

2023 Half Rack Youth Football League



What: Half Rack Youth Football League is a developmental level program for football players from 3rd thru 6th grade. It will be a combination of flag football and padded football. Google flex football for videos and more information.

When: Games to be played starting in September. Team schedules will be released by middle of August after we confirm the number of teams in each division.

Where: Nebraska City and Auburn (Softball Complexes)

Divisions: 3rd/4th & 5th/6th Grade with 8-16 players per team

Requirements: Each team will consist of 8-16 players. Jerseys, Flags, 1 game ball. City Rec will be responsible for providing soft shell helmet and soft shell shoulder pads. Parents are able to purchase their own equipment if desired. Examples pictured below. Merz Inc in Nebraska City will stock equipment.



For more information or to register a team contact:
Linus Hendrickson: (402) 274-7985 / linush05@hotmail.com

Half Rack League Football Rules

General Description

1. Eight offensive and eight defensive players are allowed on the field during live plays.
2. A minimum of 8 players must be on the field to start the game.
3. All players are eligible receivers.
4. Offensive teams have four downs to successfully advance to the next zone-line-to-gain and earn a new set of downs.
5. On 3rd down a team can choose to punt or go for it. If they choose to punt the other team will get the ball on their 5 yard line.
6. Zone lines-to-gain markers are located at the 15, 30, 15..
7. The ball will be spotted wherever the ball was at the time of the flag pull or the ball carrier left the field-of-play.
8. Games will have two 24 minute halves with 2 minutes for halftime.
 - a. It will be a running clock except for the last 2 minutes of the game.
9. Last 2 minutes of the game the clock will stop on incomplete passes, players running out of bounds, and when the ref is setting the ball on a first down.
10. At the start of each half and on all punts the ball will start on the offences 5 yard line.

Field

1. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 60 yards with two 10 yards endzones (one at each end).

Rosters

1. Teams must consist of at least 8 players with a maximum of 16 players
2. Teams must start games with a minimum of 8 players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with 7 players on the field but no fewer than 7.

Equipment

1. Players are to wear a protective mouthpiece, soft helmets, and soft shoulder pads while on the field-of-play.
2. For safety reasons, players must wear pants or shorts that do not have pockets, belt loops, zippers, or exposed draw strings. Pants or shorts with pockets that have been professionally sewn-shut are allowed at the game official's discretion.
3. Teams must have flags. The flags must be the ones provided by the league.
4. Having the correct and legal flags is solely the responsibility of the coaches/team.
5. Altered or tampered flags could result in an ejection or forfeit. No shortening, cutting, etc.
6. Flags cannot be the same/similar color as a player's pants/shorts. Similar is at the official's discretion.
7. Sublimated Jersey supplied by league.
8. Players may not wear hard, unyielding, or stiff material items that in the view of the officiating crew may present a hazard to other players.
9. Players must ensure their jerseys are long enough to remain tucked in during the entire play. (Jerseys should never cover the flag belt).

10. Flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
11. Flags must be evenly distributed on the belt. Suction cups must face down and away from the body. Belts must be snug around the waist to avoid rotating.
12. If a player chooses to wear a hand towel, or any other object, on their waist it will be treated as part of the flag belt.
13. Players may wear shoes or cleats. Cleats with exposed metal are never allowed.
14. Players may wear eye protection to include prescription glasses or flexible sunglasses.
15. Jewelry must be removed before play.
16. Player's finger nails must be trimmed or taped over to protect opponents. Alternatively, players may wear gloves to protect their opponents.
17. Players may wear knit or stocking-style caps.
18. Hoodies must be tucked inside the jersey while on the field-of-play.
19. Baseball-style caps must be removed.
20. Players may tape forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear soft gloves, elbow pads, shin guards, and knee pads. Unyielding items such as braces, casts, or anything with exposed metal are not allowed.
21. The player with the missing flag violation must fix the issue during the next dead ball situation or leave the field until they have done so.
22. Officials will endeavor to identify missing, incomplete or improperly worn flag belts prior to the snap and announce for example "number X, down on possession".
23. If a ball carrier is wearing an incomplete, improperly worn, or improperly secured flag belt, or no flag belt at all, they may not advance the ball after taking possession of it and will be ruled down where they took possession of the ball.
24. A missing flag violation will not delay the game or stop a live play.

