

 **Laurel Highlands**
Developmental
Football League 



LAUREL HIGHLANDS
DEVELOPMENTAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

2023 League Rules

League Teams

Bishop McCort Youth Football
Central Cambria Youth Football
Forest Hills Youth Football
Greater Johnstown Youth Football
Mainline Youth Football
Richland Youth Football
Somerset Youth Football
Westmont Area Youth Football



National Federation
of State High School
Associations

Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League

2023 League Rules

Introduction

1. The Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League (LHDFL) was formed to inspire participation and to ensure a positive experience for all youth, through football. It seeks to improve how football is taught, how football is organized and delivered in the communities and how parents and players perceive and experience the sport. LHDFL is focused on safety, athletic development and how the game's fundamentals and values are taught to players. It also works to promote an inclusive culture in football. It wants all players to have a positive experience that teaches sportsmanship, builds character, and helps each player be the best he/she can be.
2. There are differences between the rules of every level of football in our league. They are necessary because the age and skill level of the players vary greatly. In an effort to help simplify the game for, players, parents, coaches and officials, LHDFL administrative members have approved the following rules and game modifications to make a safer playing environment and more enjoyable playing experience for all who participate.
3. All Head Coaches from each division, or a team representative, from each organization must attend an annual Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League Rules Meeting prior to the start of camp (**August 20, 2023 @ East Hills Rec starting at 5pm**).
4. Home teams must provide for, at least, three (3) certified PIAA officials and on duty medical personnel for each game.

1.0 Fouls

1.1 Contact Fouls

1. All facemask fouls result in a 15 yard penalty (there is no 5 yard option for grasping but not twisting or pulling the facemask).
2. All blocking below the waist, blocking in the back and clipping is illegal. There is no "Free Blocking Zone". The penalty for clipping and blocking below the waist is 15 yards; the penalty for blocking in the back is 10 yards.
3. The penalties for defensive pass interference, facemask fouls and any personal fouls by the defensive team are 15 yards and a first down.

RATIONALE: *The reason some of these rules are more severe is we want to encourage players to learn and employ proper techniques.*



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

1.2 Other Fouls

1. The penalties for illegal forward pass and illegal touching by ineligible receivers are 5 yards only (no loss of down). *There is no loss of down for offensive pass interference.*

RATIONALE: *The loss of a down in addition to the loss of yardage is too much for youth offenses to overcome.*

1.3 Live-Ball Fouls

1. The penalty for a live-ball foul BEHIND the Line Of Scrimmage (LOS) by either team when the play ends BEYOND the LOS is enforced from the previous spot. Accepted penalties for fouls by the Offense that occur in the offensive team's end zone result in a safety.
2. The penalty for a live-ball foul by either team BEYOND the LOS when the play ends BEHIND the LOS will be enforced from the previous spot. Accepted penalties for fouls by the Offense that occur in the offensive team's end zone result in a safety.
3. Pass interference against either team results in a 15 yard penalty enforced from the previous spot. *(No loss of down for offensive pass interference.)*

RATIONALE: *Enforcing these penalties from the previous spot rather the spot of the foul is easier to remember and promotes consistent penalty enforcement.*

4. The penalties for a live-ball foul by both teams (no change of team possession) cancel each other out, and the down is replayed unless one of the fouls is a personal foul; in that case, only the penalty for the personal foul is enforced.
5. If both teams commit live-ball foul on a scoring play and there is no change of possession, the penalties cancel each other out, and the down is replayed unless one of the fouls is a personal foul; in that case, only the penalty for the personal foul is enforced.

RATIONALE: *The safety of the players and the promotion of fair play. Enforcing penalties for personal fouls whether or not there is a different type of foul by the opponent, reinforces the belief that unnecessary roughness must not be a part of the game.*



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

1.4 Scoring

1. On PAT attempts, two points are awarded for a kick and one point for a run or pass. There is **no** defensive rush on kick attempts.

RATIONALE: Placekicking is a comparatively advanced skill at the youth level. As a result, teams that promote it, and are able to kick extra points are rewarded for accomplishing a more difficult task.

2. Overtime – Each team will get the ball at the 10 yard line. They will have 4 downs to score a TD or FG. If game is still tied after 2 rounds teams must attempt to kick extra point after a touchdown.

1.5 Modified Competition Rule

1. Has been removed for this season. We expect coaches to use sound judgment and exercise good sportsmanship by proper substitution of players and not running the score up on the opposing team.

