



OFFICIAL CSSC FOOTBALL RULES

Revision Date: October 28, 2025

New/updated rules highlighted

Recent rules highlighted

RULE 1: TEAM FORMATION

Section 1: Roster

1. **Number of Players:** There is no maximum number of players allowed on a team roster. All players must be listed on the roster and sign the CSSC waiver to participate.
2. **Adding Players:**
 - Players may be added at any time until the final tee shirt order date.
 - After that time, until the third week of play, a team may add players by purchasing an individual late addition shirt (\$35 per shirt for teams of 10 or more players) or drop a player before adding a new one. The dropped player must provide their tee shirt to the added player.
 - After the third week of play, team rosters are frozen. Teams must provide an updated roster to the league at the end of the third week. Additional roster forms are available on the website.
3. **Players on the Field:**
 - A team can field no more than 8 players at a time, with at least 3 players being female.
 - A team must have at least 5 players, including at least 1 female, present at game time to avoid a forfeit.
4. **Playing Short:** A team may play with a full team of 8 even if its opponent is short players. At game time, a team must start if it meets the minimum player requirements.

Section 2: Player Restrictions

1. **Age:** Players must be 21 years old at the start of the season.
2. **League Membership:**
 - Players may play for multiple teams during the regular season.
 - The player must choose a single team prior to the semi-final game.

3. **Substitutes:**

- A team cannot pick up substitutes if it has a full team of 5 males and 3 females.
- If a team is short players, it may pick up a substitute to complete a full team.

Section 3: Uniforms

1. **Tee Shirts:** CSSC will provide each team with tee shirts for its roster. All players must wear the CSSC tee shirt for each game.
2. **Permitted Alterations:** Players may add their names, numbers, or similar personal information to their tee shirts. Depictions of the American flag are also allowed. Additions may not cover the CSSC or sponsor logo.
3. **Excluded Alterations:** Players may not add corporate information (e.g., website addresses, company names) or offensive material to their tee shirts. The Commissioner has the exclusive right to determine whether additions are offensive.
4. **Penalty:**
 - Players who do not wear the official CSSC tee shirt will be sidelined for that game.
 - Players caught exchanging shirts will be sidelined. If the players are not listed on the team roster, the team will forfeit the game.
 - Teams with players violating alteration guidelines must purchase new CSSC shirts (\$35/shirt) and will forfeit all games until the new shirts are paid for.
5. **Metal Cleats Prohibited:** Players may not wear metal cleats. Players wearing metal cleats will be ejected.
6. **Shorts/Pants with Pockets Prohibited:**
 - Players may not wear shorts, pants, or any leg attire with pockets. If a player has pockets, they must turn the garment inside out or change into non-pocketed attire.
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7. **Player Flags**
 - The pants or shorts must be a different color than the flags worn.
 - Players may use their own triple-threat style flags (i.e., must have three flags).
 - Popper flags are not permitted.

RULE 2: THE GAME AND FORFEITS

Section 1: The Game

1. **Game Time:** Game time is defined as the scheduled start time.
2. **Ball:** Each team must provide its own ball.
3. **Team Coaches:** Each team shall designate a coach to the Head Referee. If multiple coaches are selected, the team must designate a speaking coach to make all decisions. The coach's first choice of any penalty is irrevocable.
4. **Referee's Authority:** The Head Referee has authority to rule promptly in the spirit of good sportsmanship, regardless of whether the situation is covered in the rules.
5. **Coin Toss:** The away team calls the coin toss. The coach who wins the coin toss chooses whether to start on offense or defense or which goal to defend for the first half. The other

coach exercises the remaining option. Teams switch directions and possession in the second half.

6. **Ball Position:** After a touchdown, teams have the option to go for 1 point from the 1-point line or 2 points from the 2-point line.

