

# MOL Football

## Rules and Regulations

On behalf of the MOL Board of Directors, we would like to welcome you to MOL, and thank you for taking your time to volunteer, coach or referee. It is our intention that all board members, coaches and referees read and understand this document, so that all of us begin the season with the same understanding of our rules and how we intend to referee the games.

The objective of MOL football, our rules, and how we referee the games, are very simple:

- Create a fun and enjoyable experience for all of our players
- Promote fair play
- Protect the safety and wellbeing of all players involved
- Achieve these objectives by communicating with and educating the players/coaches first, and by penalizing as a last resort

### Coaches' Code of Conduct

The MOL Board of Directors has high expectations for our coaches. Not only do we expect you to provide a wonderful experience for your team members, but we also expect you to be examples for your players, your parents, and our young referees. Therefore:

- We expect coaches to ensure the good sportsmanship of themselves, their players, and their parents.
- We ask that all communication with referees be respectful and only between you and the referee. Communication with referees should be limited to questions and interpretations, not for complaints or attempted influence.

### Expectations for MOL Referees

MOL referees are typically local high school or junior high kids that have previously played MOL. While there is only a minimal up front training program, we do mentor the referees on a weekly basis and set forth the following expectations:

- We expect our referees to be familiar with the rules as presented in this document
- We expect referees to hustle and be involved in every play
- We expect referees to blow the whistle loudly and decisively to signal a play is over
- We expect the ball to be spotted accurately where the flag was pulled
- We expect our referees to talk to the kids and help them learn the rules

- We instruct our referees to call as few penalties as possible. Penalties are only to be called when there is a clear safety issue or a clear advantage gained by a rule violation. For example, minor movement on the line of scrimmage prior to the snap, that doesn't give either team an advantage, should not be called. If an official is not sure, we ask them not to call a penalty. Coaches, please convey this to your parents! Parents who are not aware of our refereeing philosophy are typically our biggest problems!
- If the referees are not sure about something, we ask them to ask for help. Supervisors and board members are always at JM to step in if appropriate.

## MOL Rules Overview

### General

MOL games will be played under generally accepted football rules, with modifications / clarifications outlined below. Several of our rules are unique to flag football in an attempt to protect the safety of our players, designed to compensate for not wearing pads and helmets. If a situation arises during a game that is not covered by the rules as stated below, the coaches/referees may consult the MOL Board Member overseeing the game for a ruling. That ruling will be final.

- All games will be played on an 80 yard field with 10 yard end zones. Field lines will be drawn at the 20 yard lines and mid field.
- Each team will field nine players. A minimum of seven players is needed to play the game, otherwise the game will be forfeited.
- Prior to the posted date of the first practice game, each team may practice two times. After the practice game, teams may practice one time per week. No exceptions!
- Games will be scheduled by the league scheduling manager. If the JM fields are closed due to rain/inclement weather conditions, the game will be rescheduled at the discretion of the league scheduling manager.
- All players are expected to play a minimum of half of the game. This may be accomplished in several ways – players can play two full quarters, can play all offensive or defensive snaps, or any other appropriate system. There is free substitution. Please respect this rule, as it is easily the most complained about issue in MOL.
- The game is flag football. All plays end when the offensive player's flag is pulled (absolutely no tackling) or the runner's body touches the ground, or by an incomplete pass, fumble, or offensive player stepping out of bounds.
- First downs will be determined by advancing 10 yards (as measured by chains)
- Spotting of the ball – when a player's flag is pulled, the ball will be spotted at the spot where the flag is pulled (not where the ball is). At the goal line, the ball carrier must have one foot on the goal line or in the end zone before the flag is pulled to be a TD/extra point. If the ball carrier reaches the ball over the line, but a foot is not on the line/in the end zone before the flag is pulled, it is not a touchdown/extra point.
- Games will be four, 12 minute quarters. Time will be running time, with the following exceptions:

- final two minutes of each half, when the clock will stop on plays out of bounds, incomplete passes, first downs (until the chains are properly positioned) and penalties
- each team will be able to call three time outs per half – 45 seconds each
- the clock will stop for a two minute warning
- One coach for each team may be on the field during play to call offensive plays, set defenses, etc. However, once the ball is snapped, the coach on the field must be silent until the play has ended.
- The referees will conduct a coin toss prior to the game. The team that wins the toss may choose to start the game on offense or defense. The team that loses the toss may determine which direction they want to attack/defend. The second half will be the opposite of the first half.
- There will be no kickoffs in games. After a score (touchdown or safety), the other team will begin play at their own 20 yard line.
- Rough play with an attempt to injure or intimidate will not be tolerated! While we all know football is a physical game – even flag football – MOL will not tolerate rough play that demonstrates an intent to injure or intimidate.

