

# **Playing Rules for Rookie League**

**Amended July 22, 2018**

## **Equipment**

- A. TEAM FURNISHED
  - 1. Jersey – One per Player
    - a. Number on back at least 8” high.
    - b. Jersey’s will be tucked in at all times.
    - c. Shoulder pads, rib vest and pants with pads will also be provided.
    - c. Apparel worn in any other manner will constitute a player ineligible to participate.
  - 2. Footballs:
    - a. Each team will be furnished two footballs minimum.
  - 4. Mouthpiece – Standard Mouthpiece.
    - a. Player will be issued 1 and if misplaced player must supply his or her own.
- B. PLAYER FURNISHED
  - 1. Shoes: Rubber football cleats.

## **THE TEAM**

- A. TEAM SIZE
  - 1. Each team will have no more than eighteen (18) players. The E.J.F.L. will strive for a minimum of fifteen (15) players. Teams will be considered full at 18. Any association adding players above the maximum number are still required to meet the minimum play rule for every eligible player on the roster.
- B. COACHES
  - 1. The Head Coaches will be approved by the Board of Directors.
  - 2. Assistant Coaches will be selected by the Head Coach or recommended by the E.J.F.L. Board of Directors.
- C. PARENTS
  - 1. Parents are asked to give their time to make this sport a special experience for the children.
  - 2. Parents from the home team are needed to run the chains and down markers at the games.
  - 3. Parents are asked to refrain from losing control at the games. If they do lose control and disrupt the game they will be asked to leave by the officials. The Head Coach is responsible for the behavior and control of his players and their parents.

# GENERAL ROOKIE RULES

## A. CENTERING THE BALL

1. Centering the ball will be done in the conventional manner, between the legs. The play starts once the ball leaves the ground. Any movement into the neutral zone prior to the snap of the ball will be called off sides and a 5 yard penalty is assessed.

2. **“Silent snaps” of the ball are not allowed. An audible “hike” is required to snap the ball.**

3. **No rushing the (A) Gap. No nose guard over center. You can have one lineman in One of the A gaps. No rushing blitzes in (A) gap.**

## B. STARTING THE GAME – NO PUNTING THE BALL INTO PLAY

1. There will be a coin toss before start of game. The ball is placed on their twenty five yard line and the game starts. The clock starts on the first snap of the ball.

2. There are no Kick-offs or Field Goals in Rookie Football

3. **DECLARED PUNT:** Punts must be declared by the Offense. Only the punter may move on offense. The defense may try to catch the ball. If the ball is caught in the air the offense will gain five yards. **No rushing the punter.**

## C. HUDDLES; 1:00 Minute Clock

## D. FUMBLES/INTERCEPTIONS; High School Rules

## E. BLOCKING; No cut blocking, Chop Blocks, or Crack Backs

## F. WEIGHT LIMIT:

1. In the Rookie Division, a player weighing up to **84.9 lbs.** has no position restrictions.

Any player weighing between **85 lbs.** and **109.9 lbs.** will be designated with a red stripe on their helmet. A “red stripe” player cannot play in a ball carrying position and cannot advance the ball. In the event of a fumble recovery or interception, they are required to down the ball by dropping to their knee. Any player weighing between **110 lbs.** and **130 lbs.** will be designated with a green stripe on their helmet. A “green stripe” player can only play on the interior offensive and defensive line and cannot advance the ball. Red stripe players are allowed to punt; however, they cannot advance the ball.

## G. SCORING VALUES

1. **TOUCHDOWN:** six (6) points

2. **POINTS AFTER TOUCHDOWN:**

a. Run- Five (5) yards out; two (2) points; Three (3) yards out; one (1) point

b. Pass- 2 points

3. **SAFETY:** two (2) points

4. **FORFEIT:** Offended team wins one (1) to zero (0)

5. **MERCY RULE:** The mercy rule as stated in the EJFL By-laws will be enforced.

## G. PLAYER PARTICIPATION

1. The Rookie League is essentially a teaching league. Coaches should show all of their players what each position does and allow them an opportunity to try it.

2. **All eligible players must play at least 8 plays in each half.**

A player may be denied his mandatory play for disciplinary reasons, such as violation of league rules during the regular season. Violations and disciplinary actions must be approved 1 day prior to the game by the league commissioner or an E.J.F.L. Board member. The League President must be informed on any matter involving a player being denied his mandatory play.

3. Each head coach is responsible for assigning **at least two** assistant coach or team mom to keep a log of all players and their current number of plays in a game. This log will be available to any Board member upon request during the game.

