



## Official Game On Rules: OUTDOOR FLAG FOOTBALL

### THE BRIEF OVERVIEW

Flag football is a modified version of tackle football where participants grab each other's flags instead of making a physical tackle. Plays and strategies follow conventional tackle football without the physical contact, thereby reducing the risk of injury.

### THE TEAM

A Flag Football team is made up of five (5) players of any gender. Game On Co-ed Flag Football teams are required to have a minimum of two (2) female players and a minimum of two (2) male players on the field at all times. Teams may play with a minimum of four (4) players so long as the above requirements are met.

Teams are required to have a minimum of 2 males and 2 females on the field at all times. That being said, there will be times (due to injuries, scheduling conflicts, etc) where this minimum number may not be met. Teams may play with only 1 male or 1 female but must play a player down for the duration of the game. If both teams, however, decide before the game that each is allowed to play with only 1 male player or 1 female player (based on their roster turnout) then teams may still play each other with the full 5 players on the field, with the make-up being 4 males and 1 female, or 1 male and 4 females.

If a default does occur then only one (1) touchdown, with no PAT (Point After Touchdown), is awarded to the captain of the non-defaulting team. The non-defaulting team will win the game 6-0.

### FIELD

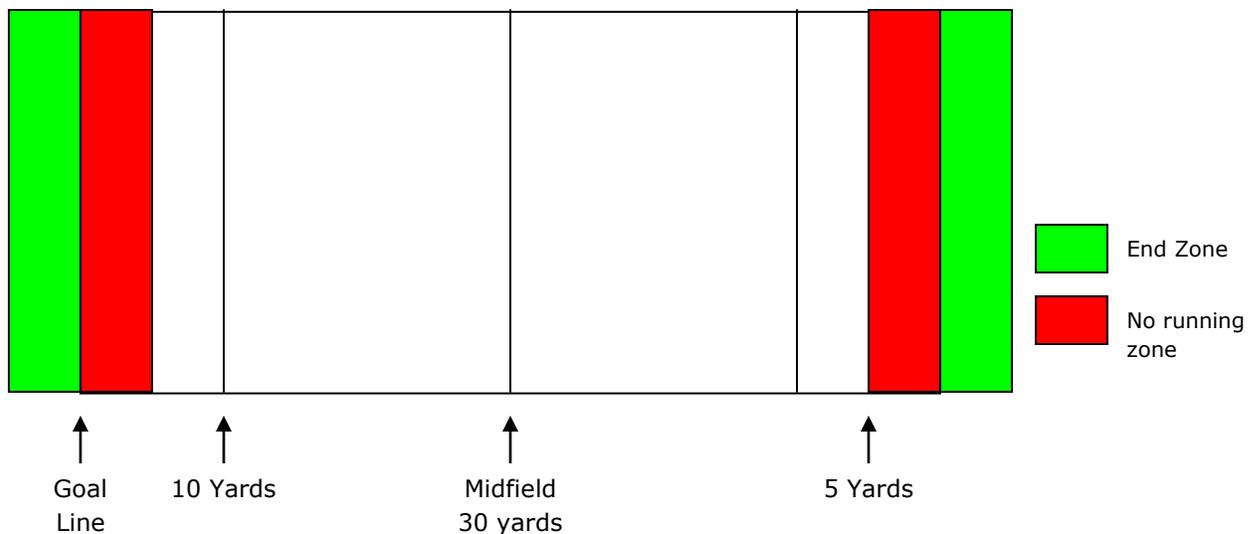
Flag Football can be played on any grass field with boundaries easily marked with rubber pylons.

Field Length is typically 60 yards.

Field Width is typically 30 yards.

End Zones are typically 5 yards deep.

No running zones are 5 yards from the end zone.



## **THE EQUIPMENT**

The only equipment required for flag football is a standard adult-sized football, pinnies, flags, and flag belts. These will be provided by the league.

Athletic/comfortable clothes and shoes are required. Cleats are allowed, as long as they are not metal.

A protective mouthpiece is highly recommended. Players may wear other protective equipment (i.e. a protective cup), provided it does not interfere with their performance or does not offer them a competitive advantage (i.e. helmet, pads).