Timeouts and clock protocol

1. Games are played for 48 minutes continuous clock (except for the last 2 minutes) with 24 minute halves.
2. Halftime is two minutes.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 25 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay of game penalty is enforced.
4. Officials may stop the clock as needed
5. Each team gets 2 timeouts per half and they cannot carry over to the next half.
6. Team timeouts are 30 seconds. After 30 seconds the official will audibly place the offense on a 25-second play clock.
7. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
8. Last 2 minutes of the game the clock will stop during
 - a. Timeouts, incomplete passes, players running out of bounds, and when the ref is setting the on a first down.
9. Team captains/coaches are encouraged to yell "clock?" or "clock check?" in lieu of "time?" to avoid confusion when requesting a team timeout.

Overtime

1. A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first
 - a. If a second round of overtime must be played, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second round of overtime. This process continues with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on the offense or defense to start out during each round of overtime.
 - b. The team that loses the flip gets to choose what side to the field that overtime will take place on. This does not change with the next overtimes.
2. Each team will take turns getting one (1) play from the defense's 5 yard line for one point or the defense's 10 yard line for 2 points. Whether to go for 1 or 2 points is up to the offensive team. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts the team that starts on defense gets a chance on offense to win or tie by converting a 1 or 2 point play on their own.
 - a. **Example:** Team A starts on offense and chooses to go for one point from the 5 yard line and is successful. Team B is then on offense and can choose to either go for one from the 5 yard line to tie and force a second round of overtime or go for two points from the 10 yard line for the win.
 - b. If the second team on offense in an overtime round fails to beat or match the team that went first, the team that went first wins.
3. Both teams must go for 2 from the 10 yard line starting with the second round of overtime.
4. Starting with the 3rd overtime, each team will get 1 play from the 5 yard line going out from the endzone. The team with the most yards will be the winner. The team with the most yards will be awarded 1 point added to their final score.
5. All regulation period rule and penalties are in effect
6. There are no timeouts.
7. Interceptions are returnable in OT, and worth 2 points.
 - a. Both teams must have an offensive possession in OT (If first possession results in Interception that is returned, they must still take an offensive possession.)

Coin Toss

1. Team captains are required to bring their game ball(s) to the coin toss for inspection.
2. Game officials will confirm with team captains during the coin toss that the teams are in correct and legal uniforms (pockets, flags, contrasting colors, unyielding materials, etc.).
3. Referee will issue the first warning about unsportsmanlike conduct, excessive rough play, and language.
4. First possession is decided using a coin toss.
5. The head official will ask the 'calling captain' their choice of "heads" or "tails". The head official will then confirm the call.
6. The captain winning the toss shall choose one of the following options:
 - a. Begin on offense
 - b. Begin on defense
 - c. Designate which goal their team will defend
 - d. Defer their choice to the second half
7. The loser of the coin toss shall make a choice of the remaining options.
8. Before the start of the second half, the choice of options shall be reversed.

Challenge Procedure

1. Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations.
2. Generally, officials are happy to answer quick responses and general questions during the game if they do not impede the game. The priority is to spot the ball then address questions without impeding the play clock.
3. If the head coach believes an official has made a procedural error they may call for a timeout. If the head official agrees that there has been a procedural error (e.g., wrong down, incorrect penalty yardage, etc.) the procedural error will be addressed and the timeout will not be charged.
4. The challenge must be made to an official before the next snap.
5. In the event the head coach loses a procedural challenge and the coaches team did not possess a legal team timeout a fifteen-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be assessed.
6. Only procedural issues may be addressed, not an official's judgment call or no-call.

