

# **EAST CENTRAL YOUTH FOOTBALL LEAGUE**

## **PLAYING RULES AND REGULATIONS**

**If the rule is not defined herein then the Minnesota High School League rules shall be applied.**

## **1. Organization and Philosophy**

- a. Coaches and parents shall stress sportsmanship, team spirit, and developing skills more than winning. In addition to learning the fundamentals, the child, parents and coaches should learn and remember how to lose graciously.
- b. Coaches and parents shall employ appropriate language when dealing with impressionable youth. Coaches or parents will not tolerate profanity.

## **2. Registration and Medical Release**

- a. Each participating community must have signed registrations including medical releases and any additional paperwork required as per each communities program. Any player with a cast or any medical concerns MUST have a copy of the release from a medical doctor or a chiropractor that must be given to the official prior to playing in any game. A copy of that release must be provided for every game.

## **3. Coaches**

- a. Coaches must complete all the requirements below to be certified as a head or assistant coach. All coaches:
  1. Shall have the approval of the respective Community representative.
  2. Shall pass a background check
  3. Shall have concussion training along with valid certificate.
- b. Coaches are selected on the basis of their ability to work with young people and not solely on the basis of their technical football knowledge. Coaches are required to abide by the spirit of these rules and the overall philosophy of the ECFL. The coaches must always remember that the program is for players and not for the coaches.
- c. Two adults must supervise each game, practice and meeting. One of said adults must be a ECFL certified coach.
- d. One (1) coach will be allowed on the field during play
  1. Coaches on the field must remain silent once the quarterback is under center and until the end of the play.
  2. If the coaches do not remain silent, they will receive one warning. For the second offense, a 5 yard penalty will be assessed. Coaches on the sidelines can continue to give commands at any time during the course of play.
  3. There must never be more than one (1) coach on the field at any given time except for equipment repairs, injuries, timeout or change of possession.
  4. EXCEPTION An on field coach may call a time out at any time.

## **4. Equipment**

- a. All players must use ECFL approved equipment. Players not equipped as outlined below will be sent off the playing field until the necessary changes have been made.
- b. All players must wear
  1. Approved helmets with chinstraps, football pants, shoulder pads, mouth guards and shoes. Shoes may not have removable metal cleats. Mouth guards must be attached to facemask.
  2. Failure to wear a mouth guard during a game will result in a 10-yard penalty. Athletic supporters are highly recommended but not required.

- c. Coaches are expected to see that each player is fitted properly in approved equipment in proper repair. Any player wearing faulty equipment will not be allowed to play.
- d. The only reason a jersey may come off during a game is for medical reasons or blood on the jersey. If the jersey needs to be replaced it must be reported to the referee and the opposing team.
- e. The official game ball for grades 4-6 is Junior size 9-12

## **5. Fields**

- a. Community Representatives shall be responsible to ensure that the game fields are in playable condition, properly marked and equipped for a ECFL game.
- b. The playing field shall be a high school regulated field with the exception of goal posts.

## **6. Games**

- a. Games begin with a coin toss involving team captains and the game officials. The team winning the coin toss has the choice of kicking off, receiving, or deferring their choice until the start of the second half.
- b. It will be the duty of the game officials with the help of the head and assistant coaches, to keep spectators 5 yards or more from the field of play. The game will stop until the area is clear. Violations may result in a ten (10) yard penalty.
- c. There will be a two (2) minute time out between quarters and a maximum of five (5) minutes at halftime.
- d. No noise makers for fans, shall be permitted (i.e. bells, whistles, etc.)

## **7. Practices**

- a. Team practices may start during the same week as Varsity beings according to the Minnesota State High School League, and teams may have no more than three (3) practices per week until the first game. Thereafter, teams may have maximum of two (2) practices and one (1) games per week. Practices should last no longer than 2 hours. Practices should not be conducted in bad weather or in darkness.
- b. No practice is allowed before the official practice starting date for High School football as designated by the Minnesota High School League.

