

# Rock Valley Area

## 3rd & 4th Grade Rules 2024

(previous rules do not apply, if not defined here, refer to WIAA/NFHS rules)

### PRACTICES

1. **EACH** player must complete 3 practices before wearing full pads but can wear their helmet, mouth guard, and cleats. There shall be no person-to-person contact drills during the first 5 practices. They must have a total of 10 practices minimum to play in their first game.
2. A team may only practice 2 times a week and only 3 combined games and practices in a week during the season and/or playoffs if applicable. A third practice is allowed during a bye week. Pre-game warm-ups are limited to 45 minutes. **Up to 4 Contact days per week are allowed before Games start. Limit of 10 practices total between start and Aug 24th 2024. Weeks with 2 games you are allowed 1 Full padded practice and one Walk Thru (Helmets only).**

### TEAM REQUIREMENTS & RESTRICTIONS:

1. **The League plays with 11 players.** A team needs a minimum of 8 players to start and finish a game. In the event one team is short, the other team is required to field the same number of players to ensure a fair game. A team with less than 8 players at any time may be required to forfeit. In the event a team fields less than 11 players they must still have 7 players on the line of scrimmage.
2. **The maximum weight of anyone in the offensive backfield/ball carrier is league average plus 10 pounds.** No heavy FBs/TEs, **including as blockers on running plays.** All teams will submit rosters as early as possible to everyone with Name, Jersey Number and Weight. **Players over the ball carrier limit should have a sticker or such marking on their helmets to indicate.** Pregame, make sure officials and opponents are aware of what method you are using. **Sticker players only may line up on Def or Off Line positions, TE is excluded.**
3. **The Defense must play either a 4 or 5-man front.** The DTs and/or DEs must line up head up, to outside the OG. No player may line up opposite the Center or in the Center/Guard (A) gap or the Inside shoulder of the Guard. Because of this, the Quarterback and Center sneak is NOT allowed. The D-Line including Ends must also be in a 3 or 4-point stance.
  - Defensive ends can line up no further out than the outside shoulder of the outside Offensive lineman, including TE, a **Wing back**/3/4 back lined up to 1 yard off line of scrimmage. If defense is in 5 man front and offense goes to a no TE set with no backs near line, the defense needs the the opportunity to remove a lineman to exchange in a LB or DB.
  - The remaining Defensive players can line up in any position but must be at least **5 yards away**

from the LOS. The only exception to the 5-yard rule is for Cornerbacks or Safeties covering Wide or Slot Receivers.

- The Defense may play an extra man on the line during “Goal Line” and “4th and Short” situations. (Goal Line is defined as the 10-yard line and in and 4th and Short being 1 yard or less) The same alignment rule still applies. (Head up to outside the OG)

6. **Except for the Center - QBs and RBs can only handle the ball during one half** of the game except for special teams. **If** a team has the ball for a limited time(1 series or less) in the 1st half, they can **request with the Referee and other teams HC** about having those players handle the ball for **ONE** additional series in the 2nd half. **If either the Ref or opposing coach disagrees, the request is denied and final.** This rule will allow other kids to learn some of the skilled positions and help them develop as football players. **This request cannot be applied to the defensive side of the ball.** The O-Line must also be in a 3 or 4-point stance.

7. **Every player must start on either Offense or Defense each half. Starters for a half, must play a minimum of 50% of the that half.** This is a learning league, not competitive, so equal playing time is the goal. The only exception will be for disciplinary, health reasons.