Lightning Protocol

1. Practice and competitions will be suspended immediately when lightning is detected within 10 miles.
2. All athletes and spectators should seek safe shelter during severe weather (but not under trees).
3. Play shall not resume for at least 30 minutes after the last sight of lightning or sound of a thunderclap.

Offense:

1. The offensive line must have a minimum of four players on the line at the snap.
2. Only one offensive player may be in motion at the snap and that motion must be parallel to the line-of-scrimmage and cannot make movement toward the line of scrimmage.
3. Players who go in motion do not count as "being on the line".
4. The ball must be snapped from the ground in a fluid and continuous motion between the center's legs.
5. There must be a Guard, Center, Guard with no more than 1 foot splits.
6. No offensive player may start a play closer than five yards from the sideline
7. It is a dead ball foul if any player on offense enters the neutral zone before the snap. (neutral zone infraction)
8. Direct snaps are legal to any player not on the line-of-scrimmage.
9. The ball will be declared dead if any portion of the ball carrier's body other than their hands and feet (knee, elbow, buttocks, ball in hand, etc.) touches the ground.
10. The offense is responsible for retrieving the ball and returning it to an official or to the line of scrimmage at the end of each play.

Blocking

1. Contact blocking is allowed between the shoulders and waist only (a.k.a. "inside the frame").
2. All blocking must INITIATE with open hands and not the elbows/shoulders (i.e. players cannot begin a block with their shoulders).
3. Blockers must be on their feet before, during and after contact is made with their opponents.
4. No contact of any kind is allowed above the shoulders of an opponent.
5. Illegal blocks include:

- a. Leading with the shoulder
 - b. Low/chop/cut blocks: An attempt by a player to block an opponent at the thigh level or lower.
 - c. Crack-back block: A blind-side block on a player by an opponent who starts downfield and then cuts back toward the original spot of the ball to make contact.
 - d. Blind-side block: Engaging an opponent who does not see the blocker approaching with anything other than fully extended arms and open palms.
 - e. Clipping: A player hitting an opponent from behind.
 - f. Tripping: A player using their leg or foot to stop an opponent's forward motion.
 - g. Hook or hug block: A player gaining advantage of an opponent by turning or detaining the opponent by illegally tackling or using arms around the body, waist, shoulders or arms.
 - h. Rolling blocks: A player on the ground attempting to block or engage an opponent by moving or turning over and over on an axis.
 - i. Dive blocks: A player leaving her feet to engage an opponent.
 - j. Making contact with an opponent while swinging or flipping hands, arms or elbows.
 - k. Slapping, punching, or swinging at an opponent with hands, arms or elbows.
 - l. Grabbing or holding an opponent's jersey while blocking.
 - m. Interlocking of blocker's fingers or hands
 - n. Laying on a downed defender
6. Swim moves (a player using a maneuver similar to a freestyle swimming stroke to get past an opponent) are legal. However, if the swim move results in contact to an opponent above the shoulder (neck, head, or face) it is illegal.
 7. Downfield blocking for the ball carrier is allowed.
 8. Blocking downfield while the ball is in the air is pass interference except if the pass is behind the line of scrimmage.
 9. Two-on-one blocking is permitted as long as both blockers are engaging the opponent above the waist.
 10. If a player turns to expose their back, it is not an illegal block as long as their opponent maintains contact with the player from the initial block.

Running/Jumping/Diving

1. Ball carriers are allowed to leave their feet, jump, and spin as evasive maneuvers in order to advance the ball as long as they do not put another player's safety at risk.
2. Jump cuts or leaping between two defenders is allowed if they do not initiate noteworthy contact with the defender or put another player's safety at risk.
3. Ball carriers may not hurdle over another player.
4. Ball carriers may not dive, lung, or fall forward in a perceived intentional manner in order to advance the ball or achieve a line-to-gain. This is a judgment call by the game officials.
5. Ball carriers may extend the ball out in front of them to gain additional yardage.
6. Diving by the defense to capture a ball carrier's flag is legal.
7. Ball carriers must make every effort to avoid a defender who has established a stationary position.
8. Runners may leave their feet to avoid collision or falling on another player.
9. Passers may jump vertically to throw the ball over a defender.

