



Co-Ed Flag Football League Rulebook and General Information

Purpose and Scope of This Document

This Rulebook and Registration Information booklet is intended to give all participants a broad overview of how the league operates and explain most rules and procedures that govern the league. This document is not intended to cover every last detail, such as schedules for each team, and various other procedural and administrative items. Many additional details for the league will be disseminated via e-mail and on the Club website, so please check both frequently. Please add patrick@madisonssc.com to your list of safe senders to ensure you receive all e-mails pertaining to the league.

Welcome

This document contains a wealth of information about how our league works as well as registration information. All participants must complete a Waiver to be eligible to play in our league. There are absolutely no exceptions to this rule. **PLEASE READ THIS DOCUMENT IN ITS ENTIRETY BEFORE YOU REGISTER AND BEFORE YOUR FIRST GAME TO ENSURE YOU FULLY UNDERSTAND THE RULES AND PROCEDURES WHICH GOVERN THE LEAGUE.**

Code of Conduct

Madison Sports and Social Club does not tolerate discrimination, racism, sexual harassment, unwelcome sexual advances, violence, threats, or any other type of behavior that may make any player or official feel uncomfortable or threaten his or her health and well-being. We expect all players to treat everyone with respect and abide by common standards of decency and good sportsmanship.

Team names and any conduct on premises must not be offensive toward any race, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other group of individuals. Conduct on premises refers to anything spoken, written, displayed on apparel, or otherwise visible or audible to any other participant, whether before, during, or after a game. Team names must not contain profanity. Please use tact and common sense when choosing a team name. MSSC reserves the right to reject any team name someone may find offensive. You will be asked to supply a new name in the event your team name is deemed inappropriate.

Players will read and understand the rules. They are sent to all roster players prior to the season and are available on the MSSC website as well. Not reading rules is the single biggest cause of problems in our leagues. If players have a question about the application of any given rule, they can ask an official during a break in play or after a game if time allows. They will not argue calls with officials or ask to have rules explained to them during play unless an official feels an explanation is necessary before play continues. Officials are human and make mistakes and MSSC does not tolerate abuse of its officials.

All participants must refrain from threatening, taunting, name-calling, put-downs, intimidation, violence, harassment, and other inappropriate behavior toward teammates, opponents, and officials. Everyone makes mistakes, and we will not tolerate criticism or intimidation of anyone involved with our leagues due to differences in skill level or any other factor. Coaching, tips, and helpful hints are welcome, provided they are relayed in a constructive and friendly manner. Any player making an offensive comment to another individual is subject to ejection at the umpire's discretion

All players are encouraged to report offensive behavior to the Club President, Patrick Fosdick, via e-mail at patrick@madisonssc.com. All reports will be kept anonymous and taken seriously, and appropriate action will be taken if deemed necessary, including, but not limited to warnings, suspension, and removal of the offending individual(s) from league play.

Shirts

Each player on a team's roster will be provided with a t-shirt. Shirt colors will be assigned on a first registered, first awarded basis, unless a returning team is using a color from a prior season. Shirts are generally available at the fields by the second game of the season, depending on the schedule of the printer. **Please wear league shirts every week. Teams at every level of organized sport – from pee wee through the NFL – all wear the same shirt/jersey/uniform**

Structure of the League

All MSSC leagues are non-contact, no blocking leagues. There is no line play and players may not block for ball carriers. All players are eligible runners and receivers.

The league will be segmented into separate divisions as much as possible. Captains will be asked to rate their team's skill on a scale of 1-10. We will form divisions as best as we're able based on how captains rate their teams.

Captains rate their team's skill level during registration, subject to adjustment by MSSC. MSSC reserves the right to change a team's stated skill level if we feel a team has incorrectly rated its skill level.

Prizes and Payouts

Prizes will be announced in the playoff email that goes out to all registered participants. In the past they've generally included gift cards to sponsor bars or cash prizes processed as refunds to the captain or available as a credit for a future league. Prizes are subject to change any given season. We only award prizes to the first and second place teams in the entire league and do not award prizes in each division if there are multiple divisions.