1.6 Timing

1. There will be four (4) TEN (10) minute quarters. The clock will be run with traditional timing rules.
2. 8 minute halftime
3. Three (3) Time Outs per Half
4. One (1) Time Out per Overtime

1.7 Reporting of Scores

1. It will be the responsibility of the HOME TEAM to report final scores of all games via text message to the Commissioner by the end of the day that games have been played.

2.0 Points of Emphasis

2.1 Trick Plays and Unfair Acts

1. It is a fundamental core belief of the LHDFL that coaches demand sportsmanship from their players and, equally important, lead by example. Coaches must always remember that the players look to them for positive life skills and values.



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

2. With that in mind, coaches should refrain from teaching their players and teams techniques and plays that have no place in youth sports. Examples of deceptive plays include but are not limited to the “wrong ball” play and/or the “fumblerooski” play.
3. Football has been and always will be a game of deception and trickery involving multiple shifts, unusual formations and creative plays. However, actions or verbiage designed to confuse the defense into believing there is a problem and a snap isn’t imminent, or planned loose ball plays, are beyond the scope of sportsmanship and are illegal within the league. Respect your opponent! Respect the game!
4. A change in cadence (varying snap count, etc.) is not considered deceptive nor an unfair act. It is required to have an audible snap count, no silent count permitted.
5. Acts of deception will result in a 5 yard penalty. Continued Unfair Acts may result in forfeiture of the contest, coach suspension, and/or removal from league play.

2.2 Helmet-To-Helmet Contact

1. The football helmet was never intended to be used as a weapon. It is designed to offer the player protection. It has become common for players to contact opponents with the helmet or facemask. That is a dangerous and illegal tactic that must be eliminated from football. It is a potentially hazardous to the person who inflicts the blow as to the player on the receiving end. And, it is illegal whether or not the blow is aimed at the opponent’s head.
2. LHDFL urges coaches to teach players proper blocking and tackling techniques that do not incorporate use of the helmet or facemask.
3. Although tackling around the head is a legal tackle, it is extremely frowned upon and a player who continually tackles in this manner; deemed intentional by the officials, will be removed from the game for that series of play. If identified player continues tackling in this manner, he may be removed from the game permanently.
4. Officials must penalize players who violate the rules regarding helmet contact. LHDFL League Officials must also support officials who call those fouls.
5. There will always be contact in football. But, all unnecessary and illegal contact, must be eradicated.



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

3.0 CODES OF CONDUCT

3.1 LHDFL Athletes Code of Conduct

1. I am accountable for the results of my behavior towards my teammates, coaches, and game officials.
2. I will respect other players (including my teammates and my opponents, coaches and game officials at all times. When I score a touchdown, I will simply hand the ball to the official before celebrating with my teammates.
3. When I make a great play, I will not embarrass my opponent.
4. I will honor the sport by playing within the rules during games and practices.
5. I will respect the game and not use foul language at any time.
6. I agree to put my team first and put forth my best effort on the field in support of team goals.
7. I agree to give my best effort in the classroom and listen to my teachers.

3.2 LHDFL Coaches Code of Conduct

1. I agree to conduct myself in a positive manner towards my players, coaches, parents and game officials at all times.
2. I will respect players, coaches, parents and officials at all times.
3. I will develop a coaching philosophy that embraces fundamentals, organization, life lessons and friendships versus a "Win at all cost" mentality.
4. I will remember kids register to play football because it is fun; every child should have an opportunity to play.
5. I will support and respect all decisions made by the game officials and refrain from outward criticism.
6. I am responsible to understand the rules of the game and abide by those rules at all times.
7. I will support the integrity of the game and make game decisions in line with fair play and sportsmanship.
8. I am responsible for completing my coaching education requirements and teaching the proper fundamentals.
9. I will create a safe and positive environment for my players to learn how to play the sport.
10. I will listen to my fellow coaches and players regarding player safety and when in doubt I will sit them out of play.



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

11. I will honor the game and my responsibility as a coach to provide a positive experience for my team.
12. I shall dress neatly and appropriately for every team practice and game.

