

Law changes

2018/19

Outline summary of Law changes

Herewith a simple outline of the main changes/clarifications.

Modifications

- There is no limit on the number of substitutes that can be used in youth football
- Permission is needed from The IFAB for any modifications not already permitted
- Temporary dismissals – System B: a player who receives two temporary dismissals and a non-temporary dismissal caution (YC) may not be substituted/replaced

Law 1

- Clarification of measurements on the field of play
- Reference to substituted players being permitted to be in the technical area
- Commercial advertising is not permitted on the ground in the referee review area (RRA)
- Reference to the video operation room (VOR) and referee review area (RRA)

Law 3

- Competition rules may permit the use of an additional substitute in extra time (even if not all permitted substitutes have been used)
- A maximum of 12 substitutes can be named for international 'A' friendly matches

Law 4

- Small, hand-held electronic or communication devices are permitted in the technical area if used for coaching/ tactics or player welfare
- Introduction of a FIFA quality mark for EPTS and data from EPTS may be received in the technical area during the match
- Detailed guidelines for what can and cannot appear on players' equipment
- Player who has left the field because of an equipment issue and returns without permission and interferes is penalised with a direct free kick (or penalty kick)

Law 5

- Reference to video assistant referees (VARs) and assistant VARs (AVARs) and the ability of a referee to use video replays for decision-making as part of VAR system
- Some sending-off offences can be reviewed even if play has restarted
- Match officials are not permitted to wear cameras
- Inclusion of the referee 'check' and 'review' signals used in the VAR process

Law 6

- Distinction between 'on-field' match officials and 'video' match officials
- Duties of the video assistant referee (VAR) and assistant VAR (AVAR)

Law 7

- Drinks breaks should not exceed one minute
- Allowance must be made for time 'lost' for drinks breaks and VAR 'checks' / 'reviews'

Law 10

- Kicks from the penalty mark – a replacement for a goalkeeper cannot take a kick in that 'round' if the goalkeeper has already taken a kick

Law 11

- The first point of contact when the ball is played/touched is the moment when offside position is judged

Law 12

- Biting is included as a direct free kick and sending-off offence
- Throwing an object at the ball or hitting the ball with a held object are separate direct free kick offences (not a form of handball)
- If the ball rebounds from the goalkeeper this does not prevent the goalkeeper handling the ball a second time even if the first attempt to catch/hold the ball was deliberate
- If the referee plays advantage for a DOGSO the offender is cautioned (YC) whether or not a goal is scored
- Entering the RRA or excessively showing the TV signal are cautions (YCs)
- Where 2 separate cautionable (YC) offences are committed in close proximity, both cautions (YCs) must be issued; same principle if one is a sending-off offence
- Entering the VOR is a sending-off (RC) offence
- If a player commits an offence outside the field of play (ball in play) against someone from their own team (including a team official) it is an indirect free kick on the boundary line

Law 13

- Clarification that free kicks can also be awarded for offences by a substitute, substituted or sent off player, or team official

Law 15

- A player must stand to take a throw-in (kneeling, sitting etc. not permitted)

In addition, the following wording was deleted as it is no longer relevant:

Law 2

- Reference to previous ball quality marks:
Balls carrying previous quality marks such as “FIFA Approved”, “FIFA Inspected” or “International Matchball Standard” may be used in aforementioned competitions until 31 July 2017.

Details of all Law changes (in Law order)

The following lists all changes to the Laws of the Game since edition 2017/18. For each change the old wording (where appropriate) and the new/changed/additional wording are given followed by an explanation for the change.

Modifications to the Laws

Additional text

For any level except competitions involving the 1st team of clubs in the top division or 'A' international teams:

- the number of substitutes each team is permitted to use up to a maximum of five, except in youth football where the maximum will be determined by the national association, confederation or FIFA

Explanation

The 2017 AGM approved a major revision of the Modifications to the Laws of the Game which aimed to increase participation but unintendedly reduced participation in some countries which already allowed 7 substitutes in youth football; this clarification therefore enables more than 5 substitutes to be used in youth football.

Permission for other modifications

Additional text

National FAs have the option to approve different modifications for different competitions – there is no requirement to apply them universally or to apply them all. However, no other modifications are allowed without the permission of The IFAB.

