

NEFFA
Official Adult Flag Football Rule Book

Northeast Flag Football Association

6v6 Tournament Format

2026

Version: 1.0



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Tournament Circuit Overview

The Northeast Flag Football Association (NEFFA) is committed to providing a competitive, organized, and sportsmanlike adult flag football experience for players of all skill levels throughout the Greater Boston and New England region. NEFFA promotes fair play, teamwork, community engagement, and respect for the game through professionally managed tournaments.

League Structure

NEFFA may organize competition in the following formats:

- Weekend tournaments
- Invitational events
- Coed divisions
- Competitive and recreational divisions

Tournament formats, schedules, and playoff structures may vary by event and will be communicated prior to the start of competition.

Payout / Points Structure

Tournament payout structures will vary by event and will be communicated prior to the start of competition.

Payouts in cash throughout day of tournament and upon completion of tournament.

In addition to cash payouts, competing teams will earn points toward NEFFA Circuit Championship.*

- 1st Place: 30 points
- 2nd Place: 20 points
- 3rd and 4th Place: 10 points
- 5th – 8th Place: 5 points

*To be eligible for NEFFA Circuit Championship, teams must compete in a minimum of two NEFFA tournaments

Definitions

Catch

A catch is completed when a player secures possession of the football with at least one foot in bounds.

Dead Ball

A dead ball occurs when the whistle is blown, a flag is pulled, a player steps out of bounds, or the ball contacts the ground.

Line of Scrimmage

The imaginary line extending across the width of the field where the ball is spotted before the snap.

Eligibility Requirements

To participate in NEFFA events, players must:

- Be at least 21 years of age unless otherwise approved by league administration
- Complete registration requirements
- Sign all required waivers
- Be listed on an approved team roster

NEFFA reserves the right to deny participation to any player, team, or spectator for conduct deemed detrimental to the league.

Code of Conduct

NEFFA officials and league administrators maintain final authority over:

- Rule interpretations
- Eligibility decisions
- Disciplinary actions
- Schedule changes
- Tournament operations

League management reserves the right to amend rules, policies, or procedures as necessary to maintain fair competition and league operations.

Player Discipline

NEFFA operates under a zero-tolerance policy regarding:

- Fighting
- Threatening behavior
- Harassment
- Intentional dangerous play

Violations may result in penalties, ejections, suspensions, or permanent removal from tournament activities.

Team Requirements

All teams participating in NEFFA leagues or tournaments must complete the official registration process prior to the published registration deadline. Teams are not considered eligible for participation until all registration requirements, fees, waivers, and roster submissions have been completed and approved by league administration.

Roster Limits

Maximum roster limit is 10 for both Adult Men's and Adult Co-ed divisions.

Co-ed teams need a minimum of two females on the roster.

Uniform Rules

Uniforms (jerseys) and flag belts to be provided to all players. Teams are welcome to wear their own jerseys so long as jerseys are all the same color and have numbers on the back. Team captains to communicate jersey plans with NEFFA commissioner 30 days prior to tournament.

Shorts or pants are allowed. Highly encouraged to wear shorts/pants that do not have pockets.

Cleats are recommended (no metal cleats).

No limit on swag. Players are welcome to wear arm sleeves, sweatbands, headbands, sunglasses, spatted cleats, jewelry (wear at your own caution), Apple Watch, Woop, wristbands, handwarmer, etc. If wearing a towel on your waist, this counts as a third flag and player will be down if towel is pulled from waist. No accessories may obstruct clear access to the flags.

Captain Responsibilities

Each team must designate at least one captain who serves as the official representative between the team and NEFFA administration.

Captains are responsible for:

- Communicating tournament information to teammates
- Ensuring player eligibility compliance
- Maintaining sportsmanship standards
- Managing sideline conduct

Pre-Game Duties

Prior to each game, captains may be required to:

- Confirm roster availability
- Verify score sheets
- Participate in the coin toss
- Address uniform conflicts
- Review special game conditions with officials

Sideline Control

Captains are responsible for maintaining control of:

- Players
- Coaches
- Team personnel
- Sideline behavior

Failure to control team conduct may result in unsportsmanlike penalties or disciplinary action against the team.

