



Below are the significant updates and changes to the 2019/2020 IFAB Rules of the Game:

LAW 3: THE PLAYERS (Substitutes)

- A player who is being substituted must leave the field by the nearest point on the touchline/goal line (unless the referee indicates the player can leave quickly/immediately at the halfway line or a different point because of safety, injury etc.).

Explanation - To stop a player who is being substituted 'wasting' time by leaving slowly at the halfway line (which is not a Law requirement) the player must leave at the nearest point (as with an injury) unless the referee indicates otherwise, e.g. if the player can leave quickly at the halfway line, there is a safety/security issue or the player leaves on a stretcher. The player must go immediately to the technical area or dressing room to avoid problems with substitutes, spectators, or the match officials. A player who infringes the spirit of this Law should be sanctioned for unsporting behavior i.e. delaying the restart of play.

LAW 4: THE PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT

- Multi-colored/patterned undershirts are allowed if they are the same as the sleeve of the main shirt.

Explanation - Manufacturers now make patterned undershirts whose sleeves are the same as the main shirt sleeve; these should be allowed as they help match officials' decision-making.

LAW 5: THE REFEREE (Team Officials)

- Referee cannot change a restart decision after play has restarted but, in certain circumstances, may issue a YC/RC for a previous incident.
- If the referee leaves the field for a VAR review or to call players back to the field at the end of a half, a decision can still be changed.
- If a penalty kick is awarded, the team's penalty taker can receive assessment or treatment and then stay on the field and take the kick.
- A team official guilty of misconduct will be shown a YC (caution) or RC (sending-off)*; if the offender cannot be identified, the senior coach who is in the technical area at the time will receive the YC/RC

Explanation - The experiment with YC/RC for misconduct by team officials has been successful and has revealed many benefits at all levels, including for young referees dealing with 'difficult' adult coaches. If the offender cannot be identified, the senior team official (usually the main coach) in the technical area will receive the YC/RC (as the person responsible for the other team officials).

LAW 7: DURATION OF THE MATCH (Medical Breaks)

- Clarification of the difference between ‘cooling’ and ‘drinks’ breaks.

Explanation - In the interests of player safety, competition rules may allow, in certain weather conditions (e.g. high humidity and temperatures), ‘cooling’ breaks (from ninety seconds to three minutes) to allow the body’s temperature to fall; they are different from ‘drinks’ breaks (maximum one minute) which are for rehydration.

LAW 8: THE START AND RESTART OF PLAY (Kick-Off)

- Dropped Ball / A Ball dropped for goalkeeper (if play stopped in penalty area) or for one player of team that last touched the ball at the location of the last touch; all other players (of both teams) must be at least 4m (4.5 yds) away.
- The team that wins the toss may choose to take the kick-off.

Explanation - Recent Law changes have made the kick-off more dynamic (e.g. a goal can be scored directly from the kick-off) so captains winning the toss often ask to take the kick-off.

LAW 9: THE BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY (Dropped Ball)

- If play is stopped inside the penalty area, the ball will be dropped for the goalkeeper.
- If play is stopped outside the penalty area, the ball will be dropped for one player of the team that last touched the ball at the point of the last touch.
- In all cases, all the other players (of both teams) must be at least 4m (4.5yds) away.
- If the ball touches the referee (or another match official) and goes into the goal, team possession changes or a promising attack starts, a dropped ball is awarded.

Explanations - The current dropped ball procedure often leads to a ‘manufactured’ restart which is ‘exploited’ unfairly (e.g. kicking the ball out for a throw-in deep in the opponents’ half) or an aggressive confrontation. Returning the ball to the team that last played it restores what was ‘lost’ when play was stopped, except in the penalty area where it is simpler to return the ball to the goalkeeper. To prevent that team gaining an unfair advantage, all players of both teams, except the player receiving the ball, must be at least 4m (4.5 yds) away.



It can be very unfair if a team gains an advantage or scores a goal because the ball has hit a match official, especially the referee.

LAW 10: DETERMINING THE OUTCOME OF A MATCH (Goal Scored)

- Goalkeeper cannot score by throwing the ball into the opponents’ goal.

