



# **CINCINNATI OPEN**

**BALL CREW MANUAL**

**2025**

# **THREE THINGS TO KNOW AT ALL TIMES**

## **1. WHERE THE PLAYERS ARE**

Our job revolves around the player. If we don't know where they are we can't service them, may run into them, or even worse roll a ball under their feet causing injury. ALWAYS know where every player is at all times.

## **2. THE MATCH SCORE**

Our job as ball persons is to get the players the balls when they need them, as quickly and cleanly as possible. Knowing the score will help you THINK AHEAD to which player will need a ball and when.

## **3. WHERE ALL BALLS ARE**

There are six balls on the court during a match. Ensuring you know where every ball is will increase your efficiency in getting balls to where they need to go.

## STARTING THE DAY

Find your posted court assignment and check in with your court monitor. Those working the net on each court are responsible for taking the kneepads to the court each day and bringing them back at the end of the day or in case of rain. The net ball person should place the kneepads on the court when they get to their position.

## ON COURT, ON TIME

For every match, all ball persons must be in position before players come onto the court for their warm-up. Be at your assigned court and checked in with the court monitor, ready to go on when the set score before your rotation is at 3 combined games (ex: 1-2, or 3-0).

## ENTERING THE COURT

When marching onto the court, all six ball crew members will walk in order based upon their position and where we enter the court. The ball person at the back of the line will be the one to drop off into position as the marching line passes their spot. (Fig. 1)

## NEW BALLS

Ball changes (new balls) occur after the first 7 games of a match (since it includes the warm-up), and every 9 games thereafter. The chair umpire will remind the ball crew when a ball change will occur, but each ball person should already be expecting this. When announced, the net persons are responsible for promptly collecting all used balls and taking them to the court official in charge of collecting them. DO NOT open new cans of balls yourself. The court official will do this for you.

