



Basics of Flag Football

Officiating



The following is an introduction to officiating Flag Football and is the information used for the initial qualification for Flag Football officiating in Australia and New Zealand.

1. Spirit, Principles & Object of the Game

Spirit of the game

There is no place for unfair tactics, unsportsmanlike conduct or acts that are intended to intentionally cause injury or disrespect. A coach or player who attempts to gain an advantage by deliberately circumventing or disregarding the rules is unsuitable for Flag Football.

The rule book attempts to prohibit all form of unnecessary contact, unfair tactics and unsportsmanlike conduct; however, rules cannot cover every potential situation. Only through the best efforts of coaches, players and officials, can the highest ethical standards be maintained.

Principles

The most important aspect of the rules is to avoid any significant and impactful contact.

The important aspect of the rules are:

- To make the flags an easy target.
- Right of place and right of way, which determine who is charged with avoiding contact.
- A blitzer sacrifices their stance in order to be given right of way. The offense should calculate the blitzer's lane in order to give them right of way and avoid interfering with them.
- The runner has to calculate the defender's action in order to avoid contact.
- Limitations to backwards passes are in place to avoid playing a game similar to Rugby.
- Penalties and their enforcement are not perfect. It is a balance between practical simplicity and fair perfection

Object

Flag football is played with two teams of 5 players who attempt to score points by moving the ball down the field across the goal line. The team with the most points at the end of regulation time is the winner.

2. Health & Safety

The responsibility for the Health & Safety of the players differs on either side of the Tasman. The IFAF rules cover the basics of the requirements plus officials should be aware of their specific responsibilities and the responsibilities of the coaches or team management. All officials should be familiar with these.

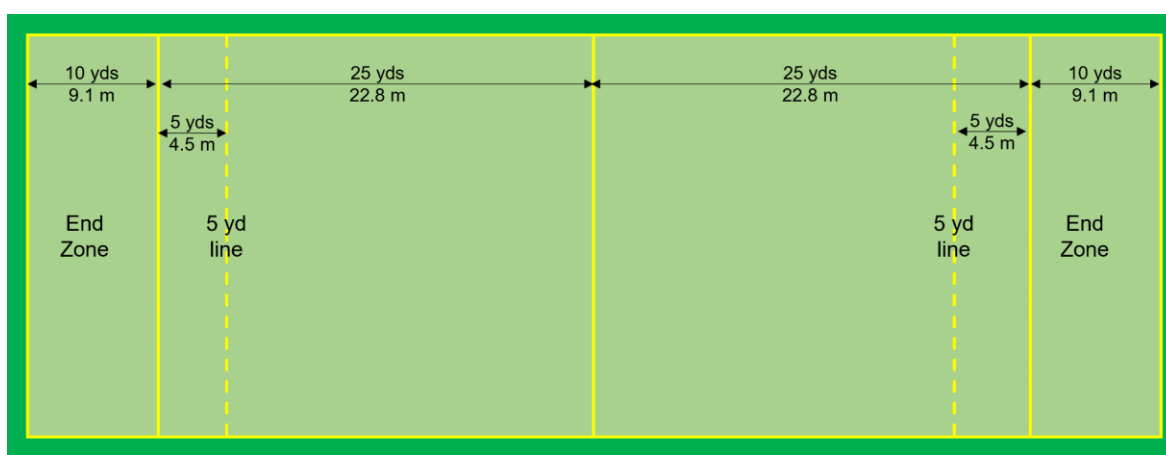
Injuries	In the event of an injured player any official may declare an official timeout, provided the player for whom the timeout is taken is removed from the game for at least one down. A player with a bleeding wound shall leave the field immediately after being ordered to do so by an official.
Stoppages	The game clock shall be stopped when each half ends, for a charged team timeout, for an <u>injury timeout</u> or at the Referee's discretion.
Concussions	Concussions or suspected concussion protocols. If there is a suspected concussion the game will stop and 2 Officials check and question the person. The player will be observed for signs of loss of consciousness, confusion and disorientation. It is strongly recommended that the player is removed from the game. It always pays to be cautious. "IF IN DOUBT - TAKE THEM OUT"

3. Flag Football Basics

This section is the general introduction to the game of Flag Football with basic Flag Football rules.

All officials should be familiar with these.

Playing Area	The playing field is a rectangle usually 70 yards long (including the two end zones) and 25 yards wide. There is a goal line at each end of the field at 50 yards leading into a 10-yard end zone. This can vary depending on available space.
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3. Flag Football Basics, continued.

