

## **Article I - PLAYER PARTICIPATION AND ELIGIBILITY**

### **Section 1- Division**

To participate in the T.A.F.L., the youth must be 4 years old as defined below. The player's division will be based on their age. The Junior Freshman Division (Flag) minimum age of 4 years old entering the fall season. The Freshman (Tackle Bar) minimum age of 7 years old or going into second grade. JV minimum age of 9 or 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Varsity minimum age of 11 going into 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Participation is limited to no more than 2 years in the freshman or JV Divisions.

No Varsity player may turn 14 years old by November 1<sup>st</sup> or be in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Exceptions:

Exceptions made by the community director and will advise the Director of Football Operations. The local community board of directors will act upon all exception requests and their decision will be conveyed to the participant and parent/guardian prior to the first game.

A player may move up to the next division if all weight requirements have been met. A parent must submit a written petition to the board of directors for review.

**Proof of Age** - Each youth wishing to participate in the T.A.F.L. must certify his/her age with a report card and/or birth certificate.

Documents must be submitted and verified at the time of registration. In the event that a formal proof of age is not available, the community director shall gather all documentary evidence (birth certificate and/or report card), establish a just

age, and submit proof to the board of directors for their decision as to eligibility.

### **Section 2- Residence Requirements**

Each youth wishing to participate in the T.A.F.L. shall reside in the area defined as the Greater Thumb Area on the day of the first game, but need not be a student of the public school system. The Greater Thumb Area is defined as the area of Michigan east of I-75 to Bay City and north of M-59 (Hall-Rd.). Area may expand based on interest and approved by the board.

### **Section 3 - Player Registration Fees**

1. Registration fees shall be determined by the board of directors before the first registration each year and shall be publicized.
2. Player registration fees shall be paid by each player at the time of registration, unless otherwise agreed to by their community.
3. Failure to pay the entire fee may result in ineligibility for the participant.
4. Upon the request of the Community Director or any board member, the board of directors may apply a scholarship.
5. Registration and uniform fees may be refunded if a participant decides to drop out of the T.A.F.L. program. . Refer to refund policy.
6. If a community has a player who hasn't paid their registration balance by the first game, they will not be allowed to play. The community is then responsible for paying T.A.F.L. the unpaid balance and has to recoup the cost from the player.

**Section 4 - Parental Approval and Release**

To participate in the T.A.F.L. the parent/guardian of the participant shall sign a proper release form, medical-insurance information form and player-contact information form. These forms shall be approved by the board of directors and completed fully by the parent/guardian at the time of registration. The participant is not eligible and cannot practice or play games until all forms are properly completed and signed.

**Section 5 - Assignment of Division**

During registration, the league shall inform the player and his/her parent/guardian of the appropriate division for which the youth qualifies. Should there be a change in the youth's status after registration; the League shall notify the youth and his parents/guardians of the new assignment prior to the first game of the season. No exceptions for division assignment will be made at the time of registration.

**Divisions are specified as follows:**

**DIVISIONS:**

<b>Junior Freshman- Flag Tackle</b>	<b>Freshman Tackle Bar</b>	<b>JV</b>
(Pre K-1)-(4-6 Yrs Old)	<b>Varsity Tackle</b> (2-3)-(7-8 Yrs Old)	(4-5) (9-10 years old)
	(6-7) (11,12,13)	

*Clarifications:*

**Section 6- Weight Limits & Weighing-in**

The weight restriction in the various divisions is as follows: (note below: under "Weigh-ins" a player's weight is with full playing gear including the helmet):

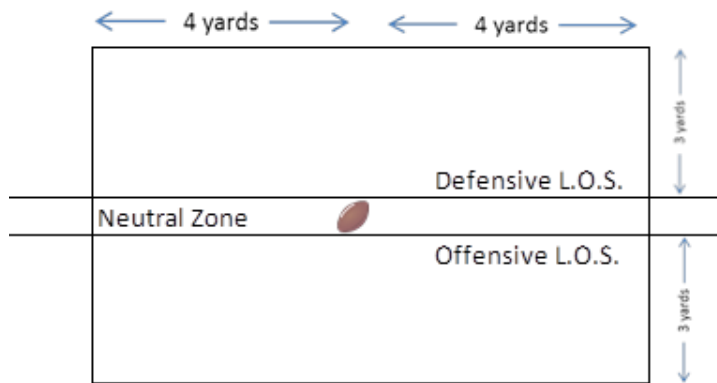
Divisions:	<u>FLAG</u>	<u>TACKLE BAR</u>
<u>JV</u>	<u>Varsity</u>	
Maximum Weight	No Limit	No Limit
170		UNLIMITED

For running backs, receivers, and ball returners

Maximum Weight*		90
120	140	

\* Offense: Players over ball carrier weight must play on the offensive line (tackle-to-tackle only). In the Varsity division players over 200 lbs can play only offensive line.

\* Defense: Players over ball carrier weight must play on the defensive line (tackle-to-tackle). Outside shoulders



**Tackle Box Clarification:** The free-blocking zone is defined as 3 yards on either side of the line of scrimmage and 4 yards either side of the ball.

If, at registration, the player is ineligible due to weight, the player can register to play in the T.A.F.L. with the understanding that they cannot play unless they make weight.

If a player is eligible (makes the weight limit) at registration and becomes ineligible at some time during the season, that player cannot participate in games until he/she can make the weight limit. The player can participate in practice without contact. In this situation, the coach must insure that the field director weighs the player before the game for the player to become eligible for that game.

