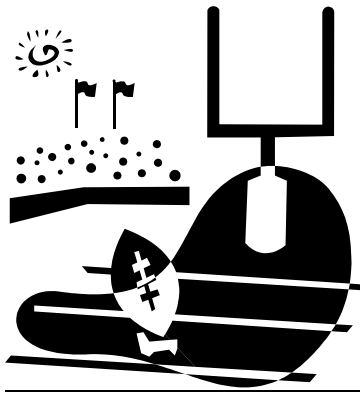


Thumb Area Football and Cheerleading League



FIELD MANUAL



Note: This manual was developed for quick reference. The articles and sections are “snippets” of the T.A.F.L. By-Laws which can be found on our web-site

www.thumbareafootball.com

Article IX- TEAM PRACTICES

Section 1- Practice Fields

The community director shall try to assign practice fields for each team that are most convenient for the majority of the players involved and are evenly spread throughout the school district and/or area as possible. Coaches can use other practice fields with the approval of the community director and must first secure any other approval needed to use that field.

Section 2- Practice Policies

1. The first day of practice shall not be before the “community Picnic” of the applicable year. The president shall determine the exact date pre-season practice shall commence each season. Any team practicing before the scheduled time will be automatically suspended from that year play-off games. A practice is considered three (3) or more players from the same team drafted in that applicable year. The only exception to this rule is a “Community Camp”, which consists of no more than 2-4 days in which every athlete in the community was invited to participate via the school system. This camp cannot be held any earlier than one week before the official start of T.A.F.L. Practice.
2. There shall be at least three (3) weeks of practice minimum and four (4) weeks of practice maximum preceding the first league game.
3. No practices are to be held on Sundays. Additionally, no practices are to be held on Fridays once school starts or when high school football starts, whichever comes first. Coaches are encouraged to schedule their practices around school activities as much as possible.
4. The first week of practice shall consist of conditioning only...no contact (contact being defined as a player coming into physical contact with another player, sled, dummy, shield, etc.). Players cannot have contact until they have completed at least 3 conditioning practices.

5. Once contact starts, only two (2) practices per week can involve contact.
6. During pre-season (before games start), each team shall practice at least one (1) time per week and no more than four (4) per week...but keep in mind the following (#7).
7. Each player shall have completed at least ten (10) practices before participating in his/her first game. The team shall forfeit each game they play where this rule is not followed.
8. After the first game, through the rest of the season, each team shall practice at least one (1) time per week and no more than three (3) times per week (two (2) times with contact).
9. Participants joining a team after the first practice must satisfy rules #4 and #7 starting from the day they join the team.
10. If any team knowingly allows an unregistered or unqualified player to practice or play games will forfeit all games in which the player was used. The head coach of the team will be suspended from his or her coaching duties and the community director will appoint an interim head coach.
11. Practices will not be held when lightning can be seen.
12. No practice/scrimmage games shall be held prior to two weeks before the first game of the season and can only be played against T.A.F.L. teams in the same grade group. Any special events, games, scrimmages, etc. involving teams from T.A.F.L. member areas, must be approved by the league prior to the event. There will be no scrimmages or practices against teams from non-T.A.F.L. members.

Article XII- RULES OF PLAY

Section 1- Basic Rules

T.A.F.L. competition and practices are governed by the playing rules and amendments of the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) and the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA). Some T.A.F.L. rules have been added for the participants' and the league's best interest. Regulation high school playing, substitution, and scoring rules will be in effect **except** where they conflict with T.A.F.L. rules.

Section 2- Field Director at each Game

The board of directors shall appoint a director to be present at each game and serve as field director. The appointed field director shall be responsible for seeing that the conduct of all officials, coaches, players, cheerleaders, and spectators is appropriate. The field director shall have the authority, within his/her best judgment, to act upon or make decisions over any situation that may arise, within the confines of this constitution and with the best interest of T.A.F.L..

