UAFLAG

OFFICIAL RULE BOOK

2026 EDITION

IMPORTANT — SINGLE SOURCE OF TRUTH

The official rules published on the UA Elite Fall Invitational website supersede any printed or PDF copy. If a printout and the website differ, the website governs.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The UA Elite Fall Invitational is committed to a safe, respectful, and fair environment for every player, coach, official, staff member, volunteer, parent, and spectator. Treat everyone with respect, play fair, and support the athletes. The full conduct policy is in Part III, §8.

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PART I

GOVERNING RULES & THE GAME

ON-FIELD PLAY — IFAF 5-ON-5

1 GOVERNING RULES

1.1 All games are played under the **2023 IFAF Flag Football 5-on-5 playing rules.** This document is a condensed, tournament-specific adaptation of those rules.

1.2 Where any rule in this document differs from the IFAF rule, **this document governs.**

1.3 Authority split. On the field, the Referee has final authority over the score and all judgment calls, which **cannot be protested.** Off the field, the **Tournament Director / Committee** decides all matters not covered by these rules (see §12).

2 FIELD, TEAMS & EQUIPMENT

2.1 · TEAMS & ROSTERS

- **5 players on the field.** Each team is permitted a maximum of **12 players**, plus up to **3 additional players on the Injured Reserve (IR) list.** Unlimited free substitution between downs.

2.2 · FIELD MARKINGS

- **50 yd field of play + two 10 yd end zones** (70 yd total), **25 yd wide.**
- Middle line at 25 yd = the first-down (line-to-gain) marker.
- **No-Run Zones:** the 5 yd before each goal line.
- Cones/disks mark the goal-line corners and the No-Run Zones.

2.3 · GAME BALLS

- **Teams supply their own ball.** Each team brings its own game ball and **uses it while on offence.** Teams are strongly encouraged to bring a spare.
- **Exact size only.** The ball must be the size listed in **Appendix B** for the team's **birth year and division.** Playing with a larger **or** a smaller ball is not permitted.
- **Any brand** is permitted, provided the ball is the correct size for the division.
- **Officials verify at the coin toss.** Both teams present their game ball; a ball of the wrong size is rejected. If a team cannot produce a correct-size ball, the game proceeds using a correct-size ball supplied by the opponent or by the tournament, at the official's direction.

2.4 · EQUIPMENT

- **Flag belts:** every athlete wears a flag belt with the flags hanging free. Cold-weather layers are worn **under** the jersey or tucked in — nothing may hang over or cover the belt or flags.
- **Mouthguards: MANDATORY** at all times during games.
- **Headgear:** optional; **soft-shell only.** Hard-shell helmets prohibited.
- **Hats:** permitted only with the brim facing backward.

- **Smart / Meta glasses, body cameras and head-mounted cameras: NOT PERMITTED — they may not be WORN** on the field of play, in the bench area, or in any restricted team area, **whether or not the device is recording.** Ordinary prescription or sports eyewear is fine. See §10.
- **Footwear:** rubber or molded-rubber studs only. **No metal cleats or spikes.**
- **Communication headsets / earpieces:** not permitted for athletes or coaches during games.
- **Jersey color clash:** teams should carry a light and a dark shirt; on a clash, the higher seed wears dark (home), the lower seed wears light (away).

3 GAME PLAY

3.1 · COIN TOSS

Conducted at **midfield approximately three minutes before kickoff**, with both team captains present.

- The **visiting-team captain calls** the toss.
- Both teams **present their game ball** for a size check (§2.3).
- The **winner elects** to begin with possession in either the **first half or the second half.**
- The **other team chooses which end to defend.**
- The opening possession begins with a **snap from that team's own 5-yard line.**
- Teams **change ends for the second half.** The team that did not begin with possession in the first half begins the second half from its own 5-yard line.

*There is no **"defer"** election and no option to **"kick"** — IFAF 5-on-5 has no kickoffs. The toss winner simply elects the half in which it takes possession.*

3.2 · SERIES & DOWNS

Offence has **4 downs to cross the middle line** for a new first down, then **4 downs to score.** Failure → defence takes over at its own 5-yard line. First downs may also be awarded by penalty.

3.3 · SNAP & PLAY CLOCK

Ball must be snapped within **25 s.** The QB has **7 s** after the snap to release a pass or hand-off; exceeding it → dead ball, loss of down.

3.4 · RUNNING RESTRICTIONS

- The QB may not advance past the scrimmage line **unless the ball was first possessed by another player or touched by a defender.**
- Inside any No-Run Zone, the play **must be a forward pass.**

Penalty: 5 yd & loss of down.