A fluorescent stripe will be placed on a player's helmet to indicate he cannot carry the ball. If a striped player is playing out of position: 1<sup>st</sup> offense-Warning, 2<sup>nd</sup> Offense- 15 yard penalty and unsportsmanlike conduct penalty assessed to the

head coach, 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense- on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Player-immediate ejection of the head coach and player involved

### **Weigh-ins:**

1. Players must weigh in before participating in a game. Weigh-ins are required at each game.
2. The field director or designee will run all weigh-ins.
3. Each team must have only one coach watching the weigh-in of the opposing team.
4. Each team can only have one coach at the weigh in scale for their team.
5. The players must be weighed in the equipment they will play in (with helmets).
6. No extra equipment or padding may be added to the player after they have weighed-in.
7. The scales at the game field shall be considered official.
8. Players must meet the weight limits to be eligible to play.
9. Weigh in sheets to be available for the opposing coach.

Any team using an unqualified player or switching jersey numbers (without notice) will automatically forfeit the game. The coach of the team will be suspended and the community director will appoint an interim head coach.

### **Section 7- Team Assignment at Registration**

Youths will not be assigned to a team at time of registration and there is no guarantee that any player will get a team he/she wants or is expecting.

### **Section 8- Ineligibility**

Any youth may be determined to be ineligible to play by being in violation of these by-laws and rules of play.

## **Article II – COACHES**

### **Section 1- Coaching Assignment**

With the recommendation of the Community Director in each community, the President will approve, upon all information received and background checks who; will or will not be a coach for T.A.F.L.. First consideration for head coach positions shall be given to board members, coaches from previous years, and parents that, in the opinion of the board of directors, have a background indicating qualifications for the position.

All coaches, including assistants, must be at least 18 years of age with appropriate background checks.

### **Section 2 - Certification**

To insure the safety of our players all coaches must obtain the Youth Football Certification from USA Football as directed by TAFL. All cheerleading coaches must obtain concussion training from the CDC and any other sport appropriate training as directed by TAFL.

### **Section 3 - Duties**

1. All teams are to be coached by a minimum of two (2) coaches, up to four (4) coaches before the draft, once the draft is completed 2 more coaches can be selected from the draft roster. Head coaches are responsible for obtaining adequate coaches defined above to assist him/her in their coaching responsibilities.
2. All coaches must attend regular T.A.F.L. coach meetings. All head coaches **must** attend special T.A.F.L. coach meetings (assistant coaches are requested to come to these

special meetings). The privilege to coach is jeopardized if these meetings are missed without cause.

3. Head coaches shall familiarize themselves, their assistants, their players, their cheerleaders, and their parents/guardians with the RULES OF PLAY as they apply to their division.
4. All coaches are expected to increase their own knowledge of the game and coaching techniques. Attending clinics, gaining certifications and seminars is a great resource. Coaches should continue to educate themselves on health and safety, concussion, and dehydration avoidance techniques.
5. Coaches are responsible to instruct and coach each player in the fundamentals of the sport while providing a safe environment to instill the spirit of sportsmanship and fair play.
6. Coaches must be organized in practice and in games. Developing a full practice plan will add credibility and gain respect of the parents and players in the community. This includes an emergency plan.
7. Coaches are to get the athletes in a physical condition to adequately perform to their team and position requirements.
8. Head coaches shall hold at least one parent meeting (individually or in mass) prior to the beginning of the league game schedule. This meeting shall inform the parent/guardians of the nature of how the team will be coached (i.e. how practices will be run, what is expected, etc.), the operations of the league, and proper conduct and sportsmanship.
9. Head coaches will receive a binder/file of each player's contact and medical information from the community director. This binder/file must be available at every practice and game and is to be kept confidential.

10. All coaches are to demonstrate good sportsmanship and conduct oneself in an adult manner at all times.
11. Periodically, coaches are to check the fit and usability of every player's helmet and all pads.
12. It is mandatory that head coaches get one "team parent" to help with functions of the team and recruit/coordinate the other parents' help. This person will be the one person to relay issues that may come up between "parents and coaches" or "parents and the league" (but never to a referee). This person will also coordinate the team's fundraising activities, team photos, and other non-coaching activities. If no "team parent" is assigned, the head coach will be responsible for this additional work.
13. Coaches are to make sure everything is picked up after every practice or game.
14. After each season, each head coach shall be responsible for the safekeeping and return of all equipment assigned to their team to their community director.
15. Since it is the coaches that are directly involved in almost every aspect of the league, it is requested that every coach feel free to communicate with the board regarding any ideas and solutions to improve league operations.
16. *Head Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their assistant coaches.*

#### **Section 4- Dismissal of a Coach**

In the event of a dismissal of a coach, the following procedure will be observed:

Any report concerning unsportsmanlike, irresponsible, or inappropriate conduct, including willful violation of T.A.F.L. rules, will be looked at in a serious manner by the Community Director, designated field director and by the president. The President, Vice-President or field director can temporarily (and

immediately) remove and replace a coach from their position until the issue is settled or corrected. In absence of the President, Vice-President or field director, any director can temporarily remove a coach for misconduct.

Following the report of the misconduct, if any two (2) members of the board feel it is warranted that further action is needed; the president will convene a special meeting where both sides of the issue will be heard.

The board of directors will discuss the issue in depth. If a corrective action is not agreed upon, a vote on dismissing the coach will be taken. The votes will be tallied by the "Inspectors of Election" with the coach in question being informed of the results by the President.

### **Article III- TEAM ASSIGNMENT**

#### **Section 1- Player Draft**

A draft selection process will take place to determine the placement of players on teams. A coach representative from each community team in each division will meet with a representative of the T.A.F.L. to make team selections. An Executive Board Member or Community Director from another community may also be present to assist in the process.

#### **Section 2- Team Assignment Date**

Team assignments shall be made before equipment orders are due. This date will be determined prior to each season by the board of directors.

Late registration – Players registering after the posted registration deadline are not guaranteed to play. Players registering after team assignments have been made shall be assigned to a team by the President. In making late assignments, the President shall maintain team balance as best as he/she can while assigning participants to a team. Maintaining team balance shall take preference.