3.3 LHDFL Parents Code of Conduct

1. I agree to support our team in a positive manner and showcase good sportsmanship towards all players, coaches, parents and game officials.
2. I will respect the coaches' commitment to coach my child and not interfere with on-field instruction during practices or games.
3. I will support the coaches and do my best to ensure that my child arrives at practice and games on time.
4. I will teach my child to play by the rules and respect teammates, opponents, game officials and coaches.
5. I will cheer for our team in a positive manner no matter the outcome of the game.

3.4 LHDFL Game Officials Code of Conduct

1. I understand I bear a great responsibility for fostering public confidence in sports.
2. I shall be free of obligation to any interest other than the impartial and fair judging of sports competitions.
3. I shall hold and maintain the basic tenets of officiating; which include history, integrity, neutrality, respect, sensitivity and professionalism.
4. I shall master the rules of the game and the mechanics necessary to enforce the rules and exercise authority in an impartial, firm and controlled manner.
5. I shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession in all interactions with athletes, coaches, league administrators, colleagues, parents and the public.
6. I shall display and execute superior communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal.
7. I recognize that anything which may lead to a conflict of interest, either real or apparent, must be avoided. Gifts, favors, special treatment, privileges, employment or a personal relationship with an individual or team, which can compromise the perceived impartiality of officiating, must be avoided.
8. I shall prepare both physically and mentally, shall dress neatly and appropriately, and conduct myself in a manner consistent with the high standards of the profession.
9. I shall be punctual and professional in the fulfillment of all contractual obligations.
10. I shall work with governing bodies in a constructive and cooperative manner.
11. I shall resist every temptation and outside pressure to use my position as an official to benefit myself.



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

12. I shall not make false or misleading statements regarding my qualifications, rating, credentials, experience, training or competence.
13. I shall accept responsibility for all my actions taken.

4.0 USA Football Playing Recommendation (Age & Wt. Base Structure)

4.1 Team Roster Rule:

1. Teams must maintain and provide to the LHDFL Board team rosters for all teams (3rd - 6th grade) in their tackle football program. This roster must be neat and legible (preferably typed) and contain all players first and last name, age, grade, a spot for weight (will be certified at MANDATORY weigh-ins held in conjunction with the Annual League Scrimmage Day (in 2023 this event will be held at the Richland facilities on 8/26/2023), and game jersey number(s). All team rosters are due to the commissioner of the league on the date of this Annual League Scrimmage Day. Additions can be made to the team rosters at any point during the season, but must be communicated to the commissioner of the league before the player can compete.
2. If necessary, players are permitted to play up one (1) grade level on any particular week due to injury, illness, or other absence so long as the following conditions or circumstances are all met:
 - 1) Anyone playing up is not playing more than one (1) game per day,
 - 2) Anyone playing up was previously identified on the initial team roster for his actual grade as a possible call-up for the season (the name of any player under consideration for call-up must be marked with an asterisk on the initial roster).
 - 3) The team making the call-up must have 15 players or less available on game day before any call-ups are permitted. If a team has more than 15 players from their initial roster available to play, then no call-ups for that particular game will be permitted.
 - 4) If a true Emergency situation arises, the President of the affected Organization may contact the league President, Vice-President, and Chair of the Rules Committee who will jointly decide if the requirements of sub-bullet (1) specifying that no player can play in more than one game per day can be waived for that week



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

4.2 Player Participation Rule:

1. Kids register to **PLAY** football, not to practice all week, so that they can watch their teammates compete on Saturdays & Sundays in the league. Every player deserves the opportunity to **PLAY** and apply what they have learned in practice during the week on the game field. The purpose of this rule allows every registered player a chance to play in a game either offensively or defensively. The LHDFL Board expects, and with the strongest possible sentiment encourages, 100% participation from all players! Head coaches are expected to enforce this at all levels of tackle football.
2. LHDFL encourages even play for all participants!

4.3 Team Roster Rule & Player Participation Rule Benefits Include:

1. Kids have a greater opportunity to participate in both games and practice.
2. Provides players with a greater ability to improve.
3. Coaches have a better opportunity to be successful in providing a positive experience to his players.

4.4 Age Cut-Off Date Rule:

1. For the purpose of eligibility, **September 1st of the current year will be the age cut-off date.**

Example: A player who becomes 10 years old on or before September 1st will play as a 10-year-old. A player who becomes 10 any time after September 1st of the current year will play as a 9-year-old.

