



**Special
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Pennsylvania**



Flag Football

Pre-Season Webinar

July 24, 2023

Today's Agenda

- Welcome/Introductions
- Reminders
- Athlete Performance Training
- 2023 Sectional & State Events
- Training
- Rule Updates
- Questions

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PRE-SEASON REMINDERS

SEASONS AT A GLANCE



| | SPRING | FALL | WINTER |
|---|---|--|---|
| Coach Site Registration | Nov. 1 - Dec. 1 | April 1 - May 1 | August 1 - Sept. 1 |
| Athlete, Unified Partner, Volunteer Signup | Dec. 15 - Jan. 15 | May 15 - June 15 | Sept. 15 - Oct. 15 |
| Season Length | March - June | August - November | December - March |
| Sports Offered | Athletics (Track & Field), Basketball, Equestrian, Golf, Gymnastics, Softball, Swimming, Tennis | Bocce, Bowling, Flag Football, Long Distance Running/Walking, Powerlifting, Soccer, Volleyball | Alpine Skiing, Bowling, Figure Skating, Floor Hockey, Snowboard, Snowshoe, Speed Skating |

Access Sign Ups on the

- **SOPA website:**

[https://specialolympicspa.org/
get-involved/sports-sign-ups](https://specialolympicspa.org/get-involved/sports-sign-ups)

Sports Season Prep

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Important Fall Dates:

- Fall Season Calendar: [Central](#), [East](#), [West](#)
 - Since due dates are different for each Sectional, there is one calendar per section of the state.
- [REGISTRATION RESPONSIBILITIES](#): Who does what and when??
- Eligibility Deadline: August 25
- Season Dates: August – November

Air Quality – For Outside Training

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If air quality levels are in an Unhealthy Zone (151) or above, no outdoor activities should occur (social or active); as indicated within the documents, these activities should be rescheduled or moved indoors.

You can monitor Air Quality levels at <https://www.airnow.gov/> enter your location and the current status will be provided.

You can use this [Air Quality Guide](#) document as an overall reference.

Athlete & Volunteer Eligibility

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Athlete Requirements: Medical on file WITH signature + expiration dates

- **Local Programs:** Athlete Medical under Certifications
- **Regions:** Athlete Registration Form & Health History under Certifications
- Valid for 3 years.
- Save attachments under "Attachments" within a person's profile vs. anywhere else in the profile.

Class A Volunteer Requirements: Class A Trainings + Background Check on file

- Background Results under Background Checks, Valid for 5 years.
- General Orientation under Training, Valid for life.
- Protective Behaviors, under Training, Valid for 3 years.
- Concussion Training, under Training, Valid for 3 years.

UCS: PIAA Medical



A Unified Champion School athlete or Unified Partner may participate in a local program with their PIAA Medical. The participant must request a copy of the medical from their school.

The PIAA physical exam must be inputted into Vsys as an "athlete medical" and the medical form must be uploaded as an attachment.

The PIAA physical exam form is good for one year from the Dr's Signature date. If the date is 3/22/22 the exam expires on 3/22/23.

Attendance Tracker Updates

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Age Calculator (Team Grouping) **6/15/2023**

Eligibility Tab: Deadline identified **8/25/2023**

- Athlete Medical
- Volunteer: Background Check, Gen Orientation, Protective Behavior, Concussion Protocol

Sport Specific Rosters:

- To better identify Teams and allow for storing scores/assessments
- Team Age groups

Missing volunteer/athlete

- If No, ask to complete Sport Sign-up Form
- If Yes, contact RSD

QUESTIONS?

CONTACT YOUR REGIONAL SPORT DIRECTOR

Attendance Trackers

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Coach will receive tracker when they submit Site Registration Form

Site Attendance Tracker has multiple tabs: Directions, Attendance, Eligibility

- **Tab 1: Directions: How to complete the form**
- **Tab 2 Attendance:**
 - Lists all participants that have signed up
 - Includes phone, email, DOB and age
 - Attendance should be tracked after each practice
 - Interest in attending Sectionals & State Games will be used to advance for competitions
 - Data will be used to collect training numbers and ultimately future allocations

Attendance Trackers

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Tab 3: Eligibility – If participant is NOT eligible...they cannot participate

- Athletes: Must have current medical
- Volunteer: General Orientation, Concussion Protocol, Protective Behaviors, 18 and over current background check
- Highlighted **RED** out of date
- Highlighted **YELLOW** will expire prior to state competition
 - Updated weekly by SOPA
 - **IMPORTANT: Fall deadline August 25, 2023**

Tab 4: Competition – sport specific

- Tracker for athlete attendance, registration times for competitions
- Allows you to track everything in once place – ability to copy and paste from here into event Google registration forms

Tab 5: Player Competency Team Rating Form

- Allows you to enter your Team Rating forms that are used for competition

[SAMPLE TRACKER](#)

Unified Partners Eligibility

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NEW in 2023 – Unified Sports Partners do not need an athlete medical.

