

Special Olympics Northern California

Flag Football



2026 Rules & Guidelines

Unified Team Competition and Individual Skills Contest

(See Page 25 for 2026 Rule Changes for Flag Football)



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SPECIAL OLYMPICS NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide athletic opportunities to children and adults with intellectual disabilities which instill the confidence needed to succeed in life.

Preparing for life through sports

SONORCAL PLAYS BY THE RULES.....

All Special Olympics competitions will be conducted in accordance with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules and the National Governing Body of rules for each sport offered in our program. These rules are designed to protect the Athletes, provide equitable conditions of competition and promote uniformity so that no competitor shall obtain an unfair advantage over another.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

COACHES CODE OF CONDUCT

SPECIAL OLYMPICS NORTHERN CALIFORNIA (SONorCal) volunteer coaches are models whose behavior should serve as a positive example for their athletes. Their behavior should reflect a concern that the fairest and most positive competitive experience is equally available to every Special Olympics athlete in each training or competition. The coach has the unique opportunity to influence the development and personal growth of many individuals. For this reason, it is important that the coach adhere to the standards of ethical decision making and teaching. In addition, it is the position of SONorCal that each volunteer coach shall agree to:

HAVE RESPECT FOR OTHERS

- I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of athletes, other coaches and volunteers, SONorCal staff members, and friends and spectators in Special Olympics.
- I will treat everyone equally regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability.
- I will be a positive role model for the athletes I coach.

ENSURE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

- I will ensure that for each athlete I coach, the time spent with Special Olympics is a positive experience.
- I will respect the talent, developmental stage and goals of each athlete.
- I will ensure each athlete competes in events that challenge that athlete's potential and are appropriate to that athlete's ability.
- I will be fair, considerate and honest with athletes and communicate with athletes using simple, clear language.
- I will ensure that accurate scores are provided for entry of an athlete into any event.
- I will instruct each athlete to perform to the best of the athlete's ability at all preliminaries/heats and finals in accordance with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules.

ACT PROFESSIONALLY AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS/HER ACTIONS

- My language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation will demonstrate high standards.
- I will dress and act in an appropriate manner at all times.
- I will display control, respect, dignity and professionalism to all involved in Special Olympics, including to the athletes, other coaches and volunteers, opponents, officials, administrators, SONorCal staff members, parents, spectators and the media.
- I will encourage athletes to demonstrate the same qualities.
- I will not use any alcohol or tobacco products, vaping products, or cannabis products while representing Special Olympics at training sessions or during competitions.
- I will not engage in any form of personal abuse towards, or inappropriate contact or relationship with, athletes, other coaches and volunteers, SONorCal staff members, family members, or spectators in Special Olympics, including verbal, physical or emotional abuse.
- I will be alert to any form of abuse from other sources directed toward athletes or others in my care.
- I will abide by the Special Olympics policy that prohibits coaches/volunteers from dating athletes.

PROVIDE QUALITY SERVICE TO THE ATHLETES

- I will seek continued improvement through performance evaluation and ongoing coach education.
- I will be knowledgeable about the Sports Rules and skills of the sport(s) I coach.
- I will provide a planned training program.
- I will keep copies of the registration, training, and competition records for each athlete I coach.
- I will follow the Special Olympics and National Governing Body rules for my sport(s) coached, as well as all SONorCal policies and procedures as amended.

ENSURE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE ATHLETES

- I will ensure that the equipment and facilities for my sport(s) coached are safe to use.
- I will ensure that the equipment, rules, training and the environment are appropriate for the age and ability of the athletes.
- I will review each athlete's registration form and be aware of any limitations on that athlete's participation noted on that form.
- I will encourage athletes, coaches and volunteers to seek medical advice when needed.
- I will report any emergencies to the appropriate authorities after first taking immediate action to ensure the safety and well-being of those involved.
- I will maintain the same interest and support towards sick and injured athletes.
- I will allow further participation in training and competition only when appropriate.

Should the behaviors and/or abilities of any volunteer coach or other faction of a school/organization violate either the principles stated above (including the SONorCal policies and procedures as amended) or the philosophy of the Special Olympics movement, then any of the following actions may be taken by SONorCal in its sole discretion:

1. The coach may be notified by official warning of the undesirable behavior and be requested to remedy the situation immediately in order to continue his or her participation in Special Olympics;
2. The coach may be requested to withdraw personally or with his/her team from the remainder of any Special Olympics event or competition;
3. The coach or sponsoring school/organization may be suspended from participating in any or all Special Olympics activities or events for a specified period of time; and/or
4. The coach or sponsoring school/organization may be permanently prohibited from participating in any or all Special Olympics activities or events.

Special Olympics Northern California

ATHLETES CODE OF CONDUCT

SPECIAL OLYMPICS NORTHERN CALIFORNIA (SONorCal) is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all athletes to honor sports and Special Olympics. All SONorCal Athletes and Unified Partners agree to the following code:

SPORTSMANSHIP

- I will practice good sportsmanship.
- I will act in ways that bring respect to me, my coaches, my team, and Special Olympics.
- I will not use bad language.
- I will not swear or insult other persons.
- I will not fight with other athletes, coaches, volunteers, or staff.

TRAINING AND COMPETITION

- I will train regularly.
- I will learn and follow the rules of my sport.
- I will listen to my coaches and the official and ask questions when I do not understand
- I will always try my best during training, divisioning, and competitions.
- I will not “hold back” in preliminary competition just to get into an easier finals competition division.
- I will follow the International Federation and the National Federation/Governing Body rules for my sport(s).

RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS

- I will not make inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal, or sexual advances on others.
- I will not use any alcohol or tobacco products, vaping products, or cannabis products while representing Special Olympics at training sessions, competition, or during Games.
- I will not take drugs for the purpose of improving my performance.
- I will obey all laws and Special Olympics rules.
- If I exhibit behavior that violates the code of conduct, I may face disciplinary actions, which could include a warning letter, a suspension, or an expulsion.

Special Olympics Northern California

PARENT AND SPECTATOR CODE OF CONDUCT

Special Olympics Northern California (SONorCal) is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all parents and spectators to honor sport and Special Olympics. All Special Olympics parents and spectators should observe the following code:

- Remember athletes are participating for their enjoyment. Encourage participation, but do not force it.
- Applaud good performances and efforts from all individuals and teams. Congratulate all participants on their performance, regardless of the event's or game's outcome.
- Focus on the athletes' effort and performance, rather than whether they win or lose.
- Encourage athletes to play according to the rules and to settle disagreements without resorting to hostility or violence.
- Never ridicule or yell at participants for making a mistake or losing the competition.
- Remember that athletes learn best by example. Appreciate good performance and skillful plays by all participants.
- Respect the decisions of officials, Games Management Team and Staff, and teach athletes to do the same.
- Show appreciation for event volunteers, coaches, and officials and staff. (Remember, without them there would be no opportunities for athletes).
- Condemn the use of violence in any form, whether it is by spectators, coaches, officials or players.
- Show respect for your team's or individual's opponents. Without them, there would be no event or game.
- Encourage athletes and coaches to follow the rules and the officials' decisions.
- Swearing and/or inappropriate language will not be tolerated at SONorCal events
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion.
- Abide by all posted and written policies, including SONorCal's Animal Policy for Practices, Competitions and Events.

By attending an event, parents and spectators have agreed to abide by this Parent and Spectator Code of Conduct. SONorCal reserves the right to dismiss parents and/or spectators from any SONorCal event for violation of this Parent and Spectator Code of Conduct.

DIVISIONING CRITERIA

FLAG FOOTBALL is a team sport and teams will be divisioned based on total team composition.

USE THE CRITERIA BELOW KEEPING YOUR FIVE BEST PLAYERS IN MIND.

	Understanding of Rules & Concepts	Offensive Ability	Defensive Ability	Physical Ability
Level 2	High understanding of rules and violations. Can run designed plays. Understand and implement strategies. Understand game score at most times.	Most players can catch a pass while running. Most players can get open on passing plays. Most players understand and set screens. Quarterback has very accurate and strong arm. Several players understand more than one offensive position.	Most players react to the way the other team plays. Most players can recognize and defend passing and running plays. Can play zone and man defense. Several players understand more than one defensive position.	High physical ability. Ability to stay on field with minimal substitutions or breaks in action. Most players can play defense aggressively without being physical. Quick reaction time.
Level 3	Basic understanding of most rules and violations. Can run basic designed plays. Understand and implement some strategies. Understand game score at most times.	Some players can catch a pass while running. Some players can get open on passing plays. Some players understand and set screens. Quarterback has fairly accurate and strong arm. Some players may understand more than one offensive position.	Some players react to the way the other team plays. Some players can recognize and defend passing and/or running plays. Can play zone and man defense. Several players may understand more than one defensive position.	Moderate to high physical ability. Ability to stay on field with some substitutions and breaks in action. Some players can play defense aggressively without being physical. Fairly quick reaction time.
Level 4	Limited to basic understanding of most rules and violations. May run simple designed plays. Understand game score at some times.	1-2 players can catch a pass while running. 1-2 players can get open on passing plays. 1-2 players may understand and set screens. Quarterback has fairly accurate or strong arm. 1-2 players may understand more than one offensive position.	1-2 players react to the way the other team plays. 1-2 players can recognize or defend running and/or passing plays. Can play either zone or man defense. 1-2 players may understand more than one defensive position.	Low to moderate physical ability. Some players require frequent substitutions. Most players have difficulty playing aggressively without being physical. Moderate to slow reaction time.
Level 5	Low understanding of rules violations. Need assistance with pre-snap formations, positions or plays. Limited or no organized plays. Need significant amount of verbal coaching.	Most players have trouble catching a pass while running. Players have difficulty getting open on passing plays. Quarterback has limited accuracy and arm strength. Players understand one offensive position.	Little to no reaction to the way the other team plays. Limited ability to recognize and/or defend running or passing plays. Play one type of defense and one position on defense.	Low Physical Ability, but have mastered Individual Skills Contest events and are ready to transition to team play. Most players have Slow reaction time.