## **THE GAME**

### **Objective:**

To pass and/or run the football down the field in an attempt to cross your opponent's goal line and score a touchdown. The overall objective is to outscore your opponent.

### **Duration of the Game:**

Games are 40 minutes in length. There will be two 20 minutes halves with a 2-minute halftime break. The convener will announce when there are 2 minutes left in the half. The clock continually runs with no stoppage in clock time, unless there is an injury or some other unforeseen circumstance.

Regular season games can end in a tie. During playoffs, if a game is tied during regulation time then each team will have the chance to score in series of four downs from the opponent's 20 yard line. If the score is still tied after each team has had a try (including extra point attempts), then the winner will be determined via a tie-breaker. The tie-breaker will first be determined on head-to-head matchups with their opponent, with the team winning the most being declared the winner. If the season series is tied, then the tie-breaker will be based on overall point differential throughout the entire regular season. There is a 1-minute break between the end of regulation and the start of overtime. The winner of a coin toss will determine whether they elect to receive or kick the ball.

While player substitutions are permitted throughout the year, only those substitutes who have played in three or more nights (i.e. a minimum of 6 games) in the regular season are permitted to play in the playoffs. This is to prevent teams from bringing "ringers" in to play during the playoffs.

### **Beginning the Game:**

Captains do a coin toss at the beginning of the game. The winner elects to kick or receive the ball. The loser will choose the side of end zone to defend for that half. At the start of the second half, the team that received the ball in the first half will now kick the ball, and vice versa.

### **The Kick-off:**

Kicks must be punted from the centre of the field. All kicks must be taken at your team's own 10-yard line. All defensive players must remain behind the kicker until the kick has occurred. All offensive players must start the kick-off on their side of midfield. Once the ball has been kicked, offensive players may cross midfield.

The person holding the football, at the time of asking if the other team is ready, **must** be the player to kick the ball. This will prevent a player, who cannot kick the ball well, to draw in the receiving team only to then pass the ball off to a teammate who can kick the ball beyond the receiving team's drawn in players. If this does occur, a 5-yard penalty will be imposed and a re-kick to occur. The same holds true for punts.

If a kicked ball lands out of bounds, the ball will be placed where the ball exited the playing field and the offense will take over at that spot. If a ball is kicked past the end zone then it is an automatic touchback. A touchback will be played at the 10-yard line.

If a ball is dropped on a kick-off, it is considered a fumble and is a dead ball. The receiving team receives possession at the spot of the fumble. If the ball bounces without coming in contact with anyone then a receiving player may pick-up the ball and run with it.

If the kicking team's player arrives at the ball before a receiving player does, the kicking team's players are not permitted to come within 3 yards of the ball until after it is touched by a receiving team.

### **Punting:**

When punting, if the ball is kicked past the end zone then it is an automatic touchback. A touchback will be played at the 10-yard line. The punting team must have all of their players, except the punter, on the line of scrimmage. No punting team players may release off the line of scrimmage until the ball has been punted. Defensive players may attempt to block a punt by jumping straight up in the air but may not penetrate/cross the line of scrimmage.

**PENALTY FOR PENETRATING LINE OF SCRIMMAGE: 5 YARDS and re-kick the punt, unless 5 yards gives the kicking team a first down at midfield.**

If a punted ball touches a player from either team and then hits the ground, the play is dead and the receiving team takes possession where the ball landed. Likewise, if a receiving player fumbles the ball then the play is also dead and the receiving team takes over where the ball landed.

**For both kick-offs and punts, a receiving team may call a fair catch by waving their arms in the air and yelling "fair catch". The play is dead and the offensive team takes possession at that spot. All kicking team players must give the receiving team's catcher 3 yards (9 feet) to make the catch before attempting to pull their flag. If the receiving team fumbles the kick, whether called a "fair catch" or not, the play is dead immediately and the receiving team takes possession at the spot of the fumble.**

### **Downs:**

Once an offensive team takes possession of the ball, that team will have four (4) downs to get to midfield. If the offensive team takes possession of the ball on their opponent's side of midfield, that team will have four (4) downs to convert a touchdown. The offensive team may punt the ball on their fourth down but must advise the defensive team that they are doing so. Punt fakes are not permitted. They may also run or pass the ball but failing to achieve a first down on your fourth down try will force the ball to be turned over at either the line of scrimmage (if the play was incomplete) or where the receiver/runner was downed.