<p>General terms</p>	<p>Down: A down is the period of time that begins when the centre puts the ball into play until the ball becomes dead.</p> <p>Line of scrimmage: (LOS): The line of scrimmage for each team is an imaginary line passing through the end of the football nearest to them, extending from sideline to sideline.</p> <p>Neutral zone: The area between the two imaginary lines extending from sideline to sideline, one across the front point and one across the back point of the football, is the "neutral zone."</p> <p>Snap: The snap is a backward pass through the legs of the centre, which puts the ball into play. The snap must be one quick and continuous motion, and the snapper can't move his feet or lift a hand until after the ball is snapped.</p> <p>Pass rusher: The defensive player standing 7 yards back from the LoS identified by raising their hand.</p> <p>Blitz: The action of the pass rusher attempting to "sack" or tackle the QB.</p> <p>Tackle: Successfully pulling one or both flags of an offensive player who is carrying the ball.</p> <p>Line to gain: This will be either the halfway line or the try line whichever the team is trying to reach with their 4 downs.</p>
<p>Equipment</p>	<p>To play the game, you need a football and a flag belt with two flags for each player.</p>
<p>Flag Belt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shirts must be tucked in, and they are not allowed to hang down over the flag belt. ● If a player loses their flag belt during a down and gains possession of a live ball, that player is considered down. The Play is over. ● Players must have the ball before their flag can legally be pulled. It's illegal for a defender to intentionally pull a flag from an offensive player who doesn't have the ball. The infraction is considered a personal foul with a 10-yard penalty. ● Guarding the flag belt is not allowed. Runners can't use any part of their body or the ball to keep an opponent from pulling their flag.
<p>Starting Play</p>	<p>A coin is tossed prior to the start of play to determine which team will kick-off first and which goals teams will defend. Teams change ends at half-time. Play begins with a snap on the offense's 5 yard line.</p>
<p>Advancing up the field</p>	<p>When a team has the ball and starts from their 5 yard line they have 4 downs to advance the ball across the halfway line. They then have 4 downs to score a touchdown.</p> <p>If they fail to advance over the halfway line, or to score a touchdown after crossing the halfway line after their 4 downs, the ball is given to the other team who then restarts at their 5 yard line.</p>
<p>Sacking the QB</p>	<p>The only defensive player who can "sack" the QB is the Pass Rusher. A sack is when the QB flags are pulled while in possession of the ball.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Pass Rusher must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Start 7 yards back from the line of scrimmage. ○ Raise his/her hand to indicate that they are the Pass Rusher. ● The Pass Rusher must not contact the QB.
<p>Punting</p>	<p>No Punting.</p>

3. Flag Football Basics, continued.

Playing the Ball (including Backward Passes and Fumbles)

- The ball is spotted (placed) on the line of scrimmage (LOS) as close to the centre of the field as conditions allow.
- Players can carry and throw the ball to move it up the field.
- The QB has seven seconds to pass the ball.
- The QB cannot cross the line of scrimmage, run up field unless they have clearly passed the ball to someone else first.
- Multiple backwards passes may occur as long as they are behind the line of scrimmage. As soon as a forward pass takes place (behind the line of scrimmage) no further passes are permitted.
- Once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage no further passes are permitted.
- A defender may knock down a pass that's in the air or can intercept the pass and attack.
- If the player with the ball has his flag pulled, any part of the runner's body except their hand or foot touches the ground or if he goes out of bounds, he is called "down" and the ball is dead.
- No one is allowed to enter the neutral zone or move toward his opponent's goal line at a snap.
- Other players have to stay still until the ball is snapped.
- If the ball hits the ground the ball is dead.
- The snap must be to a player behind the line of scrimmage, unless it touches the ground.

Forward Passes and Interceptions

- The offensive team is allowed one forward pass during each play from the line of scrimmage, but the passer must be behind the line of scrimmage when releasing the ball. Any other forward pass is illegal.
- If a player is in the air while attempting to catch a ball, he must land with at least 1 foot in bounds when he has possession of the ball before going out of bounds.
- If players from opposing teams catch the ball at the same time, the ball is given to the team that snapped the ball.