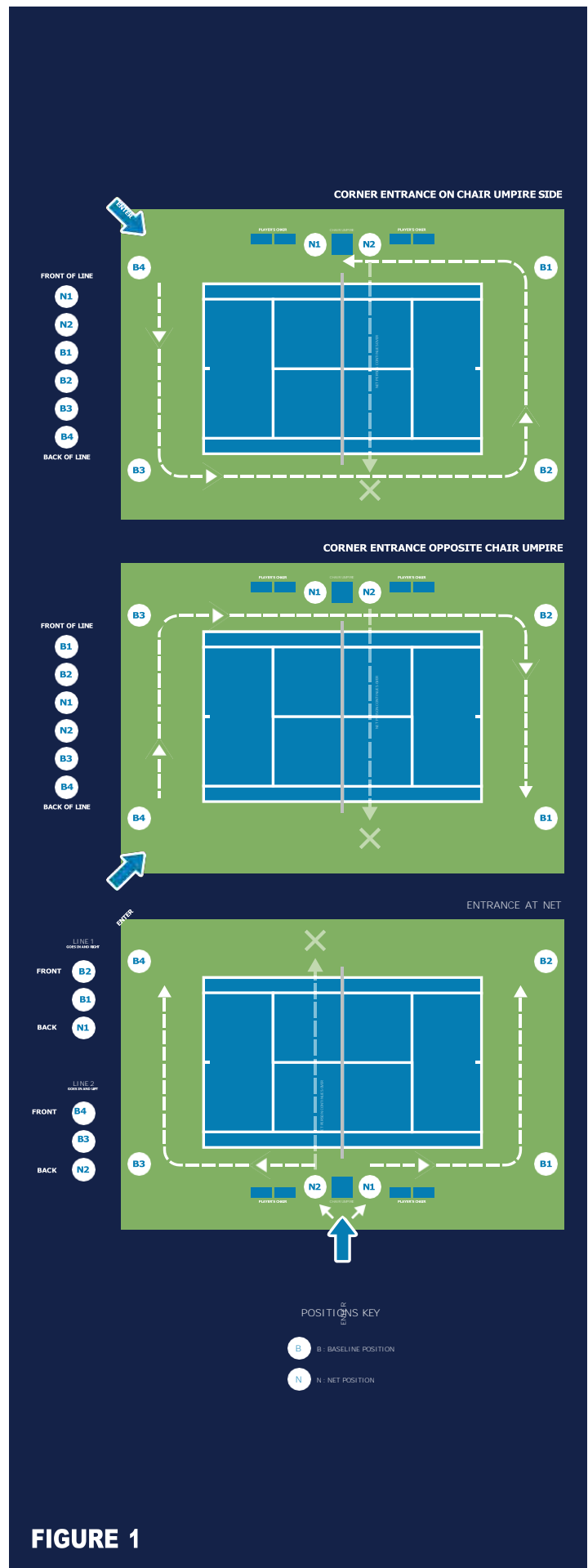


FIGURE 1

## WARM-UPS

Our job is slightly different during warm-ups. Players are trying to hit as many balls as possible in this limited time. Therefore we

ONLY retrieve balls when it isn't a distraction to players. It's okay if a ball is sitting in the court for some time. LEAVE THEM until there is a break in the hitting to avoid getting hit.

ESPECIALLY at the net. Wait until there is a break in the hitting or if it can be reached without getting in the player's way. Net positions will stand in their position during this time, with the same stance as the baseliners.