Explanation

Clarifies that, exceptionally, The IFAB may give permission for other modifications.

Guidelines for temporary dismissals (sin bins) –

Temporary dismissal systems (System B)

Additional text

A player who (...). The player may be substituted at the end of the second temporary dismissal period if the player's team has not used its maximum number of substitutes but a player who has also received a non-temporary dismissal caution (YC) may not be replaced or substituted.

Explanation

A player who gets 2x temporary dismissals can be replaced/substituted at the end of the second temporary dismissal period. However, a player who also receives a non- temporary dismissal YC (and has thus had 3 x YCs) should not be replaced /substituted.

Law 01 – The Field of Play**Additional text**

Field of Play markings diagram

- Measurements are from the outside of the lines as the lines are part of the area they enclose.
- The penalty mark is measured from the centre of the mark to the back edge of the goal line.

Explanation

Addition to the diagram how to measure the distances for the markings.

9. The technical area

Additional text

The technical area relates to matches played in stadiums with a designated seated area for team officials, substitutes and substituted players as outlined below: (...)

Explanation

Reference to substituted players being allowed in the technical area.

12. Commercial advertising

Additional text

No form of commercial advertising, whether real or virtual, is permitted on the field of play, on the ground within the area enclosed by the goal nets, the technical area or the referee review area (RRA), or on the ground within(...).

Explanation

Inclusion of the referee review area (RRA) in the restrictions on commercial advertising on the ground.

14. Video Assistant Referees (VARs)

New text

In matches using VARs there must be a video operation room (VOR) and at least one referee review area (RRA).

Video Operation Room (VOR)

The VOR is where the video assistant referee (VAR), assistant VAR (AVAR) and replay operator (RO) work; it may be in/close to the stadium or at a more distant location. Only authorised persons are permitted to enter the VOR or communicate with VAR, AVAR and RO during the match.

A player, substitute or substituted player who enters the VOR will be sent off; a team official who enters the VOR will be dismissed from the technical area

Referee review area (RRA)

In matches using VARs there must be at least one RRA where the referee undertakes an 'on-field review' (OFR). The RRA must be:

- in a visible location outside the field of play
- clearly marked

A player, substitute or substituted player who enters the RRA will be cautioned; a team official who enters the RRA will be publicly given an official warning (or cautioned where YCs are used for team officials).

Explanation

Reference is needed in the Laws to the 'working areas' used as part of the VAR process.

Law 03 – The Players**2. Number of substitutes** – Official competitions**Additional text**

The competition rules must state:

- how many substitutes may be named, from three to a maximum of twelve
- whether one additional substitute may be used when a match goes into extra time (whether or not the team has already used the full number of permitted substitutes)

Explanation

The two-year experiment with a 4th substitute being available in matches with extra time has been successful. Regardless of the maximum number of substitutes allowed during 'normal time', this change gives competition organisers the authority to permit each team to use one additional substitute during extra time.

2. Number of substitutes – Other matches

Old text

In national 'A' team matches a maximum of six substitutes may be used.

New text

In national 'A' team matches, a maximum of twelve substitutes may be named of which a maximum of six may be used.

Explanation

Clarifies that for national 'A' team friendly matches, a maximum of twelve substitutes can be named. This is consistent with the restriction for competitive matches and prevents there being insufficient seating in the technical area.

Law 04 – The Players' Equipment

4. Other equipment – Electronic communication

Old text

Players (...).
The use of any form of electronic communication equipment by team officials is not permitted except where it directly relates to player welfare or safety.

New text

Players (...).
The use of any form of electronic communication equipment by team officials is permitted where it directly relates to player welfare or safety or for tactical/coaching reasons but only small, mobile, hand-held equipment (e.g. microphone, headphone, ear-piece, mobilephone/smartphone, smartwatch, tablet, laptop) may be used. A team official who uses unauthorised equipment or who behaves in an inappropriate manner as a result of the use of electronic or communication equipment will be dismissed from the technical area.

Explanation

As it is impossible to prevent communication to/from the technical area and it is reasonable to have an exchange of information relating to coaching/tactics or player welfare (but not match officials' decisions), the focus will move to the behaviour resulting from the use of such equipment.

