

2025

3RD- 4TH GRADE LITTLE SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE FOOTBALL RULES

I. LEAGUE ORGANIZATION

The league is comprised of teams from the following cities:

COMMUNITY	YEAR OF RESPONSIBILITY
WESTLAKE	2024
AVON LAKE	2025
BAY VILLAGE	2026
ROCKY RIVER***	
NORTH RIDGEVILLE	2027, 2028
AVON***	
FAIRVIEW PARK	2029, 2030
Olmsted Falls	2031

*NORTH OLMSTED (OFFICIAL SCHEDULE MAKER)

**LAKEWOOD (SCHEDULES OFFICIALS)

***AVON AND ROCKY RIVER DO NOT PARTICIPATE,
HOWEVER WE ARE COMBINING MEETINGS FOR
EFFICIENCY.

- A. Each city is responsible to serve as League Director and provide oversight of the league as designated in parenthesis. The responsibility will rotate yearly.
- B. The Director of Recreation, or designee, will represent each city and their respective teams.
- C. Each Recreation Director, or designee, has one vote; simple majority decides all decisions regarding the rules/regulations of the league.
- D. Rules may only be reviewed and changed by a vote of Recreation Directors, or designees.
- E. Communities must be able to host games that equal the number of teams they have participating in the league (3 teams/3 host dates).
- F. No team may consist of only 3rd or 4th graders
- G. League Director Responsibilities include but are not limited to:
 - 1) Scheduling and oversight of pre-season organizational meeting to be held in the summer.
 - 2) Preparation and distribution of all meeting minutes and league rules/regulations.
 - 3) Receiving and distribution of team rosters
 - 4) Scheduling and oversight of post-season meeting to be held in November
 - 5) Preparation and distribution of season schedules (will be handled by North Olmsted)
 - 6) Scheduling Officials (The representative from the Lakewood City Schools shall schedule all officials.)

II. PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

- A. Player must be enrolled in 3rd or 4th grade

- 1) Player may play a maximum of two years in the league
 - 2) Player is ineligible to play if player's 11th birthday falls before September 1st of current year
- B. Weight Limit
- 1) No player may advance the ball or play in the offensive backfield who weighs more than 105 pounds (with clothing/equipment described below)
 - (a) Each player will be weighed in before *each* game/scrimmage and must wear at least the following:
 - (i) All equipment including pants, shoulder pads, and helmets
 - (ii) Game shoes/cleats
 - (b) Players weighing over the limit must have a clearly visible and identifiable off team colored "**Sticker**" placed on the backside of their helmet during play.
 - (c) Each team is responsible to have "Big Boy" stickers available and in place on players weighing over the limit.
 - (d) The host team is responsible for providing a representative and an accurate scale for weighing in all teams
 - (e) Teams may have only one coach at the scales to confirm player's weight
- C. Rosters
- 1) Rosters, including grade level, must be submitted to the League Director prior to the first scrimmage
 - 2) A player cannot change teams after the first league game; however, new players can be added to the roster
- D. Injured Player
- 1) In the event of a player injury, which causes a time-out, the player must be removed for at least one play
 - 2) A head injury disqualifies the player for the day and the player must have a signed doctor's permit to resume subsequent practice and play
- E. Flagrant Foul
- 1) Any player who deliberately commits a flagrant foul or unsportsmanlike conduct (including profanity) must be expelled for the remainder of the game. Any flagrant foul must be noted with the League Director

III. PLAYER PARTICIPATION

- A. All players must play a minimum of 10 plays of offense or defense. The only exceptions are if the player is being disciplined.
- B. There is no limit on substitutions.
- C. Players shall be at all games at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the game for roll call, equipment check, and weigh in.

IV. SIDELINE CONTROL

- A. Only active coaches and players are permitted on the sidelines. Non players and parents are not permitted. Coaches must enforce this rule.
- B. Each team can have a maximum of 4 coaches on the sideline during a game.
- C. Coaches are asked to have their team organized and ready to take the field at the two minute warning of the prior game.
- D. Only the Head Coach can address the referees
- E. Coaches and players not in game and spectators must remain off the playing field and out of the end zones. Coaches must enforce this rule. Officials are instructed to stop the game if necessary.
- F. One coach from each team may be in the huddle during the game.
- G. Coaches must stay in the "coach's box" which is 10 yards behind the RB on offense and

10 yards behind the S on defense and cannot address the referees at any time

- H. Coaches are asked to have their team leave the field as quickly as possible following the conclusion of the game so the next game can begin.
- I. Any coach that is ejected from a game must leave the premises will be suspended for two games, a second ejection will result in lifetime ban from participating in the league.

