



THE GAUNTLET OFFICIAL SERIES RULES

2026-27 TOURNAMENT SERIES

UNLEASHED FLAG FOUNDATION

Governing eligibility, rosters, tournament format, advancement, bids, refunds, weather, cancellations, conduct, and series administration.

PUBLISHED FOR REVIEW

MORE THAN A GAME.

OFFICIAL SERIES AUTHORITY

These rules govern participation in The Gauntlet 2026-27 tournament series. The separate **Gauntlet Official 5v5 Flag Football Rulebook** governs gameplay. These Series Rules govern eligibility, rosters, tournament format, seeding, advancement, bids, payments, refunds, conduct, protests, weather, cancellations, and administrative matters.

Series Administration: Unleashed Flag Foundation retains final authority over eligibility, event operations, advancement, suspensions, extraordinary circumstances, and matters not expressly covered.

RULE 1 - DIVISIONS & AGE ELIGIBILITY

Girls Championship Divisions: 8U, 10U, 12U, 14U, 16U, High School.

Select Boys Divisions: 6U, 8U, 10U, 12U.

Age cutoff: August 1, 2026. An athlete's age on August 1, 2026 determines age-division eligibility. Athletes may play up into an older age division but may not play down.

High School Girls is a true enrollment division. Athletes must be actively and academically enrolled in high school during the 2026-27 school year. Age alone does not create High School eligibility.

RULE 2 - ROSTERS & DUAL-ROSTERED ATHLETES

Maximum roster size is **12 athletes**. A maximum of **2 coaches** may occupy the team sideline.

One athlete may not play for two different teams in the **same division**. An athlete may participate for teams in different age divisions when otherwise eligible.

The Gauntlet will not alter, delay, or rebuild schedules to accommodate dual-rostered athletes. If games overlap, the athlete/team assumes that scheduling risk.

RULE 3 - PLAYER & TEAM VERIFICATION

All athletes must satisfy tournament registration, date-of-birth verification, current athlete photo, waiver/release, and roster-assignment requirements through the designated registration/verification platform.

Coaches are responsible for roster accuracy. Use of an ineligible, unregistered, improperly aged, or falsified athlete may result in forfeiture of games in which the athlete participated, removal from the event, and/or suspension from future Gauntlet competition.

RULE 4 - TOURNAMENT FORMAT

Each registered team receives a **4-game guarantee** unless circumstances outside tournament control prevent completion. The standard structure is **3 pool games plus single-elimination bracket play**.

Tournament Administration may modify pools or brackets when registration numbers or operational conditions require it, while preserving competitive fairness and the four-game guarantee whenever reasonably possible.

RULE 5 - POOL PLAY SEEDING & TIEBREAKERS

Priority	Tiebreaker
1	Overall record
2	Head-to-head (when exactly two tied teams played each other)
3	Point differential
4	Points allowed
5	Points scored

6	Coin flip / random draw
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Point differential is capped at **+21 / -21 per game** for seeding purposes.

RULE 6 - OFFICIAL GAMEPLAY RULEBOOK

All Gauntlet games are governed by the separately published **The Gauntlet Official 5v5 Flag Football Rulebook - 2026-27 Tournament Series**. That rulebook controls field dimensions, timing, downs, no-run zones, blitzing, passing, scoring, overtime, penalties, officials' duties, and the Gauntlet onside attempt.

RULE 7 - UNIFORMS & EQUIPMENT

Players must use legal flag belts, appropriate athletic footwear, and uniforms that do not obstruct access to the flags. Flags may not be tied, wrapped, glued, shortened, modified, or otherwise manipulated to make them more difficult to pull.

Jewelry is not categorically prohibited. Officials may require removal or securing of any item they determine creates a legitimate safety hazard.

RULE 8 - COACH, PLAYER & SPECTATOR CONDUCT

Only rostered athletes and authorized coaches may occupy the team sideline. Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their players, staff, and spectators.

Threats, fighting, discriminatory language, harassment of officials, aggressive field entry, or encouragement of dangerous conduct may result in ejection, removal from the event, and/or suspension from the Gauntlet Series.

RULE 9 - PROTESTS

Judgment calls by officials are not protestable. Protests are limited to player eligibility, roster violations, or incorrect application of a written rule.

A protest must be submitted to Tournament Administration before the protesting team's next game, or immediately following a game when the issue affects advancement or elimination. Video may assist with eligibility or rule-administration questions but is not instant replay for judgment calls. Tournament Administration decisions are final.

RULE 10 - SERIES ADVANCEMENT & PREFERENTIAL SEEDING

A. Opening Events -> Qualifiers

The **Top 8 teams in each division** at an Opening Event automatically qualify for the Qualifier stage and receive preferential seeding consideration at the Qualifier.

Opening Event Finish	Qualifier Benefit
1st-2nd	Paid entry to a Qualifier
3rd-4th	50% entry credit (half bid) to a Qualifier
5th-8th	Automatic qualification

When teams qualify through multiple Opening Events, Opening Event finish is the first consideration for preferential seeding, followed by applicable Gauntlet seeding/tiebreak criteria.

B. Qualifiers -> Nationals

Up to the **Top 12 teams in each division** at a Qualifier advance to Nationals, subject to available Nationals capacity. If fewer than 12 positions are available, spots are awarded in order of Qualifier finish.

