

Center Ball

Center Ball is a game launched by my students and I (D. Kantarelis) at Assumption University in the Fall of 1999. The game, we believe, is fun to play, easy to learn, inexpensive (no equipment), and although it resembles American Football it is not as dangerous or violent. It may be played on any field (football, soccer, basketball, backyard) if two circles may be drawn on the ground as shown in the diagram below. What makes it fun, in our opinion, is that every individual player can be a quarterback or a running back or a receiver; during the game, each player should be ready to assume any of these roles.



The objective of the game is to 'capture' the center zone of the opponent's half field (see diagram.) The objective may be achieved by running while carrying a football and/or passing the football to a teammate anywhere in the field. A point (touchdown) is earned when both feet of the ball carrier or receiver touch the area inside the circle. The game is played in sets; the team that earns 10 points first wins a set and the team that wins 2 out of 3 sets wins the game.

Rules & Regulations

The Rules Committee may be contacted as follows:

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1. Equipment, attire and dimensions of field. The game is played with a 'football' and players of each team should be uniformly dressed in colored and distinctly different attire; any running shoes will be sufficient. For dimensions of field, see dimensions of basketball court or soccer field or football field.

2. Number of players and substitutions. 5 vs 5 players on basketball size court with extra players for possible substitutions; 10 vs 10 players on soccer/football size field with extra players for possible substitutions. Substitutions are allowed after scoring.

3. Points, sets, time-outs and breaks. A point (touchdown) is earned when both feet of the ball carrier or receiver touch the area inside the circle. The game is played in sets; the maximum number of sets in a game should be 3; the team that earns 10 points first wins a set and the team that wins 2 out of 3 sets wins the game. Each team is allowed a 90-second time-out per set. Teams are allowed 3-minute breaks between sets.

4. Starting and changing of sides. Flipping of coin determines which team starts from one side or the other; the team that wins the toss selects a side and chooses to attack or defend. Teams should change sides after a total of 5 touchdowns is scored, then after a total of 10 touchdowns is scored and, in general, after 5 touchdowns are added to the score thereafter. The game should start with a pass. The starting pass should be initiated by an attacking player from within the starting zone; an offensive foul will be called if the player touches any lines in the starting zone; during the passing attempt, no other player should be in the starting zone; after the initial pass is made, the starting zones are out of bounds.

5. Continuity, 'two-hand touch', possession of the ball, turn-overs. The game is continuous and it relies on a 'two-hand touch' for forcing the attacking player to stop running. As soon as the defending player (B) touches the attacking player (A) with two hands, A should stop advancing and attempt (without traveling) to connect with a teammate via passing. A should be given 3 feet of space in all directions around her/him to pass the ball. In turn, A's receiver may run with the ball or pass it. After a team scores, it gives up the ball to the other team; it turn, the other team starts an attack by passing the ball from its own starting zone. When a team turns the ball over - due to fumble, interception, out of bounds or other - the other team becomes the attacking team from the point at which the turn over occurred.

6. Fouls.

(a) **Defensive Fouls:** Defensive fouls are committed when a defending player pushes violently or tackles or trips a ball carrier or, after a 'two-hand touch', does not give the carrier enough space to pass the ball or, in a passing attempt, interferes with the pass (e.g. when the defending player goes after the player instead of the ball.) The compensation for any defensive foul is to 'pass the ball without resistance' (the passer should be given a 3-foot radius comfort zone around her/him to pass the ball; during the execution of the foul, defending players are not allowed to touch the passer in the comfort zone.)

(b) **Offensive Fouls.** Offensive fouls are committed when an attacking player travels after a two-hand touch or, throws or receives the ball out of bounds or, walks out-of-bounds carrying the ball (for in-bounds play both feet of the ball carrier or receiver should be inside the out of bounds line) or pushes violently or tackles or trips an opponent. The punishment for any offensive foul is 'loss of ball possession'. At referee's discretion, fouls may be offsetting.

7. Penalty. A penalty is called after the opposing team commits three defensive fouls and it gives a two-to-one advantage for a touchdown to the rewarded team. During the execution of the penalty, all players stand out of bounds except two players from the rewarded team and one from the other team. From the defender's starting zone, a passer from the rewarded team passes the ball to a teammate standing at the closest penalty mark point with only one defending player from the opposing team located in her/his center zone. At referee's command, the three players involved in the penalty assume their positions where they stand without moving for a few seconds until they hear a whistle or a command for play. After the whistle, subject to all Centerball rules and regulations, the defending player may defend against the passer and/or the receiver.

8. Officials. One referee, two assisting line officials. Clothing: uniform with pockets in white; shoes: similar to players'. Equipment: Whistle and pocket-size notes pad with pencil or pen (referee and line officials), soccer-style flags (line officials only).

Referee: The referee should be viewed as the ultimate authority during the game and all players should obey her/his decisions without any resistance what so ever; otherwise a player or a group of players may be expelled. One or many expelled players cannot play for the remaining of the game or, at the referee's discretion, for any number of games during the remaining season. The referee's ultimate duty is to enforce the rules and use her/his best judgment when certain situations are not covered by the rules. During the game, the referee may overrule any decisions reached by the assisting line officials. Other important duties include: supervision of the coin toss, signal start and end of game as well as changes, keep score, make decisive calls, make sure that the field is safe and marked correctly and file an official report about the game and the events that occurred during the game. **Assisting Line Official:** The assisting line official should not hesitate to make decisions identical to those made by the referee but above all should watch the lines and call the outs; their calls are subject to overruling by the referee.



