



RULES & REGULATIONS

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LEAGUE PURPOSE AND MISSION STATEMENT

Bemidji Youth Football (BYF) is a tackle football program comprised of youth in grades 3-5 that reside in Bemidji and the surrounding areas. Each participant will learn to play both offensive and defensive positions during the course of the season. Teams are formed with an equal distribution of talent and weights each season.

The primary purpose of the program is not to win football games, but rather to teach the fundamentals of football, sportsmanship, discipline and the importance of fair play to all of the participants. It is our requirement that our coaches and parents not only teach this to the players but also practice it during the games.

The intent of this league is to provide an environment to expose all players to all aspects of the game. Throughout these rules, you may find that certain situations are not spelled out - at that point we refer to the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) Rules. With that said, this is not a high school program where an expected level of knowledge and expertise are assumed. Please attempt to simulate game situations - however keeping in mind the level of player that you are coaching and abide by the rules, goals, intent and spirit of the program.

If an issue arises during a game, the official has the final say on ANY Rule interpretation. Do not argue the point. We would ask that you refer any questions or issues to the BYF Board. Please remember that as coaches and adults we are to teach and facilitate, not dictate and manipulate a game that is intended to be a fun learning experience for ALL players.

Although we inform the officials about "our rules" they cannot be expected to understand all of the differences between BYF rules and high school rules. The only way our program will be successful, is if we as coaches, parents and participants all understand and follow the rules.

BYF is a DEVELOPMENTAL league. We must remember that the primary objective is not to "win at all costs". All teams have players of varying abilities. Coaches must ensure that each player has a starting position on offense or defense for the game. Each player can expect to play a minimum of 50% of the game, except for disciplinary reasons.

In general, 50% minimum playing time of a game is defined as:

1. Each player has one starting position on defense during one half.
2. Each player has one starting position on offense during the opposite half.
3. The player should play that side of the ball during the relative half as much as possible except for these reasons:
 - a) Injury
 - b) An occasional missed play for instruction/coaching
 - c) Disciplinary actions related to team rule violations (not due to player performance).

Other specific playing time requirements, if any, will be determined by the BYF Board and communicated to the coaches. Problems with playing time should be addressed with the BYF Board.

1. REGISTRATION, ELIGIBILITY & ROSTERS

1.1 Team Balance

The BYF Board and Coaches will strive to create balanced teams at all grade levels and agree that in the best of interest of the program, parity is a top priority. There will be no “super teams” or teams deemed A, B or C, etc.

1.2 Player Eligibility

Each player must be enrolled in their applicable grade and school and maintain the minimum attendance requirements towards grade completion. If a student is suspended or expelled from school they will not be eligible to participate at BYF until they are reinstated and in good standing.

1.3 Rosters

Team Rosters will be completed the day after the draft and turned into BYF Administration. All Head Coaches must agree on each team’s roster before submitting to Administration. Each grade group of coaches will also agree to and determine the order of roster increases/changes if a player joins or leaves BYF after the draft.

1.4 Team Size

While dependent upon registrations, BYF will strive for a minimum of 12 players on each team but no more than 15 when at all possible.

2. SCHEDULING

2.1 Season

Registration and Practices will begin around the 2nd or 3rd week of August and coincide with the MSHSL football season. Each team will play a minimum of 6 games throughout the season, which will consist of approximately 8 weeks (typically 3 weeks in August, 4 weeks in September and 1 week in October). BYF Administration will post the season schedule no later than July 1 of that year on the league website (www.bemidjiyouthfootball.com)

2.2 Cancellations

BYF or BHS will determine whether a game or practice should be cancelled due to weather, seniority facility use or field conditions. BYF Admin. and game officials will determine if a game or practice already in progress needs to be cancelled.

2.3 Inclement Weather

2.3.1 Lightning In the event of eye witnessed lightening the event, practice or game will be immediately stopped and players directed to either the locker room or closest shelter. If events cannot resume within 30 minutes due to weather, they will be cancelled.

2.3.2 Other Weather In the event of heavy rain, wind or extreme temperatures, BYF Admin and Officials will determine if the event shall continue or resume. Do not assume that an event will be cancelled. It is advised to follow the BYF Twitter account ([@BJIYouthFootbal](https://twitter.com/BJIYouthFootbal)) for real time schedule announcements.

2.4 Rescheduling

If able, cancelled games may be rescheduled if they have not completed the 3rd quarter. Games that have been cancelled after the end of the 3rd quarter will be considered a full game and will not be rescheduled. However, field conditions and officiating crew availability will dictate rescheduled events.

3. WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS**

3.1 Safety

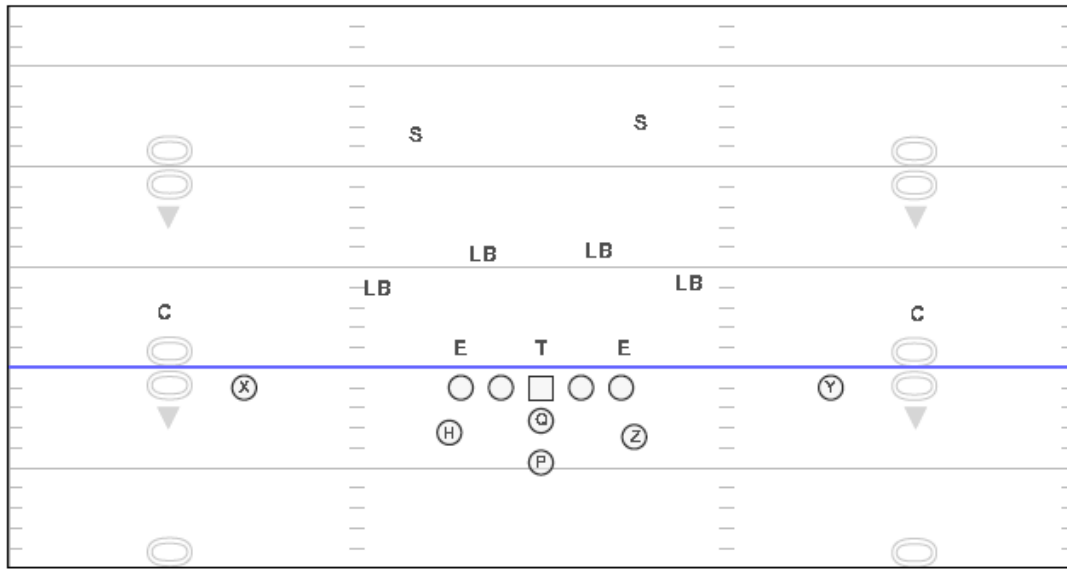
Weight rules are in place for no other reason than safety. All players will be weighed at registration in the clothing they showed up in minus shoes and their weight will be indicated on the official roster. This will be the official weight of the player for the season. Coaches may not weigh in their own child or any child that is placed on their roster after registration day or mid-season. For all weigh-ins, the 10ths will be covered (i.e. 120.4 and 120.9 are both marked as 120)

3.2 Grade Restrictions and Designations

While safety is the primary purpose of having weight restrictions, every player in BYF will be eligible for a ball carrying position on offense regardless of weight yet with certain limitations described below.

3.3 Spirit of the Game

BYF seeks to promote the “Spirit of the Game” by allowing players to experience multiple positions on Offense and not be *pigeon holed* into specific roles and positions based on their current weight or size at this young age. Therefore, in the *Spirit of the Game* all players will be encouraged to be in ball responsibility positions per our Offensive Scheme as indicated by positions H, P, Q, X, Y and Z below.



3.4 Weight Guidelines by Grade

3.4.1 3rd Grade – TackleBar Football.

No weight restrictions. All players are eligible for all positions at any time.

3.4.2 4th Grade*

Players **110 lbs.** or above may line up in ball carrying positions but may only carry the ball while inside the opposing teams 20 yard line or in PAT situations. These players will be indicated by having 1 stripe on each side of their helmet.

3.4.3 5th Grade*

Players **120 lbs.** or above may line up in ball carrying positions but may only carry the ball while inside the opposing teams 20 yard line or in PAT situations. These players will be indicated by having 1 stripe on each side of their helmet.

4. EQUIPMENT

4.1 Player Gear

The League will provide a fitted helmet, shoulder pads, pants with built-in girdle, gear bag, mouth-guard, practice jersey and game jersey. All equipment except the game jersey must be returned to BYF at the end of the season. Lost equipment may result in a fine.

4.2 Footballs*

All grades will use the same pee-wee sized football for all practices and games.

5. FIELDS**

5.1 Field Size

3rd Grade – TackleBar

The 3rd grade, TackleBar football will play on a field approximately 40 x 60 yards and widthwise across the BHS football fields.

4th and 5th Grade

4th and 5th grade will play on a field approximately 40 x 80 yards lengthwise on the BHS fields.

5.2 Field Inspection

It is advised that coaches do a pre-game inspection of the field to make sure the conditions are safe and according to the required size.