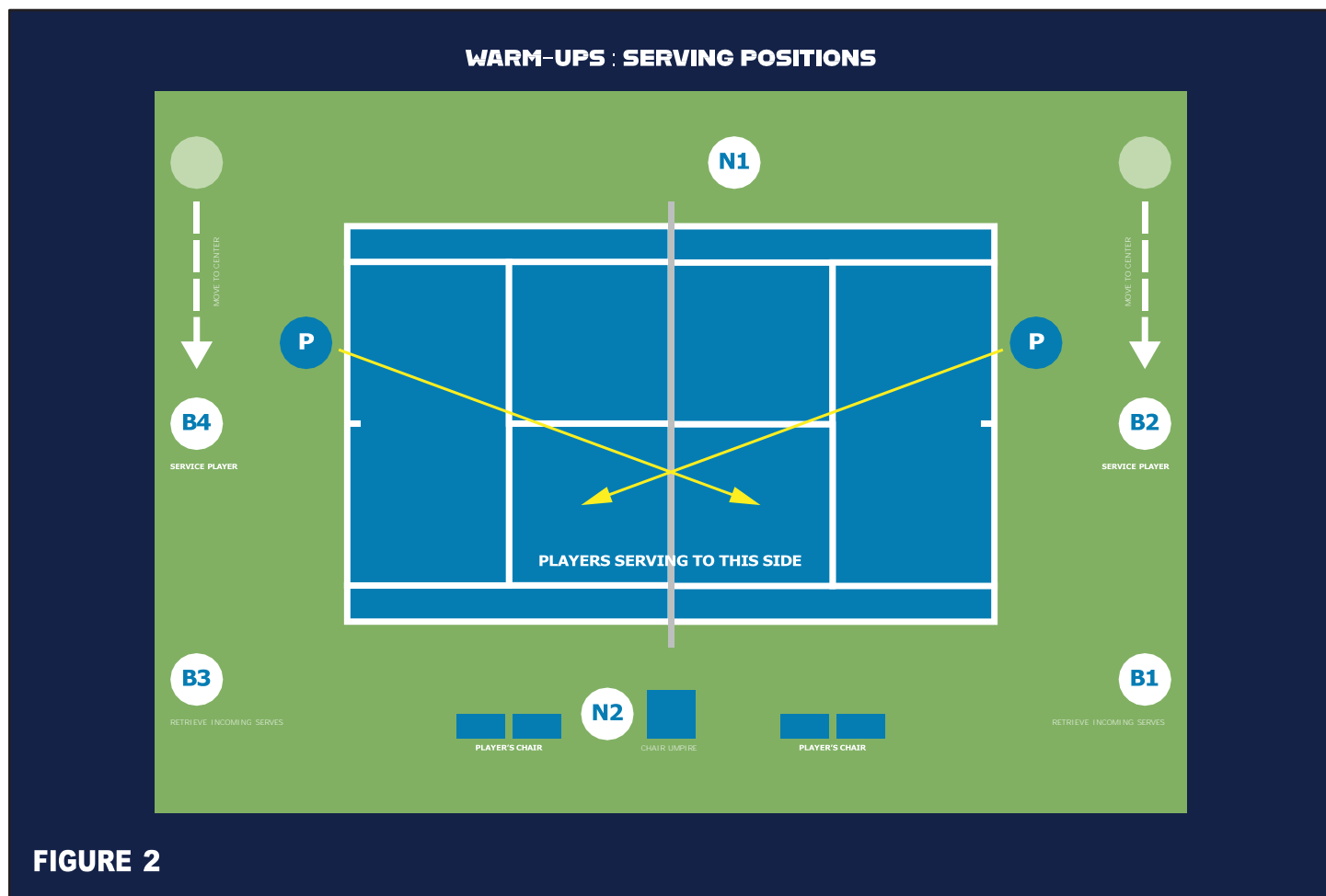
## WARM-UP: SERVES

When players warm up serves, they will both serve from either the Ad or Deuce side at the same time. Because of this, the baseliner on the side NOT being served at will shift into the middle of the court while the one being served at will retrieve the balls. (Fig. 2)

Once balls are retrieved, pass them to the baseliner who moves to the middle. The one in the middle is responsible for getting the balls to the server. Keep constant attention to the serves coming your direction as it's easy to get hit if you are not aware of the players serving.

## TAKE NOTE

Pay EXTRA attention during the serving portion of warmups. Balls will be coming quickly. As players will serve to both the Deuce and Ad sides during this time. Baseliners should shift positions based upon which side players are serving to.



**FIGURE 2**



## THE BASELINE POSITION

Baseliners stand in the four corners of the court, just outside of the doubles alley. Stand as close to the back wall or fence as possible but **DO NOT** lean against it **OR** stand in front of a sponsor sign or advertisement. **DO NOT** lock your knees or you **WILL** pass out.

Stand straight and motionless with feet shoulderwidth apart, **FACING FORWARD** (Fig. 3). Quickly retrieve balls landing in the baseline area and return to your position. If you are on the server's side, serve the players the balls as they ask for them. If you are on the receivers side, roll any balls you retrieve to the net person so that they may then get them over to the server's side.

Baseliners hold umbrellas for players providing them shade from the sun during changeovers. In singles, it's the job of the two baseliners closest to the chair umpire. In doubles, it's all four baseliners. Stand next the players, **WITHOUT** blocking the view of the cameras on the opposite side of the court (Fig. 4). Be sure to shade the player's head and body. Open umbrellas slowly, **AWAY** from the player and paying close attention to others around you.

Since our experience with Covid, one previous ballperson responsibility has been eliminated.

All players are responsible for taking care of & securing their towels. Ballperson are not to touch any players' towels.



FIGURE 3



FIGURE 4

## **BASELINE DUTIES ON SERVER'S SIDE**

Your job is to supply the server with balls in between each point. At the end of each point, IMMEDIATELY lift your arms showing the serving player how many balls you have (Fig. 5) even if the player is not looking at you. When they signal they'd like a ball, using a soft, OVERHAND throw, toss the player one ball at a time. Try to recognize and follow their patterns and routine so that you may think ahead and be prepared for how many balls they typically take and the signal they give for when they'd like a ball. Never rush the server.

If the server does not want a particular ball, they will send it back to you. When this happens, simply throw them a DIFFERENT ball and hold the one they gave back.

Most players do not want the ball that was just used in a point. If you catch a ball that has just been used, switch it with a fresh ball if you have one to serve the player with. At the conclusion of a point and before the next point begins, you should hold one ball in your throwing hand, ready to toss it to the server when they request it. If you do not have any balls, hold your arms down, showing that your hands are empty (Fig. 6).

Each toss should reach the player in one bounce in a place where they can easily catch it. A soft toss is always better than a hard one as the pressure in the tennis ball will allow it to easily reach the player at any distance. (Fig. 7).