Section 2: The Clock

1. **Length of the Game:** The game consists of two 25-minute halves with a five-minute halftime. If the game starts late, either the halves or halftime will be shortened.
2. **Running Clock:**
 - The clock runs during both halves but stops for serious injuries or other special circumstances as deemed necessary by the referee.
 - If an injury occurs, the injured player must leave the field for one down.
 - The Head Referee maintains the clock and notifies teams when two minutes remain in each half.
3. **Time Expiration:**
 - If time expires while the ball is in play, the referee may not call time until the down is complete.
 - If a touchdown occurs after time expires, the team may attempt an extra point conversion.
 - If an accepted foul by the defense occurs, the offense may choose to extend the period by one down.
4. **Time Outs:** Each team has one 30-second timeout per half, which stops the clock. If leading by 30 or more points with 5 or fewer minutes remaining in the second half, the leading team may not call a timeout.

Section 3: Forfeits

1. **Avoiding Forfeit:** If a team contacts the Commissioner by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, a forfeit fine will not be assessed, as the Commissioner will have sufficient time to notify the opposing team.

REFEREEING

1. **Head Referee:** The CSSC Head Referee is responsible for:
 - Keeping the game clock
 - Recording timeouts
 - Monitoring out-of-bounds plays
 - Calling dead balls
 - Determining the spot of the ball
 - Calling and assessing penalties

SPORTSMANSHIP

1. **Social Aspect of League:** Teams should patronize the sponsor bar after games. The league emphasizes social interaction over winning or losing.
2. **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** Any CSSC member who does not demonstrate courtesy and respect, on or off the field, will be removed from the league. CSSC staff referees will record instances of unsportsmanlike conduct.
3. **Types of Illegal Conduct:** Unsportsmanlike conduct includes, but is not limited to:
 - Illegal tags and contact (e.g., grabbing tee shirts, unnecessarily rough tags, tackling, pushing)
 - Contact with the quarterback before or after they release the ball
 - Abusive or insulting language to a player or referee
 - Spiking the ball
 - Taunting the opposing team or excessive celebration before or after a score
4. **Player Penalties:** Players who commit two offenses will be suspended from the league and ineligible to participate in any CSSC sports for one year.
5. **Team Penalties:** Teams that commit two offenses may be ineligible to participate in any CSSC sports for one year.
6. **Fighting:** Fighting results in a player's or team's permanent suspension from the CSSC.

PLAY OF GAME

Section 1: Start of Play

1. **Referee Declaration:** No player shall put the ball in play until the ref declares it ready.
2. **Time:** The offense has 30 seconds to put the ball in play after it is declared ready.

Section 2: First Downs

1. **Midfield:** The field is divided into two halves by cones placed at midfield.
2. **Earning a First Down:** Teams must complete 2 passes beyond the line of scrimmage to earn a first down. Teams can earn one new set of downs on each side of the field, excluding automatic first downs due to penalties.
3. **Automatic First Down:** Once the ball crosses midfield, the offense receives an automatic first down.
4. **Losing Possession:** A team that fails to convert a first down (by completions, crossing midfield, or scoring) loses possession to the opposing team.
5. **Punting:** The offense may punt on fourth down.
6. **Carryover:** First downs cannot be carried over from one half to the other.

Section 3: Forced Gender Play

1. Three Down Rule:

- An offense must utilize a female as the operative player within 3 consecutive downs. On a forced gender play, the offense must declare when using a female quarterback and allow the defense a few seconds to align accordingly.
- An operative player is one who:
 1. Is the intended receiver in the eyes of the official
 2. Is the primary runner (a gain is not required, and the runner does not need to cross the line of scrimmage)
 3. Is a quarterback who attempts a pass (a gain is not required)
- **Examples of Acceptable Gender Plays:**
 - A female player lines up as the quarterback and is sacked.
 - A female player lines up as the quarterback and attempts a forward pass.
 - A female player lines up as the quarterback and runs the ball over the line of scrimmage.
 - A female player receives a lateral or hand-off and runs the ball.
 - A female player receives a lateral or hand-off and attempts a forward pass.
 - A pass intended for a female player is deflected by a female player and caught by a male player.
 - Plays using a female player resulting in a loss of down (e.g., female quarterback crosses the line of scrimmage then throws the ball) still count as a female play.
 - A pass caught by a female player behind the line of scrimmage who does not gain positive yards counts as a female play but not a completion.
 - A male player who is sacked (loss of yardage and down counts for the gender play).
- **Examples of Unacceptable Gender Plays:**
 - A male player deflects a pass that a female player catches.
 - A male quarterback intentionally throws the ball at a female player's feet or egregiously over their head.
 - A female quarterback grounds the ball.
 - A female player lines up as the quarterback and laterals or hands the ball off to a male player.
 - A female player hikes the ball into play.

