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# Changes to Laws of the Game 2019-20

# Introduction



The 133<sup>rd</sup> AGM of The International FA Board (The IFAB) to be held in Aberdeen, Scotland on 2 March 2019 approved changes to the Laws of the Game for 2019/2020 related to three worldwide experiments. These changes were approved following 2 years of worldwide experiments:

There are several additional significant changes.

- Yellow and red cards for misconduct by team officials
- A player being substituted leaving the field of play at the nearest point on the boundary line
- At a goal kick and a free kick for the defending team in their own penalty area

# Substituted player leaving the field of play



## Law 3 – The Players

### Rational for the change

This will be particularly helpful when there can be little or no added time.

To tackle the unfair practice of a player who is being substituted taking a long time to leave at the halfway line (which is not a law requirement) the player must now leave at the nearest point (as with an injury) unless the referee indicates otherwise e.g. that the player can leave quickly at the halfway line or because of a safety/security issue or because the player is injured (and needs to leave on a stretcher).

A safety or security concern might be a youth player leaving the field along unfriendly spectators/parents.

The substituted player must go straight to the technical area or dressing room to avoid interfering with match officials, substitutes etc. and to avoid problems with spectators.

A player who infringes the spirit of the Law should be sanctioned by the referee for delaying the restart.



# Substituted player leaving the field of play

## Amended text

### **p. 48-3. Substitution procedure**

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

- *the player being substituted:*
  - *Receives the referee's permission to leave the field of play, unless already off the field, and must leave by the nearest point on the boundary line unless the referee indicates that the player may leave directly and immediately at the halfway line or another point (e.g. .for safety/security or injury)*
  - *must go immediately to the technical area or dressing room and takes no further part in the match, except where return substitutions are permitted*
  - *If the player being substituted refuses to leave, play continues*

# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## Rationale for the change

Formalizes the practice used in many USA youth games. And tries to standardize the practice.

The experiment with a YC/RC for misconduct by team officials has been successful and has many benefits at all levels, including for young referees dealing with *“difficult”* adult coaches.

The offender being a team official.

Law 12 will include a list of the usual YC and RC offenses. If an offense occurs and the offender cannot be identified, the senior official (usually the main coach) who is in the technical area at the time of the offense will, as the person responsible for the other team officials, receive the YC/RC.

# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## Law 5 – THE REFEREE

Amended text

p. 64-3. Powers and duties

Disciplinary action

*The referee:*

- *takes action against team officials who fail to act in a responsible manner and shows a yellow card for a caution or a red card for a sending off from the field of play and its immediate surrounds, including the technical area; if the offender cannot be identified, the senior team coach present in the technical area will receive the sanction. A medical team official who commits a sending off-offense may (...)*

# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## LAW 12 – FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

### Amended text

Adds team officials to the previous text.

p. 104-3. Disciplinary action

*(...) If, before entering the field of play at the start of the match, a player or team official commits a sending off offense, the referee has the authority to prevent the player or team official taking part in the match (see Law 3.6); the referee will report any other misconduct.*

*A player or team official who commits a cautionable or sending-off offense, either on or off the field of play, is disciplined according to the offense. (...)*

*Only a player, substitute, substituted player or team official may be shown the red or yellow card.*

# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## **p. 109 – 3. Disciplinary action**

### *Team officials*

*Where an offense is committed and the offender cannot be identified, the senior team coach present in the technical area will receive the sanction.*

### **Warning**

*The following offenses should usually result in a warning; repeated or blatant instances should result in a caution or sending off:*

- entering the field of play in a respectful/non-confrontational manner*
- failing to cooperate with a match official e.g. ignoring an instruction/request from assistant referee or the fourth official*
- minor/low level disagreement (by word or action) with a decision*
- occasionally leaving the confines of the technical area without committing another offense*



# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## Caution

### Caution offenses include (but are not limited to):

- *clearly/persistently not respecting the confines of their team's technical area*
- *delaying the restart of play by their team*
- *deliberately entering the technical area of the opposing team (non-confrontational)*

# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## Caution

### Caution offenses include (but are not limited to):

- *dissent by word or action including:*
  - *throwing/kicking drinks bottles or other objects*
  - *gestures which show a clear lack of respect for the match official(s) e.g. sarcastic clapping*
- *entering the referee review area (RRA)*

# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## Caution

- *excessively / persistently gesturing for a red or yellow card*
- *excessively showing the TV signal for a VAR 'review'*

# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## Caution

- *gesturing or acting in a provocative or inflammatory manner*
- *persistent unacceptable behavior (including repeated warning offenses)*
- *showing a lack of respect for the game*

# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## *Sending-off*

- *enter the opposing technical area in an aggressive or confrontational manner*
- *deliberately throwing /kicking an object onto the field of play*

# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## *Sending-off*

- *entering the field of play to:*
  - *confront a match official (including at half-time and full-time)*
  - *interfere with play, an opposing player or match official*

Accidentally hitting an Assistant Referee, while running along the touchline is not a send-off.

# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## *Sending –off*

- *entering the video operation room (VOR)*
- *physical or aggressive behavior (including spitting or biting) towards an opposing player, substitute, team official, match official, spectator or any other person (e.g. ball boy/girl, security or competition official etc.*

# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## *Sending –off*

- *receiving a second caution in the same match*
- *using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures*
- *violent conduct*



# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## *Sending –off*

- ***using unauthorized electronic or communication equipment and/or behaving in an inappropriate manner as the result of using electronic or communication equipment***

Unauthorized electronic or communication equipment would be an electronic communication device between a team official and a player.

# Yellow and red cards for team officials



## VAR PROTOCOL

### Amended text

Adds team officials to previous text.

p.142 – Players, substitutes and team officials

- *A player/substitute/substituted player/ team official who excessively shows the TV signal or enters the RRA (Referee Review Area) will be cautioned*  
(...)
- *A player/substitute/substituted player/ team official who enters the VOR (Video Operations Room) will be sent off:*

# Defending team free kicks in their own penalty area



## Law 13 – Free Kicks

### Rationale for the change

The experiment that 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 change is linked to the proposed change to the goal kick (See Law 16).

# Defending team free kicks in their own penalty area



## Amended text

p. 114-2. Procedure

### *The ball:*

- *Is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves*

If the kicking team kicks while the opponents are still in the penalty area or within 10 yards, they do so at their own risk and suffer the consequences.

Treat encroachments the same as you would for a free kick.

# Defending team free kicks in their own penalty area



## p. 115 – 3. Offenses and sanctions

*If, when the free kick is taken by the defending team inside its penalty area, any opponents are inside the penalty area because they did not have time to leave, the referee allows play to continue. If an opponent who is in the penalty when the free kick is taken, or enters the penalty area before the ball is in play, touches or challenges for the ball before it is in play, the free kick is retaken.*

Opponents are not allowed to interfere, as with any free kick.

# Goal kick



## **Law 16 – THE GOAL KICK**

### **Rationale for the change**

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 more dynamic/constructive restart to the game. It has reduced the time 'lost/wasted' and has stopped the tactic of a defender deliberately playing the ball before it leaves the penalty area, knowing that all that will happen is that the goal kick will be retaken. Opponents must remain outside the penalty area until the ball is in play.

# Goal Kick



## Amended text

p. 127 – 1. Procedure

- (...)

- *The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves*

If the kicking team kicks while the opponents are still in the penalty area, they do so at their own risk and suffer the consequences.

Treat encroachments the same as you would for a free kick.

# Goal kick



## p. 128 – 2. Offenses and sanctions

*If, when a goal kick is taken, any opponents are inside the penalty area because they did not have time to leave, the referee allows play to continue. If an opponent who is in the penalty area when the goal kick is taken, or enters the penalty area before the ball is in play, touches or challenges for the ball before it is in play, the goal kick is retaken.*

Opponents are not allowed to interfere, as with a free kick.



# Summary of Law changes and clarifications for 2019/20



## Other changes include:

- Clearer wording for *'handball'*
- Attacking team players must be at least *1m away from a defensive 'wall'*
- The goalkeeper only has to have *part of one foot on the goal line* at a penalty kick

Note that the Laws are using the common term, "handball."

# Summary of Law changes and clarifications for 2019/20



## A new dropped ball procedure

- If the ball hits a match official and goes into goal
- If the ball hits a match official and team possession changes
- If the ball hits a match official and a promising attack starts

The match officials are no longer just part of the field.  
Match officials cannot change the game.

# Summary of Law changes and clarifications for 2019/20



## Dropped ball

- If play is stopped inside the penalty area, the ball will be dropped for the goalkeeper

No more competitive dropped balls. Only one player participates in a dropped ball.

- 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; all other players (of both teams) must be 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

# Summary of Law changes and clarifications for 2019/20



## Free kicks

- When there is a *'wall' of three or more defenders*, the attackers are not allowed within 1m (1yd) of the wall; an attacker less than 1m (1yd) from the 'wall' when the kick is taken will be penalized with an *indirect free kick*

Attackers cannot interfere with the wall. Walls with less than three defenders are usually far enough out that attackers are not interested in the wall.

- When the defending team takes a free kick in their own penalty area, the ball is in play once the kick is taken; it does not have to leave the penalty area before it can be played

Referees should watch for unfair tactics by the attacking team, maybe behind the wall.