4.5 Player Eligibility:

1. Any player who is enrolled in a school (brick-and-mortar or cyber) that is represented by a program in our league is only eligible to play for that program and is precluded from participating for any other team within the League. For any student that is Home schooled or is enrolled in a cyber-program other than their home school, then their eligibility to participate reverts back to the school district where they physically reside. This rule does not pertain to students enrolled in a school that is not represented in our League. Any program in good standing in the league can request an individual waiver to this rule however. An established Player Eligibility Committee will review any waiver requests received on a case-by-case basis.
2. **The Player Eligibility Committee shall be comprised of the current Commissioner, Vice-Commissioner, and Rules Committee Chair. In the event that the Organization**



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

represented by the Commissioner, the Vice-Commissioner, and/or the Rules Committee Chair is one of the parties directly involved in the player eligibility dispute that leads to the waiver request being submitted, to prevent the appearance of bias that individual(s) will NOT get a vote on the waiver request and instead will be replaced by a volunteer(s) from a program not directly involved in that specific dispute.

3. **Grade Level-Age Rule**
 - 1) **The date of September 1st is determined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) compulsory education age.**
 1. **K- 6 By Sept 1st**
 2. **1st Grade- 7 Years of age by Sept 1st**
 3. **2nd Grade- 8 Years of age by Sept 1st**
 4. **3rd Grade- 9 Years of age by Sept 1st**
 5. **4th Grade- 10 Years of age by Sept 1st**
 6. **5th Grade- 11 Years of age by Sept 1st**
 7. **6th Grade- 12 Years of age by Sept 1st**
 8. **Extra Year -13 Years of age by Sept 1st**
 9. **A player cannot participate if they reach 14 Years of age by Sept 1st**
 2. **Any player that is 2 years older than their contemporaries cannot participate in that grade level. They are required to participate one grade level higher.**
 3. **Any player that turns 14 prior to September 1st cannot participate in the league.**
 4. **This rule cannot work in reverse.**
 - 1) **One point of clarification would be a player who is enrolled in a grade level, but whose age allows them to play in the grade level below their current grade level shall not be permitted to do so. Example: The following scenario shall not be permitted. I'm enrolled in 5th grade in my school, but my age would allow me to play in 4th grade.**
5. **Enrollment Verification.**
 - 1) **Once all rosters are finalized at the Mandatory League Weigh-In/Scrimmage Day, all rosters will be submitted to their respective elementary schools to be reviewed and signed off on by a school administrative official. The form will state that the players attend the school they are rostered on.**
 - 2) **Any players who do not attend the school they are playing for, need to be identified as such on the final roster at mandatory weigh-ins, and that school will be required to verify enrollment to ensure they aren't "skirting" the rules.**

4.6 General Division Rules:

1. All Clubs must weigh all tackle division players to obtain their actual weights prior to playing, so the league can establish division eligibility and eligibility to carrying the



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

football on offense and advancing the football on defense. All weights must be verified by a witness of another Club within the league (Johnstown, Richland, Westmont, Somerset, Central Cambria, Penn Cambria, Bishop McCort, & Forest Hills).

2. Players' weight certification shall be certified at **MANDATORY** weigh-ins held in conjunction with the **MANDATORY** Annual League Scrimmage Day (in 2023 this event will be held at the Richland facilities on **8/26/2023**). Any players added to the roster or who miss the MANDATORY weigh-ins due to being out-of-town on the day of the annual event will be weighed in on the first date of game play at the hosting team's facility prior to the officially scheduled game time. Home team shall provide a scale and designated space for weigh-ins. Home and visiting team shall weigh each participating player and sign off on the opposing team's roster for verification. Revised rosters, with weights, must be submitted to the commissioner for confirmation and distribution to the remaining 7 teams in the league as soon as they are revised. No player may be permitted to play until they are officially weighed in.
3. To guard against liability issues, for the league and your home organization, a player may not disrobe at weigh-ins. Players must weigh-in wearing at minimum a t-shirt and shorts. If a player, players, or organization choose to wear more than stated above, there is no weight allowance and that becomes their playing weight of record.