- All Partners – Must have a VSys database record
- Ages 16 and up – must have General Orientation and Protective Behaviors Training
- Ages 18 and up - Must have General Orientation, Protective Behaviors and a Background check.

Athlete & Volunteer Eligibility

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- The ELIGIBILITY tab on each of your attendance trackers are updated on a weekly basis by your Regional Sports Director. **PLEASE encourage and assist your athletes and volunteers in meeting our eligibility requirements.**
- **The deadline to make sure athletes and volunteers meet eligibility requirements for the Fall is August 25th**
- In the roster, if you see **RED highlight**, that person is not in compliance with eligibility requirements to participate and should NOT be training.
- In the roster, if they are **yellow highlight**, they will expire during the season in advance of state games and will not be eligible unless they update the identified requirement.

Qualifiers

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MUST attend Sectional event to be considered for Fall Fest.

Games Advancement slots per Sectional will be dependent on total number of slots at Summer Games and % of interest in advancing from each Sectional

Team Sport Age Groups

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Team Sport Age Groups will be effective starting with the Fall 2023 season.

SOPA sponsored Team Sports include:

- Fall Season: soccer, **flag football**, volleyball
- Winter Season: floor hockey;
- Spring Season: softball, basketball

[Team Sport Age Group Resource](#) outlines the guidelines.

- This document includes links to two supporting documents: [Why Age Groups are Important](#) and [Exemption Process](#).
- Please review all documents for a full understanding of the age groups and how to submit exemptions. This [video](#) will explain these documents and how to submit exemption in more detail.

If you have questions, please contact your Regional Sport Director or Michelle Boone (mboone@specialolympicspa.org).

Qualifiers

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Fall

- LDR-W
- Powerlifting
- Bocce
- Soccer: 5v5, 7v7, skills
- Volleyball: Team and skills
- **Flag Football Team and skills**

- [Allocation Process](#)
- Allocations will be placed on the SOPA Website under Games & Competition then State & Sectional Events
- [State & Sectional Events](#)

Allocations

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- Fall Allocations can be found on the SOPA Website, State Games tab
 - [SOPA State Games Paperwork Webpage](#)
- As always, please remember that you can request additional allocations through the LOI process.
- Previous Lunch & Learn about the allocation process. This riveting presentation can be found here: [Allocation L&L](#)



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ATHLETE PERFORMANCE TRAINING

Athlete Performance Training

Coaches Introduction



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What is Athlete Performance Training (APT)?



- Designed to elevate the fitness levels of athletes and improve their sports outcomes, Athlete Performance Training consists of a combination of coach-facilitated sports practices and at-home fitness programs.



- During practices, coaches will apply an approach that includes education, exertion and evaluation.
 - **Education:** Time is taken during each sports practice to discuss physical activity, nutrition, and hydration as a team.
 - **Exertion:** A practice plan is followed that engages athletes in physical activity throughout the entire practice.
 - **Evaluation:** Athletes' health and fitness metrics are collected at the start and end of the season.



- At home, athletes and their families/caregivers are provided a fitness program to complement the in-person practices.



Key Aspects of APT:

- A minimum of 8 weeks of training are required to fully complete APT.
- Any size team and any sport can participate.
- No paperwork is required by coaches. Health metrics of athletes are collected; however, they are recorded electronically on a Google sheet provided to you by SOPA.
- Health metrics: Height, weight and blood pressure can be collected from athlete's previous doctor visits.
- Fitness metrics: Determined by coaches setting up a modified Coopers Test for athletes to complete at the start and end of training.





Registering for APT:



- Coaches interested should visit the Online Portal to complete the necessary online training.
- The training can be found under the “**Training Schools, Webinar and More**” tab, labeled as “**Athlete Performance Training.**” You will only be able to access the training if you’ve taken your other required trainings (Concussion Training, General Orientation and Protective Behaviors).
- You will need to complete a short quiz after the training
- Once video and quiz are completed you will be directed to the registration form to sign up your team and request materials
- You will be contacted by SOPA, after with additional information regarding mailings of materials as well as a link to the Athlete Performance Training Tracking.