**After seven (7) days of the posted final registration deadline, late registrations will only be accepted by approval of the board of directors. Late registrations will not be considered one (1) week before the first allowable day of practice, unless agreed approved by the President and Vice President.**

### **Section 3- Community Assignment Procedures**

The board of directors will decide how member areas (communities) will be separated and who will be in the pool of players for that community's selection pool.

If a community cannot be assigned a full team, the players from that community will default into the nearest community selection pool possible (or the specific region's pool, where regions exist). All players can request playing with a specific community at the time of registration, although these requests are not guaranteed.

### **Section 4- Team Assignment Draft Procedures**

This shall be the established procedure for the selection of team personnel for all T.A.F.L. member areas:

1. Each child will be placed in the appropriate community based on their registration information. Any player who

would like to play in a community other than their T.A.F.L. community must be T.A.F.L. board approved first.

2. The number of teams will be determined from the number of participants in each grade group registered for that specific community. Each team shall be assigned a minimum of 15 players (subject to the community's pool of players and the draft process). T.A.F.L. Board approval will be needed if over 24 players on a team.
3. Coaches will be selected to represent each team.
4. A "skills day" may be held by each community. This is the option of the community director. Coaches will be able to observe their community's players for skill level. A community may elect to use a "fantasy draft" procedure in lieu of a "skills day".
5. A draft will be held by each community with a T.A.F.L. representative present.
6. Order of draft will be determined by a flip of the coin or pulling a number out of a hat.
  - a) The head coach's child (if applicable) is the team's 4<sup>th</sup> round pick.
  - b) The assistant coach's children (if applicable) are drafted starting in the 3<sup>rd</sup> round and going forward to the 1<sup>st</sup> round, if needed.
  - c) The head and assistant coach's children are placed on the teams at the start of the draft, before any other players are selected.
  - d) If a head and assistant coach's children number more than four (4) (i.e. siblings), then the extra player(s) is the team's 5<sup>th</sup> round pick and the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, etc., as needed.
7. The draft then begins with team 1, 2, 3, etc. selecting players until the 1<sup>st</sup> round is complete.

8. The 2<sup>nd</sup> round begins at the bottom of the team order (i.e. the team that picked last in the 1<sup>st</sup> round goes first in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round) and goes up through the teams until the round is complete.
9. The 3<sup>rd</sup> round starts at the top and the draft continues in the top to bottom, bottom to top style until all players have been selected.
10. If a player is selected and has a sibling(s) in the same grade division, that sibling(s) must be the team's next round pick(s); unless, it is requested that they are not on the same team.
11. It is imperative that the coaches and community director keep the teams as evenly matched as possible.
12. All children go back into the draft process each year. There are no carryovers or protecting players for future seasons. All teams will be formed using the above process.
13. No guarantees will be given for a participant to play on a certain team.
14. After the completion of the draft, the Community Director will prepare rosters for each team. Player's jersey numbers need to be recorded by all coaches and updated rosters given to community directors after uniforms are issued to teams.

## **Article IV- TEAM PRACTICES**

### **Section 1- Practice Fields**

The community director shall try to assign practice fields for each team that are most convenient for the majority of the players involved and are evenly spread throughout the school district and/or area as possible. Coaches can use other practice fields if they are TAFL sanctioned fields. The community director is responsible for this.

### **Section 2- Practice Policies**

1. The board shall determine the exact when shall commence each season. Any team practicing before the scheduled time will be subject penalties defined by the board. A practice is considered three (3) or more players from the same team drafted in that applicable year. The only exception to this rule is one "Community Camp", which consists of no more than 2-4 days in which every athlete in the community was invited to participate via the school system. The camp must be a TAFL sanctioned event and cannot be held any earlier than one week before the official start of T.A.F.L. Practice.
2. There shall be at least three (3) weeks of practice minimum and four (4) weeks of practice maximum preceding the first league game.
3. No practices are to be held on Sundays. Additionally, no practices are to be held on Fridays once school starts or when high school football starts, whichever comes first. Coaches are encouraged to schedule their practices around school activities as much as possible.
4. During the first week of practice of the season, only helmets are allowed the first two days, only shoulder pads may be used on the third and fourth days, and full pads may not be worn until the fifth day of team practice. During this time only approved "dummies" may be used.
5. During pre-season (before games start), each team shall practice at least one (1) time per week and no more than four (4) per week..
6. Each player shall have completed at least ten (10) practices before participating in his/her first game. The team shall forfeit each game they play where this rule is not followed.

7. After the first game, through the rest of the season, each team shall practice at least one (1) time per week and no more than three (3) times per week two (2) times with contact). Teams may not schedule more than one practice a day. TAFL communities shall abide by USA Football's contact guidelines for practice.
8. Participants joining a team after the first practice must satisfy rules #4 and #7 starting from the day they join the team.
9. If any team knowingly allows an unregistered or unqualified player to practice or play games will forfeit all games in which the player was used. The head coach of the team will be suspended from his or her coaching duties and the community director will appoint an interim head coach.
10. Practices will not be held when lightning can be seen.
11. No practice/scrimmage games shall be held prior to two weeks before the first game of the season and can only be played against T.A.F.L. teams in the same division. Any special events, games, scrimmages, etc. involving teams from T.A.F.L. member areas, must be approved by the league prior to the event. There will be no scrimmages or practices against teams from non-T.A.F.L. members, unless approved by T.A.F.L. Board.

### **Article V – REGIONS**

As the numbers of teams expand, “regions” may be created. Regions will provide a convenience to participants and their families, simplify team assignments and game scheduling, and allow the league to grow throughout the Thumb Area.

