

**2024 TWIN CITY NORTH
FOOTBALL LEAGUE**

7th and 8th Grade

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

DRAFT

JULY 17, 2024

2023 NORTH SUBURBAN FOOTBALL GENERAL RULES AND PROCEDURES

AREA DIRECTORS: YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING ALL OF YOUR COACHES WITH COPIES OF THIS DOCUMENT AND FOR REVIEWING ITS CONTENTS WITH YOUR COACHES.

1. Divisions of Play - There are two (2) divisions of play:

- 1) 7th Grade Unlimited
- 2) 8th Grade Unlimited

7th Grade Unlimited - Rosters may consist of 7th graders only. There is no weight limit or weight restriction. An area may roster a 6th grader if it desires, provided that the parents of the 6th grader sign an informed waiver. Occasionally we will allow a team to have a limited number of 8th graders of average size and ability or less to play a 7th grade schedule. This must be requested and approved by the Director in advance. Players must also be age 13 or under as of August 15, 2023.

8th Grade Unlimited - Rosters may consist of 7th and 8th graders. There is no weight limit or weight restriction. We normally schedule teams that are mixed grade against other similar teams or less talented 8th grade only teams, unless a team indicates it wants to play a more difficult schedule. Players must also be age 14 or under as of August 15, 2023. We attempt to construct competitive schedules based upon the size, skill and experience of all teams. Although we have become pretty good at this, it still remains an “art” and not a “science”. We rely on accurate assessments of their teams by Area Directors in this regard.

NOTE: NO PLAYER IS ALLOWED TO “REPEAT A GRADE” IN FOOTBALL IF HE IS HELD BACK IN SCHOOL WITHOUT WRITTEN APPROVAL FROM THE LEAGUE DIRECTOR PRIOR TO THE START OF THE SEASON. ANY ISSUES INVOLVING “OLDER PLAYERS”, WHETHER HELD BACK OR NOT, SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO THE LEAGUE DIRECTOR’S ATTENTION BEFORE THE SEASON STARTS.

2. “Reasonable Drawing Area” - It is the philosophy of this league that “outlaw teams,” “all-star teams,” or teams consisting of players outside a reasonable drawing area are prohibited. This league only succeeds when our coaches and area directors remain committed to establishing a competitive league within reasonable, common sense parameters. As a general rule, players from a team must come from the same high school area or the same bona fide youth sports organization that has an independent Board of Directors. (For example, Fridley and Andover draw their teams from their school district area) The league absolutely reserves the right to remove teams or areas that it finds are not abiding with the spirit of this philosophy. If you want to load up a team for the purpose of satisfying your ego, it is your absolute right to do so, but find somewhere else to play. ***Any program that turns away participants based upon ability raises some concerns in this regard. Note that this year rosters must be submitted to the league and payment in full must be made by August 22.***