SONORCAL FLAG FOOTBALL RULES AND REGULATIONS

The Official Special Olympics Rules shall govern all Special Olympics Flag Football competitions. As an International sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon the Rules of Flag Football, as approved by the International Governing Body for Flag Football. These rules shall govern all competition except when in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. In such cases, the Official SONorCal Sports Rules shall apply.

SECTION A – GENERAL RULES

1. Each Special Olympics athlete is required to have an Application for Participation on file in order to participate. Also, each Unified Partner must have a current Unified Partner Application and Release Form on file in order to participate. This is in accordance with the Special Olympics General Rules.
2. Each team is required to play all team members in every game played.
3. SONorCal has a strict Animal Policy for Practices, Competitions and Events, which must be followed by all athletes, volunteers, parents and spectators at all times. Please visit sonc.org/resources/coach-athletes-resources/ for the full policy.

SECTION B – OFFICIAL EVENTS

The following are Official Flag Football Events offered by SONorCal:

1. Unified Sports® Team Competition – Levels 2, 3, 4 & 5
2. Individual Skills Competition
3. Combine Events (Additional Opportunity for Athletes and Unified Partners)

SECTION C – DIVISIONS

1. Competitors in Flag Football will compete in an Open Age & Open Gender Group.
2. Within this group, there will be four Levels:
 - Level 2 – Regulation Rules
 - Level 3 – Regulation Rules
 - Level 4 – Regulation Rules
 - Level 5 - Regulation Rules
3. Teams will be divisioned according to:
 - a. Previous year's tournament results
 - b. Local invitational and scrimmage results
 - c. Other requirements, as determined by Competition Director and Games Rules Committee

SECTION D – PERSONNEL

1. There should be two certified officials in appropriate and matching attire (i.e., black pants/shorts and a black and white striped referee shirt). At the discretion of the games committee, games may be played with less than the minimum personnel.
2. Officials will check all players' uniforms and equipment prior to the start of the game and can disallow any uniforms or equipment deemed inadequate or dangerous.
3. There should be two scorekeepers and one timekeeper. The scorekeepers also act as line monitors. At the discretion of the games committee, games may be played with less than the minimum personnel.
4. Officials shall have the power to make all decisions on any point not specifically covered in the rules.

SECTION E – GAME ROSTER

1. Regional Entry Form (Registration Information due prior to competition):
 - a. A Regional Entry Form must contain a minimum of eight (8) players and a maximum of 12 players. Teams must have a minimum of six (6) Athletes and two (2) Unified Partners.
 - b. All coaches must also be listed on the Regional Entry Form, with a maximum of three (3) per roster. All coaches will be required to pick up a game coach pass from the official scorekeeper or field manager, which must be worn and visible at all times for the duration of the game, while on the bench. Passes must be returned to the pickup location following the conclusion of the game. Only those displaying a valid coach pass will be allowed in team areas. Coach passes are in addition to any other issued identification for the competition (e.g., wristbands).
 - c. Regional Entry Forms are considered frozen when submitted to the Games Director at the time that Registration Information is due. The Program office must approve any requests for a roster change.
2. Official Game Roster (Players from Regional Entry Form that are present for competition):
 - a. For any given game, each team must submit the Flag Football Scoresheet to the official scorekeeper. Only players who are listed on the Regional Entry Form may be listed on the Flag Football Scoresheet. The head coach must also be listed on the Flag Football Scoresheet. Failure to list a player on the Flag Football Scoresheet will result in a one-time 10-yard penalty. Failure to play any player listed on the Flag Football Scoresheet will result in a forfeit.
 - b. A team must have at least five players from the Official Game Roster on the field to start any given game and at no time may the line-up exceed three (3) Athletes and two (2) Unified Partners.
 - c. Teams may continue with a minimum of four players (minus one partner or athlete) due to disqualification or injury. If a team drops below four players, it will forfeit the game.

SECTION F – COACHES AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Coaches shall remain on their team's side of the mid-field line (team benches shall be on the same side of the field as the score table) while the game is in progress.
 - a. 1st offense – Warning
 - b. 2nd offense – 10-yard penalty
2. Coaches will be allowed to accompany a player to the scorer's table when substituting.
3. Coaches are responsible for knowing and understanding the rules of the game in this manual.
4. Each team must have an adult, non-playing coach, who will be responsible for the line-up and conduct of the team prior to and during competition.

SECTION G – UNIFORMS

1. All members of a team must wear the same color uniform, which will consist of shorts and a sleeved shirt, which can be tucked in at the waist to avoid obstruction of Flag Pulling. Pants of any type, including jeans, are strongly discouraged, but if worn, must match as a team. Shorts or pants must not have pockets.
2. All players must wear numbered uniforms. Uniforms must have a smaller number in front and larger number in the back. Numbers can consist of 0-9, the highest number being 99. Please refer to SONorCal uniform standards.
 - a. All Unified Partners shall wear visible colored armbands between the elbow and wrist, on both arms, to differentiate them from Athletes. These shall be supplied by the **team for each game at competition Field Manager for each game.**
3. A one-piece, three-flag (right, center back and left), quick-release belt, without any knots, must be worn during the game at all times. All players on the sideline must also keep a flag belt on during the game. Teams must bring issued flag belts to competitions.
4. All players must wear a protective mouthpiece at all times.
5. All players must wear rubber-cleated or flat-soled athletic shoes (gym, court, or tennis shoes). Metal cleats or spikes will not be allowed.

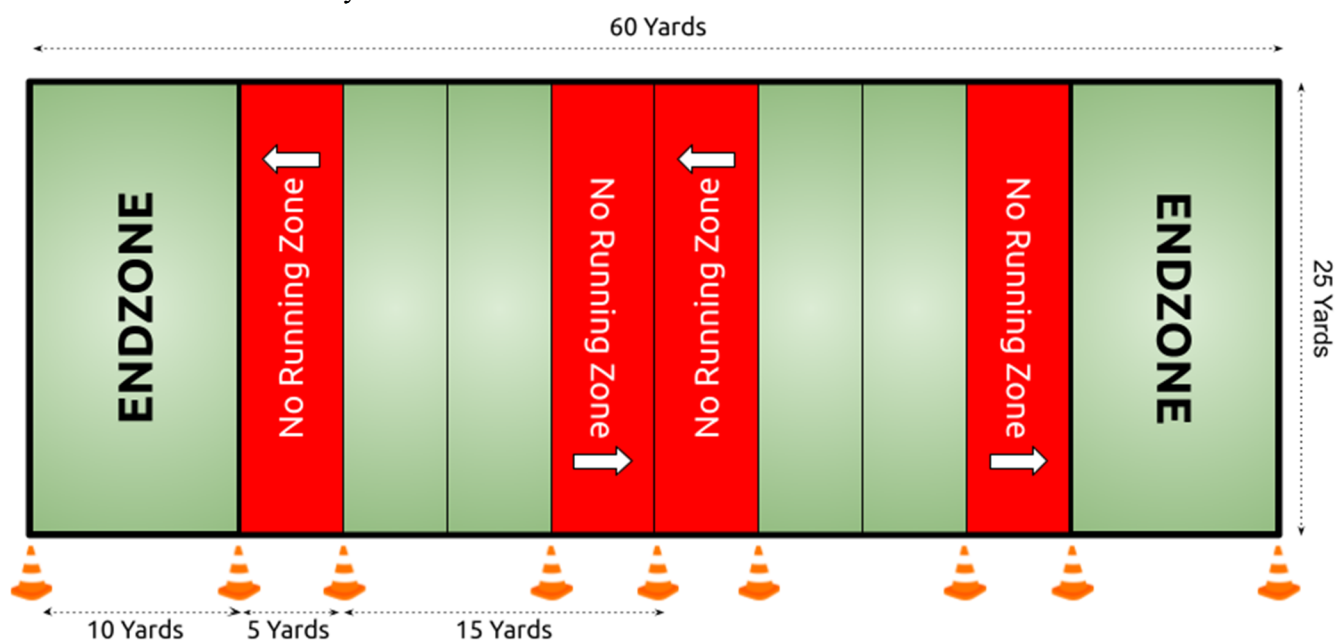
6. Those players who wear eyeglasses while playing are required to wear a strap to hold them in place.
7. Hats are not allowed, with the exception of athletes who need to wear a hat for medical or sun allergy reasons. It is recommended that the hat either have a Special Olympics logo, or no logo.
8. No jewelry is allowed.