10. The offense may use multiple backward hand-offs or laterals.

Flag Guarding including stiff arms

1. The ball carrier's flags must be accessible to the defense throughout the play.
2. Flag guarding is the act of a ball carrier denying a defender the opportunity to capture their flag in any physical way.
3. Flags may not be tucked in pants, tucked under jerseys, worn improperly, looped around the waist belt, or knotted.
4. The ball carrier shall not flag guard by flailing of arms, using their hands, arms, elbows or extremely dipped shoulders to deny the opportunity of an opponent to remove a flag.
5. The ball carrier may not swat a defender's hands away nor pin the flag against their body using the ball or hands.
6. An official may call flag guarding if they feel that a ball carrier's natural running motion gave the ball carrier a decisive advantage over the defender and the running motion caused part of the ball carrier's body to block a de-flagging attempt.
7. What constitutes flag guarding is up to the official's judgment. We recommend you carry the ball with your hands held high on the body to avoid flag guarding.
8. Flag guarding shall not be called if there is no defensive player within reasonable distance to capture the flag.
9. The ball carrier may bend at the knees to dip low, side cut, skip, or take short hops.
10. Tampering with the flag in any way to gain advantage is illegal.
11. Examples of flag guarding: stiff arming, pinning the flag, swatting, using the ball as a stiff arm.

Run Plays:

1. The quarterback — the player initially receiving the snap — may run to advance the ball at any time.
2. The offense may use multiple backward hand-offs or laterals.
3. To execute a sneak, the ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap and the QB must take at least one step backwards off the line-of-scrimmage before going forward.
4. The center cannot run the ball.

Passing Plays:

1. All players are eligible to receive a pass unless they have stepped out-of-bounds of their own accord.
2. Only one forward pass per play.
3. Once the ball has passed the line-of-scrimmage it cannot be returned to behind the line-of-scrimmage and thrown forward legally.
4. If any portion of the passer's body is behind the line-of-scrimmage it is a legal pass.
5. A passer may jump vertically to throw the ball over a defender. This does not constitute illegal advancement.
6. Any offensive player who receives either a backwards handoff behind scrimmage can pass the ball from behind the line-of-scrimmage.

7. Backward passes are allowed.
8. Teams can make an unlimited number of backward passes and then throw a forward pass provided the player throwing the ball is behind the line of scrimmage.
9. If the passer's flag has been pulled while the passer still has the ball in their hand it is a sack. There is no allowance given for the passer's arm being in motion at the time of the sack. Ball in hand at all equals a sack.

Intentional Grounding

1. A passer may not throw the ball into the ground to avoid a loss of yardage or conserve time.
2. The spike must be fluid and immediate after the snap or it is intentional grounding.
3. A pass may not be intentionally thrown into an area not occupied by an offensive receiver.
4. Passers may not throw the ball out-of-bounds to stop the clock.
5. Intentional grounding can occur anywhere behind the line of scrimmage.

Catching

1. A pass is completed when an offensive player simultaneously places at least one foot inbounds and momentarily maintains possession of the ball.
2. Simultaneous catches between a defensive and offensive player go to the offense.
3. In the event of a bobbled catch, i.e The ball is batted about by the receiver in an attempt to catch it, and the intended receiver is de-flagged before taking full possession there is no penalty for early flag pull.
4. Whether or not a ball is tipped or touched in the air has no bearing on the play as it applies to fouls anywhere on the field (roughing, pass interference, personal fouls, illegal contact, etc.).
5. If a receiver steps out-of-bounds of their own accord and is the first to touch a pass, it is illegal touching. The play will be allowed to continue to a dead ball situation (5-yards from previous and a loss of down, if accepted).
6. If the ball comes out of the receiver's grasp due to contact with the ground or while going to the ground the pass is incomplete.