3. “Host Team” - A “host team” is defined as a team at whose fields a game is scheduled at on a particular date. The host team is responsible for having the field marked properly, the chains out, and the lights on for all scheduled games on that particular date. ***Area directors are responsible for assuring that these items are provided for all games scheduled at their field.*** For example, for 3 games scheduled at 4:30, 6:00 and 7:30 on a Sunday at Fridley Commons Park, Fridley ***is responsible for having the field ready at 4:15***, properly marked, chains out, and lights on if needed. This responsibility continues for all of the games scheduled on that date. Our goal this year is to minimize "neutral site" games.
4. “Home Team” - The “home team” is the second team listed on the schedule and is responsible for providing the chain gang. (Remember that the ***“host team”*** provides the chains) ***WE DO NOT SWITCH CHAIN GANGS AT HALFTIME.***
5. Officials - Our officials are scheduled through Joe Hoffman, Dave Wisnieski and Jason Strasser. Joe Hoffman is now primarily responsible for scheduling all of the games in our league and should be the primary contact regarding issues with officials. On many days we are moving our best officials from lower level high school games to our games in an effort to have our best officials do as many games as possible. We also use good officials from several other groups of officials in an effort to cover all of the games with experienced officials. All of our officials are certified, and most of them are quality officials who also officiate freshman, sophomore and varsity contests. That being said, they do blow calls. Think for a moment how many calls are missed at varsity games with 5 man crews, and college and pro games with 7 man crews and replay. We are all competitive, but we must take extra steps to keep our teams and fans under control. There simply are not enough experienced officials to go around, and officials will not put up with any crap, especially from parents. We had difficulty last year with parent and coach problems, but our goal is to eliminate all such issues. Head coaches and area directors are reminded that they are responsible for keeping their parents, coaches, and fans under control. We can not allow coaches and parents to confront officials on the field or in the parking lot after the game. ***If a team is experiencing problems with an official, the area director of the team experiencing the problem should contact Joe Hoffman and John Swanson after the game.*** We will then deal with the problem in an objective manner. Remember that nothing positive ever results from a heated confrontation at the field.
6. Schedules - Teams with high quality lighted fields and teams from communities with multiple teams in a division usually get more “host games.” Please inform your coaches and parents of this fact in advance. In addition, coaches and parents should know that we usually schedule games in two, three or four game blocks in order to get officials. Some teams may only have two or three “host” games per season. It is not a bad idea to inform your parents in advance of the necessity of scheduling games in “blocks” and the fact that many teams may play only a couple of games at their “host” field. ***Area directors should also inform coaches and parents that we make a great effort every year to provide all teams with at least three “host games”, but sometimes this is impossible. Also note that we make every effort to minimize excessive travel.***

7. Rescheduling Games - Games can be rescheduled only in the most limited of circumstances. It is a tremendous hassle to reschedule games. ***Most of our scheduling “gaffes” in recent years have occurred when games are rescheduled, either to different dates or to different sites.*** We have experienced some difficulties in the past when games were rescheduled to either the Viking or Gopher stadium. We would prefer that games scheduled at either stadium be non-conference games, or, in the alternative, we are notified of the dates of these games during the initial scheduling process. We have also experienced nightmares in several past seasons because of the weather and because several teams dropped out after the schedules were drawn. In the event it becomes necessary to reschedule, the area director who desires to reschedule must contact all of the areas involved (remember, there will be at least two, and maybe more games scheduled at a particular field on a particular date), notify John Swanson, and also contact Joe Hoffman. After the area directors, John and the official’s coordinators have agreed upon the rescheduling, the website coordinator will be contacted and change the schedules on the website. Do not merely contact the website coordinator and assume the rescheduling has been done. Missing one or two players or your star halfback is not an acceptable reason to reschedule. We will attempt to work around basketball and hockey tryouts if we know in advance when the tryouts occur, but coaches and area directors can not expect the league to make last minute adjustments. We no longer regard ***last minute notification of*** basketball or hockey tryouts as an acceptable reason to reschedule. ***Area directors must do everything possible in advance to obtain hockey and basketball tryout dates, so we can schedule around these conflicts without having to juggle schedules in late September and early October.***
8. Bad Weather- Most rescheduling, of course, is the result of bad weather, which we sometimes experience in excess. First, there is no guarantee that any games postponed due to bad weather can be rescheduled, especially once we get into October. On days where the weather has been bad throughout the day or previous night, games must be cancelled before 4:30 pm (weekdays) or 10:00 am (weekends) to be cancelled in advance. If not cancelled before these times, they may only be cancelled at the field. Our basic bad weather procedure is summarized as follows:
 - a. Advance cancellation of an entire day’s schedule before the applicable 4:30 pm or 10:00 am deadline can only be initiated by Joe. Advance cancellation of games at a particular playing site is normally initiated by the host site’s Area Director.
 - b. In all circumstances of advance cancellation, communication will normally be between Joe and the Area Directors of the host playing sites affected. The Area Directors of each host playing sites are then responsible for contacting the Area Directors and coaches of the other teams playing at that site.
 - c. All communication in circumstances of advance cancellation should be by phone. The website and e-mail should not be relied upon to communicate advance cancellations. E-mails should be used to verify changes agreed upon by telephone, with the last step posting on the website after verification.

