
PART IX - CHALLENGER RULES MISSION

The mission of the Challenger League is to bring the Pop Warner Little Scholars experience to those special needs individuals that would normally not be given that chance. The Challenger program is non-competitive and no score will be kept. The games however, model after a regular game with warm-ups, coin toss, and singing of the National Anthem etc. Participation in the Challenger League is only at the request of the individual's parent or guardian.

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the general regulations found in Parts I-III, the following Pop Warner Challenger rules govern all participants playing Pop Warner Challenger Football (PWCF).

Membership is open to any legitimate sponsor, such as recreation departments, YMCAs, Boys Clubs, PAL, and so forth. Requests for challenger leagues to operate in chartered Pop Warner tackle league territories will be considered by the National Football' Commissioner.

Challenger leagues become members of Pop Warner Little Scholars, Inc. If sponsoring PWCF, tackle leagues (already members) do not gain a second membership. Separate registration fees are charged for challenger membership.

ARTICLE 1: ORGANIZATION

- S1: The HLA shall be considered the LEAGUE.
- S2: Associations can sponsor a team or teams.

ARTICLE 2: REGISTRATION

Each league must conform to the insurance provisions found in Part 1 National Remarks.

ARTICLE 3: DIVISION OF PLAY - CHALLENGER

Division Name:
Challenger

- S1: Challenger League age cut-off date is July 31st of the current year and shall be the participants' league age for the coming season.
- S2: There are no height or weight restrictions on players.
- S3: Cheerleaders shall follow the overall age and division of play referenced in S2 above. In addition, all challenger spirit squads must follow Pop Warner Spirit Guidelines as outlined in the spirit section of this rulebook.
- S4: Ages shall be verified by methods outlined in Part III, Article6, S-3,
- S5: If a player starts a season in one division, he must finish in that division.
- S6: A player is ineligible if he is a member of a school tackle program or if he is playing Pop Warner tackle football. He is also ineligible if he is competing in another challenger or flag football program (unless as part of school curriculum).
- S7: A player shall furnish a written consent to play from either parent or legal guardian.

- S8:** Team helpers / volunteers must be a minimum of 13 years of age and will assist the players during the game.

*NOTE: This division is intended for special needs individuals that may require the assistance of a helper during the game. Safety is of the utmost importance. It should be stressed that this is non-contact flag football. There is no tackling or impeding another by force. The person providing assistance to a player in a wheel chair should understand that they are cognizant of the safety of others. They cannot use the chair to block, ram, or otherwise impede another in the course of play. The person providing the assistance should be of an appropriate age (13) and that they are in full understanding of these rules and on-field responsibilities. *It is of course the choice of the players parent as to who will provide assistance to their child. They know their children best, defer to them.*

ARTICLE 4: CHALLENGER FOOTBALL RULES

RULE 1: PLAYERS

- S1:** A game is played between two teams consisting of a minimum five (5) players each. This represents again a minimum number; the game can be played with any number of players up to and including eleven (11). For example, seven on seven, eight on eight.
- S2:** Each team roster shall have a maximum of 28 players, and a minimum of 10 players.
- S3:** Only players appearing on the official team roster form (supplied by HQ) are to be counted as players. The Roster is completed before the first game of the season and verified by the league in a process called "certification."
- S4:** With a five person team the offensive team should have four (4) players on the line and one (1) in the backfield. The defensive team may choose any formation.
- S5:** Mandatory Play Rule: All players will receive equal play time.

RULE 2: PLAYING FIELDS

- S1:** The field shall be rectangular with lines and end zones and shall conform to either' of the two designs mentioned below.
- A. 100-yard field: This field measures one hundred and twenty yards in length, divided into 5 zones of twenty yards each between two end zones of ten yards each. It is 53 1/3 yards wide.
 - B. 50-yard field: This field measures seventy yards in length, divided into 5 zones of ten yards each between two end zones of ten yards each. It is 40yards wide.
 - C. Goal Posts are unnecessary as there is no one or two point conversions after a touchdown.
- S2:** The following field equipment will be used:
- A. A Down Marker can be used to indicate the number of the down.
 - B. Corner Flags with flexible staffs will be placed at the four sections of the end zones and the sidelines. Soft pylons may be used if flags are unavailable.