- A) **22 unique players must start if available** and additional players rotate in for significant playing time. The 2 platoon system is required **regardless of team size** and will be shown in the rosters exchanged pregame. Meaning ½ the team is Squad A, ½ is Squad B. These groups will be how the team is split for a first half O and first half D, then swapping. Teams under 22 need to field 11 players at all times, rotation of the players crossing over Squad A and B is MANDATORY, details below. Substitutions for injury/rest are allowed, but everyone should get close to even playing time.
- B) If a Team is under 22 players, they still need to have the 2 platoon listings. Every player must start on Offense or Defense. As many as needed may start both. Substitutions will be made often (roughly 5 plays in at a time, or until completion of series, whichever is SHORTER\*) for players playing both ways so ALL players end up playing both ways throughout the game. A player cannot return to the other squad A or B from where they are listed until everyone on their squad has played “both ways.” This does NOT reset at halftime. Weight/Position does not supersede this, bigs cannot sub in small positions, they need to wait to sub through big positions only. Smalls can play big positions, but would not be required to. \* yes, a 1 play opportunity to go both ways could happen with a lost INT on the first play of the series.
- a) Example: 1st half, when someone is the starting MLB one Squad A and their offense(Squad B) needs an extra player for TE, they can play it for about 5 plays then they rotate out and do not return to playing with Squad B until all Squad A has been rotated through. If all Bigs have not subbed yet, but all smalls have, then they can go in for 5 more plays.

Pre game coach exchange of rosters, players on A or B squads is required with the WIAA ref present if possible.

If over 22, a player cannot play in the second half on the side of the ball they played in the first half, regardless of position. If injuries drop available players below 22, they can play in different positions (Inside outside for line and LB not just opposite side) and must rotate as noted above, not returning to the opposite squad until everyone rotates through.

**8. Line Clarifications:** 1) Width of O line gaps: 24i max 2) D Ends are D Line positions, 3 or 4 pt stance applies. 3) No touch and go into A gap. If blocked into A gap, ok to pursue. Must line up Heads up on Guards at the closest to Center.

**9. On Field coaching:** 1 coach on field, with at least 1 adult on sideline. If no adult is available on the sideline, the coach must come off the field and the other team is NOT required to match. Sideline ADULT does not have to be a COACH. NO on field Cameras. Recording Devices (No Drones Anywhere) are allowed only from Sidelines and End zones. No on field use of electronics, ear pieces, cameras including phones and body cams, or use of any phone function except during injury for emergency. There is no instant replay! **On Field Coaches should become quiet observers when the QB begins their cadence.** Offensive coach must start 15 yards behind the line of scrimmage and stay well behind the play if it flows backwards. The Defensive Coach must start 5 yards behind the deepest player/ref and stay well out of the way of the play. Ref may tell the QB to wait if D coaches are in the middle of fixing positions.

**10. Honor:** A number of these rules are open to Slight interpretation. Rotations are not going to be checked by the refs or any third party. **You are on your honor to coach all the time and manage games within the intent of the rules.** You are to be examples to these players, their families and representatives of our respective communities. Complaints on unfair coaching, rotations, etc... can be sent to your Organization's Leadership and they will discuss what/if action needs to be taken. Video from sideline/endline may be used if there is recording done by either team during a game, Organizational Leadership can require you to provide a copy within 24 hours.

**11. GAMES – Games will consist of (4) Ten minute Quarters played on a regulation-size field. The clock will only stop on all turnovers (including a turnover on downs), unless time out is called. Injuries will also stop the clock as needed at the Head Referee discretion. Halftime is 5 minutes.**

## **EQUIPMENT:**

1. CLEATS – may be worn but must be rubber. They cannot be longer than  $\frac{3}{4}$ " and have no less than 7 per shoe. (No baseball spikes. Soccer shoes are not recommended)
2. Football- The size of the football will be Pee-Wee
3. CUPS & SUPPORTERS – must be worn during ALL contact practices, scrimmages, and games.
4. MOUTH GUARDS – must be worn for ALL contact practices, scrimmages, and games.
5. HELMETS – No stickers may be worn on helmets. Shields may be worn but must be clear. The exception is a basic indication of Weight limit players and a basic stripe used to indicate a “platoon”
6. ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT – Gloves, forearm pads, elbow pads, and neck rolls are allowed. No bandanas or anything similar under helmets at any time. This is for the safety of the players as the exposed material could be used to pull down a player causing injury.
7. JEWELRY – cannot be worn at any time.

