

EMPIRESTM LEAGUE FOOTBALL



RULES
OF PLAY

BETA RELEASE

GAME DESIGN BY
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A Note from the Game Designer

Thank you for choosing and playing Empires League Football™ — aka ELF™. There's probably a lot of great games on your shelf, so thank you for taking your time to learn and play ELF™. The design of this game was a labor of three loves — football, fantasy worlds, and board games. I've probably rolled up more characters than I've played football games, but the chance to combine the best of what made for great fun during my early years seemed a natural fit. And once the design of ELF™ began, it wasn't long before it began to unravel and reveal itself. I hope you enjoy playing it as much as I've enjoyed designing it, and I hope it provides you and your friends and family the kind of joy I had in experiencing all three of these loves.

A Word About the Words 'Football', 'Gridiron Football', and 'American Football'

“Football”, the word, should rightfully belong to the world's most popular sport, the oldest of the 'football' sports, and the one sport played almost exclusively with one's feet — what we in America call soccer. However, since history did us the displeasure of mixing the name into association football, rugby football, gridiron football (*also known as American football*), as well as a few other 'footballs', we are left with a bit of a mess. With all deference to the one true game of FOOTball, I've nonetheless choose to simplify and use the term 'football' in this set of rules and throughout the game experience to avoid having to constantly distinguish between football's various forms. So, when you read 'football' hereafter, please know we are referring to the American form of gridiron football.

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OVERVIEW



Introduction

The history of Empires League Football™ lies with Vohalm™, a brutal world indelibly dissected by light and darkness, and torn by centuries of war.

History does not yet record how the idea of football came to Queen Lydália, and she's never been one to tell her secrets. But what history does record is that when the Empire's broken and bloody warlords left her battlefield tent in chagrinned agreement that night, Vohalm was changed forever.

After centuries of wasteful war, Queen Lydália brokered an accord amongst Vohalm's empires and ruling clans to settle their differences on a new kind of battlefield — a football field. Rumor claims, Gaeldric, magister of Ildaen and counsel to Queen Lydália, used his magic to bestow upon the gathered leaders a vision of the new game destined to determine the Empire's fate.



In the ensuing days, a multi-clan committee was selected to draw up the official rules and an accord was signed by all clan leaders to establish Empires League Football™ and its body of 16 of teams, split into four geographically united divisions. The inaugural ELF™ season was to be held in two-years time, allowing each clan to appoint a patron to found a team, to learn the game, and to build their field and stadium to host games.

By law, the leadership of the Empire would be determined by the results of each annual ELF season. Each team would compete throughout the season, at the end of which, a team patron from the top team in each division would form the Empire's leadership counsel, and the winner of the championship game would rule as the Empire's monarch.

*The land of Vohalm™ —
home to Empires League
Football™ and its 16 teams.*



Introduction — Continued

An Empire's calendar was unified across the clans and used to mark the start of the new era and of the games to be played, with the first games starting in 3 E.L. (*the third year after the signing of the Empires League accords*). The trading city of Syre Genothe, melting pot of Vohalm's cultures and clans, was selected as a neutral site to host the new royal houses and the Stadium of Monarchs, home of the Empire Bowl™ — the ELF™ championship game to determine the monarchy.

Though finished much later in 7 E.L., the Stadium of Monarchs is considered a marvel of architecture. Representing the light and dark of each world within the Empire, each half of the stadium is designed by builders of the separate clans, such that it strikes an imposing backdrop for the championship game and a reminder of what each team is playing for.

It is against this backdrop, we find ourselves now, in year 10 E.L., where Odall Thrym, quarterback for the Krondag Hammerlings™ looks over the defense of the Dûrzhâd Dragons™. For their part, the Dragons are the first-ever Darksiders Union™ team favored to win the Empire Bowl™. But Odall and the rest of the Hammerlings believe their own quest to be the first non-elvish team to raise Lydália's Sceptre™.

It's fourth down, with 7 yards to go at the Dragon's 27 yard line. A quick glance at the clock reveals only two clicks remain — only enough time for one last play. The Stadium of Monarchs roils with thunderous excitement.

Odall barks commands and his lineman hikes the ball. Bryndun Thrym runs a deep post pattern. Togar Nagheld runs an underneath route, clearing the defense for Tygarne Torghelm — the Hammerling's massive tight end — to run up the seam. Odall sees him break open and lets the ball fly. It just clears the outstretched fingertips of a diving defender and lands in Tygarne's hands. Tygarne tucks the ball and lowers his shoulder into the oncoming tacklers, pushing them back and propelling himself just across the goal line before they drag him to the ground. Touchdown!

The crowd erupts in cheers and jeers as drums sound and trumpets blare. Odall runs to his teammates and his good friend Tygarne. After a hearty embrace, Tygarne hands Odall the ball before breaking into a toothy grin and triumphantly lifting Odall onto his shoulders.

Welcome to Empires League Football™

What is ELF™?

ELF is a fantasy-themed, head-to-head tabletop game based on a simplified version of football. It takes the game of football, strips it down to its core competitive and entertainment elements, and enhances that with a fantasy theme to create a unique, fast-paced, tabletop football experience. And just like real football, no two games are ever alike.

What is your role?

In ELF you are a team's coach and mage. You control who on your team plays, what plays are called, and when to use magic, timeouts, bluffs, and other strategic elements to give your team the best chance to win the game.

What is ELF™?

A game of ELF involves two teams competing against each other. As such, ELF is typically played as a two-player game. However, if you have 3 players, one team can be run by one person with the other two people splitting the other team's responsibilities — one person managing the offense and the other managing the defense. If you have four people, both teams can split the offensive and defensive responsibilities.

ELF also features well as either a league or a tournament game with 4, 8, 12, or 16 players. You can read more about this later in the rules.





Welcome to Empires League Football™ — Continued

What is a game of ELF™ like and what is the goal?

A game of ELF is played using cards and a game board. A game is divided into two halves — each half lasting 90 ticks of the game clock, which is tracked on the game board.

While there is time on the clock, two teams use cards to battle against each other, with one team moving the football up and down the field trying to score, and the other team trying to take back the football and stop them from scoring. ***The ultimate goal is to be the team with the most points when time runs out in the game.***

Each team has five players representing it on the field at any given time, with five offensive players controlling the football and trying to score against five defensive players who are trying to stop them. Offensive player cards show two abilities for a player: a run score, showing their skill at executing a running play, and a pass score, showing their ability to execute a pass play. Defensive player cards show the same two abilities for a player: the run score, showing their skill at stopping running plays, and the pass score, showing their skill at stopping passing plays.