Communication with Officials

Only designated captains may request rule clarifications or communicate formal concerns to game officials during competition.

Financial & Administrative Responsibility

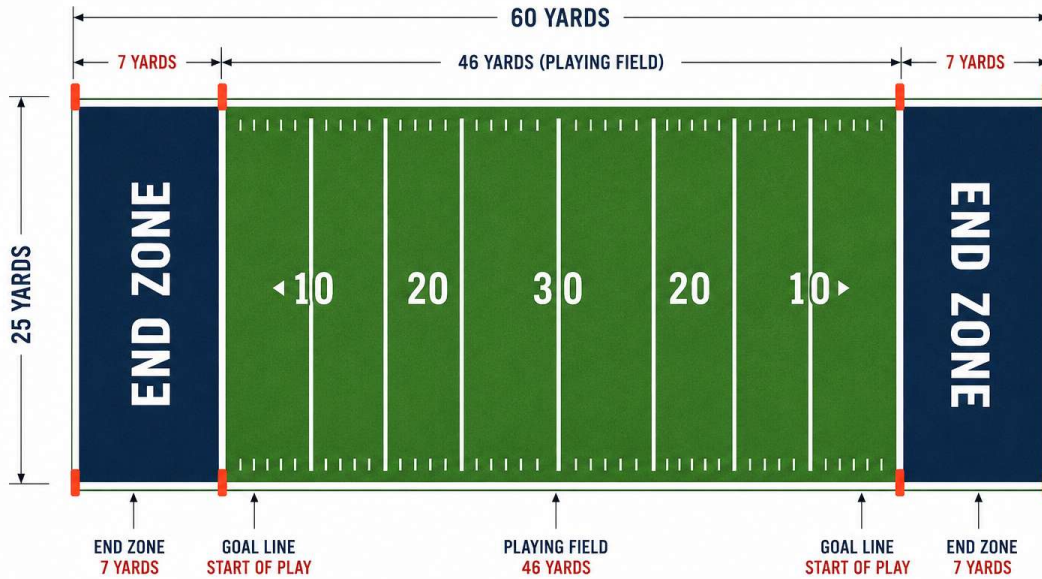
Captains may also be responsible for:

- Team registration payments
- Waiver completion
- Schedule confirmations
- Tournament check-in procedures

Field Dimensions & Equipment

NEFFA FLAG FOOTBALL FIELD DIMENSIONS

TOTAL LENGTH: 60 YARDS | WIDTH: 25 YARDS | END ZONES: 7 YARDS



Field Layout

Standard dimensions of the field are 60 yards long by 25 yards wide with 7-yard endzones. **Field dimensions are subject to change based on the facility being used.**

Required Equipment

PROPER FLAG FOOTBALL ATTIRE

Each player must wear one flag on each side and have their shirt tucked in.



- LEGAL**
- One flag on each side
 - Shirt tucked in
 - Flags clearly visible
 - Belt worn around waist

Football meeting league specifications (refer to graphic below)

APPROVED FOOTBALLS

FOR NEFFA FLAG FOOTBALL

<div style="text-align: center;">  <h3 style="color: green; margin: 0;">ALLOWED</h3> <p style="margin: 0;">ADULT / COLLEGE FOOTBALLS</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  </div> <div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OFFICIAL ADULT / COLLEGE SIZE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LEATHER OR COMPOSITE MATERIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEETS LEAGUE STANDARDS </div>	<div style="text-align: center;">  <h3 style="color: red; margin: 0;">NOT ALLOWED</h3> <p style="margin: 0;">YOUTH FOOTBALLS</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  </div> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YOUTH OR JUNIOR SIZE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EASIER TO GRIP AND THROW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NOT PERMITTED IN NEFFA PLAY </div>
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Game Format