- d. If the games can't be cancelled in advance before the applicable cancellation deadlines, the games can only be cancelled at the field. The Area Director or designated representative may cancel the games at the field before they start if he or she determines that the field is unplayable or weather conditions at that site are too severe to play the games. If the Area Director or designated representative cancels the games in this manner, they should attempt to contact the Area Directors and coaches of the teams playing later games at that field on that date.
 - e. Once a game has started, officials shall determine whether a game should be suspended. Games that have completed the first half of play shall count as completed games. Suspended games that do not count as complete games shall only be completed if they have an impact on division championships or a wild card playoff qualification, as determined by the League Director.
 - f. Cancellation at the field automatically applies to all games at that field on that date. A game suspended mid-game means that subsequent games at that field on that date are cancelled.
9. Website – Coaches are required to report scores to the Website Coordinator after each game. Both the winning and losing coach of each game should report the game score. Remember, it does us no good to attempt to keep standings if we don't receive accurate scores from all games. Problems with scheduling, officials, parents or field sites should be directed to John Swanson and Joe Hoffman, and not to the website coordinator. The website coordinator is not responsible for fielding complaints and complaints should not go to the website.
10. Communication – We must make sure that we do not overly rely on the website and e-mail correspondence to the exclusion of voice communication. It is always a good idea to confirm a change that appears on the website or appears via e-mail with a telephone call, or to confirm an agreement reached over the telephone with an e-mail.
11. Lines of Communication - Parent and coach complaints and scheduling issues should first be addressed to the Area Director, and then forwarded to John Swanson or Joe Hoffman. It is not the Website Coordinator's job to field complaints or initiate schedule changes. The Website Coordinator's duties are only to post schedules, scores, and standings.
12. Parent and Fan Control - Area Directors and their coaches are responsible for the behavior of their parents and fans, and also assuring that their teams clean up their sideline immediately after games. Pick up your garbage! Area Directors must mark their fields in such a way to maintain a reasonable distance between the field and fans. This includes a 10 yard restraining line on fields that do not have a restraining fence. Area Directors are also reminded that in the 7th and 8th grade league, teams are on opposite sidelines, with fans on the same sideline as their team. Area directors are required to notify John Jason and Joe in advance if this is the case. We continue to have occasional, but still too frequent, issues with parents, and will no longer tolerate any type of offensive or abusive behavior from parents or other fans. These problems are not restricted to any particular community. Every community has had issues with out of control parents and fans at one time or another. Our officials have been instructed not to tolerate any such behavior, whether from fans, coaches, or players.

PLAYING AND MISCELLANEOUS RULES

National Federation Rules apply, with the following modifications:

