

The following are rules differences that many coaches and fans mistake as applying to Youth football.

General differences:

1. **12 men/boys breaking the huddle.** This is a college rule. Under the National Federation a substituted player must immediately leave the field (Generally interpreted as 3-5 seconds). Rule 3-7
2. **Helmet to helmet contact.** This is NFL language. Use of the helmet is discouraged by the National Federation and it relies on the judgment of the official to determine if any helmet contact was intentional (a foul) or accidental (no foul). Rule 2-20
3. **Blocking below the waist:** All blocks must begin above the waist in Tualatin Valley Youth Football.
4. **Horse Collar Tackles:** Horse collar tackles only apply when there is a *single tackler* who grasps the runner by the inside back or side of the jersey or shoulder pads and subsequently pulls him down. Rule 9-4-3k
5. **Measurements for first down:** A measurement may be requested by a captain prior to the ball being marked ready for play, but it may be denied if, in the referee's opinion the line to gain has not been reached. Rule 5-3-2 Note.
6. **The whistle stops the play:** The play ends when the runner is down. The ball becomes dead when anything in Rule 4-2 occurs. The whistle is a courtesy and a covering official shall not blow their whistle until they see the ball, in player possession, on the ground. Only in the NFL can a player get up from the ground and continue the play.
7. **Personal Fouls:** A personal is warranted when anything stated in Rule 9-4 occurs. Personal fouls are NOT automatic first downs.
8. **Automatic first down on penalties:** College and the NFL have many penalties that merit an automatic first down that youth and National Federation do not. Defensive pass interference, roughing the passer, snapper and holder are automatic first downs. Personal fouls are not, they can be only if the yardage is sufficient to gain a first down.
9. **Returning kicks from the end zone:** All kicks into the end zone are dead and the ball is made ready for play at the 20 yard line. Rule 6-3
10. **Kicks that are muffed cannot be advanced:** In simple terms any punt that is touched by the receiving team can be recovered by the kickers. *A kick cannot be advanced beyond where kickers regain possession.* Rule 6-1-5
11. **Coach-referee conference:** Rule 3-5-11 states "A player, directed by his coach or the head coach, *may request* and be granted a time-out for the purpose of the coach and the referee reviewing a decision which may have resulted in the misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule...If the conference results in the referee altering his ruling, the opposing team shall be notified, the revision made, and the time-out shall be an officials time out. If the referee's ruling prevails, the time-out remains charged to the team requesting the time-out for the conference. **A request for this type of conference does not have to be granted.**

#### Game timing:

1. **Quarters are 8-10 minutes in length**, depending on the league.
2. **There is no 2 minute warning**. This is an NFL rule.
3. **Timeouts**: Each team is given three timeouts per half.
4. **25 Second play clock**: There is always a 25 second play clock after the referee's ready for play. Rule 2-35 states "Ready for play signifies the *referee* has signaled the ball may be put in play by a snap or free kick and the 25 second count is to begin."

#### Passing play differences:

1. **Intentional Grounding** "*He was outside the tackles*". There are variations of this in the college and NFL rules. The National Federation defines intentional grounding as "a pass intentionally thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible receiver" Rule 7-5-2c
2. **Uncatchable passes**: This is a college and NFL rule. Pass interference rules apply to all forward passes regardless of accuracy. Table 7-5-2a,b,c
3. **Face guarding is pass interference**. This is defined in rule 7-5-10b

#### Clipping and blocks in the back:

Officiating youth games there are regularly complaints from the sideline about "clipping". Rule 2-5 "**Clipping/Blocking in the back**", clearly defines the differences between the two. Article 3 of this rule states: "Such cases ***shall not*** be ruled clipping and/or blocking in the back unless the official sees the initial contact. When in doubt, the contact is ***legal*** and not from behind.

1. **His head was in front**: Please note there is no mention of where the players head is when contact is made with an opponent. This action/statement has no relevance to what constitutes a legal or illegal block.

#### Unsportsmanlike conduct:

Unsportsmanlike conduct is taken seriously and will be penalized accordingly. Disqualification ***may be*** warranted for a first offence; however a second unsportsmanlike foul by the same player ***shall*** result in disqualification by rule. Rule 9-5 applies to players and Rule 9-8 applies to non players. Common acts of players which receive penalties are: Baiting or taunting... which engenders ill will, use of profanity or acts where a player attempts to focus attention upon himself.

Common acts of coaches which receive penalties are: Use of tobacco, use of profanity, insulting or vulgar language, indicating objections to an official's decision and being outside the team box. Behavior of this nature may be seen regularly on television but will not be tolerated at youth football games. **Remember these games are played by children ages 10-14.**