### **The Snap:**

All plays will begin with a snap (except for kickoffs) with the football touching the beanbag at the line of scrimmage and in the middle of the field. If the ball is fumbled on a snap then it is a dead ball and it is a loss of down. The team in possession of the ball will have 30 seconds to complete the snap and put the ball in play. As this is not timed we ask that players respect and abide by this rule in order to get more plays in.

After the snap, the quarterback has 7 "Mississippis" or "Steamboats" to pass the ball if not being blitzed. Failing to release the ball in the allotted time will result in a "delay of game" penalty and a loss of down at the line of scrimmage.

## **PENALTY FOR DELAY OF GAME: LOSS OF DOWN AT LINE OF SCRIMMAGE**

**\*The quarterback cannot run the ball unless he has released the ball to another player and it has been returned to him, or when a "blitzer" crosses the line of scrimmage.**

### **Line of scrimmage:**

The offensive team must have at least one player (the snapper or centre) at the line of scrimmage. Players are allowed to be in motion but must set for at least one (1) second before the ball is snapped. Once the snapper, or centre, touches the ball, and before the ball is snapped, all offensive players must be inbounds and must be behind their line of scrimmage.

All defensive players must stay behind the line of scrimmage until:

1. the ball has been handed off
2. a fake hand-off has occurred
3. the quarterback has passed the ball.

The defensive player who is guarding the quarterback must call the "Mississippi" or "Steamboats" out loud.

**Blitzing** – if the defensive side decides to blitz, the "blitzer" must start at least 8 yards (24 feet) behind the line of scrimmage until the ball is snapped. At this time, the "blitzer" must attempt to sack the quarterback. There are no fake blitzes so if you call a blitz then it must be carrier through. If you are a blitzer you are not permitted to stop at the line of scrimmage.

All "blitzers" must notify all players that they are "blitzers" and must keep their arms raised up until the snap of the ball. Failure to start 8 (24 feet) yards back from the line of scrimmage, failure to announce that you are a "blitzer", and failure to raise your arm until the snap of the ball will penalize your team 5 yards (15 feet) from the line of scrimmage. If there is a "blitzer", then "Mississippi" or "Steamboats" are not in effect and the quarterback may run with the ball once the blitzer crosses the line of scrimmage or take as long as they want to before throwing the ball. There is no blitzing allowed when a down is played anywhere between the goal line and the 5-yard line.

**Blitzing is not permitted on any PAT (Point After Touchdown) attempts.**

### **Handing the ball:**

An offense may use multiple hand-offs behind their line of scrimmage. No player may hand-off the ball to a teammate except to an offensive player who is behind the line of scrimmage. No snapper may receive a forward hand-off. Backward laterals are permitted down the field but if the ball touches the ground on a lateral, or is fumbled, the play is dead and the next down takes place where the ball touched the ground.

### **Running:**

Any offensive player may be the running back. A team may have multiple running backs on any given play. A running back must line up beside the quarterback or behind the quarterback.

When any player is running with the ball, spinning, high-stepping, and jumping are permitted. However, diving is not permitted. A runner may pass the ball backwards but never forward.

**PENALTY FOR FORWARD PASS: 5 YARDS AT LINE OF SCRIMMAGE, REPLAY DOWN.**

Defensive players are not permitted to hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of the runner when attempting to remove the flag belt. As well, they may not step in front of a ball carrier.

**PENALTY FOR ILLEGAL CONTACT: 5 YARDS AT LINE OF SCRIMMAGE, REPLAY DOWN.**

Offensive players may not run with their head and shoulders down.

**PENALTY: 5 YARDS AT LINE OF SCRIMMAGE, LOSS OF DOWN.**

**Passing:**

Any player on the team may play the quarterback position and may pass the ball. A pass is an intentional act to throw the ball in any direction. A complete pass is a pass that is caught by an offensive player inbounds, and with control. If a player jumps into the air to catch a ball then at least one foot must be inbounds, when making contact with the ground, in order to be considered complete. An incomplete pass occurs when the ball touches the ground first, or when the ball touches the ground because a player did not firmly control the ball. A pass is also incomplete when a player leaves their feet in an attempt to make a catch and land out of bounds first. When a forward or backward pass is incomplete, the ball belongs to the passing team at the previous line of scrimmage, unless it was fourth down in which case the ball is turned over to the other team.