Each baseliner should be aware of how many balls each other has. Typically, a player will take two, leaving two with each of the baseliners. If you are holding three balls and know your

fellow baseliner only has one, simply roll them a ball BEFORE the player gets to the service line to serve. NEVER roll near the player. Do not feel the need to rush or force this, there is almost always time to do so. We call this "evening out". And while it is our goal to keep this balance throughout the entire match, it is okay if balls are unevenly distributed at times.

During the point, keep your hands behind your body, holding balls not in use. If your hands are full you can stop a ball with your foot, but DO NOT step on it as this is not good for the balls.

## **BASELINE DUTIES ON RECEIVER'S SIDE**

Retrieve all balls landing in the baseline area. If the first serve is called out, retrieve the ball ASAP, returning to your original position, holding the ball until the END of the point. At the end of a point, you can help the net person on your side of the court by showing them either the ball in your hand or an empty hand when they look at you. If you have a ball at the END of a point, roll the ball to the net person on your side of the court. They will receive the ball and roll it to the baseliner at the server's end.

Most ballpersons on the receiver's side will let incoming serves hit the wall and then retrieve it.

Some of the older, experienced ball persons will attempt to catch the ball to avoid it flying back into the court. Most ballpersons should NOT attempt this.

**SEE NEXT PAGE FOR BASELINER FIGURES 5 - 7.**







## NET POSITION

At the net, ball persons are to kneel on one knee, with their arms resting on the knee that is up (Fig. 8) staying completely STILL during points, always aware and ready to retrieve any ball that lands in or near the net. One net person should be at either end of the net at the start of each point.

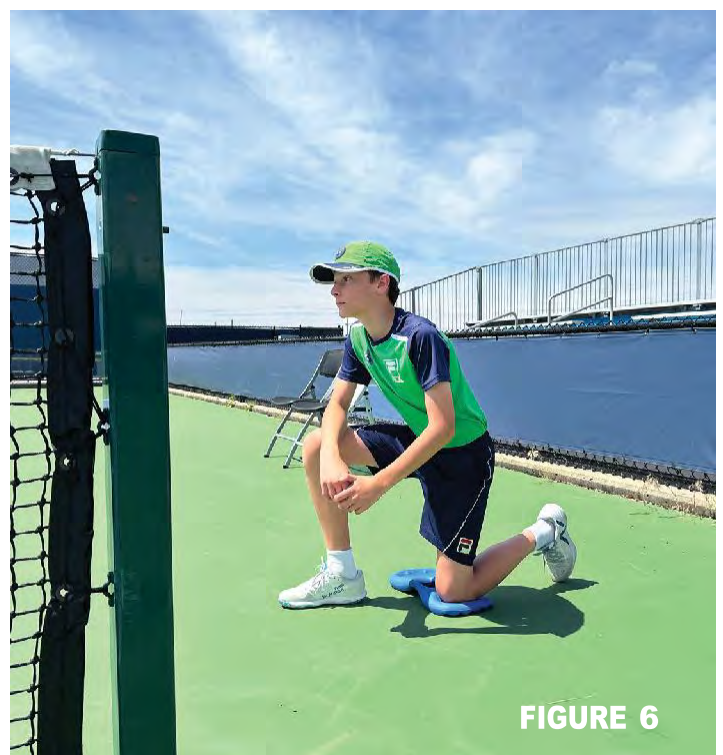
Between first and second serve ONLY the net person who has the ball land on their side of the net is to move. HOLD this ball until the end of the point. It's okay that both net persons are on the same side as the point continues. At the end of the point if a ball lands on one net person's side they should retrieve it and continue to the other end of the net, thus evening out net persons on either side. If no ball lands in the net, communicate with your fellow net person and ensure one of you moves to the opposite end of the net for the start of the following point. We want a net person at either end of the net at the end of each point to easily facilitate getting balls from the returning side to the serving players side of the court.

