

# NFL Manitoba Flag Football Officials Policy Manual



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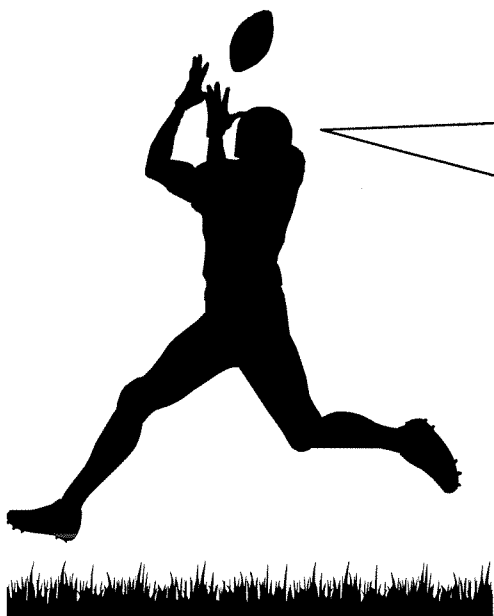
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Welcome to Football  
Manitoba and thank you  
for joining us as a referee  
for flag football!

Please use this book as a  
resource during your  
season and be sure to  
review it often during  
pre-season.

## Section 1: General Information

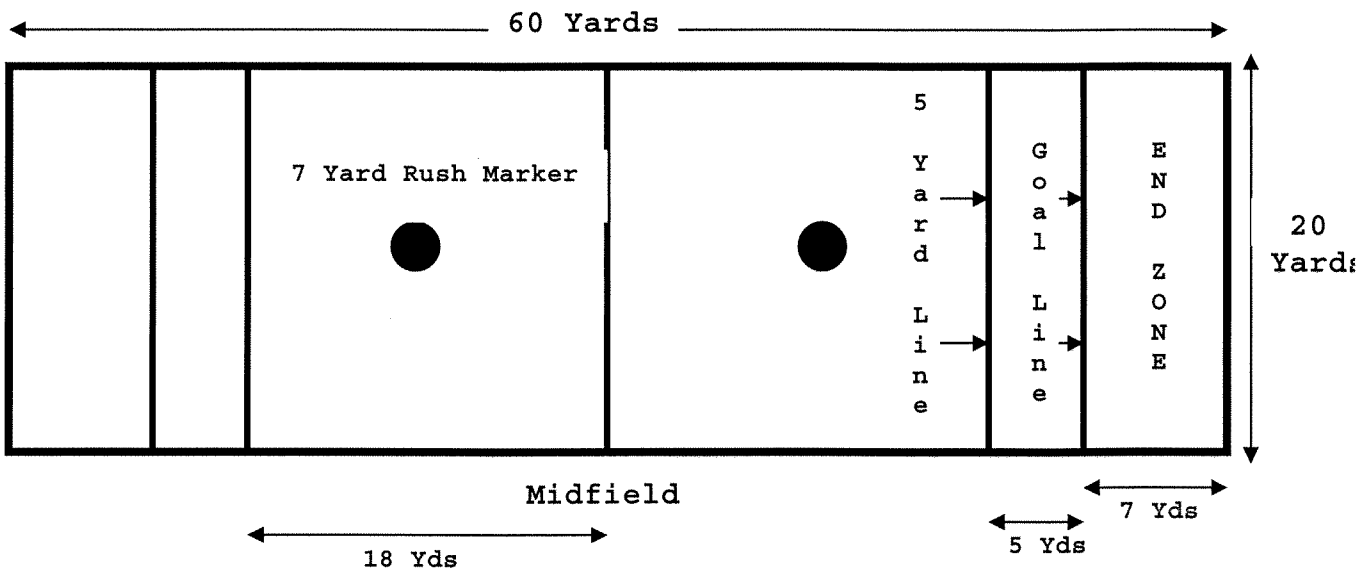


NFL Manitoba Flag Football is non-contact. Blocking and tackling are not permitted under any circumstances!!

**NOTE:** When you see (MB) in front of some rules it refers to rules used only in Manitoba. Teams planning to play in the National Tournament should disregard these rules at the National Tournament.

### Field Dimensions

- Length: 60 yards
- Width: 20 yards
- End Zones: 7 yards deep
- No running zones: Marked 5 yards from each end-zone
- **(MB):** Coaches must stay on their half of the field designated to their team and cannot pass centre. If a coach crosses center their team will be given a 5-yard penalty and a loss of down (on offense) or an automatic first down (on defense)
- Parents are designated the side of the field across from the players



## Player Attire

- Cleats are allowed, but must be rubber. Metal spikes of any kind are not permitted
- Mouth-guards are mandatory for all players
- Players must wear shorts or pants of a solid color i.e. entirely black – NO EXCEPTIONS
- **(MB):** Shorts or pants cannot be the same color as the players flags
- **(MB):** Shorts or pants cannot have open pockets – NO EXCEPTIONS
- Before the beginning of every play, players flags must be at the sides and be properly tucked into their bottoms with at least half an inch of white showing
- Baseball caps, sunglasses and jewelry of any kind are not permitted on the field of play
- All player shirts must be tucked in while on the field of play. Untucked shirts block flags.

**Remember:** Each team should have 5 players on the field at one time!!

Teams can play with a minimum of 4 players but if there is less than 4, games are cancelled and the team with not enough players must forfeit!!



## Scoring

- Touchdown – 6 points
- Extra point(s) – 1 point (played from 5-yard line - **Must be a PASSING PLAY** - a play-action fake or backwards toss is considered a running play and will result in a dead ball and a loss of down)
- 2 points – (played from the 12 yard line/7 yard rushing marker; play actions fakes or backwards tosses are allowed)
- Safety – 2 points
- A win constitutes 2 points, a tie 1 point, a loss 0 points

**Note:** An interception return to opponent's end zone on any extra-point play by the defense will result in the defense scoring 2 points plus gaining possession for the next series at its own five yard line.