A forward pass is considered legal when the ball is thrown from behind the line of scrimmage. Only one forward pass per down is permitted.

A forward pass is considered illegal when:

1. an offensive player is beyond the line of scrimmage when they throw the ball
2. a throw is made by a runner that has gone beyond the line of scrimmage
3. it is the second forward pass by the offense on the same down
4. a throw is made after team possession has changed during a down (i.e. from an interception)

**Receiving:**

Eligible players from either team have equal rights to the ball. Players from either team may jump or dive in an attempt to make a catch. If a player jumps to make a catch by the boundary lines, and one foot lands inbounds before their second foot touches out of bounds, then it is a legal catch. However, the play is dead at that point. If the first foot to touch the ground lands out of bounds, then the ruling is an incomplete catch and the ball returns to the previous line of scrimmage.

Pass interference occurs when any contact interferes with the attempt to catch a pass (offensive or defensive player) unless it occurs when two or more eligible receivers make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass. It is also considered pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged or touched prior to touching the ball on a pass thrown beyond the offense's line of scrimmage. Defensive players may not put their hands in the face of a receiver to block their view.

**PENALTY FOR OFFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE: 15 YARDS FROM LINE OF SCRIMMAGE, LOSS OF DOWN.**

**PENALTY FOR DEFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE: AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWN AT THE SPOT OF FOUL.**

Incidental contact will occur throughout the game and this should not be considered pass interference.

If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams, the ball is dead at that spot and belongs to the team that snapped the ball.

Players are considered down when any part of their body, other than their hands and feet, touches the ground. The play is dead at that point and flag removal is not required.

**Interceptions:** When an interception is made the defensive team becomes the offensive team and the offensive team becomes the defensive team. Both sides must follow the rules above. If an interception is made in the end zone during a PAT attempt then the play is dead.

**Flags:**

All players must place one flag on either side of their body. Flags will be provided at the beginning of each game. Flags must be on top of your clothing and must not be hidden by any article of clothing. Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be deflagged. It is illegal for a defensive player to intentionally pull a flag from an offensive player who is not in possession of the ball. Should a player lose their flag belt legally (it falls off on its own) or illegally (an opponent pulls it off) during a down, and should that player gain possession of a live ball, that player will be considered down when a legal tag (one hand touched by the defense between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm) is made.

Offensive players are not permitted to guard their flag. Flag guarding includes, but is not limited to:

- Swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- Lowering the shoulders in such a manner that guards the flag.

The play is dead where any flag guarding has taken place. The next down is played at the spot of the foul.

**Please check your flags after each play to ensure that they are present.**

**Scoring:**

*Touchdown:* 6 points – A touchdown will be recorded each time a player runs into the end zone or catches the ball in the end zone. The entire body of the offensive player must cross the line to be considered a touchdown. The football cannot simply break the goal line plain.

*Extra Point:* 1 point (taken from the 5-yard line)

*Extra Point:* 2 points (taken from the 10-yard line)

*Safety:* 2 points

For extra points, the offensive team must declare whether they are going for 1 or 2 extra points before play begins.

Game Win	2 points
Game Tie	1 point
Game Loss	0 points

**Playoffs:**

Only those players who are registered on the team, or those substitutes that have played a minimum of 6 games, are eligible for playoffs. The top ranked team will be the team with the most points based on the above chart. If two teams are tied with the same points, the tie breaker first goes to head-to-head match-up, then to winning percentage, then to overall point differential.

**The NO-NOs of Flag Football:**

1. **STIFF ARMING** – for both runners and receivers, stiff arming is not allowed. This is a serious personal foul and could warrant an ejection.
2. **BLOCKING** – No player may intentionally obstruct another player to prevent them from grabbing a flag. Offensive players may stand still in one area, provided that they do so before a ball carrier receives the ball. Offensive players may also run behind the runner for lateral passing plays.

