

BRITISH AMERICAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

5-ON-5 FOOTBALL RULES

2014-15 EDITION

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Foreword

The rules are revised each year to improve the sport's level of safety and quality of play, and to clarify the meaning and intent of rules where necessary. The principles that govern all rule changes are that they must:

- be safe for the participants;
- be applicable at all levels of the sport;
- be coachable;
- be administrable by the officials;
- maintain a balance between offense and defence;
- be interesting to spectators;
- not have a prohibitive economic impact; and
- not be unduly divergent from the rules adopted by EFAF in Europe and NCAA in the USA.

These rules apply to all contests involving BAFA affiliated teams and take effect from 1st March 2014 (Exception: Competitions that began before 1st March 2014 will continue to use 2012-2013 rules until the end of their competition).

For brevity, male pronouns are used extensively in this book, but the rules are equally applicable to female and male participants.

BAFA has established a mechanism for discussing and deciding future changes to this book. Each organisation affiliated to BAFA has a voice on the Rules Committee. You may make suggestions for changes to your organisation's representative(s). Suggestions may be made at any time, but to be eligible for consideration for the following year they must be received by 1st October.

Jim Briggs, BAFRA (Editor) on behalf of the BAFA Rules Committee

Those who find it necessary to write to the editor for interpretations of rules or play situations will receive prompt replies if they number their questions and email them to rules@britishamericanfootball.org

Changes to the 2014-2015 Edition

Article 2 – A team may now legally play a down with less than 5 players providing all other restrictions are met.

Article 3 – Changed minimum number of officials from 1 to 2 [1 to cover the line of scrimmage and Team A backfield, 1 to start 7 yards deep on the opposite sideline marking the blitz line and covering Team B backfield]

Article 8 – Editorial changes to more clearly define who is eligible to blitz for Team B and when restrictions are removed.

Article 9 – Amended “no run zone” restrictions for Team A and introduced new definition for a “forward pass play”.

Article 20 – Editorial change to correct wording around player numbering restrictions.

Article 21 – Removed Team A restriction on who can throw a forward pass, 7 second limit still applies to the player who originally takes the snap.

Article 24 – Emphasis added for “targeting” fouls, including automatic disqualification.

Article 24 – Changed yardage enforcement for holding from 10 yards to 5.

Article 31 – Editorial changes to more clearly define what happens to the line to gain when ball relocated by a penalty by Team A or B.

Article 31 – Team A may now execute any legal play if a Team B penalty moves the ball inside the “no run zone”.

Article 32 – Try enforcement amended as per changes to Article 31.

General Principle

ARTICLE 1. 5-on-5 football shall be played under the rules of 11-a-side contact football with the following changes. Where a rule is in conflict with 11-a-side rules or clearly does not apply, the 5-on-5 rule takes precedence.

The Game

ARTICLE 2. a. The game shall be played between two teams of no more than 5 players each. The minimum number of players in a squad and the number of those permitted to be in uniform shall be determined by the organiser of the tournament.

b. A team may legally play with fewer than 5 players, but a foul for an illegal formation occurs if the following requirements are not met:

Team A must have at least two players legally positioned on their scrimmage line when the snap starts;

One other Team A player may (if desired) be in position to receive a hand-to-hand snap;

There are no restrictions on all other Team A players, providing that they are on their side of the neutral zone;

Team B players (other than those who wish to blitz) are not restricted by position, providing that they are on their side of the neutral zone.

Supervision

ARTICLE 3. The game shall be played under the supervision of two or more officials.

The field

ARTICLE 4. a. The field of play (area between the goal lines) shall be a rectangular area of length 50 yards and width 25 yards. This may be varied to a maximum of 60 x 30 yards or a minimum of 40 x 20 yards if necessary to fit into the playing enclosure.

b. The end zones shall be 10 yards. This may be varied to a minimum of 8 yards if necessary to fit into the playing enclosure.

c. The goal line, the end line, midfield line, the 12-yard line (no more than 2 yards long and in the centre of the field) and the 5-yard line (as a hashed line) are the only lines permitted on the field.

d. If both head coaches agree, hash marks 23 feet wide may be used. They may be marked on the field or their position indicated by pylons or cones placed at least 3 feet off the end line at each end of the field.

e. Otherwise, an unmarked line running down the centre of the field from end line to end line shall be indicated by a pylon or cone placed at least 3 feet off the end line at each end of the field. At the end of every play, the ball's lateral position shall be relocated to the centre of the field.

Goals

ARTICLE 5. There shall be no goal posts.

Line to gain

ARTICLE 6. There shall be no line to gain indicators. The use of a down box is recommended.

The ball

ARTICLE 7. The ball shall be that mandated by the competition organiser and shall be appropriate for the age group of the competing teams. Teams may use their own footballs when they are in possession, provided that they are legal.

