ALL HEART

FORMAT & RULES / PARENT & COACH GUIDE

ARUBA HOLIDAY FLAG FOOTBALL CLASSIC

Monday, December 28, 2026 **3 GAME MINIMUM**

Competitive 5v5 | 3 game minimum | Complete playing rules & standings

HEART OVER HYPE

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GOOD TEAMMATES. BETTER HUMANS.

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01 Basics

How a game starts, how possession works, and what deciding the tournament standings comes down to.

- A coin toss will determine first possession and direction. The winning team gets to choose either their direction or who has the ball first; the team that loses the toss gets the remaining choice. In the second half, teams change directions, and whichever team opened the game on defense will be on offense to start the second half.
- The offensive team takes possession at its own 5-yard line and has 4 plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has 4 plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 5-yard line.
- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
- All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line. In all divisions, a player can run back an interception, and the change of possession is at the point where the run back ends.
- Teams must wear matching jerseys/colors during play, tucked into pants.
- Players will have 2 flags, one on each hip; the lead strap must be tucked into the pants.
- Parents and spectators may only be behind the end zones, while coaches and players (of both teams) will be on the sidelines. Each team occupies one sideline.
- Players must wear pants or shorts that do not camouflage a flag.
- Coaches may be on the field before the play but must move to the sidelines before the ball is snapped.
  - Coaches are not permitted on the field in 17U.
- End zones will be clearly marked (cones, lines, or paint) at the boundary between the field of play and each end zone, so players, coaches, and officials can clearly identify where a touchdown begins and ends.

Tournament Standings

Final standings, and any ties in the standings, are determined in the following order:

1. Least games lost
2. Most games won
3. Points allowed
4. Head-to-head result
5. Point differential
6. Points scored
7. Coin flip

Each criterion is applied only if the previous one leaves teams still tied — for example, if two teams have identical records and identical points allowed, the tiebreaker moves to their head-to-head result before considering point differential.

02 Players

The Team

- Teams will play with five players on the field.
- If a team only has 4 players, the game is played 4-on-4 and is an official game.
- Teams with fewer than 4 players will forfeit; however, the game will still be played as an exhibition.

Substitutions

- Substitutions may be made freely throughout the game.
- There is no 2nd QB rule.

03 Timing

- Games are played to 36 minutes running time, in 2 18-minute halves. The clock runs continuously throughout each half, except as noted below.
- The clock will stop during:
  - Time-outs (clock resumes at the first snap after the time-out)
  - Injuries (clock resumes at the official's discretion). An injury stoppage counts as one of the injured player's team's time-outs, if that team has one remaining. If the team has no time-outs remaining, play still stops for player safety, but no time-out is charged.
  - At the discretion of the official (clock resumes at the official's discretion)
- The official will announce a 2-minute warning during the final two minutes of the second half only. There is no 2-minute warning at the end of the first half.
- Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 25 seconds to snap the ball. The referee will announce when 15 and 10 seconds remain, and will count down from 5 seconds in 1-second intervals.
- Each team has three 30-second time-outs per game. There are no time-outs in overtime, and unused time-outs do not carry over into OT.

- If the score is tied at the end of regulation, the game continues to a modified overtime procedure until a winner is determined:
  - Each team gets one conversion attempt per overtime period, for the point value of its choice (one play):
    - 1 point — 5 yards from the end zone (pass only, no running)
    - 2 points — 10 yards from the end zone (pass only, no running; blitz if applicable)
  - The winner of a coin toss chooses to go first or second in the first overtime period.
  - If the score remains tied after the first overtime, the team that went second in the first overtime goes first in the second overtime.
  - If the score remains tied after two overtime periods, the game advances to a final overtime period: each team attempts 1 play from its own 5-yard line, and whichever team gains more yards receives 1 point and is declared the winner. The team that went first in the second overtime goes second in the final overtime period.
    - If neither team advances the ball in this period, a fourth overtime period of similar kind takes place with teams reversing who goes first and second.
  - Each team must have the opportunity to possess the ball an equal number of times in overtime, until one team has more points than the other after an overtime period.
  - All overtime tries are attempted facing the same end zone, selected by the official.
  - Interceptions can be returned to the other end zone for the value of the conversion's points.
    - An interception returned for a score in the first or second overtime period ends the game.
    - An interception advanced in the third or subsequent overtime period ends the game.
  - No time-outs carry over, and teams do not receive time-outs for overtime.
  - The 25-second play clock remains in effect.
  - If there is a defensive penalty on an overtime try and the offense accepts it, the offense may run the play from the prior line of scrimmage or after the penalty yards are marked off. Either way, the new overtime try is worth the same points as the original try. The no-running zone remains in effect.
  - The overtime procedure may be modified at any time by the on-site director.