3.5 · HAND-OFFS & LATERALS

Unlimited behind the scrimmage line while the ball has not crossed it and before any change of possession.

3.6 · PASSING

One legal forward pass per down, from behind the scrimmage line. Illegal forward pass (beyond the line, second forward pass, etc.) = 5 yd & loss of down.

3.7 · BLITZ / RUSH

Maximum **2 blitzers**, who must signal (hand up ≥1 s pre-snap). Any defender **≥7 yd** off the line may cross at the snap; defenders **<7 yd** must wait until the ball is handed-off or passed.

3.8 · SCORING

PLAY	POINTS
Touchdown	**6**
Try / Convert @ 5 yd	**1**
Try / Convert @ 10 yd	**2**
Defensive TD on a Try / Convert	**2**
Safety	**2** (1 on a try)

3.9 · LIVE / DEAD BALL

The ball is dead when: the runner or ball is out of bounds; a knee or elbow is down; the ball hits the ground; a ball-carrier has fewer than 2 flags; a score or safety; or a foul that kills the play.

3.10 · PENALTIES

- **Common 10-yd fouls:** pass interference; illegal contact; unsportsmanlike conduct (automatic first down or loss of down as indicated).
- **Common 5-yd & loss-of-down fouls:** illegal run; delay of pass (7-s clock); illegal kick; illegal backward/forward pass; jumping/diving; flag guarding; illegal blitz signal.
- **Enforcement basics:** live-ball fouls repeat the down unless the penalty carries loss-of-down / automatic-first-down or the ball is past the middle. Offsetting fouls → replay the down.

3.11 · RULES CLARIFICATIONS

The following rulings are issued to ensure consistent officiating across all fields. They reflect the **2023 IFAF** playing rules and are binding for this event.

QUESTION	RULING
Are laterals legal beyond the line of scrimmage?	**No.** A lateral is treated as a backward pass. It is legal **only if** the ball has **not previously been carried beyond the line of scrimmage** and possession has not changed.
Must a forward pass travel beyond the line of scrimmage?	**Not generally** — a forward pass may be caught behind the line. **However**, to satisfy the forward-pass requirement **inside a No-Run Zone**, a completed, untouched pass **must cross the line of scrimmage.**
May a player throw a forward pass after receiving a forward hand-off?	**Yes** — but **only** when all four conditions are met: the hand-off occurred **behind** the line; the ball has **never been carried beyond** the line; the pass is **released from behind** the line; and **no earlier forward pass** was thrown on the down.

4 TIMING & OVERTIME

4.1 · GAME LENGTH

Every game — pool play, playoffs and finals — is two 12-minute halves with a running clock, except the last minute of the second half, which is played on the PRO clock. The mercy rule in §4.2 can keep the PRO clock off.

4.2 · MERCY RULE & THE 21-POINT MARGIN

Mercy rule — a lead of more than two scores keeps the PRO clock off. While a team leads by **more than two scores** in the **last minute of the second half**, the PRO clock does not come into effect — the clock keeps running to the final whistle. If the margin falls back to two scores or fewer, the PRO clock applies as normal.

The real score is always posted and recorded. If a team wins by more than 21, the **actual** final score is what goes into the results. Nothing is truncated at the field.

Standings count a maximum of 21 points of margin. However large the real margin, only **21 points** of it carry into standings and tiebreakers (§6.4). A **40–7** win is recorded as 40–7 and counts in the standings as **28–7.**

4.3 · TIMEOUTS

- **1 team timeout per half** in every game.
- Timeouts are **30 seconds**; an unused timeout **cannot** be carried over.

4.4 · OVERTIME

- **No overtime in pool play** — a game tied at the end of regulation is recorded as a tie for both teams.
- **Playoff games only.** Overtime is a **sudden-conversion** format. A **coin toss** determines which team attempts first; teams then **alternate**, each receiving an **equal number of possessions** in every round.

ROUND	PROCEDURE
Round 1	Each team elects **either** a **1-point conversion from the 5-yard line or** a **2-point conversion from the 10-yard line.**
Round 2 and beyond	If the score remains tied, every attempt **must be a 2-point conversion from the 10-yard line.** This round **repeats until a winner is decided.**

After both teams have taken an equal number of attempts in a round, the team that is ahead wins.
Interceptions may be returned by the defence.

UA Modified — this overtime procedure differs from standard IFAF and governs for this event (§1.2), to guarantee a timely result on schedule.