Section 3- "Home" Team

The "Home" team coach shall appoint responsible individuals to handle the chains and down boxes. These individuals are not allowed to talk to players, coaches, or officials other than as part of their official capacity. The "chain gang" will stand on the home team's sideline.

Starting the second half of the game, there is no choice of who kicks the ball and who receives. The team that received the kickoff at the beginning of the game will kick the ball at the start of the second half from the same side of the field in which they started the game.

Section 4- Inclement Weather

Referees can stop the game due to lightning (or other severe weather conditions) and will consult with the field director who will make the decision to continue or not continue playing. There will not be a waiting period to see if more favorable weather conditions will come to continue play. All decisions in this regard are final. Games will be played in rain or snow.

If the lightning (or other severe weather condition) stops, the next scheduled game (of that day) will start at its regularly scheduled time. If this game cannot be played, then the following game will still be scheduled to play at its regularly scheduled time.

If a game has been cancelled and has completed 3 full quarters, the team with the most points at the end of the 3rd quarter shall be the winner of the game (if the game is tied after the 3rd quarter, the game will be considered a tie). If the game has not completed three (3) full quarters, the game is cancelled and will not be rescheduled.

Section 5- Tie Breakers

When there is a tie between teams the following order will be used to decide the winner:

- a. Head to head competition
- b. Defensive points scored against you
- c. Coin toss

In cases where overtime is necessary, the following play guidelines will come into effect: a coin toss determines which team attempts to score first, and at which end zone the scores shall be attempted. Both teams use the same end zone. Each team will receive one possession, starting with first-and-goal from opponent's 10 yd line. A team's possession ends when it scores a touchdown, fails to score on 4th down, or loses the ball by turnover. The defense is not allowed to score if it gains possession. A touchdown by the offense is followed by a try

for one or two point conversion. Each team receives one charged time-out per overtime. If the score remains tied at the end of the first overtime, the overtime procedures are continued until a winner is determined.

Section 6 – Every Participant Plays

All players shall start on either offense, defense, or special teams for all divisions. All coaches shall be responsible for insuring that each team member is provided with the opportunity to play as equally as possible in proportion to the amount of practice time during the current week, at the coach's discretion. Each head coach is responsible for devising a system to assure such participation. Our goal will be to get at least 5 plays per half, per child.

If a field or community director determines that a team member is not being allowed to participate, he/she shall inform the head coach. If the condition persists and there is not a good reason, the field director must take the matter to the board of directors for further review and/or disciplinary action. On determining a flagrant violation, the board can remove a coach, or take other action at its discretion.

Section 7 – Uniforms and Equipment

Each member of each team must wear the uniform designated by the T.A.F.L. during all league games. If part or all of the uniform is forgotten at game time, a sweatshirt/shirt and pants of the basic color for that team must be worn during the game. The opposing coach must approve of the substitute uniform; otherwise, the player cannot play. The field director will have final say if there is a dispute.

Game jerseys will be supplied by the League and shall not be worn for practice. Players **are encouraged** to wear these game jerseys in public and at school.

Due to the safety factor, if two (2) teams, which are playing each other, have the same color jerseys, the home team will change to another color or use field/practice jerseys. (This will be a concern when there are different regions set up.)

Coaches shall be responsible for their teams' appearance. Clean pants, socks, shirts, and shoes with the correct coloring are recommended. Shirts tucked in and socks and pants pulled up are highly encouraged.

Every player must wear gym shoes or rubber cleats. All other football cleats and footwear must be approved by the field director.

Every player must wear T.A.F.L. approved shoulder pads, helmet with facemask and football pants with all the pads. Player bought equipment, including arm pads, must be T.A.F.L. approved before using in a practice or game. Every effort should be made by field directors and coaches to see that no obsolete or worn out equipment is used and that all equipment fits well. All face shields must be clear and approved by the field director.

