



## **BANDIT FOOTBALL RULES AND GUIDELINES**

### **INSTRUCTIONAL FOOTBALL**

**Above all else, we should strive to make these new players' first experience with football a positive one.** The following rules and guidelines should help all of us achieve this goal.

#### **Game Format**

- Teams will play 12 plays on offense and defense each half (total of 48 plays in a game). There should be a 5 minute half time. The number of plays can be adjusted by agreement of coaches depending upon time constraints.

#### **Introduction (20 to 30 Minutes Before Scheduled Game Time)**

- Coaches should introduce themselves.
- If it is a split game with 1<sup>st</sup> grade at one end of the field and the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at the other end of the field, the coach running the 1<sup>st</sup> grade and the coach running the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at a minimum (can also bring some of the assistants) should meet prior to the start of the game. This will help diffuse any possible disagreements during the game. At this time the coaches can determine
  - Number of plays to run per possession - 12 plays or a different amount due to time available
  - If they want to run some plays near the goal line for some of the kids that do not normally run the ball. These goal line plays can be run during the normal part of the offensive plays or in addition to the 12 plays on offense after a team's 2<sup>nd</sup> possession.
  - Which end of the field each team will play on. It is a 40 yard field.
  - Which team will start on offense and which team will start on defense. This can be done with a coin flip or coach's agreement.
  - At half time coaches can determine if the number of plays needs to be adjusted due to the start time of next game.
  - Both teams should line up at midfield 5 minutes before the scheduled game time for a prayer.

#### **Announcing Players**

Some teams announce the players before the game and call play by play during the game. This is fine if both coaches agree, but keep in mind that some sites have limited time to play games. Err on the side of more playing and less pageantry!

#### **Rules on Defense**

- There are 6 defensive linemen – guards, tackles and ends.
- Interior Defensive linemen must line up head up on the guards and tackles. The defensive end can line up one half a body to the outside of the offensive end, not a full body or 2 bodies outside the offensive end. The end must still engage with the offensive end.
- No defensive player over the center.
- The defense needs to engage the offensive line on every play. Engage means defense should hit the offense with 2 hands on either side of the shoulder pads.
- There are to be no stunts, slants, blitzing or shooting gaps. This means that a linebacker, cornerback or safety should not be tackling the quarterback or running back in the backfield before the handoff is completed.
  - No linebacker, cornerback or safety can cross the line of scrimmage before a handoff is completed.
  - Generally, non-linemen should not be tackling anyone behind the line from one offensive end to the other.
- Middle linebackers should be 3 yards off the ball.
- Defensive coaches should pay attention and correct any players who are not following these rules. These rules are broken most games and lead to the most disagreements between coaches. Coaches should watch for rules violations of their own team and address it to avoid issues.



### Rules on Offense

- Offense must line up in a 7 man front with a center, guard, tackle and end. No unbalanced lines are permitted. Ends should not be split out from the tackles (past normal splits). Backs are fine to be split out and (of course) lined up off of the line of scrimmage.
- No quarterback sneaks are allowed. Quarterback runs are allowed outside the ends.
- Running backs are allowed to run in interiors gaps as well as outside the ends.
- Plays are not to be run on a quick or silent snap.
- Bad snaps or fumbles:
  - Plays should be blown dead immediately if the football is fumbled in the backfield (bad snap or handoff). An exception to this rule is a snap that is dropped and very quickly picked up and the play goes off normally.
- If there is a bad snap the play is to be restarted at the line of scrimmage. A fumbled handoff also will be run from the line.
  - Example 1: The snap is fumbled. The whistle is blown and the offense runs the play from the line again.
  - Example 2: The snap is fine but the running back fumbles the ball as the quarterback hands him the ball. Then offense runs the play from the line again.
  - Example 3: The snap and handoff are fine and the running back gains 5 yards and then fumbles. This counts as a play for the offense.
  - Example 4: A fumble occurs on a reverse (e.g. quarterback handoff to running back #1 is fine but handoff from running back #1 to running back #2 is fumbled). This counts as a play for the offense.
  - Please note that fumbled snaps and handoffs are to be run from the line without the offense huddling up again to call a new play. This will keep the game moving.
- A field should not be extended beyond 40 yards due to a loss of yards on the previous play.
  - Example: The first play of the game goes for 5 yards down to the 35. The 2<sup>nd</sup> play is a 10 yard loss back to the 45 yard line. Place the ball back at the 40 yard line for the 3<sup>rd</sup> play.