PART II

TOURNAMENT OPERATIONS

OFF-FIELD — STRUCTURE, ELIGIBILITY & LOGISTICS

5 ROSTER & ELIGIBILITY

5.1 Roster size. Minimum **8 registered players**; maximum **12**, plus up to **3 additional players on the Injured Reserve (IR) list.**

5.2 Minimum to play. A team must start a game with **5** players and may continue (injury only) with no fewer than **4.** A team that cannot field the minimum after a **10-minute grace period** forfeits.

The game-day minimum to avoid a forfeit; separate from the 8-player registration minimum in §5.1.

5.3 Roster lock. Rosters lock when the team's **first game kicks off**; no players may be added after that.

5.4 Playoff eligibility. A player must play in **at least 50% of their team's pool-play games** to be eligible for playoff games.

5.5 One team per division. A player may appear on only one roster in a division. An athlete who plays on more than one team may not be on two teams in the same age/gender division.

5.6 Division movement. A player may play **up** to one division above their own, and may **never play down** into a lower division.

5.7 Age divisions. Eligibility is set by **birth year (calendar year)**; divisions are listed in Appendix A. Age is verified through **Zorts**: every athlete provides **valid government-issued identification or an official birth record** showing their name and date of birth. Documents are reviewed only for eligibility and handled confidentially.

5.8 Gender divisions. The tournament runs **Coed** and **Girls** divisions by birth year, plus **Girls U19 / Women's Open & Collegiate** (Appendix A). **No on-field gender ratio applies** in Coed divisions — any mix of rostered players may be on the field.

5.9 Guest / call-up players. Not permitted. A player may only participate for the team on which they are rostered.

6 STANDINGS, TIEBREAKERS & ADVANCEMENT

6.1 Standings points. Win = 2, Tie = 1, Loss = 0. Pool-play games may end in a tie (no overtime).

6.2 Tiebreaker ladder (applied in order):

1. **Overall record.**
2. **Head-to-head — applies only when exactly two teams are tied.** Dropped entirely when 3+ teams are tied (they did not all play each other).
3. **Points against** (fewest).
4. **Point differential** (capped at **±21 per game**).
5. **Points for** (most).
6. **Coin toss** (2 teams) / **blind draw** (3+ teams).

6.3 Multi-team ties (3+). Apply the ladder in order; the moment one team is separated, the remaining teams **return to Step 1** and run the ladder again.

6.4 Point-differential cap. No more than **21 points** of margin from any single game count toward standings or any tiebreaker calculation. The real score is still posted and recorded in full (§4.2) — a **40–7** win is recorded as 40–7 and enters the standings as **28–7.**

6.5 Seeding. Playoff seeds come from pool standings; in a multi-pool division the pool winners take the top seeds. Minor seed swaps may be made to avoid first-round rematches between teams from the same pool. Girls 2009 uses a fixed chart by pool position instead (Appendix A).

6.6 Advancement. Teams advance to a single-elimination playoff per the per-division format in Appendix A.

6.7 Forfeit / default recorded score. Every forfeit, default, or no-show is recorded as a **21-0** win for the opponent — equal to the ±21 tiebreaker cap, so the recorded score is exactly what counts toward standings and tiebreakers.

6.8 Ineligible player discovered after games. Any game won by a team using an ineligible player is **nullified and recorded as the opponent's final score to 0**, with additional sanctions on the coach at the Committee's discretion.

7 GAME MANAGEMENT & LOGISTICS

7.1 Report time. Teams must be field-ready near the end zone **10 minutes before** scheduled kickoff, with no advance warning.

7.2 Early starts. If both teams are present and the field is open, a game may begin early — no additional warning required.

7.3 Late arrival. A team not ready **10 minutes after** its scheduled start forfeits. The **Tournament Director / Event Liaison — not the on-field official — makes the forfeit call.**

7.4 Rain or shine. The event is held rain or shine, subject to the weather / lightning policy (§7.6).

7.5 Scheduling. Each team is guaranteed **4 games.** In most divisions that is 4 pool games. Where pool play is **3 games** (Coed 2011, Girls 2009, Girls 2015), **every team advances** to the playoffs and its first playoff game is its fourth.