Miscellaneous Administrative Rules and Notes

- MSSC welcomes free agents (or players without a team) to register. Full teams will be placed first, followed by free agents in the order they registered (if we can place them). We don't place very many male free agents, but usually have no trouble placing females
- Free Agents are welcome to form teams on their own or request to play with friends, otherwise they will be assigned to a team by MSSC
- Spectators are welcome and encouraged at the games provided they're well-behaved. Teams are responsible for the conduct of their spectators, and referees may ask them to leave if they're being a distraction to the teams participating
- Club management reserves the right to alter the setup of the league (including rules) at any time before or during the season.
- Referees are provided by MSSC and should have no affiliation with any particular team in the league. If it becomes apparent that a referee is favoring one team over another on a consistent basis, he or she will be dismissed and another referee will take his or her place.
- Teams must maintain complete and accurate rosters. All players should be listed on a team's roster, and players who play in any number of games must complete the waiver, which is accomplished through accepting a spot on the team from a captain's e-mail invite. Teams in violation of waiver policies will be subject to forfeiting games at MSSC's discretion
- Following the regular season, an appropriate postseason structure will be established. In leagues where there are multiple divisions, traditional playoff brackets may only occur at the highest levels of play. Lower divisions may just offer two or three final games assigned against opponents at random. In general, all teams are eligible for postseason play with the following exceptions:
 - Any team forfeiting two or more regular season games may be left out of the postseason at MSSC's discretion
 - If time or space constraints arise, teams may be left out of the postseason to allow completion of the league in a timely and/or efficient manner. This rarely ever happens. Depending on the reason for the exclusion, a team may be refunded for a postseason game
 - Any team determined to have exhibited extremely poor sportsmanship or other conduct detrimental to the league on a regular and consistent basis may be left out of the postseason at MSSC's discretion. Refunds will NOT be issued to any teams under these circumstances, as this is a violation of our Code of Conduct
 - Any team who does not wish to participate in the postseason may be excluded at the captain's request. There is no requirement to participate in the playoffs. **It is the responsibility of the captain to contact MSSC before the playoff schedule is released if their team doesn't want to or can't participate in the playoffs. Forfeit fees apply during the playoffs as well**

Game Equipment

Teams supply their own footballs to be used while on offense. MSSC may or may not have a supply of "lost and found" footballs on hand for teams to use if they wish. NERF or foam footballs, toy footballs, and significantly undersized footballs are not allowed. Balls must be NCAA size or larger. Referees or a representative of MSSC will have final discretion as to whether any particular ball is allowable.

Flag belts will be provided by MSSC. All players must wear belts supplied by MSSC. All participants should wear the team t-shirts issued by MSSC for each game. It is the responsibility of each participant to ensure the t-shirt is brought to each game. Subs who don't have a team shirt must at least wear a shirt that is similar in color to the team shirts to avoid confusion. MSSC has the right to require a team to wear mesh pinnies in the event that team colors are too similar during any matchup or players aren't wearing team shirts.

The referee or a representative of MSSC may inspect attire worn by all participants before each game and will instruct players to remove any items that are not allowed on the field of play.

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE PROHIBITED ON THE FIELD AT ALL TIMES WITH NO EXCEPTIONS:

- Metals cleats
- Jewelry of any kind (watches, rings, necklaces, earrings, bracelets, etc) deemed to be too loose, sharp, or dangerous to any player
- Helmets or headwear containing a hard or unyielding surface
- Pants with belts or belt loops
- Any other item(s) the referee or representative of MSSC may deem inappropriate or dangerous to other participants

The Playing Field

Field boundaries will be marked by lines painted on the ground. Pylons will also be placed in the corner of each end zone, the center of the back of the end zone, and at mid-field to serve as reference points. MSSC many times uses multiple fields that are relatively close together, so all players must refrain from interfering with games on other fields.

Team Composition

- A. Each team should have 6 players on the field during play (a "full team"); at least 2 of them must be female at all times. A team may play shorthanded with as few as 4 players (at least 2 must be female). There is no limit on the number of females on the field per team.
- B. A player must specifically identify as a female in order to count toward the minimum number of females required for purposes of co-ed participation. The rest of the team can be any number of males and/or non-binary individuals
- C. It is the responsibility of the team captain to communicate with the referees regarding team composition when it comes to co-ed participation rules. The captain must make the refs aware of any situations in which the gender identity of any given player(s) could be misconstrued
- D. Teams may have as many players on their roster as they wish
- E. Teams are welcome to use their own subs at any time. A team's "own sub" is defined as a player who does not appear on the roster of another co-ed league team. **The captain is required to provide subs with the league rules and otherwise make sure they understand general game play.** Players who are unfamiliar with the rules pose a danger to everyone involved in the game and may otherwise cause a bad playing experience
- F. No player may appear on the roster of two or more teams in different divisions

Subs

- A. A rostered league player may not sub for a team in a skill division below the one in which their team plays. Division names will vary from season and rules regarding subbing will be communicated in the schedule email sent out prior to each season
- B. Subs from other teams are not allowed at all in the playoffs
- C. Captains must supply subs who are not already part of the league with the rules. Refs have the right to remove any players who demonstrate lack of knowledge of the rules
- D. Any sub rules may be disregarded if the opposing team consents

Referees are not allowed to play for any team in the league and teams are prohibited from recruiting a referee to join their team.

