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American Football 101: A Beginner's Introduction to the Game



American football is an exciting and popular sport in the United States, known for its intense gameplay and strategic maneuvers. Whether you're new to the sport or just want to learn more, this introduction to American football will help you understand the basics and enjoy the game even more.

American Football Basics

American football is played on a rectangular field, 100 yards long and 160 feet wide, with end zones at each end. The objective of the game is to score points by advancing the ball into the opponent's end zone or kicking it through their goalposts.

The game is divided into four quarters, each lasting 15 minutes (in professional play). The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

The Teams

Each team has 11 players on the field at a time. There are typically three units within a team: offense, defense, and special teams.

- **Offense:** The offensive team is responsible for moving the ball down the field and scoring points. Key players include the quarterback, who passes or hands off the ball, and the running back, who carries the ball.
- **Defense:** The defensive team's goal is to prevent the offense from advancing the ball and scoring. Key players include defensive linemen, linebackers, and defensive backs.
- **Special Teams:** Special teams handle kicking plays, such as kickoffs and field goal attempts.

Scoring

Points in American football can be scored in various ways:

- **Touchdown (6 points):** When a player carries the ball across the opponent's goal line or catches a pass in the end zone.
- **Field Goal (3 points):** When a team kicks the ball through the opponent's goalposts.



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- **Extra Point (1 or 2 points):** After a touchdown, the team can choose to attempt a kick for an additional point (1 point) or run or pass the ball into the end zone for two points.
- **Safety (2 points):** When the defense tackles an offensive player in their own end zone.

Gameplay

The game begins with a kickoff, where one team kicks the ball to the other. The receiving team then tries to advance the ball as far down the field as possible. The offense has four downs (chances) to advance at least 10 yards. If they succeed, they get another set of downs. If they fail, the opposing team gains possession of the ball.

Key Terms

- **Down:** Each play is called a down, and a team has four downs to advance 10 yards.
- **Yard Line:** The field is marked with lines every 5 yards to help track progress.
- **Turnover:** When one team loses possession of the ball to the other team.
- **Interception:** When a defensive player catches a pass intended for an offensive player.
- **Fumble:** When a player drops the ball while running or being tackled.

Penalties

Penalties can be called for rule violations, and they result in the offending team losing yardage or the other team gaining yardage. Common penalties include holding, offside, and pass interference.

The Super Bowl

The Super Bowl is the championship game of the National Football League (NFL) and is one of the most-watched sporting events in the United States. It features the champions of the NFL's two conferences, the American Football Conference (AFC) and the National Football Conference (NFC), competing for the coveted Vince Lombardi Trophy.

Now that you have a basic understanding of American football, you can enjoy watching games and even try playing with friends. It's a thrilling sport that combines strategy, athleticism, and teamwork, making it a favorite pastime for many.