To find more information on APT visit the SOPA website under **More Than Sports**

Why Participate in APT?



- **Athletes are at greater risk for being obese, suffering from long term health conditions, and dying 20 years younger.**
- **Incorporate APT and provide tools for athletes to make changes to their health and fitness and lower their risk of these health disparities.**
- **APT will become the standard in trainings**





Coaches Training and Progression Plan

By implementing Athlete Performance Training for a minimum of 8 weeks during training AND completing the “Athlete Performance Training Tracking” at the start and end of the season, you are eligible for the **Bronze Level** specifically the Athlete Performance Training component of the Coaches Training and Progression Plan.

Questions?

Contact Healthy Communities

Coordinator, Charla Stein

cstein@specialolympicspa.org

610-630-9450 ext. 254

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COMPETITION

Fall Sectionals

Western Fall Sectional:

- Slippery Rock University
- September 24

Central Fall Sectional:

- Juniata College
- October 1

Eastern Fall Sectional

- DeSales University
- October 1



Fall Fest: Nov. 3 -5

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Villanova University

Important Dates:

- Reg Info: Will be out by 9/8
- LOI: Due 9/28
- Final Allocations: 9/29
- Rosters: Due 10/2
- Google links sent: 10/5
- Registration: Due 10/12
- Scratch/Activation: Due 10/26





TRAINING

Be Prepared for the Season!

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- Get everyone eligible
- Understand and be aware of Air Quality levels
- Keep a pulse on illness/disease outbreaks within your community – remind athletes not to attend training if they are sick and to practice healthy habits and good hygiene.
- Know your facilities Emergency Action Plan and Evacuation route
- Updated yourself on sport rules and work with assistant coaches on a seasonal plan – identify who will manage each task during practice. Recruit additional assistance if needed.

Job Description and Levels of Responsibility

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HEAD COACH:

- Certified in the sport
- Supervises all coaches and athletes
- Responsible for equipment, transportation, and lodging
- Develops **practice plans** and assigns duties to Assistant Coaches
- Check athlete medical and volunteer Class A
- Completes all required paperwork (competition, training numbers)

ASSISTANT COACH:

- Assist head coach/help supervise athletes (1:4)
- Performs duties assigned by head coach
- Assist in evaluating training
- Arrives on time for practice/stays throughout practice
- Assists with uniforms, collection of medicals and taking attendance

Full position descriptions for both head and assistant coaches can be found here: **SOPA Website on the Resources/Training**

<https://specialolympicspa.org/resources>

Athlete as Coach

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Do you have an athlete who would like to be a coach?

- SOPA will host seasonal training webinars to review the responsibilities and steps for any athletes who would like to be part of our Athletes as Coaches Program.
- The Fall training was held on July 11th.
- If you do have an athlete and you don't want to wait for the Winter Webinar – Here is the recording of the Fall Webinar -
<https://www.facebook.com/specialolympicspa/videos/1327389408157502?idorvanity=128859894386473>
- Athlete as Coach Request form to be completed by athletes who wish to apply to be trained as a coach: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WZC14Ssl1IsilbBO_93WDmsaQq9-wmK3/view

Coaching Requirements

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As of January 2021, Coach requirements for **training and competition:**

- **Team Sports:**
 - Must have at least one (1) certified coach per team
- **Individual Sports and Team Individual Skills:**
 - Must have at least one (1) certified coach per 25 athletes



Continuing Education Update

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Protective Behavior and Concussion Training has been removed from the list of approved courses for Continuing Education and from the Continuing Education Request form.

Effective February 1, 2023, these two courses will not be accepted for continuing education

There are plenty of Continuing Education options available on the [SOPA website](#).



Expired Sport Certifications

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- If your sport certification expired between 2020 and 2022 you have until December of 2023 to complete your continuing education course to update your certifications.
- As noted above - Protective Behaviors and Concussion training will not be accepted as of February 1, 2023.
- **This extension expires on December 31, 2023.**
- On January 1, 2024, you will need to retake the Sport that has not been updated.

Webinar Series



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- Every other month (Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct, Dec)
- Lunch & Learn - will be RECORDED and posted to SOPA website, on toolbar - Volunteer Resources, Trainings
- Entire listing and registrations links can also be found here:
<https://specialolympicspa.org/lunch-learn-webinar-series>
- Several qualify as continuing education

NEXT Lunch & Learn

August 9, 2023 – How To: Build Flexibility!