Forfeiture

Teams will have until 5 minutes past the designated start time to field a legal team. A “legal team” must have a minimum of 4 players, with at least 2 of them being female. Teams fielding less than 4 players or lacking at least 2 females will forfeit the game. **Exception:** Teams may play a real game with less than 4 players or less than 2 females with the opposing team’s consent. Teams who agree to play under these conditions will lose the option of receiving a forfeit win. The opponent may play with 6 players regardless of how many players are fielded by the shorthanded team.

- If one team decides to take a forfeit win, this must be decided and captains must sign to acknowledge the forfeit before the game begins. It is the responsibility of the team taking the forfeit win to ensure this happens
- Teams who no-show games or show up with fewer than four players may be charged a forfeit fee according to the procedures outlined on the Forfeit Fees page of the MSSC website (<https://madisonssc.leaguelab.com/page/forfeitfees>)

Beginning of the Game

The “visiting” team gets to call the coin toss. The visiting team is the one listed first (or on the top) on the schedule and scorecards. The winner of the toss may choose offense/defense or which goal they wish to defend first. The loser of the coin toss may choose whichever option the winning team did not select. There are no kick-offs; play starts 5 yards from the opposing goal line.

Length of the Game, Timekeeping, and Timeouts

Play will be divided into two 20 minute halves with a five minute halftime. The clock runs continuously until the 2:00 warning unless the referee stops time for a serious injury or other matter. Teams will switch direction at the start of the second half. The team that started the game on defense will start the second half on offense. Each team is allowed two 60 second timeouts per game that may be used at any time. During the final 2:00 of each half, the referee shall stop the game clock if:

- an incomplete pass is thrown (this includes intentional grounding)

- a player ends a play by going out of bounds
- either team scores (the clock will remain off until the opposing team snaps the ball after the PAT attempt; the clock does not run during extra points)
- change of possession occurs
- a penalty occurs
- a team calls a time out

The game time will be kept by one referee. Players from either team may ask the referee for the time remaining after the completion of any given play. The play clock will be kept by the second referee.

The clock will not stop for the 2:00 warning unless there is a dead ball situation when the clock hits 2:00. For example, play will not be stopped at 2:00 if one team is in the middle of a play. The referee will announce that 2:00 remain in the game, and the clock will stop once the play is complete. If a team is up by 20 or more points in the second half, the clock runs continuously during the last two minutes of play.

The offensive team has 25 seconds to snap the ball once it has been spotted. The offense is responsible for returning the ball to the line of scrimmage. A referee is responsible for monitoring the time; there will be no visible play clock. The referee should begin a verbal countdown when a team has ten seconds left to snap the ball.

Mercy Rule: To keep scores from getting out of hand and keep games running on schedule, a mercy rule may be implemented as follows: If a team is up by 20 or more points and it has reached the time for the next game to begin, the game will be called. **If sufficient time remains before the next game is scheduled to begin, the game will be finished regardless of the score.**

Co-Ed Specific Rules

To ensure co-ed participation, there are a number of rules governing the extent to which females must be involved in plays during the course of each game. A penalty will be assessed if the offensive team fails to use a female as an “Operative Player” at least once on three consecutive plays. (Note: This rule does not reset after a first down; the rule applies to any three consecutive plays). The entire point of a co-ed league is to get the females involved and for them to be the Operative Player on a given play – i.e. the player throwing the ball, the primary/intended target of a pass, or the runner on a handoff.

An Operative Player is defined as a player who:

- Is the primary/intended receiver in the eyes of the referee
- Runs the ball as the primary runner and reaches or crosses the line of scrimmage
- Receives the snap as the QB and throws a forward pass across the line of scrimmage
- Receives the snap and immediately spikes the ball in order to stop the clock (in the last 2 minutes of the game only).

An Operative Player is NOT a player who:

- Hands off the football
- Snaps the ball into play
- Receives a hand-off only to give the ball back to a non-female before crossing the line of scrimmage
- Was in the vicinity of a non-female player who caught the ball, unless it was apparent to the referee that she was the target of the quarterback's pass. Example: a pass that is tipped by a female in an attempt to catch it, but ends up being caught by a non-female. The referees must determine that the female wasn't trying to intentionally tip the ball to the non-female player
- Is the recipient of a thrown ball possessed/controlled by a non-female and then intentionally pitched, thrown, or otherwise transferred to a female

Examples of what is and is not considered a "female play"

