

Payette County Recreation District

Youth Tackle Football Rules

The purpose of the PCRD 3rd thru 6th grade tackle football league is to provide local youth the opportunity to participate in this uniquely American sport. It is now played around the world and is a PCRD program that supports our goal of providing quality *recreational programs* to our constituents. All PCRD programs are expected to be *fun, positive, and learning experiences* with an emphasis on *participation, safety, and sportsmanship*.

Please note the following policies and procedures:

- Practice sites, dates, and times will be determined by the head coach. PCRD requires a minimum of five practices prior to each team's first game of the season. Once play begins, practices are scheduled at the discretion of each head coach. Practice attendance or a lack thereof *may* be used to determine an individual player's playing time.
- Payette County Recreation District does not provide medical insurance.

OFFICIAL RULES:

Payette County Recreation District will use the most current NFHS Rule Book. Payette County Recreation District may modify rules that are deemed beneficial or necessary to enhance or improve our program.

1) **REGISTRATION:** No player will be allowed to practice or participate until registration is completed and fees are paid.

2) **ELIGIBILITY:**

- Only players registered with PCRD or other recreation organizations associated with PCRD may participate in games or practices. NO EXCEPTIONS!!
- Parents may request to have their child move up an age/grade division if a waiver is signed.
- Players will not be allowed to participate in a division lower than their appropriate grade/age division. Participants attending school outside their school district may choose to play on a team in the town where they reside or the school district in which they attend.

3) **TEAM FORMATION:**

- The goal of PCRD is to make every attempt to ensure that teams are formed on the basis of maximum participation and parity. Due to teams being formed in the communities in which they reside, it is not unusual for team skill levels to vary significantly. If more than one team per town per division will be formed, the head coach and/or a representative from each team should plan on attending a draft meeting provided to divide teams as evenly as possible.
- **The draft will take place as follows: The highest grade level players will be drafted first until they are exhausted. The lowest grade level will then be drafted until exhausted. Multiple teams from the same town will have as close to the same number of players from each grade level as possible.**
- The head coach and his/her assistant will be allowed to place their children on his/her team.

4) **UNIFORMS:**

- PCRD will provide game jersey, helmet, and shoulder pads for all participants that register through PCRD. Players must purchase their own pants w/pads, cleats, socks, and attachable mouth guard. Personal chinstraps may be substituted for those provided.
- Shoes **must** be worn and cleats must conform to NFHS football standards. No steel baseball/softball cleats!
- **All** jewelry that is exposed and could cause injury to the player or other participants should be removed prior to participation in practice or games. Jewelry determined to be unsafe by the officials or PCRD staff will be removed or the player will not be allowed to participate. Medical alert bracelets or necklaces may be worn if they are taped to the body.

5) CONDUCT:

- Coaches, parents, and spectators **MUST** emphasize the social and physical benefits of participation and not the score of the contest. Spectators and parents are invited guests and their support is encouraged as long as it remains positive. Spectators and/or parents shall not criticize officials, players or coaches of any team.
- Coaches are expected to be **ideal** role models for their players. Sportsmanship, fair play, honesty, and integrity should be displayed at all times. Please be an example to all who participate and attend.
- The use of profanity or abusive language by anyone in attendance is considered to be inappropriate and the offender(s) shall be subject to immediate ejection. The use of tobacco products, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs during a contest or use of any of the previously mentioned substances on park or school property will serve as grounds for dismissal.

6) FIELDS:

- Alcohol, drugs and tobacco products are not allowed at Mesa Park or **ANY** school district facility.
- No pets or glass containers.
- Teams are asked to be courteous and clear the field as soon as possible so that the following game may start on time. Please have your players pick up their team area following the contest.

7) GAME PROCEDURES:

- All team personnel should plan on arriving at the game site a minimum of 30 minutes prior to game time. Pre-game stretching and practice is restricted to one end of the field only (20 yard line to end line).
- PCRD personnel or game officials will make the determination as to whether to call a game due to weather, field conditions, or lightning.
- If officials observe lightning in close proximity, the game will be suspended for a minimum of 20 minutes. At that time, officials will determine whether or not to continue based on safety first. If lightning is still evident, the game will be suspended at that point and will be continued at a later date if possible. The vast majority of game cancellations will be game time decisions at the site of the contest.

8) PARENTS:

- The role of parents is to be supportive of the participants, coaches, and officials.
- Please remember this is a recreation program. Sportsmanship, fair play, and fun are the emphasis of our programs. Focusing on the physical, mental, and social development of each of our participants far outweighs the outcome of the contest. Please realize that coaches are volunteers and deserve to be treated as such for the time and effort they contribute to our youth.
- PCRD appreciates the time and training our officials put forth to contribute to our programs. Parents must realize that the officials strive to manage the contest and administer the rules to the best of their ability. PCRD makes every effort to educate and train our officials to ensure quality officiating. Spectators who are focused on the officiating are missing a great opportunity to observe and cheer the achievements of the athletes on the field.