There must be at least six (6) teams in each division to start forming regions. A region will have a minimum of three (3) teams for each division.

The board of directors will decide, each year, if there should be regions or define what communities will be in each region while being cognizant of balancing the number of teams and balancing the quality of competition as much as possible. As the league grows, regions may change in area and include different communities.

While most games will be scheduled against other teams in the same region, there may be some games scheduled against teams in other regions.

The goal is to have, at most, 4 regions (North, South, East, West), each having regular season game schedules within their own region. The winners of each division would qualify them for the T.A.F.L. championship playoffs.

### **Article VI – GAME SCHEDULE & LOCATION**

#### **Section 1 - Scheduling of Games**

All scheduling and locations of regular season games will be set before the first day of practice of the season and be handed out to all players. Playoff games will be announced at a later date if applicable. The community director is responsible for issuing game schedules to all teams.

#### **Section 2 - Number of Games**

Our current plan is to play between 6-8 games in the season. If Playoffs are played within a specified season, it is our goal



for all teams to be in at least one Playoff game. Playoffs shall consist of the top qualifying four (4) teams; where the winner of the playoffs will have played in at least (2) playoff games for a total of eight (8) games for the season. All other teams will play in lower bracket playoffs.

### **Section 3 - Game Fields**

Game fields may be the designated home fields for each community/region. The home field will ultimately be decided when the schedule is issued each year. Games will be scheduled at participating communities throughout the Thumb Area. (Where regions exist, teams qualifying for the playoffs may have to travel to another region).

Note: Freshman fields must be a minimum of 70 yards with a maximum of 80 in length. Width a minimum of 45 yards.

### **Section 4 - Dates and Times of Games**

The date of the first game will be set, each year, by the board of directors, taking into consideration practice requirements and holidays. Up to eight (8) regular season games shall be played in consecutive weeks (except for holiday weekends), unless there are playoffs. If applicable, playoffs will start the weekend following the last regular season game.

If feasibly possible, all regular season games will be on Saturday at various times during daylight hours. If applicable, playoffs could be played “under the lights” at night.

## **Article VII- RULES OF PLAY**

### **Section 1- Basic Rules**

T.A.F.L. competition and practices are governed by the playing rules and amendments of the National Federation of High

Schools (NFHS) and the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA). Some T.A.F.L. rules have been added for the participants’ and the league’s best interest. Regulation high school playing, substitution, and scoring rules will be in effect **except** where they conflict with T.A.F.L. rules.

### **Section 2- Field Director at each Game**

Unless otherwise decided by the board of directors, the community director is responsible to be present at each of their home games and serve as field director. The community director may appoint another field director, but is ultimately responsible. The appointed field director shall be responsible for seeing that the conduct of all officials, coaches, players, cheerleaders, and spectators is appropriate. The field director shall have the authority, within his/her best judgment, to act upon or make decisions over any situation that may arise, within the confines of this constitution and with the best interest of T.A.F.L.

### **Section 3- “Away” Team**

The away team coach shall appoint responsible individuals to handle the chains and down boxes. The chain gang will be determined one week prior to the game and given to the Community Director. Persons performing the chain gang must be competent individuals. These individuals are not allowed to talk to players, coaches, or officials other than as part of their official capacity. The “chain gang” will stand on the visitor team’s sideline.

Starting the second half of the game, there is no choice of who receives. The team that starts on offense will start on defense after the second half.

#### **Section 4- Inclement Weather**

Officials will stop the game due to lightning (or other severe weather conditions) and will consult with the field director who will make the decision to continue or not continue playing. There will be only one delay, to last no more than 45 minutes from time of delay. There will not be a waiting period to see if more favorable weather conditions will come to continue play. All decisions in this regard are final. Games will be played in rain or snow.

If the lightning (or other severe weather condition) stops, the next scheduled game (of that day) will start at its regularly scheduled time. If this game cannot be played, then the following game will still be scheduled to play at its regularly scheduled time.

If a game has been cancelled and has completed 3 full quarters, the team with the most points at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter shall be the winner of the game (if the game is tied after the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, the game will be considered a tie). If the game has not completed three (3) full quarters, the game is cancelled and will not be rescheduled.

#### **Section 5- Tie Breakers**

In the event teams in the same divisions have the same record (tied), the following order will be used to decide the overall standings:

- a. Head to head competition
- b. Defensive points scored against you
- c. Coin toss

In cases where overtime is necessary, the following play guidelines will come into effect: a coin toss determines which

team attempts to score first, and at which end zone the scores shall be attempted. Both teams use the same end zone. Each team will receive one possession, starting with first-and-goal from opponent's 10 yd line. A team's possession ends when it scores a touchdown, fails to score on 4<sup>th</sup> down, or loses the ball by turnover. The defense is not allowed to score if it gains possession. A touchdown by the offense is followed by a try for one or two point conversion. Each team receives one charged time-out per overtime. If the score remains tied at the end of the first overtime, the overtime procedures are continued until a winner is determined.

#### **Section 6 – Attendance / Playing Time**

All players shall start on offense or defense with teams of 22 players or less. Teams with more than 22 must sub accordingly. Each player shall play at least 5 plays per half. This is for all willing and able players at game time.

If a football player or cheerleader misses one practice the week prior to a game, they are ineligible to participate in the first ½ of the team's next scheduled game. If a football player or cheerleader misses more than one practice the week prior to a scheduled game, they are ineligible to participate in the team's next scheduled game. If a football player or cheerleader is tardy or leaves practice early more than twice per week, they are ineligible for the team's next scheduled game (A bi-week does not excuse absences or tardies). All Cheer and Football Coaches are to take daily attendance, to be turned in every Friday to a designated community board member. The only exceptions are for verifiable reasons such as a medical appointment and family death/illnesses. For the purpose of this rule, other sports or extra-curricular activities, are not valid reasons for absences, tardies, or early departures.

