

## **Northern Indiana Youth Football League (NIYFL) Bronco and Pony Levels of Play**

*As Revised February 12, 2018*

### **Section A: Basic Rules**

The NIYFL plays according to the rules set forth by the Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) and National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations (NFHS). Exceptions to, or departures from, the rules of these governing bodies are those noted in the following Sections. It is suggested that each NIYFL Member Area maintain the current year's IHSAA Rules Book, Case Book, and Officials Manual in addition to these rules along with their Commissioners Manual.

### **Section B: Game Officials**

1. The NIYFL will strive to recruit, train, and license a pool of licensed IHSAA officials from which one (1) will be assigned to each league game. In addition to any league provided lead officials, each Area Commissioner will be responsible to recruit, train, and compensate supporting officials for each league game. Supporting officials will be considered qualified if they have attained at least sixteen (16) years of age and are not a close relative of any participant in the game they are officiating. *Close relative is defined as parent, sibling, grandparent, step-parent, step-sibling, aunt/uncle, niece/nephew, first cousin, or in-law.*
2. All game officials should have a complete knowledge of IHSAA and NIYFL Rules. It is the responsibility of the area commissioner to arrange for a minimum of two (2) qualified supporting officials for each game and to provide each official with a copy of the NIYFL Bylaws, Operating Directive, and Game Rules. Officials have the complete support of the NIYFL as evidenced by the field director's support of them. Once a game has begun, the game officials are in charge of the field. Their judgment is final.
3. Keep in mind that game officials should be able to maintain complete control of the game at all times, and if necessary, the official may eject players, coaches, and fans from the sidelines or games.
4. Officials should conduct the pre-game meeting with coaches and captains of both teams simultaneously. This is to be conducted just prior to the coin toss.
  - a. During this meeting officials should describe their expectations of the teams and coaches and discuss good sportsmanship and character.
  - b. The officials should remind everyone that this is an instructional league.
  - c. The officials should update everyone with regards to special concerns for the day and location such as weather (heat, cold, rain, etc.) or grounds issues (danger areas, missing pads or markers, mud, holes, etc.)
  - d. Officials should also review any points of emphasis with all contained in the rules. These will be in bold and red in the official league rules for the year.
  - e. Any ejection from play will be handled like the IHSAA Rule; specifically that an ejection carries with it a one (1) game suspension. Therefore, it should be made clear that any player, coach, or NIYFL official ejected from that day's game will also miss the next game. This will be communicated through the league's officers to the member areas. This will also bring the Zero Tolerance Rule into play as we as the Code of Conduct for

Coaches and Board Members.

5. If at any time during the course of the game the officials are unsure of a call they should confer with a single coach from each team and the field director if warranted. Under no circumstance should officials confer with a coach from only one team or just the field director.

### **Section C: Injury and Concussion Protocol**

1. The NIYFL has adopted and adheres to USA Football's Heads Up Football program. This includes Heads Up Football's injury, concussion, practice, and heat protocols. Any NIYFL personnel (defined as coaches, field administrators, and field personnel) must complete the annual USA Football Heads Up training and certification.
2. The specific protocols are adjusted from year to year. USA Football should be consulted for the current year's protocols.

### **Section D: Rules Specific to the NIYFL**

These are the items where the NIYFL departs from, adds to, or takes away from the IHSAA and NFHS rules mentioned in Section A.

1. **Time of Quarters:** 10 minutes
2. **Time and so-called "Play" Clocks:** The time clock will be kept on the field (or scoreboard if available). The play clock is 35 seconds; the offense will have 35 seconds from the officials indication that the ball is set for play to snap the ball.
  - a. Specials Teams plays have a post-snap or secondary play clock as well. The kick must be executed within 20 seconds of the snapping of the ball.
3. **Intermissions:** Applies to both Pony and Bronco Levels of Play
  - a. Between the 1st & 2nd and the 3rd & 4th Quarters ⇒ 2 minutes
  - b. Halftime (between 2nd & 3rd Quarters) ⇒ 10 Minutes
  - c. *NOTE These times may be adjusted subject to mutual agreement of the field director and BOTH head coaches.*
4. **Scoring:** Applies to both Pony and Bronco Levels of Play
  - a. Touchdown (TD) ⇒ 6 points
  - b. Point After Touchdown (PAT) ⇒ Scoring team MUST announce intent to run/pass or kick.
    - i. Run or Pass ⇒ 1 point
    - ii. Kick ⇒ 2 points
  - c. Field Goal (FG) ⇒ 3 points
5. **PAT/FG:**
  - a. Alignment ⇒ The kicking block must be set between the outside hip of the offensive tackles extended back from the line of scrimmage. The offensive line splits may be no wider than double arm length (fingertip to fingertip).
  - b. Play Clock ⇒ The normal 35 second play clock is in effect as is the secondary 20 second play clock as noted in Section D Item 2a.
  - c. Attempt ⇒ For the PAT/FG kick the offense has two (2) chances to execute a successful center to holder snap. If the initial attempt requires the holder to leave his position and take more than one (1) step to retrieve this is considered "no play" and the ball is set for

play again. If the second snap attempt results in the holder leaving his position then the try is considered “No Good” or missed.