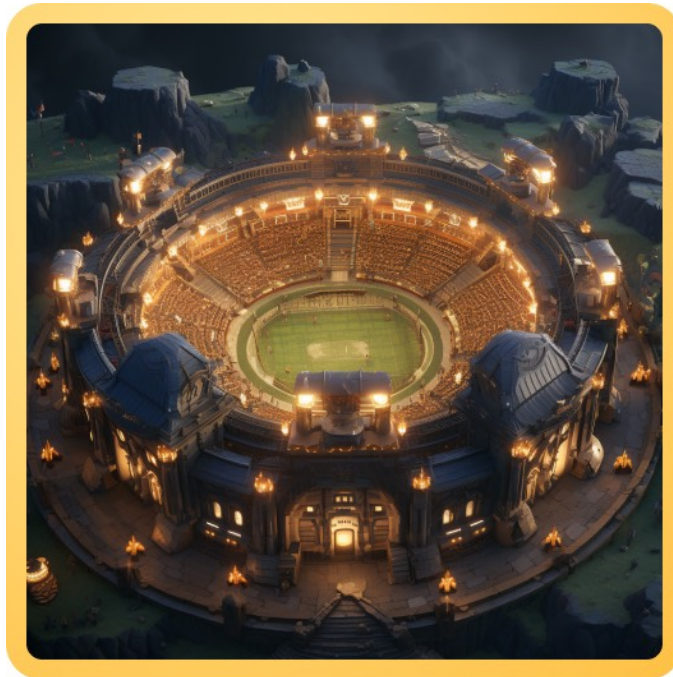
Each team's mage (or coach) influences play based on their area of football expertise and by casting spells, activating magic items, and healing players.

Like football, the offensive team must gain at least 10 yards in 4 downs to continue playing on offense, and may continue playing until they score points — via a field goal or a touchdown — or turn the ball over. If they are unable to gain 10 yards after 3 downs, they have a choice to “go for it” on 4th down — with the risk of turning the ball over if they do not get a first down — or they may punt, giving the ball to the other team further down the field.

This process repeats with each team getting chances to score until time runs out on the game clock, and the winner is decided by whichever team has scored the most points. If the game ends in a tie, there are tie-breaking rules used to determine a winner.

Now this, of course, is just the dry, dictionary definition of a game. You haven't lived until you've seen the pantheon of drama and emotion played out in a full game, or been to the Dreadhold and seen a stadium of intoxicated orcs erupt and storm the field — as when their famed linebacker, Igmar Fangrin, recovered a fumble to seal the victory against the stuffy, high-minded Ildaen Kings™, and marked the first time ever a Darksiders' team had beaten the Empires' Champion.

Obviously you can't see a real game at the Dreadhold, but you can experience the fun and excitement of a come-from-behind victory over your biggest rival. Or a last-ditch play that goes the length of the field to win you the tournament championship. It's these kinds of moments that make football such a sublime experience and explain its popularity, and it's these kinds of moments that are packed into a game of ELF, waiting for you to experience them.



The Grunzelpub Stouts™ brought in dwarves from Krondag to build their home stadium. This has led to rampant speculation as the Hammerlings™ have yet to lose a game in the Stouts' home venue.



Learning How to Play

Learning the Game of Football

Don't be intimidated by this rulebook. It's big because there's a lot of nuance to the game of football which adds to the fun and strategy, but you don't have to know all of that when you start. About 90% of what you do in the game is the Order of Play. Simply master the Order of Play and you can add in the nuance over time. And you should easily master the Order of Play by the end of your first game. The rest is largely background, strategy, set up instructions, or unique situations that occur infrequently throughout the game.

If you know what football is and how to play it, start here ...

Skip to page 7 and continue from there to learn about the game components, game board, game area layout, and the gameplay rules.

If you don't know what football is or how to play it, start here ...

We'll start with the basics first, and then we'll build on that foundation to understand how ELF™ is played. Please read on ...

Football Basics

A game of football is played on a 100 yard-long field, bounded on each end by an end zone. Two teams play the game, each defending their end zone against the other team.

A football — which is inflated and shaped like a symmetrical egg, pointed on both ends — is the focal point of the game. Each team works to possess the football in order to move it toward the other team's end zone and score points. The football also marks a team's current position and progress on the field.

The team that possesses the football — or simply, ball — is called the offense. The offense gains yards and moves the ball down the field using running or passing plays. The offense can score either by reaching the other team's end zone and scoring a touchdown or by kicking a field goal.

The team that doesn't possess the ball is called the defense. The job of the defense is to stop the offense from moving the ball or to take possession of it by creating a turnover. A defense can score by creating a turnover and running the football to an opponent's end zone, or by pushing a team backward into its own end zone to score a safety.

After a team scores, they kick the ball to the opposing team, who then takes possession and the process begins all over again. This process of moving the football up and down the field, and either scoring or turning the ball over, repeats until time runs out. Whichever team has scored the most point when time runs out wins the game.

There's a lot more detail and nuance to the game of football, but at its core, it's the same as most team sports — two teams vying to score the most points before time runs out.

Differences Between ELF™ and “Real” Football

What follows is a short description of the few key differences between football and ELF, so read on even if you know how to play football. The specific rules for each of these can be found a bit later in the official rules section.

Differences Between ELF™ and “Real” Football — Continued



Magic

In ELF there are spells and magic items designed to have a strategic affect on the game. A team's coach has a magic power rating that determines the extent to which a team can use magic, but magic definitely plays a sizable role in the outcome of any game of ELF.

Five on Five

Real football has eleven players on offense versus eleven players on defense. To simplify things, the ELF™ Competition Committee reduced the number to five offensive players versus five defensive players.

Plays

Instead of the myriad formations, play designs, and playbooks available in real football, ELF simplifies to three types of running plays and three types of passing plays.

Kicking Game

In a brutal fantasy world, it's hard to image a kicker who misses a game-winning field goal getting out of a stadium without at least a few missing body parts or worse. As such, the ELF Competition Committee categorically removed kickers and punters from the game and formalized new rules regarding kickoffs, punts, and field goals.

Game Clock

Translating a timed football game to tabletop required a different game mechanic to capture the nuance of how a game clock is strategically used in football. The game clock has 90 “ticks” that count down with each play. The offense controls the clock and how many ticks each play takes, choosing from between 1, 2, or 3 ticks. Instead of a two-minute warning, Madden's Warning was instituted to by the ELF Competition Committee to provide an automatic slow-down in the game near the end of each half.