04 Scoring

Offensive Scoring

- Touchdown: 6 points
- Points After Touchdown:
  - 1 point (played from the 5-yard line, no running)
  - 2 points (played from the 10-yard line, pass only — no running)
  - If there is a defensive penalty on a point-after try and the offense accepts it, the offense may run the play from the prior line of scrimmage or after the penalty yards are marked off — either way, the new try is worth the same points as the original.
    - *Example:* Team A goes for a two-point try from the 10-yard line. Team B is offsides. If Team A accepts the penalty, they can re-attempt from the 10-yard line or move up and attempt from the 5-yard line. Both options remain pass-only, and the play counts for two points either way.

Defensive Scoring

- Safety: 2 points, and the defense receives possession of the ball. An intentional grounding or flag guarding in the end zone also results in a safety.
- Points After Touchdown: a defensive interception returned to their own end zone during an opponent's PAT results in the defensive team receiving the number of points the offense was attempting.

05 Offense

Running

- After 5 seconds, the quarterback may run with the ball beyond the line of scrimmage. The quarterback is limited to one run beyond the line of scrimmage (whether designed or a scramble after the 5-second count) per set of four downs, similar to the blitz limitation in Section 6. A QB run that occurs because a defender has legally crossed the line of scrimmage on a blitz does count against this limit.
- Handoffs, laterals, and pitches are permitted only behind the line of scrimmage.
- Offense may use multiple handoffs, laterals, and pitches.
- "No-running zones," located 5 yards from each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield, are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations.
- The player who takes a handoff, lateral, or pitch behind the line of scrimmage can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball has been handed off, laterialed, or pitched, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- Spinning is allowed, but players cannot dive, slide, or jump to avoid being tackled.
  - Jumping in the air in a forward motion to advance the ball, or to avoid a flag pull, is not allowed. Lateral moves to the left or right are permitted. Jumping over players is only permitted to avoid stepping on a player who is off his feet and on the ground.

BALL-SPOTTING RULE

The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.

- A ball carrier cannot charge into a defender who is not mobile.
- An offensive player cannot block a defensive player. A block occurs when an offensive player who is not the ball carrier hinders a defensive player from making a tackle — by contacting the defensive player, running between the ball carrier and the defensive player with or without contact, or a similar act.
- The quarterback may hand the ball off to the center, but only by wrapping the ball around to the center's front. Exchanging the ball back through the center's legs is an illegal procedure: 5-yard penalty and loss of down.

Receiving

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback, if the ball has been handed off, lateralled, or pitched behind the line of scrimmage).
  - The quarterback may not throw the ball off the center or another receiver's body part, catch it, and advance it. Should this happen, the referee blows the whistle and the down is consumed.
- A player must have at least one foot in-bounds when making a reception.
  - If one foot is in-bounds and one is out of bounds simultaneously, the receiver is ruled out of bounds.
- If an offensive player's flag falls out, they are eligible to receive a pass but cannot advance the ball after the reception. The play is dead at the spot of the reception.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by an offensive and a defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.

Passing

- A forward pass may be thrown to a receiver behind or beyond the line of scrimmage.
- A forward pass may be thrown underhand or overhand, as long as the passer is behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is released. A passer is considered beyond the line of scrimmage if any part of the passer's foot is in contact with the ground beyond it.
- Only one forward pass may be thrown during a play.
- Intentional grounding will be called when a passer about to be sacked intentionally drops the ball or throws a pass not in the direction and general vicinity of a receiver.
  - Intentional grounding will not be called if the passer throws a forward pass that lands out of bounds (including out of the end zone) beyond the line of scrimmage.
- The quarterback has a 5-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within 5 seconds, any defensive player may rush, and the quarterback may run beyond the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, lateralled, pitched, or passed forward, the 5-second rule no longer applies.
  - In the no-running zone, the referee sounds the whistle in lieu of announcing the 5th second if the ball has not been thrown, and the play is ruled dead.
- If a QB's flag falls out prior to a pass being made, the ball is dead, and the next play begins from the spot the flag fell out (including in a no-running zone).

