

NEPSAC 8-MAN FOOTBALL

Rules Information 2018

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The NEPSAC 8-Man Football Conference has teams from the following NEPSAC schools: Holderness (NH), Pomfret (CT), Gunnery (CT), Millbrook (NY) and Forman (CT.) This is the third year of the conference. Teams played a 6 game schedule in 2017 and a championship game was held between the top two teams.

All schools formerly played standard 11-man football in various NEPSAC conferences. Holderness was a member of the Evergreen League up through the 2017 season. Various reasons led the teams to enter into the 8-man conference; but it was mostly dwindling interest and roster sizes. The common thread was that each school wanted to keep the football program alive; but was only able to do it using the 8-man system.

Teams: There is no cap on roster size. Only 8 players on the field for each team at any given time (hence the name 8-Man Football.)

Rules: Like the NEPSAC 11-man conferences, the 8-man division plays modified NCAA rules. So, the “live” neutral zone, “live” PAT attempts (defense can score), legal BTW outside the tackle box, and all of the other NCAA vs National Federation differences apply – plus a few more!

Field: The field is 80yds x 40yds with 10yd end zones. Inbounds Lines are at 9 yards from the sideline. PAT attempts are from the 3 yard line. Team boxes are from the 25 yard line to the 25 yard line. Most schools use portable goal posts. All but one of the schools in the conference play on grass fields. Holderness NH has grass.

Free Kicks: KOs are from the 30 yard line. Touchbacks always go to the 15 yard line. Free Kicks after a Safety are from the 15 yard line.

Timing: Federation timing is used with the following exceptions: 12 minute halftime with no 3 minute warm-up, and the play clock is a 30 second play clock which starts on the Referee’s ready-for-play whistle. No 10 second run-offs on any penalty administrations.

Players: Offense must have 5 players on the LOS at the snap. There is NO numbering requirement. Players can wear any number from 1-99 no matter what position they line up at.

Eligible Receivers: The 2 players on the end of the LOS plus the 3 players lining up in the backfield are eligible receivers. (A snapper on the end of the LOS is technically an eligible receive as there is no numbering requirement!)

Mercy Rule: Once there is a 35pt differential at any time during the game, the clock changes to a “running clock” that only stops for injury time-outs. If the point differential drops below 35pts, then the clock reverts to standard Federation timing.

Notes from a discussion with Pomfret School AD and conference founder Jon Sheehan

Style of Play: Most teams pass the ball on about 60-65% of their offensive plays. Spread formations and shotgun snaps are the norm.

Scoring: The average game score in 2017 had a combined score of over 55pts.

Player Size: Most teams feature offensive line-ups with smaller, quicker players; even in the Center and Guard positions. There are very few players over 210lbs in the league.

FG and PAT Kick Attempts: With only 5 (or 6) offensive players on the LOS, it is difficult to kick a FG or PAT with the tradition 7yd snap. The crashing defensive ends have less distance to go and an easier line to the kicker/holder. As a result, there were only a few FGs and PAT kicks attempted in 2017. Vast majority of PAT attempts were 2pt rush/pass plays.

Sportsmanship: The division places a premium on teams practicing good sportsmanship before, during and after games. Teams realize that they were close to losing their programs and are grateful to have their programs still alive. Poor sportsmanship is not tolerated.

In 2016 and 2017, the game officials seemed to have the biggest problem dealing with who was or wasn't an eligible receiver on pass plays. This stems from the lack of a player jersey number requirement. Wingmen must be diligent in determining what players on their side of the formation are eligible prior to the snap going off. (At least we've got an extra 5 seconds on the play clock to do this!)

Misc: I personally watched video highlites from about 10 games played in 2017 and didn't see any blocking below the waist outside the Tackle Box by any backs or ends. It isn't illegal, it just doesn't seem to part of the offensive schemes.