[August Lunch & Learn Registration](#)

Coaching Progression

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Certified Coach

- Class A volunteer with at least 1 sport certification



Bronze

- Adds: Athlete Performance Training activation, personal best performance goals, **Coaching Special Olympics Athletes** course



Silver

- Adds: Athlete goal setting, training minimum of 10 weeks, **Principles of Coaching** course, **Coaching Unified Sports**



Gold

- Adds: advanced sport skills course, training at least twice a week for minimum of 10 weeks, develop year-round training/wellness plan for athletes

Improving Communication

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Closed Facebook Group for Coaches:

- 100% Optional
- Direct connection to coaches
- Share Competition Information/Reminders
- Share Training/Coaching Tips
- Encourage sharing of best practices between coaches
- Q&A
- [Coach Page](#)



☹ Which SOPA local program to you coach for?

☹ What sport/sports do you coach?



Flag Football

Sport Management Team



Technical Director Volleyball: Kathy Reilly Atkins
Email: kathy.r.adkins@gmail.com

[Al Garzon](#) - Venue Coordinator Fall Festival

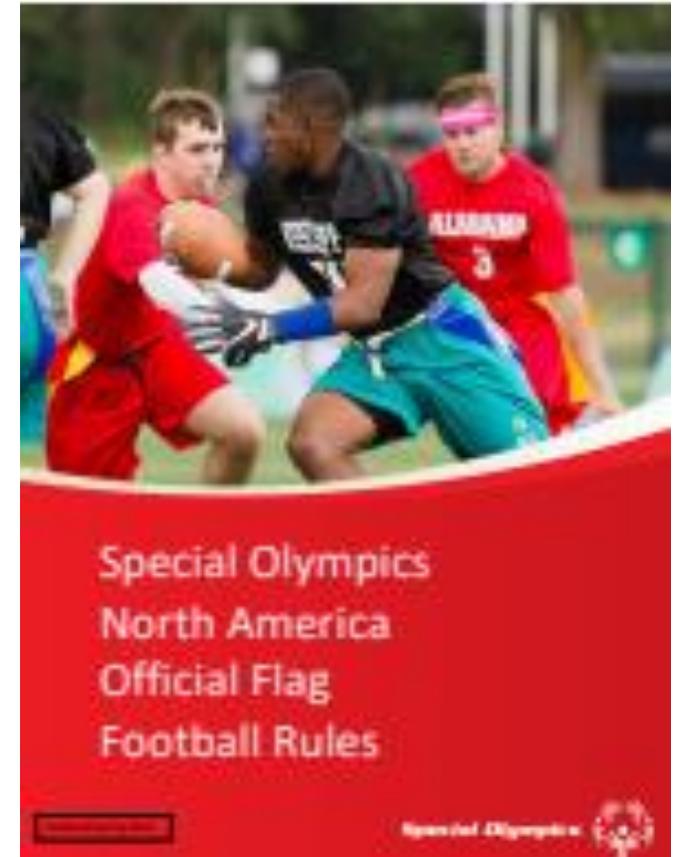


Flag Football Rules Book

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Flag Football Sport Rules



SOPA Website - Sports Offered Page

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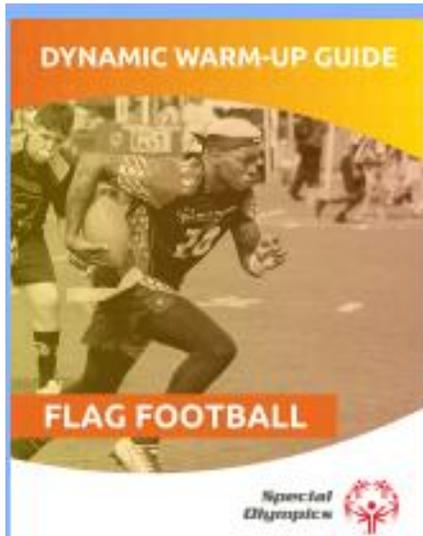
Links to all the sport pages
[Sports Offered](#)