9) COACHES:

- Each **head coach** and **all assistants** are *advised* to watch the following courses and videos offered by the NFHS Learning Center (www.nfhslearn.com): Football Tackling (<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/football-tackling>), “Concussion in Sports” (<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/61064/concussion-in-sports>) and the “Sudden Cardiac Arrest” online courses (<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/61032/sudden-cardiac-arrest>) before each team’s first regular season practice. From there you will have to register as a user and then start the course. All three courses are FREE even if you click on the “purchase now” prompt. Please print the certificate of completion at the end of the course and turn it in to the PCRD office to be placed with your file.
- Coaches should make every attempt to set a *positive, caring, and enthusiastic* example for the participants.
- Please show respect for the officials and teach your players to do so also. Coaches who are focused on the officiating are missing a great opportunity to train, educate and be a positive example for the athletes on the BOTH TEAMS. **Protests are not allowed.**

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- Please remind your parents that children must be picked up promptly after games and practices. Give PCRD a call if you have parents who are frequently late picking up their children.
- ALL coaches are responsible to abide by the policy manual and attend the preseason coaches meeting. Discussion of league rules and procedures at this time will help to eliminate problems that could arise once league play has begun.
- Please conduct a parent meeting to introduce yourself, assistants, team moms, etc. The parent meeting is a great time to give parents practice and game schedules as well as present your expectations and team rules, in writing (preferred), to the parents and participants. Please provide names and contact information for yourself and your assistants. The use of Team Sideline communication tools is provided and preferred.
- If phone calls are necessary during the season for any reason, communicate with a parent if possible. This will help to eliminate any miscommunication that may occur.
- **PRACTICE:** Practices that are well organized and fun will allow your team to enjoy their preparation for competition. Coaches, it is imperative that you consistently provide players an opportunity to stay hydrated. Please monitor the physical well-being of each participant and limit your practice times to no more than 2 hours. Team success can usually be measured by the level of satisfaction participants experience due to coaches who provide excellent practice plans. Practice sites, dates, and times will be determined by the head coach. PCRD suggests a minimum of **ten (10)** practices prior to each team's first game of the season. No glass containers please.

10) GAME RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Keep your players in the team box, encourage them to clean up after the game and promptly remove their personal belongings and gear. No glass containers please.
- Parent(s) should remain in the stands. Coaches only may be in the team box.
- After the contest, please take part in a display of sportsmanship. Showing respect for your opponent and officials is an important lesson for the participants.
- **Basic Skill Goals:** Skills to be stressed for all ages: follow directions; listen and work with teammates and coaches; tackle and block properly; wear proper uniform; respect officials; learn the rules.

11) PLAYING TIME:

- **ALL players in uniform MUST play a minimum of half of each of the first 2 quarters of each game. At or near the five-minute mark of the 1st and 2nd quarters, each coach will be allowed a one-minute officials time-out to enter and organize their substitutes that will play for the remainder of each quarter. Players who are injured, become ill or choose to remove themselves from play should be re-entered at the first opportunity to do so. Players who have fulfilled their 5 minutes of playing time in a quarter may be substituted for by another player who has fulfilled their 5 minute minimum.**
- If there is disciplinary action taken by the coach in which any player will not be allowed to play for any amount of time, the following procedures must be adhered to:
 - Notify the parent(s).
 - Notify PCRD.
 - Notify the opposing team prior to the game.
 - Notify the OFFICIALS prior to or immediately if the discipline is during the contest.

12) EQUIPMENT: (Should be turned in at the end of your last game.)

- 3 JUNIOR (5th-6th) or PEE WEE (3rd-4th) size footballs & 4-8 cones.
- First Aid Kit & Equipment repair Kit
- Electrical tape for helmets
- Tackling dummies and shields (if issued)

