

USA WHEELCHAIR FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Key Rule Changes





Thank you for your interest in the USA Wheelchair Football League!

In this document, you'll see outlined a few of the key differences between our sport and the stand up game you're familiar with.

Generally, if not outlined here, if it is legal in the Stand Up game, it is legal in the USA Wheelchair Football League. This game was designed to have all of the intensity and general contact you're used to seeing and officiating in the Stand Up game, therefore most of the rules have remained intact, they may just look slightly different when put into process by a wheelchair athlete.

All rules listed below reference their formal mention in the USA Wheelchair Football League Official Rulebook.

In addition, we encourage you to sign up for a training to learn from coaches and officials experienced in the USA Wheelchair Football League's rules and conduct.

For more information on trainings, please contact Karalyn Stott at kstott@moveunitedsport.org.

KEY RULES CHANGES

Find full rulebook at usawfl.org

FIELD SURFACE

Rule 1, Section 1, Article 2

- ▶ Wheelchair Football is played on a field that is 60 yards long by 22 yards wide with 8 yard end zones.

In order to allow chairs to move at a fast speed, the surface of a Wheelchair Football field is a solid flat surface such as a paved parking lot or an indoor sports court. Inspection on the field area should be done, particularly on outdoor fields, to ensure there are not large cracks, crevices, gravel or rocks that might cause harm to a player who approaches them at high speed.

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TEAM MAKEUP

Rule 5, Section 1-2

- ▶ **To maintain appropriate spacing on the smaller field, Wheelchair Football plays 7-on-7.**

A team is allowed to play with 6 players if they cannot field a full roster for reasons of injury or player disqualification during a game, but cannot start a game with fewer than 7 players, and cannot play with fewer than 6.

To be eligible to play, the athlete must have a permanent physical disability.

Each player's disability will be classified based on their physical movement ability to complete the key skills of football. The classification will equate to a number of points (1.0-4.5) being assigned to a player. A team may not field a roster with players whose classification points add up to more than 15 points on the field at any given time. To help an official keep track of these points, color-coded tape will be attached to a player's wheelchair to identify which point class they are assigned.

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RUNNING GAME CLOCK

Rule 3, Section 3, Article 2

- ▶ In order to keep a fast-paced game, The USA Wheelchair Football League uses a running game clock. Upon the start of each quarter, the clock shall start, and it shall only be stopped upon a charged team timeout, an injury or equipment timeout, or any others official's timeout.

Exception: The two-minute drill clock timing remains. At the end of the 2nd and 4th quarters, a two-minute warning will be called and the clock will stop. Then, two-minute drill clock rules similar to the NFL or NCAA are in play, meaning the clock will stop after an incomplete pass, when the ball goes out of bounds, or when the offensive team reaches their line to gain in order to reset the officiating team.

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KICKS

Rule 2, Section 14, Article 6-7

- ▶ Given the wheelchair equipment all athletes will be using, a kicking motion is not possible. Therefore, all kicks in the Stand Up game translate to passes during the Wheelchair Game, and some have been eliminated from the game (see Item 8). In the rulebook, all references have been changed to label the play as a 'Kick Pass' or simply 'Pass' if it is clear that the reference isn't to a traditional offensive pass play.

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THE SNAP

Rule 3, Section 23, Article 1

- ▶ As a snapper may not physically be able to bend over to snap the ball from the ground, a snap can be made from wheelchair height as long as the ball remains on the line of scrimmage plane until the official snap, and it is a legal backward passing motion.

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LINE TO GAIN

Rule 3, Section 5, Article 3

- ▶ The 'Line to Gain' in Wheelchair Football is a set 15 yard interval on the field. This means that if the offense takes over at their 10 yard line, they have 4 downs to reach their 15 yard line, before the next set of downs take over. The 'Lines to Gain' will be clearly marked on the field by 4-inch wide lines across the entire width of the field.

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TACKLE

Rule 7, Section 2, Article 1

- ▶ For safety reasons, a player does not have to be brought to the ground to be considered downed or tackled. Instead, a player in possession of the ball is downed if an opposing player uses one hand to touch the ball handler above the waist. A player is not downed if the opponent only touches their wheelchair or any part of their body below the waist. Grabbing an opponent's wheelchair in an attempt to make a legal tackle is also illegal as it creates safety risks for the ball handler as well as the tackler.

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FIELD GOALS AND 'PAT' KICKS

Rule 11, Section 1, Article 2
Rule 1, Section 1, Article 1

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- ▶ Given that a kicking motion is not possible, we have removed the Field Goal and PAT Field Goal option from the Wheelchair Football game. After a touchdown, teams still have an option of 1 or 2 points during a PAT, by either running a pass play (1 point) or a run play (2 points) from the 3 yard line.

If a team reaches a fourth down, they must choose to either go for a first down via a run or passing play, or declare that they will be running a Punt Pass play. No field goal options are available. As the two plays might look similar, teams must declare to an official prior to the snap that they are Punting, in order to not be able to claim later that they were simply running a traditional offensive pass play.

OVERTIME

Rule 15, Section 1, Article 3

- ▶ While the majority of the rules in the league stem from National Football League play, the overtime rules are NCAA rules. Instead of a timed overtime period, each team gets an untimed series of downs to score starting from the 15 yard line. If the score is still tied at the end of the series, a second overtime will occur, and this process will continue until a winner has been declared. If, after 3 overtimes the score is still tied, teams must go for 2 points on a PAT.

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FUMBLE

Rule 7, Section 2, Article 1

- ▶ In order to ensure that players aren't getting fingers run over, and are able to maintain sightlines while their chairs are moving, generally a ball is declared dead when it strikes the ground, even if it would be considered a loose ball fumble situation in the stand up game. For example if a runner fumbles the ball, the ball is dead at the spot it touches the ground as soon as it comes into contact with the ground. The offense will play their next down from that spot, or the defense will take over on downs, whichever is appropriate.

Exception: During Free Kick Passes or Punt Passes, where more of the field is in play, dead ball/live ball situations remain exactly the same as the stand up game.

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EVERYONE IS AN ELIGIBLE RECEIVER

Rule 8, Section 1, Article 6

- ▶ Players do not have to wear a designated jersey number or declare themselves to an official in order to be considered an eligible receiver. Instead, all offensive players on the field are eligible to receive a pass during a passing play, except for the Quarterback or player making the pass.

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CLIPPING

Rule 12, Section 2, Article 2

- ▶ Because striking a player from certain angles while in a chair is extremely dangerous and can injure the player as well as provide severe damage to a chair, it is illegal. These fouls, known as clipping, occur when a player comes into contact with a second player's wheelchair behind the axle.

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TARGETING

Rule 12, Section 2, Article 3

- ▶ In order to prevent unnecessary injury on a down from scrimmage, it is illegal for a player to strike another player if they use more than two pushes on their chair to propel them into the opposing player. This is considered a 'targeting' penalty and unsportsmanlike conduct.

Note: This does not apply to a free kick pass or punt pass play where more of the field is in play, and it may require a player to use more than two pushes to cover the full field. A player should still not come into contact with another player at an angle or speed that the official deems unnecessarily unsafe.

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