Blitz, No Run Zone and Legal Forward Pass play

ARTICLE 8. The following definitions of a blitz, the no-run zone and a legal forward pass play shall apply to these 5-on-5 rules only.

a. A blitz is when a Team B player crosses the neutral zone:

1. While the ball is live.

2. Before a change of team possession.

3. Before the player who receives the snap has given up, or simulated giving up, initial possession of the ball.

b. Only one Team B player is eligible to blitz during a down. Prior to the snap, he must be lined up either:

1. In a three or four-point stance, within one yard of the line of scrimmage, and immediately opposite the ball. If there is such a player, he is the only player eligible to blitz.
2. In Team B's backfield not less than seven yards deep from the neutral zone.

PENALTY -

Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot.

c. If the player who receives the snap fumbles and the ball touches the ground, or if the snap is muffed and touches the ground, any Team B player may blitz.

1. Team B shall not engage in any tactic designed to confuse Team A as to the identity of the legal blitzer after the ball becomes live, or any other tactic that violates the spirit of this rule.

PENALTY -

Live-ball foul. Ten yards from the previous spot. Automatic first down for Team A if not in conflict with other rules. Flagrant or persistent offenders, including coaches who sanction the use of such tactics, shall be disqualified.

ARTICLE 9. a. The no-run zone is established when the ball becomes dead and is located so that any part of the ball is either breaking the plane of or inside Team B's 5-yard line. When the line of scrimmage is in the no-run zone, Team A must execute a legal forward pass play, unless the ball becomes dead behind the line of scrimmage.

b. A legal forward pass play is the interval between the snap and when a legal forward pass as defined by Article 21;

1. is completed, intercepted or first touched beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. is touched or intercepted by the defense behind the line of scrimmage.
3. falls incomplete.

PENALTY -

Loss of down at the previous spot.

Kicks

ARTICLE 10. There shall be no kicking of the football. If the ball is punted, place-kicked, or drop-kicked, it is dead. If a loose ball is kicked it remains live.

Game clock

ARTICLE 11. The game clock is any device under the direction of the appropriate official used to time the duration of the game.

a. The duration of the game may be varied by competitions.

30-second clock

ARTICLE 12. The 30-second clock is any device under the direction of the appropriate official used to time the 30 seconds between the ready-for-play signal and the ball being put into play.

Start of each half

ARTICLE 13. Each half shall start with a snap from the offensive team's 5-yard line.

a. Before the game, the Referee shall toss a coin at midfield, in the presence of not more than two captains from each team and (if present) another game official, first designating the captain of the visiting team to call the coin toss.

b. The winner of the coin toss has first possession. The loser chooses which end of the field to defend and shall have first possession in the second half. The winning captain may not defer his choice.

Playing time

ARTICLE 14. a. The total playing time (excluding extra periods) shall be 30 minutes divided into two halves of 15 minutes each (unless varied according to Article 11-a). The half-time interval shall be 2 minutes.

b. The clock shall start on the first snap of the game.

c. Outside the last two minutes of a half, the clock shall normally only be stopped for charged team timeouts, penalty enforcements, and changes of possession. The clock shall continue to run after a scoring play until the try down has

been completed. The referee shall declare and charge himself with a timeout if an injured player requires one. He may also declare and charge himself with a timeout if there is a significant delay in spotting the ball for the next down, or for any contingency not elsewhere covered by the rules.

d. After a charged team timeout or change of possession, the clock starts on the snap. After any other timeout, the clock starts on the ready-for-play signal.

e. When the ball is dead and two minutes or less remain in a period, the referee shall order the clock stopped (if necessary) to inform the head coach and field captain of each team. The 30-second count must not be interrupted to give the two-minute warning. The clock shall start on the snap.

f. After the two-minute warning, normal game timing applies. Refer to Rule 3.

g. Competitions may adopt regulations for either normal game timing or a running clock (as defined in (a) to (e) above) for the entirety of the game. In either case, the referee shall still issue the two-minute warning.

Timeouts

ARTICLE 15. a. Each team is entitled to two charged team timeouts during each half. During extra periods, each team shall have one charged timeout per period. Charged timeouts may not be retained into the succeeding half or extra period.

b. Charged timeouts shall last no more than 60 seconds.

Putting the ball in play

ARTICLE 16. The ball shall be put in play within 30 seconds of it being declared ready for play, unless play is suspended during that interval. If play is suspended, the 30-second count will start again. Consuming more than 30 seconds after the ball has been declared ready for play is an illegal delay.

PENALTY -

Dead-ball foul. Five yards from the succeeding spot.

