# IHSAA UNFIED SPORTS® FLAG FOOTBALL RULES IN A NUTSHELL

- Teams have no more than 3 Unified Student Athletes and 2 Unified Student Partners on the field at a time
- Safety is the primary consideration—flag football is a NON-CONTACT sport—stationery "screen blocking," but no moving blocks; no kick offs or punts; no returns of fumbles or interceptions, etc.
- Games consist of two 20-minute halves (running clock except last 2 minutes) with 1 time out per team each half
- Unified Flag Football is played with a Wilson Youth football on a field that is 60 yards by 25 yards

## 200-1.1 Definition of Participants:

a. Unified Student Athlete: A Unified Student Athlete is a student who is receiving special education and related services pursuant to an individual education program based on a cognitive, developmental and/or intellectual disability.

b. Unified Student Partner: A Unified Student Partner is a student that meets the eligibility criteria outlined in General Eligibility rules 1-20, but is NOT identified by the school as a Unified Student Athlete.

## Coaches:

In order to be eligible to coach Unified Flag Football a coach must meet the criteria necessary to coach an IHSAA sport under IHSAA By-Laws Rule 7, successfully completed the NFHS course on Unified Sports®, and attend Unified Sports® Flag Football rules training in person or on-line.

## Fundamentals:

- All possessions, except following an interception, start at the offensive team's 5-yard line.
- The offense has four plays to cross midfield. Once the offense crosses midfield, they have four additional plays to score a touchdown.
- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield or score a touchdown in a prescribed number of plays, possession of the ball changes and the opposite team starts at their 5-yard line.
- The ball carrier may not spin, dive, hurdle, stiff arm, or use either arm to shield a defender from grasping his/her flag.
- The quarterback (player receiving snap) may NOT advance the ball beyond line of scrimmage
- Laterals and backward passes are not allowed. All passes must be forward from behind the line of scrimmage and be caught beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Screen blocking is the only form of legal blocking that can be used by any player at any time.
- Dead Ball - play is ruled dead when the ball carrier's flag is pulled, loses his/her flag, steps out of bounds or any part of their body other than the hand or foot touches the ground; a receiver catches a ball without his/her flags attached, a pass is intercepted (no returns); or when a snap, pass, or lateral strikes the ground.
- There is no advance of an interception or fumble
- Fumbles - A ball fumbled by the runner is dead when it hits the ground and remains in possession of the offensive team (unless it is fourth down). If fumbled forward, the ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble. If fumbled backwards, it is marked where it hits the ground.
- The ball is spotted near the middle of the field for each down by the Referee
- The forward progress spot is the position of the ball when the player is declared down (carrier's flag belt is pulled or anything other than the runner's hand or foot touches ground).
- "No Running Zones" are located 5-yards before the midfield line and goal line. Any ball snapped from these zones must be passed. The purpose of "No Running Zones" is to avoid short yardage power running situations.
- A Unified Student Partner may NOT pass to another Unified Student Partner (to fully include Unified Student Athlete participation and prevent Unified Student Partner dominance).
- Partners MAY handoff to another partner.

**Special Olympics Indiana will provide a price list from the official vendor for schools to purchase approved equipment or a starter kit**: (pylons, 2 Wilson all weather youth footballs, multi-colored cones, boundary marker set, mouth guards, approved flag belts and equipment duffle bag).

**Schools will need to provide** two sets of jerseys (home and away) and affix patches provided by Special Olympics Indiana.