

**New Jersey Football Officials Association**  
**SIX-OFFICIAL MECHANICS MANUAL**

**2022 ADDENDUM**



This 2022 Addendum supplements the **2021 NJFOA Six-Official Mechanics Manual** that was provided as a spiral-bound hardcopy to all NJFOA members last summer.

## Part 1

### Six-Person Mechanics

#### Summary of Changes

- Formally accepted last season's experimental implementation of technique for having LOS and deep wing officials switch sides of the field at halftime. H and S will work the press box side of the field during the first half of the game. L and F will be opposite the press box, with L having primary responsibility for the line to gain equipment.
- U will now be lined up behind Team K's line with the kicker in all free kicks except for a free kick after an awarded fair catch. The coverage mechanic stays the same. SJ will move to Team K's line to rule on possible encroachment.
- On punts, the FJ will now line up five (5) yds deeper than the deepest receiver who is lined up in the middle of the field or to his side. The side judge remains ten (10) yards deeper than the receiver. If the deepest receiver is lined up on the SJ side, these alignments are reversed.
- On a fake, bad snap, or blocked FG from the 20 yd line or inside, the short wings will have responsibility for the GL. Outside the 20 yd line, the deep wings have responsibility. Short wings will move immediately to the line to gain when a fake or bad exchange occurs and be ready to rule on forward progress.
- On 4<sup>th</sup> down scrimmage plays, and team A is "going for it" the short wings will move to the line to gain at the snap. If the line to gain is 3 yds or less. Inside the 7 yd line, they go to GL as usual and work back to line to gain
- Scrimmage Kicks (punt) -- The U will line up opposite the R and be in position to rule on contact on the snapper. He should be 8-10 yds from the LOS and no wider than the offensive guard. This is a clarification to the wording.
- New rule 7-5-2 exception permitting the passer to purposefully throw an incomplete forward pass without warranting an intentional grounding penalty requires additional emphasis on appropriate mechanics and coordination between Referee and covering wing official to determine if all requirements of the exception have been met.

## Part 2

### Officiating Philosophies & Principles

#### Summary of Changes

- Added three "when in question..." philosophical principles surrounding the new rule allowing a Team A passer to legally ground a forward pass

This addendum to the **2021 NJFOA Six-Official Mechanics Manual** includes the major substantive revisions for 2022. It is provided in a manner that allows for easy insertion into the hardcopy printed manual you received last summer. It includes only substantive changes made since last season. The entire manual—with all substantive, minor, as well as editorial changes—will be available in electronic form on your chapter’s website.

Each change provided will include directions in **GREEN** detailing where in the printed manual to place the changed content.

**[To be added to the table on p. 7 of the hardcopy manual]**



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YEAR	SUMMARY OF SUBSTANTIVE REVISIONS
2022 Supplemental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Added a preface stating the formal adoption of the 2021 experimental technique of having line of scrimmage and deep wings switching sides of the field at halftime.</li><li>Revised to change Umpire’s initial positioning on free kicks, including expected short (“onside”) kicks and free kicks following a safety</li><li>Revised positioning of deep wings on punts</li><li>Added technique for short wings on “4th and short” plays for better coverage of forward progress</li><li>Added clarification for coverage of goal line on fake/busted field goal plays</li><li>Clarified Umpire positioning on scrimmage plays</li><li>Added recommendations and clarification for officials covering a grounded forward pass (2022 rule change)</li></ul>

[Insert this page after Summary of Revisions on p. 8 -- right before Points of Emphasis]

## Preface

### ***Wings switch at halftime***

At the request of the New Jersey Football Coaches Association, the NJFOA State Mechanics Committee has formally approved the implementation of a technique designed to improve coach-official relationships and communications.

The nature of the technique is as follows:

1. In the first half of each varsity game, the Head Linesman (HL) and Side Judge (SJ) will operate on the press box side of the field; the Line Judge (LJ) and Field Judge (FJ) will operate on the side of the field opposite the press box. **NOTE: You are NOT changing positions—you are simply changing which side of the field you are working from for the first half of the game.**
2. For the second half of the game (and overtime, if required), these four officials will switch sides of the field and operate as we have done in the past (H and S opposite press box).
3. There are no impacts whatsoever for the Referee or the Umpire.
4. The line-to-gain equipment and the box will NOT switch sides and will remain opposite the press box for the entire contest as required by NFHS rules.
5. **In general, each official takes his/her mechanics to the other side of the field when they move with a few exceptions (below).** For example, the FJ will continue to be responsible for the play clock regardless of which side of the field he's on; the SJ will continue to monitor the operation of the game clock for both halves; etc.