If a player wears a neck roll, the T.A.F.L. strongly suggests a proper fit. Proper fitting being defined as a: "neck roll that adequately protects the neck, but still allows movement of the head in all directions."

All players must wear mouth protectors either clear or colored, unless the player has written permission from his/her dentist. Mouthpieces **must** be attached to the helmet and worn in the mouth while on the playing field. A first warning may or may not be issued by the referee. A 10-yard penalty will be given for each violation.

Individual award or other non BOD stickers are prohibited to be placed on helmets. 1st offense: The player must be removed

from the playing field until the sticker is removed. 2nd offense:
Team may be required to forfeit.

Section 9 – Game Playing Times

Divisions:	Freshman	Junior Varsity	Varsity
Minutes per Quarter	10	11	12

Four quarters, a 2-minute rest between quarters, and an 8-minute rest at half time.

Each team is entitled to three 35-second time outs per half.

The clock will stop for all penalties after a score, following kick-off, an injury or equipment repair. The clock is not stopped for any other reason, with the exception of the last two minutes of the first and second halves of the game when the difference in score is within 8 points, then and only then will the clock stop for a dead ball (i.e. going out-of-bounds, after a pass play or the time it takes to move the 1st down markers). (currently it states “the last two minutes of the game when the difference in score is eight)

Each team must have a 10-minute warm-up of stretching and/or calisthenics before starting each game. Before starting the 2nd half of each game, at least a 2-minute warm-up will be observed by each team. These warm-ups are mandatory and will be enforced by the referees. Should either warm-up result in a delayed start of either half, the team causing the delay is to be penalized 15 yards at the time of kick-off.

In the event of injury, an official’s time-out will be called. However, the hurt player must report to their sideline after the time-out and remain there at least three (3) consecutive plays. The referees will be instructed at the T.A.F.L. Official’s Clinic to follow this procedure.

Weight Limits & Weighing-in

The weight restriction in the various divisions is as follows:
(note below: under “Weigh-ins” a player’s weight is with full playing gear including the helmet):

Grades:	Freshman	Junior Varsity	Varsity
Maximum Weight	140	170	Unlimited
	(Minimum weight removed)		

For running backs, receivers, and ball returners

Maximum Weight*	110	140	160
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* Offense: Players over this weight must play on the offensive line (tackle-to-tackle only). In the Varsity division players over 200 lbs can play only offensive line.

* Kick receive: Players over this weight may play only on the front line positions. (200lbs offensive line only)

* Defense: Only two (2) inside linebackers can be over the ball carrier weight limit, others must play on the defensive line (tackle-to-tackle).

If, at registration, the player is ineligible due to weight, the player can register to play in the T.A.F.L. with the understanding that they cannot play unless they make weight. A maximum of 50% refund may be given, if the player quits the team.

If a player is eligible (makes the weight limit) at registration and becomes ineligible at some time during the season, that player cannot participate in games until he/she can make the weight limit. The player can participate in practice without contact. In this situation, the coach must insure that the field director weighs the player before the game for the player to become eligible for that game.

A fluorescent circle sticker will be placed on a player’s helmet to indicate he cannot carry the ball.

Section 10 – T.A.F.L. Special Rules of Play

PATs (Point After Touchdowns):

After a touchdown, the point after will be either run or passed successfully from the 3-yard line and will count for one (1) point. The offense has the option to go for two (2) points from the 5-yard line and must notify the referee of this decision before the ball is placed in play. There will be no place kicks for either PATs or field goals.

Fumbles:

The defense shall not advance fumble recoveries. Offense cannot advance a fumble once the ball is past the line of scrimmage.

Punt Rush and Punt Return:

In our continuing attempt to improve player safety, the following rules for punting plays will be followed:

Divisions:

Freshman	No punt rush	No punt return
Junior Varsity	No punt rush	No punt return

In lieu of a punt, the ball is automatically placed 25 yards from the line of scrimmage unless you are inside the 40, then it is half the distance.

