

Rules of Play

American Flag Rugby

2017 Edition

WITH UPDATED EAGLES LAWS

Version 8.6

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The American Flag Rugby Rules of Play are comprised of all the elements contained herein. Revisions for playing year 2015.

1. Glossary of Terms and AFR Key Phrases

Those familiar with the adult game of rugby will be familiar with much of the terminology used in the American Flag Rugby Rules of Play. However, in order to effectively introduce the game, American Flag Rugby utilizes both standard and non-standard rugby terms and phrases. In particular the “Key Phrases” have been developed to facilitate quick understanding and retention of many of the game’s most important concept and practices.

Glossary of Terms:

American Flag Rugby: A fun and friendly youth version of the worlds greatest team sport.

Attackers: The team in possession of the ball.

Barging: A penalized offence for dangerously running into an opposition player.

Conversion: The 2 point kick made after a 5 point Try is scored. Equivalent to football “extra point”.

Deadball line: Line indicating the end of the field at the rear of the In-Goal (end zone) area.

Defenders: The team not in possession of the ball.

Drop Kick: A kick where the ball is dropped to the ground, before or simultaneously to, being kicked.

Goal line: The line a ball carrier must cross before touching the ball down for a try.

In-Goal: The Area between the Goal line and the Dead Ball line. Equivalent to football “End Zone”.

Knock-on: Passing or propelling the ball forward with the hands. A minor infraction of the rules. **Line-out:** A procedure for restarting after the ball or ball carrier has gone out of bounds (“in to touch”).

Rugby: A large town (pop. 62K) in central England, where the game was first established in 1823.

Scoring a Try: The act of touching the ball down in your opponent’s goal area. Worth 5 points.

Scrum: A procedure for restarting the game after a minor infraction of the rules, usually a Knock-On.

Tackle: The act of removing a ball carrier’s flag. See “Tackle Transaction” below.

Touch line: Equivalent to the US Football sideline. Stepping on the line is out of bounds.

The 22: For American Flag Rugby, an imaginary line half way between “the 50” and the goal line.

The 50: A line on the field that is half way between the goal lines. The middle of the field.

Spinning: Rotating the body more than 90 degrees in order to avoid a tackle. Not permitted in AFR

2. American Flag Rugby Key Phrases:

These phrases define important conceptual areas of the American Flag game and experience. Whether you have vast experience with rugby or are new to the game, reviewing and understanding these Key Phrases will greatly assist your understanding of the areas that are unique to American Flag Rugby.

Co-ed-Non Contact,: In two hand touch versions of youth rugby, and no matter what the age group, someone will always get too aggressive. That someone is usually a boy. Without the Non-Contact, you won’t have the Co-ed. And without the Co-ed, you won’t have the broad community and family level support programs need to be built on.

Hookers, One Foot Only: This refers to the scrum, in which the hookers may contest for the ball, however, it may only be the hooker and with one foot only. While this may seem to contradict the non-contact requirements of the game, it generally does not. When Hooker and Loose Head Prop have been properly trained, the ball will rarely reach the opposing Hooker. Additionally, if the Full Bind is properly enforced by the referee, the contesting remains safe. No pushing is allowed in AFR scrums.

Full Bind: This refers to the shoulders of all six players in a scrum. The shoulders should all be touching with no

backs of the heads visible. When a scrum starts with a correct full bind, the Hookers are actually forced to hook, rather than begin to stand and start kicking for the ball. Without the Full Bind, standing, stomping and shin kicking is inevitable (players are allowed to wear soccer type shin guards).

Downward Motion: If a player is running with the ball and is within 1 meter of the goal line, and has clearly initiated the **downward motion** with the ball toward the line (ball in motion and at or below waist level), a try will be awarded even if the flag was removed before crossing the line or touching down. The Referee will indicate “**Downward motion** had, Try Awarded”, indicating that a score has been made. This method helps prevent the contact that becomes inevitable with repeated goal line restarts.

Going to Ground: If a player hits the **ground**, they are **out** of play. This is defined as one knee or more of the body touching the ground and includes both attacking and defending players. If a player goes to ground while carrying or gathering the ball, they are considered tackled even though they still have both flags attached. If they remain in possession of the ball, they must quickly make a pass, either while still on the ground, or choose to get up on their feet and then immediately pass the ball within 2-3 seconds to their **most available teammate**. Defenders on the ground may not attempt to grab a ball carrier’s flag.

Toe n’ Throw: Toe n’ Throw, not Toe n’ Go. This is a restart that requires the player to put the ball on the ground and utilize the traditional “through the mark” procedure. It teaches the concept of the mark and toeing through it. It allows the referee to set the mark, keep a foot on the ball and make sure the opposition is set. The required throw means the ball will make its way through more hands, which means more players involved. Eagle level may take these from a standing position, where proper ball release is taught.

Contestable Line Outs: In order to reasonably maintain the non-contact environment, while at the same time keeping the Hawk and Eagle levels interesting, we needed to devise a new kind of line outs. The solution was to place the jumpers 3m from touch and space the lines 2m apart. The defenders are not allowed to jump into the tunnel. The throw is only contested if the throwing team should make a considerable error, either in the throw or in handling it thereafter. The method results in about 85%-90% going to the throwing team, however that other 10% keeps it interesting.

Run at Spaces, not Faces: This should be self-explanatory. A ball carrier running aggressively into a defender (or visa versa) is called barging. This is dangerous play and will be quickly penalized.

Standing Free Pass: For the Owl level, play restarts when the ball is passed to a teammate.

The Tackle Transaction: A tackle is made when a flag is removed. The tackler, as well as the referee, must immediately call out “Tag” or “Flag” or “Tackle” etc. The ball carrier has 2 seconds in which to play the ball according to the appropriate division rules. Once played, both tackler and tackled player are out of the game until the flag is returned. The flag must be handed back to its owner, and the owner must accept the handed flag immediately. The Tackler may re-enter play as soon as the handoff is made. The tackled player may re-enter play as soon as the flag has been re-attached.

Intention to Turn Over: Kick-offs and re-starts must be made with the intention of turning the ball over to the receiving team, and in the opinion of the referee, not in a way where regaining possession is the intent. This promotes safety and sportsmanship. Kick offs may be contested as long as the receiving team has had a fair and adequate opportunity to gather and play the ball, but failed to take advantage of the opportunity. This simple rule has worked extremely well and generally prevents constant kicking to the weakest links while it promotes kicking deep for territory.

Disputes over conventions of the game not addressed In these Rules

Any questions and controversies that arise over the directives presented in these Rules of Play, should be resolved by applying the corresponding or most appropriate Law of the adult Sevens game. In a case where that is not workable, participants are required to use their best judgment, and come to agreements that will insure the highest levels of safety, enjoyment and sportsmanship for all. Participants are then requested to share their issues and resolutions with the American Flag Rugby Rules Committee, so that such learning’s can be addressed in future versions of the Rules of Play.

3. The Age Appropriate Divisions: An Overview

*Because most American Flag Rugby programs are most often played over the summer months, and because children prefer to play with their grade level friends, the divisions are defined in terms of the school grade that children will be next entering, rather than by a specific age level. For programs that may choose to play at another time of the year, Administrators should use their best judgment as to what set of rules to play (based on the overall skill and development of the players). However, it is still recommended that children remain grouped by school grade rather than actual age. Key Phrases are in **Bold**.*

A Note on Fields and Goal Posts: *The field dimensions listed herein are sizes that have worked well during AFR's development; however it is understood that each location is different and reasonable variations will occur. Goal posts are usually improvised. Many programs use Soccer or two Lacrosse goals with uprights taped on for the day, and multiple fields can even share a post between them. The important factor is that some sort of goal be improvised so that players can attempt conversion kicks, an exciting and important part of the game experience.*

American Flag Rugby Technical Guidance

Fields:

It is recognized and expected that individual programs will have access to widely varying resources when it comes to field space and goal post arrangements. It is clear that larger, wider fields are better, as they allow greater running spaces and present more opportunity for skill development. The following are recommended field sizes (measured in feet):

Owls: 84 x 60 w/ 6 ft in goals (Effective field: 74 x 60)

Falcons: 140 x 80 w/10 ft in goals (Effective field: 120 x 80)

Hawks: 190 x 110 w/13 ft in goals (Effective field: 164 x 110)

Eagles: 210 x 130 w/15 ft in goals (Effective field: 180 x 130)

For Hawks and Eagles, program administrators should consider, if available, using fields that are a third to half the size of an available rugby, soccer, or American football field, with the 15 to 20 buffer gap between them. Fields should have Posts at either end; however, creative use of what is available will govern much of the kicking game. A single soccer goal with upright PVC pipes taped on, situated between two fields, is a perfectly acceptable arrangement.

Field Markings:

Fields should be marked with flags at the half way line, and with flags at the intersection of the touchlines and goal lines (6 flags per field are adequate). Visible lines should include the touchlines, the try (goal) lines, the dead ball lines, and a half way line, referred to as "the 50". An "x" or other appropriate marker can be made on the 50 at the center of the field to indicate where kicks are taken from. If any of these lines are unavailable, the referee's judgment will apply. Minimally, games can also be played with a square of cones.

