

NYS FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

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Rules

I. Game

- At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The Visiting team calls the toss.
- The winner of the coin toss ~~has the choice of~~ must choose offense or defense. There is no option to defer to the second half. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (3) plays to score a touchdown.
- If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
- All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.
- Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

II. Terminology

Boundary Lines	The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
Line of Scrimmage	(LOS) as imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
Line-to-Gain	The line the offense must reach to get a first down.
Rush Line	An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven (7) yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
Offense	The team with possession of the ball.
Defense	The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
Passer	The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
Rusher	The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent them from passing the ball by pulling their flags or by blocking the pass.
Downs (1-2-3)	The offensive team has three (3) attempts or 'downs' to advance the ball. It must reach the line-to-gain to get another set of downs or to score.
Live Ball	Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.

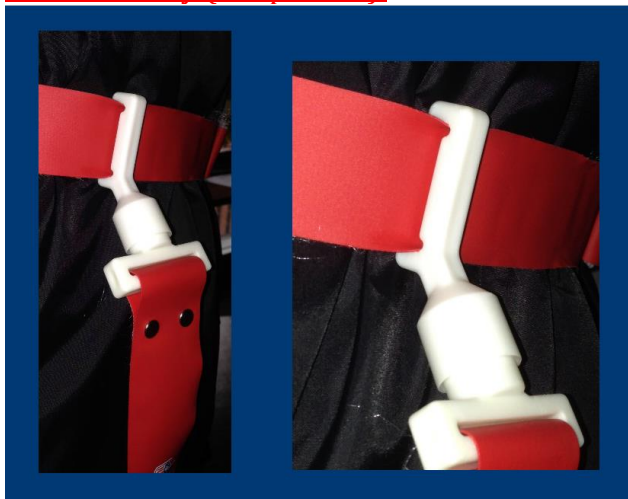
Dead Ball	Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
Whistle	Sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, halftime, or the end of the game.
Inadvertent Whistle	Officials whistle that is performed in error.
Charging	An illegal movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm, or the chest.
Flag Guarding	An illegal act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier's flags by still arm, lowering the elbow or head, or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand, ball, or arm.
Shovel Pass	A legal pitch attempted beyond the line of scrimmage.
Lateral	A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier.
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	A rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language.

III. Equipment

- The league provides each player with an official flag belt and NYS approved FLAG team jersey.
- Teams will use footballs provided by the league.
 - Ball size:
 - 6U – Mini Ball
 - 8U – NFL Blue (Peewee)
 - 10U – NFL Brown (Junior)
 - 12U – NFL Brown (Junior)
 - 14U – NFL Brown (Junior)
 - Exception:** If both coaches agree to use the same ball for the entire game. Game ball must be size equivalent for that age division.
- Players must wear shoes. Cleats with exposed metal are never allowed and must be removed.
- Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed. Hard casts are NOT allowed at any time.
- Players must remove all jewelry, and hats. Winter beanies are allowed. No headgear may have a hard brim.
- Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line **and** impede the flags from being pulled.
- Players **must** wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. Shorts or pants are **not allowed** to be taped or reversed (if the pockets hang out).

- Players are not allowed to wear anything on their flag belts. This includes: wrist bands, play cards, and towels. Wrist coaches, if worn, must be worn on the wrist or arm.
- Players must wear a mouth guard when playing. The mouth guard must be in the players mouth at the snap of the ball. Any player found to be playing without their mouth guard in their mouth during play may be assessed an illegal equipment penalty. This is a Player safety issue and will result in play being whistled dead and the penalty being assessed. Any player deliberately, or continually, removing their mouth guard will be assessed an Unsportsmanlike penalty and may be ejected from the game.
- The Flag Belts must be worn with the socket facing down and away from the body (see picture).

IV. Field



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mensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two (2) 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-run zones proceed each line-to-gain by 5 yards.

- No-run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
- Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
- Each offensive team approaches only TWO (2) no-run zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

V. Rosters

- Teams must consist of at least five (5) players.
- Teams must start games with a minimum of five (5) players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four (4) players on the field but no fewer than four (4).

VI. Timing and Overtime

- Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two (2) 20-minute halves.

- Halftime is one (1) minute.
- Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball once the Referee has blown the Ready Whistle.
- Each team has two (2) 30-second timeouts per half.
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.

VII. Scoring

- Touchdown: 6 points
- PAT (point after touchdown): **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (10-yard line)
 - a. Note: 1 point PAT is a pass only play; 2 point PAT can be a run or pass play.
 - b. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 10-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned.
- Safety: 2 points
 - a. A safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs on the end zone, or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.
- After one team in winning by 28 points or more, the game is over. Once a 28 or more point advantage is gained, no PAT will be attempted. During the regular season the game will continue a "scrimmage mode" for the remainder of the game. In the playoffs, the game will end when the mercy rule goes into effect.
- Forfeits are scored 28-0 for the winning team.