Scoring

Points can be scored in the following manner:

- Touchdown = 6 points
- Extra point = 1 point (if successful from the 5-yard line)
- Extra point = 2 points (if successful from the 10-yard line)
- Safety = 2 points

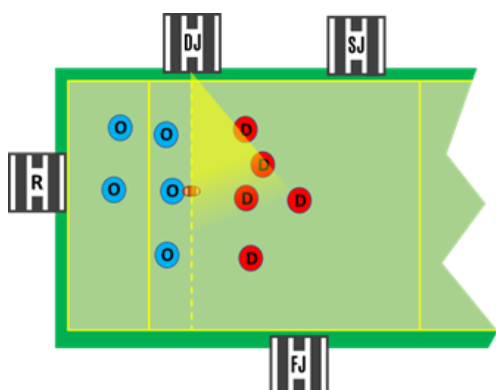
A safety is called when an offensive player is down with the ball in his own end zone. The team that was scored on begins with a snap on the their 5 yard line.

4. Roles of Officials

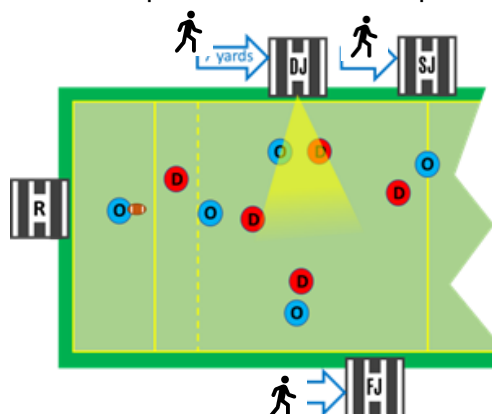
4.1. Down Judge (DJ)

Position	The initial position of the Down Judge is on the line of scrimmage at the side line with the down indicator if used .
Basic Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Down Judge is responsible for the operation of the down indicator if used. • The Down Judge shall keep count of the downs. • The Down Judge has jurisdiction (see diagram) over the scrimmage line and their side line to 7 yards down the field. • Watches for offside or encroachment - false starts. • Makes out of bounds calls on his/her sideline. • Must be able to return to the mark if the down is replayed (marks this with a bean bag).
After snap	<p>The Down Judge stays at the line of scrimmage until a runner has crossed the line or a pass thrown. They then move down the field 7 yards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once the ball has been snapped, the Down Judge shall be responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ QB crossing the LOS. ○ Shielding, contact flag, guarding, jumping other fouls ○ Where the play finishes. • If there is a foul on the play they walk off the penalty yards indicated by the Referee. • Shall "spot the ball" - indicate where the ball should be placed for the next play.
3 Man crew	<p>Description R, DJ & FJ but no SJ.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is no Side Judge, then the Down Judge shall cover the receivers on their side of the field..
4 Man crew	<p>Description R, DJ, FJ & SJ.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave the deep run passes beyond halfway to the SJ. • Once the ball has crossed the scrimmage line, the Down Judge shall be responsible for ruling on the play around the ball and forward progress on their side of the field. • Leave the deep run passes beyond halfway to the FJ.

DJ position prior to the snap.



DJ position after the snap



4.2. Field Judge (FJ)

Position The initial position of the Field Judge is 7 yards deep at the sideline opposite to the down indicator.

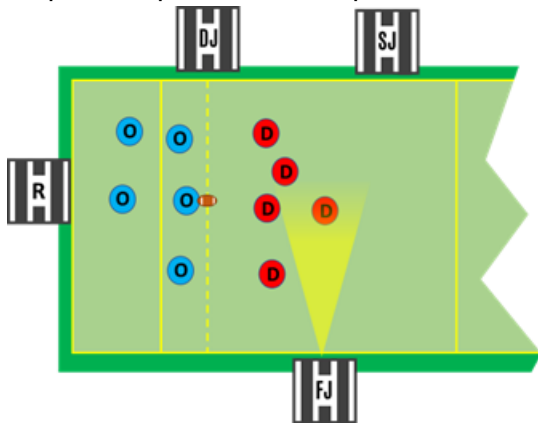
- Basic Responsibilities**
- Responsible for running the game clock.
 - The Field Judge has jurisdiction over their side line:
 - Watch for the Blitz (also called a Pass Rusher) crossing the 7-yard line prior to the snap - Illegal Blitz.
 - Makes out of bounds calls on his/her sideline.
 - Marks the 7 yard Blitz point.

After snap After the snap the FJ will move to mid field while watching the area from 7 yards to down the field to cover deep passes.