Balls:

- Owls: Number 3 International Rugby Board Standard
- Falcons: Number 3 International Rugby Board Standard
- Hawks: Number 4 International Rugby Board Standard
- Eagles: Number 5 International Rugby Board Standard

Player Qualifications:

At any level, highly qualified players (defined as being physically skilled, attentive and socially capable) should be encouraged and allowed to move up to the next division.

4. Age Based Supplemental

Owls Supplemental - players entering Kindergarten and 1st grades, approx. ages 5-6

- Approximate field dimension: 60 ft x 84 ft. (including 6 ft In-Goals)
- Ball: Number 3 International Rugby Board Standard
- 7 players a side, (can be more or less if agreed upon by coaches)
- Game is two 10 minute Halves with a 2-3 minute intermission
- Place kicks to start halves and after score. Scoring team kicks off, receiving team must gain possession on kickoffs, (knock ons forgiven when receiving kick)
- Flags must be returned to the ball carrier to simulate the tackle and not dropped
- A pass must be made to the most available teammate when a tackle is called / made **(2 seconds or 2 step rule) Coaches discretion for Owls to keep the flow of the game.**
- Going to ground is the same as being tackled
- Offsides line is created after a tackle is made. Players must retreat to their side of the ball (parallel to where the ball is when the tackle is made)
- Tries are Five (5) points, no conversion kicks are taken.
- No Scrums / Line outs. Toe and Throw for all restarts. (out of bounds / knock ons).
- No open field kicking.
- No flag guarding or spinning more than 90 degrees to avoid a tackle.
- Defenders may not grab or knock the ball from an offensive player.
- Ball carrier missing a flag is considered tackled.
- Using a player as a blocker is obstruction and considered a penalty resulting in a turnover.
- Running into an opposing player is considered barging / dangerous play and is a penalty resulting in a turnover. **(Run at spaces not faces.)**
- The ball must be grounded with control in the try zone for a score
- If a player has initiated a downward motion toward the try/goal line, the try will be awarded, even if the flag is removed.
- Two Coaches per team allowed on field during the game.
- Turnover/Penalty taken as a **Toe and Throw** to restart. Opposition back 3 meters.
- Coaches serve as Referees.

Falcons Supplemental - players entering 2nd and 3rd grade, approx. ages 7-8)

(All Notations in Bold/ Italics are to reference the changes in rules from the previous level.)

- *At any level, highly qualified players (defined as being physically skilled, attentive, and socially capable) should be encouraged and allowed to move up to the next division.*
- *Approximate field dimension: 140 ft x 80 ft. (including 10 ft In-goals).*
- Ball Number 3 International Rugby Board Standard
- 7 players a side, (can be more or less if agreed upon by coaches)
- Game is two 10 minute Halves with a 2-3 minute intermission
- *Each team should designate a captain or co-captains for each game. A coin toss is done at this level.*
- *Positioning for educational purposes in practice can be taught*, but not for game situations to slow the flow of the game (No line outs/ Scrums...Toe and Throw to begin play)
- Place kicks to start halves and after score. Scoring team kicks off, receiving team must gain possession on kickoffs, (knock ons forgiven when receiving kick)
- Flags must be returned to the ball carrier after the pass has been made and not dropped to the ground.
- A pass must be made to the most available teammate when a tackle is called / made *(2 steps or two second rule)*
- Going to ground is the same as being tackled
- Offsides line is created after a tackle is made. Players must retreat to their side of the ball (parallel to where the ball is when the tackle is made)
- Tries are Five (5) points, *conversion kicks are (2) points, (kicks – to be taken as a punt in front of the posts at the end of the game by each player...if posts are available)*
- No Scrums / Line outs. Toe and Throw for all restarts. (out of bounds / knock ons) to speed up the pace of play.
- No open field kicking.
- No flag guarding or spinning more than 90 degrees to avoid a tackle.
- Defenders may not grab or knock the ball from an offensive player.
- Ball carrier missing a flag is considered tackled.
- Using a player as a blocker is obstruction and considered a penalty resulting in a turnover.
- Running into an opposing player is considered barging / dangerous play and is a penalty resulting in a turnover. **(Run at spaces not faces.)**
- The ball must be grounded with control in the try zone for a score
- If a player has initiated a downward motion toward the try/goal line, the try will be awarded, even if the flag is removed.
- *One coach per team is allowed on field with players during the game.*
- Turnover/Penalty taken as a **Toe and Throw** to restart. *Opposition must retreat 5 meters.*
- *Introduction of the Advantage rule.*
- *Should have an American Flag Rugby Trained Referee*

Hawks Supplemental - entering 4th, 5th, and 6th grades, approx. ages 9-11

(All Notations in Bold / Italics are to reference the changes in rules from the previous level.)

- At any level, highly qualified players (defined as being physically skilled, attentive, and socially capable) should be encouraged and allowed to move up to the next division.
- ***Approximate field dimension: 190 ft x 110 ft (including 14 ft In-goals)***
- ***Ball: Number 4 International Rugby Board Standard***
- 7 players a side, (can be more or less if agreed upon by coaches)
- Game is two 10 minute Halves with a 2-3 minute intermission
- Each team should designate a captain or co-captains for each game. A coin toss is done at this level.
- ***Introduction of set piece skills of contestable Line-outs, and contested scrums. (Scrums are contestable at the Hawk level but only by the Hookers with one foot only, the other foot remaining on the ground supporting their weight). Full bind is required / No push allowed.***
- ***Drop Kicks to start halves.***
- ***Tries are Five (5) points with a two (2) point conversion taken as drop kick from location the Referee indicates (kick will be taken on an angle in relation to where it is grounded, however using the width of the posts as it relates to the width of the field. I.E. a score in the left corner of the field will be taken in front of the left hand post.)***
- Flags must be returned to the ball carrier after the pass has been made and not dropped on the ground. Players must immediately accept the flags when given.
- A pass must be made to the most available teammate when a tackle is called / made (2 steps or two second rule)
- Going to ground is the same as being tackled
- Offsides line is created after a tackle is made. Players must retreat to their side of the ball (parallel to where the ball is when the tackle is made)
- ***Line-outs are now contestable, players must jump straight up for the ball. No jumping into the tunnel and no quick line outs.***
- ***The line out is formed 3 meters from the touch line, forming a tunnel that is roughly arm's length apart with two jumpers spaced 5 meters from the front jumper to the back jumper.***
- ***A scrum half is 3 meters back from the formed tunnel and a line of backs formed off of the scrum half.***
- ***Upon catching the ball, a jumper may not run with the ball, rather they must pass it back to the scrumhalf or another player. This may include the thrower entering the field, or the first jumper peeling backwards. The Scrumhalf may not enter the line, or otherwise directly receive the throw-in.***
- ***Once a player has received the ball directly from a lineout jumper, they may not run to the short side of the field. They must run behind their second jumper toward the wide side of the field.***
- ***Open field kicking is permitted. Players may kick a ball that is on the ground as long as no other players are attempting to gather the ball.***
- Ball carrier missing a flag is considered tackled.
- Using a player as a blocker is obstruction and considered a penalty resulting in a turnover.
- No flag guarding or spinning more than 90 degrees to avoid a tackle.

- Running into an opposing player is considered barging / dangerous play and is a penalty resulting in a turnover. **(Run at spaces not faces.)**
- The ball must be grounded with control in the try zone for a score
- If a player has initiated a downward motion toward the try/goal line, the try will be awarded, even if the flag is removed.
- Turnover/Penalty taken as a **Toe and Throw** to restart, *opposition must retreat 10 meters.(5 meters on a smaller field) No quick penalties. A Penalty is taken as a tap off the ground and pass to a teammate (Toe ‘n Throw), or as a kick to touch (kicking team gets the throw).*
- The Advantage rule applies.
- Should have an American Flag Rugby Trained Referee.
- *Player may be temporarily removed (sin binned) or ejected for foul play, in which case a team must continue with fewer players.*
- *Injury time could be added at the ref’s discretion due to unforeseen stoppages of play.*

Coaching Tip:

- To help avoid the constant question of “can I kick next”...assign each player a number of 1-10 which will be the order to kick for that practice or game.
- Assign a letter of A or B or perhaps Colors to help organize positions when receiving the kickoff. A’s up front, B’s in the back, is a much easier way to instruct them to their proper position than trying to arrange all 7 players.

Eagles Supplemental - entering 7th, 8th, and 9th grades, approx. ages 12-14

(All Notations in Bold / Italics are to reference the changes in rules from the previous level.)