RULE 3: EQUIPMENT**S1: GAME BALL**

Each PWCF league will determine which ball will be used during its games.

S2: FLAGS

- A. Each player must wear a belt with the number of flags designated as "standard" by the league, which will be either 2 or 3 flags.
- B. The flags will be attached to a belt and extend or hang from each side of the player's body. When using three flags, the third will hang from the rear of the player's body,
- C. Flags will be 14 to 20 inches long and a minimum of 2 inches wide.
- D. The belt must be tight to prevent being turned around during a de-flagging.
- E. The home team should wear light flags and the visitors should wear dark flags.
- F. The securing of flags to the body, waist or belt, other than provided by S-2-B, is illegal.
- G. Jerseys cannot be worn over flags.
- H. If a player's flag is inadvertently lost; he is ineligible to handle the ball.
- I. Flags are to be of contrasting colors, different from game uniform. Definitions of uniform shall be game pants and/or jersey.

NOTE: The flags will be attached to a belt made for that purpose. Such a belt has equal resistance at the point of attachment of flags, thereby ensuring an equal effort necessary to de-flag a player.

S3: GAME UNIFORMS

- A. All team members must wear the same color jersey. *Note: It is the intent of Pop Warner that the Challenger jersey is exactly like that of the other teams in the organization. It is important that these players look exactly like everyone else in the organization.*
- B. All uniforms must have the Official Authorized Pop Warner Patch displayed in the designated areas as determined by National.
- C. All jerseys may be numbered, front and back.
- D. Any type of pants may be worn.
- E. Sneakers are the preferred shoe.

S4: EYE GLASSES

Eye glasses, when worn, shall be of athletically-approved construction with non-shattering glass (safety glass).

S5: MOUTHGUARDS

Mouth guards are not required; if used, no keeper strap is necessary.

RULE 4: PROHIBITED EQUIPMENT

S1: Spiked or street shoes.

S2: Padding of any kind, including hard surface padding such as shoulder pads, hip pads, and helmets (unless required as a result of the individual participant's disability).

S3: Hard metal or any other hard substance on a player's clothing or person (unless required as a result of the individual participant's disability).

S4: Anything that conceals the flags.

S5: Slick or sticky substances such as grease or glue.

S6: Any equipment, in the opinion of the referee, which will endanger or confuse players.

RULE 5: REFEREES

S1: There should be at least two (2) referees.

S2: The league may assign more than two referees for a game.

S3: Each game official will carry a handkerchief and drop it whenever an infraction occurs.

Note: Challenger Flag Football is purely instructional. There will be no penalties assessed but rather instruction as to what the player did wrong. After instruction as to the infraction, play will resume.

RULE 6: GAME PLAY

S1: PLAYERS

The free substitution rule is always in effect and a player may enter the game any time the ball is dead.

S2: TEAM COACHES:

One Coach for each team will be permitted on the field.

S3: TIME & GAME PLAY

There will be two 25-minute halves. There can be up to three time outs if necessary for each half.

- A. Ten (10) minutes between halves.
- B. A continuous running game clock.
- C. There are no winners and losers, and a score will not be kept. Each team possession, regardless of turnovers, will end in a touchdown.
- D. Each child will be allowed to score a touchdown during a game. It is of the utmost importance that the coach 'spread the ball around' as evenly as possible, again giving each child equal opportunity to score.
- E. At the conclusion of each play, the referee will place the ball in the center of the field (equal distance from sidelines-not on a hash mark).

S4: DOWNS

- A. Although a down marker is used, it is used for game realism only. It can however be advanced per down.

S5: DE-FLAGGING

- A. There shall be no tackling of the ball carrier, passer, or kicker.
- B. The player carrying or having possession of the ball is down when the flag is removed from his waist (deflagging). The defensive player shall hold the flag above his head and stand still.
- C. The defensive player cannot hold or push the ball carrier to remove his flag. An accidental touch of the body or shoulder while reaching for the flag shall not be considered a violation; however, touching of the head or face shall be considered a violation.