4. Other equipment – Electronic performance and tracking systems (EPTS)

Additional (and amended) text

Where wearable technology (WT) as part of electronic performance and tracking systems (EPTS) is used in matches played in an official competition organised under the auspices of FIFA, confederations or national football associations, the competition organiser must ensure that the technology attached to the player's equipment is not dangerous and must bear the following mark:



This mark indicates that it has been officially tested and meets the minimum safety requirements of the International Match Standard developed by FIFA and approved by The IFAB. The institutes conducting these tests are subject to the approval of FIFA. ~~The transition period runs until 31 May 2018.~~

Where electronic performance and tracking systems (EPTS) are used (subject to the agreement of the national football association/competition organiser) the competition organiser must ensure that the information and data transmitted from EPTS to the technical area during the match in matches played in an official competition are reliable and accurate.

A professional standard was developed by FIFA and approved by The IFAB in order to support the competition organisers with the approval process of reliable and accurate electronic performance and tracking systems.

The professional standard will be implemented in the transition period until 1 June 2019. The following mark indicates that an EPTS device/system has been officially tested and meets the requirements in terms of reliability and accuracy of positional data in football:



Explanation

Outlines the changes to the use of EPTS data and the development of a FIFA Quality standard.

5. Slogans, statements, images and advertising

Additional text

Principles

- Law 4 applies to all equipment (including clothing) worn by players, substitutes and substituted players; its principles also apply to all team officials in the technical area
- The following are (usually) permitted:
 - > the player's number, name, team crest/logo, initiative slogans/emblems promoting the game of football, respect and integrity as well as any advertising permitted by competition rules or national FA, confederation or FIFA regulations
 - > the facts of a match: teams, date, competition/event, venue
- Permitted slogans, statements or images should be confined to the shirt front and/or armband
- In some cases, the slogan, statement or image might only appear on the captain's armband

Interpreting the Law

When interpreting whether a slogan, statement or image is permissible, note should be taken of Law 12 (Fouls and Misconduct), which requires the referee to take action against a player who is guilty of

- using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures
- gesturing in a provocative, derisory or inflammatory way

Any slogan, statement or image which falls into any of these categories is not permitted.

Whilst 'religious' and 'personal' are relatively easily defined, 'political' is less clear but slogans, statements or images related to the following are not permitted:

- any person(s), living or dead (unless part of the official competition name)
- any local, regional, national or international political party/organisation/group, etc.
- any local, regional or national government or any of its departments, offices or functions
- any organisation which is discriminatory
- any organisation whose aims/actions are likely to offend a notable number of people
- any specific political act/event

When commemorating a significant national or international event, the sensibilities of the opposing team (including its supporters) and the general public should be carefully considered.

Competition rules may contain further restrictions/limitations, particularly in relation to the size, number and position of permitted slogans, statements and images. It is recommended that disputes relating to slogans, statements or images be resolved prior to a match/competition taking place.

Explanation

This guidance is to help competition organisers, national FAs, confederations and FIFA decide what can be visible on players' equipment.

6. Offences and sanctions

Additional text

(...)

A player who enters without permission must be cautioned and if play is stopped to issue the caution, an indirect free kick is awarded from the position of the ball when play was stopped, unless there was interference in which case a direct free kick (or penalty kick) is awarded from the position of the interference.

Explanation

Clarifies the restart if a player returns without the necessary permission and interferes (consistent with Law 3).

Law 05 – The Referee

4. Video assistant referee (VAR)

Additional text

The use of video assistant referees (VARs) is only permitted where the match/competition organiser has fulfilled all the VAR protocol and implementation requirements (as set out in the VAR Handbook) and has received written permission from The IFAB and FIFA.

The referee may be assisted by a video assistant referee (VAR) only in the event of a 'clear and obvious error' or 'serious missed incident' in relation to:

- goal/no goal
- penalty/no penalty
- direct red card (not second caution)
- mistaken identity when the referee cautions or sends off the wrong player of the offending team

The assistance from the video assistant referee (VAR) will relate to using replay(s) of the incident. The referee will make the final decision which may be based solely on the information from the VAR and/or the referee reviewing the replay footage directly ('on-field review').