(All Notations in RED are changes for the 2015 season)

- At any level, highly qualified players (defined as being physically skilled, attentive, and socially capable) should be encouraged and allowed to move up to the next division.
- **Approximate field dimension: 210 ft x 130 ft (including 15 ft In-goals)**
- Ball: Number 5 International Rugby Board Standard
- 7 players a side, (can be more or less if agreed upon by coaches)
- Game is two 10 minute Halves with a 2-3 minute intermission
- Each team should designate a captain or co-captains for each game. A coin toss is done at this level.
- Set pieces, including contestable Line-outs and contested scrums. Contestable scrums by Hookers with one foot only, the other foot remaining on the ground supporting their weight). Full bind is required / No push allowed.
- **Contestable Scrums must begin with a “STRAIGHT” put into the tunnel. NO FEEDING ALLOWED. If not straight, Free Kick to non offending team. If this act continues, Penalty Kick at the spot of the mark. If warned and advised, a “Yellow Card” can be issued for repeated infringements.**
- Drop Kicks to start halves.
- Tries are Five (5) points with **a two (2) point conversion taken as drop kick perpendicular from where the ball was grounded.**
- Drop goals (3 points) can be attempted in lieu of a penalty or in open play.
- Flags must be returned to the ball carrier after the pass has been made or ruck set to simulate the tackle and not dropped. Players must immediately accept the flags when given.
- A pass must be made to the most available teammate when a tackle is called / made (2 steps or two second rule) **OR a ruck must be set.**
- Going to ground is the same as being tackled
- Offsides line is created after a tackle is made. Players must retreat to their side of the ball (parallel to where the ball is when the tackle is made)
- Line-outs are contestable; players must jump straight up for the ball. No jumping into the tunnel and no quick line outs.
- The line out is formed 3 meters from the touch line, forming a tunnel that is roughly arm's length apart with two jumpers spaced 5 meters from the front jumper to the back jumper.
- A scrum half is 3 meters back from the formed tunnel and a line of backs forms off of the scrum half.
- Upon catching the ball, a jumper may not run with the ball, rather they must pass it back to the scrumhalf or another player. This may include the thrower entering the field, or the first jumper peeling backwards. The Scrumhalf may not enter the line, or otherwise directly receive the throw-in.
- Once a player has received the ball directly from a lineout jumper, they may not run to the short side of the field ***IF IT IS PROPERLY DEFENDED*** and must run behind their second jumper toward the wide side of the field. ***Players are encouraged to run to the strong side of the field...but can run to the weak side if it is open due to a***

defender being out of position... See rulebook for clarity.

- Tactical open field kicking is permitted. Players may kick a ball that is on the ground as long as no other players are attempting to gather the ball.
- Ball carrier missing a flag is considered tackled.
- Using a player as a blocker is obstruction and considered a penalty resulting in a turnover.
- No flag guarding or spinning more than 90 degrees to avoid a tackle.
- Running into an opposing player is considered barging / dangerous play and is a penalty resulting in a turnover. **(Run at spaces not faces.)**
- The ball must be grounded with control in the try zone for a score
- If a player has initiated a downward motion toward the try/goal line, the try will be awarded, even if the flag is removed.
- Turnover/Penalty taken as a **Toe and Throw** to restart, opposition must retreat 10 meters (5 meters on a smaller field.) No quick penalties. A Penalty is taken as a tap off the ground and pass to a teammate (**Toe 'n Throw**), or as a kick to touch (kicking team gets the throw).
- The Advantage rule applies.
- **Once your flag is pulled you have 2 choices: The ball carrier MUST immediately:**
 - (1) pass the ball within 2 steps or 2 seconds. If not, penalty.**
 - (2) choose to Ruck. If you choose to ruck and there is a delay in stopping to create the ruck, a penalty will be called.**
 - a. What is a Ruck: A Ruck is when the ball carrier has their flag pulled creating a tackle situation. The ball is now placed on the ground, the ball carrier **MUST step over the ball** thus creating a set play for the scrum half and setting off-sides lines. Once the ball is available by “stepping over” it is now considered **“PLAYABLE”** and **“OUT OF THE RUCK”**. (Similar to the adult play). The defense now has the opportunity to play the ball **IF AND ONLY IF** the Scrum Half or any teammate is not there causing a delay in playing the ball. All players playing the ball **MUST BE ON THEIR FEET** and come from an **ON-SIDES** position.
- **If the ball carrier over-runs the 2 step rule and in the Referee’s judgment had time to stop to make the pass, the Referee can: (1) call a Penalty for delay of game; OR (2) call “PASS” one last time giving the ball carrier an opportunity to pass to his teammate who is “WAITING TO RECEIVE at the Point of where the flag was pulled” (or where the ruck used to be set). That receiver MUST NOW PASS simulating a “tackle” and a “Pop pass” thereby creating off-sides lines so the defense knows how far to retreat creating their “Picket Fence” and the offense can regain the “Steep” lines.**
- Should have an American Flag Rugby Trained Referee.
- Player may be temporarily removed (sin binned) or ejected for foul play, in which case a team must continue with fewer players.
- Injury time could be added at the ref’s discretion due to unforeseen stoppages of play.
- **Coaching Tip:**
 - The reason for these changes is to make the game faster. Therefore, as coaches you need to promote strong passing skills and continual support to the ball carrier. Players should be **“in the pocket”** of the ball carrier.
 - The ball should be moving at all times.

- The only time you want to set a Ruck is when you need to slow down the pace of the game to reset your offense lines. Similar to going backwards in the 7's game.
- This supplement is to be used as a **“quick reference guide”**. Coaches / Referees are encouraged to refer to the AFR Rulebook for further clarification or more in depth analysis with regard to the do's and don'ts for each age group.

5. General Rules of Play

The wording of these rules is identical for all Divisions

GENERAL RULE 1 - Sportsmanship

The founding principal of this game is that it is a vehicle for teaching and practicing Rugby's most important cultural value: Good Sportsmanship. All participants in American Flag Rugby must positively contribute to the game to the best of their ability. All participants must outwardly show the utmost respect for one's self, other participants, fellow players, coaches, referees, and administrators of the game. Players and participants must accept both victories and defeats graciously. Unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated from any participant or individual present at an American Flag Rugby event.

A referee or event host can declare forfeiture against an offending team for any action or combination of actions deemed inappropriate, dangerous, or unsportsmanlike, by a player, a coach, a parent, or partisan spectator. It is a rule of the game that both teams must line up and shake hands (or high five) at the end of each match in a demonstration of good sportsmanship. American Flag Rugby, as with all rugby, is based on the premise that playing the game with honor and sportsmanship is truly a reward in itself.

GENERAL RULE 2 - Participants

In American Flag Rugby, "Participants" are defined as all Players, Coaches, Referees, Administrators, parents and spectators. Participants must agree that foul language, foul play, or foul attitudes are not and never will be permitted.

GENERAL RULE 3 - Try Scoring

In order to score a 5 point try, a player must touch the ball down so that it touches the try line or is in the in-goal area while still in possession of both flags. (This is not the case on going to goal and having a flag pulled) This is defined as controlling the ball down to the ground and exerting downward pressure on it by the hand, arm or upper body. If a player is running with the ball and is within 1 meter of the goal line, and has clearly initiated a downward motion with the ball toward the line (ball in motion and at or below waist level), a try will be awarded even if the flag was removed before crossing the line or touching down.

GENERAL RULE 4 – Game Day & Player Attire

Total Playing Time Per Day

Total playing time per day should not exceed 90 minutes (4 full games with extra time).

Player Uniforms:

All players must wear approved American Flag Rugby shorts and flags. If proper shorts and flags are not available players may wear traditional flag football type belts and flags, however this is strongly discouraged due to inherent design flaws that greatly detract from the overall American Flag Rugby

experience. Shirts must be tucked in and the belt line or Velcro area of the shorts must be visible at all times. Protective, soccer type shin guards may be worn provided they are covered completely by appropriate socks.

Glasses, Sunglasses, hats

Any players requiring corrective eyeglasses must wear approved sports safety glasses as required by NJ State law. If players do not yet have safety sports glasses, non-safety type prescription glasses may be worn if held in place with a behind-the-head strap. Baseball or visor type hats with a hard brim are not permitted. Soft, short brim type hats, rugby type scrum caps and soccer type protective head gear are permitted. Any playing gear that is approved by the International Rugby Board (IRB) for adult or Under age 19 (U19) play, may be worn.

GENERAL RULE 5 – Missing Flags, Appropriate Defense, Obstruction

Ball Carrier: A player who receives or gathers the ball but is unknowingly without one or both flags, or a player running with the ball who accidentally knocks off one or both of their flags, is considered tackled. Upon being made aware, they must quickly pass the ball to their most available teammate. If a ball carrier is at pace and makes considerable ground before the missing flag is noticed, the referee should return to the spot where the missing flag is found and instruct the ball carrier to Toe and Throw to restart the game. It is incumbent on the ball carrier to have both flags attached at all times while running with or in any way playing the ball. A player who intentionally catches a ball while still re-attaching a flag will be penalized and the ball turned over.