If a field or community director determines that a team member is not being allowed to participate, he/she shall inform the head coach. If the condition persists and there is not a good reason, the field director must take the matter to the board of directors for further review and/or disciplinary action. On determining a flagrant violation, the board can remove a coach, or take other action at its discretion.

### **Section 7 – Uniforms and Equipment**

Each member of each team must wear the uniform designated by their respective communities. during all league games. If part or all of the uniform is forgotten at game time, a sweatshirt/shirt and pants of the basic color for that team must be worn during the game. The opposing coach must approve of the substitute uniform; otherwise, the player cannot play. The field director will have final say if there is a dispute.

Game jerseys will be supplied by the respective communities or the League and shall not be worn for practice. Players **are encouraged** to wear these game jerseys in public and at school. Due to the safety factor, if two (2) teams, which are playing each other, have the same color jerseys, the home team will change to another color or use field/practice jerseys. (This will be a concern when there are different regions set up.)

Coaches shall be responsible for their teams' appearance. Clean pants, socks, shirts, and shoes with the correct coloring are recommended. Shirts tucked in and socks and pants pulled up are highly encouraged.

Every player must wear gym shoes or rubber cleats. All other football cleats and footwear must be approved by the field director.

Every player must wear T.A.F.L. approved shoulder pads, helmet with facemask and football pants with all the pads. *Player bought equipment, such as gloves, arm pads, etc. are considered TAFL approved equipment. Every effort should be made by field directors and coaches to see that no obsolete or worn equipment is used and that all equipment fits well. All face shields if used must be clear.*

If a player wears a neck roll, the T.A.F.L. strongly suggests a proper fit. Proper fitting being defined as a: "neck roll that adequately protects the neck, but still allows movement of the head in all directions." Head coaches are responsible to ensure the neck roll is properly installed on the shoulder pads.

All players must wear mouth protectors either clear or colored, unless the player has written permission from his/her dentist. Mouthpieces **must** be attached to the helmet and worn in the mouth while on the playing field. A first warning may or may not be issued by the referee. A 10-yard penalty will be given for each violation.

Individual award or other non BOD approved stickers are prohibited to be placed on helmets. 1<sup>st</sup> offense: The player must be removed from the playing field until the sticker is removed. 2<sup>nd</sup> offense: Team may be required to forfeit.

Cheer Uniforms must be consistent throughout the league. Just like the football uniforms, this will be reviewed yearly by the TAFL Board of Directors, as recommended by the Cheerleading Director

### **Section 8 – Officials**

All officials (regardless of whether they are MHSAA/NFHS sanctioned) must attend the T.A.F.L. Official's Clinic for continuing certification to officiate in the league. All officials must have a copy of the MHSAA Rules for the current year and get a copy of the T.A.F.L. rules from the designated T.A.F.L. Board Member. All officials are to be certified by MHSAA.

Officials shall be a minimum of 11<sup>th</sup> (For Legacy Officials 9<sup>TH</sup>) grade students, (Only 1 Legacy Official on a field at a time) although all officiating crews must include at least one (1) adult (21 or older) to serve as the head referee at all contests. There must be at least three officials at every game, unless approved by field director. Officials work directly for the designated field director. Per MHSAA guidelines, legacy officials will be paid the same rate/wage as all other officials.

Officials will penalize team's 15-yards for unsportsmanlike conduct by the players, coaching staff or supporting fans. This does not eliminate the possibility of questioning an official on a call; however this must be done in a sportsmanlike manner.

The T.A.F.L. is responsible for the continuing education of the league's officials. The field director is responsible for any communication between the league and the officials.

### **Section 9 – Game Playing Times**

Divisions:                      Junior Freshman-Flag    Freshman-Tackle  
Bar   JV-Tackle      Varsity- Tackle

Minutes per Quarter:	20 Min Running Clock	12
	13	14

Junior Freshman –Flag 2 halves, 8 Minute rest at halftime  
 Each team is entitled to 2 35 second time outs per half

Tackle Bar/JV/Varsity-Four quarters, a 2-minute rest between quarters, and an 8-minute rest at half time.  
 Each team is entitled to three 35-second time outs per half.

The clock will stop for all penalties, after a score, an injury or equipment repair. The clock is not stopped for any other reason, with the exception of the last two minutes of the first and second halves of the game when the difference in score is within 8 points, then and only then will the clock stop for a dead ball (i.e. going out-of-bounds, after a pass play or the time it takes to move the 1<sup>st</sup> down markers).  
 (currently it states “the last two minutes of the game when the difference in score is eight)

Each team must have a 10-minute warm-up of stretching and/or calisthenics before starting each game. Before starting the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of each game, at least a 2-minute warm-up will be observed by each team. These warm-ups are mandatory and will be enforced by the Officials. Should either warm-up result in a delayed start of either half, the team causing the delay is to be penalized 15 yards at the time of kick-off.

In the event of injury, an official's time-out will be called. However, the hurt player must report to their sideline after the time-out and remain there at least three (3) consecutive plays. The Officials will be instructed at the T.A.F.L. Official's Clinic to follow this procedure.

## **Section 10 – T.A.F.L. Special Rules of Play**

### **Safety's- Junior Freshman-Flag**

In the event of a safety, two points shall be awarded to the defensive team. The team awarded the two points will receive the ball on their 10 yard line.

### **Safety's- Tackle Bar/JV/Varsity**

In the event of a safety, two points shall be awarded to the defensive team. The team awarded the two points will receive the ball on their 25 yard line.

### **PATs (Point After Touchdowns) and field goals:**

**FLAG/TACKLE BAR:** After a touchdown, the point after will be either run or passed successfully from the 5-yard line and will count for one (1) point. The offense has the option to go for two (2) points from the 10-yard line and must notify the referee of this decision before the ball is placed in play.