Start Of Game/Game Play:

- A coin toss will determine starting possession. The winner of the toss may elect to receive or defer possession to second half. The loser of the toss will choose the direction they will go in the first half.
- Possessions start at 5-yard line at the beginning of each half and following a touchdown
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its own 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield for a first down. Offense will have another four (4) downs to score a touchdown.
- On 4th down the offensive team has the option to concede the possession to the defense which results in the other team gaining possession on the defenses 5-yard line.
- Defense takes over where turnover on downs occurred
- Interceptions are live and ball can be returned. Possession starts at wherever the player who intercepted the ball gets his/her flag pulled
- Fumbles are automatic dead ball with ball spotted where fumble occurred
- Teams change sides after the first half.

Intentional or excessive contact is prohibited. Any attempt to block or shield an opponent is a penalty.

Number of Players

6 v 6 format (no more than six players per team on the field at anytime)

Teams must have at least five players on the field to not forfeit

Co-ed: Minimum of two females on the field at all times

Game Length

Two 15-minute halves

Timeouts

Each team receives 2 timeouts per game

Timing Rules

Play is over once the player in possession of the ball has at least one of their flags pulled. Ball spotted where the flag was pulled

Ball carrier steps out of bounds → player is down at the spot where they went out of bounds

Ball hits ground → dead

Running Clock

Running clock, 25-second play clock

Clock stops at 1-minute mark each half

Pro-style clock under 1 minute

Stop Clock Situations

During the final 1 minutes of the game, the referee will stop the clock if:

- An incomplete pass is thrown.
- A player ends a play by going out of bounds.
- Either team scores (the clock remains stopped until the opposing team snaps the ball after the PAT attempt; the clock does not run during extra points).
- Change of possession, including a turnover on downs.
- A penalty which must be marked off occurs.
- A team calls a timeout.

If a team is up by 16 points or more, the clock runs continuously during the last minute of play.

Halftime

Teams have two minutes during halftime. Referee can use discretion to extend halftime if necessary (i.e., on a hot day).

Scoring

Touchdowns

Only the ball must be over the goal line in order for it to count as a touchdown or extra point. No diving over the line will be allowed.

Touchdown: 6 points

Extra Points

PAT (Point After Touchdown)

1 point try – the ball will be placed 5 yards from the goal line

2 point try – the ball will be placed 10 yards from the goal line. The clock does not stop during a PAT, except within the minute of a half when applicable. A PAT is allowed if the touchdown was scored as time ran out to end either half. If a two point conversion is intercepted it may be run back for two points.

Safeties

Safety: (2 points) A safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, they step out of bounds, the ball is fumbled, or they hit the ground with their knee or arm. A safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone.

Offensive Rules

NEFFA FLAG FOOTBALL – PLAYER MOVEMENT RULES				
<p>NO STIFF ARMS</p>  <p></p> <p>Stiff arming or using an extended arm to ward off a defender is NOT allowed.</p>	<p>NO JUMPING</p>  <p></p> <p>Jumping to avoid a defender is NOT allowed.</p>	<p>YES – SPINNING</p>  <p></p> <p>Spinning to elude a defender is allowed.</p>	<p>YES – DIPS</p>  <p></p> <p>Dipping or changing levels to get around a defender is allowed.</p>	<p>NO DIVING</p>  <p></p> <p>Diving of any kind is NOT allowed.</p>

Flag Guarding

An offensive player may not avoid a tackle by guarding his/her flag. Flag guarding consists of the following:

- Pushing an opponent's hand away from the flag.
- Pushing an opponent or stiff-arming.

- Lowering an arm to shield the flag.

If a player is called for flag guarding, the play is dead at the point of the infraction.

Spinning to avoid a tackle is legal, as long as none of the above-listed events occur simultaneously.

Dipping or lowering the body is legal provided the player is not using the movement to shield or obstruct access to the flags.