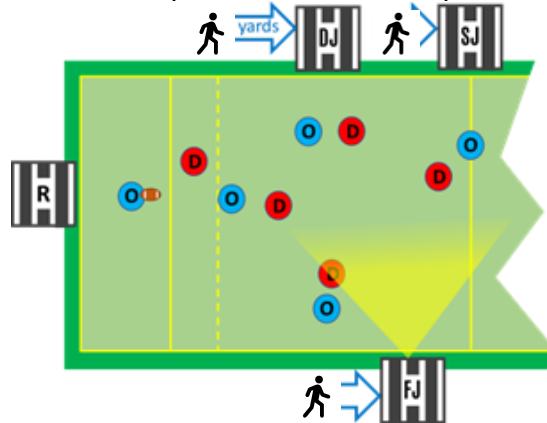
Once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage, the Field Judge shall be responsible for ruling on the play around the ball and forward progress on their side of the field.

3 Man crew Responsible for observing run passes beyond half way.

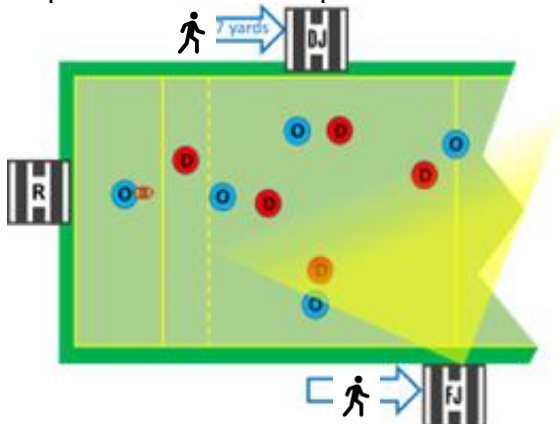
FJ position prior to the snap.



FJ position after the snap



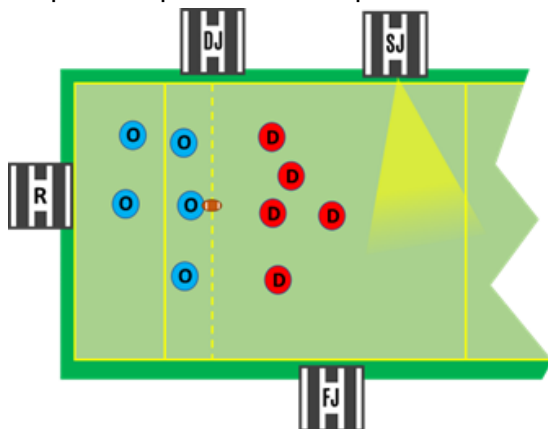
FJ position after the snap in a 3 Man crew



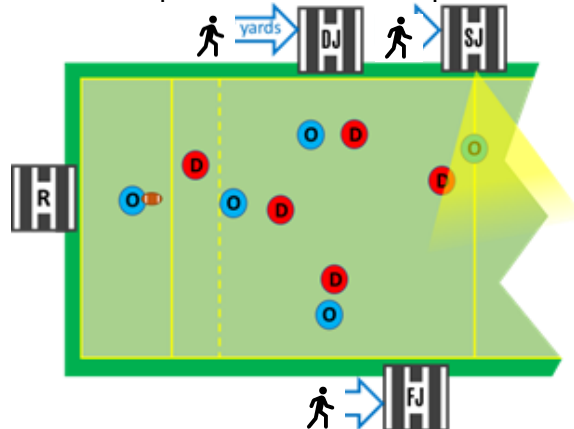
4.3. Side Judge (SJ)

Position	The initial position of the Side Judge is 20 or more yards deep on the same side as the DJ.
Basic Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Side Judge shall be responsible for observing receivers on deep routes for ruling on long passes and the status of the ball and forward progress in their area. • May be responsible for the 25 sec play clock. • Makes calls for any touchdowns ensuring players are in bounds. • Watches the receivers and defenders for fouls: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shielding, ○ Contact, ○ Flag Guarding, ○ Jumping and diving ○ Pass interference
After snap	Responsible for observing the receivers on deep routes, ruling on long pass plays, forward progress in their area.

SJ position prior to the snap.