3. **PICKS** – All players/teams must avoid all pick plays. Typically pick plays are as a result of players running crossing patterns. This can result in serious injury, especially at the speeds the game is played at, so please avoid altogether. Any pick plays will result in an immediate stoppage in play. The play will be re-played from the original line of scrimmage.
4. **PERSONAL FOULS:** Any act of unnecessary roughness will not be tolerated. While we understand that accidents do happen, should any of the following personal fouls occur that player may be asked to leave the game or to not return to the league. Players shall not :
  - a. Punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession.
  - b. Trip an opponent.
  - c. Contact an opponent who is on the ground.
  - d. Throw the runner to the ground.
  - e. Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead.
  - f. Make any contact with an opponent that is deemed unnecessary.
  - g. Deliberately run into a defensive player.
  - h. Clip an opponent.
  - i. Tackle the runner - (warrants an ejection).
5. **INITIATING CONTACT:**
  - a. No player shall contact another player or an official.
  - b. No player may step, jump, or stand on another player.
  - c. No player may hold another player.
  - d. All players have the right to place (given to a still standing player) and opponents have to avoid contact.
  - e. The runner is in charge to avoid contact with opponent players.
  - f. All blitzers have the right of way to the quarterback, provided they raised their arm above their head prior to the snap and announced themselves as a "blitzer".
  - g. All offensive players have the right of way (given to a moving player and opponents have to avoid contact) as long as the ball has been thrown or a runner has crossed the line of scrimmage.

#### **Ending the first half and the game:**

After the 20 minutes of each half is over, there will be four (4) remaining plays that are to be played out. After these four (4) plays are made then either it is half-time or the game is over. The following are not considered a play and will not go against the 4 last plays:

1. Punt and, subsequently, a punt return
2. Kick-off and, subsequently, a kick-off return
3. PAT attempt

#### **Penalties:**

All penalties are a penalty of 5 yards (except pass interference, which is 15 yards for offensive pass interference or at the spot of the foul on a defensive pass interference, and delay of game, which is simply a loss of down).

All penalties are assessed from the line of scrimmage, except for defensive pass interference.

All penalties can be declined by the opposing team.

No penalty can exceed half of the distance to the opposing team's goal line, except for defensive pass interference. Defensive pass interference in the end zone will place the ball at the 1-yard line.

#### **Offensive Penalties:**

- **Delay of Game:** When the offensive team takes longer than 30 seconds for a play to happen (from huddle to snap).
- **Flag Guarding:** An attempt made by a runner to avoid a flag pull by using any part of the body or ball.

- **Illegal Forward Pass:** More than one forward pass in the same down, or a pass made beyond the line of scrimmage.
- **Illegal Pass:** Throwing the ball out of bounds intentionally to avoid being downed.
- **Offensive Holding:** Any offensive player preventing a defensive player from making a play by holding a part of their body or their clothing.
- **Offensive Pass Interference:** Obstructing a defensive player from making a catch on a ball.
- **Substitution Penalty:** Too many players (6 or more) on the field.

#### **Defensive Penalties:**

- **Illegal Contact:** Holding, blocking, etc.
- **Illegal Flag Pull:** Pulling the flag before the receiver has the ball.
- **Illegal Blitzing:** Starting the rush before 7 yards from the line of scrimmage, not announcing your intent to blitz or not raising your arm before the snap.
- **Offside:** Crossing the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
- **Defensive Pass Interference:** Obstructing an offensive player from making a catch on a ball.
- **Substitution Penalty:** Too many players (6 or more) on the field.

#### **Mercy Rule:**

There is no Mercy Rule in effect.

#### **Injuries/Substitutions:**

Substitutions may occur only after a touchdown, or change of possession, has occurred.

**BLOOD RULE: If any player is bleeding then they must immediately remove themselves from play until the bleeding has stopped or has been bandaged. A substitute player from the sidelines may come in to take place of this player.**

#### **Defaults/Spares:**

If a team cannot field their squad (minimum four players) within 10 minutes of the start time, they will default the game. Spares are allowed. However, any spare must sign a waiver before play begins.

#### **Other:**

If a pregnant player wishes to participate as a member player, they are required to provide a doctor's note that specifically states what she can and cannot do and until what time in her pregnancy.

#### **Lightning Policy:**

We ask that everyone show up to the game even if you think it may rain or thunder. Weather can change in an instant. We play rain or shine so be prepared to play in some poor weather conditions at times.