Division:

Varsity	Punt rush allowed*	Punt return allowed
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* There will be NO contact allowed with the offensive center (long snapper) on the line of scrimmage in a punt situation. Referees shall be instructed to enforce any violation with a personal foul with a 15-yard penalty and an automatic 1st down.

Kick-offs:

Divisions

Freshman	No Kick-offs	Ball placed on 40-yd. line
Junior Varsity	Kick-offs allowed	Ball kicked from 40-yd. line
Varsity	Kick-offs allowed	Ball kicked from 40-yd. line

Trick Plays:

In keeping with the primary mission of the T.A.F.L., which is teaching football fundamentals and sportsmanship, the following “gadget” plays are not permitted:

- Center sneaks (hiking the ball without a count)
- Fumble-rooskis (fumbling the ball on purpose to get an advantage)
- Bounce passes or any play where the receiver/ball carrier leaves the playing field and returns to handle the ball.

The team attempting to use one of the above plays shall be penalized with both the loss of a down and a 10-yard assessment. The designated field director shall have the final determination of a trick/gadget play.

Sideline Area:

All coaches must remain on the sidelines as in regular high school rules and may enter the playing field to converse with their players only during called time-outs. There shall be an automatic 15-yard penalty for any member of the coaching staff on the playing field that interrupts the normal progress of the game.

Coaches and players on the sidelines must remain one (1) yard back and within the 25-yard line markers.

Exception:

For Divisions: Freshman and Junior Varsity

One (1) coach per team may be present on the playing field, but shall not interfere, either physically or verbally, while play is in progress. The coach can be in the huddle but must remain at least ten (10) yards behind the line of scrimmage and out of the playing area when play resumes.

Out-Scoring by more than 32 Points:

Any team out-scoring an opponent by more than 32 points could be given a bye the following game. If, in the opinion of the designated field director at the game, every practical effort was made to keep the score down or there are circumstances beyond the coach's control that prevented the team from keeping the score down, the bye will not be enforced. Before any such action takes place, the designated field director and the president must discuss the situation.

Section 11 – Miscellaneous.

Football size. All Freshman and Junior Varsity teams shall use a “Pee-Wee” football or its equivalent size for practice and games. All Varsity grade teams shall use a “Junior” football or its equivalent size for practice and games.

Defensive Line of scrimmage. Freshman and Junior Varsity teams must have no more than six (6) players on the line of scrimmage at all times, except goal line defense inside the 10 yard line. Linebackers need to be 3 yards off the ball and can't move until the ball is snapped.

Defensive line, tackle to tackle, must be in a 3 or 4 point stance. This is for Freshman and Junior Varsity divisions. Any violation is a 15 yard penalty.

Extra Games. Games to be played against non-member football teams must be approved by the board of directors prior to scheduling the game. In any T.A.F.L. area, where the opposing team is not affiliated with T.A.F.L., the opposing team shall be under the nominal supervision of the area field director.

Horse collaring. All horse collaring will result in a 15 yard penalty.

Section 12 - Sportsmanship

Rules governing the conduct of coaches, players, and spectators are continuously reviewed by the league in an attempt to stem unsportsmanlike behavior.

In an effort to keep the game environment under control, the Referees may penalize team 15-yards for unsportsmanlike conduct by the players, coaching staff **or** supporting fans.

Any coach or assistant coach entering the field of play to argue an official's call in an unsportsmanlike or hostile manner, shall be immediately ejected from the game. He/she will be required to leave the playing site immediately before the game resumes and will be on a league-enforced suspension from all practices and games for the next seven (7) calendar days. Any coach not complying will forfeit the game in question and the entire team will be suspended from all practices and games for the next seven (7) calendar days. The designated field director must report any such ejection to the president and the league.

