FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

All policies and procedures governing Intramural Sport programs at The University of Alabama are outlined in the Intramural Sports Handbook. All flag football games will follow the rules detailed in the 2017-18 NIRSA Flag & Touch Football Rule Book.

PLAYERS AND EQUIPMENT

- **Number of Players:** The game shall be played between two teams of 7 players each. Four players are required to start the game.
- **All players** must sign-in with the supervisor at the event site prior to the event to be eligible to participate.
- **Jerseys:** Players of the opposing teams must wear contrasting colored jerseys, without pockets. Jerseys should be tucked in at all times.
- **Shorts/Pants:** All players are required to wear either shorts or pants. There shall be NO belts, belt loops, pockets, zippers, buttons, or exposed drawstrings on the pants or shorts of the player. Players are not permitted to play in boxer shorts or any other form of undergarments.
- **Shoes:** Regulation rubber soled cleats, plastic cleats, detachable rubber cleats that screw into the shoe, and tennis shoes are the only permissible footwear. Sandals, street shoes, hiking boots, combat boots, or metal spikes are not allowed. No steel cleats, metal tips or shoes with detachable steel cleats that screw onto the shoes may be worn. 5-finger shoes are not allowed.
- **Illegal Equipment:** A player wearing illegal equipment shall not be permitted to play. Types of equipment or substances which shall always be declared illegal include, but are not limited to:
  
  A. Headwear containing any hard, unyielding, stiff material, including billed hats, or items containing exposed knots
  B. Jewelry
  C. Pads, Casts, or Braces worn above the waist
  D. Shoes with metal, ceramic, screw-in, or detachable cleats. **Exception:** Screw in cleats are allowed if the screws are part of the cleat
  E. Shirts or jerseys which do not remain tucked in. Any hood on a coat, sweatshirt, or shirt which does not remain tucked in. Tear-away jerseys or jerseys that have been altered in any manner which produces a knot-like protrusion or creates a tear-away jersey
  F. Shirts or jerseys with names that may be deemed vulgar by the Intramural Sports Staff
  G. Any leg or knee brace deemed unsafe by the Certified Athletic Trainer on staff
  H. Any slippery or sticky foreign substance on any equipment or exposed part of the body
  I. Exposed metal on clothes or person. This includes “O” or “D” rings used to secure flag belts
- **Medical Bracelets:** Any participant required to wear medical bracelets or medical medals will be permitted to do so. They must be taped to the body with medial data visible by the Athletic Trainer on site.
- **Game Ball:** Men shall use the official/regulation size ball only. The regular, intermediate, youth, or junior size football shall be used for Women’s and CoRec games.
- **Flag Belts:** The Intramural Sports Department will provide flag belts to be used during the game. The belt should be positioned with one flag on each side, and one in the center of the back.

FIELD AND TIMING

- **Playing Field:** The playing field is 80 yards long from goal line to goal line and is divided into four, 20-yard zones. There is an end zone that is 10 yards long on each end of the playing field.
- **Timing:** The regulation game shall consist of two 20 minute halves. During the first half and the first 18 minutes of the second half, the clock will run continuously except for timeouts and official’s timeouts.
- **Last Two Minutes:** During the final two minutes of the second half the clock will stop for the following:
  - Incomplete legal or illegal forward pass
  - Player out-of-bounds
  - Safety
  - Team time-out
- Touchdown (after the try)
- Touchback
- Team attempting to illegally consume time
- Change of Possession
- Penalty
- Inadvertent whistle
- Team attempting to conserve time illegally
- Official's time-out
- First down

- **Play Clock:** After a ball is declared ready for play, the offensive team has 25 seconds after the Referee has sounded the whistle to put the ball in play.

- **Start of the Game:** The officials will bring in both teams' captains and have a coin toss. The away team will call the toss. The team that wins the toss will have the option to defer choices for the second half, choose offense or defense, or which end to defend. The other team will have the option to choose from the remaining options after the other team has chosen.

