

Law changes

2019/20

Outline summary of Law changes

Herewith a simple outline of the main changes/clarifications.

Law 1

- A team official will be cautioned (YC) for entering the RRA and sent off (RC) for entering the VOR

Law 3

- A player who is being substituted must leave the field at the nearest point on the boundary line, unless otherwise directed by the referee

Law 4

- Undershirts can be multi-coloured/patterned if they are exactly the same as the shirt sleeve

Law 5

- Referee cannot change a restart decision after play has restarted but, in certain circumstances, may issue a YC/RC for a previous incident
- If the referee leaves the field for a VAR review or to call players back to the field at the end of a half, a decision can still be changed
- Team officials guilty of misconduct can be shown a YC/RC; if an offender cannot be identified, the senior coach in the technical area receives the YC/RC
- If a penalty kick is awarded, the team's penalty taker can receive assessment or treatment and then stay on the field and take the kick

Law 7

- Clarification of the difference between 'cooling' and 'drinks' breaks

Law 8

- The team that wins the toss may choose to take the kick-off
- Dropped ball – ball dropped for goalkeeper (if play stopped in penalty area) or for one player of team that last touched the ball at the location of the last touch; all other players (of both teams) must be at least 4 m (4.5 yds) away

Law 9

- Dropped ball if the ball touches the referee (or other match official) and goes into the goal, possession changes or an attacking move starts

Law 10

- Goalkeeper cannot score by throwing the ball into the opponents' goal

Law 12

- Handball text re-written for greater clarity/consistency with clear guidelines for when 'non-deliberate' handball should (and should not) be penalised
- Confirmation that an 'illegal' handball offence by a goalkeeper in their own penalty area is not sanctioned with a YC/RC
- If, after a throw-in or deliberate kick from a team-mate, the goalkeeper unsuccessfully kicks or tries to kick the ball to release it into play, the goalkeeper can then handle the ball
- Referee can delay issuing a YC/RC until the next stoppage if the non-offending team takes a quick free kick and creates a goal-scoring opportunity
- The YC for an 'illegal' goal celebration remains even if the goal is disallowed
- List of the warning/YC/RC offences for team officials
- All verbal offences are punished with an IDFK
- Kicking an object is punished in the same way as throwing an object

Law 13

- Once an IDFK has been taken, the referee can stop showing the IDFK signal if it is clear that a goal cannot be scored directly (e.g. from most offside IDFKs)
- For defending team free kicks in their penalty area, the ball is in play once it is kicked and clearly moves; it does not have to leave the penalty area
- When there is a defensive 'wall' of at least 3 players, all attacking team players must be at least 1 m from the 'wall'; IDFK if they encroach

Law 14

- Goalposts, crossbar and nets must not be moving when a penalty is taken and the goalkeeper must not be touching them
- Goalkeeper must have at least part of one foot on, or in line with, the goal line when a penalty kick is taken; cannot stand behind the line
- If an offence occurs after the referee signals for a penalty kick to be taken but the kick is not taken, it must then be taken after YC/RC is issued

Law 15

- Opponents must be at least 2 m from the point on the touchline where a throw-in is to be taken, even if the thrower is back from the line

Law 16

- At goal kicks, the ball is in play once it is kicked and clearly moves; it does not have to leave the penalty area

Details of all Law changes (in Law order)

The following lists all changes to the Laws of the Game since edition 2018/19. For each change the old wording (where appropriate) and the new/changed/additional wording are given followed by an explanation for the change.

Law 01 – The Field of Play

14. Video assistant referees (VARs)

Amended text

Video operation room (VOR)

A player, substitute, ~~or~~ substituted player or team official 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)

A player, substitute, ~~or~~ substituted player or team official 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

Misconduct by team officials is now a sanction using YC/RC.

Law 03 – The Players

3. Substitution procedure

Amended text

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)
 - the player being replaced is not obliged to leave at the halfway line and 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 a player who is to be ~~replaced~~ substituted refuses to leave, play continues

Explanation

To stop a player who is being substituted 'wasting' time by leaving slowly at the halfway line (which is not a Law requirement) the player must leave at the nearest point (as with an injury) unless the referee indicates otherwise, e.g. if the player can leave quickly at the halfway line, there is a safety/security issue or the player leaves on a stretcher. The player must go immediately to the technical area or dressing room to avoid problems with substitutes, spectators, or the match officials. A player who infringes the spirit of this Law should be sanctioned for unsporting behaviour i.e. delaying the restart of play.