**JV/FLAG:** After a touchdown there are options for a PAT by kicking the ball through the goal post or running or passing for PAT. If the offensive unit opts for a kicking PAT, the ball will be spotted on the three yard line. A successful attempt will yield 2 points. If the offensive unit opts for a run or pass play, the ball shall be spotted on the five yard line and a successful attempt will yield one point. An offensive team may attempt a fake PAT. If the offense chooses a kicking PAT, the defensive line will be the only people allowed to rush the kicker and a defender shall not be lined head up on the center. If a kicking PAT is not allowed due to no goal post, the scoring team may attempt from the 3 yard line for 1 point, or the 5 yard line for 2 points.

### **Punt Rush and Punt Return:**

In our continuing attempt to improve player safety, the following rules for punting plays will be followed:

#### **All Divisions:**

Junior Freshman-Flag and Freshman-Tackle Bar: No punts.

Junior Freshman –Flag- Ball will be placed at the 5 yard line following a turnover on downs.

Freshman –Tackle Bar- Ball placed 25 yards away when punt is selected or half the distance within the forty yard line.

Junior Varsity and Varsity: Defensive lineman may not line head up over the center. The defensive line are the only players on the return team who can rush the punter. The ball is dead where the return team catches it or at the spot of first touching. If a member of the return team drops the football, then it is a live ball and can be recovered. The punt team can attempt a fake punt. No declaration necessary.

#### **Ball placement in lieu kick offs and kick offs**

Freshman-Tackle Bar/JV Tackle: No Kick-offs, so the ball will be placed on 25-yd. line

Varsity Tackle: Will have kick offs. The ball will be blown dead and spotted where the receiving team catches it or where it comes to rest. The ball is live if the receiving team muffs the ball. Neither team may advance a muff. No onside kicks are allowed at any time.

### **Trick Plays:**

In keeping with the primary mission of the T.A.F.L., which is teaching football fundamentals and sportsmanship, the following “gadget” plays are not permitted:

- Center sneaks (hiking the ball without a count)
- Fumblerski (fumbling the ball on purpose to get an advantage)
- Bounce passes or any play where the receiver/ball carrier leaves the playing field and returns to handle the ball.

The team attempting to use one of the above plays shall be penalized with both the loss of a down and a 10-yard assessment. The designated field director shall have the final determination of a trick/gadget play.

#### Sideline Area:

All coaches must remain on the sidelines as in regular high school rules and may enter the playing field to converse with their players only during called time-outs. There shall be an automatic 15-yard penalty for any member of the coaching staff on the playing field that interrupts the normal progress of the game. **No use of Camera’s on the field of play, this includes the sidelines (Team Box) Exceptions to be approved by Community Director**

Coaches and players on the sidelines must remain 3 yards when possible. This also applies to cheerleaders. Suggestion for cheerleaders to be on the track and stay within 25-yard line markers.

#### Exception:

For Divisions: Junior Freshman (flag)/freshman (Tackle Bar) One (1) coach per team may be present on the playing field, but shall not interfere, either physically or verbally, while play

is in progress. The coach can be in the huddle but must remain at least fifteen (15) yards behind the line of scrimmage and out of the playing area when play resumes. (Must remain behind the referee)

#### Special Rules of Play Freshman Division (Tackle Bar):

1. Each player within the acceptable weight range to carry the ball (90 pounds and below) shall wear the Tackle Bar harness.
2. A player is considered down when the tackle bar is ripped off the harness. The defensive player must hold the bar in the air until the whistle blows. If a ball carrier goes down for any reason, they are down. If the Tackle Bar harness comes off the ball carrier, they are down.
3. No blocking below the waist, at any time.

#### Section 11 – Miscellaneous.

**Football size.** All Freshman and JV teams shall use a “Pee-Wee” football or its equivalent size for practice and games. All Varsity teams shall use a “Junior” football or its equivalent size for practice and games.

**Defensive Line.** Freshman and Junior Varsity teams must have no more than six (6) players on the line of scrimmage at all times, except goal line defense inside the 10 yard line. Defensive line, tackle to tackle, must be in a 3 or 4-point stance.

Freshman (Tackle Bar) and JV (Tackle) -Linebackers need to be 3 yards off the ball and can't move forward until the ball is snapped. The violation- 15 YARD PENALTY

Varsity (Tackle)-Any kid over the ball carrying weight must be in a 3 or 4 point stance on the of line scrimmage, from tackle to tackle.

**Extra Games.** Games to be played against non-member football teams must be approved by the board of directors prior to scheduling the game. In any T.A.F.L. area, where the opposing team is not affiliated with T.A.F.L., the opposing team shall be under the nominal supervision of the area field director.

#### **Section 12 - Sportsmanship**

Rules governing the conduct of coaches, players, and spectators are continuously reviewed by the league in an attempt to stem unsportsmanlike behavior.

In an effort to keep the game environment under control, the Officials will penalize teams 15-yards for unsportsmanlike conduct by the players, coaching staff **or** supporting fans.

Any coach or assistant coach entering the field of play to argue an official's call in an unsportsmanlike or hostile manner, *or behaving on the sidelines in an unsportsmanlike or hostile manner* shall be immediately ejected from the game. He/she will be required to leave the playing site immediately before the game resumes and will be on a league-enforced suspension from all practices and games for the next seven (7) calendar days. Any coach not complying will forfeit the game in question and the entire team will be suspended from all

practices and games for the next seven (7) calendar days. The designated field director must report any such ejection to the president and the league.