Explanation – If the goalkeeper throws the ball directly into the opponents’ goal a goal kick is awarded.

LAW 12: FOULS AND MISCONDUCT (Goal Celebrations)

- A YC for an ‘illegal’ celebration (e.g. removing the shirt) remains even if the goal is disallowed.

Explanation – Cautions for inappropriate goal celebrations apply even if the goal is disallowed as the impact (safety, image of the game etc.) is the same as if the goal was awarded.

LAW 12: FOULS AND MISCONDUCT (Quick Free Kick and YC/RC)

- If the referee is about to issue a YC/RC but the non-offending team takes the free kick quickly and creates a goal-scoring opportunity, the referee can delay the YC/RC until the next stoppage if the offending team was not distracted by the referee.

Explanation – Occasionally, an attack is stopped by a cautionable (YC) or sending-off (RC) offense and the attacking team takes a quick free kick which restores the ‘lost’ attack; it is clearly ‘unfair’ if this ‘new’ attack is stopped to issue the YC/RC. However, if the referee has distracted the offending team by starting the YC/RC procedure, the quick free kick is not allowed. For a DOGSO offense, the player will be cautioned (YC) and not sent-off (RC) because the attack was re-started (as when advantage is applied for a DOGSO offense).

LAW 12: FOULS AND MISCONDUCT (Handball)

- Deliberate handball remains an offense.
- The following ‘handball’ situations, even if accidental, will be a free kick:
 - The ball goes into the goal after touching an attacking player’s hand/arm.
 - A player gains control/possession of the ball after it has touched their hand/arm and then scores, or creates a goal-scoring opportunity.
 - The ball touches a player’s hand/arm which has made their body unnaturally bigger •the ball touches a player’s hand/arm when it is above their shoulder (unless the player has deliberately played the ball which then touches their hand/arm).
- The following will not usually be a free kick, unless they are one of the above situations:
 - The ball touches a player’s hand/arm directly from their own head/body/foot or the head/body/foot of another player who is close/near.
 - The ball touches a player’s hand/arm which is close to their body and has not made their body unnaturally bigger.
 - If a player is falling and the ball touches their hand/arm when it is between their body and the ground to support the body (but not extended to make the body bigger).
 - If the goalkeeper attempts to ‘clear’ (release into play) a throw-in or deliberate kick from a teammate but the ‘clearance’ fails, the goalkeeper can then handle the ball.

Explanation - Greater clarity is needed, especially when a ‘non-deliberate’ handball is an offense.

The re-wording follows a number of principles:

Does not accept a goal being scored by a hand/arm (even if accidental).

Expects a player to be penalized for handball if they gain possession/control of the ball from their hand/arm and gain a major advantage e.g. score or create a goal-scoring opportunity.

When it is natural for a player to put their arm between their body and the ground for support when falling.

Having the hand/arm above shoulder height is rarely a ‘natural’ position and a player is ‘taking a risk’ by having the hand/arm in that position, including when sliding.

If the ball comes off the player’s body, or off another player (of either team) who is close by, onto the hands/arms it is often impossible to avoid contact with the ball.

When the GK clearly kicks or tries to kick the ball into play, this shows no intention to handle the ball so, if the ‘clearance’ attempt is unsuccessful, the goalkeeper can then handle the ball without committing an offense.

LAW 12: FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

- Confirmation that an 'illegal' handball offence by a goalkeeper in their own penalty area is not sanctioned with a YC/RC.
- If, after a throw-in or deliberate pass from a team-mate, the goalkeeper unsuccessfully kicks or tries to kick the ball to release it into play, the goalkeeper can then handle the ball.
- Referee can delay issuing a YC/RC until the next stoppage if the non-offending team takes a quick free kick and creates a goal-scoring opportunity.
- All verbal offences are punished with an IDFK.
- Kicking an object is punished in the same way as throwing an object.

LAW 13: FREE KICKS

- Once an IDFK has been taken, the referee can stop showing the IDFK signal if it is clear that goal cannot be scored directly (e.g. from most offside IDFKs).
- For defending team free kicks in their penalty area, the ball is in play once it is kicked and clearly moves; it does not have to leave the penalty area.
- When there is a defensive 'wall' of at least 3 players, all attacking team players must be at least 1m from the 'wall'; IDFK if they encroach.