SECTION H – EQUIPMENT

1. Flag Belts – a one-piece, three-flag belt will be provided by SONorCal during the practice season. Teams must bring issued flag belts to competitions.
2. **Mouthpiece – must be worn by all players (athletes and unified partners) during all practices and competitions. Provided by SONorCal during the practice season.**
3. **Wristband – must be worn by all unified partners between the elbow and wrist on both arms. Provided by SONorCal during the practice season.**
4. **Play-Call Wristband – one on-field player (athlete or unified partner) may wear a wristband that contains offensive and/or defensive play calls.**
5. Ball – an intermediate (Youth) Football will be used for all Levels of competition and the Individual Skills Contest.
6. Cones – for marking field dimensions.
7. Other Markers (required)
 - a. Ball Marker
 - b. Down Marker
 - c. Pylons for Endzones
 - d. Penalty Flags

SECTION I – THE FIELD

1. The playing field is 60 yards long (including the end zones) and 25 yards wide.
2. A space of at least five yards around the field must be free and clear of obstructions, including team members.
3. The field may be marked with chalk, paint, and/or cones.
4. No-Run Zones (a five-yard zone where only passing plays are allowed) are placed/located immediately before midfield and immediately before the end zone.



SECTION J – DEFINITION OF PLAYING TERMS

1. Line of Scrimmage – an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
2. Rush Line – An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (on the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage. This shall be “marked” by one designated official standing on the sideline at the location of the line.
3. Shovel Pass – A legal pass attempted behind the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot-put type manner.
4. Screen Blocking – A legal obstruction of an opponent without contacting him/her with any part of the screen blocker’s body.
5. Shift – The action of one or more offensive players who, after taking positions, move to a new position prior to the snap.
6. Motion – One offensive player may move laterally or away from the line of scrimmage prior to the snap.
7. Snap – the exchange from the Center to the Quarterback by either a direct snap between the legs or to the side.
8. No Run Zones – Areas of the field where teams can only initiate passing plays.
9. Center – The offensive player that snaps the ball through his/her legs, or to the side, to the Quarterback to begin a play.
10. Quarterback – The offensive player first receiving possession of the ball from the snap by the Center. The quarterback may not rush the ball.
11. Passer – The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the Quarterback.
12. Rusher – the defensive player(s) assigned to rush the Quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.
13. Shielding – An act by the ball carrier to prevent an opponent from pulling their flags, by any number of methods (see penalties).

SECTION K – PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTES

1. A team must start the game with five players.
2. Teams must not exceed three (3) Athletes and two (2) Unified Partners on the field.
3. No individuals other than registered Athletes and Unified Partners, and game officials, are allowed on the field during competition.
4. Teams may continue play with a minimum of four players, due to disqualification or injury.
5. Substitutions may be made during any dead ball (any time the referee’s whistle is blown to stop play), during time-outs or prior to the beginning of a half.
 - a. All players must check in with the score table the first time they enter the game. Any subsequent substitutions of that player, or starting players re-entering the game, may be made without checking in at the score table, again, only during a dead ball.
6. A replaced player must leave the field immediately.
7. Each substitute must play at least one down prior to being replaced.
8. The coach must submit their line-up to the official scorekeeper at least ten minutes prior to the scheduled game time.
9. Each team is required to play all team members in every game played.

SECTION L – THE GAME

1. The Games Rules Committee shall make all final decisions.
2. Unified Partners are not permitted to solely dominate, dictate, or dominate competition. Player dominance shall be regulated at the discretion of the on-field official(s) and Games Director.
3. Games will consist of up to two 20-minute halves. The Competition Director will determine the length of the game, due to time constraints and number of fields and facilities.

- a. The clock will be a running clock except for time-outs (called or official), and the last minute of each half. During this final minute, the clock will stop on all dead ball situations/whistles (and start again when the ball is snapped)
 - i. If a team is up by 25 or more points in the last one (1) minute of the game, the clock will continue to run, except in the case of a called or official time-out.
 - b. Officials may stop the clock at their discretion (injuries, safety, delays, etc.)
 - c. The clock will stop on all time-outs.
 - d. A play clock will run from the time the ball is spotted by the official to the time the ball must be snapped by the Offensive team. The play clock is determined by the Level:
 - i. Levels 2 & 3 – a 30-second play clock will be used
 - ii. Levels 4 & 5 – a 45-second play clock will be used
 - iii. The clock operators will inform the teams when 20 as well as 10 seconds remain on the play clock.
 - e. Extra Point Attempts are un-timed downs (game clock does not run).
 - f. Each team will receive one 60-second time-out per half. An unused time-out does not carry over to subsequent halves or overtime periods.
 - g. There shall be a five-minute halftime.
4. Overtime
- a. If, at the discretion of the Competition Director, overtime is to be used, it shall consist of one 10-minute period.
 - i. A coin toss will determine first possession.
 - ii. If still tied at the end of the overtime period, each team will receive four (4) downs/plays.
 - a) A coin toss will determine first possession.
 - b) Possessions will begin at mid-field.
 - c) The team that gains the most yardage or scores the most points will be declared the winner.
 - d) Exceptions to this rule are as follows:
 - (1) Interception – if the defensive team intercepts the ball, the game ends and that team is declared the winner.
 - (2) If the team with the first possession scores a touchdown on the first play, the opposing team must also score on the first play.
 - e) If both teams score touchdowns on the first play or gain the same yardage, equal possessions will continue until a winner is determined based on the above rules.
5. Coin Toss
- a. Two captains (one Athlete and one Unified Partner) from each team will meet at mid-field three minutes prior to the start of the game.
 - b. The Officials will toss the coin and the team winning the coin toss will choose offense, defense, or end of field to defend, or may defer its choice to the second half. The team losing the coin toss will get to choose the other option.
 - i. For example: Team A wins the coin toss and chooses to receive the ball. Team B then picks the end of the field it wants to defend.
6. Possessions
- a. All possessions, except those following an interception, begin at the offensive team's five-yard line.
 - b. The offensive team has four (4) downs to cross mid-field.
 - c. Once the offensive team crosses mid-field, it has four (4) additional downs to score a touchdown.
 - d. If the offensive team fails to cross mid-field or score a touchdown in the prescribed number of plays, possession of the ball changes and the opposite team starts at its five-yard line.
7. The ball must be put in play promptly and legally and any action or lack of action by either team, that tends to prevent this, is considered a delay of game.
- a. This includes:
 - i. Interrupting the play clock for any reason except for a granted time-out
 - ii. Consuming more than the prescribed time on the play clock before snapping the ball
 - iii. Failing to remove an injured player for whose benefit an excess time-out has been granted, or
 - iv. Deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead.

8. Pre-snap
 - a. All players from each team must be on their side of the line of scrimmage prior to the ball being snapped.
 - b. Any number of players may line up on the line of scrimmage and there is no minimum or maximum.
 - c. Motion
 - i. Only one offensive player may be in motion at the snap, but the player must be behind the line of scrimmage and may not be moving toward the line of scrimmage.
 - ii. If the player comes to a stop, s/he must be set for one (1) second prior to the ball being snapped.
 - iii. For Levels 4 and 5, motion penalties will be eased, as long as the pre-snap motion does not give the offensive team an advantage or put the defense at a disadvantage.
 - d. Shift
 - i. One (1) or more offensive players may shift to a new position prior to the snap.
 - ii. Any player who shifts must be set for one (1) second prior to the ball being snapped.
 - e. Quarterback
 - i. Under Center – Quarterback is directly behind the Center for a hand-to-hand ball exchange.
 - ii. Shotgun – Quarterback is several steps behind the Center for a tossed ball exchange.
9. Snap
 - a. The Center may snap the ball from the ground, where the ball has been spotted, to the Quarterback, in one of two manners:
 - i. Between the legs
 - ii. To the side – stand at a side angle and hand/toss the ball
10. Running
 - a. Handoffs – Directly handing the ball from one player to another without throwing, tossing or kicking it. Laterals, pitches, or other backward passes are not allowed.
 - i. May be in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback/offensive player, but must be performed behind the line of scrimmage.
 - ii. The offensive team may use multiple handoffs behind the line of scrimmage.
 - iii. A handoff may occur between any combination of players behind the line of scrimmage, regardless if they are an Athlete or Unified Partner®.
 - iv. The player who takes a handoff can pass the ball as long as s/he does not pass the line of scrimmage, at which point they become a runner.
 - b. The Quarterback (first player receiving the snap from the Center) can not advance the ball across the line of scrimmage.
 - c. No Running Zones are located five (5) yards before the mid-field and goal lines.
 - d. The ball carrier may not dive, jump, hurdle, stiff arm or shield/flag guard to prevent a defender from pulling his/her flag or to otherwise gain additional yardage.
 - i. An offensive player may jump/hurdle over another player who is on the ground, but only to avoid injury, as judged by the officials.
11. Passing/Receiving
 - a. All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - i. Shovel passes are allowed, but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - b. Eligible Receivers
 - i. All offensive players are eligible to receive a forward pass, including the Quarterback, if s/he has handed off legally first.
 - ii. If the passer is a Unified Partner, only athletes are eligible receivers. Teams are expected to comply with this rule without intervention by the officials.
 - c. Sideline Catches – Any player receiving a pass must establish possession of the ball and then get at least one foot in bounds, at the judgment of the official, when making a catch.
 - d. Simultaneous catches
 - i. If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by two players from the same team, the play is immediately whistled dead and the ball is placed at the spot of the catch.
 - ii. If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by two players from opposing teams, the play is immediately whistled dead, the possession is retained by the offensive team, and the ball is placed at the spot of the catch.