5.0 The Divisions:

3rd Grade - 8 & 9 Year Old's -Over 120 lbs. shall play as a "Double Stripe"

*** Ball Carrier Weight Limit - 90 lbs**

4th Grade - 9 & 10 Year old's - Over 140 lbs. shall play as a "Double Stripe"

*** Ball Carrier Weight Limit - 110 lbs**

5th Grade - 10 & 11 Year Old's - Over 155 lbs. shall play as a "Double Stripe"

*** Ball Carrier Weight Limit - 125 lbs**

6th Grade - 11 & 12 Year Olds - Over 170 lbs. shall play as a "Double Stripe"

*** Ball Carrier Weight Limit - 140 lbs**

1. **Linemen - Double Stripe** - all players weighting more than 30 lbs over the established ball carrying weight in each division shall be classified as a "Double



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

Stripe" and must play in the tackle position when playing defense. Double Stripe players can play Center, Guard or Tackle on the offensive line, but cannot catch or progress the football.

- i. Players designated as a "Double Stripe" shall have two, contrasting colored, stripes on the top of their helmet from the front to the back of their helmet.
- ii. In the Majors, a *Double Stripe player may not line head up as a nose tackle over a non-striped or single striped center.*
- iii. For safety reasons, a double stripe player is prohibited from playing on either the kickoff special team or the kick return special team. This rule is being implemented so as to eliminate the possibility of a double stripe player running unopposed down the field and gaining speed and momentum before contacting a ball carrying-weight player returning the football or a smaller player trying to block him/her. Double stripe players ARE ELIGIBLE to be on the field for all punts, punt returns, field goal attempts, and all PAT plays on either offense or defense due to the shorter distance between contact.

2. **Linemen - Single Stripe** - all players weighting more than the established ball carrying weight of their division and less than the 30 lbs over the established ball carrying weight will be designated as a "Single Stripe". These players must play on the line on defense.

- i. Players designated as a "Single Stripe" shall have one (1) stripe on the top of their helmet from the front to the back of their helmet.
- ii. A Single Stripe player can play any position on the offensive line, including TE but cannot catch or progress the football or release from the LOS on a pass play.

3. The defensive team shall be limited to two double striped players on the field at the same time, which must play at the defensive tackles, and must be in a three or four point stance.

Exception: *When the offensive team has three or more double striped linemen on the field of play at the same time, then the defensive team may match the offensive line.*

The basic Minor Division 4-3-4 defensive alignment rules are defined as follows:

POE: *All teams in the Minor Division (3rd & 4th grade) must play a basic 4-3-4 defense alignment throughout the game, the entirety of the season.*

POE: *Minors are permitted to have only a four man rush by the linemen.*



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

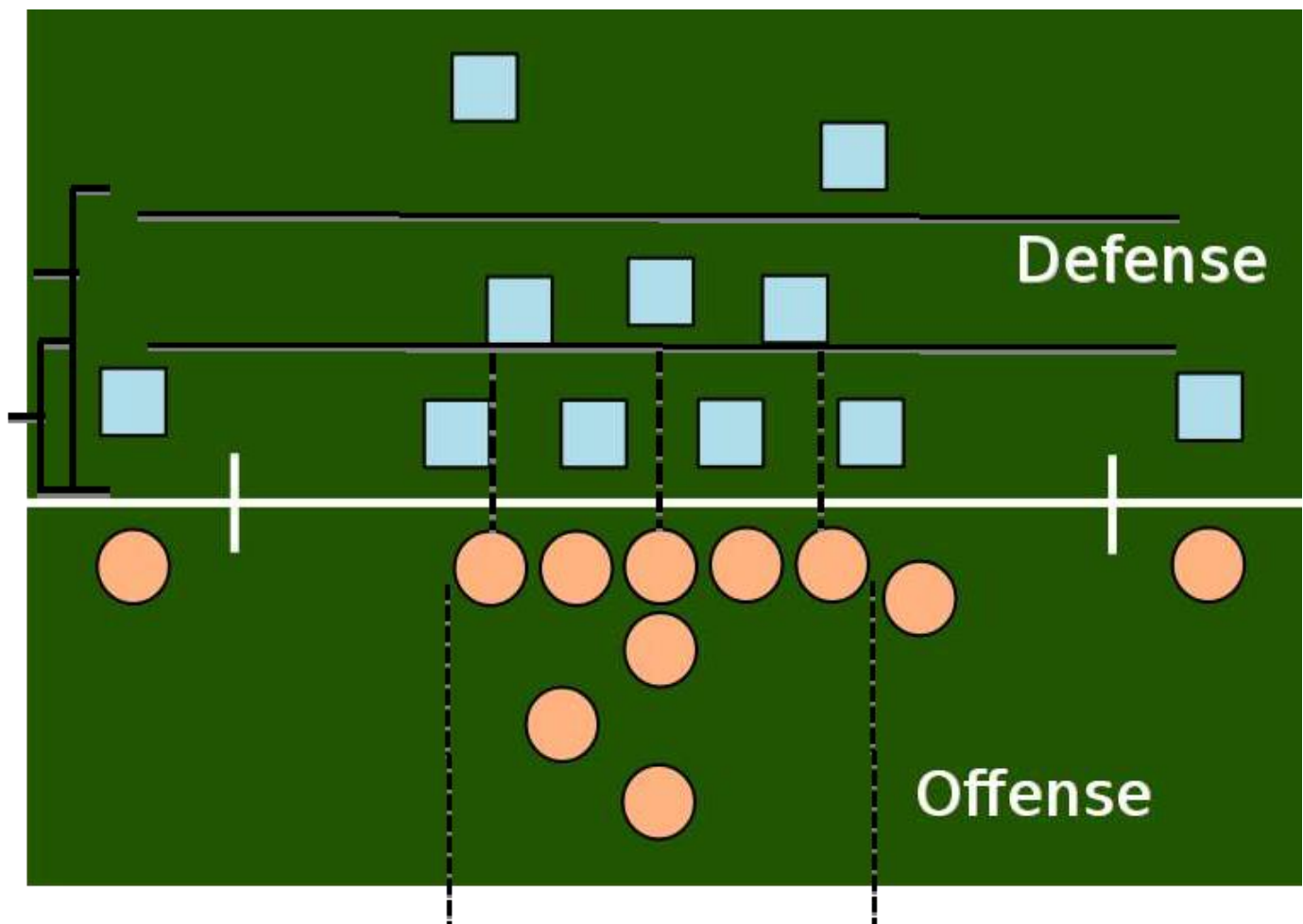
POE: Linebackers must hold and read until ball is handed off, quarterback tucks and runs, or quarterback escapes pocket (outside shoulders of the tackles) to advance past the line of scrimmage.