## Timing & Overtime

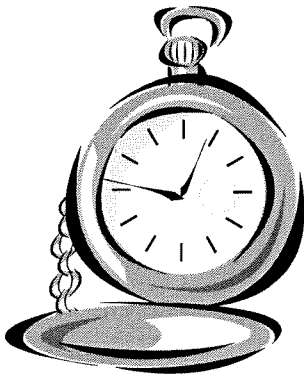
### TIMING:

- Each team has 1 – 60 second time out per half. The clock stops during a time out. Timeouts cannot be carried over to the second half or overtime.
- Officials may stop the clock at their discretion, i.e. during injuries
- Teams will be warned when there are two minutes left to play in both halves. The official will make two whistle blows to signal two minutes.
- There will be a halftime period of 2 minutes between the first and second half

### OVERTIME:

- If the score remains tied at the end of regulation in regular season, a tie will be rewarded with each team receiving one point
- **Only in the playoffs** – If the score is tied at the end of regulation time, teams move directly into overtime. A coin toss determines first possession of overtime. The team that wins the coin toss starts with the ball on the opponents 12 yard line. The game is decided by alternating convert attempts from the 12 yard line (ala. CFL/NCAA Football Overtime). If the team with first possession scores, the second must match that score to continue the overtime period. If the first team does not score, the second team can win by scoring their convert. If both teams do not score, overtime will continue until one team scores and the other is unable to convert their attempt.

**NOTE:** There will be no timeouts granted during the overtime period.



### Did You Know

- That flag halves are 25 minutes running time and that there are 2 halves in a game. That's 50 minutes of playing time!!
- That a flag game **CANNOT** end on a defensive penalty!

## Age Divisions

This year Football Manitoba has changed their age divisions for competitive participants based on Football Canada's Long Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD). Please remember that there will be a possibility of 3 competitive divisions this year. Please see below for a list of these divisions with roster specifications:

- 15 Competitive Female Division (roster of 7, all female)
- 15 Competitive Male Division (roster of 7, all male)
- 16/17 Competitive Division (roster of 7, not gender specific)

### Sportsmanship/Roughing/Ejections

- If the official witnesses any acts of flagrant contact, i.e. intentional/deliberate tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or other physical conduct, the team committing the foul will be penalized 15 yards, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. FOUL PLAY IS NOT TOLERATED
- Trash talking and taunting is illegal. If trash talking or taunting occurs, the team committing the foul will be penalized 15 yards for unsportsmanlike conduct. Officials have the right to determine offensive language
- Discriminatory statements/offensive language, such as comments of race, sex and upbringing by players, coaches or spectators will result in a 15 yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty and an immediate ejection
- Deliberate questioning of officials calls will be penalized upon the officials discretion
- Any physical or verbal abuse against an official by a player, coach or spectator will result in a 15 yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty and an immediate ejection
- In the case that parents are asked to leave the field of play, coaches are responsible to help officials enforce the decision if parents are unwilling to leave. If the parent does not leave, the team they are sided with will forfeit the game  
**Note:** If an official must call the first game of the night due to an inappropriate parent, the second game must still be played, unless the official fears for his or her safety. If the parent continues to be inappropriate during the second game, the team they represent will forfeit the game.
- Once a flag is pulled, the defensive player should drop the flag at their feet so the official can spot the location of the flag pull.

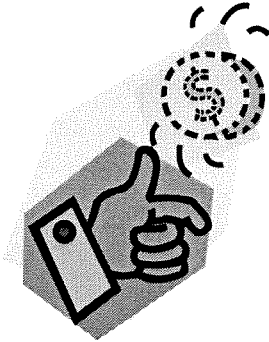
### Fair Play Wins Games

Flag football is a developmental and recreational sport and therefore all players must be given fair playing time.

If complaints are registered by coaches, parents, or players about fair play, please ask them to contact Rachel at Football Manitoba and then contact Rachel yourself to advise her of the complaint. Football Manitoba will then investigate, evaluate and possibly discipline the coach in question.



## Section 2: In Play Rules



### Did You Know

Every flag football game begins with a coin toss. This determines who has first possession at their own 5-yard line.

Loser of the coin toss has choice of end zone to defend and the loser of the toss also gets possession of the ball at the beginning of the second half, starting at their own 5-yard line

### Possession

- There are **no** kickoffs or punts
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line at the beginning of each series and has three players to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three plays to score a touchdown.
- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield or score a touchdown (once passed midfield) it will produce a turnover on downs, resulting in a change of possession
- An automatic first down penalty will overrule the other requirements regarding three plays to make either a first down or to score
- All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line
- If an offensive penalty occurs passed midfield, which causes the ball to be placed behind the midfield marker, the offensive team must still make a touchdown within three plays
- Teams change sides at halftime
- **(MB): One pass must be made for every three plays of possession**

### Passing

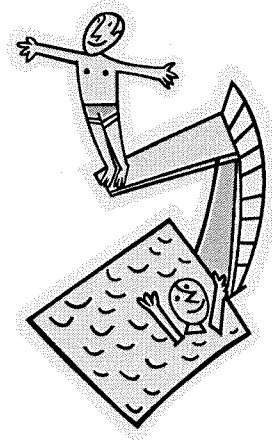
- The quarterback has seven seconds to throw the ball. If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play will be blown dead, a loss of down will occur and the ball will be spotted at the previous line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball is handed off or tossed, or there is a play-action fake or toss, the seven second rule is no longer in effect
- Any player can receive a toss or handoff and be allowed to throw the ball downfield behind the line of scrimmage
- Forward passes must cross the line of scrimmage. If a forward pass does not cross the line of scrimmage, the offense will be penalized with an illegal forward pass
- Shovel passes are allowed but must be beyond the line of scrimmage
- Once a player catches the ball past the line of scrimmage, they are no longer allowed to lateral the ball