Defenders: Defenders may not grab the ball away from an opposition player, or attempt to knock it out of their hands. Defenders may not intentionally run in to or otherwise initiate contact with a ball carrier. If while attempting to pull a flag, a defender grabs the shorts or shirt of the ball carrier, they must release immediately. If doing so significantly impedes the ball carrier's progress or momentum, the referee may award a penalty. If a defender, while pulling a flag, loses control of the flag and it falls to the ground, the tackle is still considered to have been made and the defender must pick up the flag and return it to its owner according to the rules of the tackle transaction. As is stated above, it is incumbent on the ball carrier to have both flags attached at all times while running with or in any way playing the ball.

Obstruction: Obstruction is defined as having occurred when a ball carrier has clearly and deliberately used a teammate as a blocker, or when a teammate has clearly and deliberately moved to a position to block a defender from pursuing a ball carrier. In both cases, a penalty/turnover will be awarded to the defending team. A ball carrier that chooses to run in a broad arc behind his line of players in an attempt to gain a running space advantage will also be considered to be causing obstruction and a penalty/turnover will be awarded to the defending team. (To be called only if obstruction actually takes place, not simply on the act of running in a backwards / arching direction)

GENERAL RULE 6 – The Tackle Transaction

The Tackle Transaction is designed to take both the ball carrier and the tackler temporarily out of the game, allowing for constant movement of the ball through the hands of as many players as possible. The Tackle Transaction begins when a ball carrier has a flag removed. The tackler must immediately

indicate that a tackle has been made by holding up the flag and making an audible call, such as “Tag”, “Flag”, or “Tackle”. Upon seeing the flag in the defender’s hand, the referee should make a similar call to reinforce the communication.

The defender who is holding the flag should remain stationary and continue to hold the flag up so it is visible. After a tackle, both the tackler and the ball carrier are considered “out of the game” until the flag is returned. The tackler must wait patiently until the ball has been passed (or ruck set at Eagles level) and then hand the flag back to its owner. The flag must not be thrown toward or at its owner, or dropped to the ground. The tackler may not push the flag on to, or make contact in any way with the flag’s owner. The owner must accept the handed flag immediately upon making the pass (or setting the ruck – Eagles). The Tackler may re-enter play as soon as the handoff is made. The tackled player may re-enter play as soon as the flag has been re –attached.

“Diving” to grab a flag may be considered dangerous play. If two defenders each removed a flag, both are considered out of the game. Both must wait to individually return their flag to the tackled ball carrier. The tackled ball carrier must accept both flags back immediately after making their pass and must not make the defenders wait while attaching one flag at a time.

GENERAL RULE 7 – Interfering with the Tackle

A ball carrier or player may not in any way attempt to interfere with a defenders attempt to grab their flag. This includes but is not limited to: guarding or blocking the flag with the ball or the free hand; swatting or otherwise making contact with a defenders hand; shoving, running into, or otherwise making any contact with a defending player.

Spinning, defined as turning the body more than 90 degrees in an attempt to prevent a flag removal, is also prohibited. Players may only turn more than 90 degrees when they are doing so as part of a complete change in running direction. Ball carriers must “Run at Spaces, not Faces”. This means that every effort must be made to run around a defender, and not in any way attempt to run “through”, or directly at a defender (barging). All forms of interfering with the tackle result in a penalty.

GENERAL RULE 8 – Field & Goal Posts

The field dimensions listed in Section 3 are sizes that have worked well during AFR’s development. However, it is understood that each location is different and reasonable variations will occur.

GENERAL RULE 9 – Player Qualifications:

At any level, highly qualified players (defined as being physically skilled, attentive, and socially capable) should be encouraged and allowed to move up to the next division.

6. Falcon specific Rules of Play

The Falcons are a significant step up from the Owls. The Falcons will have a greater attention span and hence will begin to learn some of the conventions of the game. The focus at this age needs to be ball handling and the skills of moving the ball as a team. Uncontested scrums and line-outs can be introduced in practice with their associated player positions so that the 7-8 year olds begin to learn what the set pieces are, (for educational purposes). However, during the games all re-starts will be done via a Toe and Throw to avoid slowing the pace of the game. Kicking is introduced in the form of punts for conversions at the end of each game by every player, (if posts are available) instilling in them the strategic value that conversions have on the score line.

RULE 1 - Teams

Teams should consist of 7 players on the field at any time. Open substitutions are allowed at any break in the play to ensure that all players get equal playing time. A player may be substituted for another player and return to the game. To facilitate play, and if agreed to by the coaches, a game may be played with up to 9 players per team or fewer than 7 players. The number of players on each side should be equal at all times. Coaches should ensure that all players take turns at being the kicker.

During practice a Coach can instruct their team on set pieces such as scrums and line outs as well as the proper positions such as - Hooker, Scrum-half, two Props, Fly-half, Center and a Wing. However, during the games all re-starts will be done via a Toe and Throw to avoid slowing the pace of the game. Over the course of the season, all players should have the opportunity to be the captain of their team and participate in the coin toss procedure.

RULE 2 - Games

2A – Game length. Games should be for a length of 20 minutes, consisting of two 10 min. halves with a 2-3 minute half time break. Teams change sides at half time. The 10-minute clock is considered running time, and begins with the kick off and ends at the first non-penalty break in play after a full 10 minutes.

2B – Coaching. One coach from each team is allowed on the field with players during the game.

2C – Referees and captains. Falcon games will have a designated AFR Referee who will keep the time and score. Each team will have a captain or co-captains who will participate in the coin toss prior to kickoff. The team that traveled the furthest always calls the toss. The team that wins the toss chooses to kick, receive, or defend a particular end. The opposing team will then be given the remaining choice.

RULE 3 - Off-Sides

As in the adult game, a tackle sets an offside line, which is a line through the point of the tackle and parallel to the goal lines. Both Defensive and Attacking players must actively attempt to retreat behind the point of the tackle before entering play. Once a pass has been made and a new ball carrier is in possession of the ball, the off side line ends. This means that a defensive player that was actively retreating but has not yet reached the off sides line, may re-enter play as soon as the ball is played by the new ball carrier.

It is recognized that this is often a very difficult concept for very young players to grasp, and that loitering and interference with the pass will regularly occur. When a pass is interfered with due to offsides, play should stop to allow the coaches to instruct the players on where they should be positioned. Play restarts with a standing free pass. (Toe and Throw)

RULE 4 - Making The Pass

Upon learning that their flag has been pulled, the ball carrier must quickly pass the ball. Passes may not be made forward, and should be made to their most available teammate. Coaches and referees should vocally encourage Falcon players to quickly and correctly make the pass. If a ball carrier steps into touch (out of bounds) before

making the pass, play is stopped and the ball is turned over to the other team, who restart with a standing free pass (Toe and Throw) from the place where the player stepped out.

If a ball carrier travels more than 2 meters (2 step or 2 second rule) after having their flag removed, he or she should be instructed to return to the place of the tackle and make their pass.

RULE 5 - Going to Ground

A player has gone to ground if, while either carrying or gathering the ball, one knee or more of their body comes in contact with the ground. For purposes of safety, the ground is considered the tackler, and any player who goes to ground is considered tackled even though they may still have both flags attached. Falcon level players must be instructed to immediately stand and make a pass to their most available teammate.

RULE 6 - Advantage

An advantage situation occurs when an infraction of the rules creates a situation that is of advantage to the non-offending team, such as a ball knocked forward that is recovered by the opposing team. In such cases, if the non-offending team has gained an advantage from the infraction, the referee will not immediately stop play for a scrum or penalty, but rather allow play to continue. Advantage situations should clearly favor possession over territory.

RULE 7 - Starting and Re-starting the Game

The game is started with a place kick from the center of the field. After a try, play is re-started by a place kick by the scoring team from the center of the field. At all kicks, the receiving team must gain possession. (Knock ons forgiven) Kicks that go into touch or over the dead ball line (out of bounds), either directly or having bounced, will be taken over. (2 “do-overs” max, or receiving team will begin at the 50 with a Toe and Throw) A kicked ball coming to rest in the in- goal area is considered to be in play, and the receiving team must play the ball. If a knock on results with the kicking team gaining possession, the coaches can either instruct the receiving team to play the ball or result in a re-kick so that the receiving team gains possession.

RULE 8 - Conversions

A conversion is a kick at goal taken when a try has been awarded and is worth 2 points. Falcon level conversion kicks are taken as punts from any location of the kicker’s choosing by each player on both teams at the end of each game, if posts are available.

RULE 9 - Open Field Kicking

Tactical, open field kicking is not permitted in the Falcon level. However, kicking a loose ball on the ground is permitted provided that it is done safely, with no other players in immediate proximity reaching for or attempting to gather the ball. If such a kick is made, traditionally referred to as a “Fly Hack”, it will be penalized as dangerous play.

