



OPTIMIST
INTERNATIONAL

Friend of Youth

Lapel Optimist Youth Football (3rd-4th)

Rules Handbook 2017

(Version 2.0)

Junior Division

(3rd & 4th Grades)

Updated 8/2017

2017 Lapel Optimist Youth Football Rules

These rules are intended to guide the coaches in how the game is to be played. Coaches are advised to remember that our players are young children and our job is to teach how the game is to be played and create a positive experience for the children and their families.

1. ELIGIBILITY

- a. Senior Division – 3rd & 4th Graders ----- 80 Yard Field
(Based on 2017 – 2018 Fall School Year Grade)

2. WEIGHT LIMITS

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| a. Classification | Junior Div. |
| Offensive Backs | 95 lbs or less |

All Offensive and Defensive Linemen must play interior line positions on both offense and defense. On Defense, interior linemen must be within one yard of the line of scrimmage. Interior line positions do not include the offensive and defensive end positions.

- b. A player lined up as an offensive end may not carry the ball unless he receives a forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage or receives a kick-off.
- c. A player exceeding the weight limit for their division is required to have a black "X" on the top of their helmet to indicate that they cannot carry the ball. Exception exists on kick-off if a player with a black "X" has the ball kicked directly to them. (Reference Rule I-3)
- d. Each coach must have in his possession a copy of the official roster for his team.

3. EQUIPMENT

- a. Players may wear molded rubber or plastic stud cleats. Metal cleats and metal studs are not allowed.
- b. Each player must wear a mouth guard.
- c. **Helmets must be LOYF issue. (Unless approved by Program Director)**
- d. **Shoulder Pads must be LOYF issue (Unless Approved by Program Director)**
- e. Pee Wee size football will be used for 3rd/4th grade games.

4. PLAYING TIME AND POSITIONS - REGULAR SEASON

These rules are intended to promote youth football by increasing the amount and quality of playing time for players.

- a. All players must have an assigned starting position either on offense or defense or both. The player must play their position unless they are hurt or refuse to enter the game. If the player will not participate the Program Director needs to be contacted to discuss with the player and the parents. (This does NOT include special teams).

- b. There are at least three captains per team per game.

5. LENGTH OF GAME

- a. Each quarter is 8 minutes running clock.
 - i. Clock will stop for time outs.
 - ii. Clock will stop after a touchdown.
 - iii. Clock will run except for a penalty or incomplete pass but will restart upon the referee placing the ball and blowing the whistle to start the clock.
 - iv. Clock will stop for the **“Two Minute Warning”** at the end of the 2nd quarter and the 4th quarter. The clock will stop for incomplete passes as well as out of bounds plays and will re-start at the snap of the ball.
- b. Each team is allowed three - one minute time outs per half.
- c. Half time is 5 minutes.
- d. Teams will only change goals at half.

6. COACHES AND COACHES' CONDUCT

- a. Head coaches must be at least 21 years old.
- b. All coaches must have a back ground check.
- c. And must be an active member of the Lapel Optimist Club.
- d. All head coaches must complete the NFHS concussion training.
- e. All head coaches must complete the NFHS Heat Illness Prevention.
- f. Each team is allowed one head coach. Only registered coaches and assistants may be in the bench area during a game. No more than four coaches per team.
- g. Only one coach is allowed on the field during the game.
 - i. Once the offensive huddle breaks the coach on the field (offensive and defensive) cannot speak to, or communicate with their players in ANY way (i.e. hand gestures, etc.). A violation of this rule is a 5 yard penalty.
 - ii. The coaches on the sidelines can still communicate once the huddle breaks.
- h. Additional coaches are permitted on the playing field only in the case of any injury, if requested by the officials, or at timeouts.
- i. Coaches must be careful to NOT inflame the parents of either team by arguing with officials or other coaches. Only the head coach is allowed to address the lead official.
- j. Unsportsmanlike conduct will result in a 10 yard penalty.
- k. Coaches are not to “argue calls”. Coaches are instructed to advise players to respect calls even if the coach disagrees. If a coach argues a call with an official or coach they will be penalized 10 yards for Unsportsmanlike conduct and ejected from a game. No exceptions.
- l. Coaches will not make a negative remark or gesture to an opposing player, opposing coach, referee, parents or program official. If a coach does make a negative remark or gesture a flag will be thrown. If the coaches receive two flags the head coach will be ejected from a game and must leave the field immediately or the game will be forfeited to the opposing team. The coach will need to report to the program director within 48 hours of the ejection. Depending on the

situation a hearing may be called with the director & board which could result in a suspension for one game or the entire season. The ruling is at the discretion of the director & board.

- m. The Program Director will terminate a coach if the coach has previously been ejected from a game and he has a second violation of these rules.