V. PLAYER EQUIPMENT

- A. All players must wear the required equipment at all times while on the playing field:
 - 1) Helmet on, chinstrap buckled, and mouthpiece in (helmet must have approved stamp)
 - 2) Shoulder pads and jersey
 - 3) Game pants with pads including girdle, jock, and protective cup
 - 4) Game shoes/cleats - molded all-sport shoes permitted
- B. Forearm and hand pads made of soft material are acceptable; doctor's approval is needed for all casts
- C. No jewelry permitted, unless medical alert

VI. GAME EQUIPMENT

- A. A Pee Wee size football will be used in the league
- B. No walkie-talkies or electronic equipment permitted
- C. End zones will be marked with pylons, cones or red flags

VII. PRACTICES

- A. Practices may be no more than four times a week
- B. Practices may be no more than three times per week starting August 12th
- C. Practices may be no more than two hours in length
- D. Practices can begin no earlier than July 29th
- E. Players must have at least four days of conditioning prior to contact. Contact practices can begin no earlier than August 5th

VIII. Playoffs at end of Season Schedule

- A. Play 6-week season and 2 playoff games. Teams will be put into groups based off of records. Even if a team loses week 7, they will still play a game week 8 against the loser from the other side of the bracket.

IX. GAME RULES (NOTE: any ruling not specifically covered here shall be governed by the Ohio High School Federation Rules)

- A. Start of game
 - 1) Weather
 - (a) All games are to be played regardless of weather; except lightning. National Federation Lightning Disturbances Guidelines must be followed
 - (b) Recreation Director, or designee, may postpone games due to inclement weather and/or poor field conditions determined to be unsafe for players
 - 2) Number for participation
 - (a) Teams must be able to field 7 players at all times
 - (b) A team will forfeit if it is unable to field 7 players within 15 minutes of the official starting time
 - 3) A coin flip will award the winners with the choice of either the goal or the ball. The loser has his choice at the start of the second half.
 - 4) Officials

- (a) Only persons registered by the Ohio High School Athletic Association shall be qualified.
 - (b) No game can be started without the appointed officials on the playing field.
- B. Quarters
 - 1) Each game will consist of 4 – 12 minute running quarters, with a 10-minute halftime.
 - (a) The clock will only stop on P.A.T., player injury, team timeout, or as deemed necessary by the game officials
 - 2) The last two minutes of each half will be a stop clock – regular National Federation High School clock.
 - 3) The game officials will announce the two-minute warning
 - 4) Each team is permitted 2 timeouts per half
 - 5) Official time will be kept by the game officials on the field
 - 6) Teams trailing by 21 points or more in the second half shall only need 5- yards on offense to gain a first down. This rule will be in effect until the team is within a 21 point deficit.
- C. Penalties
 - 1) All penalties both major and minor will follow OHSAA rules.
 - 2) A minor penalty will be assessed against the team of a player who, after one warning, is detected not wearing a mouthpiece
- D. Offensive Team
 - 1) Must play a balanced line (equal spacing tackle to tackle) on the line of scrimmage. Offensive tackles must be covered by and end or split end at the snap of the ball.
 - 2) A tight end over the legal ball carrying weight (95lbs) is an ineligible receiver and may not advance from the line of scrimmage during a pass attempt. To be ruled as an ineligible player downfield.
 - 3) Putting the ball in play: An offensive team is allowed 30 seconds to put the ball in play after setting of the ball by the officials from the previous play.
- E. Tackling
 - 1) Officials will blow a “quick whistle” to avoid piling on
- F. Tie game at the end of regulation
 - 1) There are no overtime periods for games tied at the end of regulation play.
- G. Blocking
 - 1) No crack-back blocks: downfield blocking will be limited to above the waist. Cross body blocks allowed within 3 yards of the line of scrimmage and from tight-end to tight-end.

X. RULES FROM USA FOOTBALL ROOKIE TACKLE RULEBOOK

- A. Because of the all players, all positions, all skills philosophy, there are no restrictions on jersey numbers or player positions.
- B. All game action takes place on one half of the field with all possessions starting on the 40-yard line going toward the end zone with the width being 36 yards (Sideline to the far hashmark.)
- C. A turnover on downs brings the ball back to the 40-yard line, and the teams switch sides from offense to defense, defense to offense.
- D. Turnovers on interceptions or fumbles are blown dead immediately. No returns are allowed in order to protect players from running toward the 20-yard administration zone between the two fields. Play restarts on the 40-yard line with the recovering/intercepting team now on offense. There are no defensive touchdowns.
- E. In shotgun formation, if the center muffs the snap the ball is live and should not be ruled dead by an official.
- F. After each play, the ball is spotted in the middle of the field. Hash marks are not used.
- G. Because of the limited field size, all 15-yard penalties are enforced as 10-yard penalties
- H. No penalty on the offense can take the ball beyond the 40-yard line to ensure the administration zone.
- I. Penalties on the offense that are called and accepted on the 40-yard line result in