If there is thunder and lightning before the game, wait it out for up to 20 minutes. If it still hasn't cleared up by then the game will be cancelled and each team will receive a point for a tie.

If you are playing and thunder and lightning occurs, stop the game and wait up to 20 minutes to see if it clears. If the storm has not passed, we will cancel the game.

If you have not reached half time and the game is cancelled the score will be listed as a tie. If you have reached half time and then the game gets cancelled, whichever team is winning at that point will be the declared the winner. (However, if both team captains agree that the game should be listed as a tie if the match gets cancelled at any point during the game, that's what will be recorded)

If the field conditions are bad, it will be up to the team captains to decide whether or not they want to play. If it is agreed that the fields are in no shape to play and the game is cancelled, the score will be recorded as a tie.

## DEFINITIONS

**Centre:** snaps the ball to the quarterback and then becomes an offensive player ready to receive a pass and run the ball.

**Dead ball:** the ball becomes dead when:

- a. the ball carrier's flag becomes detached
- b. when any part of the ball carrier's body other than the hands and feet touch the ground
- c. an incomplete pass
- d. a fumble
- e. when the ball goes out of bounds

**End zone:** the area between the goal line and the end line where touchdowns occur.

**Fumble:** the ball carrier drops the ball while in their possession. Fumbles become dead balls and cannot be advanced by the recovering team.

**Handoff:** an exchange of the football from the quarterback to a teammate.

**Interception:** when the defense catches a ball that was meant to be caught by the offensive team.

**Line of Scrimmage:** imaginary line drawn from the forward tip of the football to the sideline.

**Quarterback:** the quarterback calls the offensive plays and receives the snap from the centre.

**Running Back:** stands behind or to the side of the quarterback to receive handoffs. They then become an offensive player ready to receive a pass and run the ball.

**Safety:** removing the flag of the other team, who has possession of the ball, behind their own goal line.

**Snap:** a pass of the ball between the centre's legs to the quarterback to begin an offensive play.

**Touchdown:** an offensive player having possession of the football in the opponent's end zone.

**Wide Receiver:** flag football position that receives passes to drive the ball down the field.

## RULE ENFORCEMENT

During league games, rules will be enforced primarily by the "honour system". Players will be expected to rule whether or not they were in violation of any rule and it is the player's responsibility to help Game On enforce and uphold the rules of flag football when playing. All contests will be supervised by a convener. THE CONVENER'S DECISION IS FINAL – NO EXCEPTIONS. They have the right to stop a game and discuss the incident before proceeding. In respect for the spirit of the game, and for your fellow players, there is absolutely no protesting.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Understand, appreciate and abide by the rules of the game.
2. Respect the integrity and judgment of game officials or conveners.
3. Respect your opponent and congratulate them in a courteous manner following each game whether in victory or defeat.
4. Be responsible for your actions and maintain self-control.
5. Do not taunt or bait opponents and refrain from using foul or abusive language.
6. Fighting will not be tolerated by Game On. A player, and possibly the team, will be expelled from the league, without refund, for fighting or for gestures made towards an opponent to fight. This includes verbal threats. It is a player's, and their team's, responsibility to maintain composure during the game and to ensure its safety and fun. If a player is having a concern over the play of another, please have it addressed through your captain with the convener, or game official, present. Alternatively, email us the details at [info@gameonguelph.ca](mailto:info@gameonguelph.ca) and we will investigate the situation.
7. Unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated. This includes:
  - a. foul language, racial slurs and verbal abuse
  - b. unnecessary roughness and physical abuse
  - c. slamming down or throwing balls in anger
  - d. arguing with officials, staff, participants, or fans

- e. abuse of the honour system
- 8. Physical, sexual or mental abuse is not acceptable. If you encounter such a situation, and would like to report it, please do so via the game official, via telephone or via e-mail. Any reports will be kept confidential. Should any of this be reported to Game On Sports & Entertainment, we will issue a verbal warning to the team. Should a second such report occur, that player and/or team will be asked to leave the league without a refund. Game On Sports & Entertainment reserves the right to involve law enforcement officials at its discretion and reserves the right to eject any player and/or team, without warning or refund, for such behaviour.
- 9. Alcohol and/or smoking are prohibited at any game and any such offenders will be asked to leave the league immediately, without a refund.