2. Defense:

- On a forced gender play, the defense cannot use a zone defense and must play man-to-man. Defensive players may only leave their man-to-man assignments after the ball is in the air.
- Men may guard women, except on gender plays (see exceptions below).
- During a forced gender play, the defense must stay within 10 feet of the puck and/or the male quarterback. The defense can roll with the quarterback as long as they remain within 10 feet.
- The defense can designate one safety (male or female) who cannot interfere with a pass less than 15 yards from the line of scrimmage. For passes longer than 15 yards, the safety can make a play on the ball.

3. **Exceptions When Team is Down a Female Player:**
 - **Defense:** If the defense is down a female player, it may not cover the offense's female player with a male player on a gender play. One female receiver must be left unguarded until the safety is allowed to defend her.
 - **Offense:** If the offense is down a female player, the defense may double-team using its third female player on a gender play. If the defense has more than 3 females, they may not use additional females to double-cover unless the offense has more than 3 females, in which case they can cover 1-for-1.
4. **Exclusions:** The slate is clean for extra points and punts.

Section 4: Scoring

1. **Touchdown:** To score, the ball must break the plane of the goal line.
 - A touchdown is worth 6 points.
 - A female-to-female touchdown is worth **7 points**.
2. **Extra Points:**
 - Extra points are worth 2 points for a 10-yard conversion and 1 point for a 5-yard conversion.
 - Only the ball must cross the end zone. The ball carrier is not permitted to jump or dive into the end zone; such actions result in the extra point being called "no good."
 - An intercepted extra point can be returned by the defense for 2 points.
3. **Safety:** A safety is worth 2 points.

Section 5: Punts/Kickoffs

1. **Declaration:** The offense must declare punts on fourth down. Faking punts is not allowed.
2. **Punts:** All punts must be kicked.
 - The kicking team must stay on the line of scrimmage until the ball is punted.
 - Three players from the receiving team must be on the line of scrimmage.
3. **Receiving Team:**
 - The receiving team may fair catch the ball or advance it if caught in the air.
 - If the ball hits the ground or is muffed (an unsuccessful attempt to catch where the ball is touched), it becomes a dead ball.
 - If the ball is downed in the end zone, it comes out to the 20-yard line.
4. **Blocking:** No blocking is allowed on punts.
5. **Kickoffs:**
 - The team kicking off does so from the 35-yard line, marked by larger cones on the sidelines. Kickoffs can be placekicked or punted.
 - All other players on the kicking team must stay even with or behind the kicker until the ball is kicked.
 - If the ball lands in the field of play, it is down where it first touches.
 - The receiving team maintains possession if the ball bounces off a receiver (i.e., onside kicks are not allowed).

- If the ball goes out of bounds, the receiving team may choose to have the team re-kick or take possession where the referee estimates it went out of play.
- If a re-kick is requested and the second kick also goes out of bounds, the ball is spotted at the kickoff cones on the receiving team's side unless it goes out of play before the kickoff cone.
- The ball used for kickoffs must have adequate air. It should not be deflated. If not, the kicking team can use a ball of their choice for kicking.