The only exceptions to the general rule of officials bringing their mechanics with them to the other side of the field are necessitated by the fact that the chains remain opposite the press box. As a result, the State Mechanics Committee has identified these relatively few exceptions where officials' mechanics do change between halves.

- In the first half, the LJ is responsible for ensuring that the line to gain equipment is properly placed for each new series and is responsible for signaling its movement when a new series is awarded. (The HL will be responsible for this in the second half.)
- In the first half, the HL has the primary responsibility for signaling time out after a down when Team A has reached the line to gain or informing the referee when his decision is necessary regarding whether or not the line to gain has been reached or a measurement is required. (The LJ will be responsible for this in the second half.)
- In the first half, if there is a measurement,
  - The LJ will bring the chains onto the field using the clip (HL in second half)
  - The HL will indicate the spot where the clip is to be placed (LJ in second half)
  - The SJ will hold the ball stationary on the ground for measurement (FJ in second half)
  - The FJ will help place the box at the succeeding spot (SJ in second half)

It is highly recommended that all Chapters' training programs include an overview of this technique as well as a heavy concentration on sideline communication techniques.

Please note that for the sake of simplicity, all diagrams and text in this manual will show/describe only positioning (relative to the press box) as it will be for the second half of each game. Be aware that all such depictions will be reversed for the first half of the game.

**[Add to V. FREE KICK RESPONSIBILITIES (Umpire Responsibilities) on p. 14 of hardcopy manual]**



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The Umpire will then move to a position 10 yards behind K's free kick line and maybe up to a maximum of 15 yards depending on the kicker's initial position. He should also be positioned 2 to 3 yards wider than the spot of the kick on the kicker's kicking foot side. He must be in a position that allows him to see the kicker's foot strike the ball. He will raise a hand to inform the Referee that the ball can be declared ready for play. He has the primary responsibility for ensuring correct alignment of Team K players, and pop-up kicks.

**[Replace Field Judge and Side Judge responsibilities in Section V. FREE KICK RESPONSIBILITIES on p. 14 of the hardcopy manual]**