Penalties

While in real football penalties are called based on player wrong-doing, in ELF, penalties are a strategic element employed by each team at their discretion.

Timeouts

In ELF, timeouts are used by the defense to slow the clock, but also can be used by either team to swap out cards from a team's hand.

Ties & Sudden Death

ELF uses a different approach to resolving ties and managing overtime situations.



The Traghus Orcs built their field within the confines of the Dreadhold. It's the loudest, most raucous stadium across the league and one that attracts only the bravest of Lightside Alliance™ fans.

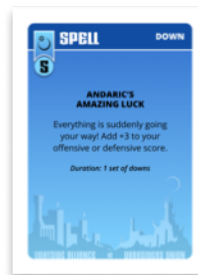
GAME COMPONENTS



56 team cards

4 team decks of ...

- 12 player cards
- 1 coach card
- 1 team card



45 magic deck cards

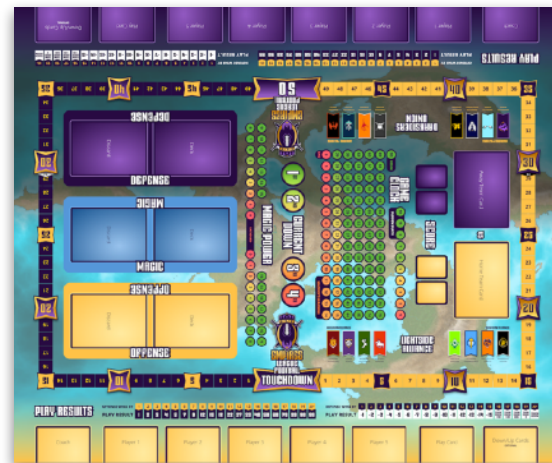


6 timeout cards



84 offensive deck cards

- 70 offensive plays
- 6 audibles
- 3 penalties
- 3 bluffs
- 2 injuries



1 game board



84 defensive deck cards

- 70 defensive plays
- 3 audibles
- 3 penalties
- 3 bluffs
- 3 turnovers
- 2 injuries

game pieces and tiles ...

- 1 ELF™ Coin of the Empire
- 1 Lightside Alliance™ ball marker
- 1 Darksiders Union™ ball marker
- 1 Lightside Alliance™ magic power marker
- 1 Darksiders Union™ magic power marker
- 1 1st down marker
- 1 current down marker
- 1 time marker
- 40 score tiles

Types of Cards



Game Board & Gameplay Area



timeout 3

timeout 2

timeout 1

bench player 7

bench player 6

bench player 5

bench player 4

bench player 3

bench player 2

bench player 1

away team magic power

current down

game clock end

game clock begin

score tile area to show the team scores

card area for the away team

field goal indicator

away team card

sudden death game clock

home team card

home team magic power

endzone / touchdown

defensive deck

field goal indicator

magic deck

field of play track

offensive deck

play results chart

home team coach card

player cards for those players active for the current play

the play card used for the current play

any down or up cards used for the current play

bench player 1

bench player 2

bench player 3

bench player 4

bench player 5

bench player 6

bench player 7

timeout 1

timeout 2

timeout 3

GAMEPLAY



Official Rules vs Your Rules

ELF™ is meant to be fun. And since “fun” means different things to different people, there is some flexibility to the rules. Throughout this rulebook, you’ll find variants and suggestions on changing up the game play. These will be clearly called out and/or labeled as ‘variants’, ‘optional’, or ‘suggestions’. When it comes to these rules, use what you and your friends like and make them your rules. Or, come up with your own rules.

That said, this game is equally — or even more — fun as a tournament-style game or played out over a season. And so all players can count on the same rules during tournaments, assume all rules in this book not called out as ‘variants’, ‘optional’, or ‘suggestions’ are, in fact, official tournament rules.

Gameplay Summary

- A game involves two teams vying to score the most points before time runs out in the game
- One team is the home team, the other team is the visiting team
- Each team includes:
 - a coach (*also responsible for magic use*)
 - 5 starting or active players — the players on the field
 - 7 bench players — they can be substituted for the starters at the end of any play, or in certain cases during a play
- A team’s players execute plays on both offense and defense
- The goal for the offensive team — the team that controls the football — is to score points
- The goal for the defensive team is to keep the offense from scoring points and to try to regain possession of the ball
- On offense, a team consists of:
 - 1 QB
 - at least one OL
 - any combination of player positions for the remaining three players as dictated by the active the play card
- On defense, a team consists of:
 - 1 LB
 - at least one DL
 - any combination of player positions for the remaining three players as dictated by the active play card
- Each team has a hand of 18 cards:
 - a minimum of five cards must be offensive plays
 - a minimum of five cards must be defensive plays
 - a maximum of four magic cards are allowed
 - the remaining cards may be shared in any combination of offensive or defensive cards, including plays
- There are two halves to a game — the first half and the second half
- A half lasts 90 ticks of the game clock
- The game ends on the last tick of the game clock in the second half
- The goal is to score the most points before the end of the game
- Points are scored via several methods, but outside of magical means, points are scored primarily by the offensive team executing plays in succession until they either kick a field goal or score a touchdown
- The defense can stop the offense by creating a turnover or, more typically, by keeping them from gaining a first down and forcing them to punt the ball