## Equipment

- All players must play with league issued jerseys, league issued flags (worn over the jerseys), and shorts that have no red in them (due to flags being red).
- All players must wear mouthguards during games, and are strongly encouraged to do so during practice.
- Players may wear rubber molded cleats. Screw-in cleats are not allowed.
- Hats, gloves, and jewelry are not allowed.
- Hard casts are not allowed, even if wrapped.
- Prior to the start of each game, players will line up for a referee inspection to ensure the equipment rules above are followed

## Offense

- Huddle - all players must be in the huddle prior to the snap. “Sleeper” plays are illegal. This rule does not prohibit running a no huddle offense.
- Time in huddle – we expect coaches to call plays quickly and get their teams to the line of scrimmage to run the play. It is optimal for the players to run as many plays as possible. If the referee believes a team is taking excessive time in the huddle or at the line of scrimmage (more than 30 seconds), he will offer one warning before calling a penalty for delay of game.
- Legal formations – the offensive team must have at least five players on the line of scrimmage and the remaining players in the backfield (at least one step off the line of scrimmage). There must be two players lined up within one yard of the center on the line of scrimmage.
- Shifts/motion – the offensive team may shift or motion a player, but they must be set for one full second before the ball is snapped.
- Eligible receivers – In the AFC and NFC, the two “guards” lined up within one yard of the center are not eligible. All other players are eligible receivers. In the PAC12, all players are eligible.

- Legal snaps – the ball may be snapped to the quarterback either under center or in shotgun formation. If a shotgun snap hits the ground, the referee has the discretion to blow the ball dead if, in his judgment, a possible recovery of the muffed snap creates a dangerous situation (possible head to head contact as the QB is trying to pick up the ball). If a muffed snap is fielded cleanly and no dangerous situation is created, the play will go on. If the play is blown dead, the ball will be spotted at the original line of scrimmage, loss of down.
- Passing – the ball may be thrown to any of the eligible receivers, and must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage. The passer may not throw the ball away to avoid a sack. If the referee deems that the passer did not throw the ball in the vicinity of an eligible receiver, in an effort to avoid a sack, intentional grounding will be called and the ball will be spotted at the point of the throw.
- Running – a player carrying the ball may not:
  - Charge, or intentionally run into a defender. The runner must make a best effort to avoid contact with the defender.
  - Spin, or make a 360 degree turn, in an effort to avoid his flags being pulled.
  - Flag Guard, either by intentionally covering the flag with the hand or ball or holding onto belt/”buckle” with one hand, or by intentionally knocking the defenders hand away from the flag. A ball carriers normal course of running shall not constitute flag guarding.
- The runner will be marked down when:
  - the flag is pulled by a defender
  - the flag falls off the ball carrier, and is then touched by the defender with one hand on any part of the ball carrier’s body
  - the runner steps out of bounds
  - any part of the runner’s body - other than his feet or hands -touches the ground
- Receiving – a receiver must have full control of the ball before the ball hits the ground, or one foot in bounds before stepping out, for a legal catch. A reception is considered good if the player receiving the ball is down, but catches the ball before it hits the ground.
- Blocking – all blocking is to be done with semi extended or extended arms, with openhands, where the blocker’s hands may contact the front of the defender’s body, in the area above the waist and below the neck. There will be absolutely no blocks below the waist, in the back, or above the shoulders, and absolutely no tripping. Grabbing the jersey, or holding the defensive player in any way, is not allowed.
- Blocking away from the line of scrimmage - blocks away from the line of scrimmage can only be “screen” blocks, not “run through” blocks. Examples are lead blocks from running backs, pulling guards, and “crack back” blocks from wide receivers. While players can still block away from the line of scrimmage, they are expected to screen the defender, NOT run through the defender. If such a block is deemed to be overly aggressive and/or knocks a defender off his feet, a penalty shall be assessed.
- Fumbles – once a player secures possession of the ball, there are no fumbles in MOL. If the ball is inadvertently dropped, stripped, or in any way lost by the offensive player, the ball is dead at that point.