# **Additional LEAGUE RULES & DEFINITIONS:**

1. **BLITZING – NO BLITZING!** Defensive Linemen are the only ones who can cross the line of scrimmage at the snap. All other Defensive players must wait until the ball is handed off or the QB is outside the Tackles. If QB has committed to a Run, the rest of the Defense can go.
2. **BLOCKING** – There is no blocking below the waist. No Crack Back blocks are allowed.
3. **CADENCE** – Traditional cadence is READY – SET – HUT (HUT) or Down, Set, Go (Go), Down, Set, Hut.
  - a. **NO SILENT COUNTS.** No more than two HUTS allowed. The ball can only be snapped on the first or second HUT/GO, not before. No Audibles.
4. **CADENCE INTERFERENCE** – No player or person other than the Offensive team (usually the QB) shall use disconcerting acts or words prior to the snap-in an attempt to interfere with the Offense signals or movements.
5. **CHAINS & DOWN MARKER** – The home team must provide the chain and down marker. (These will be located on either the visitor's side or opposite the players)
6. **COACHES – Only One USA Football Certified** coach on the field at a time unless absolutely necessary for special circumstances. The second person can only help the individual that requires the special assistance; any action other than that would revert back to one USA Football Certified Coach only.
7. **COIN TOSS – NO DEFERRING!** Visiting team calls the toss and the winner must select offense, defense, or field direction. Before the start of the 2nd half, field direction and possession must change.
8. **DOWN BY CONTACT** – A player is down anytime his knee/shin/elbow touches the ground. A player is not considered down if only his hand touches the ground.
9. **EXTRA POINT** (Point after Try or PAT) – From the 2 ½ yard line.
  - 1 pts for a run/pass, 2pts for kick, not live, the ball starts at the line, can be tossed or carried back to the holder. The defense may raise hands and jump, with no forward movement or contact.
10. **FIELD GOALS** – None
11. **GAMES** – Games will consist of (4) Ten minute Quarters played on a regulation-size field. The clock will only stop on all turnovers (including a turnover on downs), unless time out is called. Injuries will also stop the clock as needed at the Head Referee discretion. Halftime is 5 minutes.
12. **HELPING THE RUNNER** – An offensive player shall not push, pull or lift the ball carrier to assist his forward progress.
13. **HUDDLE** – Huddles should be no more than 35 seconds. This time is from the time the ball is ready for play until the snap.
14. **KICKOFFS** – There are no Kickoffs. Teams start from their 35-yard line.
15. **MOTION** – The man in motion must be in a set position for at least one second before he moves and must move parallel or backward from the LOS.
16. **MOUTH GUARDS & CHIN STRAPS** – All mouth guards and chin straps must be in place before the QB starts his cadence. Failure to comply will be considered a Delay of the Game infraction.

**17. MUFF** - A Muff is the touching of a loose ball by a player in an unsuccessful attempt to secure possession.

**18. PUNTS** – No Punts, play fourth down as usual or declare punt and ball is moved 25 yards and Turn over on Downs. Ball will not be placed deeper than the 15 yard line.

**19. SAFETY** – The team scoring the safety gets the ball at their 35-yard line.

**20. SNAPPING THE BALL** - Centers MAY lift the ball to rotate the laces but may not rotate it end to end. The Center's body may be over the ball but his feet must remain behind the neutral zone and no part of his body, other than his hands on the ball may be beyond the ball.

**21. SPEARING / BUTT BLOCKING** - Not only is it illegal to intentionally use the crown of the helmet to drive into another player to punish him but is extremely dangerous for the player spearing. Repeated infractions are subject to ejection. Butt Blocking is similar to Spearing except that instead of using the crown of the helmet the player intentionally uses the frontal area or face mask as the primary point of contact.

**22. TACKLING** - No player may tackle another player by the face mask or any part of the helmet or around the neck or by the back of the jersey neck or shoulder pads. (Horse Collar) Additionally, no player may take any part of his body to intentionally hit another player high enough to cause that player to be “clotheslined.”

