

Official Interpretation: Receiver Becoming Thrower

USA Ultimate Rules Working Group
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Recently there has been discussion and confusion regarding the exact moment that a receiver becomes a thrower after making a catch. This has implications for what protections that player has (i.e. throwing fouls) and when they get them. We acknowledge that there are multiple ways Rules 3.J, 3.O.5, 15.B.8, and 17.I.4.a can reasonably be interpreted. One possible interpretation is that a receiver obtains the protections associated with being a thrower the moment they catch the disc, even for contact related to the catch and not related to any subsequent throwing attempt. In particular, there is often contact between the receiver and outstretched limbs of a defender immediately after a catch, which could be construed as a throwing foul even where the receiver initiated the contact. This was not the intention of the language of the rules, and this ambiguity will be clarified in the next revision of the rules. For the time being, the following official interpretation is in effect:

The receiver becomes the thrower immediately upon establishing possession of the disc. However, before a thrower has established a pivot, application of the Throwing Fouls (17.I.4.a) protections are limited to contact during the throwing motion and related windups. Instead, the general foul rules and responsibility to avoid contact will apply, and the player initiating non-incidental contact will generally have committed the foul (with the exception of blocking fouls).

To further illustrate this interpretation, we provide the following example:

A receiver catches the disc while jumping, swings it down against the non-stationary extended arm of a defender, loses possession, and claims that the defender committed a throwing foul (17.I.4.a.2). However, based on the interpretation above, the turnover would stand as it was the receiver who initiated the contact with the defender. Thus, immediately after a catch and before a pivot is set, only a player initiating the contact between the thrower and a defender may generally be responsible for a foul, unless that contact is during a throwing motion or related windup of the new thrower (such as a “greatest” attempt), in which case the Throwing Fouls Rule 17.I.4.a applies.