Section 6: Continuance of Play

1. **Touch:** To stop play, the opponent must remove a flag.
 - If a player loses a flag during play and catches the ball, they are down upon catching it.
 - If a flag falls off on its own, the ball carrier is down at that spot.
 - If the defender pulls the receiver's flags before the reception, the receiver can advance until two-hand touched by a defender.
2. **Out of Bounds:** If the ball carrier leaves the field, the play stops.
3. **Scoring:** Play stops when the ball carrier scores.
4. **Dead Ball:** Play stops when the ball touches the ground due to a fumble, punt, incomplete pass, or when the ball carrier slips or falls while any part of their body (except feet or hands) touches the ground.
5. **Pushed Player:** A player with ball control who is pushed out of the end zone or sideline is considered inbounds or to have scored.
6. **Ineligible Receiver:**
 - An eligible receiver becomes ineligible if they step out of bounds (before or during a pass) and remains ineligible until an eligible receiver or any defensive player touches the pass.
 - **Exception:** If forced out of bounds, the receiver may legally touch the pass as soon as they return inbounds.

Section 7: Turnovers

1. **Possession:** A possession change occurs only due to downs, an interception on a forward pass, or a lateral being intercepted.
2. **Fumble:** There are no fumbles except in the case of a lateral being intercepted.
3. **Lateral:**
 - A lateral is a pitch to a teammate next to or behind you.
 - A lateral may be advanced if intercepted.
 - If the quarterback laterals behind the line of scrimmage, the receiver can run or throw the ball. The defense can rush immediately after the lateral.
 - Only one forward pass is allowed per play.
4. **Interception:**
 - An interception occurs when a player catches an opponent's pass before it hits the ground, with control of the ball inbounds.
5. **Blatant Cheating:** If a player purposely ties their flags to prevent a defender from pulling them, it results in an immediate turnover.

Section 8: Inadvertent Whistle

1. **During Play:** If an official inadvertently sounds their whistle during a play, the ball becomes dead immediately.
2. **During a Run:** If the whistle is sounded during a run, the offense maintains possession at the ball's location at the time of the whistle.
3. **Ball in Flight:** If the ball is in flight during a legal pass, snap, or punt, the down is replayed.

Section 9: Scrimmage

1. **Adjusting Ball:** The center may adjust or reposition the ball before each play, provided it is not done to intentionally draw the defense offside.
2. **Position of Offense:** All offensive players must be within 15 yards of the ball at the snap. The offense must be set for one full second after the referee declares the ball ready and before the snap.
3. **Motion:** A player in motion may move toward the line of scrimmage but must be moving parallel or backward at the time of the snap.
4. **Line of Scrimmage:** At least 5 offensive players must be on the line of scrimmage. All remaining players must be on or behind their backfield line.
5. **Quarterback Run from Scrimmage:** If the line of scrimmage is in the opposing team's half, the quarterback cannot run for positive yards unless rushed after the 5-second count.
6. **Rushing the Quarterback:** The defense cannot cross the line of scrimmage until they have completed the 5 second count.
 1. Example: 1 Mississippi, 2 Mississippi, 3 Mississippi, 4 Mississippi, 5 Mississippi, then rush. Mississippi is the only word permitted.
 2. If a handoff or lateral occurs, the five-second count is void, and the defense can cross the line immediately.

Section 10: Passing

1. **Completion:** A forward pass is completed when caught by any offensive player with at least one foot inbounds.
2. **Simultaneous Reception:** If an offensive and defensive player catch the pass simultaneously, the ball is dead and belongs to the offense at the spot of the catch.
3. **Incomplete Pass:** If a player steps out of bounds but is inbounds at the time of the catch, the pass is incomplete.
4. **Fourth Down:** On fourth down, an incomplete pass returns to the previous spot.

Section 11: Safety

1. **Definition:** A safety occurs when a player is downed in their own end zone, runs out of bounds in their own end zone, snaps the ball out of the end zone, or fumbles in their own end zone. A safety cannot occur on a punt or interception.
2. **Scoring:** The defense receives 2 points, and the offensive team punts a free kick from the 20-yard line.

