



Overtime Sports Bozeman Men's Flag Football Rulebook 2018

Contents

I General Overview

- 6 vs 6 non blocking/contact
- Two 20-minute halves
- Must cross orange cone in middle of field for a first down
- 6 point touchdowns
- Choice of 1 or 2 extra points on PATs (3 paces for 1 pt., 8 paces for 2 pts.)
- Two point conversion attempts may be intercepted and returned for 2 points.
- Dead ball on all fumbles – Laterals CAN be intercepted and returned (Live Ball)
- Quarterbacks cannot snap the ball to themselves
- Running clock except for final two minutes of second half (If game is within 16 points)
- Ties during regular season stay as ties
- Referees will shout out rush count at start of every snap. The rush count will be as follows: "1-apple, 2-apple, 3-apple, 4-apple, 5-apple!" in all yardage situations. Offensive and Defensive players are not allowed to run UNTIL the referee has finished the cadence.

- Four-Downs-and-out format applies during playoffs over-time from 2nd cone
- Flag Football is a no contact sport. Blocking, (play is blown dead and a five yard penalty will ensue) at the line of scrimmage, downfield or contact during pass routes or flag pulls will not be allowed
- Receivers need only one foot in bounds with possession of the ball to be considered “in bounds”

II Pre Game Procedures

A Team Size

Each team shall field no more than 6 players. If both captains can agree, a team may play with 5 players, otherwise the team with 5 players must forfeit.

*Picking up to two non-roster players as subs during non-playoff games is allowed.

B Game Preparation

Games will start no later than 10-minutes past the scheduled start time. At that time, it is up to the referee or staff member and opposing captain to allow play.

Team captains will Ro-Sham-Bo (rock, paper, scissors) at the start of the game for kickoff choice. The winning team captain can choose: 1) to start game with possession of the ball or to start the 2nd half with possession of the ball or 2) choose which goal to defend. The losing captain then get choice on the remaining option. Teams flip flop direction at the start of the second half, with the team that started the game on defense starting the second half on offense. There are no kick-offs. Play starts 5 (between one point and two-point conversion lines) paces/yard from the goal line.

III The Game

A Time

Play will be divided into (2) 20-minute halves. The team starting the first half on defense will start the second half on offense. The clock will run continuously for the first 38 minutes of the game, except during timeouts, serious injuries, stoppages, or referee's decision to stop the clock. Each team is allowed 3 timeouts per game. The 30-second play clock starts up again at the referee's instruction after the timeout has ended. *NOTE: The clock does not stop on first downs or fumbles*

If a game is within **16 points** or less during the final 2 minutes of the game, the referee shall stop the game clock if:

- An incomplete pass is thrown
- A player ends a play by going out of bounds
- Either team scores (clock will remain off until the opposing team snaps the ball after a PAT attempt; the clock does not run during extra points)
- Change of possession
- A penalty which must be marked off occurs
- A team declares a punt and their "30 seconds" (see below) has elapsed – the clock will resume for the punt and the ensuing return. It will be stopped when the returner is down and up until the first snap from scrimmage
- A team calls a time-out (teams have 1 minute in the huddle for time-outs).

For the entire game, the offensive team has 30 seconds to snap the ball (20 seconds in the huddle) once the referee spots the ball. Referees will normally call out "10 seconds" to indicate 10 seconds remaining on the play clock to snap the ball. Referees may count down from 5, however this is done as a courtesy and is not required. If a referee feels the play clock is being taken advantage of, they can:

- On the first recognized abuse – Stop the Clock
- On subsequent abuses – Stop clock, and penalize the offense a delay of game – 5 paces/yards

1 Mercy Rule:

If a team losing by 25 or more points with 3 minutes remaining in the game, the game will be called unless the losing team has the ball. If the team that is behind has possession of the ball, then the game will end when they lose possession of the ball if they are still behind by 25 or more points

B First Downs

Each team shall have 4 downs to either score or earn another first down. First downs are achieved when team crosses two orange cones based on their original field position. If a team fails to score or earn a first down, possession will go to the other team. Offensive teams may elect to punt on fourth downs.

