

Law

03

The Players

1. Number of players

A match is played by two teams, each with a maximum of eleven players; one must be the goalkeeper. A match may not start or continue if either team has fewer than seven players.

If a team has fewer than seven players because one or more players has deliberately left the field of play, the referee is not obliged to stop play and the advantage may be played, but the match must not resume after the ball has gone out of play if a team does not have the minimum number of seven players.

If the competition rules state that all players and substitutes must be named before kick-off and a team starts a match with fewer than eleven players, only the players and substitutes named in the starting line-up may take part in the match upon their arrival.

2. Number of substitutions

Official competitions

A maximum of three substitutes may be used in any match played in an official competition organised under the auspices of FIFA, confederations or national football associations.

The competition rules must state how many substitutes may be named, from three to a maximum of twelve.

Other matches

In national “A” team matches, a maximum of six substitutes may be used.

In all other matches, a greater number of substitutes may be used provided that:

- the teams reach agreement on a maximum number
- the referee is informed before the match

If the referee is not informed, or if no agreement is reached before the match, each team is allowed a maximum of six substitutes.

Return substitutions

The use of return substitutions is only permitted in the lowest levels (grassroots/recreational) of football, subject to the agreement of the national football association.

3. Substitution procedure

The names of the substitutes must be given to the referee before the start of the match. Any substitute not named by this time may not take part in the match.

To replace a player with a substitute, the following must be observed:

- the referee must be informed before any substitution is made
- the player being substituted receives the referee’s permission to leave the field of play, unless already off the field
- the player being replaced is not obliged to leave at the halfway line and takes no further part in the match, except where return substitutions are permitted
- if a player who is to be replaced refuses to leave, play continues

The substitute only enters:

- during a stoppage in play
- at the halfway line
- after the player being replaced has left
- after receiving a signal from the referee

The substitution is completed when a substitute enters the field of play; from that moment, the substitute becomes a player and the replaced player becomes a substituted player.

Substitutes can take any restart provided they first enter the field of play.

If a substitution is made during the half-time interval or before extra time, the procedure must be completed before the match restarts.

All substituted players and substitutes are subject to the referee's authority whether they play or not.

4. Changing the goalkeeper

Any of the players may change places with the goalkeeper if:

- the referee is informed before the change is made
- the change is made during a stoppage in play

5. Infringements and sanctions

If a named substitute starts a match instead of a named player and the referee is not informed of this change:

- the referee allows the named substitute to continue playing
- no disciplinary sanction is taken against the named substitute
- the named player can become a named substitute
- the number of substitutions is not reduced
- the referee reports the incident to the appropriate authorities

If a player changes places with the goalkeeper without the referee's permission, the referee:

- allows play to continue
- cautions both players when the ball is next out of play

For any other infringements of this Law:

- the players are cautioned
- play is restarted with an indirect free kick, from the position of the ball when play was stopped

6. Players and substitutes sent off

A player who is sent off:

- before submission of the team list can not be named on the team list in any capacity
- after being named on the team list and before kick-off may be replaced by a named substitute, who can not be replaced; the number of substitutions the team can make is not reduced
- after the kick-off can not be replaced

A named substitute who is sent off before or after the kick-off may not be replaced.

7. Extra persons on the field of play

The coach and other officials named on the team list (with the exception of players or substitutes) are team officials. Anyone not named on the team list as a player, substitute or team official is an outside agent.

If a team official, substitute, substituted or sent off player or outside agent enters the field of play the referee must:

- only stop play if there is interference with play
- have the person removed when play stops
- take appropriate disciplinary action

If play is stopped and the interference was by:

- a team official, substitute, substituted or sent off player, play restarts with a direct free kick or penalty kick
- an outside agent, play restarts with a dropped ball

If a ball is going into the goal and the interference does not prevent a defending player playing the ball, the goal is awarded if the ball enters the goal (even if contact was made with the ball) unless the ball enters the opponents' goal.

8. Player outside the field of play

If, after leaving the field of play with the referee's permission, a player re-enters without the referee's permission, the referee must:

- stop play (not immediately if the player does not interfere with play or if the advantage can be applied)
- caution the player for entering the field of play without permission
- order the player to leave the field of play

If the referee stops play, it must be restarted:

- with an indirect free kick from the position of the ball when play was stopped or
- in accordance with Law 12 if the player infringes this Law

A player who crosses a boundary line as part of a playing movement, does not commit an infringement.

9. Goal scored with an extra person on the field of play

If, after a goal is scored, the referee realises, before play restarts, an extra person was on the field of play when the goal was scored:

- the referee must disallow the goal if the extra person was:
 - > a player, substitute, substituted player, sent off player or team official of the team that scored the goal
 - > an outside agent who interfered with play unless a goal results as outlined above in 'extra persons on the field of play'

Play is restarted with a goal kick, corner kick or dropped ball.

- the referee must allow the goal if the extra person was:
 - > a player, substitute, substituted player, sent off player or team official of the team that conceded the goal
 - > an outside agent who did not interfere with play

In all cases, the referee must have the extra person removed from the field of play.

If, after a goal is scored and play has restarted, the referee realises an extra person was on the field of play when the goal was scored, the goal can not be disallowed. If the extra person is still on the field the referee must:

- stop play
- have the extra person removed
- restart with a dropped ball or free kick as appropriate

The referee must report the incident to the appropriate authorities.

10. Team captain

The team captain has no special status or privileges but has a degree of responsibility for the behaviour of the team.