## Running

- At the start of each play, the ball must be snapped between the legs of the snapper
- The center is the player who gives the ball to the quarterback via a snap. The center cannot take a direct handoff back from the quarterback (no center sneak play)
- The quarterback is the player who first receives the ball directly from the snap
- The quarterback cannot run the ball past the line of scrimmage
- An offence may use multiple handoffs behind the line of scrimmage. Only backward or lateral handoffs are allowed during a down
- Tosses or sweeps behind the line of scrimmage are allowed, as are running plays.
- Downfield tosses (once the ball passes the line of scrimmage) are not permitted. Once a player has possession of the ball beyond the line of scrimmage, any loss of possession (i.e. fumble) will be blown dead by the official
- "No running zones" are located 5 yards from each end zone. When the ball is on or inside the 5-yard line going towards the opponent's end zone, the offense cannot use a running play to cross the line of scrimmage. A play-action fake or lateral/backwards toss is considered a hand-off within the 5-yard no run zones. If a run or play-action fake or lateral/backwards toss occurs within the five yard no run zone, the play will be blown dead, a loss of down will occur and the ball spotted at the original line of scrimmage
- Any player who takes a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage
- Spinning is allowed, but offensive players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player. If a player leaves their feet, the play will be blown dead by the official and the ball will be placed from the spot the player left his/her feet or will result in a turnover on downs (if on 3<sup>rd</sup> down)
- The ball is spotted where the ball carriers feet are when the flag is pulled, not at the spot of the ball
- It is up to the ball carrier to avoid contact with the defender. Good defensive position will be rewarded to the defense by the officials
- If the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage and laterals the ball, or throws the ball forward, the play is blown dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the lateral or forward pass
- There are no fumbles in flag football. Any fumble will be considered a dead ball and will result in a the subsequent down or a turnover on downs
- Any fumble by the offensive team in their own end-zone will result in a safety

## No Diving

No diving is allowed by an offensive player. If a player dives from his feet, the play will be blown dead by the official and the ball will be placed from the spot the player left his feet or will result in a turnover on downs (if on 3<sup>rd</sup> down).



## 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 foot must be in bounds for a caught ball to be ruled a catch
- Players may catch the ball while on their knees, back or side, however, the play will be blown dead and the ball spotted where the catch was made
- Players are ineligible to catch a pass if their flag has fallen off
- If a player dives to catch a ball, the play is dead where the catch is made (i.e. where the players feet/body are at the time of the catch)
- If both an offensive and defensive player catch the ball simultaneously, the tie will always go to the offense

**Remember:**  
Coaches can  
make  
substitutions on  
any dead ball!!

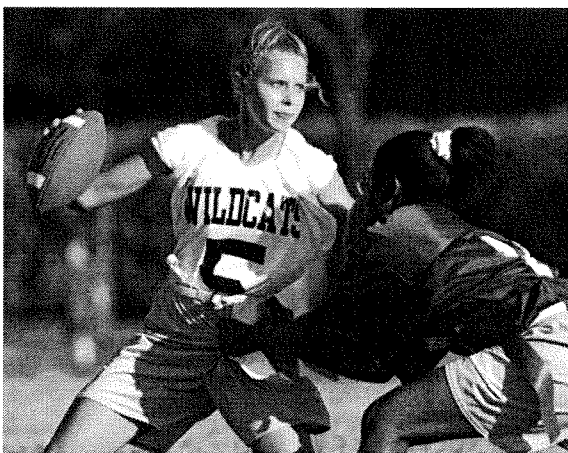


## Dead Balls

- Play is ruled "dead" when:
  - Official blows the whistle
  - Ball carrier's flag is pulled or becomes illegal.  
Note - Illegal meaning the flag is in a position unable for the defense to pull, i.e. falls off
  - Ball carrier steps out of bounds, jumps or leaves feet
  - Touchdown or safety is scored
  - When any part of the ball carrier's body, other than a hand or foot, touches the ground
  - When the ball is fumbled  
**Note:** There are no fumbles. The ball will be spotted where the ball carrier's feet were when the fumble was made. If a fumble occurs, it will result in a loss of down or a turnover on downs. If a fumble occurs in the end zone it will result in a safety
- If the ball carrier's flag falls off, the play will be whistled dead and the ball will be spotted at the spot where the flag fell off

## Defensive Rushing

- Only players starting from a minimum of 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage can rush the passer
- A bean bag designates the seven yards from the line of scrimmage
- Any number of players may rush the quarterback
- A rusher lined up **within** two yards (side to side) of the 7 yard marker is entitled to a free rush at the quarterback – the rusher may not be interfered. If interfered, it will result in an offensive rusher interference penalty
- **(MB)** - A rusher lined up **outside** the two yards (side to side) of the 7 yard maker is **not** entitled to a free rush to the quarterback and may be interfered (For example - a running back or receiver in motion or in a pattern who runs into the rusher)
- All defensive players are eligible to rush once the ball has been handed off or tosses, or there is a play-action fake or toss
- **(MB)** - A rusher **may not** hit the quarterbacks arm or any other part of their body while the quarterback is throwing



### Important

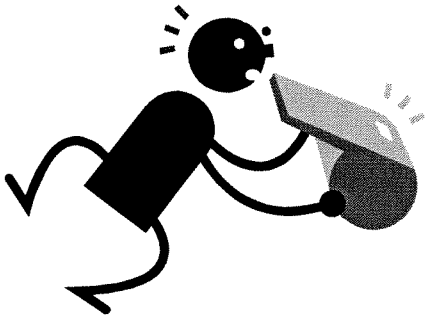
Rushers must be **under control** when rushing the quarterback!

Players may not leave their feet when rushing the quarterback to pull his/her flag!!

## Interceptions

- The defense can return interceptions
- Interceptions change the possession of the ball
- If an interception occurs in an end-zone, the ball will become dead and will result in the ball belonging to the intercepting team at its own 5-yard line.
- If an interception occurs in the end zone and the ball carrier leaves the end zone, the ball will belong to the intercepting team at the spot the ball becomes dead.
- If the ball carrier intercepts in the end zone, subsequently leaves the end zone, then returns to the end zone and is de-flagged, or the ball is ruled dead, the result will be a safety for the other team

## Section 3: Penalties



**Remember:** All flag football penalties are 5 yards, except for pass interference and unsportsmanlike conduct which are both 15 yards!!

### Penalties

- All penalties may be declined - the official should check with the coach or captain after each penalty to determine if they accept or decline the penalty
- Officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play
- All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage except for flag guarding and defensive diving
- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines the penalty
- If the offense and defense are both penalized with two penalties that are of the same distance (i.e. 5 yard and 5 yards), the down will be repeated
- If the offense and defense are both penalized, but one side is penalized with a 15 yard penalty, the difference between the penalties will be assessed, and the down will be repeated

### Did You Know

That the term "spotted foul" means that once the penalty is assessed the ball is placed at the spot of infraction!