◆ 7.6 · WEATHER / LIGHTNING POLICY

This is an **outdoor late-fall event** — games continue in rain, wind and cold. The only reasons for delay or cancellation are **lightning or conditions deemed unsafe by officials.**

> **LIGHTNING PROTOCOL**
> • If lightning is seen or detected, **all play stops immediately and fields are cleared.**
> • A **20-minute delay** begins from the last lightning strike.
> • If another strike occurs during the delay, the **20-minute timer resets.**
> • Play resumes once there has been **no lightning for 20 consecutive minutes.**

If severe weather persists and safety cannot be ensured, games may be **modified or cancelled at the officials' discretion.** Weather delays and schedule changes are communicated **directly to registered coaches.**

PART III

CONDUCT, DISCIPLINE & AUTHORITY

HOW EVERYONE IS EXPECTED TO BEHAVE — AND WHO DECIDES

8 CODE OF CONDUCT

Everyone attending the UA Elite Fall Invitational is expected to:

- Treat players, coaches, officials, staff, volunteers, and spectators with respect.
- Follow tournament rules and staff instructions.
- Accept officials' decisions without prolonged arguing or confrontation.
- Remain within designated player, team, or spectator areas.
- Avoid taunting, harassment, threats, discriminatory language, fighting, or unsafe behaviour.
- Represent their team with professionalism and good sportsmanship.

Coaches and team representatives are responsible for helping manage the conduct of their players, parents, and spectators.

9 CONDUCT VIOLATIONS, PENALTIES & DISCIPLINE

Penalties are based on the seriousness, frequency, and impact of the behaviour. Tournament leadership may move directly to a higher-level consequence depending on severity.

◆ TIER 1 — MINOR VIOLATION

Examples: disrespectful comments; minor unsportsmanlike behaviour; failure to follow procedures; continued disagreement with an official; entering a restricted area without permission.

Consequences: verbal or formal warning; direction to correct; notification to the coach; removal from a restricted area.

◆ TIER 2 — SERIOUS OR REPEATED VIOLATION

Examples: repeated Tier 1 behaviour; aggressive/abusive language; excessive arguing; taunting, intimidation, or harassment; refusing staff instructions; entering the field without permission; disrupting a game.

Consequences: unsportsmanlike penalty; removal from the game/field; game suspension; formal review; team-level consequences.

◆ TIER 3 — SEVERE VIOLATION

Examples: fighting or attempted fighting; threatening or physically aggressive behaviour; discriminatory/hateful language; deliberately endangering someone; refusing to leave after removal; identity or age fraud; conduct that affects tournament safety or integrity.

Consequences: immediate ejection; removal from tournament property; suspension for the remainder of the tournament; team sanctions, forfeiture, or disqualification; referral to security or authorities where required.

SPECIFIC DISCIPLINE RULES

- **Two (2) unsportsmanlike penalties** on any one player or coach in a game = **automatic disqualification** from that game.
- **Any ejection** carries an automatic **minimum one-game (next-game) suspension.**
- **Fighting** = immediate ejection + expulsion from the remainder of the tournament, with possible multi-event suspension or ban.
- **Suspensions carry over for the remainder of the event** (they do not carry forward to future events).
- The **Tournament Director** adjudicates ejections, expulsions, and suspensions.

10 CAMERAS, WEARABLES & RECORDING DEVICES

Players, coaches, and team representatives may **not wear smart / Meta glasses, body cameras, head-mounted cameras,** or any other wearable recording device on the **field of play, bench area, or restricted team areas — whether or not the device is recording.** Take them off before you enter. Phones and other recording devices may not be used by teams in those areas; spectators record only from spectator areas, without interfering with play.

Video challenges are not permitted. Officials will not stop a game to review personal footage or reverse a call based on team or spectator recordings. Recordings may not be used to confront, harass, or target participants, officials, staff, or volunteers.

11 PROTESTS

- A team may lodge **one rule-interpretation protest per game.** The head coach must have this rulebook to hand (printed or on a phone) and call a **"Protest Time-Out" before the next play** begins.
- The **Event Liaison arbitrates and has final say.** A protest ruled to be wrong costs the team a timeout.
- **Officials' judgment calls cannot be protested**, and personal video, photos, or livestreams may not be used to challenge or reverse a decision (see §10).

12 TOURNAMENT AUTHORITY

- All participants must cooperate with tournament officials, staff, venue personnel, and security.
- The **Tournament Director / Committee** may take reasonable action to protect the safety, fairness, and integrity of the event, **including addressing conduct not specifically listed** in these rules.
- **Decisions regarding conduct, access, eligibility, suspension, removal, scoring, and tournament participation are final.**

APPENDICES

REFERENCE TABLES & RULES SUMMARY

A DIVISIONS & ADVANCEMENT

Pool play and playoff format by division. The published schedule governs exact matchups and times. Girls 2010 teams play in the Girls 2009 division this year.

