

Fairfield County Football League

8th Grade – SENIOR DIVISION 2025 RULES AND REGULATIONS

I. GRADE AND WEIGHT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- A. All weights are the player's weight while wearing his uniform and all game equipment, excluding his helmet and shoulder pads.
- B. Enrolled in the 8th Grade during the fall football season and will be a maximum of 14 years old by August 1 of that same year. **In addition, a limited player enrolled in 7th grade may play up in 8th grade if approved by his town's board prior to the first game. Any player playing up a grade is allowed to play any unlimited position if he makes the new grade divisions weight restrictions. The FCFL will be notified of any players playing up.**
- C. Players playing at "unlimited" positions (may play any position) must weigh no more than **160** pounds. This includes all equipment except helmet and shoulder pads.
- D. Players weighing over **160** pounds must play interior line "limited" positions and may not carry the ball on a designed play. A player's weight includes all equipment except helmet and shoulder pads. "Limited" positions include only OT/OG/C/DT/DG, and these positions are prohibited from carrying, passing, or handing off the ball on a designed play. **"Limited" players may play only on the LOS and may NOT play TE, DE (or wider than the second player from the center) or any offensive position other than OT, OG, C (defined as the player who snaps the ball, the players on the LOS no further than the second player from the center) nor any defensive position other than NG, DG or DT (defined as the players head up on the C, OG and OT) . Each "limited" player must have an orange circle not less than 1 inch in diameter on the front of his helmet, which shall be verified at weigh-in.**
- Only possible Offensive limited positions: OT--OG--C--OG--OT**
- Two possible Defensive Limited positions: DT--DG-----DG--DT**
- Or DT-----NG-----DT**
- E. The Head Coach must ensure that each player on his team meets the grade, age, and weight requirements.
- F. Violations of the above eligibility rules will result in automatic forfeit of all games played in which the violation occurred.

II. WEIGH-IN PROCEDURE AND GAME DAY ELIGIBILITY:

Pre-Game weigh-ins are mandatory and should be conducted as follows:

- A. Each team must be weighed in the presence of both teams' coaches' representatives no later than 15 minutes prior to the start of the game. The final FCFL approved roster listing each player's name, DOB, jersey number, game weight with pads and whether "limited" or "unlimited" must be exchanged between teams and be available on the FCFL website.
- B. Players must wear all game uniform and equipment, excluding helmet and shoulder pads but including hip pads, thigh, butt, and knee pads. Players must then play in the equipment in which they were weighed as well as helmet and shoulder pads. (Example: Should a player elect to be weighed wearing sneakers, or no undershirt, or no additional pads for ribs, neck, or arms, he must play with or without that same equipment.)
- C. A mouth guard is mandatory during game play.
- D. Only one official weigh-in per player. Unofficial weigh-ins are allowed prior to the official weigh-ins to be supervised only by that player's coach.

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E. Each hosting organization is responsible for providing a scale, calibrate using a standard size free weight (minimum 20 lbs.) in the presence of the opposing team.

III. HEAD COACH RESPONSIBILITIES - GAME DAY:

A. The Home Teams having the first game of the day will provide two (2) assistants to League Officials for field preparation, including placing yard line and goal markers.

B. After the last game, the Visiting Team will ensure that the field and sidelines are clean and will assist League Officials with storing equipment.

C. Head Coaches are responsible for fan control and deportment.

D. Home Teams will provide a three (3)-man sidelines/first down crew. Where possible, the

E. First down crew shall be stationed on the home team's sideline.

F. Home Teams must provide the same accommodations for the Visiting Team that they have available for themselves. Home Teams who cannot provide the same accommodations for the Visiting team are prohibited from using them.

G. No sideline coaches, parents or fans are permitted on the playing field, or in the end zones for any purpose including filming the game.

H. All coaches, fans and players are prohibited from using any wired or wireless mechanical communication devices, either directly or indirectly, to communicate with anyone observing the game.