Run quickly and quietly across the court and pick up any ball landing in or around the net. NEVER touch the net. After retrieving a ball head to the CLOSEST court position, you can as quickly as possible. This may mean running back to the baseline (this is ONLY in between first and second serve and should only be done if the ball rolls to the baseline). When a net person's quickest option is to run to the baseline, stand shoulder to shoulder with the baseliner. If the server is on that side, discreetly hand them the ball BEHIND your back. At the end of the point, return to the closest net position. Running to the baseline position

from the net should only be done if necessary. It is better to return to the knee pads at your position.

The net positions are key to ensuring balls are where they need to be before every point and ultimately determine a smooth rotation. Therefore, they must pay extra attention to SCORE and where EVERY ball is at all times. At the end of each point the net positions should look to the baseliners on each end of the court, checking in to ensure no balls need to be moved from one side to the other.

During changeovers, net persons stand on the inside doubles alley line facing the players. Pay attention to the players as they will ask you for towels, drinks, etc. Stand with your side to the net and DO NOT block the cameras on the opposite side of the court. It's your job to turn player fans on and off at the start and end of changeovers.



## TIEBREAKER PROCEDURES

The regulation tiebreaker is first to 7-points, win by 2 points. Super tiebreakers are now used instead of a 3rd set in men's and women's DOUBLES. The winner of a super tiebreaker is the first one to 10 points (must win by 2).

At the beginning of the tiebreaker, the first server serves one point; next, their opponent serves two points; thereafter, each player serves alternately for two consecutive points. Player's switch ends every 6 points. Remember that in each series of six points the pattern of serving is 1-2-2-1. Then the players change sides.

$(1+2+2+1 = 6)$

THE NET PERSON PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN MAINTAINING THE SPEED OF A TIEBREAKER.

Unlike in normal match play, during the tiebreaker we like to keep one ball in the hands of each net person, with the remaining four

at the server's end. We like the net persons to be holding a ball during the tiebreaker to help speed up the process of getting balls from one server to the next. Therefore, when a point ends and service is switching, the net persons should roll the ball in their hand FIRST, then turn around to receive the balls from the previous service side. Being sure to keep one ball for when service switches again. If you accidentally end up without a ball, it is okay. By doing our job quickly we can still ensure a smooth tiebreaker without it.

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### EXAMPLE:

Player one is Red and player two is Blue.

Player Red will serve the first point of the tiebreaker. Then, balls will switch to the other side of the court so that player Blue can serve the next two. After those points, balls will switch back to Red for two points. Following those two points balls return to blue for one point. At the end of that point (and our pattern of 1-2-2-1), players will switch AND balls will switch WITH the players. The pattern resets with blue serving the first point and will continue until the tiebreaker ends.

1 - 2 - 2 - 1 (players switch sides) 1 - 2 - 2 - 1 (pattern continues...)

### TAKE NOTE:

During tiebreakers when the players switch sides after six total points the balls switch WITH them. You must understand the scoring and side changes in a tiebreaker to move the balls quickly to the right spot so that play is continuous.

## **GENERAL MATCH RULES**

Practice, practice, practice. You **MUST** be able to roll and toss balls correctly in order to do your job on the court. This simple task can be difficult in high stress situations. Please practice.

**DO NOT LOCK YOUR KNEES** when standing. If you are feeling shaky, faint, or sick, tell the closest linesman and leave the court as soon as possible. We will get a replacement to the court. The other 5 ballpersons will be fine until the replacement arrives.

**NEVER ROLL THE BALL ACROSS THE COURT.**

Not sure where the balls need to go after a point? Look at the game score. Remember, players switch sides on after **ODD** games in a set (ex: 3-2). When players switch sides, the balls stay on the side that they're on. After **EVEN** games (Ex: 2-2), players stay on the side they're on and balls switch sides. So; players stay, balls switch. Players switch; balls stay.

It's always better that **TWO** ball persons go for a ball than none. Never allow a loose ball to remain on the court in between serves or after the conclusion of a point.

Never touch a ball unless you are **SURE** the point is over. **ALWAYS** letting balls bounce twice before touching them.

