

Darien Junior Football League – Flag League Rules

- 1) Quarters are 12-minutes with stoppages for injuries, time-outs, and, at the referee's discretion, to prevent the offensive team from taking too long in the huddle and thereby shortening the opposing team's time of possession.
- 2) Each team gets two time-outs per half.
- 3) Teams change ends only at the start of the second half.
- 4) Coaches may remain on the field with their teams. Once players go to the line of scrimmage, coaches must stand several yards behind their teams so as not to interfere with the action. They may call out instructions to their players both before the snap and during the play.
- 5) Substitutes may enter at any time between plays. Coaches are obligated to make substitutions quickly.
- 6) All players on a team must play **at least half the game**. Only coaches can effectively monitor playing time, and therefore must make substitutions accordingly.
- 7) Field dimensions are 80 yards long, 40 yards wide. For "kicking off," the receiving team takes possession of the ball at its own **30**. To punt, the offensive team declares its intention to punt, the ball is advanced 20 yards and the opposing team takes possession.
- 8) **No punt may pin a team deeper than its own 20-yard-line. (Example: if you punt from the opponent's 35 yard line, you will only be awarded a fifteen yard punt and your opponent will take possession on its twenty.)**
- 9) **IMPORTANT: *There are no 10-yard 1st-Down chains. Offenses achieve a 1st Down (and receive a new set of downs) each time they cross the twenty or forty yard lines (midfield). A down marker indicating 1st-4th Down moves with the ball, but the 1st Down lines (the two 20 yard lines and the 40 yard line) remain fixed.***
- 10) Referees may correct non-moving fouls such as lining up in the neutral zone or illegal formations before the snap without a penalty being assessed, though repeated violations, particularly later in the season, may be penalized. Penalties such as defensive encroachment, illegal procedure, clips, holds, and pass interference will be assessed according to the usual rules of football. Additionally, a number of "Flag-specific" penalties will be assessed as follows:
 - A) Flag-Guarding: Deliberately deflecting a defender's hands from the flag is illegal. Referees at their discretion may return the ball from where it was advanced to the spot where the flag-guarding occurred.
 - B) Tackling: Tackling the ball-carrier rather than grabbing his flag is like grabbing the face-mask in tackle football. At the referee's judgment, the tackling of a ball-carrier may be met with a warning, a five-yard penalty or a fifteen-yard penalty (tacked onto the end of the run), depending on the severity of the foul.

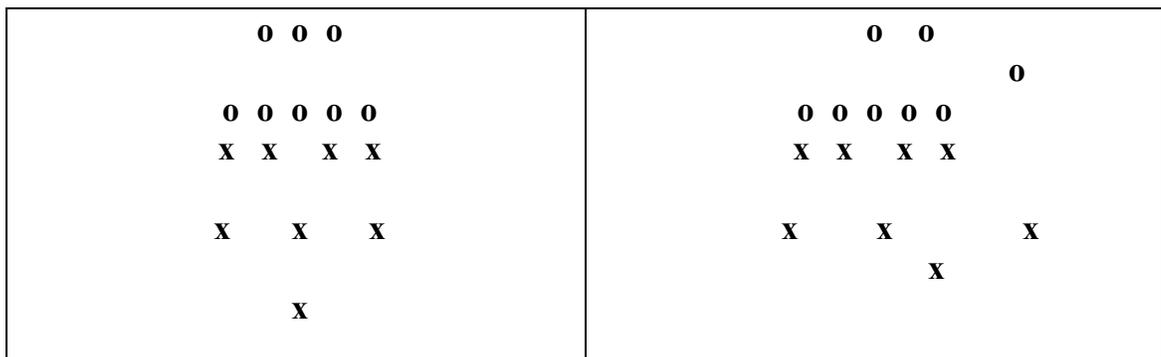
- C) Pushing out of bounds: Pushing a player out of bounds (instead of grabbing the flag) is comparable to illegal tackling. Referee may give a warning or he may tack on five or fifteen yards to the end of the run, depending on the severity of the foul. Generally speaking, it is fair to “force” a player out of bounds from the front, that is, give him nowhere to run but out of bounds. The penalty comes when you push the runner from the side or the back.
- D) Disposition of the flags: Flags must be displayed fully and freely from the flag belt. Jerseys must be tucked inside the flag belt. It is the obligation of coaches on both teams to ensure that the players’ jerseys are not covering any part of the flags. A defensive coach may halt play before the snap to ask that an offensive player adjust his flags. Once the play begins, the disposition of the flags **cannot** be cause for a penalty or negating the play. If a flag falls off during the play, the ball carrier is considered down at the spot.
- E) When a defensive player grabs the flag, he should halt in place and raise the flag so that the referees may correctly mark the spot.

11) Formations:

- A) The eight-man offense must employ a center, two guards, and two ends on the line. Center may snap the ball either from the side or between the legs. The QB may line up under center or in a shotgun (shotgun works better to avoid rush). Guards must use a three point stance. Ends may use a three- or two-point stance. Splits between linemen must be no more than 1 yard. Ends and backs are eligible for passes. **Ends may not be split wide.**

Three backs are deployed in the offense in any fashion the coach wishes. If a flanker is used, he may be split wide or slotted behind the end. Shifts and motion are permitted, though only one player may be in motion when the ball is snapped.

- B) The defense **must** use a 4-3-1 formation. Examples:



Defensive guards must use a three- or four-point stance and must line head-up on the offensive guards. Defensive ends may stand if they wish and may line up either head-up or on the outside shoulder of the offensive end, but **no wider than that**. No nose guard is permitted over the center. Once the play begins, defensive linemen may slant or stunt as they wish.

The three linebackers must line up no closer than two yards from the line of scrimmage—they **may play deeper than that, but no closer**. The middle linebacker **must** line up opposite the center. The outside linebackers may adjust laterally anywhere within the outside shoulder of the widest-set player on offense, including any backs who go in motion or any split-out flankers, but they must be no closer than two yards from the line of scrimmage. The safety must line up no closer than four yards from the line of scrimmage and may adjust laterally in any direction before the snap—he **may play deeper than four yards, but no closer**. Once the play begins, safeties and linebackers may blitz and stunt as they wish.

12) Fumbles and misplayed snaps are ruled dead where the ball hits the ground. For safety, players should be discouraged from diving headlong for the fumble. Pass interceptions and balls snatched from the ball carrier's grasp are live and may be returned.

13) Bad snaps and fumbles behind the line-of-scrimmage (in the offensive backfield) result in a loss of down. However, the ball is returned to the original line of scrimmage for the next play. (In other words, teams will not lose yardage due to bad snaps or fumbles, but will lose the down.)

14) Scoring:

A) Teams run or pass for PAT from the 2-yard line. There are no field goals.

C) There is no overtime. Games may end in a tie.

15) Mercy Rules:

A) Teams trailing by 12 points or more do not have to kick off. For example, if after scoring a TD you still trail by 12 points or more, you again take possession of the ball at your **30** yard line. Or, if you are scheduled to “kick off” to start the second half but are trailing at that time by 12 points or more, you take the ball at your **30** just as you did to start the game.

B) A team trailing by 12 points or more is entitled, **once per possession**, to use eight downs to gain a first down. For example, if while trailing by 12 or more points your team runs a play on fourth down and fails to cross the 40 or 20 yard line ahead of you, you are given another four downs in which to try and do so. If you again attempt a play on fourth down and fail to convert, the other team will take possession at that spot; therefore, on your second series, you may choose to punt on 4th down. This rule may be invoked once per possession so long as you are 12 or more points behind. If the lead is narrowed to within 12 points, it no longer applies.