Explanations – Attackers standing very close to, or in, the defensive 'wall' at a free kick often cause management problems and waste time. There is no legitimate tactical justification for attackers to be in the 'wall' and their presence is against the 'spirit of the game' and often damages the image of the game.

The experiment where, at a defending team free kick in the penalty area, the ball is in play once it is kicked and does not have to leave the penalty area, has produced a faster and more constructive restart. Opponents must remain outside the penalty area and at least 9.15m away until the ball is in play. The same change has been made to the goal kick (see Law 16).

LAW 14: THE PENALTY KICK

- The team's penalty taker can have (quick) treatment/assessment and then take the kick.
- The goalkeeper must not be touching the goalposts/crossbar/nets; they must not be moving.
- The goalkeeper must have at least part of one foot on/in line with the goal line when the kick is taken; cannot stand behind the line.

Explanations - It is unfair if the kicker needs assessment/treatment and then has to leave the field and cannot take the penalty kick.

The referee must not signal for the penalty kick to be taken if the goalkeeper is touching the goalposts, crossbar or net, or if they are moving.

Goalkeepers are not permitted to stand in front of or behind the line. Allowing the goalkeeper to have only one foot touching the goal line (or, if jumping, in line with the goal line) when the penalty kick is taken is a more practical approach as it is easier to identify if both feet are not on the line. As the kicker can 'stutter' in the run, it is reasonable that the goalkeeper can take one step in anticipation of the kick.

LAW 15: THE THROW-IN

- Opponents must be at least 2m from the point on the touchline where a throw-in is to be taken, even if the thrower is back from the line.
- If, after the ball is in play, the thrower touches the ball again before it has touched another player, an indirect free kick is awarded; if the thrower commits a handball offence (which can be non-deliberate).

LAW 16: THE GOAL KICK

- At goal kicks, the ball is in play once it is kicked and clearly moves; it does not have to leave the penalty area.

Explanation – The experiment that at a goal kick the ball is in play once it is kicked, and does not have to leave the penalty area, has created a faster and more dynamic/constructive restart to the game. It has reduced the time ‘lost/wasted’ including stopping the tactic of ‘wasting’ time when a defender deliberately plays the ball before it leaves the penalty area knowing that all that will happen is the goal kick will be retaken. Opponents must remain outside the penalty area until the ball is in play.

All changes were put into effect on June 1, 2019.

- ✓ Attacking players are prohibited from being in the wall.
- ✓ Attacking players are prohibited from being within one meter of a wall consisting of 3 or more players.
- ✓ For Goal Kicks, the ball is in play as soon as it is touched and it can be played inside the 18-yard box (to clarify, oppositional players are still not allowed in the box until the ball is played).
- ✓ Players who are being taken off and replaced **must now leave the pitch by the nearest point** on the touchline, which means no longer being forced to walk to the half-way line.
- ✓ The team that wins the coin toss has a choice of picking which half to attack or to take first kick-off.
- ✓ Officials will be able to issue yellow or red cards to coaches, in the same way they do with players.
- ✓ Handball Offences are deemed free kicks. Essentially, the changes will mean that there will be **no goal in cases where the ball accidentally strikes a player's hand before crossing over the line**. Similarly, if a player has accidentally handled the ball and created an advantage or subsequently scores, they will be penalized with a free kick.
- ✓ For Penalty Kicks, the Goalkeeper must have at least part of one foot on or in line with the goal-line.
- ✓ The Drop Ball is no longer competitive. If play is stopped inside the penalty area the ball will simply be dropped for the goalkeeper. If it is stopped outside the penalty area the ball will be dropped for a player from the team that last touched the ball. In all cases, players will have to be at least four meters (four and a half yards) away.
- ✓ Dropped Ball if the ball touches the referee or match official and a goal is scored, possession changes or an attacking move starts.
- ✓ Opponents must be at least 2m from the point on the touchline where the throw-in is to be taken, even if the thrower is back from the line.
- ✓ Drink Breaks are a maximum of one minute.
- ✓ Cooling Breaks can vary from ninety seconds to three minutes.