Section 12: Blocking

1. **No Contact Allowed:**
 - All players must avoid contact. No blocking is allowed except for screen blocking (arms down or hands behind the back).
 - Blocking is any movement (deliberate or unintentional) that impedes a defensive player's pursuit of the ball carrier, unless to avoid personal injury.
 - Rushers must go around blockers and may not use hands to push blockers.
 - Blockers may not stick out legs to trip rushers.
2. **Shielding:** A player may use their body to shield another player, but arms must not leave their sides.
3. **Face Guarding:** During a legal forward pass, a defensive player may not use hands or arms to screen the offensive player from catching the ball while their back is to the ball, including waving hands in the receiver's face.

PENALTIES

Section 1: Five-Yard Penalties

1. **Not Using a Female Player on a Forced Gender Play:** The penalty is reassessed until a gender play is used. If on fourth down, it results in a turnover. Assessed from the line, results in a loss of down.
2. **Double-Teaming a Female on a Forced Gender Play:** Unless the female is the quarterback or the offense is down a female player, the offense may reset the gender count or repeat the gender play. Assessed from the line.
3. **Not Rotating a Defensive Male Player on a Forced Gender Play When Short a Female Player:** The offense may reset the gender count or repeat the gender play. Assessed from the line.
4. **Playing Zone Defense on a Forced Gender Play:** Except when a female player is quarterback, the offense may reset the gender count or repeat the gender play. Assessed from the line.
5. **Delay of Game:** Assessed from the line; the ball is dead.
6. **Illegal Cadence:** If the player calling the cadence does not snap or receive the snap, the play is invalid, and the down is repeated. Assessed from the line; the ball is dead.
7. **Illegal Participation:** A team cannot have more than 8 players or more than 5 male players on the field. Assessed from the line.
8. **Offensive Offsides:** An offensive player is offsides if their body is beyond the scrimmage line before the snap. Assessed from the line; the ball is dead.
9. **Defensive Offsides:** A defensive player is offsides if any part of their body is beyond their line of scrimmage before the snap or before the five-second count. The offense may accept or decline the penalty and accept the succeeding spot. Assessed from the line. If a handoff or lateral occurs, the five-second count is void, and the defense can cross the line immediately.
10. **Defensive Encroachment:** Occurs when a defensive player's body is in the neutral zone and contacts an offensive player before the snap. The official blows the whistle immediately. Assessed from the line; the ball is dead.

11. **Illegal Shift:** All offensive players must remain stationary for one second before the snap after a shift or huddle. Assessed from the line; the ball is dead.
12. **Illegal Motion:** No player may move forward toward the opponent's goal line at the snap. Assessed from the line; the ball is dead.
13. **Illegal Forward Pass:**
 - Only one forward pass is allowed per play. A player may not lateral back to another player behind the line of scrimmage for a second forward pass, nor step over the line, return behind it, and throw a pass.
 - If an offensive player catches an illegal pass, the ball is dead, the pass is incomplete, and the penalty is assessed from the line.
14. **Quarterback Illegal Forward Pass:** If the quarterback crosses the line of scrimmage and throws a forward pass, the defense may decline the penalty or it is assessed from the line, resulting in a loss of down.
15. **Intentional Grounding:** A passer facing imminent loss of yardage throws a forward pass without a realistic chance of completion. Assessed from the line; results in a loss of down. If on a gender play, the gender play must be repeated.
16. **Illegal Jumping or Diving:** No player may leave their feet to gain positive yards. If the dive is to score, the penalty is assessed from the original line of scrimmage; otherwise, assessed at the spot of the foul. This is distinct from juking.
17. **Sleeper/Sideline Play:** All players must be within 15 yards of the ball when the referee declares it ready for play. Substitutions must report to the huddle or, in no-huddle situations, to the referee. Assessed from the line.
18. **Flag Guard/Extended Arm:** The ball carrier may not extend an arm or flag guard (referee's discretion) to prevent a defensive player from touching them or charge into a defensive player. Assessed at the spot of the foul.