Except for a 'serious missed incident', the referee (and where relevant other 'on-field' match officials) must always make a decision (including a decision not to penalise a potential offence); this decision does not change unless it is a 'clear and obvious error'.

Reviews after play has restarted

If play has stopped and restarted, the referee may only undertake a 'review', and take the appropriate disciplinary sanction, for a case of mistaken identity or for a potential sending-off offence relating to violent conduct, spitting, biting or extremely offensive, insulting and/or abusive gesture(s).

Explanation

- Inclusion of the provision for a referee to use video assistance (via the VAR)
- Reference to the referee being able to use information from video replays for certain sending-off offences and mistaken identity, even if play has restarted.

5. Referee's equipment – Other equipment

Additional text

(...)

Referees and other 'on-field' match officials are prohibited from wearing jewellery or any other electronic equipment, including cameras.

Explanation

Clarifies that referees and other 'on-field' match officials are not permitted to use or wear cameras.

Law 06 – The Other Match Officials

Additional (and amended) text

Other match officials (two assistant referees, fourth official, two additional assistant referees, reserve assistant referee, video assistant referee (VAR) and at least one assistant VAR (AVAR) may be appointed to matches. They will assist the referee in controlling the match in accordance with the Laws of the Game but the final decision will always be taken by the referee.

The referee, assistant referees, fourth official, additional assistant referees and reserve assistant referee are the 'on-field' match officials.

The VAR and AVAR are the 'video' match officials and assist the referee in accordance with the VAR protocol as determined by The IFAB.

(...)

With the exception of the reserve assistant referee, the 'on-field' match officials assist the referee with..... (...)

The 'on-field' match officials assist the referee with inspecting the field of play... (...)

Explanation

- Reference in the Laws to the match officials who are used within the VAR system.
- Distinction created between 'on-field' match officials and the 'video' match officials.

5. Video match officials

Additional text

- A video assistant referee (VAR) is a match official who may assist the referee to make a decision using replay footage only for a 'clear and obvious error' or 'serious missed incident' relating to a goal/no goal, penalty/no penalty, direct red card (not a second caution) or a case of mistaken identity when the referee cautions or sends off the wrong player of the offending team

An assistant video assistant referee (AVAR) is a match official who helps the VAR primarily by:

- watching the television footage while the VAR is busy with a 'check' or a 'review'
- keeping a record of VAR-related incidents and any communication or technology problems
- assisting the VAR's communication with the referee especially communicating with the referee when the VAR is undertaking a 'check'/'review' e.g. to tell the referee to 'stop play' or 'delay the restart' etc.
- recording the time 'lost' when play is delayed for a 'check' or a 'review'
- communicating information about a VAR-related decision to relevant parties

Explanation

Outline of main duties of the 'video' match officials.

Law 07 – The Duration of the Match

2. Half-time interval

Additional text

(...); a short drinks break (which should not exceed one minute) is permitted at the interval of half-time in extra time. (...)

Explanation

To avoid drinks breaks becoming lengthy coaching (commercial) breaks, their length is limited/defined. This restriction does not apply to medical 'cooling breaks'.

3. Allowance for time lost

Additional text

Allowance is made by the referee in each half for all time lost in that half through:

(...)

- stoppages for drinks (which should not exceed one minute) or other medical reasons permitted by competition rule
- delays relating to VAR 'checks' and 'reviews'

Explanation

Reference to additional time for stoppages for drinks and VAR 'checks'/'reviews'.

Law 10 – Determining the Outcome of the Match

3. Kicks from the penalty mark – Procedure

Additional text

- A goalkeeper who is unable to continue before or during the kicks may be replaced (...) but the replaced goalkeeper takes no further part and may not take a kick. If the goalkeeper has already taken a kick, the replacement may not take a kick until the next round of kicks

Explanation

Clarifies that if a goalkeeper is replaced and has taken a kick, the replacement may not take a kick in that 'round' of kicks.

Law 11 – Offside

2. Offside offence

Additional text

A player in an offside position at the moment the ball is played or touched* by a team-mate is only penalised on becoming involved in active play by:

(...)