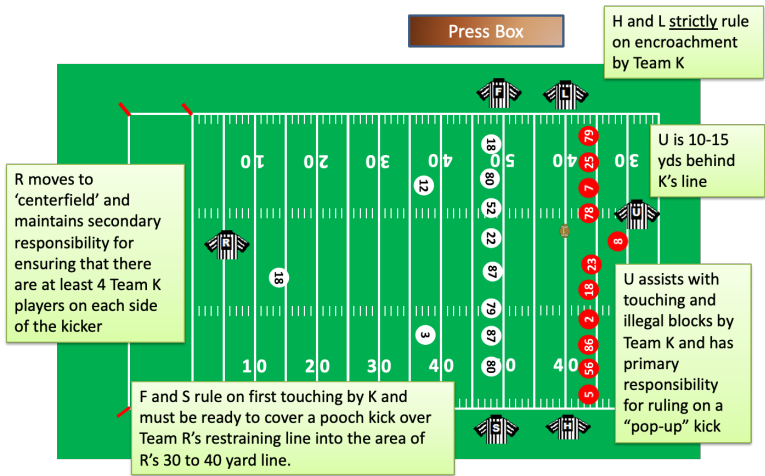


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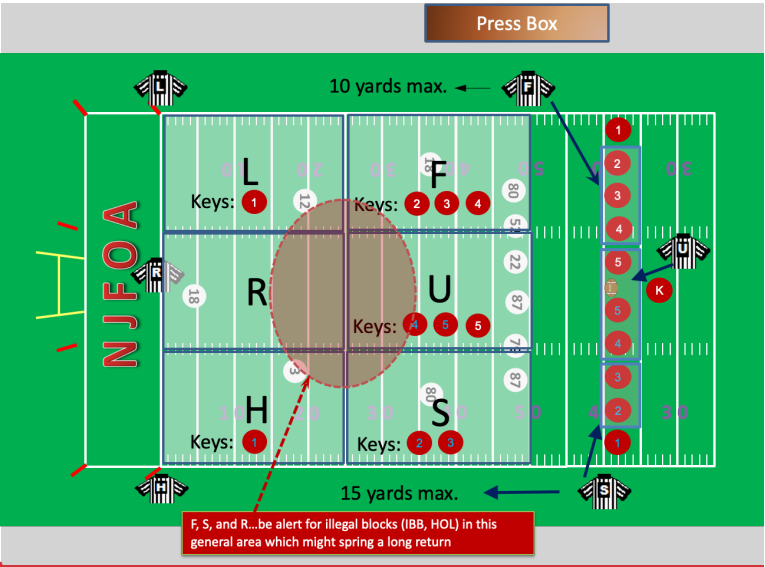
**Field Judge and Side Judge:** The **Field Judge** will initially position himself on the press box sideline at Team R's restraining line, and the **Side Judge** will initially position himself on the sideline opposite the press box at Team K's restraining line. They will count Team K's players together with the Umpire. It is NOT necessary for them to align Team R prior to the kick.

On a normal kickoff officiating alignment, the **Field Judge** must observe the kick and know if it touched the ground initially and potentially has become a pop-up kick. The **Side Judge** is responsible for possible encroachment by Team K players.

[Replace Diagram on p. 15 of hardcopy manual with this updated version.]



[Replace Diagram on p. 16 of hardcopy manual with this updated version.]



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**[Replace Umpire responsibility on p. 17 of hardcopy manual with this updated version.]**



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**Umpire:** At the kick, the Umpire's initial responsibility is R's possible interaction with the kicker. Be alert for a Team R player who moves purposefully toward the kicker. Umpire initially keys on K players 4 and 5 on the Side Judge's side of the formation as well as player 5 from the opposite side of the formation. He should move downfield from his initial position carefully and no more than 10 to 15 yards. Observe action mainly toward the center of the field. On long returns, watch for illegal blocks and observe off-ball action in front of the runner as he approaches, working inside-out as on any running play. He should move with the action, but he does NOT have goal line responsibility.

**[Replace first two paragraphs in A. Anticipated Short Free Kick on p. 17-18 of hardcopy manual with this updated version.]**

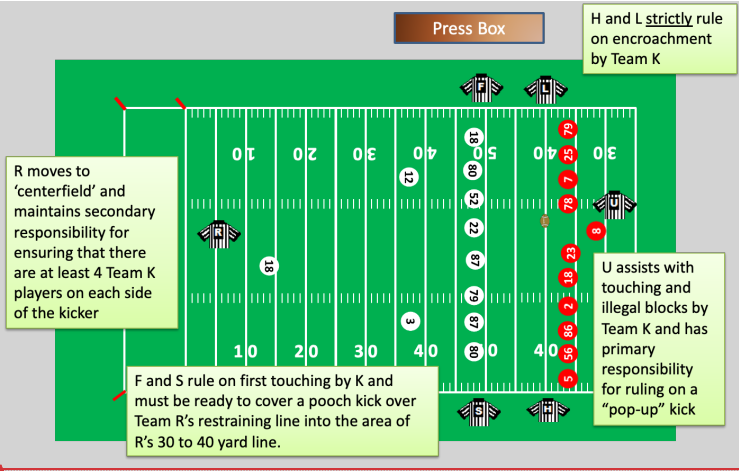


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When an on-sides kick is likely, the Head Linesman will take a position on the sideline opposite the press box on Team K's free kick line. The Line Judge will move to the press box sideline on Team K's free kick line. The Field Judge, and Side Judge will maintain their same positions as in a normal free kick. The Referee should move to the center of the field at the 10 yd line and may assist the Umpire in making sure that at least 4 K players are on each side of the ball when it is kicked. Only the covering official will signal to start the game clock when the ball is legally touched.