Line of Scrimmage

An eligible center will snap the ball to the Quarterback. The center can then leave the line of scrimmage as an eligible receiver. The center must be on or behind the line of scrimmage. Snaps may be between the legs or from the side (ball must always be snapped from the ground).

Motion

Motion can only be lateral on the line of scrimmage.

Illegal Shift

Two players cannot be in motion at the snap of the ball.

First-Downs

Each team may earn only one first down during each drive. A first down may be achieved by advancing the ball to or past the 50 yd line cone.

No diving over the line will be allowed.

A ball spotted on the line shall be considered a first down.

A first down may also be awarded due to a defensive foul (i.e. interference). A defensive foul is the only way that a team may be awarded more than one first-down.

Blocking – This is a No Blocking League

Blocking is considered the movement, whether deliberate or unintentional, that impedes a defensive player's pursuit of the ball carrier unless movement is to avoid personal injury (as interpreted by the referee). This also includes the deliberate or unintentional movement of limbs by a stationary player. More leeway may be given to players moving at the time of a reception, but this is up to the referee's discretion.

A violation of this rule will result in the play being called dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the infraction, or the ball carrier's position at the time of the infraction, whichever is in favor of the defensive team. If the referee considers the blocking incident excessively aggressive, a 15-yard penalty will be assessed from the spot of the ball (or to the one-yard line if the offense is under 15 yards from their own goal line).

Laterals

A lateral is an (i) underhand pitch of the ball, (ii) overhead pass and/or (iii) handoff to a fellow team member next to you or behind you. Laterals are legal only behind the line of scrimmage. A dropped lateral

is a fumble and the ball is spotted at the point of the fumble and the offense retains possession. If the lateral is picked off, the defensive team has the ability to advance the ball.

Unlimited laterals behind the line of scrimmage may occur on a play.

Quarterbacks

A Quarterback is not eligible to run the ball downfield.

A Quarterback can't throw a forward pass to himself. It has to be at least touched by a player on the offense or defense (with some intent of doing so).

A Quarterback cannot bounce the pass off a defender and run with it as a completed pass. Both of these calls will result in an incomplete pass and are at the discretion of the officials.

A Quarterback can lateral or hand off the ball and become an eligible receiver once he crosses the line of scrimmage.

The player receiving the snap may not advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage unless the ball has first been handed off or lateraled to another offensive player.

Rushing

The offense may rush the ball an unlimited amount of times per possession. The quarterback may not rush the ball, they must hand the ball off or lateral to be considered an eligible rush attempt. Once the ball is handed off or lateraled any and all defensive players may cross the line of scrimmage in an attempt to "tackle" the ball carrier.

Running backs are permitted in the backfield. A running back can never take a direct snap from the center. The QB will be considered the one calling the cadence.

Pass Receptions

All players are eligible receivers once the ball is legally snapped

For a pass to be legal the receiver must have **one** foot in bounds at the time control is achieved. No part of the body may be touching an area out of bounds.

Fumbles

If a player fumbles the ball, the play is blown dead at the spot where the player lost possession. The offensive team remains in possession of the ball unless it is 4th down and they would have lost the ball on downs. If a player on either team takes possession of the ball, prior to the ball hitting the ground, possession goes to that team and that player may attempt to advance the ball towards his own end zone. There is no stripping of the ball.

Co-ed

Female must be involved (either pass or catch) at least one out of every three offensive plays.

Defensive Rules

Rushing the Quarterback

The defense may not pursue the quarterback behind the line of scrimmage until completing a five-second count, at normal speaking cadence, as determined by the referee. After the five-second count is completed, any number of defensive players may rush behind the line of scrimmage. If the defense rushes prematurely, the offense will have a “free play” and may either take the outcome of the play or accept the penalty and replay the down with the ball marked five yards ahead of where the penalty occurred.

