

**Saskatchewan Rugby**  
**5 on 5 Flag Rugby Rules**  
**Updated: November 2020**

**1. PLAYING AREA**

- 1.1. The playing area shall be no greater than 60m x 35m. The minimum field width should be no smaller than 25m (i.e. 5m width per player).
- 1.2. The playing area will be clearly marked, with a clearly marked end zone area and halfway line.
- 1.3. The 5 players on a team will be the only people entitled to be on the playing area during a game. Substitutes and spectators must not be on the playing area during a game.

**2. DURATION OF PLAY**

- 2.1. The duration of play shall be determined by the match organizer. It is recommended that individual games not exceed 30 minutes.
- 2.2. The running of time shall be continuous unless explicitly stopped by the referee.
- 2.3. Games over 12 minutes in duration shall include a halftime break. The duration of halftime shall be at the discretion of the match organizer but should be proportional to the duration of each half (e.g. halves of 7.5 minutes may only require a 1 minute break but halves of 15 minutes should have a 2 minute break).
- 2.4. The game or half ends at the indication of the referee or timekeeper.
  - 2.4.1. If using a method of ending the half other than the traditional “triple blast” of a whistle, this methodology should be confirmed with the teams before the match.

**3. NUMBER OF PLAYERS**

- 3.1. Games will be played with a maximum 5 players on the playing area at any one time.
- 3.2. The number of allowed substitutes will be determined by the match organizer.
- 3.3. A team will forfeit the match if they cannot field 5 players from their roster.
  - 3.3.1. The match organizer will determine any other course of action required following a forfeit as appropriate for their competition (e.g. scoring of forfeited match, replacement players for exhibition game, etc.).

**4. SUBSTITUTES**

- 4.1. Substitutions may be made at any point throughout the match.

- 4.2. Players substituting on must have the proper equipment (flags) prior to stepping into the play area and may not enter the playing area until the player that they are replacing has left the playing area.
- 4.3. All substitutions must be made from the halfway line on the side of the field in front of the team benches (i.e. players leaving and entering the playing area at this location). Exception may be made in the case of injury where the injured player is unable to proceed to this location and must be moved from the field via the closest sideline.

## **5. REFEREES**

- 5.1. Matches may be refereed by any individual with a competent grasp of these rules.
- 5.2. The referee shall be responsible for the management of the game and enforcement of these rules on the field of play.
  - 5.2.1. The referee may position themselves along one touchline or on the field, as is their preference.
  - 5.2.2. The referee may appoint a linesperson(s), including a time/scorekeeper, to manage the sideline(s).
- 5.3. The referee will shout the number of tags that have been made (e.g. "THREE!") when each tag has been made and "TURNOVER!" after the 6th tag.
- 5.4. The referee may delegate a timekeeper to blow the whistle to signal the start and end of the game. All other stoppages will be whistled by the referee, including any decisions to stop game time to deal with an injury or disciplinary issue.

## **6. EQUIPMENT**

- 6.1. Players are required to wear a flag belt with two flags while on the field of play.
  - 6.1.1. The flags must be positioned to have one flag on each hip. Players shall not attempt to gain advantage by placing two flags on a single hip or wearing their flags in any other configuration.
  - 6.1.2. The belt must be worn outside the clothing (it is recommended that players' shirts be tucked in) and flags shall not be concealed.
  - 6.1.3. Playing the ball while wearing flags in an improper configuration or with flags concealed will result in a turnover of possession to the non-offending team.
- 6.2. If a player accidentally loses a flag when they have the ball, it will be considered a tag. This will not count towards number of tags allowed before a turnover.
- 6.3. A player whose belt is malfunctioning shall leave the field of play to repair or replace their equipment.

**6.4.** Players footwear shall conform to the facility's rules regarding footwear (e.g. no metal studs).

## **7. STARTING PLAY**

**7.1.** One team starts each game from the center of the field with a free pass.

**7.2.** If a halftime break is being observed, the team that does not start the game shall start the second half.

**7.3.** When a try is scored, the non-scoring team starts at the center of the field with a free pass. The non-scoring team may proceed to re-start play at their own pace unless the referee has whistled for play to stop provided that the scoring team has all five players back on their own half of the field.

