

History of The IFAB

The IFAB is the universal decision-making body for the Laws of the Game of association football. Its objectives are to safeguard, compile and amend the Laws as they apply within the scope of world football as organised by FIFA, which includes ensuring that the Laws are uniformly applied worldwide and monitored accordingly, and that organised football is practised consistently.

The IFAB was formed when two representatives from each of the football associations of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland met on 2 June 1886. The brainchild of the English FA, the new body was created to draw up a uniform set of Laws at a time when each country applied different rules. Once established as the guardians of the Laws of the Game, The IFAB's role was and remains to preserve, monitor, study and where appropriate improve the Laws.

The game of football spread rapidly and in 1904 seven nations met in Paris to form FIFA, Fédération Internationale de Football Associations, which joined The IFAB in 1913.

The IFAB has overseen many Law changes since the creation of the first set of official Laws in 1863. For example, offside is probably the most amended Law e.g. originally a player in front of the ball was offside. The goal area first appeared in 1869, followed by corner kicks in 1872, and the first penalty kick was awarded in 1891 - until 1902 it could be taken from any point along a line 12 yards from the goal. The 1912 decision to prohibit goalkeepers from handling the ball outside the penalty area led to an increase in the number of goals and from 1920 players could not be offside from throw-ins.

Steadily, The IFAB changed the game and the mind-set of those who played and watched it. The change prohibiting goalkeepers from handling deliberate 'back-passes', introduced after the 1990 FIFA World Cup Italy™, and the 1998 ruling that red cards be awarded for serious tackles from behind are good examples of that shift in attitude.

In October 2010 The IFAB reconsidered the introduction of goal line technology (GLT) and agreed to a two-year period of comprehensive testing. In July 2012 The IFAB made the historic decisions to approve GLT and the use of Additional Assistant Referees.

March 2016 was also an historic AGM when a testing phase for Video Assistant Referees was approved along with the most comprehensive revision of the Laws of the Game in The IFAB's history.