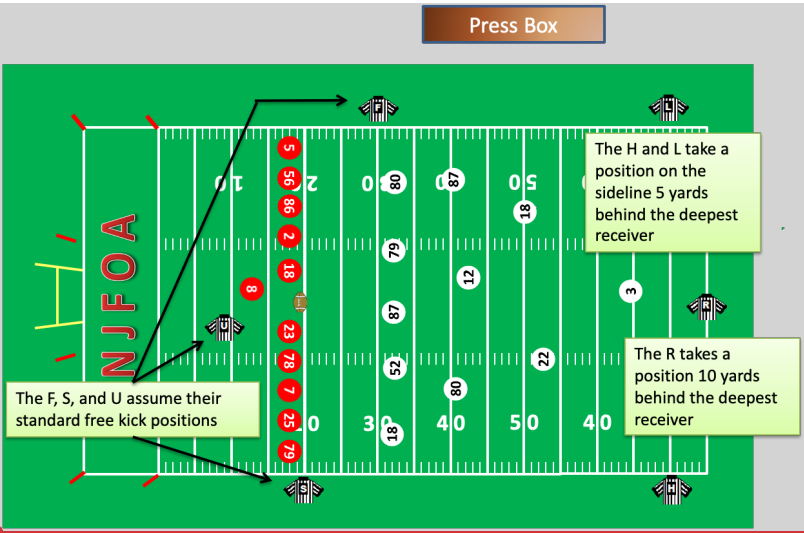
The Umpire will take his standard position behind the spot of the free kick.. He will be responsible for assessing Team K compliance with alignment rules. After the kick, he will assist in ruling on possible first touching, blocks and possession. The Line Judge and Head Linesman have responsibility for K free kick line and will strictly enforce ("Letter of the law") the rule related to Team K encroachment. The official in whose direction the kick is moving should be alert for first touching and catch or recovery. The other official should watch for illegal blocking, holding, clipping, etc. If the kick is deep downfield, stay back in the middle of the field and assist with blocks and the kick return.

[Replace diagram on p. 19 for anticipated onsides kick with this updated version]



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[Replace diagram on p. 21 for C. Free Kick Following a Safety with this updated version]



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**[Replace Umpire responsibilities in - C. PASSING PLAYS with this updated wording.]**



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**Umpire:** Initial position 7-9 yds. off the LOS. If he reads 'pass,' remain stationary (do not charge the line of scrimmage, as in the past), and look for holding or other illegal blocks by offensive and defensive linemen. He should look for holding or other illegal blocks keying, but not tunneling, on the center and two guards and the tackle opposite the R. As a secondary responsibility, the Umpire should be able to provide assistance on ineligible receivers down field prior to the release of a forward pass. When the ball is snapped inside Team B's 7-yard line, the umpire has primary responsibility for determining whether a forward pass crossed the line of scrimmage and if the passer was beyond the neutral zone. Once the pass has been released, he should turn quickly to assist in determining if there is a reception, interception, or an incompletion as other officials may be blocked out if the pass was thrown over the middle. He should maintain coverage of his area of responsibility as long as there is a threat of action. After a catch, he should cover continuing action around the runner in the side zone.

**[Add to Head Linesman and Line Judge responsibilities in - C. PASSING PLAYS with this updated wording—in front of words: “When the pass is released deep downfield...”]**



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If either line of scrimmage official senses that a passer under duress may have intentionally grounded a forward pass, the offside official should make note of the spot of the pass to be of assistance if that spot is needed for enforcement of a penalty. The near-side official will have responsibility for determining if the pass reached the neutral zone in flight to aid the Referee in potentially ruling a legally grounded pass.

[Add following Long Pass Approaching B's End Zone on p. 30 of hardcopy manual.]



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#### **Legal grounding of forward pass by Team A passer**

**With the 2022 approval of a rule allowing a Team A passer to legally ground ("dump") the ball under certain conditions, our mechanics must adapt accordingly.**

**Referee.** The Referee has the sole responsibility (with possible help from the Umpire) for (a) determining that the passer was under duress, and (b) determining if the passer has been outside the lateral bounds of the free blocking zone ("the pocket"). While each referee must develop his own "strike zone" for this pocket, we would suggest that in a normal split formation, the pocket extends from the outside foot of one tackle to the outside foot of the other tackle.