Any player or coach using profanity, degrading language, unsportsmanlike gestures or taunting of another player, coach or referee shall be penalized 15 yards for unsportsmanlike conduct and will be automatically ejected. This penalty shall be considered a team penalty and the next unsportsmanlike infraction from any player or coach of the same team will result in an immediate ejection of that player or coach from the game. A 3<sup>rd</sup> unsportsmanlike infraction from a player or coach will result in that team forfeiting the game.

Concerning the sportsmanship of spectators and fans, it will be explained to the coaches at the coaches' meetings, officials' clinic and by every field director, that it is the coach's responsibility to control their team's fans and parents. The head coach may ask an official to delay the game to get the Field Director to address a spectator who behaves in an unsportsmanlike manner without their team being penalized. If the coach cannot control them, then the designated field director must step in and restore order. It should be explained that at the 1<sup>st</sup> such offense, a sportsmanlike conduct penalty, will be enforced and 15 yards marked off against the offending team. A 2<sup>nd</sup> offense will require the field director to stop the game and if the individual(s) causing the disturbance can be identified, they will be instructed to leave the playing site or the game will be stopped and a forfeit awarded to the opposing team. *The offending spectator will be required to leave the playing site immediately before the game resumes and will be on a league-enforced suspension from all practices and games for the next seven (7) calendar days.*

All spectators must remain at least five (5) yards from all boundaries of the playing field, or in the stands when possible. The field director shall, immediately escort any spectator entering the playing field for reasons other than player injuries, from the playing site. The game will resume once the spectator has left the game site.

### **Section 13 – Participant Awards and Gifts**

At the end of the season, the league through its community may present each player on all teams with an award (i.e. usually a shirt and/or trophy).

### **Section 14 - Safety**

Player safety should always be on the forefront of all coaches, officials, and directors' minds both on and off the fields.

Each team is to be equipped with a first aid kit, including ice packs. Coaches are required to bring their first aid kit (including ice packs) to all practices and games. If more first aid supplies are needed, the coaches must contact the league to replenish their inventory of medical supplies.

In the event of an injury, the field director in charge may remove an injured player from the game if in his/her opinion, the player is unable to safely continue. *An incident report is required for all injury time outs.* All injuries must be reported to the league, filing an injury report within 1 day of the injury.

All coaches need to be aware of concussions. If a player is suspected to have a concussion, they may not return to practice or a game without a doctor's note.

All field directors, head coaches and assistants should be, at least, acquainted in basic first aid procedures.

The community director, with the help of the board of directors, will develop an emergency action plan to evacuate an injured player (ambulance, etc.) as part of every community's pre-season planning.

Head Coaches shall immediately notify their respective Player Safety Coach regarding any injury/incident and document this using TAFL's incident report. Head Coaches shall submit their incident report and copies of insurance forms, and medical clearances to the team's player safety coach in a reasonable amount of time. The team's Player Safety Coach shall turn over all incident reports and supporting documentation to the community director for submission to the TAFL. If TAFL's insurance forms are accepted by a participant's family, a copy of the Incident Report and all documentation including the insurance form shall be immediately emailed to the TAFL Secretary.

If a participant is referred to medical treatment at the request of the Head Coach or if medical assistance is rendered at a game or practice, the participant shall not return until cleared by a physician with accompanying documentation.

If a participant receives medical attention for an injury outside of football and cheerleading, the participant shall not return until cleared by a physician with accompanying documentation.

TAFL's Football Director is the final authority in all player safety matters concerning football. TAFL's Cheerleading



Director is the final authority in all player safety matters concerning cheerleaders.

Any indications of child abuse or neglect involving any football player or cheerleader shall be reported to the authorities.

Drug and alcohol use will not be tolerated. Any coach who shows up to any practice or game under the influence shall immediately be relieved of his/her coaching duties.

TAFLL guidelines concerning safety, sportsmanship, and the coach's code of conduct shall apply to any TAFLL team participating in post-season tournament play or any games or scrimmages against non-TAFLL opponents.

#### **Section 15- T.A.F.L. Blood borne Pathogens**

In keeping with the T.A.F.L. policy of stressing the utmost safety at all times for our participants and following the current MHSAA guidelines, the following policy will be invoked and adhered to by all T.A.F.L. communities and their players, coaches, Officials and community directors.

1. A player who is bleeding, whether from an injury, previous injury, or an unexpected occurrence (i.e. nose bleed) shall not be allowed to play until the bleeding is stopped. All traces of the blood must be removed and the injury site adequately covered by a dressing.
2. Any player who has liquefied (fresh) blood on a jersey, pants, pad or socks will not be allowed to play until the jersey, pad, or sock(s) is replaced or removed. Realizing

that this should be a rare occurrence, but that the possibility exists, the T.A.F.L. suggests that all teams have at least two (2) extra jerseys provided for them by their respective area and it shall be the coach's responsibility to see that these jerseys are at each game.

3. Each area shall provide latex (plastic) gloves for use by each team, in addition to furnishing gloves for use by the game officials. These gloves are to be safely disposed of if they are used, along with any Band-Aids, dressings or related medical supplies that may come in contact with blood.
4. It is suggested that each area formulate a procedure for handling a "bleeding occurrence," such as who is authorized to treat an individual who may be bleeding, for instance, the field director, coach, etc.
5. The League recognizes that it is not economically feasible to have spare football pants on each and every sideline. However, in the event of a bleeding occurrence on a player's pants, the player will not be allowed to participate until the blood is removed and/or covered.
6. The Officials shall be instructed to remove from the game any player with blood on the above mentioned equipment. This is not just the injured player, but any participant who has come into contact with the injured player and may have blood on their equipment. No injury time out will be assessed in the event of a bleeding occurrence, however the injured player will be held out of play until bleeding stops and blood is cleaned up properly and coach sees player is

fit to play again. See T.A.F.L. Blood borne Pathogens Rule #4.