Law 04 – The Players' Equipment

3. Colours

Additional text

Undershirts must be:

- a single colour which is the same as the main colour of the shirt sleeve or
- a pattern/colours which exactly replicate(s) the shirt sleeve

Explanation

Manufacturers now make patterned undershirts whose sleeves are the same as the main shirt sleeve; these should be allowed as they help match officials' decision-making.

Law 05 – The Referee

2. Decisions of the referee

Amended text

The referee may not change a restart decision on realising it is incorrect or on the advice of another match official if play has restarted or the referee has signalled the end of the first or second half (including extra time) and left the field of play or ~~terminated~~ abandoned the match. However, if at the end of the half, the referee leaves the field of play to go to the referee review area (RRA) or to instruct the players to return to the field of play, this does not prevent a decision being changed for an incident which occurred before the end of the half.

Except as outlined in Law 12.3 and the VAR protocol, a disciplinary sanction may only be issued after play has restarted if another match official had identified and attempted to communicate the offence to the referee before play restarted; the restart associated with the sanction does not apply.

Explanation

- The word 'terminated' is not easily translated – 'abandoned' is better
- If, at the end of a half, the referee goes to the RRA or to tell the players to return to the field, a 'review' is allowed and a decision can be changed for an offence which occurred before the half ended
- Sometimes a match official indicates/communicates a YC/RC offence (e.g. AR flagging for violent conduct off the ball) but the referee does not see the indication/hear the communication until after play has restarted. The referee can take the appropriate disciplinary action, but the restart associated with the offence does not apply

3. Powers and duties – Disciplinary action

Amended text

(...)

- takes action against team officials who fail to act in a responsible manner and ~~may expel them~~ warns or 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 coach present in the technical area will receive the sanction. A medical team official who commits a ~~dismissible~~ sending-off offence may remain if (...)

Explanation

The experiment with YC/RC for misconduct by team officials has been successful and has revealed many benefits at all levels, including for young referees dealing with 'difficult' adult coaches. If the offender cannot be identified, the senior team official (usually the main coach) in the technical area will receive the YC/RC (as the person responsible for the other team officials).

3. Powers and duties – Injuries

Additional text

(...)

- An injured player may not be treated on the field of play (...). Exceptions to the requirement to leave the field of play are only when:
- (...)
- a penalty kick has been awarded and the injured player will be the kicker

Explanation

It is unfair if the team's kicker needs assessment/treatment and then has to leave the field and cannot take the penalty kick.

Law 07 – The Duration of the Match

3. Allowance for time lost

Amended 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 rules~~
- medical stoppages permitted by competition rules e.g. 'drinks' breaks (which should not exceed one minute) and 'cooling' breaks (ninety seconds to three minutes)

Explanation

In the interests of player safety, competition rules may allow, in certain weather conditions (e.g. high humidity and temperatures), 'cooling' breaks (from ninety seconds to three minutes) to allow the body's temperature to fall; they are different from 'drinks' breaks (maximum one minute) which are for rehydration.

Law 08 – The Start and Restart of Play

1. Kick-off – Procedure

Amended text

- the team that wins the toss of a coin decides which goal ~~it will~~ to attack in the first half or to take the kick-off
- depending on the above, their opponents take the kick-off or decide which goal to attack in the first half
- the team that ~~wins the toss~~ decided which goal to attack in the first half takes the kick-off to start the second half

Explanation

Recent Law changes have made the kick-off more dynamic (e.g. a goal can be scored directly from the kick-off) so captains winning the toss often ask to take the kick-off.

2. Dropped ball – Procedure

Amended text

Old text	New text
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The referee drops the ball at the position where it was when play was stopped, unless play was stopped inside the goal area in which case the ball is dropped on the goal area line which is parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was when play was stopped• The ball is in play when it touches the ground• Any number of players may contest a dropped ball (including the goalkeepers); the referee cannot decide who may contest a dropped ball or its outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>The ball is dropped for the defending team goalkeeper in their penalty area if, when play was stopped:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>the ball was in the penalty area or</u>• <u>the last touch of the ball was in the penalty area</u>• <u>In all other cases, the referee drops the ball for one player of the team that last touched the ball at the position where it last touched a player, an outside agent or, as outlined in Law 9.1, a match official</u>• <u>All other players (of both teams) must remain at least 4 m (4.5 yds) from the ball until it is in play</u> <p>The ball is in play when it touches the ground.</p> <p>Any number of players may contest a dropped ball (including the goalkeepers); the referee cannot decide who may contest a dropped ball or its outcome.</p>

Explanation

The current dropped ball procedure often leads to a 'manufactured' restart which is 'exploited' unfairly (e.g. kicking the ball out for a throw-in deep in the opponents' half) or an aggressive confrontation. Returning the ball to the team that last played it (had possession) restores what was 'lost' when play was stopped, except in the penalty area where it is simpler to return the ball to the goalkeeper. To prevent that team gaining an unfair advantage, all players of both teams, except the player receiving the ball, must be at least 4 m (4.5 yds) away.