13) PLAYING RULES

- **FOOTBALLS:** **Junior** size football shall be used for all 5th-6th grade games. **PEE WEE or JUNIOR** size football shall be used for all 3rd-4th grade games. A horizontal white stripe is not required on the ball but it must display “**Junior**” or “Pee Wee” size on it. PCRD encourages teams to agree to use one ball for the game. If teams choose to use different game balls, coaches are responsible for bringing in their own game ball after change of possession.
- **PROCEDURE TO BEGIN THE GAME/3RD QUARTER/AFTER A SCORE/ON-SIDE OPTION:** Options for the team that wins the coin toss will be to defer **OR** choose to go on either offense or defense **OR** choose the goal that team will defend. The team on offense will start 1st and 10 at their 40-yard line anywhere between the hash marks. The game clock will start on the snap. (1) Following a score, the non-scoring team will start 1st and 10 at their 40-yard line AFTER the PAT. The ball will be spotted on the 40-yard line anywhere between the hash marks. The game clock will start on the ready. (2) In the 4th quarter only, if the scoring team still trails on the scoreboard, they may choose to have the ball placed 4th and 10 at their own 40-yard line, anywhere between the hash marks. The game clock will start on the ready. (3) If successful in reaching a first down, possession continues normally.
- **PROCEDURE WHEN A TEAM CHOOSES TO “PUNT”:** The receiving team will put the ball in play 1st and 10 at the succeeding spot 30-yards from the line of scrimmage between the hash marks. Teams receiving the ball after a declared “punt” will start at no closer to their goal line than the 20-yard line. The game clock will start on the ready.
- **SCORING:** TD – 6 pts; PAT run or pass – 2 pts; dead ball non-contact PAT kick – 1 point; or field goal – 3 pts.
- **TIMING:** Four 10-minute quarters with a 5-minute halftime. Clock stops on injury/official and team time outs only. Clock runs at all times with the following exceptions: (1) After an extra point try; (2) regular clock rules the last 1 minute of the 1st half IF the score difference is 12 points or less; (3) regular clock the last 2 minutes of the 2nd half IF the score differential is 8 points or less. Both the 3rd-4th grade league and 5th-6th Grade league will use a 40-second play clock, or 25-second play clock after scores, change of possession, penalties and other designated situations. Two timeouts per half. 3rd-4th grade may have two coaches on the field COACHING and not “advising” officials. (4) At or near the 5-minute mark of the 1st & 2nd quarters for teams to meet the mandatory substitution rule.
- **BLOCKING:** NO blocking below the waist.
- Any participant weighing 101 pounds or more in the 3rd-4th grade league and 116 or more in the 5th-6th grade league will not be allowed to advance the ball. Players that meet or exceed these weights will have a colored strip of ELECTRICAL tape placed vertically front to back on their helmet and may only play on the offensive line of scrimmage (center, guard, tackle, tight end or wide receiver), quarterback, or any position defensively. Quarterbacks that meet or exceed the weight limit may not advance the ball past the line of scrimmage. QB’s that violate this rule will be penalized with a five-yard live ball illegal procedure penalty from the previous spot and **a loss of down**. Any violation in excess of one will incur the penalty and removal of that player from the QB position for the remainder of the game. The QB’s that meet or exceed the weight limit MUST receive the snap from the center. Players that meet or exceed the weight limit may catch or intercept a pass or recover a fumble but the play will be blown dead when they possess the ball. Players who meet or exceed the weight limit MUST wear the stripe at all times while the game is in progress.
- **OVERTIME:** All ties will remain a tie. No overtime.
- **GENERAL:** Stripping the ball from the ball carrier *is* allowed. Targeting (delivering a blow to or tackling the head of the ball carrier) will result in a 15-yard penalty if the official deems the act to be dangerous and/or intentional.
- **DEFENSIVE ALIGNMENTS:** Teams must use a minimum of four defensive linemen. Defensive linemen may use any stance, must be within 1 yard of the LOS, and may not line up anywhere between the offensive guards (over center or in A gaps). Defensive players not on the line of scrimmage and heads up with the center or the A gaps must be three yards off the line of scrimmage at the snap. From the 20-yard line and in, any defensive alignment is legal. The penalty for violation of this rule is a live ball five yard illegal procedure penalty.
- **OFFENSIVE ALIGNMENTS:** Offensive linemen may use any stance. A minimum of two players must be lined up on each side of the center (center, guard, tackle/tight end) with a maximum distance of 1/2 yard or less between them. Remember, there MUST be a minimum of 5 players on the line of scrimmage and no more than 4 players in the backfield. The INTERIOR 5 are all INELIGIBLE.

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PCRD 3rd-4th Grade Youth Tackle Football Special Rules for 9-man Football

NFHS rules will apply in all instances:

- A minimum of one (1) offensive player must be on each side of the center. Players on each side of the center must be on the line of scrimmage and are required to be within 1/2 yard or less from each other.
- Offensive formations may have a *maximum* of four (4) players in the backfield at the snap.
- Defensive alignments must include a *minimum* of two (2) players on the line of scrimmage at the snap. Defensive players on the line of scrimmage may not line up head-to-head with the center or in the “A” gaps. Linebackers must be 3 yards deep at the snap if they are head-to-head with the center or in the “A” gap. If the line of scrimmage is located on the 10-yard line going in, defensive players may line up anywhere behind their line of scrimmage.
- On field coaches:
 - o Maximum of two – MUST stay deep enough to not interfere with play at any time.
 - o Must coach kids, not officials. Any coach who is disrespectful will be sent to the sideline for the remainder of the game.
 - o **ALL on field coaches must refrain from “coaching” once the snap count is eminent.** Procedure – (1) Warning, (2) Removed from the field, (3) 5-yard live ball illegal procedure penalty, (4) 15-yard Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty.
- Field modifications:
 - o All 3rd-4th grade games should be played on a 50-yard field with end zones that are 7 to 10 yards deep.
 - o 1st downs will be achieved by reaching the next 10-yard line, regardless of the line to gain on 1st down.
 - o Extra points will be 1 point from the 1-yard line, 2 pts from the 3-yard line, 3 pts from the 10-yard line.
 - o Teams will not switch ends of the field at the end of the 1st and 3rd quarters.
- Kicking game: Teams that choose to “punt” may take the ball 25 yards from the line of scrimmage. The new series may not be start inside the 10-yard line based on which field the game is being played on.

Monday, August 18, 2025