I. Refer to additional responsibilities in FCFL Policy and Procedures "Coaches Code of Conduct".

IV. REFEREES:

6th-8th grade games should be played with 4 referees. The game can begin with no fewer than 2 referees. Referee responsibilities include:

A. Knowing FCFL Rules

B. Enforcing Rules

C. Keeping Time

D. Down Supervision

E. Game Play

F. Crowd Control

G. An official game may not be played without at least two referees in attendance.

Referee point of Emphasis:

The FCFL board emphasizes that there should be a penalty called any time the head or neck is contacted by any player, whether offensive or defensive. If a determination can't be made who initiated the illegal head and neck contact, then both players should be penalized. The referees should at the time of the penalty track in writing the number and name of the player(s) penalized and report it on the FCFL website. If a player gets two such penalties, they should immediately be removed and again reported on the FCFL website. Referees should not hesitate to penalize or eject a player who violates these rules. It is considered critical in the teaching of proper techniques to both the player and the coaches. It is expected that initially there may be a lack of understanding of the strictness of the calls, but by consistently calling the penalty, players and coaches will learn that there is no tolerance to any contact to the head and neck

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area, nor any contact using any part of the helmet to initiate the contact. The FCFL board would rather the referee err on the side of calling a borderline penalty, than not calling the penalty. Even contact that is deemed unintentional should be penalized.

V. INJURIES - EMT COVERAGE:

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- A. Host organizations must ensure that EMT or EMS personnel are present at their fields during every game and have radio access to ambulance service.
- B. Coaches are to cooperate fully with EMTs, **recognizing that any injury is potentially serious.** The Head Coach (or his duly qualified designee) shall immediately attend to a downed player, solicit the opinion of the referees regarding the circumstances related to the injury, and signal to the attendant EMT if assistance is required. As soon as the EMT arrives, the EMT will be responsible for the disposition of the injured player.
- C. An injured player must sit out a minimum of one (1) play.
- D. Injured players will be permitted to return to the game based on a decision made **by the medical doctor or EMT covering the game.**

VI. MANDATORY PLAY RULE:

- A. Team size will be dependent upon the total number of participants in that grade as specified in the FCFL Policy and Procedures document, section VII, A.
- B. **Each player is required to play a minimum Ten (10) plays. Punts and Live PAT/FG count as plays.** Any “dead-ball” play such as dead ball extra points (since they are not live) do not count as plays.
- C. **At the end of the second and third quarters, there will be an official time out, for player monitors to agree on players who have not played 10 plays. If the minimum plays** have not been satisfied by the end of the third quarter, each player who has not played **10** plays must immediately start the fourth quarter and remain in the game until he meets the minimum play requirements. Once both coaches have agreed that all players have met the minimum play requirements, neither team may submit a protest. Coaches shall not agree to waive the minimum play rule. **It is** mandatory that each team has at least one play counter and all play counters from both teams are together on the sideline (outside coaches’ box) of the home team in the first half and the away team in the second half. After each quarter the play counters will have one official play count tally.
- D. Each team must use the Player Participation Form as provided by FCFL and maintained during the game by each team's designated player monitor. Head coaches are to provide the opposing coaches/player monitors with a minimum play sheet that clearly identifies the following separately: two-way starters, offense only starters and defensive only starters and substitutes.
- E. Exceptions to the minimum play rule for disciplinary matters or injury must be identified prior to the start of the game. The coach and disciplined or injured player will both be required to notify the opposing coach in person prior to the game to discuss the minimum play waiver.

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F. Plays that result in a QB spiking the ball or dropping to his knee with the sole purpose of “playing it safe” or “taking a knee” will not count as plays for minimum play requirements.

VII. REMOVING PLAYERS:

A. If a team has a **seventeen (17) or more point in the second half** of the game, the opposing coach may elect to remove up to three (3) players from the leading team's offense without regard to position until the lead is reduced to less than seventeen (17) points. Additionally, such players **are** ineligible to participate on any special teams (punting or punt receiving, and field goal or PAT attempts).