Setting Up a Game

- Layout the game board, placing the time marker at '90', the down marker on '1st', and set each team's score tiles to '00'; reserve all other markers until later
- Unless determined by some other means (*i.e., a tournament bracket, league schedule, playing at someone's house, etc.*), determine the home team by flipping the Coin of the Empire; the winner of the coin flip is the home team
 - If an Alliance vs Union game, the Lightside Alliance takes the Lightside Alliance ball marker and defends the gold or light end of the field, with the Darksider's Union getting the Darksider's Union ball marker and defending the purple or dark end of the field
 - Alternatively, if an Alliance vs Alliance or a Union vs Union game, the home team chooses their preferred ball marker and the end of the field they wish to defend, with the visiting team automatically getting the other marker and defending the other end of the field
- If not already separated, separate out all team cards, plus the six timeout cards
 - The home team gets to select their team of choice first, followed by the visiting team
 - Each team also gets three timeout cards
 - Each team places their team card on the game board in the appropriate 'Away Team Card' or 'Home Team Card' slot
 - Each team places their coach card on the game board in the 'Coach' slot
 - Each team's players all begin as bench players and are set off to one side along with the team's three time out cards
 - Place each magic power marker at the appropriate location for each team's coach as stated on their card
- Separate all remaining cards into their appropriate decks and shuffle them. Decks include:
 - Offensive Deck - all cards in this deck have a gold band at the top and the letters 'OFF' in the top-left corner
 - Defensive Deck - all cards in this deck have a purple band at the top and the letters 'DEF' in the top-left corner
 - Magic Deck - all cards in this deck have a blue band at the top and the magic symbol (*a moon and star*) in the top-left corner
- Shuffle the offensive, defensive, and magic decks and place on the game board
- In order of visiting team, then home team, each team draws a card from one of the three main decks until both teams have 8 offensive cards, 8 defensive cards, and 3 magic cards
- Keep in mind that of the 8 offensive cards, 5 must be offensive plays, and the same goes for the 8 defensive cards — 5 must be defensive plays; each team must discard and redraw until they have 5 offensive plays and 5 defensive plays in their hand of 18 cards
- Each team then discards one of their magic cards face up in the magic discard pile, so that each team starts with a total of 18 cards in their hand of cards

Starting a Game

- Toss the Coin of the Empire, with the visiting team calling "light" or "dark"
- Whoever wins the coin toss, chooses to start with the ball in the first half or the second half
- There are no kickers, so whichever team starts on offense starts from their own 20 yard line
- Place the offensive ball marker on their 20 yard line
 - The home team begins on the gold or light 20 yard line
 - The away team begins on the purple or dark 20 yard line
- Place the 1st down marker 10 yards up field at the 30 yard line
- The game is now ready to begin



EASTERN ALLIANCE



FARENHIL
RANGERS™



KRONDAG
HAMMERLINGS™



GRUNZELPUB
STOUTS™



AINSBRIDGE
LEGION™

WESTERN ALLIANCE



NORDHAL
DEFENDERS™



ILDAEN
KINGS™



BREELING
LIGHTFOOTS™



WESTGATE
LANCERS™

Order of Play

1 Select an Offensive Play

The offense selects a play from their hand without revealing it to the opposing player and places it face-down on the game board in the 'Play Card' slot.

- The play determines which five positional players (*QB, RB, OL, TE, and WR*) are used
- Select which players fill the five positions and place them face-up on the game board
- The remaining offensive players are kept on the bench off to the side of the game board
- The offensive team then announces their team run score and team pass score (*including any coach or magical bonuses*) to their opponent

2 Select an Defensive Play

The defense reviews the offensive formation, selecting a counter play from their hand without revealing it and places it face-down on the game board in the 'Play Card' slot.

- The selected play determines which three positional players (*DL, LB, and DB*) are to be used
- Select which players fill the five positions and place them face-up on the game board
- The remaining defensive players are kept on the bench off to the side of the game board
- The defensive team then announces their team run score and team pass score (*including any coach or magical bonuses*)

3 Play Down Cards — optional

Each team may play a down card, placing it face-down on the game board in their 'Down/Up Cards' slot.

- Down cards grant an advantage to a team or disadvantage to the opponent
- Down cards are revealed later in the Order of Play during step 7
- Only one down card is allowed per team, per play
- Teams cannot place a down card after this step

4 Reveal Plays

Each team simultaneously reveals their play cards, with the offensive team announcing the kind of play (*run or pass*) and the type of play. The defensive team follows, announcing the kind of play and type of play.

5 Determine Play Modifiers

Teams compare their plays to see if the offense or defense gets an advantage based on how the plays match up. Use the following to determine which team, if any, gets a modifier to their offensive or defensive score ...

Defense fails to call the correct kind of play ...

+2
Offense

Defense correctly calls the kind of play, but not the play type ...

no bonus to either team

Defense correctly calls **BOTH** the kind of play and the play type ...

+4
Defense

In football, the success of a play is affected by how well the defensive play call matches up against the offensive play call. For example, if the offense calls a play to run up the middle, and the defense calls a play to defend a run up the middle, then the defense has a greatly increased chance of defending that play.



HIGHLAND FACTIONS



DREADHOLD
WARGS™



EREWHYTE
HORDE™



ANAERYON
NIGHTWINGS™



DÜRZÂHD
DRAGONS™

LOWLAND FACTIONS



DARKVALE
RAIDERS™



BLOODMOOR
GORGERS™



STORMTIDE
TRITONS™



REAGERRE
WRATH™

Order of Play — Continued



6 Play Up Cards — optional

Each team may play an up card, placing it face-up on the game board in their 'Down/Up Cards' slot, on top of any existing down card. Up cards generally affect the beginning or action of a play and grant an advantage to a team or disadvantage to the opponent, or allow a team to change its play.

- Only one up card is allowed per team, per play, but they do not have to be revealed at the same time — a team may play an up card in response to an opponent's up card
- If any up cards are played, execute their instructions immediately, resolving the first card played first, followed by the second card

7 Resolve the Play

Each team adds up their total offensive or defensive scores based on the play, the players involved, and any modifiers (*play call modifiers, up cards, coach special abilities, or previous magic cards that remain in effect*). Compare offensive and defensive scores and consult the Play Results chart (*also on the game board*) ...

OFFENSE WINS BY

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20+
1	2	3	4	5	7	9	12	15	18	22	27	33	40	50	60	70	80	90	99

DEFENSE WINS BY

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20+
-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8	-9	-10	-11	-12	-13	-14	-15	TURN OVER +40	TURN OVER +20	TURN OVER LOS	TURN OVER -5	TOUCH DOWN

However, do not move anything on the board yet until step 9 in the Order of Play.

8 Reveal Down Cards

Any down cards are revealed by their respective teams — simultaneously if both teams have played a down card. Down cards generally affect individual players or the results of a play, and grant an advantage to a team or disadvantage to the opponent, or may change the nature of a play altogether.

Resolve down cards according to their instructions and as follows:

- If only one team plays a penalty as a down card, resolve the other down card first, and then follow the instructions on the penalty
- If both teams play a penalty down card, the penalties offset, canceling each other out
 - Discard all cards
 - If an up card was played with a magical duration effect, this play counts against the duration, but the magic remains in effect

Anytime Cards and Special Cards

There are cards with unique rules for when they are played. Anytime cards can literally be played anytime a team chooses. Special cards have distinct rules for when they can be played and are not restricted as up or down cards. With either card, follow the unique instructions on the card.