Rule Clarification: If a player passes the first down marker and then commits an “in-progress” penalty at the end of the run (i.e. flag guarding, illegal contact, illegal forward lateral) that would push him/her back behind the already passed first down marker, the player will still be awarded the first down, but not an additional first down for passing the first down cone again. The player does not lose the 1st down but is penalized by having to add the penalized yards to complete their NEXT first down.

C Scoring

Touchdowns are awarded 6 pts. Extra points: 3 paces off the goal line = 1 pt., 8 paces = 2 points. 1 point attempts cannot be returned, a turnover on a one point attempt is a dead ball. A 2 point attempt can be returned by the defense for 2 points

NOTE: A player intercepting a pass in the end zone or catching a punt in the end zone cannot be tackled for a safety UNLESS he has previously crossed the plane of the end zone and then come back into the end zone. If a player intercepts a pass in the end zone and attempts to return the interception that is tackled, this is considered a touchback (8 yard line), not a safety.

Safeties: A safety will be scored if:

- A player is tagged down in his/her own end zone (not on a punt return)
- A player runs out of bounds in his/her own end zone
- A player snaps the ball out of the end zone
- The offensive team fumbles the ball in its own end zone

As a result, the team on defense receives 2 points, and the team on offense must now punt a “free” kick from their own 8-paces/yard line.

D Punts

A punt must be declared and cannot be faked. All punts are “free” punts. A team need not snap during a punt. A dropped snap during a punt is not a fumble. Punts must be kicked. Punts cannot be thrown. Punts are “open” plays, i.e. there are no male/female rules for punts. The defensive team (receiving team) on a punt is required to have 4 players on the line before the ball is kicked. **NO DOWNFIELD BLOCKING or BLOCKING AT THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE.** Failing to allow the punting team to release downfield after the ball had been kicked is considered a penalty. The kicking team may not cross the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked.

The receiving team may not raise hands or jump to block a punt. If a punt is “shanked” and caught it is a live ball and is returnable. If the ball comes into contact with the ground or a member of the kicking team after it has been punted it is a dead ball, spotted at the point where it hit the ground or player, and may not be returned. A ball punted through the end zone comes back to 3 paces/yards off the goal line. If a player

drops the ball in the end zone, the ball is again spotted 3 paces/yards out from the goal line and is not counted as a safety.

E Turnovers

A change of possession can only occur due to downs or an interception on a forward pass or on a lateral. A fumble is not a turnover. The ball is dead at the point of the fumble and the offense retains possession. A picked off lateral is a “live ball” turnover, teams should lateral at their own risk.

F Rush

In order to better standardize the rush, the line judge will be responsible for shouting out the rush count for both teams. The rush will be as follows: “1-APPLE, 2-APPLE, 3-APPLE, 4-APPLE, 5-APPLE, GO!!”

Players may not cross the line of scrimmage and pursue the quarterback until ‘go’ is heard.

If an OTS referee is unable to yell the rush count, play will continue as normal with a defensive player allowed to rush in after 5 seconds. An OTS referee can choose to have the down replayed or a 5 yard penalty if deemed that the lack of a rush count adversely impacted the play.

G Continuance of Play

Play shall continue until:

- Ball-carrier has at least one flag pulled by an opponent (see flag specifics for the few exceptions/additions concerning flag pulling)
- Ball-carrier leaves the field of play
- Ball-carrier scores
- Ball touches the ground as a result of a fumble, punt, incomplete pass, or while in the hands of the receiving player. (If the ball is pinned between the ground and the ball carriers hand the play is dead.)
- Ball-carrier’s knee touches the ground. SPOT OF THE BALL
- Defensive player makes a legitimate attempt to pull the flag but is unable to do so in the eyes of the referee (flag-guarding, shirt covering up flags, flags all bunched in one spot on the belt).

The ball will be spotted wherever the player’s hips are at the time the ball-carrier’s flag is pulled. The idea of holding the ball out to break the plane only applies for the end zone, and not for first down situations. If the ball crosses the plane of the goal line before the ball-carrier’s flag has been pulled it will result in a touchdown (ball extension), even if the player’s hips are not over the goal line.

- A player who catches the ball and lands with one or 2 feet across the goal line, but has his flag pulled before he pulls the ball across the plane of the goal will not be awarded a touchdown. The ball will be spotted at the point of where the ball was at the time he was called “down.” The ball must cross the goal line in order for a touchdown to be awarded.