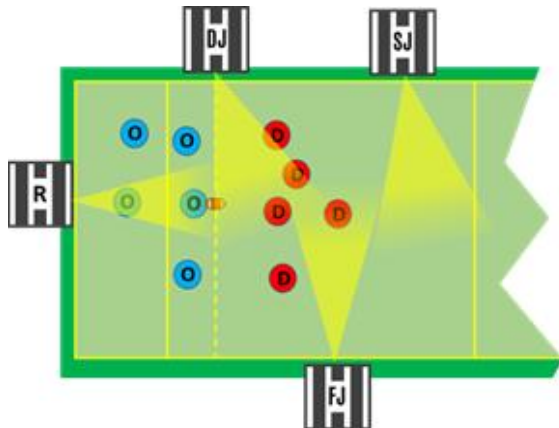


SJ position after the snap

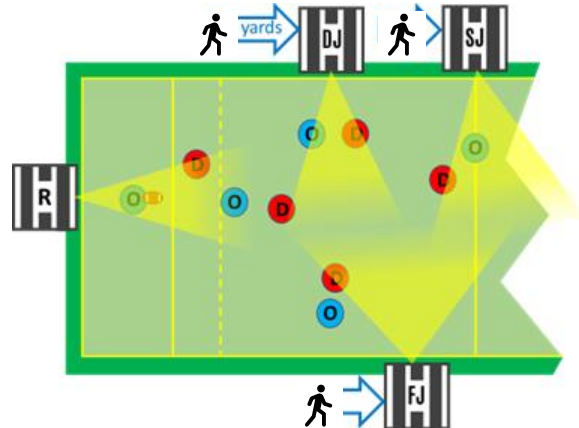


4.4. Positions Master Diagrams

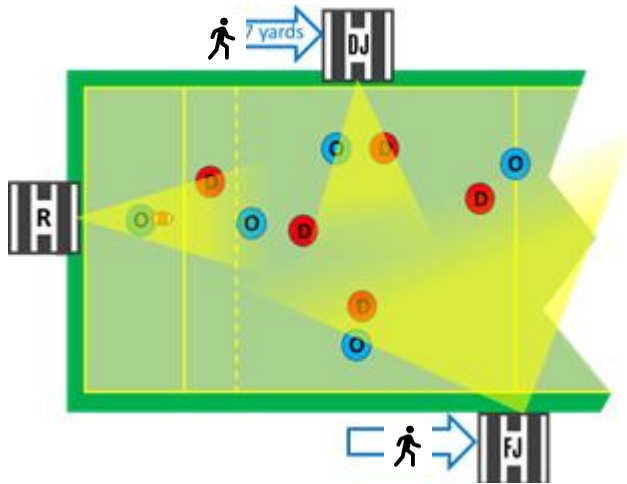
All Officials positions prior to snap.



All Officials positions after the snap



All Officials positions after the snap for a 3 Man crew



4.5. All Officials

- Watch for**
- Look towards Ref for all penalty signals and instructions,
 - Watch for flag guarding,
 - Watch for Right-of-place and Contact,
 - Watch for flag guarding and jumping or diving,

- Equipment** Each Official should have:
- Referee shirt
 - Whistle
 - Flag
- Position Specific equipment
- DJ should have a bean bag to mark the line of scrimmage in case a replay of a down.
 - FJ may have a timing device (watch or phone) for running the game clock.
 - SJ may have a timing device (watch or phone) for running the 25 second play clock.

5. Infringements and Penalties

Infringement	Official Responsible	Description & what to watch for	Whistle or Flag	The Referee will call the penalty
Blocking	All	Watch for use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during a screen block.	Flag	Personal foul, 10 yards at spot of foul
Right of Place	All	All stationary players have the right of place and opponents must avoid contact.	Flag	
Contact	All	No player shall intentionally contact an opponent or an official. No player may hold another player.	Flag	
Flag guarding, Jumping & Diving	All	Watch the runner in possession of the ball swinging the hand or arm over the flags or placing the ball over the flag to prevent an opponent from removing the flag. Watch a runner in possession jumping or diving to avoid a tackle.	Flag	5 yards and loss of down at spot of foul
Pass Interference	DJ FJ SJ	A defensive player must avoid running into the QB behind the line of scrimmage. If a defender contacts the passer's hand or arm, whether or not he or she touches the ball, it is roughing the passer.	Flag	10 yards (previous spot) and automatic first down
False Start	DJ Ref	Offensive players moving before the snap, or not coming to a complete stop for 1 second after a shift.	Whistle	5 yards from the previous spot and loss of down.
Illegal Blitz	FJ	The pass rusher cannot move closer than 7 yards before the ball is snapped.	Whistle	5 yards from the line of scrimmage and replay the down.