Law 09 – The Ball In and Out of Play

1. Ball out of play

Additional text

The ball is out of play when:

- (...)
- it touches a match official, remains on the field of play and:
 - a team starts a promising attack or
 - the ball goes directly into the goal or
 - the team in possession of the ball changes

In all these cases, play is restarted with a dropped ball.

Explanation

It can be very unfair if a team gains an advantage or scores a goal because the ball has hit a match official, especially the referee.

2. Ball in play

Amended text

The ball is in play at all other times including when it touches a match official and when it rebounds off a match official, goalpost, crossbar or corner flagpost and remains on the field of play.

Explanation

Except as outlined in Law 9.1, the ball is in play when it touches a match official.

Law 10 – Determining the Outcome of a Match

1. Goal scored

Additional text

(...)

If the goalkeeper throws the ball directly into the opponents' goal, a goal kick is awarded.

Explanation

Change to be consistent with re-wording of handball in Law 12.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

1. Direct free kick – Handling the ball

Amended text

The main part of the 'Handling the ball' section on handball has been re-written (see p. 104-105)

Explanation

Greater clarity is needed for handball, especially on those occasions when 'non-deliberate' handball is an offence. The re-wording follows a number of principles:

- football does not accept a goal being scored by a hand/arm (even if accidental)
- football expects a player to be penalised for handball if they gain possession/control of the ball from their hand/arm and gain a major advantage e.g. score or create a goal-scoring opportunity
- it is natural for a player to put their arm between their body and the ground for support when falling
- having the hand/arm above shoulder height is rarely a 'natural' position and a player is 'taking a risk' by having the hand/arm in that position, including when sliding
- if the ball comes off the player's body, or off another player (of either team) who is close by, onto the hand/arm it is often impossible to avoid contact with the ball

1. Direct free kick – Handling the ball

Amended text

The goalkeeper has the same restrictions on handling the ball as any other player outside the penalty area. ~~Inside their penalty area, the goalkeeper cannot be guilty of a handling offence incurring a direct free kick, or any related sanction but can be guilty of handling offences that incur an indirect free kick.~~ If the goalkeeper handles the ball inside their penalty area when not permitted to do so, an indirect free kick is awarded but there is no disciplinary sanction.

Explanation

Goalkeepers cannot handle the ball in their penalty area from a deliberate kick or throw-in from a team-mate, or having released the ball from their hands. If they do, it is an IDFK but this and any other 'illegal' handling does not incur any disciplinary sanction even if it stops a promising attack or denies a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity.

2. Indirect free kick

Amended text

An indirect free kick is awarded if a goalkeeper, inside their penalty area, commits any of the following offences:

- controls the ball with the hands/arm for more than six seconds before releasing it
- touches the ball with the hands/arm after releasing it and before it has touched another player
- touches the ball with the hand/arm, unless the goalkeeper has clearly kicked or attempted to kick the ball to release it into play, after:
 - it has been deliberately kicked to the goalkeeper by a team-mate
 - receiving it directly from a throw-in taken by a team-mate

Explanation

- Inclusion of 'arm' is consistent with other parts of the Law relating to handling the ball
 - When the GK clearly kicks or tries to kick the ball into play, this shows no intention to handle the ball so, if the 'clearance' attempt is unsuccessful, the goalkeeper can then handle the ball without committing an offence
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3. Disciplinary action

Amended text

If, before entering the field of play at the start of the match, a player or team official commits a sending-off offence, 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 offence, either on or off the field of play, ~~against an opponent, a team-mate, a match-official or any other person or the Laws of the Game,~~ is disciplined according to the offence.

(...)

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

Explanation

Red and yellow cards may now be shown to team officials (see Law 5).

3. Disciplinary action – Delaying the restart to show a card

Additional text

Once the referee has decided to caution or send off a player, play must not be restarted until the sanction has been administered, unless the non-offending team takes a quick free kick, has a clear goal-scoring opportunity and the referee has not started the disciplinary sanction procedure. The sanction is administered at the next stoppage; if the offence was denying the opposing team an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, the player is cautioned.