H Flag Specifics

- No flag guarding
- Shirt must be tucked inside the flag belt and flags must be securely attached. Loose hanging articles (i.e. sweatshirts, long t-shirts, etc.) that are held/ripped will not result in a holding penalty, unless in the referees eyes player was not attempting to go for flag or it is deemed that the player made minimal effort to let go of the offensive player.
- Any ball-carrier whose flags are (in refs opinion) not accessible to be pulled will be down at the first point of contact with the defense.
- Any ball-carrier who has a flag or both flags missing for whatever reason (falls out, accidentally pulled before reception, not noticed before snap, etc.) will be down at the first point of contact.
- Players may leave their feet to pull flag.
- Spin moves ARE allowed. Jumping to the side or back to avoid a flag pull is also allowed. This should not be confused with diving. However, jumping or spinning into a player is not allowed and will be assessed a 5 yard penalty from the spot of the infraction.
- The “bobbling catch” – Players bobbling an eventual catch that have their flag pulled after the ball first touches the receivers hands will be down at the point of the flag pull – even if the player did not have full possession until after the pull. Players cannot pull the flag early or make contact to prevent a person from catching a pass that deflects off their own hands.

I End of Game

Games ending in a tie score will be recorded as tie games during the regular season play. Ties count as one point toward post-season seedings.

1 Overtime

During regular season play, all ties will be scored as ties. In the playoffs, however, the Four-downs-and-out format will apply. A Ro-Sham-Bo between the team captains before the start of overtime will decide first or second possession. Teams will attempt to score in the same end zone. Each team will then have 4 downs to score from the 2nd cone from the goal. If a team scores, they will have the opportunity to go for one or two on the PAT. The game will be decided when one team scores more points in the rotation. No first downs will be awarded in overtime except in the case of an

automatic first down from a penalty. Interceptions will result in a turnover and may not be returned for any points. Two point conversions may be returned to end the game.

V Penalties

OTS penalties are divided into two categories:

- 1) In-progress Penalties
- 2) Regular Penalties

In-progress penalties are assessed according to the place the ball is at when the violation occurs. These penalties do not result in a replay of the down. Simultaneous in-progress penalties will offset at the spot of the infraction, not the original line of scrimmage. Non-simultaneous in-progress penalties will offset at the point of the offensive infraction. In all other situations, penalties committed by both teams on the same play will offset with the play being done over.

A In-Progress Penalties

Blocking

Players are not allowed to block to give their runner any advantage, this includes “screening” a defensive player. They should not impede the progress of the defender towards the runner in any way. A block does not have to be intentional on the part of the blocker, if the runner uses another player in a way which impedes the defender’s progress to the ball carrier, a block can be called. Play will be blown dead at block or at end of play and 5 yards will be marked off where the block occurred.

Defensive Obstruction

A defensive player slowing down the offensive player (grabbing, at the shoulders, grabbing at the legs, pulling on players clothing, tackling, or otherwise initiating contact with the ball carrier) so that he or another player can pull the flag will be assessed an automatic 5-yard penalty from the point at which the flag is eventually pulled. This penalty also applies if one player impedes the progress of another player by making a tackle (example: hooking the player with one arm while pulling the flag with the other are). *Note: This is not basketball so ‘taking a charge’ does not apply as an excuse for defensive obstruction.*

Diving

Jumping or diving into or over another player (including diving in general to break the plane or secure extra yardage) is not allowed and will be assessed a 5 yard penalty from the spot at which the player left their feet. Diving is only allowed by offensive players trying to make a catch, or defensive players attempting to pull a flag, but contact ensuing from this dive will be assessed as “illegal contact” with a 5-yard penalty. Please note that diving is up to the discretion of the referees. Just because a player falls and leans into the end zone does not mean they are guilty of diving.

Flag Guarding

Runners cannot guard their flags by using their hands, arms, body, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove a flag. This results in a penalty of 5 yards from the spot of the violation. Examples of flag guarding are but not limited to:

- Placing or swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt
- Placing the ball in possession over the flag
- Lowering the shoulder in such a manner which places the arm over the flag belt

Hazardous Play

This penalty deals with dangerous or out-of-control play by a member who has the potential to injure another player (non-intentionally). If an OTS ref deems that a player has put other players at risk or has unnecessarily run into a player or caused a collision, a Hazardous Play penalty can be called. Comments like “I was just going for the ball” or “they were in my way” are not acceptable if the play of a member is deemed to be excessively dangerous. 5 yard penalty added on to result of play or from line of scrimmage.