(End of Rules of Play: Falcons)

7. Hawks Rules of Play

With the Hawks, we introduce the all-important set piece skills of contestable Line-outs, and contested scrums. Hawks is where competitive spirit and athleticism really begin to enter the game. This division begins to more closely resemble the openness of the adult 7's game. It is worth noting that with 5th and 6th grade Hawks, the girls can often outrun the boys, which usually makes for exciting team dynamics. Features of the Hawks game:

RULE 1 - Teams

Teams should consist of 7 players on the field at any time. Open substitutions are allowed at any break in the play to ensure that all players get equal playing time. A player may be substituted for another player and return to the game. In order to facilitate play, and if agreed to by the coaches, a game may be played with more or fewer players. The number of players on each side should be equal at all times, unless a player has been temporarily removed or ejected for foul play, in which case a team must continue with fewer players. See Rule 14 for more information. (This is all determined by the coaches, the field size and if it will impede the game...too many kids on the field removes the open space and slows the game)

A team should have players designated as follows: a Hooker, Two Props, a Scrum-half, Fly-Half, Center and a Wing. Players should be rotated over the course of a season to learn about each position if possible. Over the course of a season, all players should have the opportunity to be the captain of their team and participate in the coin toss procedure.

The toss is always called by the team that traveled the furthest. The team that wins the toss may choose to kick or receive by choosing to defend a particular end. The opposing team will then be given the remaining choice. Over the course of a season all players should have the opportunity to be the captain, and to make kicks.

RULE 2 - Game

Games should be for a length of 20 minutes, consisting of two 10 min. halves with a 2-3 minute half time break. Teams change sides at half time. The 10 minute clock is considered running time, begins with the kick off and ends at the first non-penalty break in play after a full 10 minutes. Time is kept by the referee. If play ends with a try, conversions will still be taken. As a best practice, games should be completed within a 30 minute total time slot to allow for a next game to start. In appropriate situations, the coaches and the referee may agree to "stop the clock" to compensate for unforeseen stoppages in play. (Injury time may play in, and at the discretion of the ref, time could be added. The point is to give them 20 Mins of playing time.)

RULE 3 - Offside

As in the adult game, a tackle sets an offside line, which is a line through the point of the tackle and parallel to the goal lines. Conversely, there is no offside line if a ball carrier passes the ball before their flag is removed. When there is a tackle, all players must conform to the offside line in order to continue play. Defensive players must actively attempt to retreat behind the point of the tackle before entering play. Loitering, or intentionally interfering with the pass will result in a penalty awarded 5 meters in front of the tackle. The Referee should be vocal in instructing players where they need to be in order to be considered on-side. Once a pass has been made and a new ball carrier is in possession of the ball, the offside line ends. This means that a defensive player that was actively retreating but has not yet reached the offside line may re-enter play as soon as the ball is played by the new ball carrier.

RULE 4 – Making the Pass after a Tag

Making The Pass. Upon learning that their flag has been pulled, the ball carrier must quickly pass the ball. If a ball carrier steps into touch before making the pass, play is stopped and a line-out awarded to the defending team.

Passes may not be made forward. The ball carrier may stop running first or may pass while in the process of stopping. The timeframe for making this pass is generally defined as being within 2 to 3 seconds. However, it is the greater intention of this rule to insure that the ball carrier passes quickly to the most available teammate, rather than allowing them to await the arrival of a more favored teammate. If the ball is not passed quickly to an available teammate, a penalty for delay of game will be awarded to the defenders and the ball turned over at the place where the flag was pulled.

Momentum. In the case of a breakaway, where a tackled ball carrier running a FULL pace is carried by momentum a significant distance (3 -4 meters) past the point of the tackle in the direction of the goal line, the referee should instruct the player to return to where the tackler is holding their flag before making the pass. (At the discretion of the referee, if a ball carrier has gone too far past the mark after a tag has been called this would result in a turnover.)

RULE 5 – Interfering with the Tackle or Pass

After a flag is pulled, the tackle transaction takes place and all defenders must retreat to an on-sides position as fast as possible. The approximate time frame of 2 to 3 seconds that is given to the ball carrier to make the pass also applies to the defenders' responsibility to retreat and clear any passing lane. As part of the tackle transaction, the defender who pulled the flag is considered "out of the game" while holding the flag, and remains neutralized until they have properly returned the flag after the tackled ball carrier has made the pass. While waiting for the pass to be made, they may not attempt to interfere in any way with the ball carrier's passing of the ball. A defender who was not involved with the tackle and who is on-sides as the pass is being made may not interfere with the ball carrier making the pass. However they may attempt to run forward and intercept the ball once it has left the tackled player's hands. If the ball carrier chooses to make a pass while still in possession of both flags, players must be aware that no tackle has been made and hence no offside line has been created. With no offside line, any defender may attempt to intercept the ball once a pass has cleared the hands of the player throwing the ball.

Coaching Directive - Double Handed Defense is not allowed: Double Handed Defense refers to a potentially dangerous play whereby a defender attempts to remove both flags at once. Defensive players attempting this move will typically fail to halt their forward momentum when going for the flags, resulting in illegal barging and unacceptable levels of contact. Coaches are directed not to teach the "double handed defense", and to inform all players that this technique is considered dangerous play. Defensive players who take both flags while in a stationary position should not be penalized; however if they have forward momentum and that momentum carries them into the body of the ball carrier, Referees must penalize the defensive player for barging. Equally, a ball carrier who runs into a defensive player who is stationary, as can happen when a ball carrier tries to "run through" a "picket fence" defense, should equally be penalized for barging.

RULE 6 – Going to Ground

A player has gone to ground if, while either carrying or gathering the ball, one knee or more of their body comes in contact with the ground. For purposes of safety, the ground is considered a tackler and any player who goes to ground is considered tackled even though they may still have both flags attached. If they remain in possession of the ball or legally gather the ball, they may quickly make a pass while still on the ground, or immediately get up and upon gaining their feet, immediately pass the ball within 2-3 seconds to their most available teammate. They may not run with the ball, and any additional delay will be penalized. Upon making the pass, the player may rejoin play. A ball carrier may not intentionally go to ground with the intention of putting defending players in an offside position. Players may not intentionally go to ground in a lineout, as the close proximity to other players will nearly always result in dangerous play.

Loose Ball: Players should be instructed to always attempt to gather a loose ball while on their feet. Whether accidental or intentional, going to ground while attempting to gather a loose ball can be dangerous. Referees must

judge and immediately penalize any player that puts another player at risk by this play. This is particularly important during kickoffs, where the receiving team must be given a fair and safe chance to gather and play the ball (refer to Rule 8 and the Intention to Turnover). If a player does go to ground while gathering the ball, they must not obstruct an opposition player who is on their feet from gathering the ball. When such a situation occurs, any player who is on their feet and within an arm's length of the player on the ground, should call out "my ball", indicating that they are claiming the ball, at which time the player on the ground must release the ball. This must be done before the ball is passed off the ground or the player with the ball regains their feet. The referee may also facilitate this indication on behalf of the players by calling "release", if such intervention promotes safety and continuity of play. In either case, the referee must then ensure that the player on the ground releases the ball to the opposition, at which time play immediately continues.

RULE 7 - Advantage

An advantage situation occurs when an infraction of the rules creates a situation that is of advantage to the non-offending team, such as a ball knocked forward that is recovered by the opposing team. In such cases, if the non-offending team has gained an advantage from the infraction, the referee will not immediately stop play for a scrum or penalty, but rather allow play to continue until a reasonable opportunity has been given to the non-offending team to take advantage of the offending team's error. Advantage situations should clearly favor possession over territory.

RULE 8 – Starts and Restarts

The game is started with a drop kick from the center of the field. After a try is scored and the conversion kick taken, play is re-started by scoring team drop kicking from the center of the field to the non-scoring team. Start and re-start kicks must be made with the intention to turnover, and not as a clearly intended play designed to re-gain possession of the ball. The kicking team may gather possession of the ball if it is clear that the receiving team was given a fair and adequate opportunity to play the ball, but failed to take advantage of the opportunity. Kicks that go into touch or over the dead ball line (out of bounds), either directly or having bounced, will be taken over. This promotes the skill of controlled kicking. A kicker who repeatedly intentionally kicks the ball into touch or over the dead ball line will be penalized for delay of game at the center of the field. A kicked ball coming to rest in the in-goal area is considered to be in play, and the receiving team may run with the ball or immediately touch it down and restart play at the "22". See Rule 13 for further information.

In order to facilitate play at this level, an initial knock-on committed while attempting to gather the ball directly from a kick off will be forgiven and play allowed to continue. However, if such a knock-on results in the kicking team gaining immediate possession of the ball, play will also continue.

RULE 9 - Conversions

A conversion is a kick at goal taken after a try has been awarded. Two (2) point conversion taken as drop kick from location of the referees choosing (The kick will be taken on an angle in relation from where it is grounded, however using the width of the posts as it relates to the width of the field. I.E. a score in the left corner of the field will be taken in front of the left hand post.)

RULE 10 - Scrums

Scrums are contestable at the Hawk level but only by the Hookers, who may use only one foot. At no time is pushing allowed in the scrums. Scrums are ordered by the referee for minor infractions as described in these rules, or other impasses in play. Scrums primarily result from passing or knocking the ball forward. All scrums are formed by three players from each team, the hooker and two props (collectively referred to as the front row). A fourth player is designated as a scrumhalf and the remaining three players form a back line. The back line players must line up at least 3 meters back from the center line of the scrum. The Referee should verbally control the scrum

at all times (“crouch, bind, set”) and ensure that the front rows come together safely and stay together safely until the scrum has ended.