- Hard counts – there are no hard counts, or double “go” counts allowed in the PAC12. Going after the first “go” is allowed in the NFC and AFC. However the referee will enforce a delay of game penalty if he feels the offense was simply trying to draw the defense offside with no intent to snap the ball.

## Defense

- Alignment – defensive players may align themselves as they wish, with two exceptions:
  - no defender may line up directly over the center
  - defensive backs must line up at least two yards from wide receivers. “Bump and run” coverage is not allowed.
- Offside – if a defensive player lines up past the tip of the football (in the neutral zone), he is technically offside. If a player either lines up offside or jumps a snap count, they have the opportunity to get back onside before the ball is snapped, as long as they do not touch an offensive player – and as long as the referees determine the “jump” was not an intentional effort to cause the offense to move prematurely. The referee will only call an offside penalty when contact with an offensive player is made, the offside is deemed intentional, or the offside creates an advantage for the defense.
- Flag pulling – the defender must make a reasonable attempt to pull the ball carrier’s flags, with the exception of running through, or tackling the ball carrier. It is legal for a defender to “square up” the ball carrier and attempt to pull both flags, as long as they break down prior to doing so. If the ball carrier is near the sideline, the defender must still attempt to pull the flag – they may not shove the ball carrier out of bounds. An attempted “force out” will be considered a tackle, and penalized as such.
- “Tackling” – Tackling anywhere on the field is a penalty. Defenders must make every effort to pull the ball carrier’s flag only. A defender may not grab a ball carrier’s clothing as a means of slowing them down so a flag may be pulled. This will be viewed as a form of Tackling. An unintentional grab of clothing close to the flag or belt is not considered Tackling so long as the defender immediately releases the clothing and it does not impair the runner’s momentum. If a referee determines that someone is intentionally tackling a ball carrier and the safety of the ball carrier is put at risk, the referee may eject the defender. Further, if the referee determines that a defender intentionally tackles an offensive player in an attempt to prevent a touchdown, a touchdown shall be awarded.
- Taking on blocks – defensive players can use their hands to ward off blockers, push or pull the blocker out of the way, and/or spin away from a block in attempt to get to the ball carrier. A defensive player is prohibited from striking a blocker above the shoulders. A defensive player may never strike the center while his head is still down looking to deliver a shotgun snap (commonly referred to as “canning the center”)
- Pass rush - a defensive player may not raise his arms in the Quarterback’s face. This rule is in effect to avoid QBs being inadvertently struck in the head and/or throwing arm. It is illegal for a pass rusher to raise his arms within two yards (referee’s discretion) of the QB and block, deflect, or impede a pass in any way

- (impedes means that in the referee's judgment the raised hands altered the QBs throw in any way). It is illegal for a rusher to run into/rough the QB.
- Pass Interference – defenders cannot bump the receiver at the line of scrimmage, and may not significantly alter the receiver's route in any way while the ball is in the air.
- Interceptions in the end zone may be run out, or if the interceptor is downed in the end zone, the ball will be placed at the 20 yard line.

## Special Teams

- Point After Touchdown (PAT) – the scoring team has the option to go for one point or two. For one point, the ball will be spotted three yards from the goal line. For two points, the ball will be spotted five yards from the goal line. A defensive interception on a PAT is a dead ball and the attempt fails.
- Punts – an offensive team can choose to punt. If so, they are to inform the referee. The kicking team gets a “free punt,” meaning that neither the offensive or defensive team may cross the line of scrimmage until the ball is punted. Both the offensive and defensive teams must have at least five players on the line of scrimmage. Also, a dropped snap may be picked up and punted (no dangerous situation is created).

## Overtime

- If the game is tied at the end of regulation, we will play overtime. MOL overtime rules:
  - A) There will be a coin flip prior to overtime. The winner of the coin flip may choose to play offense or defense first during the first overtime period. If there are subsequent overtime periods, teams will alternate who plays offense first
  - B) Each team gets four opportunities to score from the 10 yard line. If they score, they may choose to go for one point or two. If after an overtime period one team is ahead, they are the winner. If the game remains tied, we play subsequent overtime periods: maximum of three during the regular season, or until there is a winner during playoffs
  - C) A change of possession results in the team losing any remaining opportunities in the overtime period.

