

IHSAA UNIFIED SPORTS®

FLAG FOOTBALL 2019-20



UNIFIED SPORTS TEAMS

SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED SPORTS® combines students with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team for sports training and competition. Special Olympics Indiana is considered a world leader in development of these programs having conducted the first-ever pilot test in 1989 and has since instituted competitions in virtually every sport.

- Teams consist of an approximately equal number of students with intellectual disabilities (Unified Student Athletes) and students without intellectual disabilities (Unified Student Partners).
- These distinctions will be for entry purposes only. There will be no identifiable distinction between participants in practice or competition.
- Teams are co-ed (all boys, all girls, or any combination).
- A school must certify all players on the sectional entry list but dress only 12 eligible players at each level of tournament. Schools may also play sub varsity games during the regular season.

UNIFIED SPORTS FLAG FOOTBALL BASICS

- Teams have no more than 3 Unified Student Athletes and 2 Unified Student Partners on the field at a time
- Safety is the primary consideration—flag football is a **NON-CONTACT** sport—stationery “screen blocking,” but no moving blocks; no kick offs or punts; no returns of fumbles or interceptions, etc.
- Games consist of two 20-minute halves (running clock except last 2 minutes) with 1 time out per team each half
- Unified Flag Football is played with a Wilson Youth football on a field that is 60 yards by 25 yards

SEASON DATES—Fall 2019

August 1st deadline for entering team for 2019 (Also limited to first 64 schools that apply)

- First possible date for practice—August 5
- Regular season—August 17- September 28
- Entry list deadline—September 27
- Sectional—Saturday, October 5 (4-6 teams, 2-3 games per team, 8 sites)
- Regional—Saturday, October 12 (4 teams, 2 games per team, 2 sites)
- State Championship Game—Saturday, October 19, Grand Park Westfield

SCHOOL GRANTS

Up to 64 schools that participate in the 2019 IHSAA Flag Football Tournament will receive a grant of \$1500 from our partners at Special Olympics Indiana. The grants will be distributed by the IHSAA at the end of the season to those schools that participate in the tournament. Schools will need to provide all equipment, 2 sets of jerseys (home and away) and affix a patch provided by Special Olympics Indiana to all jerseys. An equipment & price list from a preferred vendor will be provided by SOIN.

GOVERNANCE AND RULES

For specific rules and regulations concerning this tournament check IHSAA By-Laws (Rules 200, 201, 203) and IHSAA Fall Bulletin 2019-20 (Unified Flag Football). Game rules were developed by Special Olympics and modified for use by the IHSAA and are available online at IHSAA.org > Schools > Coaches.

ON-LINE RULES MEETING (COACHES AND OFFICIALS)

This will be available some time during the week of July 29.

IHSAA UNIFIED SPORTS® FLAG FOOTBALL RULES IN A NUTSHELL

200-1.0 Vision of Unified Sports®

The IHSAA/Special Olympics Indiana (SOIN) Unified Sports® project is to allow high school students with and without intellectual disabilities the opportunity to represent their high school in an IHSAA sanctioned activity by participating on a Unified Sports® team providing the students with a quality experience of sports training and competition.

200-1.1 Definition of Participants:

- a. Unified Student Athlete: A Unified Student Athlete is a student who is receiving special education and related services pursuant to an individual education program based on a cognitive, developmental and/or intellectual disability.
- b. Unified Student Partner: A Unified Student Partner is a student that meets the eligibility criteria outlined in General Eligibility rules 1-20, but is NOT identified by the school as a Unified Student Athlete.

Coaches:

In order to be eligible to coach Unified Flag Football a coach must meet the criteria necessary to coach an IHSAA sport under IHSAA By-Laws Rule 7, successfully completed the NFHS course on Unified Sports®, and attend Unified Sports® Flag Football rules training in person or on-line.

Fundamentals:

- All possessions, except following an interception, start at the offensive team's 5-yard line.
- The offense has four plays to cross midfield. Once the offense crosses midfield, they have four additional plays to score a touchdown.
- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield or score a touchdown in a prescribed number of plays, possession of the ball changes and the opposite team starts at their 5-yard line.
- The ball carrier may not spin, dive, hurdle, stiff arm, or use either arm to shield a defender from grasping his/her flag.
- The quarterback (player receiving snap) may NOT advance the ball beyond line of scrimmage
- Laterals are not allowed. All passes must be forward from behind the line of scrimmage and be caught beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Screen blocking is the only form of legal blocking that can be used by any player at any time.
- Dead Ball - play is ruled dead when the ball carrier's flag is pulled, loses his/her flag, steps out of bounds or any part of their body other than the hand or foot touches the ground; a receiver catches a ball without his/her flags attached, a pass is intercepted (no returns); or when a snap, pass, or lateral strikes the ground.
- There is no advance of an interception or fumble
- Fumbles - A ball fumbled by the runner is dead when it hits the ground and remains in possession of the offensive team (unless it is fourth down). If fumbled forward, the ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble. If fumbled backwards, it is marked where it hits the ground.
- The ball is spotted near the middle of the field for each down by the Referee
- The forward progress spot is the position of the ball when the player is declared down (carrier's flag belt is pulled or anything other than the runner's hand or foot touches ground).
- "No Running Zones" are located 5-yards before the midfield line and goal line. Any ball snapped from these zones must be passed. The purpose of "No Running Zones" is to avoid short yardage power running situations.
- Partners shall NOT dominate play (as determined by a Games Committee).
- A Unified Student Partner may NOT pass to another Unified Student Partner (to fully include Unified Student Athlete participation and prevent Unified Student Partner dominance).
- Partners MAY handoff to another partner.

Special Olympics Indiana will provide a price list from a suggested vendor for schools to purchase approved equipment or a starter kit: (pylons, multi-colored cones, boundary marker set, mouth guards, approved flag belts and equipment duffle bag).

IHSAA will provide 2 Wilson all weather youth footballs.

Schools will need to provide two sets of jerseys (home and away) and affix patches provided by Special Olympics Indiana.