Order of Play — Continued



9 Recording Play Effects

- Discard all play cards, up cards, and down cards not already discarded
- Move the game clock marker (1-3 ticks according to the offense's discretion unless otherwise covered in the rules)
- Update the current down marker
- If necessary, move the ball marker
- If necessary, move the first down marker
- If necessary, move the magic power marker for each coach
- Update any scoring changes

10 Re-up Player's Hands

- Players draw one card for each card discarded, except magic cards
- No cards are drawn to replace discarded magic cards — magic cards can only be drawn at specific times

Repeating the Order of Play

The Order of Play accounts for about 90% of the action in ELF™ — it's the engine that drives the game and the rules that determine how teams move down the field towards their goal of scoring points. Each time the offensive team takes control of the ball, the Order of Play continues to be executed until one of the following five outcomes occur:

1. Punt
2. Turnover
3. Field Goal
4. Touchdown
5. Safety

Each of these will be discussed further on, but let's first look at how to move the ball using the Order of Play.

Downs & First Downs

As mentioned previously, scoring points is how a team wins. Points are scored primarily by the offensive team successfully executing plays in succession until they either kick a field goal or score a touchdown. But while scoring points is the main goal of the offense in football, there are mini-goals that help a team advance toward their main goal along the way. These mini-goals are called first downs. When a team takes possession of the ball, it places its team ball marker at the spot of possession (*their own 20 yard line to start the game*) and it places the first down marker 10 yards down field toward their goal (*at their 30 yard line to start the game*). The team is then allowed four downs — or chances — to advance the ball 10 yards. If the offense is successful at executing plays that gain a total 10 or more yards within those four downs, they are granted a new set of four downs to continue their progress toward the opponents goal line. This act of achieving the 10 yard mini-goal is called "gaining a first down", or more simply "First down!".

Five on Five

If an offensive team gets to fourth down and has not gained the 10 yards necessary for a new first down, they have an option to either "go for it" — by executing another play and gaining enough yards for the first down — or they may choose to punt the ball. "Going for it" is risky because, if the offense does not gain a first down during their fourth down play, they automatically turn the ball over to the other team at its location when the play ends.

• A Bit of Strategy

Going for it is a judgement call based on how much time is left in the game, if a team is winning or losing, and where the team is at on the field. As a general rule of thumb, a team shouldn't go for it if they are in their own half of the field or if they are winning. A team should go for it if they are losing and time is running out to score, or if they are in the opponents side of the field, but not yet in scoring range (see *hereafter*), or if they are in scoring range but need a touchdown to win or tie and time is running out in the game.

Repeating the Order of Play — Continued



Getting Into Scoring Range

Another mini-goal of along the way to scoring points is “getting into scoring range”. This is simply getting the ball within the opponent’s 30 yard line. Anywhere in this area of the field is called “scoring range” because a team is almost sure to score points — either by declaring a field goal or by eventually scoring a touchdown. The only way to stop a team from scoring once they have moved into scoring range is to get a turnover or move them back out of scoring range with a loss on a play.

Shortening the Field or Limiting Offensive Play Selection

As an offensive team marches down the field, getting closer and closer to the opponent’s end zone, the usable portion of field gets shorter and shorter. While this is a good thing since the offense is closer to scoring, it also makes it more difficult on the offense because it limits the play selections available to them. As the field shortens, the following rules come into play:

- When at or inside the 20 yard line, the offense can no longer use deep pass plays
- When at or inside the 10 yard line, the offense can no longer use mid-range pass plays
- If the offensive team only has deep or mid-range passes in their hand, they may discard a play card and draw a replacement until they draw a play card that is eligible to be used

The reason for this is that there’s simply not enough field to run these longer plays. This makes it easier for the defense to guess the kind of play the offense will run, giving them an advantage as the field shortens.

Rules Variant

This rule is meant to add realism to the game, but to simplify your gaming experience, you can ignore limiting the offensive play selection inside the 20 yard line.

Actions Outside the Order of Play

Punts

Often, instead of going for it, teams choose to punt the ball on fourth down. A punt is a play where a player kicks the ball down field to push the opponent further back toward their own end zone, thus making it a much further distance to get into scoring range. Punts are a strategic tool teams use when going for it is too risky and turning the ball over at its current location would give their opponent a short distance to go and increase their chance of scoring.

Use the following rules to govern punts:

- Declaring a punt counts as a discrete play, meaning a team must have a down available in order to punt the ball
- When a punt is declared, the offense places the football marker 40 yards in the direction of the opponent’s end zone from its current position, and places the first down marker 10 yards up field to mark the new first down
- If the 40 yard punt would place the ball in or past the opponent’s end zone, the ball is automatically placed at the opponent’s 20 yard line, with the first down marker placed at their 30 yard line
- The defensive team then takes possession of the ball and is now on offense — with a new set of 4 downs to gain 10 yards, and restarting the Order of Play
- Since declaring a punt counts as a discrete play, a punt also counts one play against any magic card’s duration effect



Actions Outside the Order of Play — Continued

Turnovers

A turnover occurs when either the defense has a very high score on the Play Results chart, or when a spell has a specific effect that creates a turnover. When a turnover occurs, the defense takes possession of the ball and is now on offense — with a new set of 4 downs to gain 10 yards, and restarting the Order of Play. The specific location on the field where the turnover occurs is either determined by the information on the play card that calls for a turnover, or on the Play Results chart.

Use the following rules when the turnover occurs on the Play Results chart:

- Turnover +40 = the turnover occurs 40 yards downfield toward the defense's end zone
- Turnover +20 = the turnover occurs 20 yards downfield toward the defense's end zone
- Turnover LOS = the turnover occurs at the current play's line of scrimmage
- Turnover -5 = the turnover occurs 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage
- If the added distance on a turnover would place the ball into the defense's end zone, the ball is automatically placed at the defense's 20 yard line
- If the distance behind the line of scrimmage on a turnover would place the ball into the offense's end zone, the defense automatically scores a touchdown (*see Touchdowns this page*)

Field Goals

A field goal is a scoring opportunity that can be declared by the offensive team anytime their ball marker is inside the opponent's 30 yard line. Use the following rules to govern field goals:

- Declaring a field goal counts as a discrete play, meaning a team must have a down available in order to declare a field goal
- If a team uses 4th down to "get into field goal territory", yet does not gain a first down, then they cannot declare a field goal since they are out of downs
- A field goal also counts one play against any magic card's duration effect
- After declaring a field goal, the offensive team may select one of three options:
 - *option 1* — claim an automatic three points, adding it to their team's score
 - *option 2* — if the player does not have any magic cards, draw two magic cards, adding one to their hand and discarding the other
 - *option 3* — if the player does have one or more magic cards in their hand, they may draw a new magic card and, either add it to their hand and discard an existing magic card, or they may discard the drawn card