- D. A defensive player may not run over, push, or pull a blocker away from him. He may push him sideways if he gets past him, but he cannot push the blocker down.
- E. A defensive player must go for the passer's flag. He cannot touch the passer's arm.

S6: BLOCKING

- A. A blocker must block from an upright position.
- B. Cross body and roll blocking are not permitted.
- C. A blocker can only use their hands below the shoulders.
- D. Blocking shall be done with the arms and body in the form of shoulder and brush blocking only.
- E. A defensive player cannot block or push a ball carrier out-of-bounds.
- F. Butting, elbowing or knee blocking is not permitted.
- G. There will be no two-on-one blocking for the ball carrier beyond the line of scrimmage.
- H. Blocking a player from behind is not permitted (clipping).
- I. There will be no interlocking blocking.
- J. A defensive player will be restricted in the use of his hands to the blocker's body and shoulders.

S7: BALL CARRIER

- A. The ball carrier cannot use his hands or arms to protect his flags. The defensive player must have the opportunity to remove the ball carrier's flags.
- B. The ball carrier cannot lower his head to drive or run into a defensive player.
- C. Stiff-arming by the ball carrier is illegal.
- D. The ball carrier cannot spin or hurdle to prevent a defensive player from removing his flags.
- E. He may run in any direction until the ball is declared dead.

S8: CENTER

- A. The center may side snap the ball.

S9: PASSING

- A. All backfield participants (this could include an individual's helper) are eligible passers.
- B. Passing will be attempted from behind the line of scrimmage only.
- C. A lateral pass is a pass thrown parallel to the line of scrimmage or back toward the passer's own goal line. A lateral pass is not considered a forward pass.
- D. A forward pass is a pass thrown from behind the line of scrimmage toward the defensive team's goal line.

S10: RECEIVING

- A. All participants (this could include an individual's helper) are eligible to receive forward passes. If the individual's helper receives the pass, they must immediately give the ball to the rostered player,
- B. A receiver may catch a ball even if he steps out-of-bounds or out of the end zone as long as he comes down with one foot in bounds.
- C. Two or more receivers may touch a ball in succession resulting in a completed pass.

- D. If an offensive and defensive player catch a pass simultaneously, the ball is declared dead at the spot of the catch and the passing team is awarded possession.
- E. An offensive player cannot be out-of-bounds and return in-bounds to catch a pass. This will be ruled an incomplete pass.

S11: DEAD BALL

All balls touching the ground are immediately dead. For example, the ball is declared dead at the following times:

- A. When the ball carrier's flag has been pulled.
- B. If a pass receiver or ball carrier has a missing flag (ball is dead at that spot).
- C. Following a touchdown, safety or touchback.
- D. When the ball goes out-of-bounds for any reason.
- E. If a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught at the same time by an opposing player(s).

RULE 7: INJURED PLAYERS

Once removed from a game because of injury, a player must sit out at least one down, and may not re-enter the game without the approval of attending medical personnel.

RULE 8: PRACTICES

- S1:** In the USA, practice cannot begin until August 1.
- S2:** Challenger participants are not required to complete the mandatory condition required for other Pop Warner participants.

RULE 9: SCHEDULES

- S1:** Maximum number of regular season games shall be eight (8) with a maximum of ten (10) games in the season.

RULE 10: EXHIBITION GAMES

- S1:** At the approval of the HLA, challenger teams may participate in Exhibition Games

RULE 11: PENALTIES

Since there are no penalties, the following can be used as a guide to game play for instructional purposes only.

- S2: LINE OF SCRIMMAGE-**
 - A. Offside, down is replayed.

- S1: PASSING**
 - A. If a forward pass is thrown and intercepted, the play will be blown dead. The offense retains possession of the ball. Play continues.
 - B. Passer crosses the line of scrimmage, the play stands, and the passer is instructed as to the rule.

- C. Intentional grounding, the play stands, the passer is instructed as to the rule.

S3: FLAG WEARING AND DE-FLAGGING

- A. There is no tackling.
- B. You cannot wear the flags illegally.
- C. The ball carrier cannot use his hands to prevent a defensive player from de-flagging.
- D. A player cannot hold, push, or hit the ball carrier while de-flagging.
- E. A player cannot leave one's feet while de-flagging.
- F. As above, the offending player will be instructed as to the rules.