## Penalties

- Penalties will be assessed as either “Minor” or “Major” penalties. In the PAC12, Minor penalties will be three yards and major penalties five yards. In the NFC and AFC, Minor penalties will be five yards and Major penalties will be 10 yards.
- No MOL penalty will result in an automatic first down. A first down will only occur if the assessed penalty yardage results in a first down.
- Any penalty called for “rough play” with an intent to “injure or intimidate” can also result in the following, at the sole discretion of the referee:
  - A) the player being removed for the remainder of the offensive/defensive series

B) the player being removed from the game and the incident being reported to the League Commissioner for possible additional discipline

If a player has been removed for a series, and is called for rough play again, that player will be removed from the game.

- A “tackling” penalty assessed to a defender whose tackle is judged to prevent a touchdown will result in a touchdown being awarded.
- See all MOL penalties, designations, etc. on the attached “Chart of Penalties”.

### Chart of Penalties

Penalty	Minor/Major	Assessed from...	Down
Delay of Game	Minor	Line of Scrimmage	Repeat
Illegal Formation	Minor	Line of Scrimmage	Repeat
Off sides	Minor	Line of Scrimmage	Repeat
Illegal procedure	Minor	Line of Scrimmage	Repeat
Illegal forward pass	Minor	Line of Scrimmage	Loss of down
Intentional grounding	Minor	Ball placed at spot of foul	Loss of down
Ineligible receiver downfield	Minor	Line of Scrimmage	Repeat
Charging or spinning	Minor	From spot of foul***	Loss of down
Flag guarding	Minor	From spot of foul***	Loss of down
Offensive pass interference	Minor	Line of Scrimmage	Loss of down
Illegal use of hands/holding/block in	Minor	Line of Scrimmage	Repeat
Block below the waist	MAJOR	Line of Scrimmage	Repeat
"Run through block"	MAJOR	Line of Scrimmage***	Repeat
"Tackling"	MAJOR	From spot of foul	Repeat
Defensive pass interference	MAJOR	Line of Scrimmage	Repeat
Illegal hands in QBs face	Minor	Line of Scrimmage	Repeat
Roughing the passer	MAJOR	Line of Scrimmage	Repeat
Unsportsmanlike conduct/ Personal foul/Rough play	MAJOR	From spot of foul***	Repeat

\*\*\* Such penalties called on the offense behind the line of scrimmage shall be assessed from the line of scrimmage

# Appendix

## Playoff Tiebreaker Rules

1. Most Wins
2. If teams are still tied, then Least Losses
3. If teams are still tied, then Head-to-Head among the tied teams (only if all tied teams played each other)
4. If teams are still tied, then Lowest Points against in games among the teams that are tied (only if all tied teams played each other)
5. If teams are still tied, then Lowest Points against in all games against common opponents among all tied teams
6. If teams are still tied, then Lowest Points against in all regular season games
7. If teams are still tied, then coin flip

If a tie involves more than two teams, once the tie is broken and a winner determined, the tie breaker logic 'resets' and is applied to the remaining teams in the tie.

## Replacement Players

If a coach has 7 or more players, the team plays, and the opponent is not obligated to match a lower number of players. If a team has less than 7 players, that team forfeits the game. (Coaches are encouraged to play a game for fun in a forfeit situation, since MOL is about kids playing football, not team records.)

If necessary, a team can use "replacement players" to get a team from 7 to 9 players. The rules for replacement players are as follows:

- Replacements can only be used for the 8th and/or 9th player, not a 10th or more
- Replacement players must be of equal or later pick position from the draft
- Replacement players cannot be first or second round selections, only third and lower
- Opposing coach and division commissioner have to agree to the use of replacement players; replacement player's existing coach should be notified out of courtesy
- If a replacement player has been added and then an original player attends (unexpectedly bringing the total player count to 10), the replacement player can play up to half the game
- Players from a lower division are not allowed for safety reasons, players from a higher division are not allowed

Please remember that this is MOL, and things happen. The best solution to this problem is in the draft. Coaches should not draft their favorite baseball team, or 9 travel soccer players. One of the main things that kids remember about their years in MOL is being on teams with kids from throughout our communities.