Qualifier Finish	Nationals Benefit
1st-2nd	Paid entry to Nationals
3rd-4th	50% entry credit (half bid) to Nationals
5th-12th	Qualified for Nationals, subject to available capacity

Qualifier finish receives preferential seeding consideration at Nationals.

C. Nationals -> Worlds

The **Top 8 teams in each division** at Nationals advance to Worlds. The **Top 2** receive paid entry to Worlds. The **Top 4 Nationals finishers** receive preferential seeding at Worlds.

RULE 11 - BIDS, DUPLICATE AWARDS & TEAM CONTINUITY

Qualification and financial awards are earned by the **team in the specific division** in which the result was achieved. Awards may not be transferred between age divisions or sold/transferred to another organization.

A team may earn qualification status only once per division, per advancement stage. If a team that already holds a paid bid earns another paid bid to the same advancement stage, the duplicate paid bid rolls down to the next highest-finishing eligible team that does not already hold an equal or greater award. The same principle applies to duplicate half bids.

Separate teams from the same organization may independently earn awards in different divisions.

Roster continuity: A qualifying team must retain at least 50% of the roster that earned the advancement position when competing at the next stage, unless Gauntlet Administration approves an exception.

RULE 12 - OPENING EVENT PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENT

To be eligible to participate in a Gauntlet Qualifier, a team must **actually compete in at least one official Gauntlet Opening Event** during the 2026-27 series. Registration without participation does not satisfy this rule.

A team that does not participate in an Opening Event is not eligible for a Qualifier bid, at-large Qualifier entry, or Qualifier competition. Any exception is reserved for extraordinary circumstances caused by the series itself, including an event cancellation or comparable administrative circumstance.

RULE 13 - REGISTRATION PAYMENTS, DEPOSITS & REFUNDS

Teams may secure a tournament spot by paying the required deposit or paying the registration fee in full. A spot is not secured until the required payment has been received.

Withdrawal Timing	Deposit	Full Payment
14 or more days before event	100% refundable	100% refundable
9-13 days before event	50% refundable	50% refundable
8 days or fewer before event	NON-REFUNDABLE	NON-REFUNDABLE

Refund eligibility is determined by the date a written withdrawal request is received by Unleashed Flag Foundation. Beginning 8 calendar days before the tournament, deposits and registration payments are final and non-refundable.

Team-initiated withdrawals due to schedule conflicts, travel issues, roster availability, injuries, disqualification, or failure to attend do not create an exception to this policy.

RULE 14 - WEATHER, EVENT INTERRUPTION & CANCELLATION

Section 1. Safety Authority

Player, coach, official, and spectator safety takes priority. Unleashed Flag Foundation and Tournament Administration may delay, suspend, shorten, relocate, reschedule, modify, or cancel games when weather, field conditions, lightning, air quality, natural disaster, government order, venue restriction, or another circumstance makes normal tournament operations unsafe or impracticable.

Section 2. Weather Delays and Schedule Modification

A weather delay does not automatically cancel the tournament or create a refund. Tournament Administration may adjust start times, game lengths, pool formats, bracket formats, field assignments, or other operational details when reasonably necessary to continue the event safely.

Teams are responsible for remaining available for official schedule updates during a weather-affected event.

Section 3. Partially Played Events

If an event begins but weather or another uncontrollable condition prevents completion, fees are not automatically refundable. Tournament Administration will determine whether the event can be resumed, rescheduled, completed in a modified format, or concluded based on games already played.

When an event is concluded early, Tournament Administration may use completed games and established tiebreak procedures to determine standings, advancement, or awards when a fair and reasonable determination can be made.

Section 4. Complete Cancellation by Unleashed

If Unleashed Flag Foundation cancels an entire tournament before tournament play begins and the event is not rescheduled, registered teams will be offered either a 100% refund of tournament registration fees paid or a 100% credit toward another Gauntlet event.

This provision applies to tournament registration payments made to Unleashed Flag Foundation. Unleashed is not responsible for third-party expenses such as travel, lodging, transportation, meals, or other costs incurred by teams, athletes, families, or organizations.

Section 5. Rescheduled Events

If an event is postponed and rescheduled rather than canceled, team registration will transfer to the rescheduled event. If a team cannot attend the rescheduled date, Tournament Administration may provide an event credit or refund consistent with the circumstances announced for that specific postponement.

Section 6. Force Majeure / Uncontrollable Circumstances

When cancellation, interruption, or modification results from circumstances beyond the reasonable control of Unleashed Flag Foundation, including severe weather, natural disaster, unsafe field conditions, government orders, venue closure, or similar events, Tournament Administration will determine the appropriate remedy after considering event status, unrecoverable event costs, games completed, and the ability to reschedule.

No weather or force-majeure decision creates an exception to Rule 13 for an unrelated team-initiated withdrawal.

REVIEW STATUS

This edition is published for review. Final publication may include administrative clarifications, event-specific bulletins, or formatting changes approved by Unleashed Flag Foundation. Unless expressly superseded, the Official Gauntlet 5v5 Flag Football Rulebook governs gameplay and these Official Series Rules govern series administration.