## **8. Weight Restrictions**

- a. At weigh in the player may wear anything they want but at a minimum they must wear a pair of shorts and a T shirt. Weigh ins must occur the first week of practice.
- b. Each coach must maintain a roster of their players, including their jersey number and weight.
- c. Official weights are as follows
  - 1. 6<sup>th</sup> Grade: To be eligible to carry or receive the ball, a player cannot weigh more than 120 pounds while wearing shorts and a T shirt.
  - 2. 5<sup>th</sup> Grade: To be eligible to carry or receive the ball, a player cannot weigh more than 110 pounds while wearing shorts and a T shirt.
  - 3. 4<sup>th</sup> Grade: To be eligible to carry or receive the ball, a player cannot weigh more than 100 pounds while wearing shorts and a T shirt.
  - 4. Your entire team WILL be weighed at the beginning of the season. If a player is found to be over the weight limits, a red stripe must be placed on the players helmet immediately for that and all following games. The coach of the offending team will be suspended for 2 games, that game and the next game, regular season or playoffs do not matter.

1. It is the responsibility of the offending teams Community Rep to ensure that the coach abides by the 2 game suspension
5. A player weighing in excess of the above weights shall be deemed an ineligible player for the purpose of these rules. Ineligible players will be designated by a single red stripe on the helmet. No ineligible offensive player may advance the ball on any offensive play or as part of any kickoff, punt or fumble. An ineligible defensive player may advance an interception or a recovered fumble.
6. Players who are not eligible to carry or receive the ball will have their helmet marked with a red stripe for identification. Players with a red stripe cannot line up in any offensive position that is eligible to receive or carry the ball (including quarterback)
7. If the ball is turned over during a kickoff or punt, it can be advanced only by a player of legal ball carrying weight. If the ball is recovered by a player with a red stripe, the play will be blown dead at the spot of recovery.

Clarification: Red striper must possess the ball then it is dead. If a red striper touches and does not possess, it is a live ball on kick offs.

1. Turnovers from the offense to the defense can be advanced by any player.

## 9. Offense

- a. Teams may run any legal offense (i.e. 7 players on the line of scrimmage). A player is considered on the line of scrimmage as long as his helmet is even with or forward of the centers hips. Only players of ball carrying weight may line up in any position eligible to receive the ball. (see rule on ball carrying weights)
- b. The offensive line may not line up with splits larger than three (3) feet between linemen. (i.e. Center, guard, tackle)
- c. "Crack Back" blocks are illegal. Players split more than 5 yards from the offensive tackle may not block defensive players on the line of scrimmage. (Defensive Ends can go wider). Teams must use a balanced line. The ball must be snapped from the middle of the formation. The outside two (2) players are eligible receivers, and may line up anywhere between the tackle and the sideline as long as they remain on the line of scrimmage.
- d. All teams must huddle between each play. An official huddle is five (5) yards back from the line of scrimmage and between the hash marks. If hash marks are not on the field the huddle must be in the middle of the field per the official's judgment. It could range in time anywhere from one (1) second to no more than forty five (45) seconds. An official can hold up a play to allow for a defensive player to get on the field and get set up, (i.e. injuries, moving chains), only on a change of possession. The clock stops on a change of possession.

## 10. Defense

- a. 6th grade Teams may use a 4, 5 or 6 man front, with the nose guard directly head up on the center (no shading) and the inside defensive tackles must be head up (no shading) on the offensive tackles. The nose guard and tackles must be in the down position. The outside players on the line of scrimmage (Defensive Ends) may stand, or be in a down position. If a defensive huddle is not used it must be very clear well before the offensive huddle is broken which front you are using. The outside players on the line of scrimmage (Defensive Ends) may stand, or be in a down position. They may line up anywhere outside the tackle on their side, but on the line of scrimmage and not closer than three (3) feet to the defensive tackle. The other six (6) players must be in a standing position and must be lined up at least four (4) yards from the line of

scrimmage when the play begins. The defensive backs are not allowed to blitz making the tackle behind the line of scrimmage before ball carrier commits to line of scrimmage.