If the ball changes possession in the backfield (i.e. lateraled) the defense may rush in immediately. If the offense fakes a change of possession and the defense advances behind the line of scrimmage, no foul will be called if the defense returns to in front of the line of scrimmage immediately, and continues the five-second count.

Tackling

A player is “tackled” by pulling at least one flag from the ball carrier’s belt.

A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.

If a flag is removed by a defensive player, prior to full possession (as determined by the referee), the offense is not considered tackled and play continues with no infraction charged.

It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball or pull from the ball carrier’s possession at any time.

If a player’s flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the defense must touch the player with one hand and then he is considered down and the play will be whistled dead.

A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.

Flag guarding is not allowed

Penalties & Enforcement

OFFENSE

False Start: 5 yards & replay the down.

Delay of Game: 5 yards & replay the down.

Offensive Illegal Block: 10 yards & replay of down.

Quarterback crossing the line of scrimmage prior to pass: 5 yards & loss of down.

Offensive pass interference: 15 yards & replay of the down.

Flag guarding: 5-yard penalty from the spot of infraction & loss of down. 1st down yardage prior to penalty results in 1st down. Flag guarding can be called even if the flag is pulled.

Unsportsmanlike conduct: 15 yards personal foul from the end of the play (the down counts).

Impeding the rusher: The offensive snapper and receivers must avoid the rushers beyond the line of scrimmage. Contact or not, getting in the pass rusher's way is impeding the rusher. The penalty is 5 yards and loss of down.

NOTE: Loss of down penalties on a PAT attempt nullifies the try (whether successful or not).

DEFENSE

Holding ball carrier / Illegal flag pull: 5-yards added to the end of the run.

Stripping: 5-yards from the spot of the foul.

Roughing the passer: 5 yards & automatic 1st down.

Illegal rush (not 5 seconds): 5 yards & replay the down or result of the play (offense may decline).

Illegal contact (the ball has not left the QB's hand): 5 yards & replay the down.

Pass interference: Automatic 1st down at the spot of the foul.

Pass interference in the end zone: 1st & goal at the one-yard line

Unsportsmanlike conduct: 15-yard personal foul (automatic 1st down).

Forceout by the defender will result in a spot foul (5 yards from spot) and automatic first down.

Overtime Rules

During pool play, if the score is tied at the end of regulation, the game ends in a tie.

During bracket play, games that end regulation tied will go into overtime.

Overtime Format

Kansas City shootout OT rules. After TD, teams must go for extra point (1 or 2). Beginning with the 3rd overtime, the teams will alternate 2 point conversion tries.

Possession Rules

Each team has a chance to possess the ball starting at **mid-field**. Coin flip to determine who goes first/second.

Tournament Rules

NEFFA tournament directors reserve the right to adjust schedules, formats, and field assignments as necessary to ensure fair and timely competition.

Pool Play

To consist of a minimum of three games.

Tie Breakers (for Bracket Play seeding)

- 1) Record
- 2) Head-to-head
- 3) Point differential
- 4) Points allowed
- 5) Points scored
- 6) Coin flip

Seeding Procedures

All participating teams move onto single elimination bracket play following pool play games. No teams will receive byes. First round matchups will be 1 seed vs 8 seed; 2 seed vs 7 seed; 3 seed vs 6 seed; and 4 seed vs 5 seed.

Penalty Reference Chart

Penalty	Yards	Automatic First Down
False Start	5	No
Delay of Game	5	No
Illegal Motion	5	No
Illegal Blocking	10	No
Illegal Pass	5	No (loss of down)
Offensive Pass Interference	15	No
Flag Guarding	5	No (loss of down)
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	15	Possible
Impeding the Rusher	5	No (loss of down)
Holding the Ball Carrier	5	No
Stripping	5	No
Roughing the Passer	5	Yes
Early / Illegal Rush	5	No
Defensive Pass Interference	Spot Foul	Yes
Illegal Contact	5	No (replay down)
Forceout	5	Yes
Too Many Men on the Field	5	No