## **8. FREE PASS**

**8.1.** To make a free pass, the ball must be "kicked" a visible distance (commonly referred to as a "tap"). If the kicker is holding it, it must clearly leave the hands. If it is on the ground, it must clearly leave the mark. Once the "kick" has been successfully taken the kicker may play the ball again in order to pass the ball backwards to a member of their own team.

**8.2.** A free pass is used to restart play at any time that play has halted and needs to be restarted, including being awarded to the non-offending team when their opposition infringes the rules.

**8.3.** If the ball travels out of the field of play, the game is restarted with a free pass to the side that was not the last side to touch it inside the field of play

**8.3.1.** If the ball travels out of the field of play into touch (i.e. across the sidelines), the free pass shall be taken at the point where the ball travelled out of play.

**8.3.2.** If the ball travels out of the field of play across the dead ball line (i.e. the back of the end zone), the free pass shall be taken from the point that it was last touched inside the field of play. If the last touch inside the field of play happens within the end zone (regardless of the team who makes the last touch), the free pass shall be taken 5 meters from the goal line.

**8.4. Re-Starting Play After an Infringement:** The defenders must remain **5** meters back from the player making the free pass (who shall do so from the referee's mark). They cannot start moving forward until the ball leaves the hands of the player making the free pass.

**8.5. Re-Starting Play in Open Play or from Touch:** After a tag has been made, the defenders must remain **1** meter back from the player making the free pass. They cannot start moving forward until the ball leaves the hands of the player making the free pass.

## **9. TAG**

- 9.1.** To complete a tag one of the two flags from the ball carrier's belt must be removed.
- 9.2.** The only person who can be tagged is the ball carrier.
- 9.3.** The defender (tagger) must stop, hold the flag above their head, and shout "FLAG!" The flag should then be dropped to the ground to mark the location of the tag. The defender must not deliberately throw the flag away from the place that the tag was made.
- 9.4.** When a tag has been made the ball carrier must then pass the ball immediately (within two strides). If a pass cannot be made within two strides the ball carrier must return to the location of the tag to resume play with a free pass. If a pass is made outside of the allowed two strides, the referee will bring play back to the location of the tag, with the attacking team retaining possession unless they have exhausted their allowed number of tags.
- 9.5.** Six (6) tags in a row leads to a turnover in possession.
- 9.6.** The tag count will be restarted when there is a turnover or when an infringement occurs.

## **10. SCORING**

- 10.1.** A try will be deemed to be scored when an attacking player touches the ball down in the end zone while still in possession of both of their flags.
- 10.2.** A try will be worth 1 point.
- 10.3.** Players may not intentionally dive to score a try.
- 10.4.** A try will be deemed to be scored if the attacking player is in the process of touching the ball down (i.e. making a clear motion to touch the ball to the ground) when their flag is pulled provided that the touch down is successfully completed in that motion.
- 10.5.** If the attacking player's flag is pulled while in the end zone but the player is not making an attempt to touch the ball to the ground, a tag will be called and the attacking team will restart play with a free pass from the goal line.

## **11. PASSING THE BALL**

- 11.1.** The ball can only be passed by the ball carrier in a backwards direction.
- 11.2.** Attackers must not pass the ball forward; towards the defenders' try line.
- 11.3.** Attackers may not hand the ball to another attacker.
- 11.4.** A free pass will be awarded to the opposition if an attacker passes the ball forward or hands the ball to another attacker.
- 11.5.** If the ball is not caught to conclude a pass play will continue unless an infringement (e.g. knock on or forward pass) has occurred.

## **12. KICKING**

**12.1.** There is no kicking of any kind in flag rugby.

## **13. ADVANTAGE**

**13.1.** Not stopping the game when an infringement happens is called 'advantage'.

**13.2.** Referees should play 'advantage' to the non-offending team if there is any chance that they may be advantaged by there being no stoppage in play. For instance, if the non-offending team gets the ball or retains the ball in circumstances that are more favourable than if a free pass was called.