Any player or coach using profanity, degrading language, unsportsmanlike gestures or taunting of another player, coach or referee shall be penalized 15 yards for unsportsmanlike conduct. This penalty shall be considered a team penalty and the next unsportsmanlike infraction from any player or coach of the same team will result in an immediate ejection of that player or coach from the game. A 3rd unsportsmanlike infraction from a player or coach will result in that team forfeiting the game.

Concerning the sportsmanship of spectators and fans, it will be explained to the coaches at the coaches' meetings, officials' clinic and by every field director, that it is the coach's responsibility to control their team's fans and parents. If the coach cannot control them, then the designated field director must step in and restore order. It should be explained that at the 1st such offense, a sportsmanlike conduct penalty, will be enforced and 15 yards marked off against the offending team. A 2nd offense will require the field director to stop the game and

if the individual(s) causing the disturbance can be identified, they will be instructed to leave the playing site or the game will be stopped and a forfeit awarded to the opposing team.

All spectators must remain at least five (5) yards from all boundaries of the playing field. The field director shall, immediately escort any spectator entering the playing field for reasons other than player injuries, from the playing site. The game will resume once the spectator has left the game site.

Section 14 - Safety

Player safety should always be on the forefront of all coaches, officials, and directors' minds both on and off the fields.

Each team is to be equipped with a first aid kit, including ice packs. Coaches are required to bring their first aid kit (including ice packs) to all practices and games. If more first aid supplies are needed, the coaches must contact the league to replenish their inventory of medical supplies.

In the event of an injury, the field director in charge may remove an injured player from the game if in his/her opinion, the player is unable to safely continue.

All field directors, head coaches and assistants should be, at least, acquainted in basic first aid procedures.

The community director, with the help of the board of directors, will develop an emergency action plan to evacuate an injured player (ambulance, etc.) as part of every community's pre-season planning.

Section 15- T.A.F.L. Blood borne Pathogens

In keeping with the T.A.F.L. policy of stressing the utmost safety at all times for our participants and following the current MHSAA guidelines, the following policy will be invoked and

adhered to by all T.A.F.L. communities and their players, coaches, referees and community directors.

1. A player who is bleeding, whether from an injury, previous injury, or an unexpected occurrence (i.e. nose bleed) shall not be allowed to play until the bleeding is stopped. All traces of the blood must be removed and the injury site adequately covered by a dressing.
2. Any player who has liquefied (fresh) blood on a jersey, pants, pad or socks will not be allowed to play until the jersey, pad, or sock(s) is replaced or removed. Realizing that this should be a rare occurrence, but that the possibility exists, the T.A.F.L. suggests that all teams have at least two (2) extra jerseys provided for them by their respective area and it shall be the coach's responsibility to see that these jerseys are at each game.
3. Each area shall provide latex (plastic) gloves for use by each team, in addition to furnishing gloves for use by the game officials. These gloves are to be safely disposed of if they are used, along with any Band-Aids, dressings or related medical supplies that may come in contact with blood.
4. It is suggested that each area formulate a procedure for handling a "bleeding occurrence," such as who is authorized to treat an individual who may be bleeding, for instance, the field director, coach, etc.
5. The League recognizes that it is not economically feasible to have spare football pants on each and every sideline. However, in the event of a bleeding occurrence on a player's pants, the player will not be allowed to participate until the blood is removed and/or covered.
6. The referees shall be instructed to remove from the game any player with blood on the above mentioned equipment.

This is not just the injured player, but any participant who has come into contact with the injured player and may have blood on their equipment. No injury time out will be assessed in the event of a bleeding occurrence, however the injured player will be held out of play until bleeding stops and blood is cleaned up properly and coach sees player is fit to play again. See T.A.F.L. Blood borne Pathogens Rule #4.

7. These regulations shall remain in effect until further notice.

None of the T.A.F.L. rules can be waived by any person for any reason. Anyone willfully violating any rule will be suspended for one (1) year. Reinstatement/appeal procedures are outlined in the T.A.F.L. Guidelines.