1. Ten minute book rule stop time quarters, except that the referee will start the clock when the chains are set after a change of possession, unless the clock has been stopped for another reason. This is the “old” high school clock rule. We have found that this modification is needed to enable the games to be completed in 90 minute blocks. Time outs are back to book rule three (3) per half this year. Coaches should report officials who do not use proper time procedures immediately to Joe Hoffman and John Swanson. This is not “modified” stop time or any other type of timing method – it is high school book rule with the sole modification discussed above. All coaches should be advised that we play “book rule stop time” with the minimum adjustments described above.
2. Two points for a conversion kick one point for a conversion run or pass.
3. In the event of a tie game, only one (1) overtime period will be played (unless the game is a playoff game). If the game remains tied after one overtime, it ends in a tie. ***Coaches may not waive or modify this rule.***
4. Teams may use either a regulation ball or the next size down from regulation. The “name” of the next size down used to be “intermediate”, but is now referred to as “youth” by Wilson and Nike, but are referred to by different names by other manufacturers (“junior” by Rawlings, for example). As a general rule, a ball designated as appropriate for ages 12-14 by the manufacturer is an appropriate ball for our league. Balls designated for younger ages are not appropriate. Questions regarding ball size should be directed to John Swanson. Teams may use their own ball when they are on offense, but must arrange to get the ball in quickly. Officials become frustrated when this is not done efficiently. Any cleats legal per National Federation rules are allowed, except metal tipped cleats, and players are encouraged to wear rubber all-purpose cleats. Teams are encouraged, but not required, to number their offensive players consistent with National Federation rules. If a team is not able to number their players consistent with National Federation rules, they should advise the officials of this fact before the start of each game.
5. The league reserves the right to ban players, coaches, or parents for any act of unsportsmanlike or abusive behavior, including single incidents. Acts of unsportsmanlike and abusive behavior have increased significantly in recent years. Area Directors are ultimately responsible for policing the behavior of their coaches, players and parents, and most have done an excellent job. Where high school fields or other fields with restraining fences are used, fans must be in the stands or behind the restraining fences. If a team has problems with a particular official, the problem must not be addressed on the field. The Area Director should contact Joe Hoffman and John Swanson to resolve the problem after the game. We have removed a number of officials over the past several years for lack of effort, excessive tardiness, or lack of professionalism. ***Players or coaches who are ejected from a game are also suspended from the entire next game. A second ejection during the same season will result in the player or coach being suspended for the remainder of the season. Coaches and Area Directors are required to notify both Joe Hoffman and John Swanson if a player or coach has been ejected. Use of drones for any purpose and the videotaping of any games other than your own game is prohibited. Scouting must be done the old fashioned way.***

6. Coaches should be thoroughly familiar with the playing rules. We have experienced a few occasions over the years where the officials were confused about the level they were officiating and the rules. For example, it is strongly suggested that coaches meet with the officials, and remind them: "This is North Suburban 7th grade, we play ten minute stop-time quarters, etc."
7. There are no special restrictions on offenses, defenses, blitzing or anything else. This is straight football. ***There are no minimum playing time requirements, although the league strongly encourages teams to, at a minimum, play all of their players 1/4 to 1/3 of each game (discipline and attendance issues, of course, excepted).*** Each area is free to set their own playing time policies, however, and the league is not the playing time police. We encourage coaches and Area Directors to worry about their own program, and not worry about the other guys. Any person with any amount of common sense, experience, and intelligence knows that the programs that play the most players are the programs that are the most successful at the high school level. If a team decides not to play all of their players, that is their business, and their long term problem. ***The league may, however, place teams that it knows do not play all of their players in the toughest division.***
8. "Host Team" - The team at whose fields games are scheduled at on a particular date is the "host team" and is responsible for having the field marked, the lights on, and the chains out.
9. "Home Team" - The second team listed on the schedule is the home team and is responsible for providing the chain gang. We do not switch chain gangs at halftime.
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MISCELLANEOUS

1. **Reporting Scores** - Both winning and losing coaches should report the score of each game to the Website Coordinator. Remember that regardless of the mechanism for reporting scores, whether via web, e-mail, fax, or voice mail, the system requires coaches to report. Problems with scheduling, officials or field sites should be directed to John Swanson or Joe Hoffman, and not the Website Coordinator.
2. **Cooperation** - We all are competitive, we all want to win, and this league encourages high-level competition. Please remember, however, that this league has prospered because the coaches and directors have tempered their competitiveness with common sense, reasonableness, and a focus toward the long-term. Many of our coaches and area directors no longer, or have never had kids playing, and are committed to the long-term success of this league and of football in general. Please remember that football gets squeezed by the single-sport nuts, and football will not maintain its popularity unless we do things to encourage maximum participation.
3. **Serious Disputes** - Please do not get John Swanson and Joe Hoffman involved unless there is a significant problem that cannot be resolved.
4. **Playoffs** - Playoff formats vary according to divisions of play. As a general rule, teams in the tougher divisions can expect different playoff formats than teams in weaker divisions. Teams may request a reduced schedule per the below.

