



To all national football associations,
and confederations

Circular no. 18

134th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of The International Football Association Board (The IFAB) – Decisions

Zurich, 7 April 2020
SEC/2020-C347/bru

The International Football Association Board

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Dear Sir or Madam,

The 134th AGM of The IFAB took place in Belfast, Northern Ireland on 29 February 2020 and was chaired by the Irish FA President, Mr David Martin. Details of the main decisions taken and discussions held at the AGM are outlined below; the minutes of the meeting will be available in due course on www.theifab.com.

In order to ensure that preparations to implement the Law changes can begin without delay, and to assist with the translation of the Laws of the Game, all the changes are set out in the accompanying document – *Laws of the Game 2020/21 – Changes and clarifications* – which is also available on www.theifab.com/document/for-football-bodies.

Downloadable English, French, German and Spanish versions of the Laws of the Game 2020/21 book will be available on our website shortly before the printed copies are distributed in May/June.

As usual, each confederation and national FA will receive five printed copies of the Laws of the Game 2020/21; each national FA will also receive one copy for each of its FIFA referees and assistant referees.

Pre-orders for additional copies of the Laws of the Game 2020/21 can be made through The IFAB's web shop at www.theifab.com/shop as from 7 April, at the reasonable price of CHF 3.00 per copy. To ensure the correct number of copies is produced, you should place your order by 24 April 2020 at the latest. Once your order is confirmed, you will receive an invoice with payment instructions. Please note that late orders may incur greater production costs and thus the price per copy may be higher.

1. Laws of the Game 2019/20

The members were pleased that the changes to the Laws of the Game for 2019/20 – particularly with regard to the goal kick, the substitution procedure, the use of red cards (RCs) and yellow cards (YCs) for team officials, and no attackers being allowed in the defensive wall – have had such a positive impact on the game at all levels.

2. Laws of the Game 2020/21

A number of changes to the Laws of the Game were approved; the exact wording is in the aforementioned enclosure.

All changes are compulsory for competitions and matches as from **1 June 2020**, although competitions which start before that date may implement them earlier or delay their implementation until no later than the start of the next competition.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the Laws of the Game

Competitions which have been suspended because of COVID-19 have the option of completing the competition using the Laws of the Game 2019/20 or adopting the Laws of the Game 2020/21.*

**'Friendly/practice/warm-up' matches in preparation for the restart of the competition are permitted to use the version of the Laws that will be used when the competition restarts, even if these matches are after 1 June 2020.*

Main Law changes

The main Law changes/clarifications approved at the AGM were:

- Handball:
 - Accidental handball by an attacking player should only be penalised if it 'immediately' results in a goal or an obvious opportunity for the player and/or their team to score a goal (i.e. following the handball, the ball travels only a short distance and/or there are very few passes)
 - For the purposes of determining handball offences, the 'arm' stops at the bottom of the armpit
- Penalty kicks and kicks from the penalty mark (KFPM):
 - If the goalkeeper offends but the kick misses the goal or rebounds from the goalposts/crossbar, the kick is not retaken unless the kicker was clearly impacted by the goalkeeper's offence
 - If a goalkeeper is penalised and a kick is retaken, the goalkeeper is warned for the first offence (in the game or in KFPM) and cautioned (YC) for any subsequent offence(s)
 - YCs for all players are not carried forward into KFPM. If a player receives a YC in both the match and KFPM, this should be recorded as two YCs, not as a sending-off (RC)
 - If the goalkeeper and kicker offend at exactly the same time, the kicker should be penalised

- Video assistant referees (VARs):
 - Only one TV signal is required for a 'VAR-only review'
 - Where a reviewable incident is subjective, the expectation is that the referee will undertake an 'on-field review' (OFR), i.e. the referee will view the replay footage in the referee review area

Other important clarifications

The following Law clarifications were also approved at the AGM:

- Goalposts and crossbars may be a combination of the four basic shapes
- Deliberate handball by a defender is 'deliberate play' for the purposes of offside
- If the goalkeeper is penalised for 'illegally' playing the ball a second time at a restart (i.e. before it has touched another player), the appropriate disciplinary sanction is applied, even if the second touch was with the hand/arm
- If the referee allows a 'quick' free kick or plays advantage for an offence which 'interfered with or stopped a promising attack', the YC is not issued
- A player who fails to respect the required 4m distance at a dropped ball should receive a YC
- If the goalkeeper 'flicks' the ball up at a goal kick or free kick and it is headed or chested back by a team-mate for the goalkeeper to catch, the kick should be retaken but there is no disciplinary sanction unless this occurs persistently

The members agreed that the fundamental philosophy of offside is underpinned by a desire to encourage attacking football and the scoring of goals. It was further agreed, therefore, that **Law 11 – Offside** should be analysed and reviewed with a view to potentially proposing changes reflecting this philosophy.

3. Concussion

The important and complex issue of concussion was discussed within the context that The IFAB only has responsibility for what happens during a match.

The members received feedback from the Concussion Expert Group meeting and it was agreed that deliberations would continue and protocols would be drawn up in the coming weeks to trial ways in which actual or potential head-injury events in a match could be managed.

4. 'play fair!': behaviour on the field of play

It was agreed that the focus for the coming year would be to consider ways in which the Laws of the Game might assist in reducing mobbing in football.

5. Video assistant referees (VARs)

The members were pleased to learn of the considerable increase in countries and competitions using, or planning to use, VARs following the successful implementation in competitions organised by FIFA, the confederations and in almost 40 countries worldwide. They acknowledged that there had been some inconsistency amongst high-profile competition organisers in the application of the VAR protocol as defined in the Laws of the Game. However, recent communication from these competition organisers signalled a positive shift towards the universal application of the protocol from next season.

The members were also updated on various technological developments, including important work being undertaken by FIFA to develop systems which will make the use of VARs more accessible to those countries and competitions with limited financial resources.

It was furthermore agreed that more insight into the decision-making process, for example access to the conversation between match officials during a review, would not be appropriate at this point, but that more effort should be made to enhance existing communication approaches to improve understanding of the review process and the referee's final decision.

6. Communication and education

The members were updated on the steps being taken to continue developing football stakeholders' understanding of the Laws of the Game, particularly through the use of media channels and digital tools such as the Laws of the Game mobile application.

Laws of the Game mobile application

As you might know, The IFAB launched the Laws of the Game app last year, presenting the Laws of the Game in a new, easily accessible and environmentally friendly way. It includes the full and up-to-date Laws with the latest changes highlighted (complete with explanations), as well as the VAR protocol, a glossary and practical guidelines for match officials. The app is useful for anyone interested in football and the Laws of the Game, from professionals and amateurs to fans and members of the media (more information can be found here: www.theifab.com/logapp/).

Although the app is available in English, French, German and Spanish, there is high demand for other language versions to be included. Therefore, we have also prepared the app to be able to operate in more languages (for more information, please contact us at logapp@theifab.com).

The IFAB is very grateful for the support and the many suggestions from all areas of the football world, which help the Laws of the Game to evolve to make football, from grassroots to international level, even fairer, more accessible and more enjoyable.

We will maintain our global consultation so that the Laws of the Game continue to promote and protect fairness and integrity on the field of play.

Thank you for your attention – please contact us if you have any questions or enquiries.

Yours sincerely,

The IFAB



Lukas Brud
Secretary

cc:

FIFA

Encl.:

as mentioned