- **Forfeits:** Game time is forfeit time. If a team has one less than the minimum number required to play, they will be extended a five minute grace period. During the grace period, the game clock will run and play will begin once the opposing team has met the minimum requirements.

- **Mercy Rule:** The game will be over if a team is winning by 19 or more points at the two-minute warning. The game will be over if a team is winning by 50 or more at halftime or any time in the second half.

- **Timeouts:** Each team is entitled to two, one-minute time-outs during each half.

- **Overtime:** If the game is tied at the end of regulation, an overtime period will be played. A coin toss will determine the options. All overtime periods will be played on the same end of the field.
  - Each team will start from the 10-yard line unless moved by penalty. They will have a series of four downs to score. Each team will have an opportunity to score in each period.
  - Each team will be awarded one timeout during the entire overtime. Timeouts do not carry over from regulation.

- **Inclement Weather:** In the event of inclement weather cancellation, any game that has completed the first half of play will be considered an official game and will not be rescheduled.

**BALL IN PLAY, DEAD BALL, & OUT OF BOUNDS**

- **Ball declared dead when:**
  - A. It goes out of bounds.
  - B. Any part of the runner other than a hand or foot touches the ground.
  - C. A touchdown, touchback, safety, or successful Try is made.
  - D. A forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
  - E. A backward pass or fumble by a player strikes the ground.
  - F. A runner has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player.
  - G. A runner is legally touched with one hand between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm, once the flag belt is no longer attached.
  - H. A snap hits the ground.
  - I. A muff of a kick strikes the ground.
  - J. The passer is deflagged before releasing the ball.
  - K. An official sounds his/her whistle inadvertently.

- **Out of Bounds:** A ball in player possession is out-of-bounds when either the ball or any part of the runner touches the ground or anything else, except a player or game official, which is on or outside a boundary line. If the runner in-bounds bumps into or is touched by player or an official on the sidelines out-of-bounds, the ball is still in play.

**SERIES OF DOWNS & LINE TO GAIN**

- **Series of Downs:** A team in possession of the ball shall have four (4) consecutive downs to advance to the next zone by scrimmage.
• **Zone Line to Gain:** The zone line to gain in any series shall be the zone in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. In such case, the original zone in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs is the zone line to gain. The zones formed by the marking of the twenty and forty yard lines are used to determine the distance to be gained. The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines, shall be the determining factor.

**Kicking the Ball**

• **Declaring to Punt:** The offensive captain may declare a punt on any down. After a punt has been declared, the ball must be punted. Any kicks besides a declared punt are illegal.

• **Formation and Snap:** Neither the kicking nor receiving team may advance beyond their respective line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked. After receiving the snap, the kicker must punt the ball immediately in a continuous motion.

• **Touchback:** If a punted ball crosses the goal line, it shall become dead and will not be able to be returned. The ball will be placed at the 14-yard line for the succeeding series.

• **After the Punt:** Once the ball has been kicked, any player on the receiving team, R, may block the kick. If the blocked punt hits the ground, it is dead at the spot. If the punt is blocked by any player on the receiving team behind the scrimmage line of the kicking team, K, and then caught by K player, K may run, and or throw behind the scrimmage line. R may advance the punt anywhere on the field of play. A K player cannot punt the ball to himself/herself or any other K player.

• **First Touching:** If a player on the kicking team touches the ball after crossing the scrimmage line and before it touches a player on the receiving team, it is known as first touching. The play continues until the ball becomes dead. The receiving team can either take the ball from where it was first touched by the kicking team, or the result of the play following the first touching by the kicking team. The right to take the ball at the “first touching” spot is cancelled if the receiving team runs the ball after first touching and commits a penalty during the down.

• **Loose Ball:** If the ball after a punt hits a member of the receiving team past the scrimmage line, and then another R player catches it, they can advance the ball. If the same play happens, but instead a member of the kicking team catches the ball, the ball is dead at the spot and the kicking team has a new set of downs. The receiving team may also advance an untouched punt after the ball hits the ground.