VIII. Coaches

- Coaches are expected to adhere to NFL Flag philosophies, coaching guidelines, and code of conduct.
- Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need and division. Coaches must move to the sidelines before the snap of the ball.
 - a. 12U and up: no coaches on the field.
 - b. 10U and below: may have an offensive coach on the field; however, they must be 10 yards behind the line at the snap of the ball.
 - c. 8U and below: may also have a defensive coach on the field; however, they must get to the sideline PRIOR to the snap of the football.

IX. Live Ball/Dead Ball

- The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until an official whistles the ball dead.
- The official will indicate the neutral zone and the line of scrimmage.
 - a. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
 - b. Any team intentionally entering the neutral zone with the intent to disrupt the flow of the game will result in an unsportsmanlike penalty on the Head Coach (which could lead to ejection from the game).
- A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one (1) foot comes down in the field of play.
- The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball. Substitutions must always be made from the team’s side of the field.
- Any official can whistle the play dead.
- Play is ruled dead when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground.
 - i. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap. The ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground.
 - b. The ball carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - c. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown, PAT, or safety is scored.
 - e. The ball carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball carrier’s flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one (1) or no flag(s).
 - h. The 7-second pass clock expires.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle.
 - j. Ball carrier leaves their feet (jumps) during the live ball play.
 - k. Procedural Penalties
 - i. False Start
 - ii. Offsides
 - iii. Illegal Motion
 - iv. Delay of Game
 - v. Illegal Equipment

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier’s feet were at the time of the fumble.

- In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two (2) options:
 - a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.

- b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
- A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule was interpreted incorrectly, the timeout will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.

X. Running

- The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball. Forward progress will be measured by the player's grounded front most foot.
- The quarterback cannot directly run the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap from the center. The quarterback may hand the ball off to another player, then receive it back to run or pass.
- Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind, or to the side of the offensive player but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - a. **The "Center Sneak" play is no longer allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.**
- Absolutely NO laterals of any kind.
- No-run Zones located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO (2) no-run zones in each drive – one (1) 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one (1) 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).
- Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage (provided they have not crossed the Line of Scrimmage already). Once the ball is advanced beyond the LOS, the current ball carrier is the only player allowed to have possession of the ball until the play is ruled dead.
- Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind, or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- **Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping will result in the play being whistled dead at the spot the ball carrier left their feet.**
 - a. The Jump Cut is legal and is considered a "football move". This move will be determined at the discretion of the Referee.
- Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.

- a. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
- Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that they have done so to avoid collision with another player without ending the play.
- No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.
- Once the ball is advanced beyond the LOS, the remaining offensive players may not impede the defense from attempting to pull the offensive player’s flag. Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. ~~No~~No screening, active blocking, or running with the ball carrier.
- Flag obstruction – All jerseys MUST not obscure the flags before play begins. The flags must be on the player’s hips and free from obstruction. Obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

XI. Passing

- All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage. Only one (1) forward pass per play may be attempted.
 - a. **All passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage, whether received or not, are illegal forward passes.**
 - b. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack; however, the pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
- **Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage and be thrown with one (1) hand.**
- The quarterback has a seven (7)-second “pass clock”. If a pass is not thrown within the seven (7) seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. (this is treated as if it were an incomplete pass). Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
 - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the previous line of scrimmage (LOS).

XII. Receiving

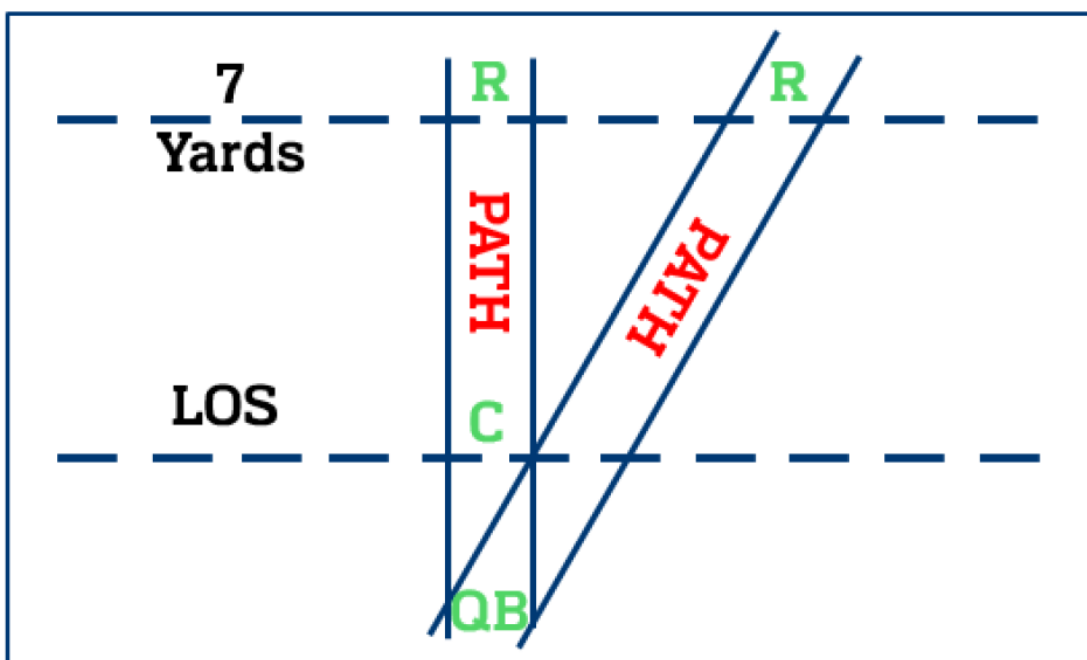
- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- Only one (1) player is allowed in motion at the snap of the ball. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
- A player must have at least one (1) foot inbounds when making a reception.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- Interceptions change possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
- Interceptions are returnable except on conversions after touchdowns.