- A pass deflected by a non-female and caught by a female is a female play
- A pass intended for a female (in the eyes of the referee) that is deflected by a female and caught by a non-female counts as a female play
- A pass thrown by a non-female, caught by a non-female, and pitched, thrown, or otherwise transferred to a female does not constitute a female play. However, the play will stand unless it was required to be a female play, in which case the penalty for not using an operative player will apply. If done within five yard of the end zone (and including the end zone) and the female scores a touchdown, the touchdown will only be worth 6 points
- A ball spiked by a female in the last 2 minutes of the second half in order to stop the clock counts as a female play
- If a female pitches the ball to a non-female behind the line of scrimmage who then crosses the line of scrimmage, it will not be considered a female play
- If a female pitches the ball to a non-female behind the line of scrimmage and then he passes it to a female, it will count as a female play
- A ball possessed by a non-female in the air and intentionally transferred to a female via a pitch, throw, or any other method is not a female play. The non-female must demonstrate control of the ball and have intentionally directed it toward the female in the eyes of a referee in order for the play to not count as a female play.

Definitions, explanations, and clarifications for terms used above:

- A "tip" and a "deflection" are essentially the same action. This occurs when a pass is thrown to a player and bounces off of the player's hand(s) or fingers immediately with no control or possession demonstrated by the player.
- A legal catch occurs when a player demonstrates control and possession of the ball with at least one foot in bounds. A catch does not need to occur for a player to demonstrate control/possession of the ball and transfer it to another player.
- A "pitch" or a "throw" is any action whereby a player demonstrates control/possession of the ball and intentionally transfers the ball to another person in the eyes of a referee.

All plays are subject to referee discretion and interpretation, as mentioned toward the end of the rulebook. They have the final decision on the call to be made, especially in situations not specifically covered in this rulebook.

Penalties for failure to use a female as an Operative Player: The penalty for running 3 consecutive plays without using a female as an Operative Player will be a 10 yard penalty, loss of down, and a female must now be an Operative Player on the next play. If necessary, this sequence will continue until the team turns the ball over on downs.

Special note for sacks: If a non-female is the quarterback on a play and is “sacked” by having a flag removed while in possession of the ball, the ball is spotted where the QB was sacked and the play stands as a non-female play. If a team would have been forced to use a female as the Operative Player (i.e they had gone three consecutive plays previously without using a female) and a non-female QB is sacked, the play will count as a female play and the offensive team does not have to use a female on the next play.

Special note for rushing the quarterback: If a team is in a forced female play situation and the defense rushes the quarterback, the quarterback may run, but may not throw the ball to a non-female. If a non-female quarterback laterals or throws the ball backwards to another non-female at or behind the line of scrimmage, the offense loses the ability for a non-female to run. Once past the line of scrimmage, the ball may not be lateraled or thrown backwards to a non-female.

Scoring and Rules During Play

Scoring - Teams are awarded 6 points if a touchdown is scored by a non-female player and 9 points if scored by a female player. A player may run, pass, or catch a touchdown to be awarded the appropriate number of points. For example, if a female player throws a pass to a non-female player that is caught in the end zone, the team will be awarded 9 points since the pass was thrown by a female.

If a non-female player is deemed to have intentionally gone out of bounds, kneeled down, or otherwise halted forward progress to surrender a flag inside the five yard line when the player had the opportunity to score, the ball will be placed at the five yard line and the next play will commence from this point. This rule is in place to prevent “cheap” female touchdowns generated by non-females intentionally going down inside the five yard line.

Extra points will not be kicked, but rather will take the form of a 2 point conversion where players must run or pass the ball into the end zone. An extra point initiated 5 yards off the goal line is worth 1 point. An extra point initiated 10 yards from the goal line is worth 2 points. Extra point attempts may be intercepted and returned for the attempted number of points, and the intercepting team will continue on offense, starting at their 5 yard line.

Games ending in a tie score will be recorded as tie games during regular season play. During the playoffs there will be no ties. Please refer to the “Playoffs” section of this document for overtime rules during the playoffs.

Safeties - A safety will be awarded if a ball carrier:

- Is tagged down in their own end zone by having the belt removed
- Runs out of bounds in their own end zone
- Snaps the ball out of the end zone
- Fumbles the ball in the end zone
- Laterals the ball out of the end zone
- Kneels down in the end zone
- Makes contact with the ground in the end zone with the hand carrying the ball
- Intentionally grounds the ball in the end zone

As the result of a safety, the defensive team receives 2 points and is awarded the ball on offense again. The team awarded the safety now begins on offense at the five yard line on the opposite end of the field.

First downs - Each team shall have 4 downs to either score or earn a first down. A first down is earned by reaching midfield. If a team fails to score or earn a first down, possession will go to the other team, which will receive the ball on their own 5 yard line, not at the spot of the turnover.

Punts - There are no punts. A team has four downs to either score or reach the first down marker.

