

SIX-MAN FOOTBALL

History

6-man football was developed in 1934 by Chester (Nebraska) High School coach Stephen Epler as an alternative means for small high schools to field a football team during the Great Depression. The first six-man game played in Texas was on September 29, 1936 between Sylvester High School and Dowell High School at the high school football field in Rotan, TX. Sylvester won the game 14-0. In 1938, Prairie Lea High took on Martindale High School in a six-man football game played as a demonstration game to see if the Texas UIL would adopt it as a sanctioned sport, which they did, and by spring of that year about 55 schools were playing the game. This number had doubled by 1939 and at one point in the 1960s there were more than 160 six-man teams in Texas. On October 5, 1940, Windham High School from Windham, Ohio defeated Stamford Collegiate of Niagara Falls, Ontario, 39-1 in the first international six-man football game. Jack Pardee, who played in the 1950s at Christoval High School in Texas is a 6-man player who played and coached in the NFL, Chicago Bear Ed Sprinkle, who played six-man football at Tuscola High School in 1939, is another former Texas High School 6-man player who played in the NFL.

Game Play/Six-man Playing Field.

Six-man is a fast-moving game played on an 80-yard (73 m) long by 40-yard wide (37 m) field (instead of the normal 100-yd (91 m) by 53¹/₃-yd (48.8 m) field used in 11-man football. Furthermore, the game specifies a 15-yard distance (14 m) from the line of scrimmage to gain a first down, instead of the normal 10 yards (9 m).

All six players are eligible to be receivers. On offense, three linemen are required on the line of scrimmage at the start of the play. The person to whom the ball is snapped cannot run the ball past the line of scrimmage; however, if the ball is tossed to another player, that player can run or throw the ball and the person to whom the ball was snapped is still an eligible receiver. All forward passes to the player who snapped the ball (center) must travel at least 1 yard (1 m) in flight.

Scoring

Scoring is the same as in 11-man football, with the exceptions being on the point after touchdown attempt and the field goal. A point-after kick is worth two points, while a conversion made by running or passing the ball is worth one point; this is the opposite of 11-man football. In addition, a field goal is worth 4 points instead of 3. These rule changes were made because of the difficulty of successfully getting a kick off with so few blockers on the line compared to the number of defenders. In both University Interscholastic League and Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools competition, a 45-point "mercy rule" exists to prevent lopsided scoring deficits (no such rule exists in the 11-man game). The game is ended under this rule if a team is losing by 45 or more points at halftime or at any point after. The mercy rule is alluded to in the title of the David Morse film about six-man football, *The Slaughter Rule*.

Six-man Football Today

As of the 2008–2009 alignments from both UIL and TAPPS, the state of Texas has 183 six-man football teams (127 in UIL and 56 in TAPPS); this does not count schools in other leagues such as Texas Christian Athletic League (TCAL) or schools playing "outlaw schedules" (schools whose enrollment is too large to play six-man football in a sanctioned district, but nevertheless continue to organize a team). The number of schools opting for six-man football is expected to increase due to declining population in small West Texas towns, and newer private schools opting for six-man football as less cost is required for equipment.

The state of Florida has 32 teams playing six-man football in the Florida Christian Association of Private and Parochial Schools. FCAPPS comprises small Christian or private schools and at least one home school cooperative. Teams in the conference are as far south as the Keys of Florida to as far north as Jacksonville.

The sport is also played by high schools in Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Wyoming and in parts of Canada.

There are also two adult amateur football leagues: the San Antonio, Texas based Texas Six-man Football Association (TSFA), and the Southeastern Christian Association of Six-man Football (SCASF). The TSFA just finished their 10th season with 13 teams vying for their championship and the SCASF just completed their 5th season with 8 teams. There is also one semi-pro six-man football league in Central Florida.

The A-11 offense, the original version of which is now banned in almost all levels of football, could be seen as an adaptation of the six-man offense to 11-man rules, with its wide-open style and the appearance of every player being eligible.

Basic Rules

Please keep in mind that all states play by varying rules to begin with. Texas is one of the few that plays by NCAA rules, while many others use the NFHS rules as their basis.

UIL/NCAA Rule Exceptions/Basic Six-man Football Variations

1. Field is 40x80 yards vs. 50x100
2. 15 yards for a first down
3. All players are eligible receivers
4. There must be a 'clean exchange' of the football. The quarterback must hand off, pitch or throw the ball before it can cross the line of scrimmage.
5. Field goal is worth 4pts, kicked PAT is 2pts and a run/pass PAT is 1 pt.
6. If at any point after halftime, a team leads by 45 points or more, the game is over.