Touchdowns

An offensive touchdown happens when the offensive team gains enough yards at the conclusion of a play to cross the opponent's goal line into the end zone, or the area marked on the game board as "Touchdown". A defensive touchdown happens when the result of a play shows a turnover returned for a touchdown. In either case, the team that scored the touchdown takes the following two actions:

1. Add six points to their team's score
2. Select one of three additional options:
 - *option 1* — claim an extra point: the team receives an additional point, adding it to their team's score
 - *option 2* — try a two-point conversion: the team attempts a two-point conversion, which is a high risk/reward venture (*see Two-Point Conversions page 17*)
 - *option 3* — draw a card from the magic deck and discard a card from their hand: remember to keep at least 5 offensive and 5 defensive plays and no more than four magic cards



Actions Outside the Order of Play — Continued

Two-Point Conversions

The two-point conversion, or “going for two”, can turn the fortunes of the game, especially at a well-timed moment. But it’s a risky play since you can walk away with no points at all. To execute a two-point conversion, use the following rules:

- Place the team’s ball marker at the opponent’s 3 yard line
- Use the Order of Play to execute a single play:
 - The team trying for the two-point conversion cannot use deep or mid-range passes as their play selection as there is not enough field to execute those plays
 - If that team only has deep or mid-range passes available in their hand, they may discard a play and draw a new play — one at a time — until they’ve drawn any running play or a short pass
 - If the team trying for the two-point conversion plays a penalty that would normally move the ball two or more yards forward, the ball is instead moved 1 yard forward — or half the distance to the goal — and a second play is allowed
 - If magic cards are played that would move the ball more than 12 yards forward (*equal to the 2 yard line plus the 10-yard depth of the end zone*), the two point conversion fails as the ball cannot go beyond the far edge of the end zone
 - If the play successfully gains two or more yards, the offensive team earns two points, adding it to their score
 - If the play fails and the team does not gain two or more yards, the team only gets the original six points for the touchdown and the game board is reset (*see **Resetting the Game Board After Scoring Points** this page*)

Keeping the Game Competitive

The team that didn’t score the touchdown automatically draws two magic cards, adding one to their hand, discarding the other, and then discarding a card from their hand — remember to always keep at least 5 offensive and 5 defensive plays. The ELF™ Competition Committee felt this would keep games closer and more competitive throughout the game.

Safeties

A safety is scored when the defensive team drives the offensive team backwards into their own end zone (*the area marked Touchdown*). When this happens, the defensive team takes the following actions:

- Add two points to their team’s score
- Unlike any other scoring event, the defensive team keeps possession of the ball
- Set their ball marker at their own 30 yard line
- Set the first down marker at their 40 yard line
- Set the current down marker to 1st down
- Restart the Order of Play

Resetting the Game Board After Scoring Points

After any scoring event — except safeties (*see **Safeties** this page*) — the opposing team takes over on offense and takes the following actions:

- Place the ball marker at their own 20 yard line
- Set the first down marker at their 30 yard line
- Set the current down marker to 1st down
- Restart the Order of Play to continue the game as long as time remains on the game clock

Rules Variant

If you don’t care about keeping the game competitive and want to beat the snot out of your opponent, ignore the *Keeping the Game Competitive* rule.



Time and the Game Clock

A game of ELF™ is broken into two halves. Each half lasts 90 ticks of the game clock. Each half begins with the time marker being placed on the circle marked '90'. For each play, the time on the game clock ticks down from its current position by moving the time marker, counting down from 90 to 0.

The offensive team controls the game clock by choosing how long each play takes — selecting to count-down either 1, 2, or 3 ticks off the game clock at the end of each play. However, there are two situations in which the offense does not get to choose the amount of time a play takes:

- If either team plays a timeout at the end of a play, that play automatically takes 1 tick off the game clock
- During Madden's Warning, all plays of any type automatically take 1 tick off the game clock

Timeouts

Each team has three timeouts to use during each half of the game, and one timeout added if a game goes into overtime. Timeouts are anytime cards that can be used at a team's discretion. Timeouts perform two functions:

- Either team can call a timeout to force the play takes only one tick off the clock
- When played either on offense or defense, a timeout allows the team who played the timeout to discard and redraw up to three offensive or defensive cards, or one magic card

While not a part of the clock, timeouts are a strategic tool for teams to use. Where possible, save your timeouts for the later stages of the half to let your team slow down the clock. That extra time can be useful on either offense or defense.

Madden's Warning

Named after a famed football mage, Madden's Warning is an honored tradition of the game signifying that the end of the first half or the end of the game is near. Plays may only take 1 tick off the clock during the four ticks of Madden's Warning.

Strategy and Using the Clock

The game clock presents one of the biggest challenges in football by using it to your team's advantage or doing your best to try and beat it. Think of the clock as a strategic tool. While it's easy to say every play takes 2 ticks of the clock, the best teams know how to use the clock and control it wisely to help their team win. Consider these basic tips:

- The bigger the lead your team has, the more ticks each play should run off the clock, leaving your opponent with less time to catch up
- Conversely, if your team is playing from behind, use only 1 tick for each play to preserve time and catch up to your opponent
- When possible, save timeouts to use toward the end of each half, giving your team the flexibility to slow down the clock if needed — either on offense to have more time to score, or on defense to have more chances to stop the opponent and get the ball back

Halftime

Once the game clock reaches 0 during the first half, it's time for "halftime". Halftime is traditionally a break teams take to rest and rejuvenate, to discuss the game and the game plan for the second half, and to motivate themselves to either continue their good play or overcome their bad play. For your gaming purposes, halftime is a great time for a break in the tension of an exciting or stressful game. There are no specific rules for halftime, however there are specific rules for the second half game set up (see *Second Half Set Up* page 19).

Rules Variant

If you're pressed for time and want to play a quicker game, start each half at the 60 mark on the game clock, or some other mark of your choosing.

Rules Variant

If you want a simple game without the game clock rules, just have every play count two ticks off the game clock — with timeouts and Madden's Warning being the only ways for plays to take 1 tick off the clock. Or, simply play to a set score (e.g., *the first team to score 40 or more points wins*).