- Only the quarterback can throw a forward pass in the no-running zone. Handoffs, laterals, and pitches are not allowed in a no-running zone.
- A forward pass thrown in the no-running zone must be thrown beyond the line of scrimmage (both of the receiver's feet must be in front of the line of scrimmage upon reception).
- *Note:* kneeling is allowed in the no-running zone, including a kneel-down to move the ball back to a position where running is allowed on the following play.
- If an offensive penalty is called on a team while in the no-running zone, the offense will be moved back and will still not be permitted to run.

Formation

- The ball must be snapped between the legs, not off to one side, to start play.
- At least 2 receivers, in addition to the center, must line up at the line of scrimmage on every play.
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. A player in motion cannot be moving forward at the time of the snap. The offense must still have three players set on the line of scrimmage while a player is in motion.
- In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
  - Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
  - Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

06 Blitzing the QB (7th-8th grade only)

Blitzing is only for 7th·8th grade.

- Players may blitz by rushing the quarterback prior to 5 seconds.
- All players who blitz the quarterback must be a minimum of 10 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped (marked by the official).
- Any number of players can blitz the quarterback, as long as they are 10 yards from the line of scrimmage.
- Once a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage on a blitz, the quarterback can run beyond the line of scrimmage.
  - Once a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage on a blitz, all other defensive players, regardless of where they lined up at the start of the play, may also cross the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball is handed off, lateralled, or pitched, the 10-yard rule no longer applies, and all defenders may rush.
- Teams are limited to one blitz per set of four downs. Teams may also blitz on PATs (unless it is a no-run, no-blitz situation).

07 Dead Balls

Play is ruled dead when:

- The whistle blows.
- The ball carrier's flag is pulled.
- The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- A touchdown or safety is scored.
- The ball carrier's knee hits the ground.
- The ball hits the ground.
- There are no fumbles. If the ball carrier fumbles backwards, the ball is spotted where it first hits the ground. If the ball carrier fumbles forward, it is spotted where the ball carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble. Unless the fumble is on 4th down in the final two minutes of the game, the clock continues to run, as if it were a fumble recovered by the offense. *Note:* the ball cannot change possession on a fumble — if the ball carrier loses control and the same team or the other team receives it, even without it touching the ground, the play is ruled dead at the spot of the fumble and the original ball carrier's team retains possession.
- · The ball is dropped in the end zone, the result of the play is a safety and 2 points will be awarded to the defense.
- The ball carrier's flag falls out. (*Note:* if a ball carrier's belt lead is out so that it appears to be a flag, it is treated as if the flag fell out.)
- An illegal forward pass is thrown. (*Note:* an illegal forward pass is a dead ball as soon as it is released, so it cannot be intercepted.)
- An illegal run occurs in the no-running zone. (*Note:* an illegal run is a dead ball as soon as the QB's foot lands across the line of scrimmage, as soon as there is a handoff/lateral/pitch, or when the referee blows the whistle after the count in the no-running zone.)

08 Penalties

All penalties are called by the official. Unless otherwise indicated, all penalties are assessed from the line of scrimmage.

Defensive Penalties

PENALTY	ENFORCEMENT
Offsides	5 yards and repeat down
Illegal rush (rushing prior to 5 seconds)	5 yards and repeat down
Illegal blitz (starting blitz inside the 10-yard marker)	5 yards and repeat down
Illegal flag pull (before receiver has the ball)	5 yards and repeat down
Too many players on the field (includes defensive coach)	5 yards and repeat down
Attempting to strip the ball from the ball carrier	5 yards and repeat down
Holding	5 yards and automatic first down
Illegal contact	5 yards and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	5 yards and automatic first down
Equipment violation (e.g., player not wearing a mouthguard)	5 yards and automatic first down
Pass interference	Automatic first down at point of penalty
Tackling	15 yards from point of penalty and automatic first down
Unsportsmanlike conduct	15 yards from point of penalty and automatic first down

A clear-path tackle — an illegal tackle or "trip" by the defense when, in the referee's judgment, the offensive player has a clear path to the end zone — results in an automatic first down and the ball placed at the defense's 1-yard line.