Illegal Contact – Offense (downfield)

Ball carrier lowering the shoulder, initiating a stiff arm, jumping into a defensive player, or otherwise initiating contact with a defensive player. This will be considered illegal contact on the part of the offense. It will be penalized 5 yards from the spot of the infraction.

Intentional Strip

Because laterals can be intercepted and returned any attempt to knock the ball loose or strip the ball from an offensive player will not be allowed and a 5-yard penalty will be added to the end of the play. This rule also holds true for receptions. A ref can deem that a player has made a reception and then has been stripped of the ball by a defensive player instead of ruling an incompleteness. All attempts made by defensive players should be made at the flags and not at stripping or knocking the ball loose. Strips occurring in the end zone can be awarded a touchdown by a ref.

B Regular Penalties

Box Rule

When the offense starts a down within 3 yards of the opposing team's goal line, it is a violation for the offense to run the ball within the tackles (3 yards of either side of the referee's spot). The resulting penalty shall be 5 yards and a repeat of the down. The penalty can be declined by the defense.

"Clear Path" Penalty/Intentional Holding

In situations where a turnover has occurred and a player has a clear path to the end zone, and a defensive player makes no attempt to pull the flag but instead holds or pulls a player down (especially on a returned attempt on a 2 point conversion interception) the offensive team will be awarded 1st and goal (one opportunity for a returned 2 point conversion) at the 3 pace mark from the end zone).

Defensive Checking

5-pace/yard penalty from line of scrimmage, replay down. The "bump and run" coverage will not be allowed. No player may initiate contact at the line of scrimmage or down field in order to slow down a receiver. There is no 5-yard bump zone.

Defensive Pass Interference

Spot Foul – Ball is spotted at the spot of the infraction and offense is awarded an automatic first down. If the pass interference is in the end zone. The ball comes out to the 1 pace/yard line and it will be 1st down and goal.

Defensive interference is not normally called if two players have equal position and are both making legitimate attempts at the ball. Pass interference will be called if a player

- 1) Comes over the back of another player who is trying to make a catch
- 2) Hooks a player's waist or arms as they are trying to make the catch
- 3) Interferes with the player running a route, whether the pass is intended for them or not (includes holding, tripping, hip checks, etc.).

Please note that pass interference does not specifically need to be intentional. A defensive player who trips a player going for a pass does not need to have intentionally tripped the player to be cited for pass interference. The normal of practice in the NFL of pass interference being called for a player screening the offensive receiver is not considered pass interference with OTS unless there is significant contact or other interference.

Illegal Contact at or Behind the Line of Scrimmage

In cases where an offensive player initiates any contact at or behind the line of scrimmage before the ball crosses the line of scrimmage (at the refs discretion) a 5 paces/yards from the line of scrimmage will be ruled and the down will be replayed. If this contact is deemed excessive by the ref, an “unnecessary roughness” penalty of 10 paces/yards can be assessed in addition to “illegal contact,” thus making the total penalty 15 paces/yards

Illegal/Early Rush

5 paces/yards, offense has option to decline penalty. Defensive players responding to an act by the offense (fake handoff, quarterback faking a sprint to the line) will be given a 1 yard neutral zone in which to reset their position before a penalty is called.

Illegal Forward Pass (By QB or by Offensive Lateral)

Penalty results in an automatic 5-yard penalty and loss of down.

Note: Illegal forward pass is a declinable penalty, thus an intercepted illegal pass may be returned by the defense.

This penalty can occur when:

- A quarterback throws a forward pass and has already crossed the line of scrimmage. This penalty results in a loss of down if not declined by the defense and a 5-yard penalty from the line of scrimmage. This penalty can be declined by the defense
- An offensive player illegally pitches the ball forward on a lateral attempt past the line of scrimmage. This will result in a 5-yard penalty from the spot of the infraction once the play is complete. Please note the rule clarification above regarding forward laterals after the offensive team has already crossed the 1st down marker during play.
- A team throws more than one forward pass (5 yards from the spot of the infraction and a loss of a down)

Illegal Procedure

Players must be set or in motion sideways before the ball is snapped. Players may not be in motion towards the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped, and only one player may be in motion at the time of the snap. This will result in a dead ball, 5-yard penalty and repeat the down.