Second Half Set Up

Take the following actions to set up the game for the second half:

- Each team turns in all offensive, defensive, and magic cards
- Reshuffle the offensive, defensive, and magic decks and place on the game board
- Each team resets any of their used timeouts
- Reset the game board:
 - Place the time marker at '90'
 - Place the down marker on '1st'
 - Place each magic power marker at the appropriate location for each team's coach as stated on their card
- The ball is then given to the team that started the game on defense, with their marker placed at their 20 yard line to begin offensive play
- In order of visiting team, then home team, each team draws a card from one of the three main decks until both teams have 8 offensive cards, 8 defensive cards, and 3 magic cards
- Each team then discards one of their magic cards face up in the magic discard pile, so that each team has a total of 18 cards in their hand
- Second-half play now begins with the offensive team executing the Order of Play
- Keeping the Game Competitive

Ending & Winning the Game

The game ends when there are no more ticks left on the second half game clock AND one team has scored more points than the other. In this case, the team with the most points wins.

Ties and Sudden Death

If the game ends in a tie — meaning both teams have the same score when there are no more ticks on the game clock — then the game goes to “sudden death”. Sudden death gives each team a sequence of up to 10 plays to score either a field goal or a touchdown from the 50 yard line. Sudden death starts with the visiting team on offense first, then after the visiting team has either scored or exhausted their 10 plays without scoring, the home team gets their 10 plays to score from the 50 yard line. This process of the visiting team and then the home team getting 10 plays to score from the 50 yard line repeats until one team has scored more points at the end of the home team's sudden death sequence.

Sudden Death Set Up

- Each team turns in all offensive, defensive, and magic cards
- Reshuffle the offensive, defensive, and magic decks and place on the game board
- Each team is granted one timeout to use throughout the Sudden Death period
- Reset the game board:
 - Place the time marker at '10' on the sudden death track of the game clock
 - Remove the down marker — it is not used during sudden death
 - Place each magic power marker at the appropriate location for each team's coach as stated on their card
- Each team draws three magic cards and discards two — this is the only magic card the team will have access to throughout the sudden death period
- Each coach renews half of their expended magical energy at the end of the second half, rounded down
- Place the visiting team's ball marker at the 50 yard line — the visiting team always starts on offense in sudden death
- The visiting team draws five offensive cards, discarding and drawing until they have at least 3 offensive play cards
- The home team draws five defensive cards, discarding and drawing until they have at least 3 defensive play cards

Ending and Winning the Game — Continued



How to Play Sudden Death

Throughout a sudden death sequence, play follows the standard Order of Play for steps 1 through 8, but changes on steps 9 and 10.

Changes to Step 9 — *Record Play Effects*

- Decrement (or move down) the time marker by one position on the sudden death track of the game clock
- If necessary, move the ball marker
- If necessary, move the magic power marker for each coach
- Update any scoring changes

Changes to Step 10 — *Discard Cards and Re-up Player's Hands*

- After each play, each team may optionally keep any one unused card from their hand, but discards all other cards — the kept card is in addition to an unused magic card
- The team on offense draws five offensive cards, discarding and drawing until they have at least 3 offensive play cards
- The team on defense draws five defensive cards, discarding and drawing until they have at least 3 defensive play cards
- A used magic card is not replaced — magic cards can no longer be drawn

Scoring During Sudden Death

When a team scores during sudden death, they may choose the same post-scoring options as during the regular game except they cannot draw additional magic cards. This means a team must take 3 points when declaring a field goal and either may take an extra point or play for two after scoring a touchdown. Taking an extra point or going for two does not require any plays to be left on the sudden death track of the game clock. However, declaring a field goal does require a play — a team cannot use their last play to get into field goal territory, they must already be in field goal territory and then use their last play to declare the field goal.

Magic and Sudden Death

Magic use remains the same during sudden death (see *Magic page 21*), however the only way to get magic is at the beginning of sudden death play. It's important to keep in mind whether a team will be playing on offense or defense when selecting an appropriate magic card from the three drawn options. Regarding magical energy, each coach renews half of their expended magical energy, rounded down at the beginning of sudden death. So, if a coach has used 9 magical energy points during the second half and the game goes to sudden death, the coach renews half of those expended points, adding 4 points (*half of 9 or 4.5 points, rounded down*) to their magical energy score to start sudden death.

Ending Sudden Death with a Winner

As mentioned previously, sudden death allows each team an opportunity to score, and always with the visiting team getting the first chance and the home team getting the last chance. If the visiting team scores a touchdown on the 3rd play of their sudden death sequence, the home team gets the ball at the 50 yard line and gets their full, 10-play sequence to score. Scores are only checked at the conclusion of the home team's sequence. This process of a visiting team sudden death sequence, followed by a home team sudden death sequence, followed by comparing scores, continues until one team has more points than the other and is declared the game's winner.

Rules Variant

Instead of using the sudden death rules to resolve ties, follow the standard game play and set up a new half of 90 ticks on the game clock. Flip the coin of the realm to see who goes first. The first team to score wins. This is how real football used to resolve ties. It's a potentially quicker way to end the game, but it often is based on luck because whomever wins the coin toss has a greater chance of winning the game.

MAGIC



Magic plays in critical role in Empires Football League and can quickly change momentum or fortunes — bringing a completely new dynamic to the traditional game of football.

The Coach / Mage

Each teams' coach is a mage of varying skill, whose role it is to use magic to support the team by casting spells and empowering magic items — but only per the allowable rules of ELF™.

ELF™ Rules of Magic

At the beginning of each half, one player shuffles all magic cards in the magic deck and places the shuffled deck on the appropriate game board location. A team may draw items from the magic deck according to the following rules:

- At the start of each half, the visiting team draws three cards from the magic deck and may select two of the three cards to add to their hand. The third card is sent to the magic discard pile. Then the home team does the same.
- When a team scores a touchdown, it may choose either to add an extra point to their score or draw a card from the magic deck.
- When an opposing team scores a touchdown, the defensive team automatically draws two cards from the magic deck (*the ELF™ Competition Committee felt this would keep games closer and more competitive throughout the game*).
- When in field goal territory (*inside the opponent's 30 yard line*), the offensive team may declare a field goal, but forego the three points — choosing instead to draw two magic cards, adding one to their hand and discarding the other, or they may discard one of their existing magic cards and draw a new one.
- No more than four magic cards can ever be in a player's hand at any time; if after drawing magic cards, a player has more than four magic cards, they must discard a number of magic cards to get down to four cards

Rules Variant

Each team draws one magic card at the change of possession. Magic cards may still be gained instead of field goals and extra points.