Defense

1. Defense must have 2 players on the line of scrimmage and no more. You can have a corner walk up to jam a split out WR, this does not count as one of the players on the line of scrimmage.
2. Stripping or attempting to strip the ball from a player's hand, including the quarterback, is illegal.
3. Defensive teams may not simulate the offensive team's signals or cadence. (Unsportsmanlike)
4. There are no "free plays" for the offense. After the head official blows the ready-for-play whistle and the snapper puts their hand(s) on the ball, no player may enter the neutral zone until the ball is moved to start the snap. Entering the neutral zone before the snap is known as "offside" or encroachment which causes the play to be immediately blown dead and the offending team is penalized five yards.

Rushing

1. Defensive players may not line up directly in front of an offensive lineman (i.e. head-to-head). They must “shade” (face toward each other but shoulder-to-shoulder) to one side or the other of their opponent for safety reasons or be a minimum of one yard away from the offensive lineman at the snap.
2. The center is considered a defenseless player while their head is down in the snapping position and cannot be contacted until they assume a blocking position or have fired out into their pattern.

Roughing the Passer/ Center

1. Defensive players must make a concerted effort to avoid charging into an unprotected player.
2. To assist defensive players to avoid unnecessary contact with the passer the covering official will endeavor, but is not required, to announce “balls away” when the ball has left the passer’s hand.
3. In general, defensive players may not “crash” the passer’s throwing arm, shoulder or body even if the ball is touched first.
4. An insignificant “brush-by” may be allowed by the referee but is not guaranteed.
5. Making contact with the quarterback while blocking a pass or attempting to block a pass may result in a roughing the passer penalty.
6. Whether or not a ball is tipped in the air by the defense has no bearing on the play as it applies to fouls (roughing, pass interference, personal fouls, etc.).
7. The defense can knock the ball down, but the ball must have left the passer’s hand.
8. A roughing penalty will not be enforced if a passer initiates contact with a defensive player while in the throwing motion; for example, during the passer’s follow through their arm makes contact with an opponent’s hand, arm, or shoulder. In this instance the energy of the contact is the action of the passer and not the defender. This is a judgment call.
9. It is a personal foul if the passer’s follow through hand or arm makes contact with an opponent’s head, neck or face.

Pass Coverage

1. Contacting receivers within the initial five yards from scrimmage is allowed as long as the ball is not in the air.
2. Contact within the initial five yards must be continuous (i.e. no “re-loading”) and applied “inside the frame” of the body.
3. A defender may turn an opponent “off their route” as long as the defender’s hands are “inside the frame”.
4. Pass interference normally occurs above the waist; entangled feet are not considered pass interference.
5. Incidental contact is not considered pass interference.
6. A player may “find” their opponent by reaching out and placing a hand on them as long as touching does not delay, impede, twist, or turn their opponent. This is not considered pass interference.
7. Contact away from the direction of the pass is not considered pass interference but may be considered illegal contact.

8. Examples of pass interference include:
 - a. Shoving or pushing off to create separation.
 - b. Playing through the back.
 - c. Hook and turn: grabbing the torso and turning an opponent before the pass arrives.
 - d. Defender is looking at the receiver and makes significant contact *materially* impeding the receiver.
 - e. Arm bars, hooking, restricting, grabbing wrists, or turning a receiver.
 - f. Blocking downfield before the ball has been touched, commonly seen through “pick plays”.
 - g. Cutting off the path of a receiver by being in front of them and slowing down or being beside them and “riding” them off her path to the ball.
9. Whether a pass is catchable or uncatchable has no bearing on pass interference. The benefit of the doubt is given to the receiver.
10. A player may use their arms or hands to intentionally obstruct the receiver’s view (face guarding) of the ball without turning their own head to play the ball as long as noteworthy contact is not made with the receiver.
11. The remedy for defensive pass interference is 15-yard and an automatic first down or half the distance to the goal and a first down, even if it occurred in the end zone.
12. Interceptions may be returned
13. Interceptions in the end zone that are not returned to the field of play will result in a touchback and the ball will be spotted on the 15-yard line.