Always stay still from the moment the server gets to the service line until the point has ended.

When moving balls across the court **ROLL ONE** ball at a time, quickly and low to the ground without any bounces.

**NEVER** roll balls between first and second serve.

If a ball bounces into the stands, spectators are allowed to keep it. At the next break in play or changeover make sure the chair umpire knows the court is short of a ball. They will replace it.

Staying hydrated is key. You may quickly get water during changeovers.

**NEVER** become involved in line disputes. Do not give your opinion about line calls. Never applaud, use facial expressions, or react in any other way to match play.

**DO NOT** ask players for **ANYTHING**. No **PICTURES** or **AUTOGRAPHS** are allowed.

Never bounce or juggle balls at any time before or during a match.

When on court do not talk, do not chew gum.

It is your responsibility to know your court assignment and be early for your rotation. When the umpire calls time, you must return to your position immediately. This is especially crucial on a TV court when commercials must fit into the allotted time.

### **UNIFORMS - ON & OFF THE COURT:**

Do not alter your uniform in any way

Do not roll your sleeves

Undershirts must not be visible

Always have your shirt tucked

Hats must be worn forwards at all times



## **OTHER REMINDERS**

Backpacks will be inspected upon entering the tournament each day. You must have a nametag, or some sort of ID attached. Keep your backpack in the Ball Crew Lounge where it is the safest. Never set it down if you are walking the grounds, as it will be confiscated by security.

Always stay in uniform when on the tournament grounds. When you are dismissed for the day, you must immediately call home for your ride. Never wear your ID credential without your uniform! You must arrive wearing your credentials and in full uniform to be admitted. Your ID credential is only good on days that you are working. You are not to use your ID when your volunteering time ends.

You may not use the Volunteer Lounge or Ball Crew Lounge when you are not working and not in uniform. Do not bring friends or family into the ballperson lounge.

Cell phones must remain in the Ball Crew Lounge in your backpack and turned off. They will be confiscated by the Ballperson Monitors if taken outside the Ball Crew Lounge area.

All ball crew members will be provided two parking passes when they pick up their uniform packet. One for the Volunteer lot where you can park your car (Lot V) and a 2nd pass to be used if the parent wishes to drop their child off at the Drop-off Zone located near the South Entrance. Please keep both passes handy and display the appropriate one when coming to the site so the parking attendants know how to direct you by visually seeing which pass you display. The Ball Crew Drop-off Zone has a turnaround

along the South Entrance fence. Please follow the direction of the arrows to allow proper traffic flow and make it easier for you to drop off and pull out to exit. The easiest way to access the Drop-off Zone is from exit 24 (Western Row) off I-71 which opens Friday, August 11th. Parents that wish to escort their child up to the site should park their car in the Volunteer Lot (Lot V) and walk their child to the South Entrance located on the southwest side of the tournament facility. Upon completion of their last assignment, ballpersons should contact their parents and arrange to be picked up at the same location by the South Entrance.

All ball crew members should check-out with the Ballperson Lounge Monitors prior to leaving for the day. All ballpersons are expected to work the first 5 days of the tournament (Sunday – Thursday, August 11-15). Do not schedule doctor appointments, driving classes or other conflicts during this time frame.

All ball crew members should start to hydrate (drink at least 8 glasses of water per day) 3 days prior to the start of the tournament. Water is the best source for hydration. Soda or sweetened drinks will hinder your ability to perform on court. Always eat before reporting to your shift. Those that do not follow these rules may end up in First Aid instead of on the court!

You are a highly visible representative of the tournament; inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. Running, rudeness, childish behavior, bad language, pictures with players, autographs or incomplete uniforms will not be tolerated. Your goal is to be working until the last day of the tournament. Do everything you can to achieve that goal. Representing the tournament in a positive fashion and learning your skills will help you to achieve that goal sooner!



**THE TOURNAMENT STAFF THANKS YOU FOR CHOOSING TO PARTICIPATE  
AS A BALL CREW MEMBER!**

**YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ARE CRUCIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS EVENT.**