- e. Diving
 - i. An offensive or defensive player may dive to catch a pass.
 - ii. A ball carrier may not dive in an attempt to gain additional yardage.
12. Screen Blocking – legally obstructing an opponent without contacting him/her with any part of the screen blocker’s body.
- a. The screen blocker shall have his/her arms fully extended down to the ground (below the waist), either at the side, in front, or behind the back, or have them crossed over the chest with hands near the shoulders.
 - b. Any use of arms, elbows, legs or shoulders to initiate contact during the screen block is illegal.
 - c. The screen blocker must be on his/her feet before, during and after screen blocking.
 - d. The screen blocker must give an opponent at least one step if the opponent has his/her back to the screen blocker.
 - e. The screen blocker must not initiate contact with an opponent.
 - f. The screen blocker may not take a position so close to a moving opponent that the opponent can not avoid contact by stopping or changing directions.
 - g. After the snap of the ball, a screen blocker in the backfield (behind the line of scrimmage) may move laterally or backward to maintain the block, as long as they don’t move into an opponent and create contact.
 - h. A screen blocker downfield (in front of the line of scrimmage) may not move when screen blocking.
 - i. A screen blocker may not run between the ball carrier and the defender.
13. Scoring
- a. Touchdown (any part of the ball crosses the plane of the goal line before the ball carrier is declared down): six (6) points awarded to the offensive team.
 - b. Extra Point (attempt by offensive team to score additional points following a touchdown):
 - i. One (1) point if try is originated and successful from the 5-yard line. An attempt from the 5-yard line must be a pass attempt, since it is in a no-run zone.
 - ii. Two (2) points if try is originated and successful from the 12-yard line.
 - iii. If the defensive team is penalized during the extra point, the ball will be placed at a point halfway to the goal line and the extra point will be retried. Regardless of where the ball is placed when a try is successful, points will be awarded based on where the initial try was originated.
 - iv. If the offensive team is penalized during the extra point, the attempt is declared no good and there will be a change in possession.
 - c. Safety (offensive team is declared down in its own endzone either by flag pull or fumble): two (2) points awarded to the defensive team.
14. Defense
- a. Flag Pulling
 - i. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
 - ii. If a player’s flag or flag belt falls off during the play, the player is declared down and play is stopped.
 - iii. If a player loses his/her flag or flag belt prior to gaining possession of the ball, s/he is declared down immediately upon gaining possession of the ball.
 - iv. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
 - v. It is illegal to strip the ball from the carrier at any time.
 - b. Rushing the Quarterback
 - i. All players who rush the Quarterback must be at a distance of at least seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
 - ii. A designated official standing on the sideline at the location of the line will indicate the seven-yard distance for rushing.
 - iii. Once the Quarterback completes a handoff, the seven-yard marker is no longer in effect and all defensive players are allowed to rush.
 - iv. Defensive players not rushing the Quarterback may defend the line of scrimmage.
 - c. Interceptions and Touchbacks
 - i. Levels 2 & 3
 - a) If the ball is intercepted legally by the defensive team (see Section K, 11., c-d.), the play is immediately declared dead (no run-backs), a change in possession occurs and the ball is placed at the spot of the interception.

- b) If the interception occurs in the defensive team's endzone, the ball will be placed at the five-yard line.
- c) If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by the defensive and offensive player, the offensive team retains possession at the spot of the catch.
- ii. Levels 4 & 5
 - a) If the ball is intercepted legally by the defensive team (see Section K, 11., c-d.), there will be no change in possession and the pass will be treated as an incomplete pass and will be returned to the previous line of scrimmage.
- d. Diving
 - i. Defensive players may only dive for a forward pass.
 - ii. Defensive players may not dive in an attempt to pull the opponent's flag or otherwise obstruct the offensive player.
- e. Stoppage of Play/Whistled Dead – any play is ruled dead when any of the following occur:
 - i. Fumble – regardless of the direction fumbled, or the location of the fumble to the line of scrimmage, the ball is spotted where it is dropped by the ball carrier.
 - ii. Any of the ball carrier's flags is pulled
 - iii. Ball carrier loses any flag or flag belt
 - iv. Ball carrier steps out of bounds or on a boundary line
 - v. Ball carrier's knee or hand touches the ground
 - vi. A Touchdown, Extra Point or Safety is scored
 - vii. A forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by two or more players.
 - a) If two opposing players, the offensive team retains possession.
 - viii. A forward pass is intercepted (no returns)
 - ix. A ball carrier (receiver or runner) gains possession without his/her flags attached
 - x. A snapped ball touches the ground
 - xi. Inadvertent Whistle
 - a) The team in possession of the ball may choose to accept the result of the play or choose to replay the down.

SECTION M – PENALTIES

1. Coaches will have the option to decline or accept a penalty based on the result of the play except for Rough/Unsporting and Coach/Bench Penalties.
 - a. For Live-ball fouls:
 - i. If accepted, the penalty will be enforced from the line of scrimmage, and any resulting yardage will not be applied.
 - ii. If declined, the ball will be spotted at the point at which it was whistled dead and the down will be official.
 - b. For Dead-ball fouls:
 - i. All Dead-ball fouls will be accepted since they will occur before the ball is snapped.
 - ii. See below for Offensive and Defensive Penalties
2. No penalty may take the ball more than half the distance to the offender's goal line (if a penalty occurs within 10 yards of the endzone).
3. Offensive Penalties
 - a. Dead-ball Penalties – the following penalties, if accepted, will result in a 5-yard penalty from the line of scrimmage for the offensive team:
 - i. False Start – Offensive player moves forward prior to the snap of the ball
 - ii. Illegal Motion – Offensive team has more than one player in motion, or the player in motion moves forward, prior to the snap)
 - iii. Illegal procedure – Offensive player does not come set for at least one second after a shift or the player in motion stops and does not come set for at least one second
 - iv. Offside – Offensive player lines up in the neutral zone or on the defensive side of the line of scrimmage
 - v. Delay of Game – Failure to snap the ball prior to the 30-second clock expiring

- b. Live-ball Penalties – the following penalties, if accepted, will result in a 5-yard penalty from the line of scrimmage and a loss of down for the offensive team:
 - i. Illegal forward/backward pass
 - a) Pass completed behind the line of scrimmage
 - b) Unified Partner pass to Unified Partner receiver
 - c) Quarterback passes beyond the line of scrimmage
 - ii. Illegal Procedure – Quarterback runs
 - iii. Pass Interference – picking or pushing defender on a pass play
 - a) Examples of Offensive Pass Interference:
 - (1) Picking is an illegal play in which an offensive player attempts to impede the progress of a downfield defender in order to allow a teammate to get open for a pass.
 - (2) Pushing off on a defender to become open
 - (3) Purposely making contact with a defender to become open
 - b) Incidental contact may be determined by the official if, in their judgment, both offensive and defensive players were making equal amounts of contact. In this case, no penalty is called against either team.
 - iv. Illegal Contact – holding, blocking, bumping, stiff arming or otherwise intentionally contacting a defensive player
 - v. Diving – intentionally diving to gain extra yardage or advance the ball
 - vi. Jumping or hurdling (unless attempting to avoid a player on the ground in order to prevent injury)
 - vii. Flag Guarding/Shielding – Ball carriers may not use their hands, arms or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove their flag or flag belt. Flag guarding includes:
 - a) Slapping or swinging the arms
 - b) Lower the shoulders or arm over the flag belt
 - c) Stiff arming
 - d) Intentionally covering the flag with the ball or any part of the uniform
 - e) Contact must occur in order for this penalty to be called.
4. Defensive Penalties
 - a. Dead-Ball Penalties – the following penalties, if accepted, will result in a 5-yard penalty from the line of scrimmage:
 - i. Encroachment – Defensive player crosses into the offensive side of the line of scrimmage and makes contact with an offensive player before the snap
 - b. Live-Ball Penalties – the following penalties, if accepted, will result in a 5-yard penalty from the line of scrimmage and an automatic first down for the offensive team:
 - i. Offside – Defensive player lines up in the neutral zone or on the offensive side of the line of scrimmage
 - ii. Pass Interference – making contact with the intended receiver prior to or while the pass attempt is in the air
 - a) Examples of Defensive Pass Interference:
 - (1) Pushing, grabbing or tripping the receiver
 - (2) Making contact with the receiver without turning to look for the ball in the air.
 - b) Incidental contact may be determined by the official if, in their judgment, both offensive and defensive players were making equal amounts of contact. In this case, no penalty is called against either team.
 - iii. Illegal Contact – holding, blocking, bumping, or otherwise intentionally making contact with an offensive player
 - iv. Illegal Flag Pull – pulling the flag or flag belt prior to the offensive player (receiver or runner) gaining possession of the ball
 - v. Illegal Rushing – initiating the rush of the Quarterback at a distance less than seven yards from the line of scrimmage
 - vi. Diving – when used to down a player
 - vii. Stripping the Ball – defensive player attempts to strip the ball from the offensive ball carrier – 5 yards

5. Rough and Unsporting Play/Conduct – The following penalties will result in a 10-yard penalty from the line of scrimmage and an automatic first down (if the defensive team receives the penalty) OR a loss of downs (if the offensive team receives the penalty):
 - a. Any excessive or dangerous play (including tackling, tripping, pushing, shoving, etc.), as determined by the on-field officials.
 - b. Ball carriers must make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
 - c. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
 - d. At the discretion of the officials, players may be disqualified without prior warning.
 - e. Failure to self-patrol Unified Partner rules (passing and receiving) will be considered unsportsmanlike, and will be penalized accordingly.
 - f. Officials will disqualify (eject from game) any player who participates in rough or unsportsmanlike play or conduct.
6. Coach and Bench Conduct
 - a. Conduct by any coach or members on the team bench that is deemed inappropriate by on-field officials, field managers, or Games Director will result in a 10-yard penalty against the offending team.
 - b. Egregious, continual or subsequent offenses, in addition to a 10-yard penalty, will result in disqualification (ejected from game) of coaches or players, at the discretion of the on-field officials, field managers or Games Director.

