

2026 Pop Warner Little Panthers Special Rules for Officials & Coaches

A minimum of 16 players must be dressed and eligible to start each game. If you start a game with 16 players, you can finish a game with 15 players. If you drop below 15 eligible players, the game is over and declared a forfeit.

Special Notes for 6U and 7U

No Kickoffs: To start the game, half, after a TD, field goal or safety the ball will be placed on the 35 yard line.

Field Length: 80 or 100 yard field.

Coaches: Two coaches from each team are permitted to be on the field with the team. **Once the team breaks from huddle, coaches must stay back 10 yards from the line of scrimmage.**

No punting. On 4th down, a team has the option of (a) running or passing the ball from scrimmage, or (b) move the ball back to opponents 35 yard line, and start offensive play from there.

Penalties: Major penalty 10 yards. Minor penalty 5 yards.

Game Time and Time Outs: Each quarter is 8 minutes. Game will consist of four (4) quarters. Half time will be 10 minutes. **Each team is allowed two (2) time outs per half.**

Scores may be displayed on scoreboard. No tiebreaker unless in playoffs/League Championship game or bowl/game.

Ball will be blown dead if fumbled behind the line of scrimmage. However, **ball will be live if fumbled beyond the line of scrimmage.**

Offense: All offensive backs must be lined up behind the offensive line in some type of formation. You will be allowed, however, to split one offensive back no more than five (5) yards outside the tight end (Can't have split WR's, twins, or trips). **Offensive line may utilize any stance.**

Defense: **Any defensive player lined up directly over the center must be a minimum of three (3) yards off the center.** **Defensive line must be one (1) yard back from the offensive line and may utilize any stance.** **Defense must run a 6,4,1 set.** **Only the six (6) defensive linemen may move forward at the snap. No blitzing. (NO BLITZING = No LB's or DB's can cross the line of scrimmage until QB has handed off or thrown the ball).** **10 yard penalty after one warning.**

SPECIAL NOTES FOR 8U & 9U

No Kickoffs: To start the game, half, after a TD, field goal or safety the ball will be placed on the 35 yard line.

Punts are live. The defense can't rush or block the punt. On punts, the defense/receiving team must be in either a 6-4 formation with one player back to return or a 5-4 formation with two players back to return.

Coaches (8U only): A maximum of one (1) coach per team is permitted on the field except during punts. Starting week 5 (9/20/25), 8U coaches can no longer be on the field. **No coaches on the field for 9U.**

There shall be:

- 1.) No blitzing on defense. (NO BLITZING = Only defensive linemen can move forward immediately at the snap. LB's and DB's may move toward the runner after a read step and cross the line of scrimmage after the QB has handed off or thrown the ball.) 10 yd penalty after one warning.**
- 2.) No rushing of punts, field goals or point after touchdown (while attempting a kick) in 8U & 9U play.** Ball must be snapped straight back to the kicker/holder in line with the snapper and must be kicked immediately upon securing the snap. **Penalty – dead ball, delay of game.**
- 3.) No more than six (6) defensive players can be on the line of scrimmage or rush the ball. Linebackers must be 3 yards off the line of scrimmage, corners must be 5 yards off the line of scrimmage, and safeties must be 7 yards off the line of scrimmage.**
- 4.) Offensive & Defensive players can utilize any stance and the defense may not line head-up over center.** D-line may line up in the A-Gap but may not initiate contact with the center. **Penalty for violation of the above: First violation: Warning; Additional violations: 10 yards unsportsmanlike conduct.**

NFHS Rules apply to 10U, 11U, 12U, 13U, & 14U Divisions

OVERTIME – High School overtime rules will be followed (Each team receives a possession from the 10 yd line).

Ball Size:	6U, 7U, 8U, 9U	10U, 11U	12U, 13U, 14U
Wilson	K2	TDJ	TDY
Spalding	Rookie	Junior	Youth
Nike	Peewee	Junior	Youth

No electronic devices of any kind may be used by coaches, staff, or players anywhere on the field, team box, or sideline.

LOPSIDED/INTENTIONALLY RUN UP SCORES

Any time a team goes up by 30 points or more, the following will occur:

- Once a 30-point difference is obtained between the two opponents, the clock will become a running clock the remainder of the game.**
The winning team cannot pass the ball (forward or backward) or run sweeps outside the tackle. If the winning team fails to abide by this rule, each violation will be a loss of down and a 5-yard penalty from the previous spot at the discretion of the game referee. If at any point during the remainder of the game the point difference drops below 30 the clock will continue running; however regular rules would apply, i.e. teams would not be required to run between the tackles etc. If a 30 point difference is reached again, the previous stipulations would take effect again.
- There will be no Blitzing by either team** once the clock becomes a running clock and the lopsided rule is in effect.
- There will be no onside kicks at kickoff by the winning team.**
- The winning defensive team cannot advance a fumble or pass interception.** The ball is blown dead immediately. The winning offense may start play from the spot of the turnover.
- The winning team must make every effort to replace starting players with reserves. Failure to do so will call for an immediate investigation and possible one game suspension if found guilty.
- Both defenses must run a 4-3-4 set with 4 linemen on the line of scrimmage, 3 linebackers set at least 5 yds off the line of scrimmage and 4 defensive backs at least 10 yds off the line of scrimmage.**
- Any coach who employs types of plays without the intent to maximize the action of play shall be in violation of this rule.
- The teams are still required to complete the mandatory play rule.