This includes sneak plays:

- If the player calling the cadence does not receive the snap, the play will not stand and will result in a 5-pace/yard penalty and repeat of the down.
- One person must call the cadence and receive the snap. Violation of this will result in a 5-pace/yard penalty and repeat of down. This person CANNOT be positioned as a “wide receiver”
- Silent snaps will not be allowed.
- The QB may not be in motion and then receive the snap, or this will result in a 5 pace/yard penalty and repeat of down.
- The QB may not snap the ball to him/herself

Intentional Grounding

This penalty will be called when a passer facing an imminent loss of yardage because of pressure from the defense, throws a forward pass, without a realistic chance of completion and without any potential receivers in the immediate area. This will result in a loss of down (i.e. if it was a 1st down during the penalty, it is now 2nd down) and a 5 yard penalty from the original line of scrimmage, or spot of the foul whichever is greater.

Offensive Pass Interference

The offensive team may not initiate contact while running a passing route. Offensive pass interference can occur any time after the ball is snapped. This includes contact before the ball is in the air (pushing off to create space, setting picks while running a route etc.), or after the ball is in the air. Once the ball is in the air, offensive pass interference will be called the same as defensive pass interference. 5 pace/yard penalty from the line of scrimmage, and loss of down. Remember: Some acceptable incidental contact will occur while running routes and within the normal course of play. Teams are allowed to run crossing routes, but may not set picks while running those crossing routes.

Offsides (offensive or defensive)

5 paces/yards, play is ruled dead immediately. Teams do have an option to decline, down is replayed. Includes players lining up offsides or false starting (moving/jumping across line) before the snap.

Unnecessary Roughness

This includes any illegal act such as grabbing jerseys, tackling a player, excessive pushing, etc. This behavior will result in a 10-pace/yard penalty from point of the infraction and automatic first down. An “unnecessary roughness” penalty of 10 paces/yards can be assessed in addition to any penalty thus making the total penalty

15 paces/yards. Extreme roughness may result in ejection from the game and or league if deemed necessary by the referee and league staff.

Any player throwing a punch or intentionally shoving another player will be automatically ejected. Any player ejected from a game for fighting will receive an automatic minimum 1 game suspension (includes playoff games).

Un-sportsmanlike Conduct (Dead-ball)

A player can be assessed an un-sportsmanlike conduct penalty 10 yards/paces at any point by an OTS referee. A referee will normally warn a player once, with the second warning resulting in a 10 yard penalty from the spot of the ball. A player incurring 2 or more un-sportsmanlike conduct penalties will be removed from the game.

Players can incur an un-sportsmanlike conduct penalty from:

- “Excessive” arguing with a referee
- Cursing or gesturing at an opposing player or team
- Threatening another player or referee
- Any other act which might be deemed “not sportsmanlike” by and OTS referee (including taunting, spiking ball at another player, etc.).

An OTS employee may make the determination that a participant or a fan has acted in such an unsportsmanlike manner that the OTS employee will recommend a suspension for that person. This recommendation will be forwarded to the League Director for consideration. The League Director will then have sole discretion to suspend a player for an appropriate amount of time.

“Yell” Rule

If a player yells at player from the opposing team in an attempt to cause them to drop a pass, this will be considered a violation of the “Yell” rule. It will result in a penalty of 5 yards and a repeat of a down if called on the defense, or 5 yards and a loss of down if called on the offense.

VI Miscellaneous

- Loss of down penalties, which occur on fourth down, will result in a change of possession
- Snaps must occur with some part of the ball touching the ground before the play starts.

- Receivers need only one foot in bounds for a reception. If in the referee's eyes a receiver would be able to legally catch a pass but was pushed out of bounds by a defender while in the air a catch will be awarded.
- Receivers intentionally leaving the field of play are not eligible to touch a pass as the first receiver, but may catch a deflected pass. This includes the back of the end zones.
- Excessive roughness can get a player/team ejected from the game and/or league.
- Injuries – Any player for whom an injury timeout has been called must sit out a minimum of one play before they can re-enter the game, even if their team has no subs available.
- Balls and Ball Size –OTS will provide a football or a team may provide an official sized football. No Junior sized footballs allowed.