Summary of Penalties			
Offensive Penalties			
Dead Ball		Live Ball	
False Start	5 Yards	Illegal Forward/Backward Pass	5 Yards
Illegal Motion		Illegal Procedure	
Illegal Procedure		Diving, Jumping	
Offside		Pass Interference	
Delay of Game		Illegal Contact	
		Flag Guarding	

Defensive Penalties			
Dead Ball		Live Ball	
Encroachment	5 Yards	Offside	5 Yards & Automatic First Down
		Illegal Rushing	
		Diving (to down an opponent)	
		Stripping the Ball	
		Pass Interference	
		Illegal Contact	
		Illegal Flag Pull	

Other Penalties			
Rough & Unsporting Conduct		Coach & Bench Conduct	
Excessive or Dangerous Play (including tackling, tripping, pushing, shoving, etc.)	10 Yards & Loss of Down (if Offensive Team) OR Automatic First Down (if Defensive Team)	Inappropriate Conduct by Any Coach or Members on Team Bench	10 Yards & Loss of Down (if Offensive Team) OR Automatic First Down (if Defensive Team)
Ball Carrier not Making Effort to Avoid Defender			
Defenders Running Through or Tackling Offensive Player		Egregious, Continual, or Subsequent Offenses	
Failure to Self-Patrol Unified Partner Rules			

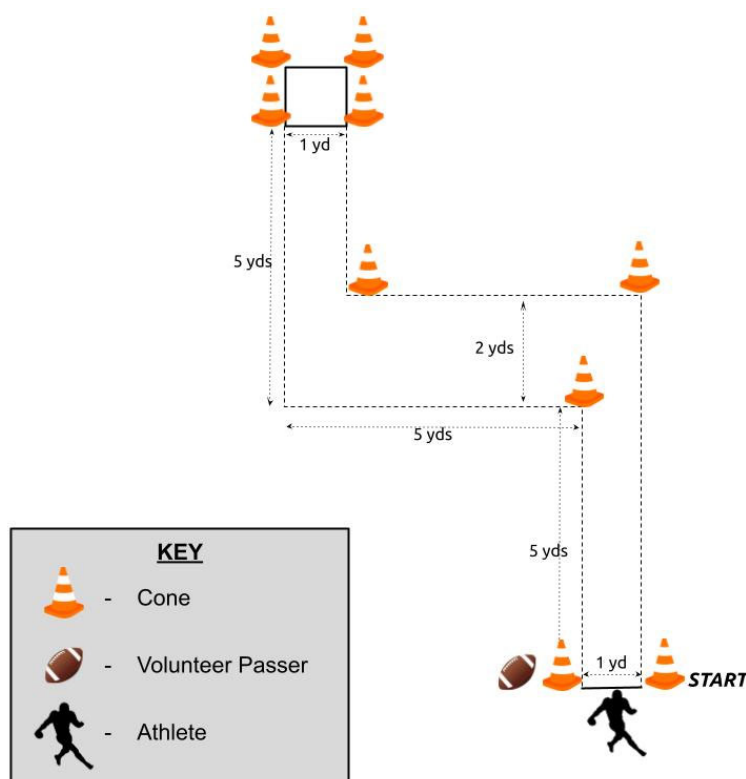
SECTION N – TIE BREAKERS

1. For divisions at a competition where, at the discretion of the Competition Director, places do not need to be determined for advancement purposes (in final division play), the following procedures will take place:
 - a) Head to Head: counting only games between the teams that are tied; if still tied, proceed to b).
 - b) The remaining tied teams will receive the same award (double, triple, etc.) and subsequent places will be skipped.
 - c) Forfeit Rule:
 - i. If any team involved in a tie has forfeited a game (not including divisioning, leveling, or play-in games), it will be placed in the lowest position of the teams involved.
 - ii. If any team involved in a tie received a win as the result of a team forfeiting to them, ALL games involving the team that forfeited will be omitted and the resulting records will be used in the foregoing tiebreaker procedures.
2. For divisions at a competition where, at the discretion of the Competition Director, places need to be determined for advancement purposes (to final divisions, medal or placement games), the following procedures will take place:
 - a) Head to Head: counting only games between the teams that are tied; if still tied proceed to b).
 - b) Lowest total defensive points allowed, counting only games (not including divisioning, leveling, or play-in games) between the teams that are tied; if still tied, proceed to c).
 - c) Highest point differential (difference between points scored and points allowed in each game), counting only games (not including divisioning, leveling or play-in games) between the teams that are tied; if still tied, proceed to d)
 - d) Highest total offensive points scored, counting only games (not including divisioning, leveling, or play-in games) between the teams that are tied; if still tied, proceed to e)
 - e) Lowest total defensive points allowed, counting all games (not including divisioning, leveling, or play-in games) between common opponents; if still tied, proceed to f)
 - f) Highest point differential (difference between points scored and points allowed in each game), counting all games (not including divisioning, leveling or play-in games) between all common opponents; if still tied, proceed to g)
 - g) Highest total offensive points scored, counting all games (not including divisioning, leveling, or play-in games) between common opponents; if still tied, proceed to h)
 - h) If all of the tiebreakers described above still do not decide the outcome of a tie, a coin flip will be used, where the winner will be given the higher placement.
 - i) Forfeit Rule:
 - i. If any team involved in a tie has forfeited a game (not including divisioning, leveling, or play-in games), it will be placed in the lowest position of the teams involved.
 - ii. If any team involved in a tie received a win as the result of a team forfeiting to them, ALL games involving the team that forfeited will be omitted and the resulting records will be used in the foregoing tiebreaker procedures.

SECTION O – INDIVIDUAL SKILLS CONTEST (ISC)

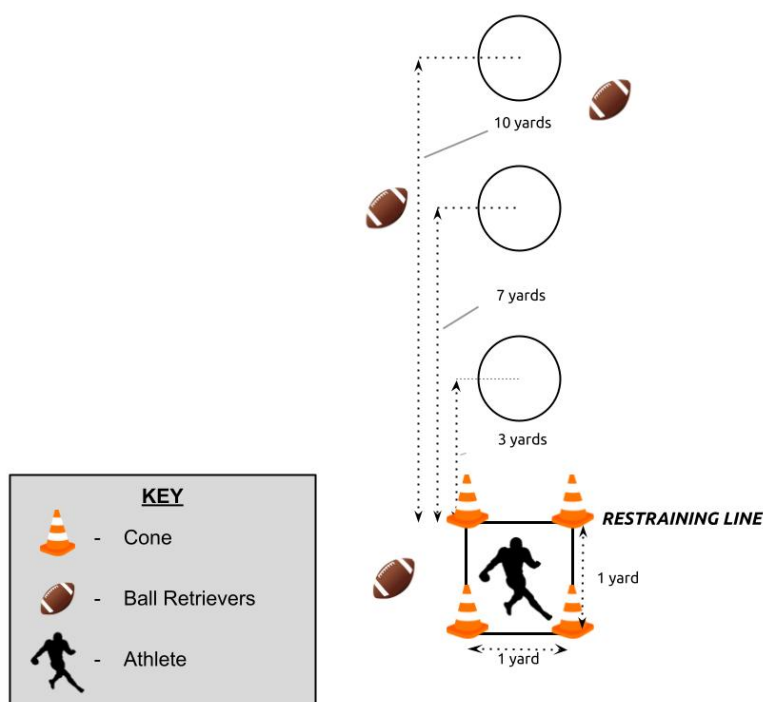
1. The following events provide meaningful competition for athletes with lower ability levels. It is not for athletes who can already play the game.
2. Athletes who receive assistance in the portion of the event that determines the score will receive a “Non Score” for the event. Athletes who score “Non Score” in all of the events will only be eligible for a Participation award. In order to receive a placement award (Gold through 8th Place), athletes must perform at least one of the events below without receiving assistance in the portion of the event that determines the score (see specific events for details).
3. Four events comprise the Individual Skills Contest: Catching, Throwing For Accuracy, Throwing for Distance, Flag Pulling.
4. The athlete’s final score is determined by adding the scores achieved in each of these four events.
5. Athletes will be pre-divisioned according to their total scores from these three events as well as gender and age group.
6. Each event is diagrammed with the suggested number and placement of volunteers who will administer them. It is also suggested that the same volunteers remain at an event throughout the competition so that consistency is provided.

