

BAFA Flag Football rule changes 2021



This list contains all BAFA flag football rule changes adopted for 2021, including those made by IFAF.

1 Introduction

The International Federation of American Football has recently introduced a new set of rules for flag football. IFAF 2021 rules are to be used for all flag football games played in Britain from 1st March 2021.

2 Changes from 2019

Important changes compared to the 2019 version are:

- Flag Football Code introduced
- Line marking rules tightened to improve standards and players safety
- Cones to mark the longitudinal axis are recommended to help the officials to spot the ball
- Ball dimensions added
- Flags need not to be single colour
- Blocking is renamed to Shielding and Targeting is renamed to Aiming to avoid conflicts with Tackle definitions, definition for Aiming is added and the foul is moved under Initiating Contact
- Coin Toss procedure for start and overtime changed
- Clock will stop during last 2 minutes only if score difference is less than 30 points (mercy rule)
- QB can only run after the ball has been solely possessed by another player or touched by defense
- Penalty for illegal hand-off is changed to SF with LOD
- Penalties for illegal contact and game interference gets an additional LOD
- Penalty for live ball substitution is added and penalties are harmonized
- Challenges (Coach Conference) are added to align with officials commonly handling situations

3 British amendments to IFAF Rules

Additionally, the IFAF rules allow National Federations (such as BAFA) to make changes for their competitions. All games in BAFA-affiliated competitions shall be played with the following changes:

3.1 Field dimensions (Rule 1-1-1)

The field of play (i.e. between the goal lines) shall be 60 yards long and 30 yards wide with 10-yard end zones. This may be reduced to a minimum of 50 yards long by 25 yards wide if the size of the facility does not permit a full-sized field and safety zone. The length should always be twice the width.

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3.2 Down box, scoreboard and pylons (rule 1-1-1)

The use of a down box, scoreboard and pylons is very strongly recommended. However, they are not mandatory for British games.

3.3 Rosters & mixed-gender teams (rule 1-1-1)

There is no limit to the number of participants who may appear on a British roster. Competitions may allow the entry of mixed-gender teams.

3.4 The ball (rule 1-2-1)

Adult teams who wish to participate in IFAF-sanctioned competition are strongly advised to use leather balls when they are in possession, because these are the only balls that will be allowed in IFAF games. However, they are not mandatory for British games.

3.5 Design of flags (Rule 1-3-1-c)

If necessary, teams may use flags of the Velcro type. However, it is very strongly recommended that teams obtain and use popper flags if at all possible.

Although the rules mandate flags must be of one colour only, the manufacturer's name is an allowable exception to this.

3.6 Mouthpiece (Rule 1-3-1-d)

For adult competition, a mouthpiece is strongly recommended. For all other competition it is mandatory.

3.7 Head coverings (Rule 1-3-2-b)

Players may wear an entirely soft head covering to protect their head from the elements. However, any head covering that has any stiff or rigid part is illegal equipment.

3.8 Game timing and number of time outs (Rules 3-2-1 and 3-3-2)

At their discretion, competitions may vary the duration of the game and the number of time outs.

4 Questions and feedback

Questions regarding the interpretation of the flag rules may be addressed by email to the Chair of the BAFA Rules Committee at rules@britishamericanfootball.org.

Note that both IFAF and BAFA are looking to improve the rules; both in the way in which the game is played, and editorially in the way the rules are expressed in writing. Suggestions in either of these regards are welcome, also to the above email address.

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