- b. 5<sup>th</sup> and 4th Grade Teams must use a six (6) man front with at least four (4) down lineman. 5<sup>th</sup> and 4th Grade Teams cannot use a nose guard/tackle. The four (4) down linemen must be head up (no shading) on the offensive lines guards and tackles. The outside players on the line of scrimmage (Defensive Ends) may stand, or be in a down position. They may line up anywhere outside the tackle on their side, but on the line of scrimmage and not closer than three (3) feet to the defensive tackle. The other five (5) players must be in a standing position and must be lined up at least four (4) yards from the line of scrimmage when the play begins.
- c. Goal line defense: When the offense has the ball on, or inside the defensive team's five (5) yard, the linebackers may move up into the gaps to within one (1) yard of the line of scrimmage. This may also be used for all 4th down situations.
- d. Blitzing, stunting: There shall be no blitzing or stunting.
  - i. Defensive linebackers and safeties may not cross the line of scrimmage until the ball carrier commits to cross the line or goes outside the offensive tackle position established at the time of the snap. Except as referenced in the penalties.
  - ii. Linebackers and safeties must be coached to read all of the plays and the movements of the offensive players.
  - iii. All players must line up heads up, no shading and square to the line. If a referee considers a player lined up crooked for a stunt he may make him square up. You can cross block but you must line up squared up.
  - iv. Blitzing/stunting penalty clarification. If the referee calls a team for blitzing or stunting, the penalty for the first offense is a 5 yard penalty. The penalty for the second and any subsequent calls is a 5 yard penalty and automatic first down for the offense.

## 11. Kicking Game

4th Grade No punts or kicks allowed ball placed 20 yards from spot on punts, on or inside the 20 yard line half the distance to the goal.

5th Grade No punts or kicks allowed ball placed 20 yards from spot on punts, on or inside the 20 yard line half the distance to the goal.

6th Grade Punts and Kicks allowed. 6<sup>th</sup> grade can kick off.

- a. The kicking team will line up on the 40 yard line. The kicking team cannot cross the 40 yard line until the ball has been kicked. The receiving team must have 5 players lined up on the 50 yard line. If the ball is kicked out of bounds the receiving team takes possession on their own 30 yard line. A free kick will occur after a safety. For a safety the ball will be placed at the kicking teams 40 yard line and can be punted or kicked off. The set up for a free kick is the same for a regular kickoff. All communities please ensure that the 40 yard lines are marked well for ball placement.
- b. No Onside kicks.
- c. Live ball after 10 yards on kick off if the ball does not go 10 yards dead on spot and receiving team takes over.
- d. When a touchback occurs the ball will be placed on the 20 yard line.
- e. The offensive team must notify the defensive team when they intend to punt no matter what down it is. (Declared punt) The punting team must have 7 players on the line of scrimmage in a legal offensive formation. The punter must line up at least 3-5 yards behind the line of scrimmage. The offensive and defensive teams cannot leave the line of scrimmage until the ball has been punted. The defensive team must have 5 players on the line of scrimmage. If the ball touches either

offense or defense on the line of scrimmage it is a dead ball and belongs to the receiving team and ball goes back to the original line of scrimmage.

## **12. Playing Time**

- a. The actual playing time must be split up as equal as possible for all players.
- b. ECFL does expect that each community and/or team will devise an equitable system to ensure as close as possible playing time. The League will investigate complaints that coaches are not abiding by the spirit and intent of this rule. The League absolutely reserves the right to forfeit games and ban coaches, teams and communities who are not abiding by the spirit and intent of this rule.