Section 2: Ten Yard Penalties

1. **Reckless Play:**
 - Players must avoid contact, including leaping into the crowd at the sidelines to catch or tag.
 - A reckless player sits for one series. If deemed unsportsmanlike, the player is ejected.
 - Assessed from the line.
 - If a male player makes intentional contact (referee's discretion) with a female player resulting in her falling, a 10-yard penalty is assessed.
2. **Blocking:** No player may use hands to block or run down the field to become a blocker. Only shielding with the body is permitted. Assessed from the line.
3. **Illegal Contact/Holding on the Defense:** A defensive player may not make original contact with a receiver, use hands/arms to hang onto or encircle a receiver, extend arms to cut off or hook a receiver, or maintain contact. If on a gender play, the gender count resets. Assessed from the line; results in a first down.
4. **Offensive Picking:** The offense may not initiate a pick/block while in motion. A pick is any action that delays or prevents an opponent from reaching a desired position. If a catch is made after a clear pick, it is ruled no catch. Assessed from the line.

5. **Defensive Pass Interference:**

- Occurs when player movement significantly hinders an eligible player's progress or opportunity to catch a forward pass.
- Incidental contact is allowed when competing for position unless prohibited.
- Prohibited conduct is visually evident and materially affects the opponent's opportunity to catch the ball.
- If a player has gained position, their actions are considered bona fide if aimed at catching the ball.
- Enforcement: For plays 15 yards or less, the next play is spotted at the infraction spot. For plays over 15 yards, the next play is spotted 15 yards from the previous line of scrimmage.
- Counts as a completion for the offense but not necessarily a first down unless it crosses the 50-yard line for the first time or is the second completion for a first down.

6. **Offensive Pass Interference:** See Defensive Pass Interference. Assessed from the line.

Section 3: Fifteen-Yard Penalties

1. **Defensive Face Guarding:** During a legal forward pass, a defender may not use hands/arms to screen the offensive player from catching the ball while their back is to the ball. If on a gender play, the gender count resets. Assessed from the line.
2. **Intentional Foul/Penalty:** Assessed from the line; the player is ejected, and the gender count resets.
3. **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:**
 - Assessed from the line.
 - If on the defense, the offense gets an automatic first down, and the gender count resets.
 - If on the offense, a 15-yard penalty is assessed. After a touchdown, 10 yards are added to the extra point conversion.
 - The unsportsmanlike player may be ejected and suspended for the next game if the referee finds the actions flagrant. If a suspended player plays the following week, the team forfeits that game.
 - If the Commissioner deems the conduct severe, the player is permanently ejected from all CSSC sports.
 - Any player who does not shake the opponent's hand at the game's conclusion is suspended for the next game. A team that fails to do so forfeits its next game, and the forfeit fine applies.

Section 4: Ejections

1. **Metal Cleats**
2. **Unsportsmanlike Conduct**
3. **Arguing with Referees**

TEAM STANDINGS

- **Seeding:** Determined by points earned.
- **Tiebreakers:**
 - If multiple teams have the same point total, the tie is broken by the head-to-head regular season game result if possible.
 - If not, the team with the highest combined Strength of Schedule per game average score (total points of all opponents played divided by total games) + Quality of Win average score (total points of all opponents defeated divided by total wins) is used.

PLAYOFFS

- The Commissioner determines the number of teams making the playoffs in each division and the tournament format.
- To be playoff eligible, a team must have won at least one game during the regular season.
- **Overtime:**
 - If overtime is needed to break a tie in the playoffs, the referee flips a coin to determine which team chooses offense, defense, or end zone, similar to the start of the game.
 - Each team gets four downs to score a touchdown, starting from the kickoff markers, heading toward the end zone. Teams may choose to go for one or two extra points after each touchdown. This process repeats until the tie is broken.

**Please remember to support the sponsor bar.
Charleston Sports and Social Club**