Continuance of play - Play shall continue until:

- A ball carrier has the flag belt removed by an opponent or is otherwise considered down (see Uniform and Flag Rules for exceptions and additions concerning flag belts)
- A ball carrier steps out of bounds
- A ball carrier scores a touchdown or PAT
- The ball touches the ground as a result of a fumble or incomplete pass (If the ball is pinned between the ground and the ball carrier's hand, the play is dead)
- A ball carrier's knee, elbow, or back touches the ground. This rule applies to both offensive and defensive players (after an interception for example)

Spot of the ball - The ball will be spotted where the ball is at the time the ball carrier's belt has been removed or the carrier is otherwise considered "down" (see Continuance of Play). The offense is responsible for both the ball and the ball marker. It is the offense's responsibility to get both of these to the line of scrimmage in a timely manner, or be subject to a delay of game penalty.

Turnovers - A turnover can only occur on an interception of a forward pass or a lateral. Interceptions of forward passes or laterals may be advanced until the intercepting player is ruled down. A fumble (defined as the player losing possession of the ball and the ball hitting the ground) is not a turnover. The ball is dead at the point of the fumble (where the ball hits the ground) and the offense retains possession.

The only exception to the play being blown dead is if the quarterback fumbles a snap from the shotgun formation. The quarterback will be allowed to pick up a dropped shotgun snap and continue play. The defensive player may rush at the "three one-thousand" count. If the quarterback has not picked up the ball by the time the defensive player reaches the quarterback, the defensive player may pull the belt of

the quarterback to rule the play dead. If the quarterback runs away from the defensive player without possession of the ball, the defensive player may touch the football to rule the play dead.

Penalties that occur after a team intercepts an attempt at an extra point will be marked off from the spot of the infraction, and the intercepting team will have one more play for the number of points attempted from the spot of the infraction plus any penalty yardage.

Rushing the quarterback – A three-count is used for rushing. The referee will count “one-one thousand, two-one thousand, three-one thousand” Players may rush only when the referee finishes the final “one thousand.” The quarterback may only run past the line of scrimmage if rushed by the defense (i.e. a defensive player breaking the line of scrimmage).

Substitutions - Teams may generally substitute players as often as they wish, with the following stipulations:

- Players must sub in from the same sideline all the time. Both teams may be on the same sideline
- If the offense makes a substitution, the defense must be given a chance to make a substitution before the ball is snapped

After a turnover or score, each team must be given an opportunity to make substitutions before the ball is snapped for the next play

Uniform and Flag Belt Rules

1) All players must wear flag belts supplied by MSSC. We use “triple threat” belts with three flags. No other type of belt is allowed. All players must position the belt so the middle flag is in the center of the back and the two other flags are as close to each hip as possible. Belts may need to be adjusted during the game to keep flags in the correct places.

2) Belts must be worn on top of all layers of clothing. Loose-fitting articles of clothing (i.e. large sweatshirts, long t-shirts, etc.) should not be worn, as they can be held onto or ripped easily. Shirts should be tucked in if they are long and/or baggy. The referees have the authority to tell players to tuck in shirts.

3) Any ball carrier whose flags are deemed as not accessible or not spaced properly will be down via one-hand touch. This includes having the flags in any arrangement other than one flag near each hip and one in the middle of the back. Players who use excessive and/or unnecessary force when applying a one-hand touch are subject to illegal contact penalties

4) Any ball carrier missing a belt for any reason (i.e. it falls off, is pulled off before reception, or is not noticed as missing before the snap, etc.) will be down via one hand touch.

5) A penalty will be assessed against the defense for intentionally pulling a flag early. See page 13.

Miscellaneous Rules While In Play

- No tackling. Period. The refs have discretion to remove you from the game
- All players are eligible receivers (other than a quarterback throwing a pass to him-or-herself)
- The player who commences any given play as the quarterback can only advance the ball by running if rushed by a defensive player. In other words, QB sneaks, QB draws, and similar plays are not allowed unless the QB is rushed
- The ball must be snapped from the ground
- The QB may not snap the ball to him/herself
- Loss of down penalties which occur on 4th down will result in a change of possession
- Receivers only need one foot in bounds for a completion
- Spin moves are permitted
- Only the ball must cross the plane of the goal line in order for a touchdown to be awarded
- The pylons at the front of the end zone are in play for purposes of scoring a touchdown

Penalties

Normal rules and penalties of the NCAA apply unless modified herein or added. Distances have been adjusted due to the size of the fields. Penalties include:

Illegal contact

This section of the rulebook is being expanded to clarify a few things regarding contact in general. Our leagues are “non-contact,” which – in the context of flag football – refers to the fact that there is no blocking or tackling. There are no offensive or defensive line positions, and thus no blocking at the line of scrimmage. There’s also no blocking allowed behind the line of scrimmage to prevent sacks or downfield to prevent defensive players from grabbing flags. Tackling is also prohibited. Contact will happen due to the fact that there are 12 people running around in a relatively confined space and players don’t know where their opponents (and sometimes teammates) are going. Please keep the following in mind when it comes to contact:

- Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Take action to avoid collisions as much as possible – even if it takes you out of the play. It’s better to be out for one play rather than the whole game (or multiple games) because you got hurt. Even worse is hurting someone else
- It’s most likely a penalty if you aren’t paying attention and run into or “run through” another player who was looking at you or had no chance to see you. Examples:
 - Defensive player runs in and collides with an offensive player who jumped straight up in the air attempting to catch a ball. Defensive player is at fault
 - Ball carrier is running downfield and defensive player runs into the ball carrier from the side or behind. Defensive player is at fault
 - Offensive player runs into a defensive player when the offensive player had a clear view of the defensive player and the defensive player didn’t make any sudden moves into the offensive player’s path. Offensive player is at fault

- There generally isn't a penalty if neither player is paying attention and neither was the ball carrier or intended recipient of a pass. A common example is a collision while running routes when neither player sees the other. These collisions tend to be the worst possible kind though and should be avoided by constantly surveying the field around you
- You may not make any contact whatsoever with a player who is stationary. This applies whether you're on offense or defense. It's similar to charging or blocking fouls in basketball, although open to referee interpretation since this isn't basketball
- You aren't allowed to block or otherwise attempt to stop a player with any part of your body. The only way you're allowed to stop a player is by pulling a flag
- Offensive and defensive players have equal right to go after any ball in the air
 - Unacceptable contact initiated by either side is pass interference (covered later)
 - Contact with another player without attempting to play the ball is also subject to an unnecessary roughness penalty and potential ejection, depending on the severity of the contact
 - No penalty will be called if there's a collision and refs feel the players had an equal chance to catch the ball and arrived at the ball at the same time
- Intent is not a requirement for a penalty to be called. One can be called on you for carelessness or lack of awareness

We can't address every potential type of contact, but you can be called for a penalty for any type of contact deemed unnecessary or excessive. Assessment of illegal contact penalties:

- **At or behind the line of scrimmage:** In cases where either an offensive or defensive player initiates unacceptable contact of any kind, it will be ruled a 5 yard penalty from the line of scrimmage and the down will be replayed. Examples include, but are not limited to: jamming, tripping, moving picks, moving screens, forearms, stiff arms, elbowing, etc.
- **Down field:** If the illegal contact occurs during play when the offense is advancing the ball, the penalty will be a mark off of 5 yards from the point where the ball carrier is at the time of the infraction. If the infraction occurs during a pass play when the pass is incomplete, the penalty will be marked off 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage. The same examples listed above apply
- **Excessive contact (offensive):** An offensive player may not dive, hurdle, or run over, through, or into an opponent who is stationary and on their feet. The penalty will be 10 yards from the spot of the foul and a loss of down. This is essentially the same penalty as unnecessary roughness mentioned later, but is being expanded upon due to increased frequency and the fact that our leagues are non-contact

Flag guarding: This is defined as any motion of the arm (whether intentional or unintentional) that prevents a defender from grabbing a flag. The play will stand, but the penalty will result in a 5 yard mark off from the spot of the infraction, not the spot where the runner is eventually ruled down. Note: If the flag guarding occurs on fourth down and the resulting yardage, after the penalty is marked off, does not result in a first down, it is a turnover on downs. Flag guarding includes, but is not limited to:

- Holding onto flags or the flag belt
- Tucking flags into or wrapping them around any article of clothing

- Holding the football over a flag or the flag belt to prevent defensive players from grabbing it
- Holding onto a defensive player's hand or arm, or swatting a hand or arm away to keep him or her from removing the flag
- Using foreign objects such as pins to secure flags or the belt
- Blocking a defensive player's hand with the football

Illegal Flag Pulling: A penalty will be assessed when a referee deems that a player intentionally removed the belt of another player when there was no realistic chance of ending the play via the belt pull (i.e. a defender pulls the belt off before a pass is even close to the receiver). The penalty will be five yards from the spot of the foul or wherever the player is eventually ruled down – whichever is further downfield. If the penalty occurs less than five yards from the end zone, the penalty will be half the distance to the goal. Referees reserve the right to escalate illegal flag pulling to unsportsmanlike conduct if it occurs repeatedly. Players may be removed from the game for repeated violations

Holding: Holding will result in a 5 yard penalty and an automatic first down. Holding takes many forms. A player may not grab another player's arm or hand or wrap another player up at any time. Players may also not hold onto shirts, flag belts, shorts, or any other article of clothing. If a player accidentally grabs an article of clothing while reaching for a flag and lets go of the article of clothing immediately, a penalty will not be called.