ISC Event #1: Catching



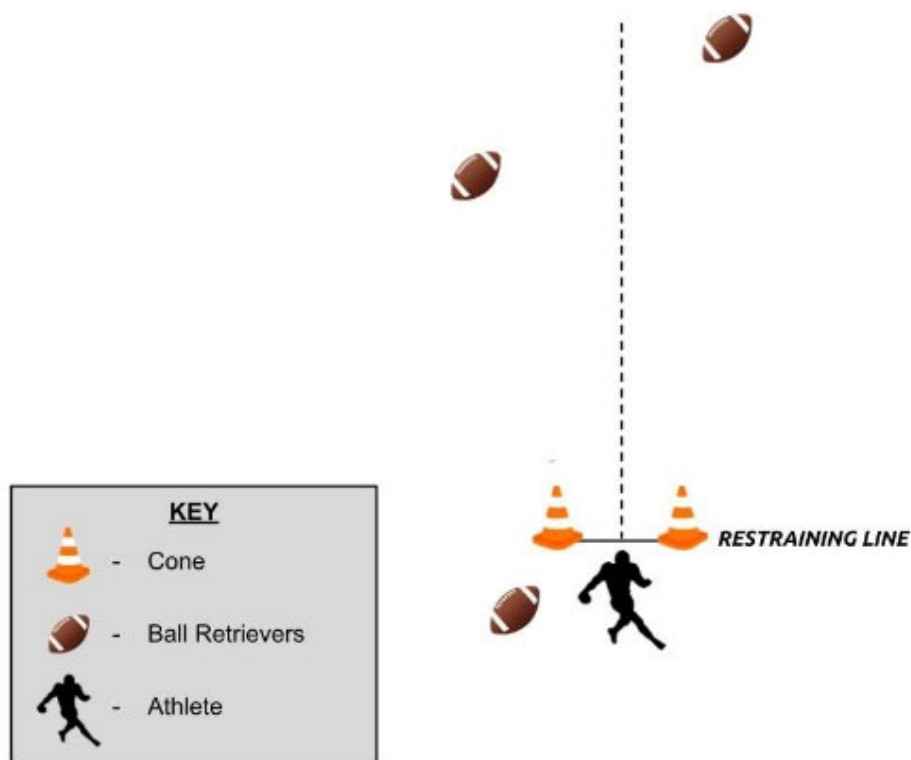
1. Purpose: To measure an athlete's skill in catching a football
2. Equipment
 - a. 5 Intermediate (Youth) Footballs
 - b. 8 traffic cones
 - c. Measuring tape
3. Description
 - a. The volunteer throwing the passes will stand to the left of the athlete, even with the starting point.
 - b. The athlete will run a "chair" route as marked by cones.
 - c. The athlete will start at the starting point marked by two (2) cones, then run upfield to the first cone placed five (5) yards out, turn left, and run five (5) yards to the next cone, then turn right (or upfield) to the square of cones and end up in a 1-yard by 1-yard square.
 - d. The athlete will turn around and attempt to catch a thrown pass from a volunteer.
 - e. Each athlete will receive 3 attempts.
 - f. Errant throws by the volunteer must be repeated and do not count as an attempt.
4. Scoring
 - a. The athlete receives 5 points for catching the ball.
 - b. The athlete receives 2 points for blocking, touching or knocking down the ball.
 - c. The athlete receives 0 points for a completely missed attempt.
 - d. The athlete receives 1 point for each cone on the running route and an additional 1 point for running the entire route correctly.
 - e. The total score for this event is the sum of the 3 trials.
 - f. The maximum score that can be attained is 24 (8 per trial). The minimum score is zero.
 - g. If the athlete receives assistance moving around the cones (is pushed, physically guided, or otherwise moved) and/or catching the ball, they will receive a "Non Score" for this event.

ISC Event #2: Throwing for Accuracy



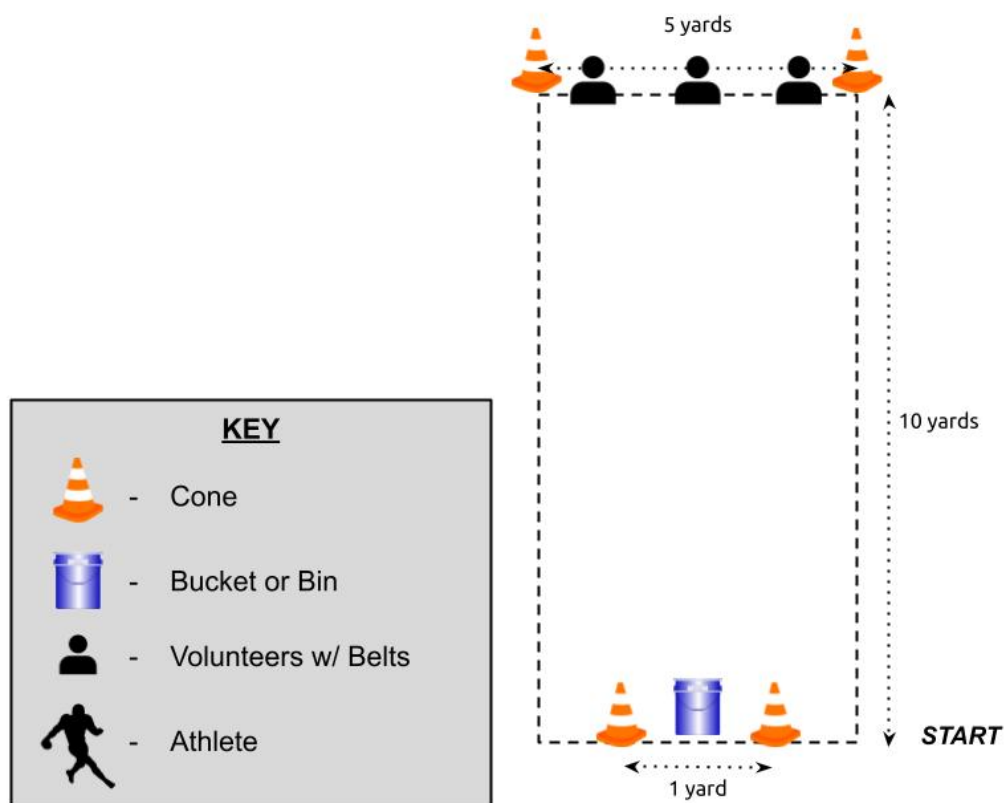
1. Purpose: To measure an athlete's ability to throw a football accurately
2. Equipment
 - a. 5 Intermediate (Youth) Footballs
 - b. At least 4 traffic cones
 - c. 3 Hula Hoops of the same size
 - d. Measuring tape
3. Description
 - a. The athlete begins from behind the restraining line in a 1-yard by 1-yard box, entering and exiting from the back of the box.
 - b. Three (3) Hula Hoop targets are placed flat on the ground, with the center placed at 2 three (3) yards, 5 seven (7) yards and 10 yards from the restraining line, directly in a row.
 - c. The athlete will stand in the starting square and try to throw the football into any of each the targets.
 - d. A ball hitting the outside of the hula hoop will be counted as a successful attempt and will receive points, as described below.
 - e. Each athlete will receive five (5) attempts at each of the three (3) marked spots, for a total of 15 attempts.
4. Scoring
 - a. The athlete receives 3 points for each 10-yard target hit.
 - b. The athlete receives 2 points for each 7-yard target hit.
 - c. The athlete receives 1 point for each 3-yard target hit.
 - d. The athlete receives 0 points for missing all targets or stepping on or over the restraining line during the attempt.
 - e. The total score for this event is the sum of the 15 attempts.
 - f. The maximum score that can be attained is 45 30points (15 for the 10-yard target, 10 for the 7-yard target and 5 for the 3-yard target). The minimum score is zero.
 - g. If the athlete receives assistance throwing, or otherwise moving the ball in a forward motion, they will receive a "Non Score" for this event.

ISC Event #3: Throwing for Distance



1. Purpose: To measure an athlete's ability to throw a football accurately
2. Equipment
 - a. 5 Intermediate (Youth) Footballs
 - b. 2 traffic cones
 - c. Measuring tape
3. Description (See ISC Event #3 Diagram)
 - a. The athlete stands behind the Restraining Line, back far enough to take one or more steps in preparation for throwing.
 - b. The athlete has five (5) attempts to throw the football as far and as straight as possible down the Throwing Line, without stepping over the restraining line.
 - c. Coaches, assistants or other waiting players should be positioned in the field to indicate, using cone or marking stake, the spot where each ball first touches the ground.
 - d. If an athlete steps on or over the Restraining Line before releasing the ball, the trial must be repeated, up to a maximum of two (2) times.
4. Scoring
 - a. Formula: Distance thrown in feet minus feet off Throwing Line = Score.
 - b. Throwing score equals the throwing distance, measured at a point on the throwing line straight across from (perpendicular to) the spot where the ball landed, minus the error distance – the number of feet the ball landed off target (distance from the throwing line).
 - c. The player's score is the best of the five (5) throws.
 - d. Both error scores and distance are measured to the nearest feet (i.e., if a ball lands even with (perpendicular to) the 15-foot point on the measuring tape, but is 5 feet off to one side; the player's score is 10 points).
 - e. If score falls between feet, score should be rounded down (i.e., 25 feet, 6 inches = 25 points).
 - f. The maximum score varies. The minimum score is zero.
 - g. If the athlete receives assistance throwing, or otherwise moving the ball in a forward motion, they will receive a "Non Score" for this event.