Offensive Penalties

PENALTY	ENFORCEMENT
Illegal formation (3 players not on-line, more than one player in motion, or a player in motion moving forward at the snap)	5 yards and repeat down
Offsides (a player lined up on the defensive side of the line of scrimmage at the snap)	5 yards and repeat down
Too many players on the field, or a coach on the field	5 yards and repeat down
Intentional grounding	5 yards from point of penalty and loss of down
Flag guarding	5 yards from point of penalty and loss of down

PENALTY	ENFORCEMENT
Blocking	5 yards from point of penalty and loss of down
Delay of game	5 yards from point of penalty and loss of down
Equipment violation (e.g., player not wearing a mouthguard)	5 yards from point of penalty and loss of down
Offensive pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/away a defender)	5 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
Impeding the blitzer	5 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
Charging	15 yards from point of penalty and loss of down
Unsportsmanlike conduct	15 yards from point of penalty and loss of down

- Impeding the blitzer: the blitzer is entitled to a direct path from where they start to where the ball was snapped. If the offense contacts the blitzer in that direct path, it's a penalty. If the blitzer deviates from that path, contact is ruled incidental unless the referee determines it was intentional by either player.
- An illegal run (an early QB run, or a run in the no-running zone) is a loss of down at the spot of the foul and does not result in a yardage loss.
- If a player throws the ball while across the line of scrimmage, the play is ruled dead and the down is consumed. The ball cannot be intercepted.
- Illegal touching — a receiver being first to touch the ball after stepping out of bounds — results in an incomplete pass and loss of down, with no yardage loss. If a defensive player steps out of bounds and is first to touch the ball, they may not intercept the pass.
- If the defense commits a penalty during a play that would place the offense in the no-running zone, the offense may accept the penalty, decline it, or re-do the previous play from outside the no-running zone.

Notes

- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from the normal run of play.
- If an offensive penalty is called on a team while in the no-running zone, the offense will be moved back and will not be permitted to run.
- A half cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines the penalty.
- Loss of down means the penalty is assessed and play moves to the next down.
- If enforcing a distance penalty would move the ball more than half the distance from the spot of enforcement to the offender's goal line, the penalty is instead half that distance.

09 Mercy Rule

- If a team is leading by 28 points or more at any point, the referees will call the game and award a win to the leading team at that score.

10 Coach's Challenge

- Coaches may challenge a rule, but not a judgment call.
- To challenge, a coach must use a time-out, and must have an available time-out to do so.
- Coaches receive 1 challenge per game.
- Coaches retain their time-out and challenge if the challenge is successful.
- Referees and on-site directors will not look at photos or videos as part of the challenge.

11 Coaching

COACHING RESPONSIBILITY

Mouthguards are required. Every player must wear a mouthguard to take the field. It's an equipment violation if a player is on the field without one — see Penalties (Section 8) for enforcement.

- Game responsibility - coaches are responsible for fielding a team to all All Heart scheduled games, regardless of the number of players who will attend. Coaches do not have the authority to cancel any game for any reason. Any disputes with fellow coaches, umpires, directors, rules, or All Heart administration should be discussed with the parties involved and All Heart's Executive Director at the proper appointed time. The only time a coach may remove a team from the field is in the event of imminent danger.

12 Sportsmanship

- If the official witnesses any acts of elbowing, cheap shots, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. Foul play will not be tolerated.
- Trash talking is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. (Trash talk is talk that may be offensive to officials, opposing players, teams, or spectators.) If trash talking occurs, the referee will give one warning; if it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.
- There is a zero-tolerance policy regarding the behavior of volunteer adult coaches. Any coach who exhibits unsportsmanlike conduct while attending any All Heart sports contest will be immediately relieved of coaching responsibilities for the duration of the tournament.