1. Defensive Line (4 players)
 - a. Must play one (1) yard from the line of scrimmage.
 - b. Tackle Alignment - inside/on/outside shoulder of the offensive guards.
 - i. All interior linemen in three (3) or four (4) point stances
 - ii. Defensive Ends may line up in a standing position at the snap of the ball
 - c. Defensive Ends – Line up at the TE - Inside/on/outside shoulder of the TE. If no TE in formation - outside shoulder of tackle (no ghost position). DEs lining up wider than the outside shoulder of the last man on the offensive line of scrimmage will result in a 5-yard Penalty for each infraction.
 - d. Defensive tackles and ends may not slant or twists on the snap of the football.
(1st Step must be forward and play through contact).
 - e. Tackles and ends must rush the passer.
2. Linebackers (3 players)
 - a. The linebackers alignments will be:
 - i. One (1) Middle linebacker will be aligned over the center.
 - ii. Two (2) Outside linebackers will be aligned over the tackles.
 - iii. Linebackers may **not** “stack” or hide there positioning behind the defensive lineman.
 - b. Linebackers may drop back into pass coverage.
 - c. Linebackers must be at least 3 yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - i. Linebacker depth may change in short yardage (3 yards or less) or goal line (10 yard line and in) situations, where the linebackers may play no closer than the heels of the defensive lineman.
 - ii. Linebackers’ react/float, but are never allowed to stunt, blitz or fake blitz.
 - iii. In all passing situations when the quarterback is in the pocket (between the tackles), linebackers must be in coverage. Once a quarterback breaks the pocket (moves outside of the offensive tackles or tucks the ball to run) then the quarterback will be treated as a ball carrier, and linebackers and secondary can play him as such.
3. Secondary (4 players)
 - a. Must play straight man-to-man.
 - b. If no man is lined head up in formation, Corner must line up at minimum five (5) yards from the Defensive End (5-10 yards is recommended) (and 3 yards off of the line of scrimmage).