Magical Energy

There is always a cost to using magic and there is no difference with ELF. Each teams' coach has a magic power rating — this reflects both the limit of their magical power and the pool of magical energy they can draw on to cast spells and activate magic items during each half of the game. Each magical spell or magic item also has a power rating — this reflects the amount of magical energy required to cast the spell or to activate the magic item. During each half or in sudden death, a coach cannot cast spells or activate magic items that require more magical energy than they have available.

Magic Items

Magic items include potions and equipment usable by a team's players and coach. If a coach has the energy required to activate the item, place the card as a down card next to the play card during a turn. If the play gets executed and the opponent doesn't play a card that interferes with activating or using the magic item, the item is activated and the card may be used on that play. If the magic item also has a duration, that duration begins during the play in which the item is activated.

Magic — Continued

Spells

Spells are to be used according to their description. Each spell has a power indicator, which is used to determine how much magical energy a mage must consume before the spell can be cast. Some spells have a duration and last for a number of plays.

Magical Exhaustion

Once a coach reduces their magical energy to zero, they lose their special coaching ability due to fatigue. If a coach is fatigued in the first half, they rest at halftime and begin the second half with full magical energy. If a coach is fatigued in the second half, they do not regain their magical energy, unless the game goes into sudden death. If a game goes into sudden death, a coach renews half of their expended magical energy rounded down. So, if a coach has used 9 magical energy points during the second half and the game goes to sudden death, the coach renews half of those expended points, adding 4 points (*half of 9 or 4.5 points, rounded down*) to their magical energy score to start sudden death.

TIME TO GO PLAY!

Okay. Now you know everything you need to know to get started. So, go have some fun! Find a friend, pick your team, set up the game, and get to playing. That's the best way to learn anyway. And good luck! May **Andaric's Amazing Luck** be with you!



THE BASICS

ELF™ involves two teams vying to score the most points before time runs out in the game. There are two halves to a game — each half lasting 90 ticks of the game clock. The team with the most points at the end of the second half wins!

SETTING UP THE GAME

Layout the game board, placing the time marker at '90', the down marker on '1st', and set each team's score tiles at '00'; reserve all other markers until later

Unless determined by some other means (*i.e., a tournament bracket, league schedule, etc.*), determine the home team by flipping the Coin of the Empire; the winner of the flip is the home team

Separate out all team cards, plus the six timeout cards

The home team selects a team to play, followed by the visiting team

Give each team three timeout cards

Both teams place their team and coach cards on the game board; players all begin as bench players and are set off to one side along with the team's three time out cards, each turned face-up

Place each magic power marker at the appropriate location based on the power ranking of each coach

Separate all remaining cards into their appropriate decks, shuffle them, and place on the game board. Decks include:

Offensive Deck - all cards in this deck have a purple band at the top

Defensive Deck - all cards in this deck have a gold band at the top

Magic Deck - all cards in this deck have a blue band at the top

In order of visiting team, then home team, each team draws a card from one of the three main decks until each team has 8 offensive cards, 8 defensive cards, and 3 magic cards

Each team then discards one of their magic cards face up in the magic discard pile, so that each team's hand has a total of 18 cards

STARTING THE GAME

- Toss the Coin of the Empire, with the visiting team calling "light" or "dark"
- Whoever wins the coin toss, chooses to either start with the ball in the first half or let the opponent start with the ball in the first half — the opposing team then starts with the ball in the second half
- There are no kickers, so whichever team starts on offense starts from their own 20 yard line
- Place their ball marker on the 20 yard line
- Place the 1st down marker 10 yards up field at their own 30 yard line
- The game is now ready to begin

THE ORDER OF PLAY

1 Set offense and place play: The offense selects a play from their hand and sets their formation based on the play card, placing the play card face down when finished

- They place 5 players face up on the game board
- The remaining offensive players are kept on the bench off to the side of the game board
- They announce their team run score and team pass score (including any coach bonuses)

2 Set defense and place play: The defense reviews the offensive formation, selects a defensive play, and sets their defensive formation based on the play card, placing the play card face down

- They place 5 players face up on the game board
- The remaining defensive players are kept on the bench off to the side of the game board
- They announce their team run score and team pass score (including any coach bonuses)

3 Play down cards (optional)

- The offense may place any down card from their hand face down on top of their offensive play
- The defense may place any down card from their hand face down on top of their defensive play
- Only one down card is allowed per team, per play
- Teams cannot place any down cards after this step

4 Reveal plays

Each team simultaneously reveals their play cards, with the offensive team announcing the kind of play (run or pass) and the type of play. The defensive team follows and announces the same.

5 Determine play modifiers

- Defense chooses the wrong kind of play = offense gains a +2 bonus to their play score
- Defense chooses the correct kind of play, but NOT the correct play type = no bonuses for either team
- Defense chooses the correct kind AND type of play = defense gains a +4 bonus to their play score

6 Play up cards (optional)

- Each team may play and up card
- Place up cards face-up on the board and execute their instructions immediately, resolving the offense's card first, then the defense's card

7 Resolve the play

Each team adds up their total offensive or defensive scores based on the play, the players involved, and any modifiers (*play call modifiers, up cards, coach special abilities, or previous magic cards that remain in effect*). Compare offensive and defensive scores and consult the Play Results chart ... see the game board. **However, do not move anything on the board yet until step 9 in the Order of Play.**

8 Reveal down cards (skip if none played)

Any down cards are revealed by their respective teams — simultaneously if both teams have played a down card. Down cards generally affect individual players or the results of a play, and grant an advantage to a team or disadvantage to the opponent, or may change the nature of a play altogether.

Resolve down cards according to their instructions and as follows:

- If only one team plays a penalty as a down card, resolve the other down card first, and then follow the instructions on the penalty
- If both teams play a penalty down card, the penalties offset, canceling each other out
 - Discard all cards
 - If an up card was played with a magical duration effect, this play counts against the duration, but the magic remains in effect

9 Record play effects

- Discard all play cards, up cards, and down cards used for the play
- Move the game clock marker (*1-3 ticks according to the offense's discretion or by rule*)
- Update the current down marker
- If necessary, move the football location marker
- If necessary, move the first down marker
- If necessary, move the magic power markers
- Update any scoring changes

10 Re-up player's hands

- Players draw one card of each type of card discarded in the previous play unless the card was a magic card.
- If the card was a magic card, then draw an appropriate offensive or defensive play card to replace the magic card, since magic cards can only be drawn according to the rules of magic