- d. Rushing ⇒ The defense is not allowed to rush on any kicking attempt.
6. **Coaches on the Field:** Only one (1) coach per team is allowed in the huddle and on the field with the exception of timeouts (TOs).
  - a. The on field coach must not interfere with play in any manner. The coach must be ten (10) yards from the line of scrimmage (LOS) and may not “coach”, or even cheer, once the offense is set for play.
  - b. Interfering with play is defined as influencing the outcome of the play by physically moving, verbally instructing, or alerting the coach’s players after the offense is considered “set”. “Set” is defined as the point after which an offensive lineman may not lift his hand to reset without incurring a penalty.
  - c. Examples of interference include, but are not limited to...calling audibles, moving a player into the correct position, shifting the defense, calling out the direction of the play, changing or calling off a blocking scheme (please note that this list is not exhaustive).
  - d. Electronic communication is not allowed in any circumstance.
  - e. Failure to comply with this rule will result in an Unsportsmanlike Penalty being assessed against the offending coach. Refer to Penalty section.
7. **Timeouts:** The allotted time outs per half vary by level.
  - a. Pony ⇒ Each team is permitted five (5) timeouts per half but may only use three (3) of them in the last two (2) minutes of each half.
  - b. Bronco ⇒ Each team is permitted three (3) timeouts per half.
  - c. A timeout is one (1) minute in length.
  - d. There is no penalty for calling a timeout when a team has none left.
8. **Weight Limits:** Weigh-ins will be done prior to each week’s game at the game site under the direction of the field director for the host area or his designee. **Players weighing in above the limit** must be identified by a contrasting stripe on the center of the helmet running front to back. At no time may this stripe cover the helmet warning label. *These players will be referred to as “**stripers**” below.* Award stickers and helmet decals must be placed in a manner which will not obscure the contrasting stripe. Weight limits and restrictions vary by level of play.
  - a. Players **MUST** weigh-in in the exact gear they will wear during the game; this includes shoes, mouthpiece, extra pads, shields, braces, etc. Failure to comply will make the player ineligible to participate for that game.
  - b. The League does not allow so-called “cutting weight”. Players caught intentionally cutting weight will be classified as stripers for the rest of the season.
  - c. An unstriped player may play any offensive or defensive position.
  - d. **Pony** ⇒ In full gear any player who weighs **more than 105** pounds will be considered a stripers as defined above.
    - i. Stripers may only play on the line (Offensive and Defensive) in a two or three point stance. (*Offensively this can include the position of tight end (TE), but no stripers would ever be an eligible receiver and may not carry/advance the ball - see D.8.f. below*).

- ii. A striper may not advance the ball under any circumstance.
  - e. **Bronco** ⇒ In full gear any player who weighs **more than 130** pounds will be considered a single striper (one contrasting stripe) and any player who weighs **more than 150** pounds will be considered a double striper (two contrasting stripes).
    - i. Offensively single stripers can play ANY position but are ineligible to carry or receive the football. Double stripers must play on the offensive line (OL), including tight end (TE), must play in a three point stance, and are not eligible receivers (*this applies even if aligned as a TE*).
    - ii. Defensively single stripers may play any position. Double stripers are restricted to the defensive line (including DE) but must play in the down position (three or four point stance).
    - iii. A striper (single or double) cannot advance the ball under any circumstance (*See D.8.f. below*).
  - f. A “striper” may recover a live ball, whether kicked, batted, or fumbled, and may intercept a forward pass. HOWEVER, under no circumstance may any “striper” advance the ball. A recovery or interception made by a “striper” will result in the ball being blown dead at the spot of the recovery by the “striper”.
9. **Kicking Situations:** During all kicking situations (punt, PAT, or FG) the offensive coach must announce to the officials and the defense whether not his team will kick. If the coach announces his intention to kick neither team may cross the line of scrimmage until the ball has been kicked (no rushing the kicker and no releasing gunners on a punt).
- a. All special teams have a secondary play clock of 20 seconds.
  - b. No kick returns of any kind are allowed at any level of play. **<New for 2018>**
    - i. The kick-off or punt will be executed and the ball shall be declared dead where successfully caught by the receiving team, “downed” by the kicking team, or where the kicked ball comes to a stop.
      - 1. NOTE - this means kick-offs are no longer live balls.
      - 2. NOTE - a kick-off must still travel ten (10) yards from the point of kick-off. Failure to travel 10 yards results in:
        - a. A rekick on the 1st attempt.
        - b. An illegal procedure penalty of five (5) yards on each subsequent unsuccessful try to advance the kicked ball ten (10) yards.
  - c. Announcing your intention to kick and faking is an Unsportsmanlike Penalty against the offense. Likewise, announcing your intention to kick and not aligning in a kicking formation is considered an unsportsmanlike penalty.
  - d. Kicking the ball without announcing your intention to do so (quick kick) is an Unsportsmanlike Penalty against the offense.
  - e. Rushing the kicker is an Unsportsmanlike Penalty against the defense and the offense will retain possession of the ball. *NOTE jumping offsides, or stepping across the line of scrimmage post snap IS NOT rushing the kicker.*
  - f. Illegal defensive alignment is any alignment which does not meet the criteria of Section D. 10. You may drop three (3) players to receive the punt but must otherwise adhere to