2023 League Rules

- c. Corners may play one (1) yard from the line of scrimmage when in man coverage.
 - d. Minimum depth for any corner in the secondary is three (3) yards (when not in man coverage).
 - e. Minimum depth for any safety in the secondary is seven (7) yards and must align within the tackle box. If a safety is needed to play man up in an unbalanced offensive formation, he/she may follow 3.c.
 - f. If a corner's man goes in motion, they may play him all the way across the field.
 - g. If the offensive receiver/split back blocks, the defensive man is free to advance to the line of scrimmage.
4. All players eligible, according to weight classification, to advance the ball shall be allowed to play all positions on offense and defense.
5. Minor League teams in violation of any part of the above rules shall be given a warning for the first violation. *Subsequent violations shall result in a 10 yard penalty per each infraction. Moreover, failure to abide by the 4-3-4 rules may result in forfeiture of the contest, coach suspension, and/or removal from league play.*

4-3-4 Alignments





Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

5.1 3rd and 4th Grade- Minor Division

1. Four (4) – TEN (10) minute quarters – standard clock.
2. Eight (8) minute halftime
3. Thirty (30) seconds between plays to snap the ball (No Official's Discretion)
4. The official will keep the play clock and give an audible and hand signal for 5 seconds left and count down. If the ball is not snapped by the expiration of the playclock, the official will stop the game clock and administer a 5-yard penalty without a loss of down. The game clock will resume upon the next snap of the ball
5. Size of Football: PeeWee size balls will be used on the minor level.
 1. Wilson K2
 2. Nike PeeWee
 3. UA PeeWee
6. One (1) coach on the field
7. Once the team breaks the offensive huddle, the coach on the field cannot physically move players into position or make any verbal communication to players. The Coaches on the field must move 10 yards from the closest player and be quiet and allow the players to execute the play. *Audible and coaching from the sideline coaches is permitted.
8. Encourage moving toward no on field coach in 4th grade
9. Punts, Field Goals and Extra Points, no defensive player may rush the kicker *nor jump in attempt to block the kick*.
 1. On punts - once the kicker kicks the ball, live play begins.
 2. On a muffed snap to the punter, short or long, the punter is eligible to return to his/her original spot to then execute the punting procedure.
 3. Option punt/offensive team can request the official to move the ball 20 yards down the field instead of actually punting the ball.
 4. When using the punt option only, a team may not be pinned inside of the 20 yard line.
 5. On field goals and extra point kicks - the center must snap the football between the legs to the hands of the holder without the ball touching the ground
 6. To be considered a clean snap. If the ball touches the ground or the holder drops the ball before the ball is kicked the play is dead.
 7. Teams are permitted a single "do-over" on a muffed kicking PAT.
 8. Scoring: TD = 6, Running or Passing PAT = 1, Kicking PAT = 2, FG = 3
 9. **A 2 point conversion can be attempted from the 7 yard line**
10. **Overtime" rules as stated on page 3 also apply to the Minors Division games that end in a tie at the end of regulation.**



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

5.2 5th and 6th Grade - Major Division

1. The teams in the major division shall be allowed to use any defensive formation. However, the defense may only rush five (5) players on the snap of the ball. *In the spirit of fair play, player development and player safety, it is imperative that this rule be followed. Failure to abide by the 5 man rush rules may result in forfeiture of the contest, coach suspension, and/or removal from league play.*

The basic alignments rules will be as follows:

1. Defensive Line
 - a. Must play one (1) yard from the line of scrimmage.
 - b. Defensive Lineman may be used in coverage.
 - c. Tackles/Nose Tackle must be in three (3) or four (4) point stances.
 - d. Defensive Ends- To the TE- Inside/on/outside shoulder of the TE. Away from TE- outside shoulder of tackle (no ghost position). DEs may be in a standing position. DEs lining up wider than the outside shoulder of the last man on the offensive line of scrimmage will result in a 5-yard penalty for each infraction.
2. Linebackers
 - a. Linebackers may be used in coverage.
 - b. Feet of linebackers must be deeper than the 3 yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - i. Depth may change in short yardage (3 yards or less) or goal line (10 yard line and in) situations, where the linebackers may play as tight as needed.
 - ii. Linebackers' at the majors level may react, stunt, and blitz, **but not fake blitz.**
 - iii. In all passing situations when the quarterback is in the pocket (between the tackles), only five (5) defensive players are allowed to rush. Once a quarterback breaks the pocket (moves outside of the outside shoulders of the offensive tackles) or tucks the ball to run, he/she will be treated as a ball carrier - linebackers and secondary can play him as such.
3. Secondary
 - a. Minimum depth for any corner in the secondary is three (3) yards with no receiver split back in area.
 - b. Corners may play one (1) yard from the line from the line of scrimmage when in man coverage.
 - c. If no man is lined head up in formation, Corner must line up at minimum five (5) yards from the Defensive End.
 - d. If the offensive receiver/split back blocks, the defensive man is permitted to advance to the line of scrimmage and is "free to play football."