B. If after the 3rd quarter ends, a team has a seventeen (17) or more lead, the opposing coach may elect to remove up to three (3) players from the leading team's defense without regard to position until the lead is reduced to less than seventeen (17) points.

VIII. PLAYING RULES: N.F.H.S. Rules, except as modified below, shall govern all play.

A. Quarters are 11 minutes, timed in accordance with N.F.H.S. rules. Half time will be limited to 5 minutes.

B. Offensive limited players cannot advance the ball. Defensive limited players can only advance the ball if an unintentional fumble recovery or interception. Play should be stopped if a lateral to a limited player.

C. Offensive Formations are unlimited in full accordance with N.F.H.S. rules with the following exceptions:

1. A player who weighs over the unlimited weight, must play an interior line limited position. Limited positions include only OT/OG/C/DT/DG. All offensive formations must include a balanced line of Left OT/Left OG/C/Right OG/Right OT. These players, even if unlimited **are never eligible to carry or receive ball, even if the uncovered last man on the line. Limited players may not be DE or be more than 2 players from the Center.**

2. Eligible Receivers if on the LOS they must be at least 3 players away from the Center.

3. Splits between offensive linemen may be no more than one yard.

D. Defensive Team Formations and Restrictions for 6th – 8th grade

1. Interior Line (defined as the players no wider than head up on O Tackles) is restricted to the following:

a) **3 D Lineman between 2 Offensive Tackles-** Nose guard (NG) employed: (1) NG defined as defensive lineman who must be aligned to be head up on Center (defined as player who snaps the ball) and two Def. Tackles (DT) head up on Offensive Tackles (OT). The Offensive Guards must be uncovered.

b) **4 Def Linemen between the two Offensive Tackles-** NG not employed: (1) Center (snaps ball) must be uncovered, two DGs align head up on the OGs and 2 DT align head up on the OTs.

c) No other defensive players are allowed within 3 yards from the LOS between the two OTs.

d) The above interior linemen must all be in 3- or 4-point stances.

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2. Defensive Ends (DE) – any additional player(s) setup on the defensive line setup outside of each offensive tackle, but inside the hashes are defined as Defensive Ends. They may be in a 2,3, or 4-point stance.

a) 0, 1 or 2 players (DEs) are allowed within 3 yards of the LOS outside the 2 offensive tackles. **Two DEs are only allowed on the same side of the ball when an Offensive team employs Two TEs (defined as on the LOS within 3 yards of the OT) on one side of the center.**

b) DEs must be head up or outside the TE or ghost TE (if no TE) without width restriction.

3. Linebackers (LB) - defensive players at least 3 yards deep from the LOS without lateral restrictions

a) Distinction between LB and DE: LB - 3 yards deep of LOS. DE – within 3 yds of LOS.

b) There may be no more than 7 LB's. For every DE employed, there would be 1 less LB.

c) Inside defensive team's 3-yd line: LB minimum distance from the LOS is decreased to 1 yard.

4. Safety – defensive players at least 6 yards deep from the LOS

a) **At least 1 player must be at least 6 yards deep from the LOS with no width restriction**

b) Inside defensive team's 1-yard line: S minimum distance from the LOS is decreased to 1 yard.

5. Cornerbacks

a) **Must be 3 yards off the LOS except if outside the hashes, then they can be as close as 1 yd off**

4. Response to motion or shifts

a) Offensive motion defined as only 1 player in motion at a time. The allowed defensive response may be lateral or vertical motion. The defense must be set when the offense is set.

b) Offensive shift defined as 2 or more offensive players are moving simultaneously. The allowed defensive response would be to repositioning of the entire defense until the offense is set.

c) Flinching or movement not resulting in crossing the LOS or 3 yard minimum should not result in a penalty for offsides or encroachment.