5. Reduced Schedule – In the past, a number of teams have requested a reduced schedule, usually because their kids are also playing school ball or have other conflicts. We will accommodate reduced schedule requests and will adjust fees accordingly.
6. Make-Up Dates Due to Bad Weather and COVID - We have found that it is extremely difficult to coordinate make-up games due to bad weather. Hopefully this year we are done with COVID related issues. The following procedures apply to make-up dates:
 - a. There is no guarantee that any games canceled on or after MEA week can be made up. In the event we have an excessive backlog of make-up games, only games that need to be played because they impact playoff eligibility will be made up.
 - b. In cases where only a limited number of games are impacted (i.e. bad weather postponement only at Andover and Ramsey involving the cancellation of 4 games) Joe and John will normally authorize the teams to reschedule on their own. In such cases the teams involved will have 3 days to reschedule. If the teams cannot agree within 3 days, the League will attempt to reschedule or use the designated make-up date. Rescheduled dates because of COVID must be scheduled after both teams affected have “served” the appropriate quarantine period, or in the alternative, all players from both teams have tested negative or State guidelines have otherwise been followed.
 - c. Coaches and Area Directors are reminded that all games scheduled for a field that are canceled on a particular date should be made up, if possible, on the same date. We recognize that this is not always possible, especially with COVID cancellations and as we get later in the season. John and Joe always try to reschedule games in pairs or tack them on to games already scheduled, as it is difficult and costly to obtain officials for a single game. Hopefully we are done with COVID related issues.
7. Avoiding Blow-Outs – Area Directors are required to counsel their coaches prior to the start of the season regarding running up the score. We have had a couple of distasteful blowouts in recent years where coaches were behaving in an unprofessional and unethical manner and clearly running up the score against an over-matched opponent. There is no excuse for this as we have never used points scored as any type of tie breaker. While occasional lopsided games are unavoidable, every coach should have a plan when they get way ahead or are playing a team that they know is over-matched. Obvious things to do include removing stud players, letting non-backs carry the ball, playing only a soft base defense with no blitzing or stunting, and requesting that running time be invoked earlier than norm. The continued survival of football lies primarily in our hands and it is our responsibility to continue to encourage, and not discourage, kids from playing.
8. Safety and Coaches Training - All coaches are required to have gone through the following education programs prior to the start of practice:
 - a. All coaches must go through the Trusted Coaches program, the USA Football program, or a similar program. MYAS is providing the Trusted Coaches program, which can be completed online, at a reduced rate to league participants. Contact Dawson Blanck at MYAS with any questions.

- b. All communities should be affiliated with “Heads Up” Football sponsored by USA Football, and all coaches must be knowledgeable in the principles of “Heads Up” tackling. Heads Up and Trusted Coaches are now partnering to offer all our communities a very reasonably priced package of programs. Contact Dawson Blanck at MYAS or USA Football with any questions.
- c. All coaches should go through one of the on-line education programs available for concussion education prior to the start of practice, and should be familiar with the MSHSL heat index competition guidelines.
- d. Teams must practice a minimum of one week before full contact starts. Coaches should take extreme care to assure that initial live contact drills are conducted in a safe manner. Focus must be on technique and size, strength and experience mismatches should be avoided in individual drills.
- e. The Minnesota State High School League website has a number of free educational and informational videos that can be linked through their website.
- f. ***ALL COMMUNITIES/AREAS ARE REQUIRED TO HAVE A DESIGNATED COVID CONTACT PERSON. WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT THERE WILL BE NO COVID ISSUES THIS YEAR, BUT COMMUNITIES MUST STILL REMAIN PREPARED FOR POSSIBLE COVID ISSUES.***