DIVISION	POOL PLAY	PLAYOFFS
Coed 2011	1 pool of 4 · 3 games	All 4 → semifinals
Coed 2013	1 pool of 5 · 4 games	Top 2 → final
Coed 2014	2 pools of 4, cross-pool · 4 games	4 → semifinals
Coed 2015	1 pool of 5 · 4 games	Top 2 → final
Coed 2016	1 pool of 7 · 4 games	Top 4 → semifinals
Coed 2017	1 pool of 6 · 4 games	Top 4 → semifinals
Girls U19 / Women's Open & Collegiate (2008 & older)	1 pool of 5 · 4 games	Top 2 → final
Girls 2009	4 pools of 4 · 3 games	Top 2 per pool → Championship; 3rd & 4th → Challenger Cup
Girls 2011	3 pools of 6 · 4 games	Top 2 per pool + 2 wildcards → quarterfinals
Girls 2013	2 pools of 4, cross-pool · 4 games	4 → semifinals
Girls 2015	1 pool of 4 · 3 games	All 4 → semifinals

HOW EACH BRACKET IS DRAWN

- **Top 2** — **1v2** in the final.
- **4 advance** — semifinals **1v4** and **2v3**, then the final.
- **Cross-pool** (Coed 2014, Girls 2013) — each team plays the four teams of the other pool. **Both pool winners** advance, plus the **two best remaining records** across both pools.
- **Girls 2011** — the top 2 of each pool plus the **two best remaining records** across all three pools (the wildcards). Pool winners take the top seeds, wildcards the bottom seeds; quarterfinals **1v8 · 4v5 · 2v7 · 3v6.**
- **Girls 2009** — quarterfinals by pool position. Championship: **A1vB2 · D1vC2 · B1vA2 · C1vD2.** Challenger Cup: **A3vB4 · D3vC4 · B3vA4 · C3vD4.**

B BALL SIZE CHART

Ball size is set by the athlete's **birth year and division**. **Each team supplies its own ball and uses it on offence** (§2.3). The size below is **exact** — a team may not play up or down a size — and officials verify both teams' balls at the coin toss.

BIRTH YEAR	BALL
2017 & younger	**PeeWee**
2016, 2015	**Junior**
2014, 2013	**Girls:** Junior · **Coed:** Youth
2012, 2011	**Youth**
2010, 2009	**Youth / Official**
2008 & older	**Youth / Official**

C SUMMARY OF KEY RULES

A quick-reference summary of the tournament's key settings. The full rule for each is in the section noted. This table is also pinned to the top of this page as "Key facts".

SECTION	RULE	SETTING
§1.1	Governing rules	2023 IFAF Flag 5-on-5
§2.1 / 5.1	Roster size	min 8, max 12, plus up to 3 on IR
§2.3	Game balls	each team brings its own, used on offence; exact size per birth year and division; any brand; checked at the toss
§4.1	Game length	every game 2×12, running clock; PRO clock in the last 1 min of the 2nd half
§4.2	Mercy rule & 21-point margin	a lead of more than 2 scores keeps the PRO clock off; real score always recorded; standings count ±21 max
§4.3	Timeouts	1 per half · 30 s · no carry-over
§2.4 / 10	Cameras & smart glasses	may not be WORN on the field, bench or team areas, recording or not; no video challenges
§3.1	Coin toss	visitor calls; winner elects the half it takes possession; no "defer", no kick
§3.11	Rules clarifications	laterals · forward pass & No-Run Zone · pass after hand-off
§4.4	Overtime	playoffs only: R1 free choice 1-pt @5 / 2-pt @10 → R2+ mandatory 2-pt @10, repeats
§5.2	Minimum to play	5 to start · 4 to continue · 10-min grace
§5.4	Playoff eligibility	play ≥50% of pool-play games
§5.5	One team per division	not two teams in the same age/gender division
§5.7	Proof of age	Zorts — government ID or official birth record
§5.9	Guest / call-up players	not permitted
§6.2 / 6.4	Tiebreakers & cap	record → H2H (2 only) → PA → diff → PF → toss; ±21 cap
§6.7	Forfeit score	21-0 (= the ±21 cap)
§7.5	Games guaranteed	4 per team — in a 3-game pool every team makes the playoffs
§7.6	Lightning	stop & clear; resume after 20 min clear (resets on strike)
§9	Discipline	2 unsportsmanlike = game DQ; ejection = next-game suspension
§11	Protests	one per game · Protest Time-Out · Liaison decides · no judgment calls