How is NFL Flag Football different than tackle football?

For those who are familiar with tackle football, here are some key rule differences by NFL Flag:

Stripping the ball- It is a penalty when a defender intentionally tries to strip the ball from the carrier without going for a player's flags.

Intentional blocking- This is generally understood as intentional physical contact by a player to stop a defender from pulling a ball carrier's flag. In NFL Flag, it's a penalty—in tackle, it's the way.

Intentional Screening- Described as an offensive player intentionally positioning themselves between a defender and ball carrier. NFL Flag requires that once the ball is thrown or handed off, remaining offensive players are required to stop and let the play unfold without intentional interference.

Intentional Contact – Players may not intentionally contact other players. Incidental contact is common.

Flag Guarding- Ball carrier makes a motion or contact with a defender's arm or hand who is trying to pull their flags.

Illegal Rush (offense)- A QB cannot run the ball past the line of scrimmage unless a rusher has crossed the line of scrimmage.

Illegal Rush (defense)- A defender lined up in front of the rush line crossing the line of scrimmage.

Impeding the Rusher- The offense must avoid the rusher at all times, unless they do not move at the snap.

Jumping- A ball carrier is not permitted to jump or leave their feet for the purpose of advancing the ball or avoiding a pulled flag. Spinning or jump cuts are allowed. Common example: a player cannot try to dive into the endzone, he/she would be down where their feet left the ground.

Ball Placement – the ball is placed where the ball carrier's hips are, not where the ball is, at the time the ball carrier is declared down.

Holding- When someone tries to grab the ball carrier's flags, but instead grabs the players shorts or shirt and does not immediately let go this generally results in a penalty. Also, a defender grabbing a receiver.

Pass Clock - The 7 second QB passing clock is counted by the official, not the game clock. Count starts when the QB has possession of the snap, not at the snap.

Shirts Tucked – All shirts that hang down below the flag belt must be tucked in.

As coaches gain experience, they tend to use these rules to their advantage when calling an offensive play. That is part of the gamesmanship of flag football.

As officials gain experience with specific teams, different levels of play and coaching styles, they tend to interpret these rules to allow for better play. For example, on a hand-off all offensive players are supposed to stop. At the D1 and D2 levels, kids don't often stop (they are amped up!). As the players learn the game and progress, it becomes more enforceable and less of an issue.