Coaching Resources

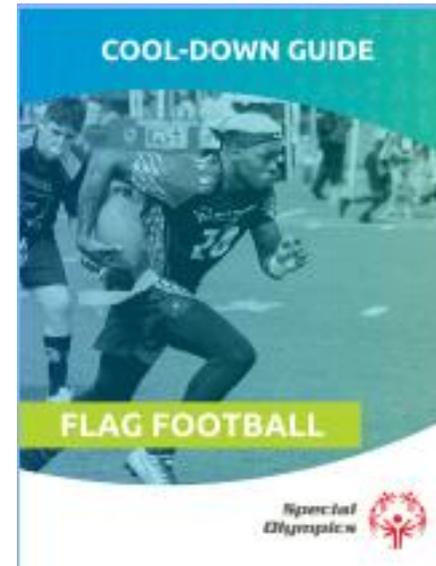
- [Flag Football Rules - Updated 2021](#)
- [SOPA-Specific Flag Football Rules](#)
- [Official and Scorekeeper Information](#)
- [Flag Football Team Competency Rating Form](#)
- [NEW Player Rating Explained \(Video\)](#)
- [Individual Skills Competition Directions](#)
- [Individual Skills Score Sheet](#)
- [Skills and Drills](#)
- [Game Day Score Sheet](#)
- [Everybody Plays](#)

Coaching Guide

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[Warm-up Guide](#)



[Cool down Guide](#)

Events Offered

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- Individual Skills
- Team
 - Traditional
 - Unified



Attire

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- All participants must have matching uniforms (shirts & shorts/pants)
 - Shirts must have matching numbers on front and back that can be tucked in at the waist to avoid obstruction of flag pulling.
 - All players must wear athletic shorts/pants without pockets.
 - No blue jeans will be allowed.
- Players must wear rubber-cleated or flat-soled athletic shoes.
 - Metal cleats, spikes, hiking boots, or other equipment deemed dangerous by officials will not be allowed.
 - No jewelry (rings, bracelets, necklaces, earrings, etc.) or hats with hard bills may be worn.
 - Sunglasses should be non-rigid and pliable. Players wearing eyewear are strongly encouraged to utilize an eyewear strap that helps hold the glasses in place.
 - The referee shall not permit any team member to wear equipment or apparel which, in his/her judgment, is dangerous or confusing to other players or is not appropriate. Reasonable accommodations can be made for unique or extenuating circumstances. The accommodations should not fundamentally alter the sport, heighten risk to participants or place opponents at a disadvantage.

Individual Skills

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Run and Catch
Throwing for Accuracy
Throwing for Distance
Hand Off
Flag Pulling



Everybody Plays

- Everyone on the roster must play in each game and pre-limes



Everybody Plays

Article 1.03F of the Special Olympics General Rules States:

- *Special Olympics celebrates and strives to promote the spirit of sportsmanship and a love of participation in sports for its own sake. To that end, Special Olympics aims to provide every athlete with an opportunity to participate in training and competition events which challenge that athlete to his or her fullest potential, regardless of the athlete's level of ability. Special Olympics therefore requires that Special Olympics Games and Tournaments offer sports and events which are appropriate for athletes of all levels of ability, and in the case of team sports, provide every athlete with an opportunity to play in every game.*
- Special Olympics Pennsylvania supports Article 1.03F as the guiding principle for participation of athletes registered as members of a team for competition at any SOPA Sectional or State Competition. As such, each athlete on a team roster must be given an opportunity to play in every game for which their team is scheduled. Special Olympics Pennsylvania will not dictate the amount of time that each athlete must play during a game, but the goal is to provide a meaningful competition experience for every athlete on every team.
- The only exceptions to this requirement will be in cases of illness or injury, where an athlete is not physically able to play, or behavioral issues, where a coach chooses not to play an athlete in order to address inappropriate behaviors. In situations where an athlete will not be playing due to illness or injury or behavior issues, the athlete shall not dress in their competition uniform for the game and if appropriate supervision is available, will not be seated on the bench with the team for that game.
- If the illness or injury or the behavior issue is such that an incident report or misconduct report is completed this report should be provided to the programs HOD who should then forward to the Program Manager and if appropriate, a representative of the Games Organizing Committee (GOC) or a SOPA staff person. The coach should also be prepared to provide an explanation to the GOC or SOPA staff, if requested, as to the reason why an athlete is not dressed and playing in a particular game. As a reminder, athletes who do not participate in preliminary games may not participate in pool play or medal round games.

At Events:

- Teams must complete lineup cards, with numbers & names
- Bottom of the card – those who are not playing and why
- Scorekeeper will check the players as they enter the game
- Code of conduct will be filed on the coach if all players are not played

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Player Competency

Please enter the player's initials in the boxes below the point value that most closely matches their skill competency.