Explanation

Occasionally, an attack is stopped by a cautionable or sending-off offence and the attacking team takes a quick free kick which restores the 'lost' attack; it is clearly 'unfair' if this 'new' attack is stopped to issue the YC/RC. However, if the referee has distracted the offending team by starting the YC/RC procedure, the quick free kick is not allowed. For a DOGSO offence, the player will be cautioned and not sent off because the attack was re-started (as when advantage is applied for a DOGSO offence).

3. Disciplinary action – Celebration of a goal

Additional text

A player must be cautioned, even if the goal is disallowed, for:
(...)

Explanation

Cautions for inappropriate goal celebrations apply even if the goal is disallowed as the impact (safety, image of the game etc.) is the same as if the goal was awarded.

3. Disciplinary action – Team officials

Additional text

A new section - '**Team officials**' - has been added outlining the usual offences for which a team official may be warned, cautioned or sent-off (see p. 112).

Explanation

The correct use of the YC/RC for misconduct by team officials will be assisted by including the main warning/YC/RC offences in the Laws.

4. Restart of play after fouls and misconduct

Amended text

If the ball is in play and a player commits ~~an~~ a physical offence inside the field of play against:

- an opponent – indirect or direct free kick or penalty kick
- a team-mate, substitute, substituted or sent-off player, team official, match official – a direct free kick or penalty kick
- any other person – a dropped ball

All verbal offences are penalised with an indirect free kick.

Explanation

Confirmation of the different restarts for physical offences and that all verbal offences, even if directed at a match official, are penalised with an indirect free kick.

4. Restart of play after fouls and misconduct

Additional text

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

Explanation

Clarification that the offence must be committed by a player against a team-mate or one of his/her team officials, substitutes etc. for an IDFK to be awarded.

4. Restart of play after fouls and misconduct

Amended text

If a player standing who is on or off the field of play throws or kicks an object (other than the match ball) at an opposing player, or throws or kicks an object (including a ball) at an opposing player, substitute, substituted or sent-off player, ~~or~~ team official, or a match official or the match ball, play is restarted with a direct free kick (...)

Explanation

Kicking an object at someone or the ball is punished the same as throwing an object.

Law 13 – Free kicks

1. Types of free kick – Indirect free kick signal

Additional text

The referee indicates an indirect free kick by raising the arm above the head; this signal is maintained until the kick has been taken and the ball touches another player, or goes out of play or it is clear that a goal cannot be scored directly.

Explanation

Many indirect free kicks are too far from the opponents' goal for a goal to be scored directly (e.g. IDFKs for offside); in these cases, the referee only needs to maintain the signal until the kick is taken because running when showing the signal is not easy.

2. Procedure

Amended text

- free kicks for offences involving a player entering, re-entering or leaving the field of play without permission are taken from the position of the ball when play was stopped. However, if a player ~~leaves the field of play as part of play~~ and commits an offence off the field of play against another player, play is restarted with a free kick taken on the boundary line nearest to where the offence occurred; (...)

Explanation

Text amended to be consistent with other parts of the Laws.

2. Procedure

Amended text

The ball:

- (...)
- is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves ~~except for a free kick to the defending team in their penalty area where the ball is in play when it is kicked directly out of the penalty area~~

Explanation

The experiment where, 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 9.15 m away until the ball is in play. The same change has been made to the goal kick (see Law 16).

2. Procedure

Additional text

Until the ball is in play, all opponents must remain:

- at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball, unless (...)
- outside the penalty area for free kicks inside the opponents' penalty area

Where three or more defending team players form a 'wall', all attacking team players must remain at least 1 m (1 yd) from the 'wall' until the ball is in play.

Explanation

Attackers standing very close to, or in, the defensive 'wall' at a free kick often cause management problems and waste time. There is no legitimate tactical justification for attackers to be in the 'wall' and their presence is against the 'spirit of the game' and often damages the image of the game.

3. Offences and sanctions

Additional text

If, when a free kick is taken, an attacking team player is less than 1 m (1 yd) from a 'wall' formed by three or more defending team players, an indirect free kick is awarded.

Explanation

Confirmation of the restart if an attacking player encroaches within 1 m of the 'wall'.

3. Offences and sanctions

Amended text

If, when a free kick is taken by the defending team ~~from~~ inside its penalty area, any opponents are inside the penalty area (...), touches or challenges for the ball before it ~~has touched another player~~ is in play, the free kick is retaken.

~~If, when a free kick is taken by the defending team inside its penalty area, the ball is not kicked directly out of the penalty area the kick is retaken~~

Explanation

Confirmation of the restart for the above situation.

Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

1. Procedure

Additional text

The ball must be stationary on the penalty mark and the goalposts, crossbar and goal net must not be moving.

(...)

The defending goalkeeper must remain on the goal line, facing the kicker, between the goalposts, without touching the goalposts, crossbar or goal net, until the ball has been kicked.

(...)

The player taking the penalty kick must kick the ball forward; backheeling is permitted provided the ball moves forward.

When the ball is kicked, the defending goalkeeper must have at least part of one foot touching, or in line with, the goal line.

Explanation

The referee must not signal for the penalty kick to be taken if the goalkeeper is touching the goalposts, crossbar or net, or if they are moving e.g. the goalkeeper has kicked/shaken them.

Goalkeepers are not permitted to stand in front of or behind the line. Allowing the goalkeeper to have only one foot touching the goal line (or, if jumping, in line with the goal line) when the penalty kick is taken is a more practical approach as it is easier to identify than if both feet are not on the line. As the kicker can 'stutter' in the run, it is reasonable that the goalkeeper can take one step in anticipation of the kick.

2. Offences and sanctions

Additional text

Once the referee has signalled for a penalty kick to be taken, the kick must be taken; if it is not taken the referee may take disciplinary action before signalling again for the kick to be taken.

If, before (...).

Explanation

If an offence occurs after the referee has signalled for a penalty kick to be taken but the kick is not taken, a free kick cannot be awarded as the ball has not been put into play; the necessary disciplinary action can be taken.

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

All opponents must stand at least 2 m (2 yds) from the point ~~at which~~ on the touchline where the throw-in is to be taken.

Explanation

This covers situations where a player takes a throw-in some distance from the touchline.

Law 16 – The Goal Kick**Amended text**

A goal may be scored directly from a goal kick, but only against the opposing team; if the ball directly enters the kicker's goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opponents ~~if the ball left the penalty area~~.

Explanation

The ball is now in play once it has been kicked and clearly moves.

1. Procedure

Amended text

The ball is in play when it ~~leaves the penalty area~~ is kicked and clearly moves

Explanation

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

2. Offences and sanctions

Amended text

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 (...), touches or challenges for the ball ~~before it has touched another player~~ is in play, the goal kick is retaken.

Explanation

Confirmation of the action the referee should take when an opponent is inside the penalty area when a goal kick is taken.

VAR Protocol

2. Reviewable match-changing decisions/incidents

Amended text

The categories of decision/incident which may be reviewed in the event of a potential 'clear and obvious error' or 'serious missed incident' are:

a. Goal/no goal

An offence by the team that scored the goal in the attacking phase that ended with the scoring of a goal, including:

- attacking team offence in the build-up to or scoring of the goal (handball, foul, offside etc.)
- ~~offside, position and offence~~
- ball out of play prior to the goal
- goal/no goal decisions
- offence by goalkeeper and/or kicker at the taking of a penalty kick or encroachment by an attacker or defender who becomes directly involved in play if the penalty kick rebounds from the goalpost, crossbar or goalkeeper

b. Penalty kick/no penalty kick

- attacking team offence in the build-up to the penalty incident (handball, foul, offside etc.)
- ball out of play prior to the incident
- location of offence (inside or outside the penalty area)
- penalty kick incorrectly awarded
- penalty kick offence not penalised
- ~~offence by goalkeeper and/or kicker at the taking of a penalty kick~~
- ~~encroachment by an attacker or defender who becomes directly involved in play if the penalty kick rebounds from the goalpost, crossbar or goalkeeper~~

Explanation

Text simplified and bullet points moved as offences at the taking of a penalty kick are 'goal/no goal' incidents.

4. Procedures – Original decision

Additional text

If an assistant referee delays a flag for an offence, the assistant referee must raise the flag if the attacking team scores a goal, is awarded a penalty kick, free kick, corner kick or throw-in, or retains possession of the ball after the initial attack has ended; in all other situations, the assistant referee should decide whether or not to raise the flag, depending on the requirements of the game

Explanation

Clarification of when the assistant referee must raise a 'delayed' flag for a very close decision.

4. Procedures – Players, substitutes and team officials

Amended text

- A player/substitute/substituted player/team official who excessively shows the TV signal or enters the RRA will be cautioned
- ~~A team official who excessively shows the TV signal or enters the RRA will be publically officially warned (or cautioned where yellow and red cards for team officials are in use)~~
- A player/substitute/substituted player/team official who enters the VOR will be sent off; ~~a team official who enters the VOR will be dismissed from the technical area~~

Explanation

Reference to RC/YC for team officials required following change to Law 5 and 12.