**Head Linesman and Line Judge.** The short wings have the sole responsibility for determining if the pass crosses the line of scrimmage (extended) in flight. The short wings have always been responsible for determining whether there is/are eligible receivers in the vicinity of the pass that might have reasonably been the intended target of the passer. With the approval of the new rule, this responsibility still remains in case the pass does not cross the line of scrimmage, or in case the pass DOES cross the line of scrimmage but the Referee rules that the passer was NOT outside the pocket when he released it.

**Side Judge and Field Judge** In rare cases where a passer under duress throws the ball way downfield, the deep wings may need to communicate to the Referee about eligible in the area of the pass.

[Add as new Section F under VI. PLAY RESPONSIBILITIES on p. 32 of hardcopy manual.]



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#### **F. "4th and Short"**

**All Officials:** On 4th down scrimmage plays where the offense lines up in a non-scrimmage kick formation ("going for it"), officials should make special note of the line to gain. If there are three (3) yards or less to reach the line to gain, the **Head Linesman** and **Line Judge** will, at the snap, immediately go to the line to gain, steady themselves, and be ready to rule possible forward progress at that spot. If the down ends short of the line to gain, wing officials will come back to officiate the dead ball spot. However...if the spot of the snap is inside B's 7-yard line, wing officials will immediately go to the goal line at the snap (as usual) but be very aware of any line to gain which is short of the goal line. Be ready to officiate back to the dead ball and any threat to the line to gain. Use O-2-O to communicate these requirements to the crew.

[Replace beginning of Umpire duties under VII. SCRIMMAGE (PUNT) RESPONSIBILITIES on p. 33 of hardcopy manual.]



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**Umpire:** The Umpire should always be opposite the Referee, even if the Referee is on the wrong side of the punter and be in position to rule on any contact with the snapper. He should be positioned 8 to 10 yards from the line of scrimmage (LOS) and no wider than the offensive guard on his side to have clear line of sight of the snapper before and during the play. Together with the Referee, he will count Team K players and give the appropriate signal when there are 11 players or less.

[Replace both Field Judge and Side Judge duties under VII. SCRIMMAGE (PUNT) RESPONSIBILITIES on p. 33 & 34 of hardcopy manual.]



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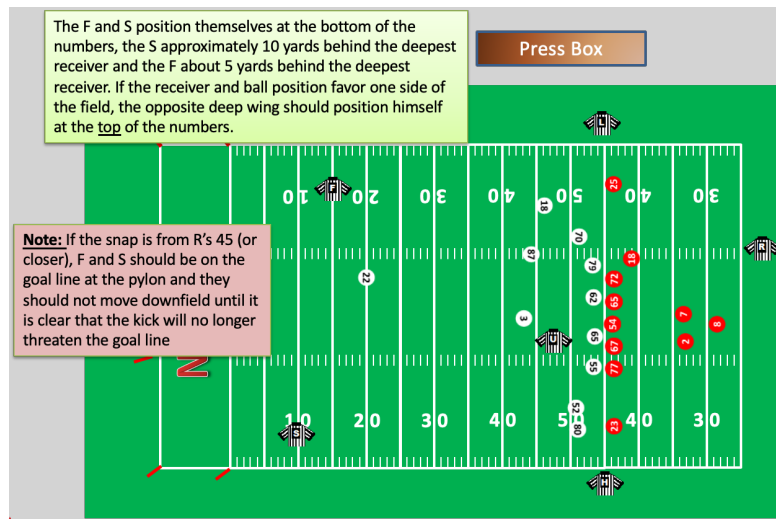
**Side Judge:** Initial position is on the Head Linesman's side of the field, at the bottom of the numbers, 10 yards behind the deepest receiver if that receiver is in the center of the field or closer to the opposite sideline. If that receiver is clearly closer to his sideline, he sets up 5 yards behind the deepest receiver.



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**Field Judge:** Initial position is on the press box side of the field, at the bottom of the numbers, 5 yards behind the deepest receiver if that receiver is in the center of the field or closer to his sideline. If that receiver is clearly closer to the opposite sideline, he sets up 5 yards behind the deepest receiver.