S4: ILLEGAL HAND-OFF

- A. The ball cannot be handed forward beyond the scrimmage line.
- B. The ball cannot be handed or snapped to a lineman.

S5: ILLEGAL SUBSTITUTIONS

- A. There should be no substitution(s) while the ball is in play.

S6: BLOCKING

Note: all of the blocks below are illegal

- A. Leaving feet to block.
- B. Cross body blocking or roll blocking.
- C. Illegal use of hands by blocker.
- D. Holding a defensive player.
- E. Defensive player blocking or pushing the ball carrier out of bounds.
- F. Butting, elbowing or knee blocking.
- G. Defensive player using hands illegally.
- H. More than two blockers for the ball carrier (on one defensive player) beyond the line of scrimmage.
- I. Clipping.
- J. Interlock Blocking.

S7: BALL CARRIER

- A. A fumble remains the possession of the offense, and is not advanced. Note: all of the following is not allowed.
- B. Stiff arming.
- C. Lowering head to drive or run into defensive player.
- D. Use of head.
- E. Use of hands or arms to protect flags.
- F. Spinning or hurdling.

ARTICLE 5: CHALLENGER SPIRIT RULES

In addition to the rules described in Part VIII - Spirit

S1: Not more than twenty (20) spirit participants may be certified to a squad roster. Mascots are not allowed for Challenger Squads.

S2: Challenger Squads shall be designated as Novice.

ARTICLE 6: COACHES

The head coach of a Challenger football team is truly a special individual. You should select a coach that has the right combination of football know-how along with the ability and or the experience to work with handicapped youngsters. Above all else, the coach should realize that this program is designed for flexibility and the enjoyment of the players, without the pressures of competitive play. The coach should be able to provide proper skill development and techniques where applicable.

A challenger team's coaching staff is in complete charge of the team whenever it is together on the practice or playing field, traveling as a group to and from practice sessions and games, or together for any team function, such as a banquet. The coaching staff is under the direction of the Head Coach; other coaches are called Assistant Coaches. The following applies to all coaches:

- S1:** A Head Coach must be at least 21 years of age. A rostered adult representative (21 years or older) must be present for practices, games and functions.
- S2:** An Assistant Coach must be at least 18 years of age. A football team may have a maximum of four (4) assistant coaches, plus Coach-Trainees, (1) Equipment Manager, (1) Trainer, (1) Team Parent and (1) Administrator. (Please note this applies only to Football. See Spirit section for squad coaching members)
- S3:** An Assistant Coach must be at least 18 years of age. A spirit squad may have a maximum of four (4) assistant coaches, plus Coach-Trainees, Student-Demonstrators, (1) Equipment Manager, (1) Trainer, (1) Team Parent and (1) Administrator.
- S4:** Teams/squads are permitted to carry Coach-Trainees, who must be a minimum of 16 years of age.
- S5:** The Head Coach will determine the assignments of the Assistant Coaches.
- S6:** In the absence of a specialized, trained person affiliated with the team/squad in the medical area (physician, paramedic, specially trained volunteer), one of the coaches must be the holder of a current Red Cross Certificate in Community CPR and First Aid or its equivalent.
- S7:** Coaches are to be selected by methods approved by League rules and/or by-laws.
- S8:** Once approved for coaching, a coach is automatically terminated at the close of each season. To coach the following year, the same League approval is required. Any violation of the rules committed by a coach during the season, even though the hearing is not held until after the close of the season, is still under the jurisdiction of the sponsoring association and/or League.
- S9:** Coaches do not make team or League policy. Rather, they carry it out, However, on the playing and practice fields; the coaching staff is in complete charge and shall not be interfered with except in cases of rules violations and any other conduct deemed by higher authority to be contrary to the welfare of youth.
- S10:** The Head Challenger Coach has final responsibility for his/her actions, those of his/her assistant coaches, players, staff and parents.
- S11:** Each League shall establish its own rules regarding the placing of coaches with sons, daughters or siblings within its own boundaries.