## RELAYING / BALL HANDLING

Officials relay the ball to one another by tossing the ball accurately using a gentle underhanded motion. In most cases, the underhanded toss is a short toss and not one where a wind-up is needed. Only when there are fewer officials on the field, or the circumstances demand a long toss, will the official wind-up and toss the ball long-distance underhanded. In no case does an official throw the ball overhanded.

After a play, all officials must complete their dead-ball officiating duties before retrieving and/or relaying the game ball. Once the dead ball responsibilities cease, the nearest official should retrieve the ball unless he/she is holding the dead-ball spot (bean bag may be used to mark progress). In that case, the next closest official will retrieve the ball.

When the ball ends up a good distance from the succeeding/previous spot, officials must align themselves into a “daisy-chain” so that a set of reasonable underhanded tosses will get the ball to the UMPIRE who is waiting somewhat near the succeeding/previous spot. It is rare that the REFEREE will be involved in the daisy chain as the REFEREE is required to stay back while observing the players, coaches, substitutions, chains, clock, and the officials as they get the ball ready for play. The REFEREE is the only official in 5-official mechanics who can have this perspective so in almost all cases, the REFEREE stays out of the relay and does not spot the ball. For this reason, our blanket statement is that “the UMPIRE spots the ball in 5-official mechanics!”

Long incomplete passes are the most challenging and require that the BACK JUDGE and one flank (5-official) hustle to relay the ball to the UMPIRE.

When there is a change of possession (after free kicks, scrimmage kicks, interceptions, fumble recovery), the BACK JUDGE in 5-official mechanics is responsible for getting the “old ball” (ball from a team no longer in possession) out to their sideline. It is recommended that the “old ball” remain on the ground at the dead-ball spot until the “new ball” comes in. This is recommended so that the REFEREE always has the option of declaring the “old ball” ready for play if, for some reason, the “new ball” is not provided by the offensive team, and it is seriously delaying the ready-for-play. **This can commonly occur following an interception, fumble, or a return for a touchdown where the team is celebrating and a “new ball” is not being provided**.

It is the responsibility of the flank official on the side of the “new ball” to make sure that the “new ball” gets to the UMPIRE. In some cases, a ball boy, player, or even a coach may assist in getting the “new ball” into the UMPIRE. Once the “new ball” arrives, the BACK JUDGE removes the “old ball” and relays it to the sideline via the flank official, ball boy, player, or coach. The 5-official crew can make these transitions smooth and efficient working together as a team.

These ball-handling scenarios (relaying the ball, spotting the ball, and change of possessions) should be discussed during the crew’s pre-game meeting.