- a loss of down.
- J. Penalties on the offense called between the 40-yard line and the end zone in which yardage is lost, even if limited in enforcement by the 40-yard line, are enforced as written in terms of down lost or replayed.
 - K. There are no defensive safeties. Tackles behind the 40-yard line are re-spotted at the 40- yard line.
 - L. All personal foul penalties include an immediate substitution from the field for a minimum of one play to allow coaches to address misconduct and promote good sportsmanship. This is called a “cooling off period.”
 - M. All plays are blown dead and the ball is returned to the 40-yard line if an offensive ball-carrier or a fumbled ball crosses over midfield or at the official’s discretion if coaches, administrators, or players from multiple fields and the dead zone area become close enough in proximity to be a concern for safety.
 - N. Special Teams Adjustments:
 - 1) There are no special teams.
 - (a) There are no kickoff or punts. Each possession starts with the ball on the 40-yard line, regardless of whether there is a score, turnover, or turnover on downs.
 - (b) There are no extra points by a kick.
 - (i) All PATs are attempted through a run or pass try. Coaches can choose to go for one point from the 3-yard line or two points from the 5-yard line.
 - O. Offensive Adjustments:
 - 1) Each play must include three offensive linemen – a center and two guards, one on either side of the center. These players are ineligible for first touch as the receiver of a pass regardless of the numbers on their jerseys. Player rotation may result with traditional non-lineman numbers at these positions for the purpose of fundamental skill development.
 - 2) Guards are required to play from a two-point stance. There are no three-point stances.
 - 3) The center may only have his or her snapping hand down.
 - 4) The distance between a guard and center may not exceed three feet (1 yard) but may be closer.
 - 5) Players should change positions during the game. Therefore:
 - (a) The three offensive linemen must identify themselves on each play by raising their hands as they break the huddle and approach the line of scrimmage.
 - (b) Once identified as an offensive lineman, players may not shift to another position.
 - (c) All three offensive linemen are ineligible for first touch on a pass, including a guard who is uncovered by an end.
 - 6) The quarterback-center exchange may be direct, pistol, or shotgun.
 - 7) Quarterback sneaks are prohibited in all situations because the defense is not allowed to have players aligned over the center or in the center-guard “A” gap.
 - 8) The offense must have four players on the line of scrimmage. The fourth player can be a tight end or a split end.
 - 9) The four offensive players who are not playing guard or center may be deployed in positions at the coach’s discretion as long as one is on the line of scrimmage.
 - 10) No trips formations are allowed.
 - (a) For purpose of Rookie Tackle, Trips is defined as any three players outside the guard-to-guard box.
 - 11) Motion is allowed by a backfield player as long as it does not create a trips formation.
 - 12) All blocks below the waist, in any situation, are illegal.
 - P. Defensive Adjustments
 - 1) Defenses may only have two defensive lineman unless an offensive formation includes a tight end. In that case, a third defensive lineman may line up over the tight end.

- 2) Defensive linemen must be in a two-point stance.
- 3) Defensive linemen over guards must be aligned in a head up or outside shade position.
- 4) Players in an outside shade must always have one foot aligned inside the stance of the opposing guards.
- 5) The defense must have one player at least 10 yards from the ball.
- 6) The remaining four players can be deployed at the coach's discretion but must be four yards off the line of scrimmage unless covering a tight end or split end on the line of scrimmage.
 - (a) Defenses are not required to match the fourth player on the line of scrimmage but have the option to do so.
- 7) No blitzes are allowed. Players within the box at the snap can penetrate upon the snap. Linebackers, safeties, and cornerbacks (both on the line and at depth) can flow to the ball naturally after a handoff is made, but predetermining penetration to a specific gap is illegal.
 - (a) The box includes offensive players who line up within two yards of the ball and on the line of scrimmage along with the defensive players lined up directly over them.
 - (b) On pass plays, anyone outside the box on the snap cannot rush the quarterback and must remain behind the line of scrimmage in pass coverage.
 - (c) Coaches are encouraged to be creative with their formations but not use "the box" to delay defensive penetration.
 - (d) NOTE: the restriction on blitzing is intended to encourage skill development within the passing game and allow young players to execute a successful handoff with limited penetration.
- 8) If the ball is inside the 4-yard line, the four non-linemen, non-deep players may align on the goal line.

New 2026 Format

- **To create consistent league offerings for all communities we will transition to a 3-4 Rookie, 4-5 Rookie, and 5-6 11v11 format to provide communities options especially those looking for a 5th grade only option which has gained momentum lately. Flag will remain available at all levels.**