



MPA Football Committee

7 vs. 7 Football Recommendation for Return to Participation

Referencing Orders and Guidelines from the Following Resources

National Federation of State High School Associations
Governor's Office - State of Maine
Maine Department of Education
Maine Department of Economic & Community Development
Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Principals' Association Sports Medicine Committee

INTRODUCTION

This guide is an appendix to the Maine Principals' Association School Sports Guidance. The following recommended rules for 7 vs. 7 football remove offensive and defensive line play, maximizes opportunities for physical distancing and eliminates collisions/tackling, effectively reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission among Maine high school football players. The MPA Football Committee members are doing their best to include all necessary information to assist football schools in the proper procedures to provide this activity while following established State of Maine guidelines.

Our Mission: It is our mission to allow programs to continue to develop players for the future while having fun. Now, more than ever, our student-athletes need to have an opportunity to be around their coaches and peers in a safe and controlled environment while having fun. This activity will be competitive, and the following structure will help support that goal.

Practice Guidelines and Expectations

It is understandable that programs will want to build on football skills for the future seasons beyond 2020. However, all training exercises must follow the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development and MPA School Sports Guidance.

Facial coverings: Face coverings are required to be worn by coaches, staff, and officials always. Players must wear face coverings when not engaged in active play, face coverings are not recommended for players during high intensity play.

The MPA will **NOT** be hosting a post-season for the fall of 2020. It was the decision of the MPA Football Committee that 7 vs. 7 format is a safe way to allow student-athletes to stay engaged and participate in as many games/events as possible, rather than focusing on a postseason.

Schools may schedule a maximum of 10 games prior to the end of the fall season within their geographical region. The last playable date will be Saturday, November 14, 2020.

Starting the game:

- A. Each team can have no more than 7 players on the field at a time.
- B. 15 - minute quarters (continuous running clock for each quarter except the clock will stop for timeout, injury, penalty, and score). Time will start after the opening kickoff of each half, or when the ball is first snapped from the 30 - yard line. 3 time outs per half, normal halftime. Clock will stop for timeout, injury, penalty, and score.
- C. Receiver gloves are acceptable equipment and are encouraged.
- D. To include all position groups, it is a recommendation that a Lineman group will play Quarters 1 & 3, Backs & Receivers play Quarters 2 & 4. Defensive players in quarters 2 & 4 who also are offensive lineman can play offense during quarters 1 & 3.
- E. Quarterbacks during quarter 1 & 3 can be a traditional quarterback, but teams are not limited to that (if you have a lineman who you want to play QB, that is allowed).
- F. A central timekeeper should be designated. Schools with scoreboards may supply a timer for the games.

Moving the ball:

- A. Offensive plays must all be passes.
- B. Teams may choose to kick the ball off each half and after a score, this is for the development of the kicker's skills. Regardless of where the ball lands, the offense will start their drive on their own 30 – yard line. The kicking team's defense can be on the field with the kicker, but there is no return or need for the receiving team's flag to be pulled since the ball will be spotted on the 30 – yard line.
- C. Teams may choose to punt on 4th down. The Offense must declare that they will be punting and can have a long snapper and kicker on the field. The defense will have 2 players to receive the punt. If the punt is caught, that will be the point of possession for the offense. If the receiving team does not touch the punt, the point in which the ball comes to rest is the point of possession. If the receiving team muffs the ball forward, the ball will be put in play where it was first touched. If the ball is muffed **backwards by the receiving team**, the point in which the ball comes to rest is the point of possession. There are **NO** fake punts.
- D. Offense teams may elect to kick a Field Goal / PAT. The offense can have a long snapper, holder, and kicker for the FG/PAT attempt. The defense will not have anyone on the field. An unsuccessful FG attempt is a dead ball and the opposing team takes possession at the original line of scrimmage.
- E. The QB is allowed 4.0 seconds to throw the ball, and the defense is **NOT** allowed to rush the passer. The Referee starts a stopwatch, or counts the four seconds by arm count as in basketball if stopwatch is not available, on the snap of the ball from the center and stops the watch as soon as the QB releases the ball.
 - i. If release is under 4.0 seconds, the play goes on.
 - ii. If the Referee sees that the clock has exceeded 4.0 seconds, he waits until the play is over (the play is not blown dead), then brings the ball back to the original line of scrimmage with a loss of down.
- F. All passes must be forward. A pass caught behind the line of scrimmage must be a forward pass. Backward pass infraction would be a loss of down.
- G. Once a forward pass has been thrown, a backward pass (lateral) is allowed.

Rules:

- A. No blocking or tackling.
- B. It is recommended that teams use flag belts to eliminate forceful tagging and physical contact. If flags are not available, teams may adopt 1-hand touch (at the hip area) rule.

- C. A Receiver/Ball Carrier is legally down when the flag is pulled. Excessive force by shoving, pushing, or striking a blow will be penalized by automatic 1st Down and 15 yards. Expulsion of a player(s) if ruled unsportsmanlike and/or flagrant.
- D. Fumbles are dead balls at the spot with the last team retaining possession. A muffed snap is not a fumble/dead ball. The 4.0 second count remains in effect on snaps.
- E. Each team will have **40 seconds** to snap the ball once the previous play ends (a whistle will sound ending the play). After any administration stoppage, the offense will have **25 seconds** to snap the ball (once it has been marked ready for play). Two delay-of-game penalties in the same possession results in a turnover. A delay-of-game penalty on the extra-point try results in a turnover.
- F. Responsibility to avoid contact is with the defense. There will be **NO** jamming, deliberate bumping, or grabbing. These actions will result in a **defensive holding penalty**.
- G. If a defender crosses the line of scrimmage, it is defensive off-sides (5 yard penalty)
- H. An Interception is a live ball and may be returned. The intercepting team takes possession where downed. Any fumble on the return will be considered a dead ball.
- I. The offensive center is not an eligible receiver (teams must have a center as one of their 7 players). The ball must be snapped from the ground, between the snapper's legs. The center does become an **eligible defender** when there is an interception by the defense.
- J. There will be an area referred to as the tackle box that extends 3 yards on both sides of the center and 3 yards deep into the backfield. No eligible receiver may align within the tackle box.
- K. No coaches will be allowed on the field, they need to coach from the sideline.

Scoring:

- A. Touchdown = 6 points
- B. PAT = 1 point (kicked from the 3 yard line), 2 points (passed from the 10 yard line).
- C. FG = 3 points
- D. Safety = 2 points & possession of the ball, 1st & 10 at the 30 yard line.

Secondary Coverage: Coverage will be the choice of each participating team.

Officials:

- A. It is recommended that 3 Officials be assigned for each game (Referee, Side Judge, and Back Judge).
- B. The Referee will be designated to keep the 4.0 second clock.