7. These regulations shall remain in effect until further notice.

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**Article VIII- Flag Overview**

**5 V 5 Flag Game Format**

**Teams:**

Each Community allowed up to 4 Teams

Each Flag Team is allowed up to 11 players

**Dress Code:**

Players receive set of flags, jersey, shorts, Flag Helmet.

Players must wear mouthguard,

Shorts with no pockets (or taped up pockets),

All shirts must be tucked into shorts

**Format:**

Fields are 24 yards wide and 40 yards long, (5 yard end zones). (This allows for 4 games on 1 field)

Games are 5 players v 5 players

Two 20 minute running clock halves

Each possession starts at the 5 yard line after scores, turnover on downs and/or halftime.

45 SECOND GENEROUS PLAY CLOCK

The offensive team has three downs to get a first down at mid-field, then 4 downs to score once they have crossed mid-field.

All players are eligible!

NO RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK!

ONE Coach is allowed on the field for both offense and defense

**Scoring**

Touchdowns = 6 points

Extra Point (5 yard line) = 1 pt

Extra Point (10 yard line) = 2 pts

**The play is dead when the following occurs to the ball carrier:**

Flag is pulled

Runner's knee touches the ground

Runner steps out of bounds

Runner loses his flag then the opposing team must touch him down.

Runner dives, jumps or leaps; ball is spotted where the runner left his feet. (unless jump is in order to avoid player on the ground)

**Rules of Play:**

NO direct QB runs

The ball carrier can spin to avoid their flag being pulled but cannot flag guard.

No fumbles (a fumbled, or stripped ball is dead and placed at the spot of the fumble with the offensive team retaining possession)

The QB has 7 seconds to either pass or hand the ball off

The sack count starts on the snap of the ball no matter what the offensive play is attempted.

If the QB does not release the ball before time expires, the result of the play is a sack and the ball stays at the Line of scrimmage.

Passes are allowed behind the line of scrimmage, example: WR screen

The QB can HAND or PITCH the ball off to another player and they can throw the ball within the allotted time. If/When the QB hands or pitches or throws a backward pass to another player, this alerts the defense that they CAN cross the LOS to pull the flag of the player with the ball.

Home team will begin on offense. Away team will start on Offense in second half.

The clock will only stop for time-outs and injuries unless it is the last minute of the game Only if the score is within 8. (it does not stop for incomplete passes, out of bounds, change of possession.

Teams switch sides at halftime.

A receiver must have one foot in bounds when making a reception.

Only one player can be in motion at the same time.

3 Players must be on the line of scrimmage or illegal formation; the center counts as 1 player on the line of scrimmage.

Laterals are allowed but if the ball hits the ground, the ball is spotted at that yard mark.

Absolutely no tackling or blocking (stationary pick is allowed but player cannot move)

Defensive players can cross the line of scrimmage when a handoff, fake handoff or backward pass has occurred. This Deception Rule is applied to define the integrity of the LOS and development of the passing game for both offense and defense. This rule applies to all Divisions.

Interceptions can be returned for a TD, if intercepting teams flag is pulled before the end zone then possession will begin where the defender is flagged.

### **LAST 1 MINUTE OF THE GAME / HALF**

If the score is within 8 the clock will stop in the final 1 minute of the game on these actions:

Incompletions

Out of Bounds

QB Sack

Change of Possession

Penalties-If a foul occurs within the last minute of the game and the score is within 8, the offended team has the option to have the clock start either on the ready or on the snap.

Mercy Rule (game will continue)

If a team is up by 35 or more, they only have 2 downs to get a first down and 2 downs to score until that point difference is trimmed below 30 pts. At that point, regular game rules apply.

The team that is behind by 35 or more points will start their offensive possession at the +10 yard line and get 4 downs for a First and 4 down to score. If the point difference is trimmed below 30 pts, then regular game rules apply.

### **OFFENSE PENALTIES:**

Offensive Pass Interference – 10 yard penalty and replay the down

Illegal motion (2 men in motion) – 5 yard penalty and replay the down

Illegal Formation – 5 yard penalty and replay the down  
False Start – 5 yard penalty, replay the down  
Illegal Forward Pass – 5 yard penalty and loss of down (QB steps over the LOS)  
Blocking –5 yards from spot of the foul  
Leaping – 5 yards from spot of the foul  
Flag Guarding (including stiff arms) – 5 yard penalty from the spot of the foul and loss of down  
Unsportsmanlike conduct – 15 yard penalty (possible ejection)  
Delay of Game – clock is stopped and a 5 yard penalty  
DEFENSIVE PENALTIES:  
Defensive Pass Interference - 5 yard penalty and replay down unless it's an offensive catch; Offense decides. 1st down can occur depending on the yardage.  
Illegal Contact – 5 yard penalty and replay down unless it's an offensive catch; Offense decides. 1st can occur depending on the yardage.  
Defensive Holding while pulling flag – 5 yard penalty added to the end of the play and replay down. 1st down can occur depending on the yardage.  
Illegal Flag Pull (before player has ball) – 5 yard penalty and replay down. 1st down can occur depending on the yardage.  
Off-sides – 5 yard penalty and replay down. 1st down can occur depending on the yardage.  
Illegal Rushing (before a hand-off has occurred) – 5 yard penalty and replay the down; offense decides depending on the result of the play. 1st down can occur depending on the yardage.  
Inadvertent tackle – 5 yard penalty added to the end of the play and replay down.  
Inadvertent tack from behind w/clear path to end zone- Ball will be placed at the one yard line  
Unsportsmanlike conduct –10 yard penalty

Defensive Penalties inside the 10 yard line will result in half the distance to the Goal line if applicable.

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None of the T.A.F.L. rules can be waived by any person for any reason. Anyone willfully violating any rule will be suspended for one (1) year. Reinstatement/appeal procedures are outlined in the T.A.F.L. Guidelines.