## Section 3A: Defensive Penalties



- Spotted Foul;**  
**5 Yards & Automatic 1<sup>st</sup> Down (Unless in No Run Zone)**
- Defensive Flag Dive

### **5 Yards & Automatic 1<sup>st</sup> Down**

- Illegal contact – holding, jamming at the line of scrimmage
- Roughing – unintentional tackling
- Illegal Flag Pull – occurs when a defensive player pulls an offensive player's flag with intention to cause a dead ball or making the receiver ineligible for a catch
- **(MB):** Coach crossing designated sideline area
- **(MB):** Quarterback release interference – Hitting the quarterback's arm when rushing the passer

### **5 Yards & Down Repeated**

- Disconcerting signals – Signals to distract opponents or simulate offensive signals prior to the snap
  - Interference with ball at the snap
  - Substitution fouls – i.e. 6 players on the field, players entering the field during the snap of the ball
  - Offside – occurs when a player is passed the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball
  - Illegal Rush - occurs when a rusher is passed the minimum 7 yard rushing length before the ball is snapped when attempting to rush the quarterback
- Note:** The rusher must pass the line of scrimmage to be considered an illegal rush

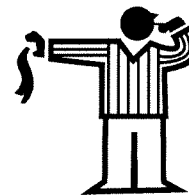
### **15 Yards & Automatic 1<sup>st</sup> Down**

- Pass interference – illegally preventing a receiver from catching the ball
- Note:** Along with the standard rules for pass interference, if a defensive player pulls the flag of an offensive receiver just as the receiver is about to make a catch, the defensive player will be penalized for pass interference.
- Unsportsmanlike conduct – intentional physical conduct, verbal abuse, player ejected

## Section 3B: Offensive Penalties

### Spotted Foul; 5 Yards & Loss of Down

- Flag guarding – using hands, arms or elbows to intentionally block the defender from pulling the flag.  
**Note:** Stiff arming a defender is a form of flag guarding and may also result in a roughing penalty



### 5 Yards & Loss of Down

- No cadence by quarterback
- Illegal forward pass – pass received behind the line of scrimmage
- Offensive pass interference - receiver push offs  
Note - If an offensive player pulls the flag of a defensive players just as the defender is about to make a catch, the offensive player will be penalized for pass interference
- Roughing - it is up to the ball carrier to avoid contact with the defender. Good defensive position will be rewarded to the defense by the officials
- Blocking/Illegal pick play  
Note – Offenses may not run plays where players are placed into a stalemated position to act as stand-still blockers downfield. If a pick play or wall is intentionally run it will result in a 5 yard penalty and a loss of down
- **(MB):** Coach crossing designated sideline area
- Rusher interference – It is illegal for a receiver, running back or center to run a pattern that interferes with a rusher who is at a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage and who is 2 yards (side to side) of the 7 yard rushing marker
- No run zone – If a run or play action fake or lateral/backwards toss occurs within the five yard no run zone, the play will be blown dead, and a loss of down will occur, with the ball being spotted at the original line of scrimmage

### 5 Yards & Down Repeated

- Substitution fouls – i.e. six players on the field, players enters field during the snap of the ball
- Delay of game – inability to snap the ball before the 30 second play clock expires
- False Start
- Illegal Snap – snap must occur between the legs of the snapper to the quarterback
- Player out of bounds – if a player goes out of bounds, without interference, the player may not return to the field or catch the ball
- Illegal contact – holding, jamming etc
- Offensive diving – leaving your feet in an uncontrolled movement to catch the ball

### 15 Yards & Loss of Down

- Unsportsmanlike Conduct and player ejection

## Section 4: Officials Equipment & Mechanics

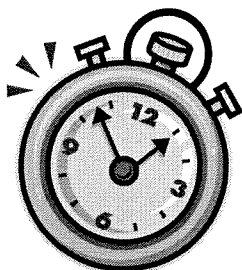
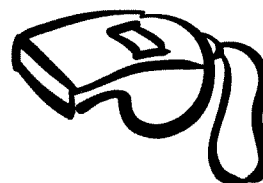


### Official's Attire

- Striped Officials shirt (Mandatory)
- Black/Dark Blue/White shorts or pants (Mandatory)
- NO SUNGLASSES
- ALL BALL CAPS MUST BE WORN FACING FRONTWARDS

### Official's Gear

- Yellow Flag (To be provided)
- Whistle (to be provided)
- Stop Watch w/timer
- 26 Cones – yellow for end zones and centre markings, orange for others (To be provided)
- 2 Bean Bags (To be provided)
- A Pen and paper
- A coin



### Be On Time

Parents, players, and coaches notice when officials are late!

Always arrive 30 minutes before your first scheduled game. Everyone participating will notice and thank you for your punctuality, and in turn, you'll be respected!!

### Officiating Alone

Oh-no! You've shown up to your field and your partner doesn't show up, what do you do?

If you have a Head Referee, let them know! They will be able to assign you to a game with a partner and they'll take on the game you were supposed to be at.

In the event that there is no Head Referee, your positioning should be on the side of the parents, in between the 7 yard rushing marker and the line of scrimmage. Prior to the game, ask both coaches or ask a volunteering parent to watch for out of bounds on the team sideline.

## Section 5: Game Duties

### Pre Game Duties

- Set up field; check placement of cones and field markings
- Establish team and parent sides of the field
- Talk to Coaches/captains
- Check player equipment – ensure rubber cleats, mouth guards, flags at side
- Decide which field half each official will cover
- Decide which official will keep time; both will keep score and downs

### Offensive Official Duties

- 1) Check for Proper placement of Flag at sides after each down
- 2) Establish the Line of Scrimmage
- 3) Watch for offensive Off-sides
- 4) Count 7 seconds for Quarterback to throw
- 5) Stay on boundary to watch “Out of Bounds” on your side
- 6) Watch Quarterback for:
  - Not to cross the line of scrimmage
  - Fake hand-off (negate 7 seconds; blow play dead if within the 5 yard no rushing zone)
  - Pass Behind the Line of Scrimmage
  - Flag Pull
  - Penalty
- 7) Keep Track of Downs
- 8) Retrieve Bean Bag after yards gained