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

- e. If a corner's man goes in motion, they may play him all the way across the field.
 - f. Minimum depth for any safety in the secondary is seven (7) yards and must align within the tackle box. If a safety is needed to play man up in an unbalanced offensive formation, he/she may follow 3.b.
4. Once the quarterback receives the snap from the center and breaks the pocket (outside shoulders of the tackles), the quarterback is now classified as a potential running back and may be pursued by all defensive players.
 5. Any defensive team that rushes more than five (5) players at the snap of the ball shall be penalized in the following manner.
 - a. First occurrence a warning
 - b. Second occurrence 15 yards un-sportsmanlike conduct
 - c. Third & subsequent occurrence - 15 yards each
 - d. Again, *in keeping with the spirit of fair play, player development and player safety, it is imperative that this rule be followed. Failure to abide by the 5 man rush rules may also result in forfeiture of the contest, coach suspension, and/or removal from league play.*
 6. Four (4) - TEN (10) minute quarters – standard clock.
 - a. Eight (8) minute half
 - b. Twenty-five (25) seconds to snap the ball (No Official's Discretion)
 - c. The official will keep the play clock and give an audible and hand signal for 5 seconds left and count down. If the ball is not snapped by the expiration of the play clock. The official will stop the game clock and administer a 5-yard penalty without a loss of down. The game clock will resume upon the next snap of the ball
 7. No coach on the field
 8. Ball Size: Junior size balls will be used on the major level.
 - a. Wilson TDJ
 - b. Nike Junior
 - c. UA Junior
 9. Punts, Field Goals and Extra Points, no defensive player may rush the kicker *nor jump in attempt to block the kick.*
 - a. On punts - once the kicker kicks the ball, live play begins.
 - b. On a muffed snap to the punter, short or long, the punter is eligible to return to his/her original spot to then execute the punting procedure.
 - c. On fourth down, teams must punt or go for it. The punt option no longer applies to the Major Division Teams.
 - d. On field goals and extra point kicks - the center must snap the football between the legs to the hands of the holder without the ball touching the ground to be considered a clean snap. If the ball touches the ground or the holder drops the ball before the



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

ball is kicked the play is dead. In the Major Division there is no “re-do” for kicking PATs.

- e. Punt Return Formations - Once an offense has declared that they are punting, a defense must stay in a traditional base defensive formation (4-4, 5-2, 3-4, 3-3 Stack) until the ball is kicked away. Teams are permitted to have a punt returner deep to field a punt. This rule has been put in place to prevent a team from “setting up a wall” in order to gain an advantage.
10. If games end in a tie score, overtime shall decide the winner.
 - a. Coin flip to decide who goes on offense first and which goal to defend.
 - b. Each team gets four (4) downs from the 10 yard line to score.
 - c. Repeat process until winner is decided.
 - d. If score still tied after 2 rounds, team must attempt extra point kick when touchdown is scored.
 11. Scoring: TD = 6, Running or Passing PAT = 1, Kicking PAT = 2, FG = 3
 - a. *A 2 point conversion can be attempted from the 7 yard line*

5.3 Side Line Management Rule

1. On game day, only coaches, assistant coaches and managers shall be allowed on the side lines with the football teams. All others must be in the stands. Head Coaches are in charge of their sideline to ensure this rule is followed. The penalties for not following this rule are as follow:
 - (A) 1st Infraction; 15 yard unsportsman like conduct penalty
 - (B) 2nd Infraction; Flagrant misconduct 15 yard penalty
 - (C) 3rd Infraction; Head coach is removed from the game and must leave the stadium.

5.4 PIAA/NFHS - Arbitration

1. All other playing, game management, and participation rules please refer to USA Football, PIAA, and/or NFHS guidelines.
2. All teams are required to have PIAA Officials at scheduled contests
3. Officials have final word on all rulings.



Laurel Highlands Developmental Football League



2023 League Rules

4. If a play, player, coach, official, or game management issue is in question, and cannot be resolved during the contest, the following series of actions are necessary for LHDFL Arbitration.
 - a. The issue must be documented by the team's head coach.
 - b. The head coach will then communicate the matter in writing/email to their organization's president.
 - c. The organization's president must then file Arbitration with the League.