Setting the Scrum: The scrum begins with the players being brought together in a full bind, defined as when the shoulders of all 6 players are in contact. The full bind body position prevents stomping and shin kicking, and must be maintained until the scrum has ended. The props must bind correctly, with the Tight Head prop’s right arm going above the Loose Head prop’s arm.

Striking for the ball: Only hookers may contest and strike for the ball, and with one foot only. The other foot must remain beneath them, supporting their weight. A prop striking for the ball or a hooker throwing both feet forward will be penalized for dangerous play. Any excessive kicking or any stomping will be also be penalized, though maintaining the **Full Bind** should prevent this. Hookers may not intentionally kick the ball thru the opposition’s front row. If the ball becomes un-playable in the scrum the scrum will be replayed with the same team having the put in.

Putting in the Ball: Once the referee has indicated that the bind is correct, the scrumhalf may place the ball into the tunnel. Signaling between the scrumhalf and the hooker may be physical, verbal or both. The ball must enter the tunnel and pass in front of the Loose Head prop’s feet and must exit behind the scrum, having passed between the feet of any player or players. If the ball comes directly out of the tunnel on either side of the scrum, the scrum will be replayed. The defending scrumhalf may not cross the center line of the scrum until the ball has correctly emerged from the scrum. The scrum ends once the ball has emerged from between the feet of a player or players in the scrum, at which time the scrum may break. Once the ball has emerged, either scrumhalf or any other player may pick up the ball and run with it, continuing play. All players must remain on their feet when gathering the ball.

RULE 11 - Contestable Lineouts

The Lineout protocol in American Flag Rugby was designed with several objectives in mind. It introduces the restart convention of the full game while still operating within the safety of a coed, non-contact environment. It is called a “Contestable” lineout, instead of the more confrontational “Contested” lineout. In this variation, the lineout only becomes contested should the ball be thrown poorly, or be knocked on. It is designed to greatly favor the throwing team, reinforcing the idea that needlessly losing possession by running into touch is detrimental to one’s team.

The Lineout: The lineout is formed by the thrower, two “jumpers” from each team, and a scrumhalf from each team. The remaining players make up a back line. There is no lifting or other contact permitted between jumpers on the same team or with the other team. A lineout may not be taken quickly, or at any time before all players are in the correct positions. A lineout is never marked closer than 5 meters from the goal line.

Positioning: The forward jumpers must stand 3 meters from the touchline. Spacing between them is determined by the first two jumpers fully extending their inside arm toward their opposite number. With arms fully extended, the player’s fingertips should not be able to touch. The second set of jumpers should line up directly behind the first, with a distance to their teammate equal to the gap between the two first jumpers. This creates a square of jumpers, approximately of 1.5 meters on each side, positioned 3 meters in from the touch line. A scrumhalf should be positioned between the jumpers approximately three meters back from the centerline of the lineout, also referred to as the tunnel. The remaining players must retreat 5 meters from the centerline of the tunnel.

The Throw: Throws should be of an overhead two-handed type, similar to the throw most young players are familiar with from soccer; however any type of throw is acceptable while skills are developing. The ball must travel at least 3 meters before being caught (referee’s judgment). The ball must be received by one of the jumpers. Upon catching the ball, a jumper may not run with the ball, rather they must pass it back to the scrumhalf or another player. This may include the thrower entering the field, or the first jumper peeling backwards. The Scrumhalf may not enter the line, or otherwise directly receive the throw.

Straight Throw: To be considered thrown straight, the ball must travel on a line no further off the center line of the lineout than the inside shoulder of the receiving player. This is best judged by whether or not the player catches the ball over head or in the area of body mass, both of which would indicate a good throw. Because of the instructional nature of this activity, if the throw is not considered in straight, the lineout will be replayed with the same team making the throw.

Second Jumpers: The second set of jumpers may begin a backwards motion while the ball is being thrown, but may not move more than 3 meters before catching the ball. Upon catching or gathering the ball, they must still pass back to the scrumhalf or another player.

Defending Players: Defending players may jump for the ball but only straight up and not into the tunnel. If the ball is thrown to a place where the defending players can catch it without jumping into the tunnel, then play continues. If, during the course of a lineout, either team knocks the ball forward, the opposing team can gather the ball and play continues. This will be considered an advantage of possession gained, and no further advantage (advantage of territory) will apply.

Infield Movement: Once a player has received the ball directly from a lineout jumper, they may run with the ball; however they must cross the centerline of the tunnel behind their second jumper and behind, or on “strong side” of the field only, away from the area of the lineout (between the position of the lineout participants and the opposite touchline). Otherwise it will be considered dangerous play and the player will be penalized for barging.

Coaching Directive: Coaches should not coach or attempt to engineer ways for a non-throwing team to “steal the ball back” in a lineout. For both safety and educational purposes, the significant advantage the AFR lineout gives to the throwing team is intended to be punitive against the non-throwing team. A non-throwing team’s only opportunity to regain possession comes from poor throwing or ball handling of the throwing team, not through any action of their own.

Lineout Safety: The nature of the lineout presents a significant opportunity for incidental contact between players, particularly if players do not stay on their feet. When a lineout becomes contested, all players who are attempting to gather the ball must remain on their feet. If any player goes to ground, or, if in the course of contesting, the ball becomes unplayable or unsafe (such as when two players are wrestling for the ball), then the referee should stop play immediately and order the lineout replayed with the same team throwing in.

*****RULE 12 - Open Field Kicking**

Tactical, open field kicking is permitted; however this type of kicking is discouraged as it usually results in turning over the ball. If the referee judges that a high kicked ball is going to result in contact between players contesting for the ball, the Referee should whistle the ball dead in the air, and award a scrum to the defending kicking team at the place of the kick. When a ball is kicked to touch, if the kick is taken behind the 50 (half way line), the lineout is marked where it went out in the air. If the kick is taken in front of the 50, the lineout is marked from where the kick was taken. Kicking a loose ball ahead on the ground is permitted provided that it is done safely, with no other players in immediate proximity reaching for or attempting to gather the ball. If such a kick is made, traditionally referred to as a “Fly Hack”, it will be penalized as dangerous play.

RULE 13 - “22 Meter”

The “22” is marked by the referee rapidly pacing off a distance approximating 25% of the field from the goal line. This distance, while not actually 22 meters in length, will maintain its reference to the senior game and be referred to as “the 22”.

There are three situations that would call for a restart from “the 22”:

1. A kickoff goes into the in goal area before being played. The receiving team may choose to immediately

touch the ball down and restart play with a **toe and throw** at the center of the 22. The attacking team lines up on the referee's mark and the defending team retreats 10 meters or back to the half way line, whichever is closest. Failure to touch the ball down immediately indicates an intention to play the ball, and play then continues.

2. A ball carrier attempting to score who is already in the opponents' in-goal area either steps on or over the dead ball line, or is tackled before touching the ball down, no try is awarded and a 22 meter **toe and throw** will be awarded to the defending team. The attacking team lines up on the referee's mark and the defending team retreats 10 meters or back to the half way line, whichever is closest.

3. If a player carrying the ball is tackled in their own in-goal area, play continues. If they step over the dead ball line or throw to a player who is standing over the dead ball line, the ball is then dead and the opposing team is awarded a **toe and throw** in an attacking position on the defenders' 22. The defenders must line up 10 meters back or on the goal line, whichever is closest. A ball thrown forward in the in-goal area results in a turnover scrum, set 5 meters from the goal line.

RULE 14 - Penalties

We hope penalties will be few and far between. Penalties in the Hawk division may be taken as follows:

1. **Toe and Throw** restart
2. Kick to touch, where the kicking, or non-offending, team is given the throw in at the lineout where the ball goes in to touch

At all penalties, the offending team must retreat 5-10 meters depending upon the size of the field. The referee has the option of a 3 minute sin bin for players if a referee judges that appropriate (yellow card). The offender must remain at the back of the in-goal area while their team plays shorthanded. Players may be ejected from the game (red card) for dangerous play, repeated offenses, as in continual dropping of flags and not returning them or for persistent transgressions of the spirit of sportsmanship as the referee sees fit.

(End of Rules of Play: Hawks)

8. UPDATED Eagles Rules of Play-Updated 2015

RULE 1 - Teams

Teams should consist of 7 players on the field at any time. Open substitutions are allowed at any break in the play to ensure that all players get equal playing time. A player may be substituted for another player and return to the game. In order to facilitate play and if agreed to by the coaches, a game may be played with more or fewer players. The number of players on each side should be equal at all times, unless a player has been temporarily removed or ejected for foul play, in which case a team must continue with fewer players. See Rule 14 for more information. (This is all determined by the coaches, the field size and if it will impede the game...too many kids takes away the open space and slows the game)

A team should have players designated as follows: A Hooker, Two Props, a Scrum-half, Fly-Half, Center and a Wing. Players should be rotated over the course of a season to learn about each position if possible. Over the course of a season, all players have the opportunity to be the captain of their team and participate in the coin toss procedure.