**13.3.** In the case of infringement by the defending team where the attacking team remains in possession, the referee may play advantage to the attacking team by resetting their tag count to zero and allowing play to continue.

**13.4.** The referee should call 'advantage' followed by 'play on' if an advantage is deemed by the referee to occur.

**13.5.** If no advantage occurs within a reasonable period play restarts with a free pass.

**13.5.1.** There shall be no advantage if the non-offending team obtains possession via a knock on and has no ability to make a pass or take evasive action before being tagged (e.g. flag is pulled the moment that the player picks up the ball).

## **14. KNOCK ON**

**14.1.** When a player knocks the ball towards the opponents' try line and does not regain control of the ball before it touches the ground, another player, or the referee, a free pass is awarded to the non-offending team unless an advantage can be played.

## **15. CONTACT**

**15.1.** There shall be no intentional physical contact between players. Contact will not be permitted unless considered incidental. Running directly, purposely, with and without intent to injure the opposition can be considered contact.

**15.2.** The sanction for contact will be a free pass to the non-offending team. Extreme cases of contact will result in the offending player being removed from the pitch. The decision and severity of the penalty is at the discretion of the referee. The match organizer may levy an additional suspension if deemed necessary upon the advice of the referee.

## **16. ATTACKERS**

**16.1.** The ball carrier shall not fend defenders off using their hands or the ball.

- 16.2. The ball carrier shall not guard or shield their flags in any way, including using the ball to block an attempt to remove the flag.
- 16.3. A player cannot spin (a revolution greater than 180 degrees from the line of movement) in order to prevent a defender from making a tag.
  - 16.3.1. Spinning movements will be allowed in other circumstances where a defender is not in position to make a tag (e.g. retrieving a ball far away from the opposition and turning sharply).
- 16.4. In the case of any infringement of 16.1-16.3, a free pass is awarded to the non-offending team.

## **17. DEFENDERS**

- 17.1. Defenders ripping the flag off the belt of the ball carrier (i.e. a tag) stops the ball carrier's progress.
- 17.2. Defenders shall not grab the ball carrier's jersey, shorts, flag belt, or other equipment that is not the flag with the intent to slow the player or make a tag possible.
- 17.3. Defenders shall not purposefully make contact with the ball carrier in the process of making a tag.
- 17.4. In the case of any infringement of 17.2-17.3, a free pass is awarded to the non-offending team.

## **18. OFFSIDE**

- 18.1. Offside only occurs at a tag or restart of play (see 8. Free Pass).
- 18.2. When a tag is made, all players from the defender's team retreat until they are behind where the tag was made. Defenders will be considered offside until they cross that mark plus 1 meter.
- 18.3. If a player is offside and they intercept, prevent, or slow down a pass, they will be penalized and a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending team, unless an advantage can be played.
- 18.4. If the attacking player attempts an offload within two strides of a tag being made (see 9.4 Flag), the defensive player will not be considered offside if they have retreated past the point where the tag was made.

## **19. GOING TO GROUND**

- 19.1. If the ball carrier intentionally goes to ground or a player dives on the ball, a free pass is awarded to the opposition.
- 19.2. If the ball carrier goes to ground unintentionally (e.g. trips), it will be considered to be a tag but will not count towards the count of flags for a turnover.
- 19.3. Players cannot dive for a try or dive on the ball for a try.

## **20. FAIR PLAY**

- 20.1.** All players must play games in a positive spirit following the principles of good sportsmanship.
- 20.2.** In instances of verbal abuse, physical abuse, poor sportsmanship, intentional offending, persistent re-offending, or any other offending deemed unnecessary the referee may send a player from the playing area.
- 20.3.** If a player is sent from the playing area by the referee under 20.2 they must remain off for the remainder of that game and leave the bench area. However, that player can be replaced by another player who has not been sent off.

## **21. FINAL INTERPRETATION**

- 21.1.** If there are differing interpretations of or disagreements with these rules, a final interpretation will be decided by the match organizer. If no match organizer is on site the final call goes to the referee.
- 21.2.** The match organizer, or referee within the context of a single match, shall clarify any interpretations with all participating teams in a timely fashion to ensure fairness of the competition.