### Mismatches

- If there is a mismatch on the line of scrimmage, the offense can ask the defense to move a player.
  - Example: Left defensive tackle is very aggressive and weighs 95 lbs. The right offensive tackle is not very aggressive and weighs about 60 lbs.

### Coaches on the Field

A maximum of 3 coaches are allowed on the field during the game. **At the start of the play defensive coaches should be at least 3 yards behind the safety.** A coach is not allowed to hold a player's shoulder pad and push him in the direction of the ball.

### "Referee"

A 4<sup>th</sup> coach from each side can be a "referee" The referee's main duties are to whistle a play dead when the play is over or on a fumbled snap or handoff, spot the ball, and keep track of the plays.

### Holding, Late Hits, Lined Up Offsides, Etc.

At the Bandit level there probably is holding on every play. That said, the defensive coach may want to mention to the **offensive coach** (not to the opposing team's player) that one of his players has been held the previous 2 or 3 plays. The defensive coach telling the player or yelling across the field at the offensive coach that #87 has been holding all day most likely will not get the issue solved. Please walk over to the offensive coach and ask him to watch or talk to #87 about not holding. The more aggressive players typically play running back so let's say your fullback is the lead blocker and he



tackles the cornerback the first play of the game. The offensive coach needs to say something to the fullback immediately. This allows the defensive coach to know that the situation has been handled. As far as late hits are concerned, coaches on either team can break this up so a player does not get hurt. This is Bandit football so if a player on offense is lined up offside, the offensive coach should try to get the line straight but this is not always possible. Please use common sense and allow calmer heads to prevail when it comes to holding and other “penalties.” Arguing over holding does not help move the game along or make it fun for the kids.

### **NO SHUTOUTS**

Please remember that this is instructional football. Our job as coaches is to make this a fun experience for all players involved. Please use common sense if it is the second half and the other team has only moved the ball 10 yards in its first 15 (12 in first half and 3 in second half) plays of the game you need to take out your more aggressive players to ensure the other team has some success on that day.

### **Good Sportsmanship**

We are not to keep score but at the same time, no player should be scoring 5 touchdowns in a game either. For example, if your first 3 or 4 plays go for 40 yard touchdowns untouched, those players need to be blocking the remainder of the game. If a team is overall dominant, then let some linemen run the ball! A game should never end up with 9 or 10 touchdowns with only 3 or 4 players running the ball the whole game.

### **Huddles**

It is not required, but it is highly suggested that you huddle **all 11 players** before each play. It can be argued all day against huddling all the players instead of just the running backs. This is instructional football, so shouldn't all players learn together?

### **Weight Limit**

There is no weight limit for Bandits. We ask that the coaches use common sense to avoid mis-matches that could result in injury.

### **Bottom Line**

Coaches and parents need to understand that there are no winners or losers at the Bandit level. **THIS IS INSTRUCTIONAL FOOTBALL.** The players are there to learn about football, good sportsmanship, and to have fun. Participation of each player should be held in the highest regard and playing time should be optimized for each player as much as possible by the coaches.

**In order to maximize the players initial experiences with football, please consider the following goals:**

- **Teach every player a good football stance by the end of the year.**
- **Teach every player how to get into and out of a huddle before and after a play.**
- **Allow every player the opportunity to run the ball in at least 1 game.**
- **Do whatever it takes to make it fun for the players. Use drills that make football fun. You can have a few pizza parties during the year. Consider having a parent vs. son game instead of a regular practice.**

Please make sure all your coaches are made aware of the Bandit rules and how the games should flow. This should help us have a successful season.