The toss is always called by the team that traveled the furthest. The team that wins the toss has 2 choices: they may choose to Kick or Defend by choosing to receive the ball on a particular end. The opposing team will then be given the remaining choice. Over the course of a season all players should have the opportunity to be the captain, and to make kicks.

RULE 2 - Game

Games should be for a length of 20 minutes, consisting of two 10 min. halves with a 2-3 minute half time break. Teams change sides at half time. The 10 minute clock is considered running time, begins with the kick off and ends at the first non-penalty break in play after a full 10 minutes. Time is kept by the referee. If play ends with a try, conversions will still be taken. As a best practice, games should be completed within a 30 minute total time slot to allow for a next game to start. In appropriate situations, the coaches and the referee may agree to "stop the clock" to compensate for unforeseen stoppages in play. (Injury time may play in, and at the discretion of the ref, time could be added. The point is to give them 20 Mins' of playing time.)

RULE 3 - Offside

As in the adult game, a tackle sets an offside line, which is a line through the point of the tackle and parallel to the goal lines. Conversely, there is no offside line if a ball carrier passes the ball before their flag is removed. When there is a tackle, all players must conform to the offside line in order to continue play. Defensive players must actively attempt to retreat behind the point of the tackle before entering play. Loitering, or intentionally interfering with the pass will result in a penalty awarded 5 meters in front of the tackle. The Referee should be vocal in instructing players where they need to be in order to be considered on-side. Once a pass has been made and a new ball carrier is in possession of the ball, the offside line ends. This means that a defensive player that was actively retreating but has not yet reached the offside line may re-enter play as soon as the ball is played by the new ball carrier.

RULE 4 – Making the Pass after a Tag

Upon learning that their flag has been pulled, the ball carrier must quickly pass the ball. If a ball carrier steps into touch before making the pass, play is stopped and a line-out awarded to the defending team. Passes may not be made forward. The ball carrier may stop running first or may pass while in the process of stopping. The timeframe for making this pass is generally defined as being within 2 to 3 seconds. However, it is the greater intention of this rule to insure that the ball carrier passes quickly to the **most available teammate**, rather than allowing them to await the arrival of a more favored teammate. If the ball is not passed quickly to an available teammate, a penalty for delay of game will be awarded to the defenders and the ball turned over at the place where the flag was pulled.

Momentum. In the case of a breakaway, where a tackled ball carrier running at FULL pace is carried by momentum a significant distance (3 -4 meters) past the point of the tackle in the direction of the goal line,

the referee should instruct the player to return to where the tackler is holding their flag before **making the pass OR choose to ruck**. (At the discretion of the referee, if a ball carrier has gone too far past the mark after a tag has been called the result is a turnover for “Delay of Game”.)

RULE 5 – Interfering with the Tackle or Pass

Defenders. After a flag is pulled, **the tackle transaction** takes place and all defenders must retreat to an on-sides position as fast as possible. The approximate time frame of 2 to 3 seconds that is given to the ball carrier to make the pass also applies to the defenders’ responsibility to retreat and clear any passing lane. As part of **the tackle transaction**, the defender who pulled the flag is considered “out of the game” while holding the flag, and remains neutralized until they have properly returned the flag after the tackled ball carrier has made the pass or set the ruck. While waiting for the pass to be made or ruck to be set, they may not attempt to interfere in any way with the ball carrier’s passing of the ball or setting of the ruck. A defender who was not involved with the tackle and who is on-sides as the pass is being made may not interfere with the ball carrier making the pass. However, they may attempt to run forward and intercept the ball once it has left the tackled player’s hands. If the ball carrier chooses to make a pass while still in possession of both flags, players must be aware that no tackle has been made and hence no offside line has been created. With no offside line, any defender may attempt to intercept the ball once a pass has cleared the hands of the player throwing the ball.

Once your flag is pulled you must immediately EITHER (1) Pass the ball (2 second rule) or (2) Ruck by placing the ball on the ground and STEPPING OVER ...creating a set play for the scrum half. NOTE: Once the ball carrier steps over the ball it is now PLAYABLE by both sides.

Coaching Directive - Double Handed Defense is not allowed:

Double Handed Defense refers to a potentially dangerous play whereby a defender attempts to remove both flags at once. Defensive players attempting this move will typically fail to halt their forward momentum when going for the flags, resulting in illegal barging and unacceptable levels of contact. Coaches are directed not to teach the “double handed defense”, and to inform all players that this technique is considered dangerous play. Defensive players who take both flags while in a stationary position should not be penalized; however if they have forward momentum and that momentum carries them into the body of the ball carrier, Referees must penalize the defensive player for barging. **Equally, a ball carrier who runs into a defensive player who is stationary, as can happen when a ball carrier tries to “run through” a “picket fence” defense, should equally be penalized for barging.**

RULE 6 – Going to Ground

A player has gone to ground if, while either carrying or gathering the ball, one knee or more of their body comes in contact with the ground. For purposes of safety, the ground is considered a tackler and any player who goes to ground is considered tackled even though they may still have both flags attached. If they remain in possession of the ball or legally gather the ball, they may **quickly** make a pass while still on the ground (i.e. Pop Pass), or immediately get up and upon gaining their feet, immediately pass the ball within 2-3 seconds to their **most available teammate**. They may not run with the ball, and any additional delay will be penalized. Upon making the pass, the player may rejoin play. A ball carrier may not intentionally go to ground with the intention of putting defending players in an offside position. Players may not intentionally go to ground in a lineout, as the close proximity to other players will nearly always result in dangerous play.

Loose Ball. Players should be instructed to always attempt to gather a loose ball while on their feet. Whether accidental or intentional, going to ground while attempting to gather a loose ball can be dangerous. Referees must judge and immediately penalize any player that puts another player at risk by this play. This is particularly important during kickoffs, where the receiving team must be given a fair and safe chance to gather and play the ball (refer to Rule 8 and the **Intention to Turnover**). If a player does go to ground while gathering the ball, they must not obstruct an opposition player who is on their feet from gathering the ball. When such a situation occurs, any player who is on their feet and within an arm’s length of the player on the

ground, should call out “my ball”, indicating that they are claiming the ball, at which time the player on the ground must release the ball. This must be done before the ball is passed off the ground or the player with the ball regains their feet. The referee may also facilitate this indication on behalf of the players by calling “release”, if such intervention promotes safety and continuity of play. In either case, the referee must then ensure that the player on the ground releases the ball to the opposition, at which time play immediately continues.

RULE 7 - Advantage

An advantage situation occurs when an infraction of the rules creates a situation that is of advantage to the non-offending team, such as a ball knocked forward that is recovered by the opposing team. In such cases, if the non-offending team has gained an advantage from the infraction, the referee will not immediately stop play for a scrum or penalty, but rather allow play to continue until a reasonable opportunity has been given to the non-offending team to take advantage of the offending team’s error. Advantage situations should clearly favor possession over territory.

RULE 8 – Starts and Restarts

The game is started with a drop kick from the center of the field. After a try is scored and the conversion kick taken, play is re-started by scoring team drop kicking from the center of the field to the non-scoring team. Start and re-start kicks must be made with the **intention to turnover**, and not as a clearly intended play designed to re-gain possession of the ball. The kicking team may gather possession of the ball if it is clear that the receiving team was given a fair and adequate opportunity to play the ball, but failed to take advantage of the opportunity. Kicks that go into touch or over the dead ball line (out of bounds), either directly or having bounced, will be taken over. This promotes the skill of controlled kicking. A kicker who repeatedly intentionally kicks the ball into touch or over the dead ball line will be penalized for delay of game at the center of the field. A kicked ball coming to rest in the in-goal area is considered to be in play, and the receiving team may run with the ball or immediately touch it down and restart play at the “22”. See Rule 13 for further information.

In order to facilitate play at this level, an initial knock-on committed while attempting to gather the ball directly from a kick off will be forgiven and play allowed to continue. However, if such a knock-on results in the kicking team gaining immediate possession of the ball, play will also continue.

RULE 9 - Conversions

A conversion is a kick at goal taken after a try has been awarded. The two (2) point conversion is taken as drop kick perpendicular from where the ball was grounded.

RULE 10 - Scrums

Scrums are contestable at the Eagle level but only by the Hookers, who may use only one foot. At no time is pushing allowed in the scrums. Scrums are ordered by the referee for minor infractions as described in these rules, or other impasses in play. Scrums primarily result from passing or knocking the ball forward. All scrums are formed by three players from each team, the hooker and two props (collectively referred to as the front row). A fourth player is designated as a scrumhalf and the remaining three players form a back line. The back line players must line up at least 3 meters back from the center line of the scrum. The Referee should verbally control the scrum at all times (“crouch, bind, set”) and ensure that the front rows come together safely and stay together safely until the scrum has ended.

