



OPTIMIST
INTERNATIONAL

Friend of Youth

Lapel Optimist Youth Football (3rd-4th)

Rules Handbook 2021

(Version 2.0)

Junior Division

(3rd & 4th Grades)

Updated 8/2021

2021 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. Junior Division – 3rd & 4th Graders ----- 80 Yard Field
(Based on 2020 – 2021 Fall School Year Grade)

2. WEIGHT LIMITS

<u>a. Classification</u>	<u>Junior Div.</u>
Offensive Backs	95.000 lbs or less

- b. 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 or line up in the back field.

3. EQUIPMENT

- a. Players may wear molded rubber or plastic stud cleats. Metal cleats and metal studs are not allowed. No baseball metal cleats are 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. There are at least three captains per team per game.
- b. All players will receive significant playing time which could include offense, defense, or special teams. Every player will get to play some in each game on either offense or defense.

5. LENGTH OF GAME

- a. Each quarter is an 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 background check.
 - c. All head coaches must complete the NFHS concussion training.
 - d. All head coaches must complete the NFHS Heat Illness Prevention.
- e. Each team is allowed one head coach. Only registered coaches and assistants may be in the bench area during a game. No more than 4 coaches per team, including the sideline during the game.
 - f. 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.....The head ref will say the huddle has broken.
 - ii. The coaches on the sidelines can still communicate once the huddle breaks.
 - g. Additional coaches are permitted on the playing field only in the case of any injury, if requested by the officials, or at timeouts.
 - h. 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 officials.**
 - i. Unsportsmanlike conduct will result in a 10 yard penalty.
 - j. 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. **THIS WILL BE ENFORCED.**
 - k. 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.

- I. 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. The Lead 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 the referee determines the violation to be committed in order to stop the clock.

<u>Penalty</u>	<u>Distance (Yds)</u>	<u>Spot for Mark</u>	<u>Consequence</u>
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	Spot of the Foul	Automatic First Down
Face Mask (Offensive)	10	Spot of the Foul	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.
- 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 defensive linemen (does NOT include defensive ends) must have ground contact with their hand or hands prior to the snap of the ball. Linebackers, Defensive backs, and Safety’s may start in an upright position and do not need to have ground contact.**
- k. 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. 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 offensive line must be a balanced line. (example: G, T, TE on both sides of the C), *Exception TE can line up as a wideout as long as he is on the line of scrimmage.*
- c. The Junior Division offense is confined to having **no more than 3 backs** within the tackle box.(**EXP. QB, RB, RB**) If a back is directly behind the QB, who is under center they must be at least 3 yards behind the line of scrimmage. This is the only formation allowed, no variations.
- d. A total of two handoffs or laterals are allowed per play(*TE’s are allowed to receive a handoff*)

e. Motion may be used,, just as long as it's not any of the 7 players that are on the Line of Scrimmage.

f. Offense Special Rules and Clarifications

i. 7 and only 7 players on the line of scrimmage(see rule 10B). Slot backs and Receivers 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).

iii. **!!!NO QB SNEAKS in JUNIOR DIVISION!**

g. A standard 4-4-3 defense is the only defensive formation that you can run (Exception: 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).

h. 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.

i. Deployment of the defensive line:

i. Defensive lineman 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, however the center has to make a football move once the ball is snapped)*

iii. Defensive ends must line up no wider than one yard on the outside shoulder of the offensive end.

j. Deployment of linebackers:

i. Middle 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 2 players are allowed to blitz

k. Deployment of defensive secondary:

i. Cornerbacks and Outside Linebackers may line up anywhere between the sideline and 3 yards outside the shoulder of the offensive end, but must be at least 3 yards off the line of scrimmage. Cornerbacks and Linebackers may move laterally prior to the snap of the ball when a back goes in motion.

ii. Safeties must be at least 8 yards off the line of scrimmage.(example 5 yards behind the cornerbacks & linebackers)

l. 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 consists 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.***