4. It is the responsibility of the each coaching staff to ensure that any player who has not played the minimum required plays at the 4 minute warning will do so during the remaining time in each half. Violations will be called to the attention of the Board of Directors.

5. Repeated violations (two or more per season) will be considered flagrant and violators will be referred to the Board of Directors for disposition.

6. Flagrant violators or deliberate attempts to circumvent this rule will be considered sufficient cause for dismissal of a coach from the E.J.F.L. Program.
- H. COACH ASSISTED GAMES: Coach assisted games will be permitted for all rookie football games. **One coach per team will be permitted on the field at any time to assist his team. Coaches must be 20 yards from the line of scrimmage at the break of offensive huddle and will get a 10yd penalty. Coaches will not interfere with the officiating or play of the game.**

## ROOKIE OFFICIALS

### A. TEAM FURNISHED:

1. The E.J.F.L. will try to ensure that a Referee is on hand for each game. Each team will provide a referee for one game during each week of season play. The E.J.F.L. promotes a Junior Referee Program by using students from local high schools. In the event that the league cannot provide a Referee the game will be officiated by one person from each team. This person must be at least 16 years of age and understand the rules of Football.

### B. GAME AUTHORITY

1. Each game will be officiated by a head referee and a second official. The referee is the head official and as such is the final authority on the field.

### C. CHAIN CREW

1. The home team will furnish qualified personnel to man the chains and down marker.

### D. THE PLAYING FIELD

1. An 80 yard field will be used

### E. PRACTICES

1. The practice guideline outlined below are to be followed.
2. We will allow a 4<sup>th</sup> day practice at the coach's discretion above and beyond what is outlined below after the season starts. This practice will follow the Level of Contact **"AIR" No Pads or Helmets Allowed.**
3. Weekend practices are not allowed.

## BACKGROUND

USA Football is committed to advancing player safety to protect the health and well-being of every child. In addition to coaching education, a key element of player health and safety is the responsibility of all coaches to conduct organized practices and teach proper fundamentals in a safer environment. There are approximately 9,300 youth tackle football organizations in the United States. Within these are approximately 2.5 million young athletes who play and 400,000 adults who coach.

# PURPOSE

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide youth football organizations (players age 6 to 14) with recommendations to establish consistent methods designed to limit the chance for injury during structured practice sessions. This document provides youth football commissioners and coaches with heat acclimatization guidelines, clear definitions of contact and recommendation on the number of practices per week and time limits on player-to-player full contact.

There is much to be learned about helmet impacts in youth sports. We remain committed to adopting the best evidence-based practices. We recognize that even with the latest research available, there is no clear consensus in this area. Accordingly, we will update these recommendations and guidelines in accordance with the evidence. Ideally, this emerging data will help us understand the potential for long-term adverse cognitive, emotional and/or neurological effects from concussions and/or other repeated head contact without associated symptoms. Based on what is known about concussions today, the guiding principles in developing these recommendations were to reasonably limit head contact and thus concussion risk.

## **Implementing a preseason youth football heat acclimatization period**

Reported cases of exertional heat stroke (EHS) currently rank among the top-three causes of sport participation fatalities. Setting mandatory guidelines for heat acclimatization provides a vital standard to protect athletes against exertional heat illnesses and possibly save lives. The majority of EHS cases occur during summer workouts when athletes are unprepared to cope with environmental conditions and physiological demands placed upon them. Heat acclimatization guidelines recommend that athletes be introduced slowly to environmental stresses during practice sessions, resulting in a lowered risk for EHS. These guidelines call for a two-week period (10-14 days) when coaches gradually increase the length and intensity of practice and the amount of equipment that can be worn. At all times, athletes should have access to fluids and have periods of rest throughout a practice.

### **Recommendations include:**

1. At no time throughout the preseason or regular season should teams practice more than once per day (No two-a-day practices). Teams should be allowed to practice a maximum of four times per week during the preseason.
2. During practice days 1 and 2 of the heat-acclimatization period, no more than 90 minutes of practice are allowed, a helmet should be the only protective equipment permitted. No form of player-to-player contact should occur during the first two practices.
3. During practice days 3 and 4, two hours of total practice time is allowed. Only helmets and shoulder pads should be worn. No full-contact drills should be allowed. USA Football defines full-contact as drills being run at “Thud” and “Live” tempo. Coaches are encouraged to limit player-to-player contact up to “Control” using USA Football’s Levels of Contact.
4. On practice days 5 and 6, two hours of practice time is allowed which would occur within the second week of a youth organization’s preseason schedule according to these guidelines. Teams have the option to wear full pads and full contact drills can begin and should be utilized within the recommended time allocation discussed below.