**23. TIMEOUTS** - 3 per half.

**24. TURNOVERS - A FUMBLE** between the Center and QB is considered a dead ball and the Offense retains possession at the same spot as before, but a loss of down and NO re-Huddling. With a running clock, this is to keep the game moving. A team may call a timeout if they have one available to Huddle again. If a ball exchange fumble happens twice without a successful play in a row, re-Huddling is allowed, if another down is available. If it happens on 4th down, turnover as usual at the original spot. This includes Shotgun snaps that never reach the QB or are dropped. All other FUMBLES are live and considered dead at the spot of the recovery. An INTERCEPTION is live and may be returned.

**25. WEATHER**- If a game makes it to half-time and is called because of weather it is considered complete.

## **INJURIES:**

1. Players must sit out at least two plays following an injury.
2. If a player loses consciousness, he will not be allowed to participate any further in that game.
3. If a player requires a doctor’s visit he must get a note from the doctor before returning to the team.
4. If a player appears to have sustained a head, neck, or back injury, DO NOT attempt to take off their helmet...and DO NOT attempt to move the player until the situation can be assessed.

## **SPORTSMANSHIP:**

1. Sportsmanship is one of the primary reasons for this program. If a player is penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct, or unnecessary roughness twice in 1 game, that player is subject to immediate ejection for the remainder of the game AND from the following game.

Additionally, Parents and Spectators are subject to removal from the park and/or having an unsportsmanlike penalty assessed against their team for inappropriate behavior.

➤ Examples would be the use of profanity, taunting, trash-talking, harassment, or arguing with the Referees, Players, or other Parents / Spectators. Additionally, excessive celebration by a player(s) (such as spiking the ball) will be considered unsportsmanlike.

2. Any Player, Coach, Parent, or Spectator striking any person, or intentionally contacting an Puntofficial, will be immediately ejected and/or removed from the park. If, at a future contest, after returning from an ejection or removal, the unsportsmanlike or inappropriate behavior continues, the offender is subject to banishment from the league/park for the remainder of the season.

## **PENALTIES:**

Penalties are enforced from either the LINE OF SCRIMMAGE (LOS) or the SPOT of the FOUL (SF). The most common penalties are listed below. All other penalties shall be enforced per the National Federation of State High Schools Association.

- **DELAY of GAME** is 5 Yards – LOS
- **ENCROACHMENT** is 5 Yards – LOS (Encroachment is defined as the defensive player breaking the plane of the Neutral Zone once the ball is ready for play and the Center has placed his hands on the ball. Once that plane is broken the defensive player does NOT have the opportunity to get back and re-set.
- **HELPING THE RUNNER** is 5 Yards – LOS
- **ILLEGAL FORMATION** is 5 Yards – LOS
- **ILLEGAL MOTION** is 5 Yards – LOS
- **ILLEGAL PARTICIPATION** is 5 Yards – LOS
- **INELIGIBLE RECEIVER DOWN FIELD** is 5 Yards – LOS
- **NO MOUTH GUARD / CHIN STRAP UNSNAPPED** is 5 Yards – LOS
- **HOLDING** is 10 Yards – LOS
- **BLITZING** is 10 Yards – LOS
- **BLOCK IN THE BACK** is 10 yards – SP
- **BLOCK BELOW THE WAIST** is 15 Yards – LOS or SP on KO and Punt Returns
- **CRACK BACK** is 15 Yards – LOS
- **TRIPPING** is 15 Yards – LOS
- **ILLEGAL USE OF HANDS** is 15 Yards – LOS (Hands to the Face for example)
- **PILING ON** is 15 Yards – SF
- **ROUGHING THE PASSER** is 15 Yards – LOS
- **PASS INTERFERENCE** is 15 Yards – LOS & Automatic 1st down
- **HIGH TACKLE / CLOTHESLINE** is 15 Yards – SF (See Tackling)
- **SPEARING / BUTT BLOCKING** is 15 Yards – SF
- **CLIPPING** is 15 Yards for Scrimmage plays – LOS
- **FACE MASK** is 15 Yards - LOS (O) SF – (D)
- **UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT** is 15 Yards – LOS (D) or SP (O) & Subject to disqualification if deemed flagrant. (See Sportsmanship)