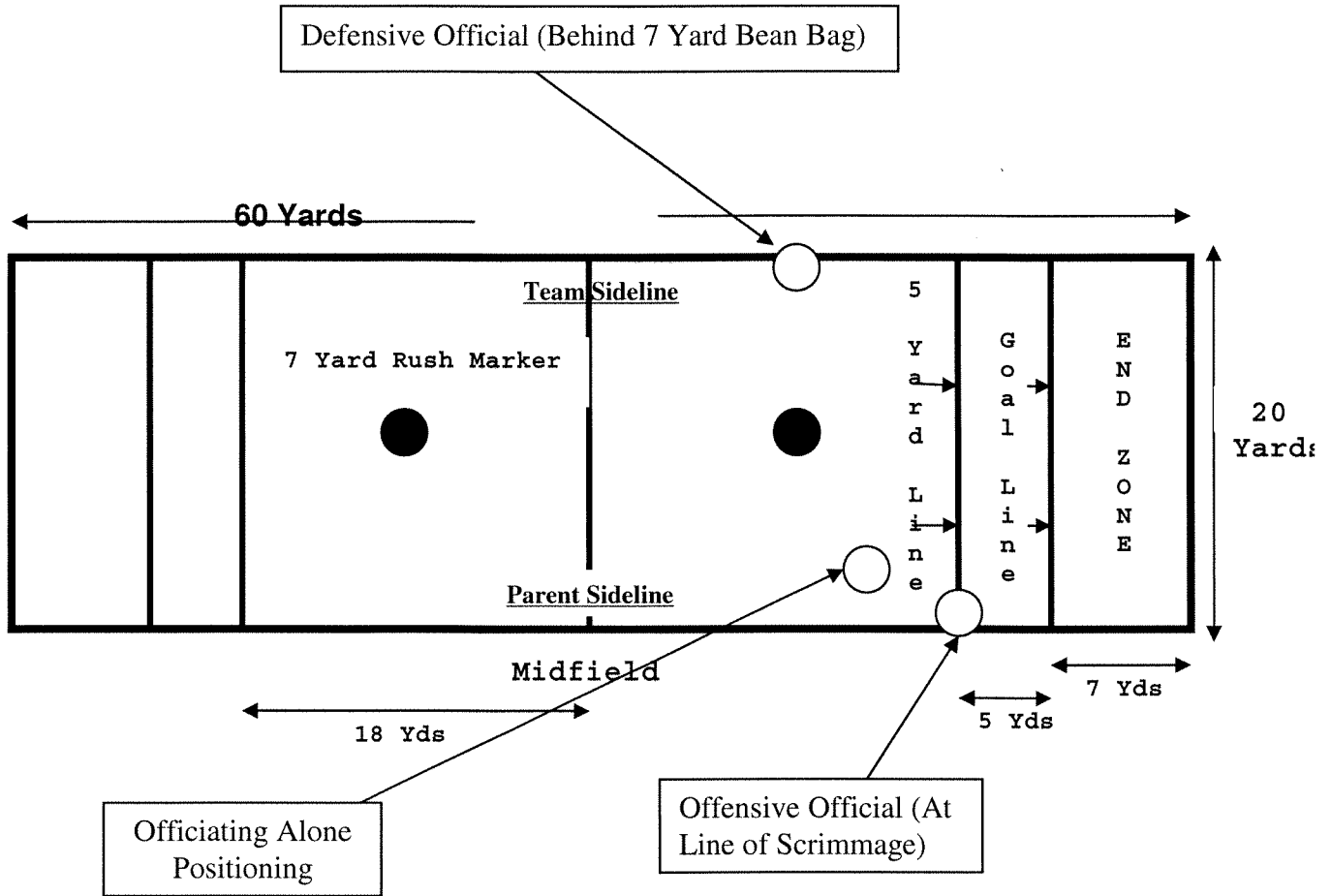
### Defensive Official Duties

- 1) Check for Proper Placement of Flag on player sides
- 2) Behind, but in view of 7 yard rushing marker
- 3) Watch for early rush
- 4) Watch for illegal rush
- 5) Check for hand-off or fake
- 6) Cover “Out of Bounds” --- opposite of official #1
- 7) Watch for interference, flag guarding
- 8) Establish where feet are when flag is pulled
- 9) Inside 5 yard no rush zone, check for pass, not run
- 10) Rule on completion
- 11) Place forward bean bag

### Post Game Duties

- 1) Verify Score with both teams
- 2) Return Ball(s) to team
- 3) Pick up cones
- 4) **Email score to Stephanie: [assistant@footballmanitoba.com](mailto:assistant@footballmanitoba.com) within 12 hours of the completion of the games in order to be paid.**  
**\*\*\*If the scores are not submitted in the 12 hour time frame then the official will be deducted \$5 from their pay. Both officials must email in the score of the games.**
- 5) If there is any incidents (big or small) please email Rachel at [programs@footballmanitoba.com](mailto:programs@footballmanitoba.com) immediately or Trevor at [efficienthome@mts.net](mailto:efficienthome@mts.net)
- 6) If there is any incidents (big or small) please email Rachel at [programs@footballmanitoba.com](mailto:programs@footballmanitoba.com) immediately or Trevor at [efficienthome@mts.net](mailto:efficienthome@mts.net)
- 7) Email questions in regards to rules to Trevor at [efficienthome@mts.net](mailto:efficienthome@mts.net)

## Section 6: Field Placement



## Section 7: Sending in Scores



**Remember:** As a referee you are responsible to send in your scores to Football Manitoba so we know you attended the game and so we have the correct results.

These scores need to be submitted up to 12 hours after your last game.

Each referee must submit their own score, you can't rely on your partner to do this as we need record of all officials!

Scores can only be submitted via email!! Voicemails or text messages will not be accepted!

### Format for Sending in Scores

When submitting your scores, make sure you send in the following information:

- Name
- Date
- Time
- Field Name
- Who your Partner was
- Age
- Division
- Score
  - Team Name & Score
  - Team Name & Score

You must email the scores to: [assistant@footballmanitoba.com](mailto:assistant@footballmanitoba.com)

**If you don't send in your score, you aren't getting paid!!!**

## Section 8: Policies

### Lightning Policy

If you can count less than 30 seconds between the lightning strike and the thunder clap this means that the storm is 10km away and there is an 80% chance the next strike will happen within that 10 km zone. (Environment Canada)

If this is the situation Football Manitoba requires the following:

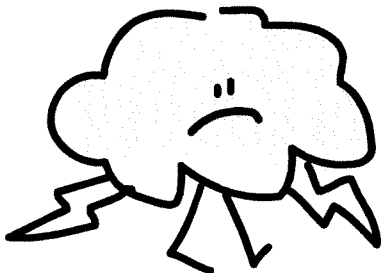
- Play will be suspended for 15 minutes, if there is no improvement in the weather the game will be called.
- If the game is called during the first half, the score will be a 1-1 tie.
- If the game is called after the first half, the score and statistics will remain as at the time the game is called
- If the second game is called before being played at 7:30 pm the score will be reported and record as a 1-1 tie.