[Replace diagram on p. 35 for Punts (Initial Position) with this updated version]



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[Add this new section after 'Field Judge & Side Judge' text on p. 36 of hardcopy document]



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### **FAKES AND BUSTED PLAYS ON FIELD GOALS**

**On ‘fakes’ or any ‘busted’ play arising from an errant or muffed snap or bad placement, officials’ coverage responsibilities must adapt to deal with the uncertainty of what might happen.**

**Inside R’s 20.** When the spot of the snap is on or inside R’s 20, the **Line Judge** and **Head Linesman** will go to the line to gain immediately as soon as a fake or busted play is determined and be ready to rule on progress. If the ensuing play advances beyond the line to gain, these officials will trail the play as quickly as possible and be responsible for ruling on progress up to and including R’s goal line. The Field Judge and Side Judge will remain on the end line but will move toward their respective standard position at the 9-yard marks.

**Outside R’s 20.** When the spot of the snap is outside R’s 20, the **Line Judge** and **Head Linesman** will go to the line to gain immediately whenever a fake or busted play is determined and be ready to rule on progress. If the ensuing play advances beyond the line to gain, these officials will trail the play as quickly as possible and be responsible for ruling on progress up but not including R’s goal line. The Field Judge and Side Judge will come off the end line at a 45-degree angle to the goal line and be in position to rule on any advance across R’s goal line.

**[Replace #1 on “C. Kickoff” in Appendix II (Pregame Conference with Crew) p. 57 of hardcopy document]**



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1. All officials perform pre-kick duties and be in position for kickoff. Umpire, after administering kick between the hash marks will step behind K’s line with the kicker approximately 10-15 yards behind and to the kicking leg side of the kicker, check with other officials, and raise his hand to signal the referee that the ready-for-play can be blown.

[Add this entire page as a new Appendix X to the hardcopy after p. 89]

## **APPENDIX X – Instructions to Ball Persons**

The following ball rotation mechanics should be shared with all ball personnel provided by the teams. We understand that very often, younger children who are not necessarily able to comprehend these requirements will be assigned. We must do the best we can in such situations.

### **Mechanics:**

- Each team will designate at least one (1) person to be a ball boy/girl.
- They will be responsible for 2 of their team's game balls on their respective sideline.
- When the offense is to come on the field, one of the offense's balls will get rotated into the game via the sideline officials to the umpire.
- The remaining ball in their possession is to be used when the game ball is dead and not near the succeeding spot and won't be re-spotted quickly, (example: incomplete pass out of bounds or incomplete deep down the field) or the ball in use becomes temporarily unplayable due to weather conditions. Ball persons need to be alert for any official calling for that spare ball.
- Once the ball is provided to the officials, ball persons will chase down the out of bounds ball. If the ball is incomplete in the field of play the officials will get it back to the sideline.
- If out of bounds on the oppositions sideline ball personnel can work with the official on his sideline to get it back over between plays.

### **Safety:**

- Ball persons should remain at the sideline and not venture onto the field
- Ball persons need to stay alert for any situation calling for their attention. It is best if they stay between the two sideline officials on their sideline since either one might call for a ball rotation.
- Ball persons need to stay clear of the sideline and be aware of any play coming toward them and move far back and away from the action
- Ball persons should be instructed to raise ball above their heads and wait for the official to make eye contact with them and is in position to receive the ball before tossing it.

## Part 2

### Officiating Philosophies & Principles

#### Summary of Changes

- Added three “when in question...” philosophical principles surrounding the new rule allowing a Team A passer to legally ground a forward pass

**[Add this new text to the end of the Passing Situations section on p. 6 of the hardcopy document]**



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- For a passer who is attempting to legally ground a forward pass (2022 rule change)
  - When in question whether the passer is inside or outside the lateral boundaries of the free-blocking zone ("the pocket"), the Referee will rule him outside (i.e. a legal grounding of a forward pass).
  - When in question whether or not a grounded pass has reached/crossed the neutral zone (including extension into the out of bounds area, the covering wing official will rule that the pass was in-flight beyond the neutral zone.
  - When a forward pass is legally grounded out-of-bounds as described above, there will be no foul(s) for ineligible players illegally downfield (IDP).