ISC Event #4: Flag Pulling



1. Purpose: To measure an athlete's ability to pull an opponent's flag.
2. Equipment
 - a. 3 flag belts with flags
 - b. 4 cones
 - c. Measuring tape
 - d. Stopwatch
 - e. Bucket, Small Box or Bin
3. Description (See Event #4 Diagram)
 - a. Three volunteers, with flag belts and flags, will stand on a 5-yard wide line, marked by cones, at a distance 10 yards from the starting line.
 - b. The athlete will run from the Starting Line and pull a flag off of the first volunteer, then return to the starting line to drop the flag in a bucket/box/bin at the starting line.
 - c. The athlete will repeat this two (2) more times until a flag is pulled from each volunteer and dropped in the box at the starting line.
4. Scoring
 - a. The time starts when the athlete leaves the starting line and stops when the athlete drops the third flag into the box/bin.
 - b. The time elapsed in seconds is subtracted from 60 to determine the point score.
 - c. The athlete will receive 1 additional point for each flag successfully dropped into the box/bin.
 - d. The athlete is given two trials.
 - e. The athlete's score will be the best score out of the two trials.
 - f. The maximum score varies. The minimum is zero.
 - g. If the athlete receives assistance moving around the field (is pushed, physically guided, or otherwise moved) and/or pulling the flag, they will receive a "Non Score" for this event.

SAMPLE FLAG FOOTBALL INDIVIDUAL SKILLS CONTEST SCORECARD

Special Olympics
Northern California
Individual Skills Contest (ISC) Scorecard
FLAG FOOTBALL

Place Athlete Label Here

Athlete Name:		Age Group:		Division:	
Delegation:		Gender:			

		ATTEMPTS					SCORE	
		1	2	3	4	5		
CATCHING								Sum of Points
THROWING FOR ACCURACY	Trial 1							Sum of Points
	Trial 2							
	Trial 3							
THROWING FOR DISTANCE								Best Attempt
FLAG PULLING		Time	Flags	Pts	Time	Flags	Pts	Best Attempt
Total Score								

Catching

- Athlete must start behind the restraining line and run the "chair" route.
- Athlete is given 3 attempts (passes). Errant throws must be repeated.
- Scoring
 - 5 points for catching the ball
 - 2 points for blocking, touching, or knocking down the ball
 - 0 points if the ball is missed completely
 - 1 point for each cone run on the route
 - 1 additional point for running the entire route correctly
 - Score is the sum of all points from the 3 attempts (Maximum of 24 points)

Throwing for Accuracy

- Athlete begins from behind the restraining line
- Athlete will receive 5 attempts at each of the three targets (hula hoops) at distances of 3, 7 and 10 yards, for a total of 15 attempts
- Scoring
 - 3 points for each 10-yard target hit
 - 2 points for each 7-yard target hit
 - 1 point for each 3-yard target hit
 - 0 points for missing a target or stepping on or over the restraining line during the attempt
 - A ball hitting the outside of the hula hoop will be counted as a successful attempt and will receive points
 - Score is the sum of all points from the 15 attempts (Maximum of 30 points)

Throwing for Distance

- Athlete stands behind the Restraining Line
- Athlete is given 5 attempts to throw the football as far and as straight as possible down the Throwing Line, without stepping over the Restraining Line.
- If the athlete steps over the Restraining Line, the trial must be repeated, up to a maximum of 2 times.
- Scoring
 - The score is the distance thrown in feet minus the distance in feet off the Throwing Line
 - If a measurement falls between feet, it should be rounded down (i.e., 25 feet, 6 inches = 25 points)
 - Score is the best of the two trials (Maximum score varies; Minimum score is 0)

Flag Pulling

- Athlete stands behind the Starting Line
- The time starts when the athlete leaves the starting line and stops when the athlete drops the third flag into the box/bin.
- Scoring
 - The time elapsed in seconds is subtracted from 60 to determine the point score.
 - An additional point for each flag successfully dropped into the box/bin will be awarded.
 - Score is the best of the two trials (Maximum score varies; Minimum score is 0)

SECTION P - 2026 RULE CHANGES

1. Actual rules changes listed below are in **red font, underlined and in bold print** within the rule book.
2. General formatting and wording changes.
3. Rule Change Summary:
 - a. Changed that teams are responsible for providing wristbands for Unified partners for all competition games
 - b. Changed that teams are responsible for providing wristbands for Unified partners for all competition games.
 - c. Clarified that mouthpieces are part of each player's equipment and must be worn during all practices and competitions.
 - d. Added that a play-call wristband may be worn by one (1) on-field player (athlete or Unified Partner).
 - e. Removed Combine events from Competition options and moved to an appendix as an optional practice idea.
4. Changes within the Rules & Guidelines below:

Page 9 – Section G: Uniforms

SECTION G – UNIFORMS

2. All players must wear numbered uniforms. Uniforms must have a smaller number in front and larger number in the back. Numbers can consist of 0-9, the highest number being 99. Please refer to SONorCal uniform standards.
 - a. All Unified Partners shall wear visible colored armbands, between the elbow and wrist, on both arms, to differentiate them from Athletes. These shall be supplied by the team for each game at competition ~~Field Manager for each game.~~

Page 10 – Section H: Equipment

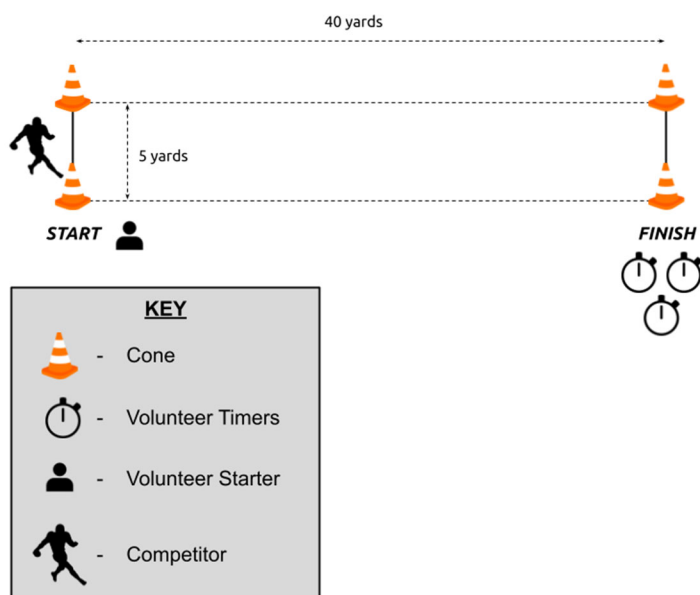
SECTION H – EQUIPMENT

2. Mouthpiece – must be worn by all players (athletes and unified partners) during all practices and competitions. Provided by SONorCal during the practice season.
3. Wristband – must be worn by all unified partners between the elbow and wrist on both arms. Provided by SONorCal during the practice season.
4. Play-Call Wristband – one on-field player (athlete or unified partner) may wear a wristband that contains offensive and/or defensive play calls.

APPENDIX A – COMBINE EVENTS RULES

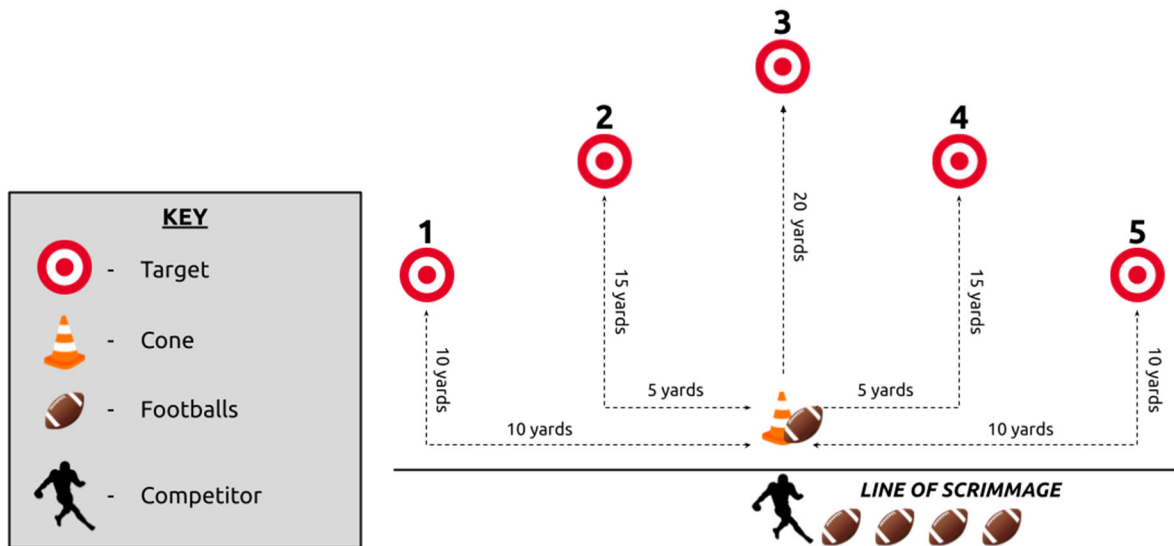
- A. The following events can be used at practices as an additional way to measure progress or provide a fun or competitive opportunity outside of normal drills and scrimmages, for athletes and/or unified partners.
- B. The following three (3) events comprise the SONorCal Flag Football Combine:
 - 1. 40-Yard Dash
 - 2. Passing
 - 3. Receiving
- C. Athletes may compete as individuals or with a Unified Partner. Scoring for Unified events will be the sum of the Athlete's and Unified Partner's individual scores for each event. Unified Partners must have an Athlete with whom they are competing.
- D. Each event is diagrammed with the set-up and equipment required to administer the event.