6. COACHES & SPECTATORS

6.1 Team & Spectator Location

Team Benches will be located on the same side of the field opposite of the spectators. Spectators are allowed to watch games either in the bleachers or at a distance of 5 yards off of the playing field opposite of any team bench. Spectators are not allowed on the same side or near the team areas during a game. Only coaches, admin, officials and players may be in the team areas during a game.

6.2 On Field Coaches

Any coach positioned on the field may be inside the huddle but must be at least 10 yards behind the line of scrimmage once a play starts.

6.3 Number of Coaches per Team

3rd Grade – TackleBar Teams may have 2 coaches on the field per team for instruction unless there are unsupervised players on the sideline. At least 1 coach must be in the sideline if there are players not playing in the game.

4th and 5th grade Games may only have 1 coach on the field and in the huddle. All other coaches must remain on the sideline.

7. OFFICIALS

7.1 Number

When at all possible, each game will employ 2 officials and a 3 member field team to assist with chains and down marker. However, games will be allowed to commence if there is only 1 official per game.

7.2 Official Authority

- 7.2.1 The head official has final say in all rule interpretation and enforcement.
- 7.2.2 Officials will communicate with the head coaches only during a game.
- 7.2.3 Officials will officiate in accordance with league rules to the best of their ability.
- 7.2.4 Officials will consider the age and ability level of youth football and give verbal warnings to infractions before a flag is thrown *with the exception of unsportsmanlike conduct infractions*.
- 7.2.5 Only Head Coaches may approach an official with a question of rule interpretation. In this instance, the official will call an officials time out and offer explanation of the rule.
- 7.2.6 Spirit of the Game – Officials are encouraged “pick up the flag” at their discretion in order to foster excitement and pride in the players efforts and should reward good plays in light of any minimal penalty that may have otherwise resulted in the play coming back. (i.e. holding away from the play, etc..) *with the exception of unsportsmanlike conduct infractions*.

8. GENERAL GAME RULES & REGULATIONS

8.1 Coaches & Spectator Conduct

Any coach or spectator not in compliance with the rules and regulations outlined in this packet will be assessed to the representing team as an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty of 15 yards. A second infraction will result in an additional 15 yard penalty, a game misconduct and removal from the premises. In this event, the game will not commence until the person(s) are out sight and audible range.

8.2 Game Time and Length

8.2.1 3rd Grade TackleBar**

The game clock on the Varsity Field will be set for 2 – 30 minute halves, running time, with a 5 minute halftime. Each team will be allowed 8 offensive plays from scrimmage regardless of outcome of those 8 plays. After the 8 plays are over, possession will change hands. Before each half ends, the team with the ball will be allowed to continue and complete their 8 plays only if it will result in an equal amount of offensive series. A new offensive series should not be started if it offers an advantage to either team in the last 2 minutes of a half. Score will be kept for the game.

8.2.2 4th and 5th Grade

The Game clocks will be set for 4 – 15 minute quarters, running-time with the exception of the last 2 minutes of the halves where stop- time will be used.

8.3 Game Clock

The clock will stop for injuries, timeouts, safety’s and touchdowns. Extra points will not be run against the game clock but against a 25 second count by the officials stop watch.

8.4 Timeouts

Each team will have 3 – 60 second timeouts per half with no carry over to the other half.

8.5 Halftime

Halftime will be 5 minutes maximum

8.6 Overtime

In the event of a tie, each team will get one (1) 4 down possession from the 10 yard line which may be extended due to defensive penalties. (All rules and scoring are still enforceable.) If the offensive team loses possession of the ball on a turnover, their attempt to score is over and the ball will trade possession. If both teams are still tied after their respective possession, the game will end in a tie.

8.7 Scoring

Touchdown = 6 points

PAT Running play = 1 point

PAT Completed Pass = 2 points (Must be completed beyond the line of scrimmage. If a pass is completed behind the line of scrimmage and then advanced into the end zone, it will be a 1 point PAT)

Safety = 2 points

8.8 Player Rotation**

Coaches shall make all reasonable attempts at rotating all players through as many positions as possible on a series by series basis. Offensively, each player should have a game time opportunity to be in both ball responsibility positions and on the line. Defensively, each player should have a game time opportunity to play on the line and in the secondary. Having a game plan prior to the start of the game will greatly aid in the efficient use of the play clock for your team.

8.9 Player Substitution**

Bear in mind that injury and absence may require last minute substitutions but should still be used in accordance with the “Spirit of the Game”. If it becomes apparent that a coach is utilizing their best or the same athletes in substitutional situations, there may be cause for unsportsmanlike conduct penalty enforcement.