5. If a practice is interrupted by inclement weather or heat restrictions on any of the practice days, the practice should resume once conditions are deemed safe.

6. On days when environmental conditions (heat index or WBGT) are extreme, modifications should be made to the work-to-rest ratio (to allow for cool-down periods and rehydration) or rescheduled to cooler parts of the day (i.e. before 10am or after 6pm).

### **Ensure all youth coaches understand the definition of “full contact”**

Full-contact drills should be limited during the preseason and regular season as the number of exposures may increase the chance for injury to youth players. For purposes of these guidelines, full-contact consists of both “Thud” and “Live Action” using USA Football’s definitions of Levels of Contact.

Rationale: By definition, “Thud” involves initiation of contact at full speed with no predetermined winner, but no take-down to the ground. Initial contact, particularly with linemen, is just as physical with “Thud” as with “Live Action.” USA Football recognizes that “Live Action” likely carries a higher injury risk to the body than does “Thud.” The first three levels of USA Football Levels of Contact “Air,” “Bags,” and “Control” are considered no or controlled-contact, and thus no limitations are placed on their use in practice.

### **Recommended number of team practices and amount of “full contact” drills per week**

#### **Preseason Recommendation**

Following the preseason acclimatization period, it is recommended youth teams conduct no more than four practices per week. Coaches are to limit the amount of full-contact to no more than 30 minutes per day and no more than 120 minutes per week. No two-a-day practices should be allowed at any point throughout the preseason.

Rationale: USA Football recognizes preseason practices may require more full-contact time than practices occurring in the regular season to allow for teaching fundamentals with sufficient repetition to prepare for the season. Coaches are encouraged to introduce contact through a progressive manner to ensure they are using proper technique before full-contact (Thud & Live Action) drills are allowed.

#### **Regular Season Recommendation**

Once the regular season begins and games commence, USA Football recommends the number of practices per week is decreased to three to account for the weekly game. Coaches are to limit the amount of full-contact to no more than 30 minutes per day and no more than 90 minutes per week.

Rationale: At this point in the season, games have begun and full-contact exposure rates have increased on a weekly basis for players. To account for this, the recommendation to eliminate one practice per week and decrease the amount of time dedicated to full-contact drills decreases the number of exposures per week.

### **Coaches need to use a practice plan and assign a “level of contact” for every drill according to USA Football’s Level of Contact chart**

USA Football defines contact using its Levels of Contact chart (see below) to help coaches assign a level of resistance for each drill period within their practice plan.

Properly employing the levels of contact during a football practice is an important skill for youth coaches to learn. This is completed by adjusting the distance between players, the speed at which they conduct a drill

and modifying the “winner” of a drill. In doing this, coaches can better accomplish specific teaching objectives during practices and decrease the chance for injury.

Planning when to teach, when to compete and when to adjust contact promotes a better experience for players and coaches. Proper usage of the Levels of Contact system will help players perform their contact skills at a high level while instilling confidence. Employing the Levels of Contact system also helps reduce player fatigue, which can advance player safety.

### **Explaining Levels of Contact**

Levels of Contact focuses on varying intensity levels throughout practices to build player confidence, ensure their safety and prevent both physical and mental exhaustion.

Five intensity levels are used to introduce players to practice drills which position them to master the fundamentals and increase skill development.

<b>CONTACT</b>	<b>INTENSITY</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>AIR</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Players run a drill unopposed without contact.</b>
<b>BAGS</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Drill is run against a bag or another soft-contact surface.</b>
<b>CONTROL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Drill is run at assigned speed until the moment of contact; one player is pre-determined the ‘winner’ by the coach. Contact remains above the waist and players stay on their feet.</b>
<b>THUD</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Drill is run at assigned speed to competitive speed through the moment of contact; no pre-determined “winner”. Contact remains above the waist, players stay on their feet and quick whistle ends the drill.</b>
<b>LIVE ACTION</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Drill is run in game-like conditions and is the only time players are taken to the ground</b>

# QUARTERS OF THE GAME

## A. QUARTERS

1. Time per quarter will be sixteen (16) minutes. Lesser times are permissible and will be specified by the E.J.F.L. Board of Directors.
  2. Rookie will utilize a full running clock which will only be stopped for time-outs.
- B. TIME-OUTS: Each team is allowed three (3) time-outs per half. Each time-out will be one (1) minutes long.