Downs

ARTICLE 17. Team A has four downs to progress to the midfield line. If successful, they shall have a new series of four downs to score.

a. At the start of a half, the team with the right to start the half takes possession at its own 5-yard line.

b. After a try down, the team that conceded the touchdown takes possession at its own 5-yard line.

c. After a safety, the team that scored the points takes possession at its own 5-yard line.

d. After a touchback, the team awarded the touchback takes possession at its own 5-yard line.

e. If Team A fails to achieve the line to gain after fourth down, Team B shall take possession at its own 5-yard line.

Backward passes and handoffs

ARTICLE 18. Prior to a change of possession, the runner may pass the ball backwards or hand the ball in any direction, provided the handoff or pass is completed behind the neutral zone, except to throw the ball intentionally out of bounds to conserve time.

PENALTY -

Five yards from the previous spot.

No Advance

ARTICLE 19. Prior to a change of possession, the player who receives the snap may not advance the ball beyond the neutral zone until the ball has been in the possession of another player.

PENALTY -

Loss of down at the previous spot.

Numbering and formations

ARTICLE 20. a. No two players of the same team shall wear an identical number during any scrimmage down.

b. Team A must have at least two players legally positioned on their scrimmage line when the snap starts. One other player may (if desired) be in position to receive a hand-to-hand snap. There are no restrictions on the position of the other players, provided they are on their side of the neutral zone.

PENALTY -

Five yards from the previous spot.

Forward passes

ARTICLE 21. Team A may make one forward pass during each down before team possession changes, provided the pass is thrown from a point in or behind the neutral zone – any Team A player may throw a forward pass.

a. The player who receives the snap has 7 seconds to give up initial possession of the ball. When he does so, the 7 second limit no longer applies. The ball is dead if the player who receives the snap exceeds the 7-second limit. If in doubt, he has not exceeded the limit. (Exception: If the actions of an illegal blitz cause the limit to be exceeded, the ball is dead but there is no foul for exceeding the limit.)

PENALTY -

Loss of down at the previous spot.

b. The passer may legally throw the ball away to avoid loss of yardage or a 7-second foul if the ball lands or would have landed in or past the neutral zone extended. If the ball does not reach the neutral zone, or would not have reached it, a receiver must have had a reasonable opportunity to catch the ball.

PENALTY -

Loss of down at the spot of the foul. Safety if the foul is behind Team A's goal line.

c. No player shall throw an illegal forward pass as defined by Rule 7-3-2 (Exception: Rule 7-3-2-f does not apply).

PENALTY -

Five yards from the previous spot and loss of down if by Team A before a change of possession.

Eligibility to touch a forward pass

ARTICLE 22. At the snap, all players are eligible to touch a forward pass or receive a forward handoff. (Exception: The passer is not eligible to touch a forward pass until it is touched by another player.)

Scoring

ARTICLE 23. The point value of scoring plays shall be:

| | |
|--|----------|
| Touchdown | 6 Points |
| Safety (points awarded to opponents) | 2 Points |
| Successful Try Touchdown (from 5 yard line) | 1 Point |
| Successful Try Touchdown (from 12 yard line) | 2 Points |
| Successful Try Touchdown (scored by Team B) | 2 Points |

NOTE: The try will be from the 5-yard line unless the captain or coach of the scoring team informs the referee that it will be from the 12-yard line. This option must be chosen before the ready for play.

Personal fouls/Holding

ARTICLE 24. No person subject to the rules shall commit a personal foul before the game, during the game or between periods.

a. There shall be no clipping at any time. (Exception: Against the runner)

b. There shall be no blocking below the waist at any time. (Exception: Against the runner.)

c. There shall be no blocking in the back at any time. (Exception: Against the runner.)

d. No player shall target and initiate contact against an opponent with the crown (top) of their helmet.

e. No player shall target and initiate contact to the head and neck area of a defenseless opponent with the helmet,

forearm, hand, fist, elbow or shoulder. (Rule 2-27-14 defines a defenseless player/opponent)

PENALTY -

10 yards from the previous spot. Automatic first down for Team B fouls if not in conflict with other rules. Flagrant or persistent offenders shall be disqualified, fouls for targeting are always deemed to be flagrant. Safety for offensive team fouls behind its own goal line.

f. There shall be no holding at any time. (Exception: Against the runner)

PENALTY -

5 yards from the previous spot. Automatic first down for Team B fouls if not in conflict with other rules. Safety for offensive team fouls behind its own goal line.

15-yard penalties

ARTICLE 25. There are no 15-yard penalties. All penalties that in 11-man football carry a 15-yard penalty shall carry a 10-yard penalty in 5-man football.

Penalty enforcement

ARTICLE 26. Any penalty may be declined, except for a false start penalty. Disqualified players must leave the game.