7. PLAYERS' CONDUCT

- a. During games players must remain within their team's sideline box.
- b. Unsportsmanlike conduct on the part of any player will result in a 10 yard penalty. An official may eject an offender from the game at their discretion.
- c. Fighting, intentional kicking, kneeling, foul language or use of fists is cause for immediate ejection from the game. Any player with a second violation/unsportsmanlike penalty will be reviewed by the program director & board for possible suspension during the season.

8. PENALTIES

- a. The clock will stop for the penalty call to be assessed. The clock will resume once the ball is placed. Exception exists during "Two Minute Warning" unless referee determines the violation to be committed in order to stop the clock.

Penalty	Distance (Yds)	Spot for Mark	Consequence
Illegal Procedure	5	Scrimmage	Dead Ball-Replay Down
Encroachment	5	Scrimmage	Dead Ball-Replay Down
Offside	5	Scrimmage	Dead Ball-Replay Down
Clipping	10	Scrimmage	Replay Down if Accepted
Holding	10	Scrimmage	Replay Down if Accepted
Face Mask (Defensive)	10	Scrimmage	Automatic First Down
Face Mask (Offensive)	10	Scrimmage	Replay Down if Accepted
Pass Interference	10	Scrimmage	Automatic First Down
Roughing the Passer	10	Scrimmage	Automatic First Down
Delay of Game	5	Scrimmage	Dead Ball-Replay Down
Coach on Field	10 + Timeout	Scrimmage	Dead Ball-Replay Down
Mouth Guard Not In	5	Scrimmage	Replay Down if Accepted
Communication after huddle	5	Scrimmage	Replay Down if Accepted
Unsportsmanlike	10	Scrimmage	Loss of Down

9. GENERAL RULES

- a. The team that wins the coin toss may elect to kick or receive the ball but not defer. (You cannot defer) If a team kicks off the ball in the first half, it will receive the ball in the second half and vice-versa.
- b. After a touchdown a team can elect to go for 1 or 2 points.
 - i. Junior Division
 - 1. For a one point attempt the ball will be placed on the 2 yard line.
 - 2. For a two point attempt the ball will be placed on the 3 yard line.
- c. A game will be forfeited to the opposing team by any team which:
 - i. Fails to field 9 players by the start of the game.
 - ii. Opposing team will still play with 11 players.
 - iii. Fails to provide to the opposing coach a roster of the team's eligible players, if requested.



- d. A penalty measurement may not move the ball more than one-half the distance to the offending team's goal line.
- e. Only team members and coaches are permitted on the bench side of the field. Exception is medical or appointees of the Program Director or Lead Official.
- f. The failure to wear a mouth guard will result in a 5 yard penalty.
- g. **During the last two minutes of EACH HALF of the game, the clock will stop for the following:**
 - i. **2 Minute Warning Rule – The clock will stop at the end of a play within two minutes of half and the end of the game. The clock will restart at the next snap. (This is not a time out situation).**
 - ii. Moving of the down markers when a first down is made.
 - iii. Time out called by either the offensive or defensive team or the officials
 - iv. Incomplete pass.
 - v. Player with possession of the football runs or is forced out of bounds.
 - vi. Offensive or defensive penalty.
 - vii. Change of possession. Includes forced turnover or turnover on downs.
 - viii. After a touchdown the clock will stop for the extra point attempt.
 - ix. *If the clock has been stopped during the last two minutes of either half for any of the reasons listed above it will start again with the snap of the ball on the next offensive play or kick-off.*
- h. Since no kicking is allowed in the Junior Division, on a 4th down, a team may elect to do one of two things:
 - The team may elect to go for a 1st down conversion
 - The team may elect to “punt” which means they forfeit the ball and the referee will advance the ball 20 yards from the line of scrimmage to simulate a punt & change of possession
- i. Kickoffs will be as follows (No kick-off):
 - Winner of the toss electing to receive gets possession of the ball on the 20 yard line
 - After a score, the opposing team will receive possession of the ball on their 20 yard line to simulate a kick-off
- j. **All offensive linemen (Center, guards, and tackles only) must have ground contact with their hand or hands prior to the snap of the ball. Running backs, Receivers, Slot Backs may start in an upright position and do not need to have ground contact.**
- k. **All defensive linemen (does NOT include defensive ends) must have ground contact with their hand or hands prior to the snap of the ball. Line backers, Defensive backs, and Safety’s may start in an upright position and do not need to have ground contact.**
- l. Time between plays will be 35 seconds from when the ball is placed until it is snapped.
 - i. First offense – Delay of Game 5 yard penalty
 - ii. Second offense – Delay of Game 5 yard penalty plus loss of timeout. (clock will start once ball is snapped)
 - iii. A game CANNOT end on a delay of game penalty, the ball must be snapped

10. SPECIAL RULES

- a. Failure to comply with the rules in this section results in an illegal procedure penalty.