the guidelines set forth below. Illegal Alignment is an Unsportsmanlike Penalty against the defense and the offense will retain possession of the ball.

10. **Defensive Formations:** *<Point of emphasis for 2018>* There shall be no more than eight (8) players within five (5) yards of the line of scrimmage extended sideline to sideline; and no more than six (6) within three (3) yards of the line of scrimmage extended sideline to sideline. In short, no more than 8 players in the so-called “box” and no more than 6 within LB level or within three (3) yards of the line of scrimmage extended sideline to sideline. [*“Box” is defined as the area which is a rectangle extending along the line of scrimmage, running from sideline to sideline, to a depth of five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage on the defensive side of the ball*]. There must be a minimum of three (3) players on the line of scrimmage and no more than six (6) players on the line of scrimmage.
  - a. Players aligning within the outside shoulders of the offensive tackles must be in a down position; those aligning outside the outside shoulders of the offensive tackles may be in either an up or down position but striping and formation rules apply.
  - b. The penalty for illegal defensive alignment is 5 yards.
11. **NO BLITZING:** No exceptions! *<Point of emphasis for 2018>*
  - a. **This is a safety issue plain and simple.** It is difficult for high school players to pick-up and protect against the blitz; we can’t expect youth players to effectively do it.
  - b. *It is not a blitz* if the quarterback initiates play action or rolls out.
  - c. *It is not a blitz* if the defensive linemen force the quarterback out of the pocket.
  - d. *It is a blitz* if the quarterback drops straight back.
12. **Unsportsmanlike or Personal Foul Penalties:** All 15 yard infractions will require...
  - a. Clear communication of the offense to the penalized player and the player’s coach on the field.
  - b. Removal of play for at least one (1) play of the offending player.
  - c. Examples of infractions which would result in this include Chop Blocks, Horse Collar, Facemask, Personal Foul, etc. Essentially any infraction which is deemed to be a safety issue.
13. **Point of Emphasis Defined:** Any area of our game rules which is designated as a point of emphasis at the annual rules meeting will get extra attention during the upcoming season. It will be reviewed and explained with extra attention during the coaches clinics. The Area Commissioners will take extra time to describe the emphasis in his/her area’s parent meeting and stress it to the area’s qualified officials (see Section B.1.). Rules designated with the Point of Emphasis tag must be discussed by the Field Administrator with the coaches of both teams at the pre-game weigh-in and the game officials must address the point of emphasis during their pre-game meeting (see Section B.4.).
14. **Minimum Playing Time:** The NIYFL is an instructional league and therefore maintains a strict rule regarding playing time for all eligible players. Each player must play a complete series each half or a minimum of four (4) plays on offense or defense per half. A series is defined as the beginning to the end of any possession of the ball. This could be an offensive or defensive series; special teams count as one (1) play, not a series. Additional playing time shall be determined by the players’ attendance at practices, active participation at practices, attitude, etc. as determined by the team coaching staff.

- a. At the discretion of the Head Coach and coaching staff, the playing time of a player can be reduced for things such as:
    - i. Poor attendance at practices because this is a safety issue.
    - ii. Illness or injury of the player during the game or from a previous game or practice which the coach deems prudent.
    - iii. Poor attitude or performance at school.
    - iv. This list is not exhaustive but is meant to give the coaching staff discretion to make a decision on playing time which is outside the league's rules.
  - b. Any such exercise of coach's discretion should be communicated to the player, the player's parents or guardians, and the NIYFL Board.
15. **Reporting of Scores:** Area Commissioners, or their designees, must report the scores of all games contested in his area within 48 hours of the last game's completion to the NIYFL Board.

#### **Section D: Awards**

Area Commissioners will be responsible for determining whether or not that member area will have individual and team awards.

No championship trophy will be awarded at any NIYFL level. The NIYFL is an instructional league and we believe all players are champions.