False start (offense only): 5 yard penalty, the play is ruled dead immediately, there is no option to decline, and the down is replayed.

Illegal formation: No player may line up in a three- or-four-point stance (i.e. one or both hands on the ground). This rule has been implemented to help alleviate illegal contact and reinforce the fact that this league is non-contact

Illegal motion: No more than one player may be in motion at a time. Motion must be backward or parallel to the line of scrimmage until the ball is snapped. More than one player in motion or movement toward the line of scrimmage will result in a five yard penalty and replay the down

Offsides/neutral zone infraction/early rush (offense or defense): A 5 yard penalty will be called if either team is lined up in the neutral zone or if the defense rushes early. If committed by the offense, the play is blown dead, similar to a false start. If the penalty is on the defense and is accepted by the offense, there is a 5 yard mark-off from the line of scrimmage against the defense and the down is repeated. If the penalty is declined, any gain on the play will stand and it will be the next down.

Illegal exchange: There must be a clear exchange of the football between the center and the quarterback, with the quarterback showing clear and sole possession of the ball before handing it off or throwing to another player. The penalty will be 5 yards and a replay of the down

Illegal forward pass: If the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage and then throws a forward pass, the defense can either decline the penalty (if the pass resulted in an incompletion or interception), or accept the penalty, which will be 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down. The quarterback's entire body must be across the line of scrimmage in order for it to be a penalty. For illegal forward passes that occur beyond the line of scrimmage (a forward lateral), any yards gained

before the illegal forward pass will stand, but the penalty will be 5 yards from the spot of the illegal forward pass.

Illegal run by the quarterback: The quarterback may not run past the line of scrimmage as a ball carrier until a defensive player touches or crosses the line of scrimmage in pursuit of the quarterback. If the quarterback runs without a rush, the penalty will be 10 yards and a replay of the down

Illegal Touching/Ineligible Receiver: A player may not leave the field of play (i.e. go out of bounds), return to the field, and be the first to touch the ball. A penalty will not be called if a referee determines the player was forced out of bounds by a player on the opposing team. The penalty for a team on offense is 5 yards and a loss of down. If a defender goes out of bounds and makes an interception while being the first to touch the ball, the play is negated and the offense keeps the ball.

Too many players on the field: No more than six players per team on the field. If the offensive team has too many players on the field, the defense can choose to accept the penalty, which will be 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage, or decline the penalty and accept the result of the play. If the defensive team has too many players on the field, the offense can accept the penalty, which will be 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage, or decline the penalty and accept the results of the play.

Unnecessary Roughness (Offense): Unnecessary roughness by the offense during a play will result in a 10 yard penalty from the line of scrimmage and a loss of down. If the penalty occurs after the play (i.e. a dead ball situation), the penalty will result in a 10 yard mark off at the end of the play. Extreme roughness or disorderly conduct will result in an immediate ejection from the game and or league if deemed necessary by the referee and league staff. No warnings need be given. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Lowering a shoulder and initiating contact with a defender
- Stiff-arming or elbowing a defender
- Kicking or kneeing a defensive player in an attempt to hurdle a defender
- An aggressive or unnecessary dive that generates an unacceptable amount of contact with a defender

Unnecessary Roughness (Defense): If the play is dead at the time the penalty is committed and the offense has not advanced the ball, the penalty will be a 10 yard mark off from the line of scrimmage and an automatic first down will be awarded. If the play is on-going or the offense has advanced the ball at the time the penalty is committed, the penalty will be 10 yards added on to the end of the play and an automatic first down will be awarded. Extreme roughness may result in ejection from the game and or league if deemed necessary by the referee and league staff. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Any illegal attempt to down a player, such as grabbing clothing and pulling a player to the ground
- Intentional tripping
- Tackling
- Forearms or arm bars
- Hitting the quarterback's arm in an overly aggressive manor while the quarterback is in delivery. Defensive players may attempt to block a pass by raising one or both arms straight up

in the air, but they may not touch the quarterback. A penalty will not be called if the quarterback's follow through hits a defensive player's arms or body when the defender has established position and is only trying to block a pass, the quarterback steps into the defender, or if contact by the defensive player is incidental in the referee's opinion.

Defensive Pass Interference: The ball will be spotted at the point of the infraction and the offense will be awarded an automatic first down. It will not be ruled pass interference if both the offensive and defensive player had an equal opportunity to call the ball and incidental contact occurred between the players. If the pass interference occurs in the end zone, the ball will be placed on the 1 yard line and it will be 1st down.