Setting the Scrum: The scrum begins with the players being brought together in a **full bind**, defined as when the shoulders of all 6 players are in contact. The **full bind** body position prevents stomping and shin kicking, and must be maintained until the scrum has ended. The props must bind correctly, with the Tight Head prop’s right arm going above the Loose Head prop’s arm.

Striking for the ball: Only hookers may contest and strike for the ball, and with one foot only. The other foot must remain beneath them, supporting their weight. A prop striking for the ball or a hooker throwing both feet forward will be penalized for dangerous play. Any excessive kicking or any stomping will be also be penalized, though maintaining the **Full Bind** should prevent this. *Hookers may not intentionally kick the*

ball thru the opposition's front row. If the ball becomes un-playable in the scrum the scrum will be replayed with the same team having the put in.

Putting in the Ball: Once the referee has indicated that the bind is correct, the scrumhalf may place the ball into the tunnel. Signaling between the scrumhalf and the hooker may be physical, verbal or both. The ball must enter the tunnel and pass in front of the Loose Head prop's feet and must exit behind the scrum, having passed between the feet of any player or players. If the ball comes directly out of the tunnel on either side of the scrum, the scrum will be replayed. The defending scrumhalf may not cross the center line of the scrum until the ball has correctly emerged from the scrum. The scrum ends once the ball has emerged from between the feet of a player or players in the scrum, at which time the scrum may break. Once the ball has emerged, either scrumhalf or any other player may pick up the ball and run with it, continuing play. All players must remain on their feet when gathering the ball.

RULE 11 - Contestable Lineouts

The Lineout protocol in American Flag Rugby was designed with several objectives in mind. It introduces the restart convention of the full game while still operating within the safety of a coed, non-contact environment. It is called a "Contestable" lineout, instead of the more confrontational "Contested" lineout. In this variation, the lineout only becomes contested should the ball be thrown poorly, or be knocked on. It is designed to greatly favor the throwing team, reinforcing the idea that needlessly losing possession by running into touch is detrimental to one's team. The lineout will be two players from each team at all times, with no lifting or other contact permitted between the teammates. Lineouts are never marked closer than 5 meters from the goal line. Quick lineouts are not permitted.

The Lineout: The lineout is formed by the thrower, two "jumpers" from each team, and a scrumhalf from each team. The remaining players make up a back line. There is no lifting or other contact permitted between jumpers on the same team or with the other team. A lineout may not be taken quickly, or at any time before all players are in the correct positions. A lineout is never marked closer than 5 meters from the goal line.

Positioning: The forward jumpers must stand 3 meters from the touchline. Spacing between them is determined by the first two jumpers fully extending their inside arm toward their opposite number. With arms fully extended, the player's fingertips should not be able to touch. The second set of jumpers should line up directly behind the first, with a distance to their teammate equal to the gap between the two first jumpers. This creates a square of jumpers, approximately of 1.5 meters on each side, positioned 3 meters in from the touch line.

Scrumhalf: A scrumhalf should be positioned between the jumpers approximately three meters back from the centerline of the lineout, also referred to as the tunnel. The remaining players must retreat 5 meters from the centerline of the tunnel.

The Throw: Throws should be of an overhead two-handed type, similar to the throw most young players are familiar with from soccer; however any type of throw is acceptable while skills are developing. The ball must travel at least 3 meters before being caught (referee's judgment). The ball must be received by one of the jumpers. Upon catching the ball, a jumper may not run with the ball, rather they must pass it back to the scrumhalf or another player. This may include the thrower entering the field, or the first jumper peeling backwards. The Scrumhalf may not enter the line, or otherwise directly receive the throw.

Straight Throw: To be considered thrown straight, the ball must travel on a line no further off the center line of the lineout than the inside shoulder of the receiving player. This is best judged by whether or not the player catches the ball over head or in the area of body mass, both of which would indicate a good throw. Because of the instructional nature of this activity, if the throw is not considered in straight, the lineout will be replayed with the same team making the throw.

Second Jumpers: The second set of jumpers may begin a backwards motion while the ball is being

thrown, but may not move more than 3 meters before catching the ball. Upon catching or gathering the ball, they must still pass back to the scrumhalf or another player.

Defending Players: Defending players may jump for the ball but only straight up and not into the tunnel. If the ball is thrown to a place where the defending players can catch it without jumping into the tunnel, then play continues. If, during the course of a lineout, either team knocks the ball forward, the opposing team can gather the ball and play continues. This will be considered an advantage of possession gained, and no further advantage (advantage of territory) will apply.

Infield Movement: As the ball is throw into play for the restart via a lineout and caught by one of the two jumpers (they still are not allowed to immediately run with the ball and must pass it before it can be advanced) it must be passed backwards to any of the backs or the person throwing the ball into play for the lineout, when he/ she is re-entering the field of play. **Unlike the Hawk level; the Eagles are allowed to run to the weak/ short side of the field BUT ONLY IF the weak side lane is open due to a defender being out of position.** Otherwise it will be considered dangerous play and the player will be penalized for barging. **(I.E. if the weak side is open due to poor defensive positioning running to the short side is allowed, if the inside lane is defended the ball must be taken wide or it will be an automatic penalty for barging.)** Coaches should instruct their players to try and play the ball to the wide side of the field to avoid being called for barging. *(In preparation for the next level of play we do not want to discourage players from tactical thinking and using the whole field, however, it is still flag / non-contact, and we would encourage the ball carriers to play the ball to the wide side of the field to avoid contact / injury)*

Coaching Directive: Coaches should not coach or attempt to engineer ways for a non-throwing team to “steal the ball back” in a lineout. For both safety and educational purposes, the significant advantage the AFR lineout gives to the throwing team is intended to be punitive against the non-throwing team. A non-throwing team’s only opportunity to regain possession comes from poor throwing or ball handling of the throwing team, not through any action of their own.

Lineout Safety: The nature of the lineout presents a significant opportunity for incidental contact between players, particularly if players do not stay on their feet. When a lineout becomes contested, all players who are attempting to gather the ball must remain on their feet. If any player goes to ground, or, if in the course of contesting, the ball becomes unplayable or unsafe (such as when two players are wrestling for the ball), then the referee should stop play immediately and order the lineout replayed with the same team throwing in.

***RULE 12 - Open Field Kicking

Tactical, open field kicking is permitted; however this type of kicking is discouraged as it usually results in turning over the ball. If the referee judges that a high kicked ball is going to result in contact between players contesting for the ball, the Referee should whistle the ball dead in the air, and award a scrum to the defending kicking team at the place of the kick. When a ball is kicked to touch, if the kick is taken behind the 50 (half way line), the lineout is marked where it went out in the air. If the kick is taken in front of the 50, the lineout is marked from where the kick was taken. Kicking a loose ball on the ground ahead is permitted provided that it is done safely, with no other players in immediate proximity reaching for or attempting to gather the ball. If such a kick is made, traditionally referred to as a “Fly Hack”, it will be penalized as dangerous play.

RULE 13 - “22 Meter”

The “22” is marked by the referee rapidly pacing off a distance approximating 25% of the field from the goal line. This distance, while not actually 22 meters in length, will maintain its reference to the senior game and be referred to as “the 22”. There are three situations that would call for a restart from “the 22”:

1. A kickoff goes into the in goal area before being played. The receiving team may choose to immediately touch the ball down and restart play with a **toe and throw** at the center of the 22. The attacking team lines up on the referee's mark and the defending team retreats 10 meters or back to the half way line, whichever is closest. Failure to touch the ball down immediately indicates an intention to play the ball, and play then continues.

2. A ball carrier attempting to score who is already in the opponents' in-goal area either steps on or over the dead ball line, or is tackled before touching the ball down, no try is awarded and a 22 meter **toe and throw** will be awarded to the defending team. The attacking team lines up on the referee's mark and the defending team retreats 10 meters or back to the half way line, whichever is closest.

3. If a player carrying the ball is tackled in their own in-goal area, play continues. If they step over the dead ball line or throw to a player who is standing over the dead ball line, the ball is then dead and the opposing team is awarded a **toe and throw** in an attacking position on the defenders' 22. The defenders must line up 10 meters back or on the goal line, whichever is closest. (A ball thrown forward in the in-goal area results in a turnover scrum, set 5 meters from the goal line.)

RULE 14 - Penalties

We hope penalties will be few and far between. Penalties in the Eagle division may be taken as follows:

1. **Toe and Throw** restart

2. **Kick to touch**, where the kicking, or non-offending, team is given the throw-in at the lineout where the ball goes in to touch.

At all penalties, the offending team must retreat 5-10 meters. The referee has the option of a 3 minute sin bin for players if a referee judges that appropriate (yellow card). The offender must remain at the back of the in-goal area while their team plays shorthanded. Players may be ejected from the game (red card) for dangerous play, repeated offenses, as in continual dropping of flags and not returning them or for persistent transgressions of the spirit of sportsmanship as the referee sees fit.

(End of Rules of Play: Eagles)

(End of Document.)