## **13. Scoring and Timing**

- a. A touchdown is worth (6) points. Extra points are worth (2) points if scored on a passing play, or (1) point if scored on a running play. Safeties are worth (2) points.
- b. Games will consist of four (12) minute quarters
- c. A 45 second play clock will be in effect once the ball is placed by the referee. Because there is no visual clock, the referee will inform the offense once 30 seconds have elapsed. Exceeding the 45 second limit will result in a 5 yard penalty.
- d. Game will have running time, with the exception of the following:
  - i. Penalties
  - ii. Injuries
  - iii. Touchdowns (through the PAT until the following kickoff)
  - iv. Change of possession (until next offensive play begins)
- e. Time is stopped during the last 2 minutes of each half for the following:
  - i. Incomplete pass
  - ii. Out of Bounds
  - iii. Moving of yard and down markers
  - iv. There will be 2 timeouts per half. Timeouts will last 1 minute from the time the huddle starts. Timeouts will not be carried over from the first half to the second half.
- f. Tie Games will end in a tie.
- g. 24 Point Rule
  - i. When a team is down by 24 points or more, the clock runs nonstop. If the score reverts to less than 24 point difference, the clock goes back to normal stoppages. There will be no passing allowed when the 24 point rule is in effect by the team that is ahead. If the winning team does pass, the first offense will be an incomplete pass, loss of down and a 15 yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. The second offense will be the same plus ejection of the coach from this game and the coach will not be allowed at the next game. There will be no timeouts allowed to be taken by a team that is 24 points or more ahead.

## **14. Rules and Penalties**

- a. The Minnesota State High School rules are used to govern all play. Our rules are either clarifications or changes made specifically for our league.
- b. Any unsportsmanlike conduct by coaches, players, parents or spectators will result in an automatic 15 yard penalty. It is the responsibility of the head coach to control his player, parents and spectators. Any time a player, parent, spectator or a coach has been ejected from the game, the game will not continue until that person has left the premises. If they do not leave within 5 minutes of being ejected the team that they represent will be forfeited.

- c. No more than 2 coaches will be allowed on the field during timeouts to discuss strategy.
- d. Only the Head coach or the coach on the field at the time, can talk to the referees during the game.
- e. Blitzing/stunting penalty clarification. If the referee calls a team for blitzing or stunting, the penalty for the first offense is a 5 yard penalty and automatic first down for the offense. After the first offense it is up to the refs discretion as to whether or not they will require all the defensive backs to put beanies on.
- f. Horse Collar tackle: A horse collar tackle will be subject to a 10 yard penalty

## 15. Inclement Weather

- a. All coaches and players must be present at the field by game time. If a team has less than (11) players at game time, it could result in a forfeit if the game could have been played. A team will be allowed 10 minutes to get all of their players to the field. Then it is a forfeit.
- b. The coach in the host area where a game is scheduled to be played shall determine whether a game should be cancelled or postponed because of weather or field conditions before the start of the game. Once the game has begun the game officials will have the authority to cancel or delay the game in progress.

## 16. Important Notes

- a. **Coaches Responsibilities:** It is the responsibility of each coach to understand and strictly follow the league's rules and guidelines. Rules are specific and are not subject to interpretation. Coaches should discuss rules or other concerns with each other before or after games in a professional manner away from the players. Remember the players are unnecessarily distracted by such discussions. The referees are instructed to officiate the games and are not expected to enforce league rules and guidelines. Coaches should confirm game timing and scoring with the referees prior to each game.
- b. **Rules disputes during the game:** Rules disputes with referees or opposing coaches during the game will not be tolerated. The referees will be directed by the league to strictly enforce penalties relating to the following: Profanity, abusive language, questioning or arguing calls by coaches, players, spectators or parents.  
First Offense: 15 Yard unsportsmanlike penalty and loss of down  
Second Offense: 15 yard unsportsmanlike penalty, loss of down and ejection. (game will be stopped until the offender has left the property).  
**If the offender does not leave within a reasonable amount of time (10 minutes) the team that the offender represents will forfeit the game.**
- c. **Rules Violations:** Rule violations should be reported in writing within 48 hours to the League Directors. Coaches determined to have violated any ECFL rules and philosophies will be dismissed by ECFL and to be enforced by the individual community.
- d. These rules have been developed to ensure
  - i. Fairness to all participants.
  - ii. The best learning environment for children.
  - iii. An experience for children and parents, which promotes football as a positive reflection of your community.
- e. Any player in a grade higher than the 6th when the season begins is not eligible to play
- f. Each team must have a minimum of eleven (11) players or the game will be forfeited.

## 17. Referees

- a. Each community shall provide a minimum of two (2), preferably three (3) referees; one of which shall be an adult – the other two can be senior high students.