal warning
- **Second Strike:** Final warning and heightened monitoring
- **Third Strike:** Automatic ejection

Officials are not required to issue warnings if conduct is severe or poses an immediate concern.

25.4 Ejections

25.4.1 Automatic Ejection.

Immediate ejection occurs for:

- Targeting
 - Fighting
 - Flagrant Unsportsmanlike Conduct
 - Severe verbal abuse or threats
 - Any act deemed by officials to pose an immediate safety risk
-

25.4.2 Ejection Timing and Suspensions.

- Ejection in the **first half** → suspension through the **first half of the next game**
- Ejection in the **second half** → suspension for the **entire next game**

MBFL reserves the right to extend suspensions based on severity or pattern of behavior.

25.4.3 Removal Procedure.

Ejected individuals must immediately leave the field of play and cease all interaction with players and officials. Failure to comply may result in additional discipline.

25.5 Coach, Staff, and Spectator Conduct

25.5.1 Coach Responsibility.

Coaches are responsible for their own conduct and for cooperating with officials in addressing the behavior of players and spectators associated with their team.

25.5.2 Spectator Attribution.

Unsportsmanlike or disruptive conduct by a spectator may be attributed to a player and/or team when the individual is reasonably identifiable as being associated with that player or team.

25.5.3 Parent or Spectator–Caused Player Removal.

If a parent, guardian, or spectator associated with a player causes disruption resulting in that player being removed from the game:

- **The player is removed for the remainder of the game**
 - **The removal does not constitute a suspension**
 - **No credits or refunds are issued**
-

25.6 Refusal to Comply and Game Control

25.6.1 Failure to Comply.

Any individual who refuses to comply with official instructions may be penalized, removed from the venue, or subject to post-game discipline.

25.6.2 Game Suspension or Termination.

Officials and MBFL representatives may suspend or terminate a game when conduct creates a safety risk, escalates beyond control, or compromises league integrity. Final outcomes are determined by MBFL.

25.7 Post-Game Discipline and League Authority

25.7.1 Supplemental Discipline.

MBFL may impose additional discipline after a game, including extended suspensions, probation, or removal from the league, regardless of whether the conduct was penalized during play.

25.7.2 Final Authority.

All disciplinary decisions by MBFL are final and non-appealable.

25.8 No Credit or Refund Policy

No credits, refunds, or compensation shall be issued for games or portions of games missed due to:

- Ejection
 - Suspension
 - Discretionary removal
 - Parent- or spectator-caused removal
 - Any disciplinary action taken under MBFL authority
-

25.9 Discretionary Authority and Preventative Action

25.9.1 Discretionary Enforcement Authority.

MBFL officials, referees, and staff may impose any penalties, restrictions, removals, or corrective actions they deem **necessary or appropriate** to maintain safety, order, and league integrity.

25.9.2 Preventative Player Removal.

MBFL reserves the right to temporarily or permanently remove a player from a game when the player's presence or behavior is deemed unsafe, disruptive, or likely to escalate, **with or without prior warning, penalty, or strike**.

25.9.3 Team Responsibility.

When a player is removed under discretionary authority, the action may be attributed to the team, and coaches are expected to comply immediately.

25.10 Spirit of the League

25.10.1 Competitive Environment.

MBFL encourages passion and competitive energy while rejecting abuse, intimidation, or conduct that threatens safety or sportsmanship.

25.10.2 Absolute Authority.

MBFL officials, referees, and representatives retain absolute authority to define and enforce acceptable conduct necessary to uphold league standards.