Flag football officials, players, coaches and parents are required to adhere to the above stated policy.

All teams are to report to the field for the beginning of the first game. If a Head Referee is present at the field the Head Referee is responsible to call all games at that location.

If a Head Referee is not present the referee who's officiating will use his/her discretion on whether or not to play.

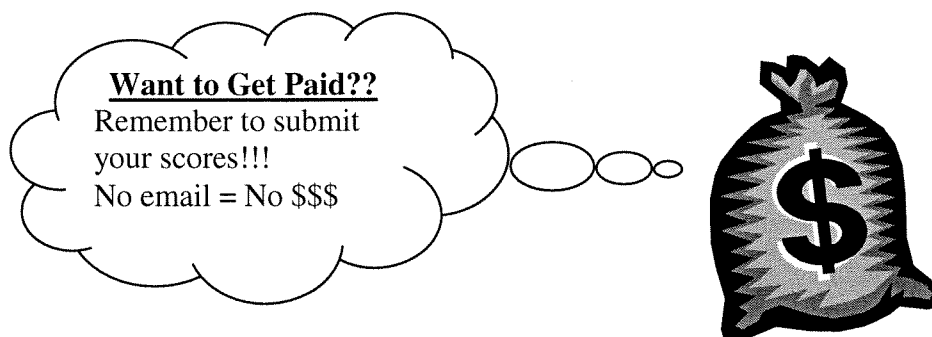
Games will NOT be re-scheduled.



**NOTE: Referees will be paid for all first games whether they are called during the first or second half. However, if the first game is called and after waiting the mandatory 15 minutes the referee will only be paid if the time extends into the time scheduled for the second game.**

## **Re-Imbursement & Payment Policies**

- Officials will be paid \$15 per game (on average two games per night are played, equalling \$30 per night). If you referee alone you will be paid \$20.
- Head referees will be paid \$20 per game (on average two games per night are played, equalling \$40 per night). If you referee alone you will be paid \$25.
- Payment will be issued at the end of the season
- **Referees will be required to email in games scores within 12 hours of the end of their final game to receive payment.**



## **Disciplinary Policies**

### **Disciplinary Policy**

Each official is responsible for carrying out their duties in a manner that will gain the respect they deserve. Any negligence in this regard shall be considered a serious offense.

Disciplinary action may be taken against a member who:

1. Repeatedly fails to appear for an officiating assignment they have accepted, having been duly warned.
2. Dresses in a slovenly, dirty or careless manner.
3. Argues with players and coaches, deemed to be unnecessary within the sphere of flag football.
4. Reports for an assignment under or suspected to be under the influence of alcohol or narcotics.
5. Conducts themselves in a manner that is detrimental to the Association.

### **Disciplinary Process**

1. The disciplinary process is a three step system, coming from the Chair of the Evaluation Committee;

- i) Verbal warning
- ii) Written warning (written warnings may include email)
- iii) Referral to the Disciplinary Committee.

### **Disciplinary Committee**

In each case the Chair of Evaluation shall investigate, recommend and report the actions to be taken to Disciplinary Committee. The judgment of the Disciplinary Committee as expressed by a majority vote shall be final. Punishment could range from a written citation to expulsion. In regards to referee discipline, the Disciplinary Committee consists of Programs & Communications Manager, Programs Assistant, Referee in Chief & Referee Assignor.

## Section 9: Conflict Management Skills

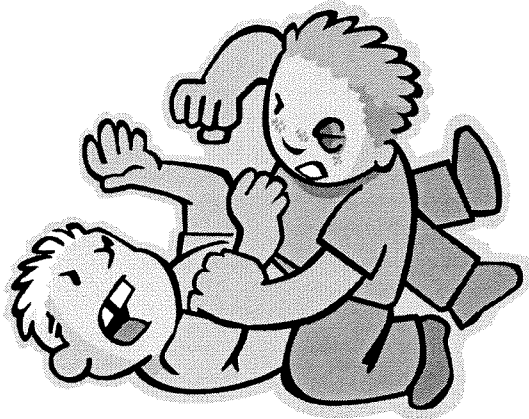
### Stay In Control

Our natural response to verbal abuse is to respond aggressively and defensively. Instead of reacting in a knee-jerk fashion when dealing with a coach or player do this. If a coach begins to berate you, ask the coach "What did you see?" This will immediately switch your tone to an empathetic one and places the burden on the coach to explain their behaviour. (College baseball umpire Randy Christal of Austin, Texas)

Remember, it's always better to slow down the situation with an aggressive coach or player, not speed it up.

### Managing Conflict

To manage conflict effectively, you must understand that conflict is *inevitable*. As an official you are there to arbitrate competition, and the most you can hope for is respect. Officiating is not a popularity contest.



### Recognizing Conflict

Most players will display signs of frustration that could lead to conflict on the field. By recognizing the signs before conflict occurs, it will allow you to prevent and prepare for a possible conflict. A few of the signs are:

- A player's poor performance is an obvious sign of a player's frustration level.
- Look at player's facial expressions and body language for clues about their feelings. Tense facial muscles, such as a set jaw, may indicate that a player is close to acting aggressively. Be on the look out for staring or glaring as well.
- Always watch for contact away from the ball or after play ends. If there is any unnecessary contact, be sure to deal with it quickly and decisively. There may be non-contact situations away from the ball or after a play that you may need to watch out for as well. Generally it is in the form of trash talk or a stare down after a player has executed good play.
- Be on the lookout for "paybacks." Some players retaliate immediately, while others will retaliate later when the official may not be looking. Paybacks must be dealt with immediately to prevent an escalation of conflict.

### Planning for Conflict: Preventative Officiating

The best way to prevent conflict is to be prepared. Having a firm understanding of the rules, mechanics and philosophy is the single greatest way to prevent conflict. Coaches and players who are certain that the rules are being applied properly will be less aggressive and more understanding of the calls and non-calls made on the field.