Live-ball fouls

ARTICLE 27. If not otherwise specified in these rules, the enforcement spot for live-ball fouls before a change of possession is the previous spot. (Exception: Roughing the passer -- if the pass is complete, the penalty is enforced from the end of Team A's run if it ends beyond the neutral zone.)

Dead-ball fouls

ARTICLE 28. The enforcement spot for any dead-ball foul is the succeeding spot.

Change of possession

ARTICLE 29. The enforcement spot for live-ball fouls after a change of possession is the spot of the foul. If this spot is behind a goal line, the penalty shall be enforced from the nearest 5-yard line.

Half-distance

ARTICLE 30. No distance penalty shall exceed half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team's goal line.

Relocated by penalty

ARTICLE 31. When an accepted penalty moves the ball over a marked line on the field:

- a. If the goal line is the line to gain and enforcement of a Team A penalty moves the ball back across the midfield line, the goal line remains the line to gain.
- b. If the midfield line is the line to gain and enforcement of a Team B penalty moves the ball across the midfield line, the goal line becomes the new line to gain and Team A are awarded a first down by distance.
- c. If the ball is snapped in the no-run zone and enforcement of a Team A penalty moves the ball outside the no-run zone, Team A must still execute a legal forward pass play during any subsequent down until a down free from Team A fouls leaves the ball outside the no-run zone.
- d. If the ball is snapped outside the no-run zone and enforcement of a Team B foul moves the ball inside the no-run zone then Team A may execute any legal play during the next down – this privilege is extended if a further Team B penalty is enforced on the subsequent down, but is cancelled if Team A foul.

Enforcement On Try Down

ARTICLE 32. On the try:

- a. If Team A has elected to go for one point and commits a foul not carrying a loss of down for which the penalty is accepted, the try is repeated after enforcement. Team A must still execute a legal forward pass play and also may not elect to change their decision to attempt a two point try.
- b. If Team A has elected to go for two points and accepts a Team B penalty that does not result in an automatic score being awarded which after enforcement leaves the ball inside the no-run zone, then Team A may execute any legal play

and a successful conversion will still score two points.

c. If Team A commits any foul carrying a loss of down for which the penalty is accepted, the try is over and any score during the down is cancelled.

Sportsmanship

ARTICLE 33. a. There is no room for any acts of deliberately illegal tactics or blocking, "cheap shots" or any unsportsmanlike act by a player or coach. Foul play will not be tolerated. A player who persistently or flagrantly commits personal fouls shall be disqualified.

PENALTY -

Players or squad members in uniform who commit persistent personal fouls or one flagrant personal foul shall be disqualified.

b. "Trash talking" (any talking which is deemed offensive, insulting or abusive to officials, opposing players, teams or spectators) or any other act of unsportsmanlike conduct is strongly discouraged. The officials are the sole arbiters of language or gestures that is offensive, insulting or abusive.

PENALTY -

10 yards from the succeeding spot. Players or squad members in uniform who commit two unsportsmanlike fouls or one flagrant unsportsmanlike foul shall be disqualified. Coaches who sanction the use of unfair tactics, or who violate these sportsmanship rules, shall be disqualified.

c. Any person disqualified from a game will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Any person subject to the rules may be disqualified and may not participate further in the game in any official capacity.

Rosters

ARTICLE 34. Both teams shall submit roster forms for any game they play in, subject to the rules of the competition. A common roster for games played in a tournament format is acceptable if allowed by competition rules. Persons subject to the rules who are required to appear on the roster form and do not shall be disqualified upon discovery.

PENALTY -

Disqualification

Extra periods

ARTICLE 35. If the score is tied after two periods, leagues or tournaments may mandate the use of extra periods. If not, the game is over and the result stands as a tie. Extra periods shall be based on the NCAA tiebreaker system detailed in Rule 3-1-3 with the following modifications.

a. The referee shall toss a coin at midfield in the presence of no more than two field captains from each team and (if present) another game official, first designating the field captain of the visiting team to call the coin toss. The winner of the toss may not defer his choice and shall choose one of the following options:

1. Offense or defense to start the first series of the first extra period.
2. Which end of the field shall be used for both series of that extra period.

b. The loser of the toss shall exercise the remaining option for the first extra period and shall have the first choice of the two options for subsequent even-numbered extra periods.

c. An extra period shall consist of two series with each team putting the ball in play by a snap from the midfield line.

d. Each team has four downs to score. The ball remains alive after a change of team possession until it is declared dead and the series is over. Team A may only have a new series of downs if Team B commits a foul that mandates an automatic first down.

e. Beginning with the third extra period, team scoring a touchdown must attempt a two point try. A one point try by Team A (although not illegal) will not score a point.

f. Extra periods will continue to be played until there is a winning team.

g. The team scoring the greater number of points during the regulation and extra periods shall be declared the winning team.