**Snapping, Handing and Passing the Ball**

• The ball must be snapped backwards off the ground, the orange ball-spotter, or a towel in a quick, continuous motion. The snapper may have one or both knees on the ground during the snap. The snapper is the only offensive player required to be on the line of scrimmage.

• **Receiving the Snap:** The player who receives the snap must be at least two yards behind the offensive scrimmage line.

• **Players in Motion:** One offensive player may be in motion at the snap, but not in motion toward the line of scrimmage. All other offensive players must be stationary.

• **Shift:** In a snap preceded by a huddle or shift, all offensive players must come to a complete stop and remain stationary in legal position for at least one full second before the snap.

• Any time at or after the ball is ready for play, each offensive player must momentarily be within fifteen (15) yards of the ball before the snap.

• **Encroachment:** A defensive player may not cross the defensive scrimmage line before the ball is snapped. The defensive team may not verbally try to draw the offense off sides.

• **Forward Pass:** All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass. During a scrimmage down and before team possession has changed, a forward pass may be thrown provided the passer's feet are behind the offensive scrimmage line when the ball leaves the passer's hand. Only one (1) forward pass can be thrown per down.

• **A forward pass is illegal if:**
  A. The passer's foot is beyond the offensive scrimmage line plane when the ball leaves his/her hand
  B. Thrown forward after team possession has changed during down
  C. Intentionally thrown to the ground or out-of-bounds to avoid loss of yardage
D. A passer catches his/her untouched forward or backwards pass

E. There is more than one forward pass per down

- **Catch:** A forward pass is completed or intercepted as long as it is caught the first part of the receiver to make contact with the ground after the catch, usually one foot, touches inbounds.

- **Simultaneous Catch:** If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams inbounds, the ball becomes dead at the spot of the catch and belongs to the offensive team.

- **Offensive Pass Interference:** After the ball is snapped and until the pass has been touched by any player, there shall be no offensive pass interference beyond the line of scrimmage.

- **Defensive Pass Interference:** After the pass is thrown and until the pass has been touched by any player, there shall be no defensive pass interference beyond the line of scrimmage.

- **Roughing the Passer:** Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown forward legally. No defensive player shall contact the passer who is standing or fading back as he/she is considered out of the play after the pass.

- **Backward Pass:** A runner may pass the ball backward anytime except if intentionally thrown out-of-bounds to conserve time. A backward pass may be caught or intercepted by any other player inbounds and advanced.

- **Handing the Ball:** Any player may hand the ball forward or backward at any time.

**RUNNING THE BALL**

- **Flag Belt Removal:** A player must have possession of the ball before they can be deflagged legally by an opponent. In circumstances where a flag belt is removed illegally by a player, play should continue with the option of the penalty or the play.

- **One Hand Touch:** When a runner loses his/her flag belt either accidentally, inadvertently, or on purpose, play continues. The deflagging reverts to a 1 hand tag of the runner between the shoulders and knees by an opponent.

- **Illegally Tied Belt:** Tampering with the flag in any way to gain an advantage including tying, using foreign materials, or other such acts is illegal.

- **Flag Guarding:** Runners shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt.

- **Obstructing the Runner:** An opponent shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when in the act of removing the flag belt or making a legal tag.

- **Charging:** A runner shall not charge into nor contact an opponent in his/her path. If a runner has established a straight line path, he/she may not be crowded out of that path, but if an opponent is able to legally establish a defensive position in that path, the runner must avoid contact by changing direction.

**SCORING PLAYS**

- **Touchdown:** All touchdowns in Men's and Women's leagues are worth six (6) points. The player scoring must raise his/her arms so the nearest official can deflag the player. If the official determines the flag belt has been secured illegally, the score is disallowed and the player is disqualified.

- **Try for 1, 2, or 3 Points:** An opportunity to score one (1) point from the 3-yard line, two (2) points from the 10-yard line, or three (3) points from the 20-yard line shall be granted to a team after scoring a touchdown.