Speak to coaches about your expectations for a fun, safe, non-conflict game prior to beginning of the game. Also let them know that any abuse will not be tolerated. This will set the tone from the on-set of the game.

Here are some other strategies to take into account before officiating a game:

- **Clear your head** – forget the mood you are in, tests you have, or other game experiences with the team(s) you have officiated already.
- **Stay Objective** – Gain enough information to help you understand why certain things are happening in the game, but be responsible enough to sort through the information and treat each game as a new one.
- **Don't take it personally** – One of the most difficult aspects to understand about officiating is that generally when people yell at you, they're yelling at your official's uniform and what it represents. Understand that players and fans will see things differently than you do. Allow some venting but make sure you have set the line for them not to cross.
- **Decide what deserves a response** – Every question does not need a response. For example, If a coach says, "He's being too aggressive in his flag pulls" what is more effective: ignoring the statement or saying to the coach, "No way; he's been fine all night"? Most of the time, ignoring a harmless statement or acknowledging it with a simple head nod ends the matter. When you defend your position, the coach instinctively may go on the offensive and continue the debate. Ask yourself, "If I say something, will it do more harm than good?"
  - **Understand Game Context** – The intensity of the game, the closeness of the score, and how much time left in the game all play a part in how much and what type of conflict you must deal with. You may want to allow a little more leeway under those circumstances. Don't let players get away with extremely unsportsmanlike conduct, but it does mean that the way in which you handle the end of game situation will likely have impact on the result, so you should consider the emotional charge of the situation and tolerate a bit more than you normally would in less critical situations.

### Implementing Conflict Management Tips

- **Avoid Threats** – Officials' ultimatums back the officials themselves into corners as much as coaches and players...avoid using "One more word and you're gone!" Instead, use phrases such as, "I've heard enough."
- **Tell the Truth** – It's okay to say you made a mistake. Honesty is your best policy. If you do blow a call, it's okay to admit it quietly to the coach or player. If you do it too often, however, your reputation will suffer.
- **Don't Trivialize** – Though extremely tempting sometimes, don't ever utter the phrase, "It's only a game."
- **Point to a Shared Goal** – If you need to address something a player or coach is doing – before assessing a penalty if you use preventative officiating – keep the common goal in mind. Here is an example: "Coach, we need to work together to ensure the safety of all players. Can you please talk to number 45 about the rough play out here? That will help us protect the players. Thank you." By letting the coach/captain know that you both have a common goal – in this case, protecting the players – you're more likely to get cooperation from the coach/captain.

### Resolving Conflict

In a Referee magazine feature story titled "Count to Ten," psychologist Dr. Bruce Baldwin detailed a plan to help resolve conflict:

- Permit the other person to talk without interrupting. Use the "10 second" rule – Give a captain 10 seconds to vent before you respond.
- Limit the discussion only to the immediate issue that is adversely affecting your relationship. Say things like, "Let's focus on this play and get it resolved. Now did you see this play?"
- Choose an optimal time to bring up and discuss problems. Then keep the conversations focused and brief.
- Judiciously avoid the other person's vulnerabilities or emotional sensitivities. Sarcasm is never a good instrument for promoting conflict resolution. Probably the biggest temptation is using a team's record or game score as a weapon.

### Tricks of the Trade

Make a deal – If a player or captain is complaining about the same thing, make a deal with them. For example, "Okay captain, I've heard you. I'm going to watch that player exclusively for the next three plays. If he doesn't perform an infraction in the next three plays, the complaining stops." The player will almost always accept the conditions. If the complaint is true, call it. If not, gently tell the complaining player so: "he looked clean on those plays."

Place the ball down and whistle in the play – When someone starts to complain, get the play rolling as quickly as possible. Don't rush, but there is generally more complaining during dead balls. Your conflicts will decrease.

### Penalties

Flag Football has a no tolerance policy for trash talk and offensive language in any way against officials, players, coaches, and parents. Here are how language situations should be dealt with:

- A curse word clearly audible to others – immediate penalty
- Trash talk to an opponent – penalize immediately
- A captain from the bench or field maliciously arguing with an official - penalize immediate
- Showing up an official – penalize immediately
- Anything that starts with "you" – i.e. "You suck" or "Your terrible" - penalize immediately
- Physical contact with an official – immediate ejection

**Note:** If the actions above are minor, they can be dealt with using a warning. Use your discretion when before throwing a penalty flag.

### Ejections

Have due reason to eject a player or coach.

The ejectee(s) must be in a position of creating or has created a danger to the safety of those participating in the game. Verbal abuse can create a danger because of its power to escalate conflict.

### Ejecting a Player

Player ejections usually occur from rough play or unsportsmanlike conduct. These steps should be taken to eject a player:

Throw the penalty flag following the infraction. Make the penalty and ejection calls in front of both benches.

**Inform the ejectee's coach that they are being ejected and that play will not resume until the player has left the field of play. Depending on the severity of the penalty, the player may be asked to leave the premises before play resumes (i.e. Throwing punches).**

### Ejecting a Coach

Coaching ejections usually always occur from abusive language. Always penalize and warn a coach on their first infraction before ejecting for the second. These steps should be taken to eject a coach on their second infraction:

- Throw the penalty flag following the infraction.
- Remain calm and explain to the coach that they have been warned and are being ejected from the game.
- The coach must leave the premises for the game to continue and the game can only continue if the team has an assistant coach that can take over for the head coach.
- Only once the coach has gone a safe distance, away from the premises may play continue.
- 

**Note:** The assistant coach must be registered with Football Manitoba. No parents may come from the sidelines to take over for the coach.

### Ejecting a Parent

When a parent becomes so verbally or physically disruptive that they become a danger to the continuation of the game, they may be ejected. Steps to be taken:

- Proceed to both coaches and ask them which team the parent belongs to.
- Instruct the coach that the parent is being ejected from the game.
- Have the coach accompany you to the parent to inform him/her/them of their immediate ejection.
- If the parent refuses to leave the premises, you may end the game and the team which the parent belongs to will forfeit.

**Remember:** when ejecting a player, coach or parent, never jeopardize your safety or the safety of those at the field. You are responsible for safety. If a situation is deteriorating, end the game and let cooler heads prevail.