8.10 Player Position Limitation

No player may play more than 1 half of the game at one position with the exception of Quarterbacks. Each team will seek to develop at least 2 Quarterbacks but no QB may play more than 1 consecutive half of a game. If there are only 2 QB’s on a given team, they must play a consecutive half. (i.e. a QB cannot play the 1st and 4th quarter. They must play the 1st and 2nd or the 3rd and 4th consecutively)

8.11 Formations & Playbook**

The only plays and formations that are sanctioned and are allowed to be executed by the teams are the designated plays and formations in the issued playbook. Our scheme and style of offense allows for abundant misdirection, weak side usage and creativity so trick plays are not necessary. So called “botched plays” are allowed to continue and realize the outcome.

9. GENERAL RULES – OFFENSE

9.1 No Huddle

A no-huddle offense may be used but only in the last 2 minutes of a half.

9.2 QB Sneak

A QB Sneak is defined as the QB taking the direct snap from center and running the ball without any perceived effort to execute a sanctioned play. The QB may “sneak” the ball once per half but only if the distance to be gained for a touchdown or first down is great than 4 yards. Violation of this rule will result in a 5 yard penalty and loss of down.

9.3 Play Clock

Offense will have 25 seconds to execute a play. Failure to execute a play in the 25 seconds will result in a 5 yard delay of game penalty.

9.4 Shotgun Formation**

Shotgun formation will not be allowed or practiced at the 3rd or 4th grade level. If a 5th Grade team can effectively transition the ball in a shotgun formation, they may use it at their discretion. However, if the transition of the ball in a shotgun formation proves to be more of an obstacle than a help, the head coach shall revert to an “under center” formation.

10. GENERAL RULES – DEFENSE

10.1 Formation and Gaps

Linemen must line up head to head on their offensive counterpart. A player lining up in the gap or angled toward a gap shall be issued a warning first and then penalized 5 yards for illegal formation upon the second infraction. It is the coaches responsibility to see to proper formation.

10.2 Stunts or Shooting Gaps

Lineman may stunt or shoot gaps after the snap of the ball.

10.3 Blitzing

Blitzing is defined as any defensive player creeping out of formation toward the line of scrimmage, moving forward before the ball is snapped or sprinting to the offensive backfield with initial disregard for position responsibility. Blitzing will be penalized 5 yards and an automatic 1st down.

10.4 Goal Line D

Goal line or short yardage defensive formations are not allowed in any circumstance. Each and every play must utilize the correct formation unless the back of the end-zone prevents proper yard distances.

11. RULES – SPECIAL TEAMS

11.1 Punting

There is no physical punting in BYF. If a team wishes to not execute their 4th down play they shall instruct the head official that they are “punting”. The official will place the ball 20 yards down field from the line of scrimmage and the ball will change possession. If a team decides to punt while inside the 30 yard line of the opposing team, the punted distance shall be ½ the distance to the goal line.

11.2 Kickoff – Game Start

There are no kick-offs in BYF. Possession of the ball at the beginning of the game will be determined by a coin flip. Each team will send up to 3 captains to the center of the field with the home team calling heads or tails. The winner of the coin flip may either elect to receive, kick or defer to the other team. If receiving, the ball will be placed at their own 20 yard line. The team without choice in the 1st half will be given choice in the 2nd half.

12. COMMON FOOTBALL RELATED RULES, INFRACTIONS & PENALTIES

12.1 Illegal Blocks

An illegal block is defined as engaging an opponent in a manner outside of the bodies blocking zone. The blocking zone is defined as the front of the opponent above the waist and below the neck.

12.1.1 Clipping Clipping is defined as blocking an opponent from behind and shall result in a 10 yard penalty + 1st down.

12.1.2 Below the Waist Blocking below the waist is defined as lunging head on at an opponent below the waist and shall result in a 10 yard penalty + 1st down.

12.1.3 Chop Block A chop block is defined as lunging at an opponent from an angle below the waist and shall result in a 10 yard penalty + 1st down.

12.2 Illegal Contact

Illegal contact is contacting your opponent in a manner not in the spirit of football such as but not limited to: throwing your opponent to the ground, tripping, butt blocking, piling on, hitting out of bounds, helmet to helmet contact, spearing, late hit or targeting. An illegal contact penalty shall result in a 10 yard penalty and automatic 1st down.

12.3 Face-masking

Face-masking is defined as grabbing your opponents facemask in any situation and shall result in a 10 yard penalty + 1st down.