- **Safety:** A safety results in two (2) points for the defensive team. It is a safety when:
  A. A runner carries the ball across his/her own goal line, and it becomes dead there in his/her team's possession.
  B. A player punts, passes, fumbles, snaps, muff, or bats a ball across his/her own goal line, and the ball becomes dead there in his/her team's possession.
  C. An offensive player commits any foul for which the penalty is accepted from a spot in his/her end zone.
SCREEN BLOCKING, RUSHING, AND CONDUCT

- **Screen Blocking:** The offense may screen block without contact. The screen blocker shall have his/her hands and arms at his/her side or behind his/her back when screen blocking. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during an offensive player’s screen block is illegal. A player must be on his/her feet before, during, and after screen blocking.

- **Players who screen may not:**
  A. Take a position closer than a normal step when behind a stationary opponent.
  B. Make contact when assuming a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent.
  C. Take a position so close to a moving opponent that his/her opponent cannot avoid contact when stopping or changing direction.
  D. Move to maintain his/her legal screening position after attaining it, unless he/she moves in the same direction and path as his/her opponent.

- **Defensive Rushing:** Opponents must go around the offensive player’s screen block. Arms and hands may not be used as a wedge to displace the opponent.

PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

- **Basic Spot:** Penalties will be enforced from the basic enforcement spot.
  - **EXCEPTION:** Penalties committed by the offensive team behind the basic enforcement spot will be enforced from the spot of the foul.

- **Loose Ball Play:** The basic spot for penalties that occur before or during a pass, punt, or backward pass beyond the line of scrimmage is the line of scrimmage.

- **Running Play:** The basic spot for penalties that occur during a running play is the end of the run.

- **Roughing the Passer:** Roughing the passer will be added on to the play’s end result.

- **Offensive Penalty during a score:** If there is a foul by the offensive team, other than unsportsmanlike or non-player fouls, during a down which results in a touchdown or try, the acceptance of the penalty nullifies the score.

- **Defensive Penalty during a score:** If there is any foul by the defensive team during a down which results in a touchdown or try, the scoring team may choose to accept the result of the play and have the foul enforced on the try or on the opponent’s next possession.

- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** Two unsportsmanlike fouls by the same person results in ejection. Three unsportsmanlike fouls by the same team results in the forfeiture of the game.

CO-REC MODIFICATIONS

- **Number of players:** The game shall be played between two teams of 8 players each consisting of 4 men and 4 women. Five players, at least 2 men and 2 women, are required to start the game.

- **Game Ball:** A regular, intermediate, youth, or junior size football shall be used.

- **Mercy Rule:** The game will be over if a team is winning by 25 or more points at the two-minute warning.

- **Touchdown:** Touchdowns that involve a woman are worth nine (9) points. Passing the ball and crossing the goal line are considered involvement.

- **Running the Ball:** A man cannot advance the ball through the line of scrimmage. There are no restrictions:
  A. During a run by a man once the ball has been touched by any player beyond the line of scrimmage.
  B. During a run by a woman.
  C. After a change of team possession.
  D. After a legal forward pass.

- **Open/Closed:** Open means any player may complete a legal forward pass to any other player. Closed means that a man may not complete a legal forward pass to another man. The first down of a new possession shall be open.

- **Opening and Closing the Play:** If a man completes a legal forward pass to another man during an open play, the next play shall be closed. The next legal forward pass completion must involve a woman as either passer or receiver, and the play must result in
positive yards. There is no foul for a woman being deflagged behind the line of scrimmage. The next forward pass completion remains closed.

- **Illegal Reception**: A man shall not complete a pass to another man on a closed play. **Penalty**: Illegal Male Reception, 5 yards from the previous spot, and loss of down.

- Any foul, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the next legal forward pass completion is open or closed.

**PROTESTS**

- Protests must be made during the game immediately after the play in question has ended. A team must call a time-out and notify the official of the protest. Protests will only occur when there is a rules interpretation in question. No Protests will be made on judgment calls made by the officials. Eligibility Protests may be made after the game as long as the protest is in compliance with the Policies and Procedures of The University of Alabama Intramural Sports Department.

*Revised July 2017*