- The defense may intercept the ball at any point on the field, to include behind the Line of Scrimmage, and it is a live ball (unless previously identified as an exception).

XIII. Rushing the Passer

- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball is handed off, the seven (7) -yard rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- A special marker, or the Referee, will designate a rush line seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
 - a. A legal rush is:
 - i. Any rush from a point seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field, AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the seven (7) yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
 - iv. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the quarterback.
 - b. A penalty may be called if:
 - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – Illegal Rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and 1st down).
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Offsides (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and 1st down).
 - iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – Illegal Rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and 1st down).
 - c. Special circumstances:
 - i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven (7) second clock in effect.
 - ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
- Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.

- Players rushing the quarterback may NOT leave their feet (jump) or yell at the offensive players. Doing so will result in an illegal rush penalty.
- The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. If the “path or line” is occupied by a **moving** offensive player, then it is the offense’s responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher’s path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. **If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher’s responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.** This “path or line” is determined pre-snap from the rusher(s) directly to the QB.



- A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage with the ball still in the hand of the QB. The ball is placed where the quarterback’s feet are when their flag is pulled.
 - a. A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.

XIV. Flag Pulling

- A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold, or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier’s possession at any time.
- If a player’s flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down where the flag came off (ball-carrier) or where the player gains

possession of the ball and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag landed or the play ended.

- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

XV. Formations

- Offenses must have a minimum of one (1) player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four (4) players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - a. At the snap, only one player may be in motion behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
- Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
- The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between their legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave their hands.
- The ball may be spotted anywhere within the middle half of the field. The ball may not be placed any closer than 7 ½ yards from either sideline. This distance will be measured based on an approximation by the Officials. If the offensive team has a preference on the ball spot, they **MUST** announce this **PRIOR** to the Ready Whistle being blown. The ball will **NOT** be moved after the Referee blows the Ready Whistle.

XVI. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- If the field monitor or game official witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the Referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!**
- Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the Referee **MAY** give one (1) warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.
- Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach, or official.
- Ball carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
- Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:

- a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
- b. Keep comments clean and profane free.
- c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
- Fans are required to keep fields safe and kid friendly:
 - a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs, and tents off the field so as to maintain a safe environment.
 - b. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.
- Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down.
 - b. Offense – 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down.

XVII. Penalties

i. General

1. The Referee will call, and announce, all penalties.
2. Any penalties that do not constitute a Dead Ball situation (See Section X above) will allow the play to continue until a Dead Ball situation arises. At that point, all penalties will be assessed.
3. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
4. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted (Spot Fouls).
5. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the Referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
6. Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
7. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
8. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal line when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

ii. Defensive spot fouls

Defensive pass interference	Automatic 1 st down at the spot
Holding	+5 yards / Automatic 1 st down
Stripping	+5 yards / Automatic 1 st down

iii. Offensive spot fouls

Screening, blocking, or running with the ball carrier	-5 yards / Loss of down
Charging	-10 yards / Loss of down
Flag Guarding	-10 yards / Loss of down

iv. Defensive penalties (from LOS)

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards / Automatic 1 st down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards / Automatic 1 st down
Roughing the passer	+10 yards / Automatic 1 st down
+Offsides	+5 yards / Automatic 1 st down
Illegal Rush <small>(Starting rush from inside the 7-yard marker)</small>	+5 yards / Automatic 1 st down
Illegal Flag Pull <small>(Before the receiver has the ball)</small>	+5 yards / Automatic 1 st down
Taunting <small>(including excessive celebration)</small>	+5 yards / Automatic 1 st down
+Illegal Equipment	+5 yards / Automatic 1 st down

v. Offensive penalties (from LOS)

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards / Loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards / Loss of down
+Offsides / False Start	-5 yards / Loss of down
Illegal Forward Pass <small>(Any pass received or landing behind the LOS or throwing a pass after crossing the LOS)</small>	-5 yards / Loss of down
Offensive Pass Interference	-5 yards / Loss of down
+Illegal Motion <small>(More than 1 person moving at the snap)</small>	-5 yards / Loss of down
+Delay of Game	-5 yards / Loss of down
Impeding the Rusher	-5 yards / Loss of down
+Illegal Equipment	-5 yards / Loss of down

Penalties with a '+' indicate penalties that constitute a Dead Ball and will result in an immediate whistle.