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# The 32 Rules of Thanksgiving Touch Football

By JASON GAY



Thanksgiving is Thursday and there's no avoiding it—make the drive, eat the turkey, pass the cranberry goo, and try not to say something you regret. If you can survive until dessert without crying at the table or sticking a fork in someone's arm, you're home free—just inhale the pecan pie, hit the couch, and pass out watching the NFL.



New Line/Everett Collection

The rules of touch football could have saved the "Wedding Crashers" from a great deal of pain.

But for the love of Lombardi, go outside and play some Thanksgiving touch football. It's a perfect opportunity for family bonding, or at least calorie-burning. Unless you're in a fraternity or live inside a Tommy Hilfiger commercial, you probably play touch football only once a year, and Thanksgiving is that day.

Here are the official rules of Thanksgiving Family Touch Football:

1. If you have a healthy relationship with your family and speak to them all the time, you're playing touch. If you see your family only once a year, it's tackle.
2. Find a nice patch of grass. It doesn't have to be big. You don't need a regulation 100 yards. Half the people in your family, if they ran 100 yards, they'd wind up in the hospital for a month.
3. The game must be played before dinner. Nobody wants to play football after Thanksgiving. Nobody wants to wear pants after Thanksgiving.
4. All family on the field! Everyone plays. Mom, Dad, Grandpa, Grandma, Cousin Jake, and Regis the one-eyed Jack Russell terrier. Don't laugh. Regis is the best receiver you've got.
5. The following things are prohibited from Thanksgiving touch football: spikes, eye black, sticky gloves, Jets jerseys, running with a martini glass and a lit cigar, Norv Turner.

6. A Nerf ball is okay but you should own a leather football. A leather football is one of the things every home must have, like a dishwasher and a bourbon distillery in the garage.
7. No footballs with wings or propellers or tails or streamers. Here's a good rule: If the football would make Dick Butkus throw up, don't use it.
8. It's two-hand touch. One-hand touch is for lazy people who buy turkey sandwiches out of vending machines.
9. Two completions is a first down. Not as simple as it sounds—just ask the 2011 Indianapolis Colts.
10. No taunting, cursing or back-handed compliments. That's what Thanksgiving dinner is for.
11. Unless you live in California, Hawaii or Florida or some fancy place like that, the ground is probably going to be squishy with cold mud, and someone in your family is going to fall down face-first and ruin his or her Thanksgiving outfit. This is not cause for alarm. This is the highlight of the game.
12. It's okay to play with kids but don't baby them. Just because your 7-year-old niece is playing quarterback doesn't mean you can't intercept her screen pass and run it back for a touchdown. She's got to learn sometime not to throw into triple coverage.
13. The count is five "Mississippi." And it's a full four syllables—not a rushed "MISS-IPPI" and knocking grandpa to the ground.
14. But if you are old enough to have grandchildren, and you sack the quarterback, and do an elaborate sack dance, you will be worshipped forever.
15. Keep the Tebowing to a minimum. The fad is already old.
16. No, you don't get to be "permanent QB." Not if you want anybody to like you.
17. No show-off football lingo. No screaming "trips left" or "zone blitz." Uncle Dale doesn't want to play the "nickel package." He wants to get this stupid game over with, have a vodka and stand in the kitchen eating stuffing with his hands.
18. But there's always one control freak who wants to diagram elaborate plays. Just listen to whatever they say, and forget it immediately.
19. There are only two plays you need for touch football: "Everybody Go Out" and "Everybody Go Deep."
20. No, that running play never works. Ever.
21. Don't throw the ball too hard. This is the mistake a lot of touch football QBs make. They see an opening, and they chuck it 99 mph like John Elway, and peg Aunt Frances in the neck.
22. A little pass interference never hurt anyone. Don't be a wimp.
23. If you throw six interceptions in a row, let someone else play quarterback, or sign with the Washington Redskins.
24. Three-minute halftime. Don't kill the momentum. Anything longer, and aging muscles seize up. Remember: if Daddy sits, Daddy is d-o-n-e.
25. If you're playing on a city street, please don't dent the blue Honda, or I will find you.

26. If you're a random guest at Thanksgiving, it's your job to be good at touch football. Lie and say you "played a little" at Alabama and pray you don't completely embarrass yourself.
27. If you find yourself surrounded by middle-aged men in blue jeans and a quarterback who keeps getting picked off, you're not with your family. You've accidentally walked into a Brett Favre Wrangler spot.
28. Punting is okay, but it's hard. You know that weird fact about how hippopotamuses kill more people than lions or tigers? Well, punts are the hippopotamuses of touch football. Botched punts break more windows and hit more cars than any other play in the game. You can look it up. Be careful.
29. Goes without saying, but if it snows, it's a classic.
30. Take it easy. You don't want any injuries that can't be treated with a bag of frozen peas.
31. If you win your game and stand undefeated, please let LSU know you're available to play in the BCS championship.
32. When you think about it, there's really only one rule for Thanksgiving touch football: Take your shoes off before going in the house, or Mom is going to kill you.

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