*The first point of contact of the 'play' or 'touch' of the ball should be used

Explanation

Slow motion shows a detectable difference between the first and last contact with the ball so a definition of the precise moment that the ball is 'played' is needed when judging offside position.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

1. Direct free kick

Additional text

A direct free kick is awarded if a player commits any of the following offences: (...)

- bites or spits at an opponent someone
- throws an object at the ball, opponent or match official, or makes contact with the ball with a held object

Handling the ball

- ~~touching the ball with an object held in the hand (clotting, shinguard etc.) is an offence~~
- ~~hitting the ball with a thrown object (boot, shinguard etc.) is an offence~~

Explanation

- Reference to biting (a rare offence) as a direct free kick offence (and also in the list of sending-off offences)
 - Throwing an object at the ball or making contact with the ball with a held object become a separate category of offence and not part of handball so a goalkeeper can be penalised for such conduct in their penalty area.
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2. Indirect free kick

Amended text

A goalkeeper is considered to be in control of the ball when: the ball is between (...) or by touching it with any part of the hands or arms except if it rebounds ~~accidentally~~ from the goalkeeper or the... (...)

Explanation

Goalkeepers often unsuccessfully attempt to catch/hold/stop or 'parry' the ball but as this is a 'deliberate' touch with the hand(s) they have technically controlled the ball so cannot pick it up. This is not the Law's intention and is not enforced; removal of 'accidentally' clarifies the Law.

3. Disciplinary action – Advantage

Amended text

If the referee plays the advantage for an offence for which a caution / send off would have been issued had play been stopped, this caution / send off must be issued when the ball is next out of play, except ~~when~~ when for the denial of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity ~~results in a goal~~ when the player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour."

Explanation

If the referee plays advantage for a DOGSO and a goal is scored it is a YC but technically if no goal results the Law said it should be a RC. This is never applied and is not seen as 'fair' as applying the advantage effectively means that a goal-scoring opportunity remains; consequently, a YC is the fairest sanction, whether or not a goal is scored.

3. Disciplinary action – Cautionable offences

Additional text

A player is cautioned if guilty of:

(...)

- entering the referee review area (RRA)
- excessively using the 'review' (TV screen) signal

A substitute or substituted player is cautioned if guilty of:

(...)

- entering the referee review area (RRA)
- excessively using the 'review' (TV screen) signal

Where two separate cautionable offences are committed (even in close proximity), they should result in two cautions, for example if a player enters the field of play without the required permission and commits a reckless tackle or stops a promising attack with a foul/handball, etc.

Explanation

- Inclusion of entering the referee review area (RRA) or excessively using the 'review' (TV screen) signal in the list of cautionable offences
- Clarifies the action the referee should take where 2 clearly separate cautionable (YC) offences occur which may be linked, particularly when someone enters the field without permission (where needed) and then commits a cautionable offence. This principle also applies to sending-off offences.

3. Disciplinary action – Sending-off offences

Additional text

A player, substitute or substituted player who commits any of the following offences is sent off: (...)

- biting or spitting at someone
- entering the video operation room (VOR)

Explanation

Inclusion of biting and entering the VOR as sending-off offences.

4. Restart of play after fouls and misconduct

Additional text

If, when the ball is in play:

(...)

If an offence is committed outside the field of play against a player, substitute, substituted player, or team official of the ir own team, play is restarted with an indirect free kick on the boundary line closest to where the offence occurred.

If a player makes contact with the ball with an object held in the hand (boot, shinguard etc.) play is restarted with a direct free kick (or penalty kick).

Explanation

Clarifies:

- how the game is restarted if a player commits an offence off the field of play against someone from their own team (including a team official).
- that hitting the ball with an object held in the hand is a separate offence and not part of handball; consequently a goalkeeper can be penalised for such conduct in their own penalty area.

Law 13 – Free kicks

1. Types of free kick

Additional text

Direct and indirect free kicks are awarded to the opposing team of a player, substitute, substituted or sent off player, or team official guilty of an offence.

Explanation

The Laws permit substitutes, substituted and sent off players, and team official to be penalised with a free kick for some offences.

Law 15 – The Throw-in**1. Procedure****Amended text**

At the moment of delivering the ball, the thrower must:
face stand facing the field of play

Explanation

Clarifies that a player must stand to take a throw in i.e. sitting or kneeling positions are not permitted.