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| Team Level | | Level 1 - Novice | | | | Level 2 - Intermediate | | | | Level 3 - Advanced | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Player Competency Point Values | | 1 | | | | 2 | | | | 3 | | | | 4 | | | | 5 | | | |
| Player Competency - Offense | Catching/Receiving | Inconsistent catching passes at shorter distances w/loose coverage; understands only basic routes/patterns; limited catch range/reach; attempts to advance the ball after catch w/uncertainty | | | | Player's skill range would fall in between a score of a 1 and 3 | | | | Average receiving skills; runs simple routes consistently; can catch short/medium passes while on the move; limited ability to adapt to defense; average catch range/reach; can advance the ball after catch with certainty | | | | Player's skill range would fall in between a 3 and a 5 | | | | Can catch various types and distances of passes w/varying types of coverage; advances the ball with conviction after catch; excellent route runner and can adapt to defensive pressure on QB; excellent pass | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Pass/Run Blocking | Limited understanding of pass/run blocking principles; lacks agility/balance and can be easily beaten by defenders/pass rushers; plays more of a fixed/limited movement blocking role; often out of position on plays that change direction | | | | Player's skill range would fall in between a score of a 1 and 3 | | | | Average understanding of blocking; able to legally block on less complex plays; occasionally can make some blocking adjustments based upon movement of QB; may sometimes be called for blocking penalties, especially against quicker defensive players | | | | Player's skill range would fall in between a 3 and a 5 | | | | Proficient understanding of blocking; implements offensive strategies and capable of maintaining legal blocks during complicated plays; quickly reacts to defender's rush movements; infrequently penalized | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Passing (only for those that play the QB position) | Limited accuracy/arm strength; has trouble completing passes over 5-10 yards; minimal mobility; inconsistent w/ simple passes, especially to moving targets; completes some passes w/ light pressure; limited | | | | Player's skill range would fall in between a score of a 1 and 3 | | | | QB has average skills and some knowledge of strategy, but stays pretty basic following calls from coach; tends to look to primary receiver; can throw on target up to 20 yards; some mobility; ability to run more than 1 passing option, but usually expect run out | | | | Player's skill range would fall in between a 3 and a 5 | | | | QB controls game; knows strategy; strong arm with excellent accuracy; able to hit moving targets, even downfield; has ability to read defense and adjust plays; | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Roster Size

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Traditional Teams

- The team roster may contain a maximum of ten (10) players.
- Teams shall field five (5) players to start the game (required).
- Teams may continue with a minimum of four (4) players, if necessary due to disqualification or injury.
- The game may be continued with fewer players as long as the team has a chance to win (at the discretion of game officials).

Roster Size

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Unified Teams

- The team roster may contain a maximum of ten (10) players.
- The roster shall contain a proportionate number of athletes and partners.
- Five (5) players are required to start the game, three (3) athletes and two (2) partners.
 - The line-up shall never exceed three (3) athletes and two (2) partners.
 - Teams may continue with a minimum of four (4) players (minus one (1) partner or athlete) due to disqualification or injury.
 - The game may be continued with fewer players as long as the team has a chance to win (at the discretion of game officials).
 - A minimum of one (1) athlete and one (1) partner is required on the field.
 - Failure to adhere to the required ratio results in a forfeit.

Equipment

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Football

Teams shall play with a pebble-grained leather or rubber covered ball in regular or intermediate/youth football sizes.

During competition, a team is permitted to play with their own selected ball on offense.

Permitted ball sizes: Size 7, 8, and 9





Mouthpiece

Mouthpiece: A protective mouthpiece must be worn at all times.



Flag Belt



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Flag Belt:

Each offensive player shall wear a one-piece quick release belt, without any knots, at the waistline with three (3) flags permanently attached, one (1) flag on each side and one (1) in the center of the back.

The belt must have a spring-loaded clip. (No detachable flags)

- Defensive players are not required to wear a flag belt.



Safety

Along with Air Quality checks make sure you check the following:

- ✓ Know the address of the location you are training
- ✓ Remind athletes to have water bottles with them and have water coolers available for refills
- ✓ Walk the venue prior to practice to ensure there is no glass or trash on the field
- ✓ Sunscreen, sunglasses and hats!
- ✓ Predetermined safety zone! Where is it, make sure everyone is aware



Thunder & Lightning

Every time you see lightening or hear thunder:

Stop practice and seek shelter for 30 minutes.

Remember this is every time you see lightening or hear thunder



THANK YOU