Overtime Sports Bozeman Referees reserve the right to interpret these rules at their judgment in the case of any kind of unique or special play. All judgments by OTS staff and refs are FINAL!!

VII League Policies

Refs: Overtime Sports Bozeman will provide paid referee(s) for each game.

Referees will have final say in any judgment call or issue regarding rules. Refs have the power to remove any player(s) from a game or league if deemed necessary. OTS referees are considered part of the field Balls Bouncing off them can be caught.

Forfeits

If your team forfeits a game during the season, the following rules apply:

- First offense: Loss of game and warning issued
- Second offense: Loss of game and staff reserves the right to remove team from playoffs.
- Third offense: Removal from the league

If you know in advance that your team is going to forfeit a game, we encourage you to email us so as to help us schedule your opponent a game

A situation may arise where the team you are scheduled to play is not present, or calls in late to say they will not be playing. In this case an OTS staff member will attempt to find you a team to play. If a staff member finds you a full team to play, that game will count towards the standings of both teams. It is just as if we had rescheduled you against another team. If however, the team you play is not a full squad but a collection of players from different teams, you will receive a forfeit win and the game will be counted as an exhibition.

The fact that a game will count toward your standings should not discourage you from participating in a game. If your team is recruited to play an extra game that day. This is a free game for you, and will not hurt your overall playoff standing. OTS counts wins, not losses, so this is an extra opportunity for you to move up in the standings.

Playoffs

All eligible teams make the playoffs (teams that have not abused any policies are eligible)

In certain situations teams at or near the bottom of the standings may not advance to the playoffs. Check with the OTS League Director to see if this applies to your league. Playoffs can be single or double elimination.

Seeding

Teams are seeded according to wins and ties. Teams may be dropped from their regular season level based on the above criteria. Teams may be moved to a higher division once the playoffs begin based on their performance and strength of schedule during the regular season.

Teams may play more than one game per day, and/or play games on days/nights other than their regularly scheduled league day/night. OTS reserves the right to schedule playoff games on days/times other than the regularly scheduled league days/times and at different locations in order to complete a season. Any questions regarding rule policies, or eligibility must be addressed before the start of the game with an OTS ref and supervisor.

Player Eligibility

A formal protest may be filed before a playoff game if an opposing player's eligibility is in question. The player in question will be required to provide his/her player information for a roster check. If the player is not on the team's roster the player will not be allowed to participate. If no team rosters are available the player will provide their name, address, phone # and signature in writing to an OTS staff member prior to the start of the game. This qualifies as an official protest. The game will then be played in its entirety as scheduled. Teams will be notified of all rulings on the identified eligibility discrepancy by the following business day. If the protest is proven to be legitimate, it will result in the forfeiture of the game in question. Games subsequent to the protested game may be rescheduled. The above procedure will also apply for any other "logged" protest. Players are asked to observe fair sportsmanship and not have players using other player's names or playing on multiple teams, especially during playoff game. All rulings by OTS staff are considered final.

Staff

To coordinate and run the league, our refs and/or staff will be available at all times to help the league run as smoothly as possible.

League Cancellation/Rainout

Leagues may be cancelled due to existing weather conditions, dangerous or unplayable field conditions, facility constraints, etc. OTS staff makes every effort to play all scheduled games, thus we will not cancel games unless this is absolutely necessary. If a league is cancelled on site, OTS staff will attempt to contact those teams still scheduled to play the remainder of the league day/night. Depending on the time of cancellation, some teams will have to be notified on site. If we do cancel, follow next week's schedule (ex. If April 13th is cancelled teams should follow the April 20th schedule for their next game). The games that are cancelled will be made up at the end of the season if time allows. In extreme circumstances, OTS reserves the right to run a shortened season without refund of schedule matches on days other than our regularly scheduled league day/night.

These policies are designed to make this league run as smoothly as possible, and provide continuity for its participants. Each player in the league is responsible for this information: please advise your team of these policies/rules. Thanks for playing!!

REMEMBER EVERYONE: THIS IS FOR FUN. PLAY SAFE!!