12.4 Illegal Tackle

12.4.1 Horsecollar A horsecollar tackle is defined as grabbing the ball carrier by any portion of the top of the shoulder pads and shall result in a 10 yard penalty + 1st down.

12.4.2 Launching It will be determined an illegal tackle if a defensive player leaves their feet to launch themselves at the ball carrier to make a tackle. Diving at the ball carriers feet to trip or “shoestring” tackle is considered fair play and should not be penalized. Launching will be a 10 yard penalty and automatic 1st down.

12.5 Offsides

Offsides is defined as an offensive lineman moving after set and prior to the snap of the ball and shall penalized 5 yards.

12.6 Encroachment (Neutral Zone Infraction)

Encroachment is defined as a defensive player lined up in the neutral zone after set and prior to snap of the ball and shall be penalized 5 yards.

12.7 Illegal Formation / Illegal Procedure

Illegal formation/procedure is defined as any offense of defensive player lined up in a manner not defined in the play book after set and prior to the snap of the ball or if there are 2 offensive players in a ball carrying position moving at the same time after set. Illegal formations will be penalized 5 yards.

12.8 Runner Assistance

Runner assistance is defined as any team mate assisting with the advancement of a teammate by pushing, pulling or lifting to achieve forward progress. Runner assistance will be penalized 5 yards from initial line of scrimmage and loss of down.

12.9 Pass Interference

Pass Interference is defined as a defender making contact with a receiver before the arrival of the ball with no visible attempt to make a play at the ball. Pass interference penalties will result in the ball being placed at the spot of the foul and an automatic 1st down.

12.10 Roughing the Passer

Roughing the Passer shall be defined as a defensive opponent making contact to the Quarterback after the ball has left the QB’s hand. Roughing the Passer will be penalized 10 yards and an automatic 1st down.

12.11 Holding

Holding shall be defined as any offensive player grabbing an opponent or opponents jersey with the intent to impede their progress. Holding will result in a 5 yard penalty and loss of down

12.12 Unsportsmanlike Conduct (All infractions will be documented by BYF.)

12.12.1 Player / Coach Player and coach unsportsmanlike conduct shall be defined as but not limited to fighting, arguing with an official, profane language, vulgar gestures or general game disruption. 1st infraction will be a 15 yard penalty and 2nd infraction will result in a 15 yard penalty AND ejection from the game or removal from the premises. If the actions of the person involved prove to be habitual, league discipline will be enforced.

12.12.2 Spectator Spectator unsportsmanlike conduct shall be defined as but not limited to fighting, arguing with an official, being located in the team area, profane language or vulgar gestures or general game disruption. The 1st infraction will result in a 15 yard penalty towards the team he/she is related to. The 2nd infraction will result in 15 yard penalty AND removal from the premises. If the actions of the person prove to be habitual, league discipline will be enforced.

13.1 Penalties inside the 15 yard line Any penalty or infraction committed inside the 15 yard line of either side of the field shall be marked off as half the distance to the goal line.

13. TACKLEBAR FOOTBALL RULES & REGULATIONS**

13.1 Definition BYF will implement TackleBar football at the 3rd Grade level. TackleBar Football is a safer approach to the game that preserves the tradition and spirit of the sport. Players wear traditional football equipment, plus a TackleBar harness that holds two foam bars across the lower back. The defender must track and engage with proper form tackling technique while wrapping the ball carrier and ripping a bar from the harness. With this approach, players stay on their feet rather than taking the ball carrier to the ground.

13.2 General Defense Rules

13.2.1 Tackling Defenders should track and engage with proper form tackling technique while wrapping the ball carrier and ripping a bar from the harness. There will be no obvious or intentional tackling or throwing players to the ground. There will be no helmet initiated contact. Players may never leave their feet to launch or dive into another player. Failure to adhere to this rule will result in a 10 yard penalty. (It is not a penalty if the ball carrier inadvertently goes to the ground during a tackle. However, contact that deliberately takes the ball carrier to the ground with force may be penalized.)

13.3 General Offense Rules

13.3.1 Weight Restrictions There are no weight restriction for RB's / QB's.

13.3.2 Blocking and Running with the Ball There will be no blocking below the waist or helmet-initiated contact. Illegal blocks and helmet related infractions will result in a 10 yard penalty.

13.3.3 Launching Players may never leave their feet to launch or dive into another player. This infraction will result in a 10 yard penalty.

***ALL OTHER RULES FOR FOOTBALL DELINEATED ABOVE WILL BE ENFORCED.**