Offensive Pass Interference: Offensive pass interference will be called when an offensive player makes any contact or takes any action that prevents a defensive player from breaking up a pass, intercepting a ball he or she otherwise would have caught, or gives the offensive player an unfair advantage in catching the ball in the referee's eyes. This includes holding a defender's arm or hand, tripping, pushing off, wrapping an arm around a player, hip-checking a defender off the ball, etc. The penalty will be 10 yards from the previous spot and a repeat of the down.

Intentional Grounding: A penalty will be called when the passer throws a forward pass without a realistic chance of completion. A pass out of bounds will not be considered intentional grounding if the passer is outside of what would normally be considered the pocket. Intentional grounding will result a loss of down and the ball will also be spotted at the point of infraction (i.e. the QB's point of release).

Fighting, Dead Ball Unnecessary Roughness, and Excessive Unsportsmanlike Conduct - Fighting and other forms of physical altercations will NOT be tolerated, period. This includes – but is not limited to – shoving, elbowing, kicking, slapping, or punching another player, intentionally knocking another player to ground, or any other action the referee deems inappropriate. Excessive unsportsmanlike conduct (verbal or otherwise) will also make the player subject to ejection, suspension, and potential permanent ban from all MSSC leagues and events. All parties involved in such behavior (subject to the referee's discretion) may be ejected from the game and subject to ejection from the league at MSSC staff discretion. Ejections from the game will cause the offending team to play down a person for the remainder of the game. The referees also have discretion to award a forfeit win if players engaged in such behavior will not leave the premises or they engage in conduct that disrupts the game once play has resumed. No full or partial refunds will be given to any player ejected from the league for any of this conduct.

Authority and Discretion of the Referees

The referees are authorized by MSSC to have complete control over all aspects of the game. Referees have the discretion to rule as they see fit in any situation not covered by the rules mentioned above. The decisions of the referees are final and teams may not argue calls with the referees. Representatives of MSSC may not overturn calls made by referees on individual plays within a game. The referees have a demanding job and are not perfect. Calls will be made that individuals and teams do not agree with, and calls will be missed. This is the nature of sports, and all participants must understand this.

All referees are expected to know the rules of the league and act as an impartial third party in each and every game they officiate. If a team feels that a referee does not know the rules or is showing bias toward another team, they may report their concerns by e-mailing Flag Football League Commissioner Patrick Fosdick at patrick@madisonssc.com.

End of the Game

At the completion of the game, the referees and each team captain will sign off on the final score of the game for verification purposes. The score card will be submitted to MSSC as proof of the game's final score. All players are expected to shake hands and otherwise show good sportsmanship, regardless of the final score or any disagreements or situations that may have arisen during the game.

Results and Standings

Results and standings will be posted on the Flag Football page of the MSSC website following receipt of the official scorecard from each game.

Playoffs

At the conclusion of the regular season, the playoffs will begin. An appropriate playoff structure will be utilized depending on the number of teams in the league. Double headers are used often in the playoffs, especially once the semifinals are reached.

Game Format - Playoff games will follow the same format during regulation as the regular season. If teams are tied at the end of regulation in playoffs, an overtime period will be played.

Overtime - In the playoffs, overtime periods will use a system similar to college football overtime. The overtime period will start with the referee flipping a coin, with the winning team deciding whether to play offense or defense. The "away" team will get to call the coin flip. The losing team will decide which end zone to defend. Each team will then have 4 downs to score from 10 yards out from the goal line. If a team scores, they will have the opportunity to go for one point or two points on the PAT, using the same rules as the regular season games. As in regular season games, a female must be used at least once in the first three downs, unless a touchdown is scored on first or second down. The male/female rule does not apply for the PAT. The game will be decided when one team scores more points than the other team during their rotating possessions. No 1st downs will be awarded except in the case of a penalty. Interceptions will result in a turnover and may not be returned for any points. If the first team on offense scores and then intercepts the other team on its attempt to score, the game is over. If the score is still tied after two complete overtime periods, each team must attempt a two point conversion after they score a touchdown. From this point on all subsequent overtime periods will continue with each team attempting a two point conversion after they score a touchdown. If the score is still tied after three overtime periods, a female must be an operative player on all subsequent two point conversions.

Cancellation/Rainout Policy

Games may be postponed or canceled due to dangerous weather, extremely poor field conditions, or a number of other factors. MSSC must abide by city guidelines to stay off the fields in certain weather conditions or risk losing access to the fields. MSSC generally expects two rainouts per season. Rained out games will be added to the end of the regular season schedule.

Any cancellations will be posted on the MSSC website and e-mailed to all players on each team's roster. In some circumstances, it may not be possible to cancel the game until some or all of the participants have arrived at the site of the day's game, and in some cases, the game may need to be postponed after play has begun. These are factors outside the control of MSSC and we hope everyone understands that such inconveniences will occasionally occur.