E. Kick-offs – There are no kick-offs. Possession will start on the offense's 30-yard line. (50-yd line after safety)

F. **Kickers and Punter positions can be limited or unlimited players. A limited kicker can never handle the ball.**

G. Punting

1. Punt formations: 5 interior linemen, 2 TEs/SEs, 3 players in the backfield from OT to OT and 1 punter. Linemen must remain in a 3- or 4-point stance, must maintain "normal

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splits” (i.e., may not spread out to cover the width of the field), and no member of the punting team may go downfield until the ball is punted. **A ball not punted within 5 seconds of the snap is an illegal procedure and a penalty will be assessed. NOTE: Punt plays remain subject to delay of game calls as well.** The Receiving Team may deploy one (1) blocker (DE or CB) per wide out to defend the play.

2. Receiving Punt formations: Minimum of 8 players within 5 yards of LOS including 4 D lineman head up on LOS. No motion/shifting of the punt returners is allowed. Punters must punt between the OTs.

3. No rushing of the punter is allowed, and all down linemen must remain in a 3- or 4-point stance until the ball is punted. Everyone in the punting formation may release downfield once the ball is punted.

4. Play is live per N.F.H.S. rules once the ball is punted.

H. After scoring a touchdown, the offensive team may elect to pass, run, or kick for an extra point(s). PAT kick is **snapped from the 3-yard line. The offense can elect to kick a dead-ball PAT. Once a dead-ball kick is elected, there can be no fake or ball advancement and must be kicked within 5 seconds of the snap or result in illegal procedure penalty. All linemen must stay in a 3-point stance and no rush is permitted. A successfully kicked dead-ball PAT results in one (1) point. A successfully kicked live PAT results in two (2) points.** Faked kicked PATs are permitted with the live PAT option and results in one (1) point. All defensive formations and restrictions apply for appropriate grades. Only Live PAT attempts count towards the Mandatory Play Rule. Teams that successfully run or pass for the PAT will get one (1) point if they elect to start from the 3-yard line and two (2) points if they elect to start from the 5-yard line. Nose Guards cannot be used when defending a live kick.

I. An offensive team may kick a field goal at any time. They shall announce their intention to the referees. Use a kick formation will be used. All defensive players are governed by the applicable defensive formations and restrictions for each grade. **All field goals are live, which permits fake field goals and advancing blocked field goals, fumbles, bad snaps, etc.** Missed field goals will result in the opposing team taking possession at the line of scrimmage from which the field goal play was attempted. Nose Guards cannot be used.

J. Safeties – If an offense gives up a safety, the defensive team gets the ball at midfield.

K. Overtime – Used only in the playoffs. A coin toss will be called by the visitors. Winner of the toss chooses offense or defense first. Teams start on the ten-yard line and attempt to score. In OT, all PATs are as per usual rules, except dead ball kicks are not permitted. If the score is tied after additional OT periods are played in the identical fashion, reversing the order of playing offense.

L. Keep the Head out of Football:

1. Illegal helmet contact: Any intentional or unintentional contact including blocking and tackling by an offensive or defensive player to any part of an opponent’s head or neck is prohibited resulting in a 15-yard penalty.

2. Illegal use of helmet: Any intentional or unintentional contact including blocking, tackling, or rushing by an offensive or defensive player using any part of his helmet as

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the initiation point of contacting an opponent is prohibited and should result in a 15-yard penalty.

3. Two or more of the above penalties by a single player result in ejection from the game

M. No blocking below the waist – except for tackling, any purposeful football action below the waist is illegal.

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IX. EQUIPMENT:

A. Only certified and properly reconditioned helmets may be worn.

B. All players must have a colored mouth guard that must be worn while the ball is in play (Violations will incur a 5-yard penalty).

C. Sneakers, rubber cleats or turf shoes must be worn.

D. A jersey must cover the shoulder pads.

E. All excess equipment must meet scholastic guidelines.

F. Under Armour, Nike and Wilson balls are all approved for use in the size indicated as follows:

1. Grades 3 & 4: Pee-Wee
2. Grades 5 & 6: Junior
3. Grades 7 & 8: Youth