# Section 10:

## Code of Conduct Football Manitoba

**Football** is a great sport and all who participate -players, coaches, athletic therapists / sport-aiders, officials, administrators, families and spectators -contribute to its success by:

- o Being fair and respectful
- o Following the rules
- o Practicing ethical and non-abusive treatment of all individuals
- o Providing a safe and welcoming environment
- o Supporting all efforts to remove verbal & physical abuse from football

We all benefit when we treat others as we wish to be treated. Remember, we learn best by example. Football Manitoba follows the Football Canada's Code of Ethics. ([www.footballcanada.com](http://www.footballcanada.com))

### Players

- 1 Play for fun & always be a good sport. Remember that winning isn't everything – making friends & doing your best are important.
- 2 Work hard to learn the rules, improve your skills and work as part of the team. Attend practices and games.
- 3 Listen to coaches, managers and athletic therapists / sport-aiders -follow their direction in a positive manner. They are volunteers who love the game like you do.
- 4 Maintain personal self-control since you are responsible for the consequences of your decisions and actions.
- 5 Never verbally or physically harass or abuse coaches, athletic therapists / sport-aiders, managers, administrators, officials, opponents, spectators, or teammates. Be respectful of your opponents in victory and in defeat.
- 6 Accept an Official's on-field game judgment and decisions.
- 7 Respect your team's and your opponent's field, buildings and equipment.

### Coaches, Athletic Therapists/Sport-aiders, Managers, Administrators

1. Winning is a consideration, but not the only one, nor the most important. There is more about football than winning the game. Remember, players are in football for fun and enjoyment.
2. Be reasonable when scheduling practice – players / families have other obligations. A player's opportunity for achieving academic success is more important than success on the football field.
3. Have realistic expectations – remember that players are not professional and cannot be judged by professional standards.
4. Be a positive role model to players, parents/guardians, officials and spectators – display emotional maturity, show consistency and ensure the physical safety of others. Be honest, sincere and honourable in your relationships with others. Maintain personal self-control since you are responsible for the consequences of your decisions and actions.
5. Know the rules of the game and follow them as well as the 'spirit' of the rules. Do not disregard the rules since they exist to keep the game fair for all participants.
6. Be consistent, honest & just and generous with your praise when it is deserved. Do not ridicule or criticize players publicly. Be an effective teacher and communicator.
7. Respect all individuals and never verbally or physically harass or abuse players, coaches, athletic therapists / sport-aiders, managers, administrators, officials, parents/guardians, or spectators.
8. Ensure that an injured player receives prompt and competent medical care.
9. Be considerate of the personal needs and problems of others. Be a good listener. Remember that events occur in the lives of others that make for good days and for bad days.
10. Be concerned with the overall development of all players – stress good habits on and off the field, give players the opportunity to improve their football skills, gain confidence, develop self-esteem and display good sportsmanship. Encourage players to be 'team players'.
11. Organize practices that are fun and challenging, as well as effectively teaching the rules, strategies and individual / positional techniques of football.
12. Obtain proper training including the Sport Manitoba 'Respect in Sport' Certificate and continue to upgrade skills.

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## Officials

- 1 Know the rules and be consistent, objective and fair in calling all infractions. Realize that sometimes infractions will require explanation so that players and coaches understand the call.
- 2 Maintain a safe environment during the game by not allowing intimidation of any player by verbal or physical actions of another individual.
- 3 Do not tolerate unacceptable conduct towards officials, players, coaches or spectators.
- 4 Have realistic expectations -remember that players are not professional and cannot be judged by professional standards.
- 5 Be a positive role model to players, parents/guardians, officials and spectators – display emotional maturity and ensure the physical safety of others. Be honest, sincere, and honourable in relationships with others. Maintain personal self-control since you are responsible for the consequences of your decisions.
- 6 Respect all individuals and never verbally or physically harass or abuse coaches, athletic therapists / sport-aiders, managers, administrators, officials, parents/guardians, spectators or players.
- 7 Obtain proper training including the Sport Manitoba 'Respect in Sport' Certificate and continue to upgrade skills.

## Parents / Guardians / Spectators

1. Players are involved in organized sports for their enjoyment. Make it fun -do not force your child to participate in sports, but support their desire to play their chosen sport.
2. Teach your child that doing one's best is as important as winning, so that a player will never feel defeated by the outcome of a game. Offer praise for competing fairly and displaying a positive attitude.
3. Enjoy the game. Cheer good plays of both teams. Be supportive after the game -win or lose. Recognize good effort and sportsmanship.
4. Never ridicule or yell at others for making a mistake or losing the game. Profanity and rude gestures / comments are offensive.
5. Teach your child to play by the rules and to resolve conflict without verbal or physical hostility.
6. Respect all individuals and never verbally or physically harass or abuse coaches, athletic therapists / sport-aiders, managers, administrators, officials, opponents, spectators or players.
7. Display a positive attitude toward the game and all of its participants. Maintain personal self-control since you are responsible for the consequences of your decisions. Don't embarrass your child by stating negative feelings towards others.
8. When you talk with the coach – do so at the next practice. Do not approach the coaching staff immediately following a game to question the coaching decisions including play calls and player participation.
9. Emphasize the importance of practices and how they benefit the player. On-going practice builds skill development, teamwork and increases knowledge of the game. Help the player attend team practices and games.
10. Recognize the importance of the volunteer coaches, athletic therapists / sports-aiders and managers & administrators. Be willing to communicate with them and understand their viewpoints. They are important to the development of the players.
11. Learn all you can about the game – it will enhance your enjoyment and will enable you to discuss the game with your player.

## Remember.....

- 1 **Misplaced Enthusiasm and Guilt** – don't overemphasize the winning or losing.
- 2 **Expectations** – don't push the player to make up for your own limitations or to match your 'star' ability. Less than 1% of players will have a successful professional career in football. Don't let great expectations become a distraction or burden.
- 3 **Perspective** – don't lose sight of what is important to the player – having fun and being part of the team. Players do not mean to make mistakes.

## **Football Manitoba Contact Information**

If you have any questions, concerns or need help at any time please do not hesitate to contact the Football Manitoba Flag Football Program staff at the following information:

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\*\*For the Flag Football Rulebook please go online to our website and download a copy