Combine Event #1: 40-Yard Dash



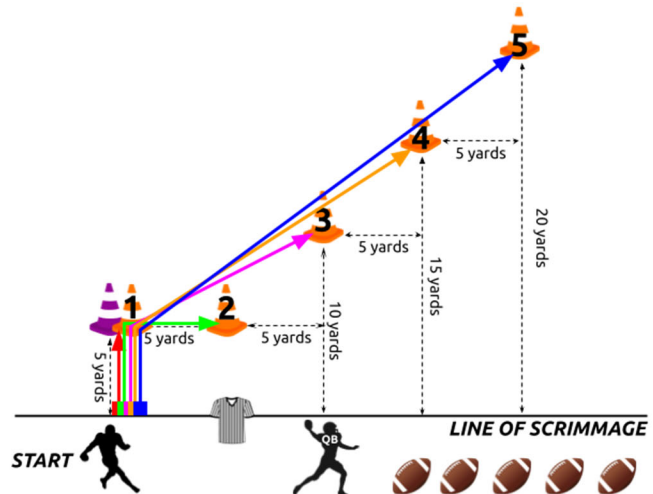
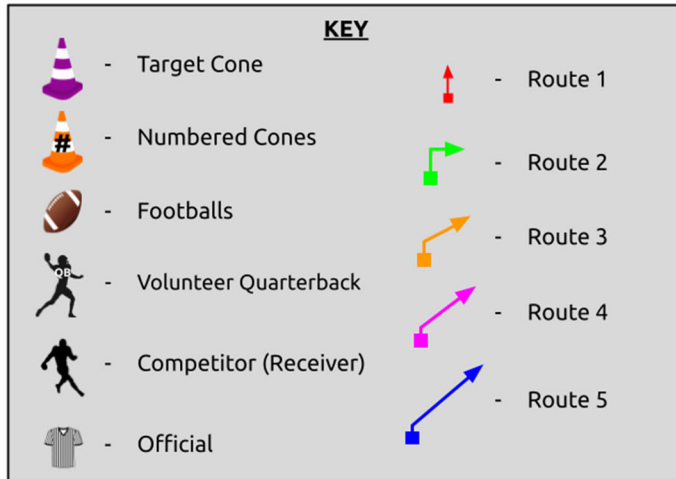
1. Purpose: To measure the competitor's ability to run or walk a specified straight-line distance for time.
2. Equipment:
 - a. 2-3 Stopwatches
 - b. 3-4 volunteers (1 Starter, 2-3 Timers)
 - c. 4 Cones
3. Description (See Event #1 Diagram)
 - a. Cones will be set five (5) yards apart at the Start and Finish Lines, along a straight path.
 - b. The competitor (Athlete or Unified Partner) will start behind the Start Line, between the cones.
 - c. The Starter volunteer will raise one hand and provide a countdown from 3 ("3, 2, 1, Go") and drop their hand.
 - d. The Timer volunteers will start time when the Starter drops their hand.
 - e. The Timer volunteers will end time when the competitor first crosses the Finish Line.
 - i. If two (2) timers, the average of the two times shall be recorded.
 - ii. If three (3) timers, the middle time shall be recorded.
 - f. The competitor is given up to three (3) trials.
4. Scoring
 - a. The time elapsed in seconds is subtracted from 60 to determine the point score. Round to the nearest whole number. (i.e., Time of 25.45 seconds = $60 - 25 = 35$ points)
 - b. The competitor's score will be the best score of the three (3) trials.
 - c. The maximum score varies. The minimum score is zero (0).

Combine Event #2: Passing



1. Purpose: To measure the competitor's ability to pass to a target.
2. Equipment:
 - a. 1 Cone
 - b. 5 Targets (inflatable or other)
 - c. 5 Hula Hoops
 - d. 5 Footballs
3. Description (See Event #3 Diagram)
 - a. The competitor will stand behind the center cone and behind the Line of Scrimmage.
 - b. For each attempt, the competitor will attempt to throw the ball once at each of the five (5) target locations without stepping over the Line of Scrimmage.
 - c. Volunteers will retrieve throws.
 - d. The competitor is given up to three (3) trials.
4. Scoring
 - a. Each successful attempt will earn the competitor points. A successful attempt is one where the ball touches the target in any fashion, or is within two (2) feet (a hula hoop can be used) of the target, before it touches the ground.
 - b. Any attempt where the competitor steps over the Line of Scrimmage will count as an attempt and receive zero (0) points.
 - c. Targets 1 & 5 = 1 point each
 - d. Targets 2 & 4 = 2 points each
 - e. Target 3 = 3 points
 - f. The competitor's score will be the best score of the three (3) trials.
 - g. The maximum score is nine (9). The minimum score is zero (0).

Combine Event #3: Receiving



1. Purpose: To measure the competitor's ability catch a thrown pass.
2. Equipment:
 - a. 6 Cones
 - b. At least 1 Football (5 recommended)
3. Description (See Event #4 Diagram)
 - a. The competitor may choose which direction they want to run their routes for all attempt – to their left after the Target Cone, or to their right after the Target Cone.
 - b. The competitor will stand directly across from the Target Cone, behind the Line of Scrimmage, at the Starting Point. The Volunteer Quarterback (QB) will stand directly across from Cone #2, behind the Line of Scrimmage.
 - c. On the first attempt, the competitor will run to the Target Cone/Cone #1 and turn to catch the pass from the Quarterback. They will then return to the Starting Point.
 - d. On the second attempt, the competitor will run to the Target Cone first, turn 90 degrees and run towards Cone #2 and turn and attempt to catch the pass from the Quarterback. They will then return to the Starting Point.
 - e. On the third attempt, the competitor will run to the Target Cone first, turn at an angle and run towards Cone #3 and turn and attempt to catch the pass from the Quarterback. They will then return to the Starting Point.
 - f. On the fourth attempt, the competitor will run to the Target Cone first, turn at an angle and run towards Cone #4 and turn and attempt to catch the pass from the Quarterback. They will then return to the Starting Point.
 - g. On the final (fifth) attempt, the competitor will run to the Target Cone first, turn at an angle and run towards Cone #5 and turn and attempt to catch the pass from the Quarterback.
 - h. Any throw from the Quarterback that is deemed uncatchable by the Official shall be re-tried.
 - i. The competitor is given up to two (2) trials.
4. Scoring
 - a. For each of the five (5) attempts, one (1) point is awarded for each successful catch. A successful catch is when the competitor secures the ball with one (1) or both hands for at least two (2) seconds. The Official shall make all judgements on catches.
 - b. Total score is the sum of points from all five (5) attempts.
 - c. The maximum score is five (5). The minimum score is zero (0).

SAMPLE SONORCAL FLAG FOOTBALL COMBINE SCORECARD

Special Olympics Northern California Combine Events FLAG FOOTBALL

Place Competitor Label Here

Use one scoresheet for each Unified Pair (Athlete & Partner) and cross-match names on each scoresheet.

Athlete Name (if applicable):		Division:	
Partner Name (if applicable):		Gender:	
Delegation:		Age Group:	

		ATTEMPTS						SCORE		
		1		2		3				
		Time	Pts	Time	Pts	Time	Pts			
40-YARD DASH									Best Attempt	
PASSING	Cone # (Points)	Cone #1 (1 Point)		Cone #2 (2 Point)		Cone #3 (3 Point)		Cone #4 (2 Point)	Cone #5 (1 Point)	Best Trial
	Trial 1									
	Trial 2									
	Trial 3									
RECEIVING	Route # (Points)	Route #1 (1 Point)		Route #2 (1 Point)		Route #3 (1 Point)		Route #4 (1 Point)	Route #5 (1 Point)	Best Trial
	Trial 1									
	Trial 2									
Total Score										

40-Yard Dash

- Competitor must start behind the Start Line and run/walk through the Finish Line for time.
- Competitor is given up to 3 trials.
- Scoring
 - The time elapsed in seconds is subtracted from 60 to determine the point score.
 - Score is the best of the three trials (Maximum score varies; Minimum score is 0)

Passing

- Competitor stands behind the Line of Scrimmage behind the cone.
- For each Trial, the athlete gets one (1) attempt to throw the football at each of the five (5) targets without stepping over the Line of Scrimmage.
- If the Competitor steps over the Line of Scrimmage, the attempt will count and will receive a score of zero (0).
- Competitor is given up to 3 trials.
- Scoring
 - A score is awarded for each successful attempt (a successful attempt is one where the ball touches the target in any fashion, or is within two (2) feet of the target, before it touches the ground).
 - Targets 1 & 5 = 1 Point Each; Targets 2 & 4 = 2 Points Each; Target 3 = 3 Points
 - Score is the best of the three trials (Maximum score is 9; Minimum score is 0)

Receiving

- Competitor stands behind the Line of Scrimmage at the Start for each attempt.
- For each attempt, the athlete will run to the Target Cone and turn (Cone #1) or turn and run to the designated numbered Cone (2, 3, 4, 5).
- A successful catch is one where the competitor secures the ball with one or both hands for at least 2 seconds.
- Any throw from the Quarterback that is deemed uncatchable by the Official shall be re-tried.
- Competitor is given up to 2 trials.
- Scoring
 - A score is awarded for each successful catch.
 - Score is the best of the two trials (Maximum score is 5; Minimum score is 0)