# Summary of Law changes and clarifications for 2019/20



## Goal celebrations

- If a goal is disallowed, 'illegal' goal celebrations (e.g. removing the shirt) are still a Yellow Card

A goal might be disallowed as a result of offside or Video Assistant Referee Review.

## Goal kick

- The ball is in play once the kick is taken; it can be played before leaving the penalty area

# Summary of Law changes and clarifications for 2019/20



## Handball

- Deliberate handball remains an offense

This clarification involves what else might be a handball, and what might not be a handball.

Note the change from handling to the more common term, handball.

# Handball



The following '*handball*' situations, even if accidental, will be a free kick

- the ball goes into the goal off an attacking player's hand/arm
- the ball a player gains control/possession after the ball has touches their hand/arm and scores, or creates a goal-scoring opportunity
- the ball touches a player's hand/arm which has made their body unnaturally bigger

An unfair advantage is not allowed.

# Handball



The following 'handball' situations, even if accidental, will be a free kick

- 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 hand or arm above the shoulder is making the body unnaturally bigger.

If the ball came off a player's head, the contact with the hand or arm is incidental. The hand or arms are expected to be at or above the shoulders for balance.

This contact still cannot result in an unfair advantage.



# Summary of Law changes and clarifications for 2019/20



## Handball

- 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
    - 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 which is between their body and the ground to support the body (not extended to make the body bigger)

Still cannot result in an unfair advantage.

# Summary of Law changes and clarifications for 2019/20



## Handball

- The goalkeeper cannot score by throwing the ball into the opponent's goal
- If the goalkeeper attempts to 'clear' (release into play) a throw-in or deliberate pass from a team-mate but the 'clearance' fails, the goalkeeper can handle the ball

If the goalkeeper tries to head, kick, or chest the ball and misplays the ball, the goalkeeper can handle the ball in the penalty area.

# Summary of Law changes and clarifications for 2019/20



## Indirect free kick (IDFK) – signal

- No IDFK signal needed once the kick has been taken and it is clear that a goal will not result directly from the kick

## Kicking objects

- Kicking an object at the ball, an opponent or match official is a direct free kick

Kicking an object at... is treated like throwing an object at..., which is a direct free kick.



## 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 or nets and they must not be moving
  - The goalkeeper is not allowed to make the posts or crossbar move.  
The posts or crossbar should not be moving during a penalty kick.
- If an offense occurs before a penalty kick is taken and the kick is not taken, the offender may receive a YC/RC but the penalty kick must then be taken

# Summary of Law changes and clarifications for 2019/20



## Players' equipment

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

## Quick free kick and RC/YC

- 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

The referee no longer has to deny goal-scoring opportunity to issue a card.  
Awesome change!

# Summary of Law changes and clarifications for 2019/20



## Substitutes

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

## Verbal offenses

- All verbal offenses are penalized with an indirect free kick

Just emphasizing that verbal offenses, like obscene language, while maybe a send-off, are indirect free kicks, NOT direct free kicks.



## Team officials

- A team official guilty of misconduct will be shown a YC (caution) or RC (sending-off); if the offender can not be identified, the senior coach who is in the technical area at the time will receive the YC/RC

# 2019/20 Laws of the Game



## Reminders

The IFAB and FIFA would like to remind everyone of two very important aspects of the game:

### **Captains**

- The Laws of the Game state that the captain has *‘a degree of responsibility for the behavior of their team’* – captains are expected to use this responsibility to help calm/positively influence the behavior of their players, especially in controversial/confrontational situations involving opponents or match officials

### **Respect for Referees**

- Players must respect all decisions made by referees and other match officials, even when they may appear to be wrong.



# 2019/20 Laws of the Game



This document summarizes the main changes and clarifications. The agreed wording and explanations will be available on The IFAB's website ([www.theifab.com](http://www.theifab.com)) soon after the IFAB AGM; a downloadable electronic version of the Laws of the Game 2019/20 will be available in mid-May on the IFAB's website, along with details of the new IFAB Laws of the Game app.

Download a copy of the 2019/20 Laws of the Game at:  
[http://static-3eb8.kxcdn.com/documents/793/103202\\_200519\\_LotG\\_201920\\_EN\\_SinglePage.pdf](http://static-3eb8.kxcdn.com/documents/793/103202_200519_LotG_201920_EN_SinglePage.pdf)

*All changes come into force on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2019. Competitions starting before that date may apply the changes from the start of their competitions, at an agreed point during the competition (e.g. after the mid-season break) or may delay then until no later than the start of the next competition.*

Law changes will likely go into affect for the Fall season and pre-Fall season tournaments.  
Check your local rules of competition.

Respect for the Laws of the Game and the match officials who apply the laws is paramount to fairness and image of football

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