Points

1. Touchdown 6 points
2. PAT
 - a. Coach gets to decide if they will go from the 5 yard line or the 10 yard line.
 - i. 5 yard line will be worth 1 point
 - ii. 10 yard line will be worth 2 points
 - b. The defensive can intercept a pass during the PAT and run it back for 2 points
3. Safety are 2 points

Required Personal Conduct

1. Players, coaches and spectators must keep their comments profanity free.
2. Disrespectful language, racist, sexist, obscene gestures/behavior, and bullying are prohibited.
3. Foul play will not be tolerated.
4. Any staff member that hears or sees anything that leads them to believe an infraction of the required personal conduct outline has been committed the person responsible may be dismissed for the rest of the year.
5. Fighting will lead to an immediate ejection for the remainder of the game, possible suspension for the season or even a lifetime exclusion.

Required Team Conduct

1. Fighting will lead to an immediate ejection for the remainder of the game, possible suspension for the season or even a lifetime exclusion.
2. One coach may be out on the field to call plays. After the play is called the coach must go to the sideline or back away from the player by 10 yards.
3. Officials may require that boom-boxes or other noise producing devices be turned off or eliminated as they interfere with the game official's ability to communicate and administer the game.
4. Teams are required to clean up their garbage after contests.

Coaches Conduct During Play

1. One coach may be out on the field.
2. Coach is permitted to align players, give a play from a card, and be in the huddle.
3. Once the huddle is broken and players are properly aligned, the coach must remain 10 yards behind the line of scrimmage.
4. There is no coaching allowed on the snap of the ball.
 - a. If this occurs, will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct.

Penalty Chart:

Penalty	Yardage	Where is the penalty Assessed	Lose of Down?
Flag Guarding	10	Spot Foul	yes
Illegal Advancement	5	Spot Foul	Yes
Illegal Forward Pass	5	Previous spot or spot of the foul, whichever penalizes the offensive side more	yes
Offensive Pass Interference	15	Previous spot	yes
Defensive Pass Interference	15	Previous Spot	Automatic 1st Down

Penalty	Yardage	Where is the penalty Assessed	Lose of Down?
Personal Foul (including contact above the shoulders: head, neck, face)	15	End of the play or previous spot whichever penalizes the offender more	By the Offense: Loss of Down By the Defense: Automatic 1st Down
Unsportsmanlike Conduct / Failure to comply with a game official	15	End of the play or previous spot whichever penalizes the offender more	By the Offense: Loss of Down By the Defense: Automatic 1st Down
Roughing the Passer/Center also includes Unnecessary Roughness	15	End of the play or previous spot whichever penalizes the offender more	By the Defense: Automatic 1st Down
Delay of Game	5	Previous spot	No
False Start	5	Pervious spot	No
Snap Infraction	5	Pervious spot	No
Offside / Encroachment	5	Pervious spot	No
Illegal Substitution or Illegal Participation	5	Pervious spot	No

Equipment Violation (improper flag size)	5	Previous spot	No
Illegal Formation	5	Pervious spot	No
Illegal Shift or Illegal Motion	5	Pervious spot	No

Penalty	Yardage	Where is the penalty Assessed	Lose of Down?
Stripping or Attempted Stripping	5	End of the run or spot of the foul whichever penalizes the offender more	No
Illegal Contact	5	Previous spot	No
Early Flag Pull	5	End of the Run or Previous spot	No
Illegal Touching	5	Pervious Spot	Yes
Illegal Block	10	End of the run or spot of the foul whichever penalizes the offender more	Yes
Holding	10	End of the run or spot of the foul whichever penalizes the offender more	No
Charging	10	Where the foul occurred	No (warning issued, on second penalty, ejection or disqualification)