- b. The Junior Division offense is confined to running a balanced “T” formation or a solo backfield. This is the only formation allowed, no variations to this formation will be allowed unless they are approved by the Program Director.
- c. A total of two handoffs or laterals are allowed per play
- d. A maximum of 3 players in the backfield
- e. Offense Special Rules and Clarifications
 - i. 7 and only 7 players on the line of scrimmage. Slot backs must be at least 1 yard behind the line of scrimmage.
 - ii. Crack back blocks are not allowed. Offensive players lined up outside the defensive end may not block him using crack back technique (this includes above the waist crack back).
- f. A standard 4-4-3 defense may be employed from the offensive team's goal line up to the defensive team's 10 yard line. The defensive team may employ a goal line defense when any part of the ball is on or inside the defensive team's 10 yard line.
- g. Once a team is leading by 21 or more points, the leading team is not allowed to blitz any players not on the line of scrimmage.
 - i. The 4 defensive players on the line of scrimmage can still attempt to advance on the quarterback.
- h. Deployment of the defensive line:
 - i. Defensive linemen line up from 2 feet to 1 yard off the line of scrimmage for 3/4 grade.
 - ii. No defensive player is allowed to line up head-to-head on the offensive center. They must not initiate contact with the center and must make a move left or right of the center. (NO blowing up of the center).
 - iii. Defensive ends must line up no wider than one yard on the outside shoulder of offensive end.
- i. Deployment of linebackers:
 - i. Linebackers must be no closer than 3 yards from the line of scrimmage until the ball is snapped.
 - ii. Linebackers must hold their positions until the snap of the ball, at which time they may proceed in any direction. (EXCEPTION: When a back goes in motion, the linebacker may move laterally, but must still be at least 3 yards off the line of scrimmage).
 - iii. A maximum of 3 players are allowed to blitz
- j. Deployment of defensive secondary:
 - i. Cornerbacks or outside linebackers may line up anywhere between the sideline and 3 yards outside the shoulder of the offensive end, but must be at least 2 yards off the line of scrimmage. Cornerbacks may move laterally prior to the snap of the ball when a back goes in motion.
 - ii. Safeties must be at least 3 yards behind cornerbacks.
- k. Goal Line Defense:
 - i. Goal line defense can be used if the football is on or inside the 10 yard line of the goal being defended. Linebackers are allowed on the line of scrimmage.

11. PRACTICE SESSIONS

- a. No player may participate in a game until they have been properly conditioned (5 contact practices).
- b. Football sessions are defined as any skill session, group conditioning or other forms of training (including games). No practice may exceed 2 hours.
- c. No more than 3 football training sessions are allowed per week. **(Week runs Sunday to Saturday)**.
 - i. Three contact practices are allowed each week prior to the first game.
 - ii. After the first game three practices are allowed however only two may be contact and the third must be no contact.
- d. Official LOFL games do not count toward the 3 football training sessions.

12. OFFICIATING

- a. There are at least 2 field officials for each game. One is positioned in the offensive backfield and on the line of scrimmage. **THE OFFICIALS ARE HIGH SCHOOL COACHES, STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEERS treat them with respect.**
- b. The Program Director may also assign individuals for quality control and statistical purposes.

13. POINTS and TIE BREAKERS

Points - Regular Season

Win - 2 points is awarded to the winning team

Tie - 1 point is awarded to each team for a tie

Tie Breakers

1. Head to Head
2. Like Opponents
3. Flip of coin

14. OVERTIME REGULATIONS

- a. **Regular Season** - If the score is tied at the end of regulation play, an overtime session will be played to try and determine the winner.
 - i. There is a 5 minute rest period between the end of regulation play and the beginning of the overtime period. The overtime begins with a flip of the coin, called by the visiting team. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of being on either offense or defense. The loser chooses which goal they will defend.
 - ii. The overtime session is comprised of one set of plays. A set is defined as each team having played both offense and defense. The winner of the game is the team scoring the most points in that set. **If the score remains tied after this set of plays, the game will end in a tie.**
 - iii. The offensive team has four (4) plays to score starting from the 10 yard line. If the offensive team scores a touchdown within those four (4) plays, they also have the opportunity to convert the extra point(s). If the offensive team fails to score, the ball is turned over on downs and the other team goes on offense and has four (4) plays to score starting from the 10 yard line.
 - iv. The overtime session is played according to the governing rules, except when the defense gains possession of the ball in which case the ball is dead and the offensive series is complete. (Play clock ONLY during this time).
- b. **Playoffs** - Same rules apply as described under Regular Season except that the overtime sessions will continue until a winner is determined.

15. THE PREDOMINANT RULE BOOK

- a. ***The predominant rule book is the current year rule book of the Indiana High School Athletic Association and exceptions are listed above. If a situation cannot be ruled on; the spirit of sportsmanship should prevail. All judgments made by the lead official are final.***