IFAB

Law changes 2021/22

IFAB

Outline summary of Law changes

Herewith an outline of the main changes/clarifications.

Changes affecting more than one Law

Notes on the Laws of the Game (all Laws) – metric units

- Clarification that, if there is any divergence between metric and imperial units, the metric units are authoritative

Laws 4, 5, 12 and VAR protocol – non-violent inappropriate behaviour

- To allow some non-violent inappropriate behaviour to be considered 'offensive, insulting or abusive' and result in a sending-off, 'action(s)/acting' replace 'gesture(s)/gesturing' in the relevant descriptions

Laws 1, 2 and 4 – FIFA Quality Programme

- Information about the FIFA Quality Programme is now included after the VAR protocol – details have been removed from the Law text

Individual Law changes (in Law order)

Law 1 – The Field of Play

- The goalposts and crossbar (and goals) must be the same shape
- The GLT signal can be sent to the video operation room (VOR)

Law 6 – The Other Match Officials

- There is now a FIFA list of international video match officials (VMOs)

Law 7 – The Duration of the Match

- Stoppage time relates to 'lost' playing time

Law 11 – Offside

- Inclusion of the Law 12 definition of where the arm ends (bottom of the armpit) for the purposes of determining an offside/onside position

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

- Handball:
  - Not every contact of the ball with the hand/arm is an offence
  - A player's hand/arm position should be judged in relation to their body movement in that particular situation
  - Removal from the accidental attacking handball offence of the references to a 'team-mate' and 'creating a goal-scoring opportunity'
- The offence of using a 'trick' to circumvent the Law against the goalkeeper handling the ball from a deliberate kick from a team-mate applies at goal kicks; the instigator is to be cautioned (YC)
- A free kick/penalty kick can only be awarded for an offence against someone on the team lists or a match official

VAR protocol

- Written permission to use VARs is only required from FIFA
- Principles have been established covering scenarios when a video match official or replay operator is unable to start or continue a match

Details of all Law changes

The following are the changes to the Laws of the Game for the 2021/22 edition. For each change, the new/amended/additional wording is given, together with the old wording, where appropriate – followed by an explanation of the change.

Changes affecting more than one Law

Notes on the Laws of the Game (all Laws) – metric units

Other languages

(…)

Measurements

If there is any divergence between metric and imperial units, the metric units are authoritative.

Laws 4, 5, 12 and VAR protocol – non-violent inappropriate behaviour

To allow some forms of non-violent inappropriate behaviour (e.g. offensively touching another person) to be considered 'offensive, insulting or abusive' and thus a sending-off offence, 'action(s)/acting' replace ~~'gesture(s)/gesturing'~~ in the following Laws:

Law 4 – The Players' Equipment

- 5. Slogans, statements, images and advertising – Interpreting the Law

Law 5 – The Referee

- 4. Video assistant referee (VAR) – Reviews after play has restarted

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

- 2. Indirect free kick
- 3. Disciplinary action – Celebration of a goal
- 3. Disciplinary action – Sending-off offences
- 3. Disciplinary action – Team officials

Video Assistant Referee (VAR) protocol

- 1. Principles
- 2. Reviewable match-changing decisions/incidents
- 4. Procedures

Laws 1, 2 and 4 – FIFA Quality Programme

There is a new section outlining the FIFA Quality Programme (FQP). Certain details regarding the FQP and the related standards have been removed from the Laws so that future FQP changes will not require Law changes. The resulting text changes are as follows:

Law 1 – The Field of Play

1. Field surface

Amended text

Where artificial surfaces are used in competition matches between representative teams of national football associations affiliated to FIFA or international club competition matches, the surface must meet the requirements of the FIFA Quality Programme for Football Turf ~~or the International Match Standard~~, unless special dispensation is given by The IFAB.

Law 1 – The Field of Play

11. Goal line technology (GLT)

Amended text

GLT systems may be used to verify whether a goal has been scored to support the referee's decision.
~~Where GLT is used, modifications to the goal frame may be permitted in accordance with the specifications stipulated in the FIFA Quality Programme for GLT and with the Laws of the Game.~~ The use of GLT must be stipulated in the competition rules.
(…)

Requirements and specifications of GLT

If GLT is used in competition matches, the competition organisers must ensure that the system (including any potentially permitted modifications to the goal frame or technology in the ball) ~~is certified according to one of the following standards:~~ meets the requirements of the FIFA Quality Programme for GLT.

- ~~FIFA Quality PRO~~
- ~~FIFA Quality~~
- ~~IMS – INTERNATIONAL MATCH STANDARD~~

~~An independent testing institute must verify the accuracy and functionality of the different technology providers' systems in accordance with the FIFA Quality Programme for GLT Testing Manual.~~ Where GLT is used, the referee must test the technology's functionality before the match as set out in the Testing Manual. If the technology does not function in accordance with the Testing Manual, the referee must not use the GLT system and must report this to the appropriate authorities.

~~Where GLT is used, the referee must test the technology's functionality before the match as set out in the Testing Manual.~~

Law 2 – The Ball

1. Qualities and measurements

Amended text

All balls used in matches played in an official competition organised under the auspices of FIFA or confederations must ~~bear one of the following~~ meet the requirements and bear one of the marks of the FIFA Quality Programme for Footballs.

Each mark indicates (…) and must be approved by The IFAB. ~~The institutes conducting the tests are subject to the approval of FIFA.~~

~~Where goal line technology (GLT) is used, balls with integrated technology must carry one of the above-listed marks.~~

Law 4 – The Players' Equipment

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

Amended text

Where wearable technology (…) the competition organiser must ensure that the technology attached to the players' equipment is not dangerous and meets ~~one of the following standards: IMS (International Match Standard) or FIFA Quality~~ the requirements for wearable EPTS under the FIFA Quality Programme for EPTS.

~~The institutes conducting these tests are subject to the approval of FIFA.~~
(…)
~~A professional standard was developed by FIFA and approved by The IFAB in order to~~ The FIFA Quality Programme for EPTS supports ~~the~~ competition organisers (…)

~~The following mark indicates that an EPTS (wearable or optical) has been officially tested to the requirements in terms of reliability and accuracy of positional data in football.~~

Individual Law changes (in Law order)

Law 1 – The Field of Play

10. Goals

Amended text

A goal consists of (...) The goalposts and crossbar must be made of approved material ~~They must be square, rectangular, round, elliptical or a combination of these shapes~~ and must not be dangerous. The goalposts and crossbar of both goals must be the same shape, which must be square, rectangular, round, elliptical or a hybrid of these options.

It is recommended that all goals used in an official competition organised under the auspices of FIFA or confederations meet the requirements of the FIFA Quality Programme for Football Goals.

Explanation

- The goalposts and crossbar must be the same shape; both goals must be the same.
- A reference to the FIFA Quality Programme for Football Goals has been added.

Law 1 – The Field of Play

11. Goal line technology (GLT)

Amended text

Principles of GLT

The indication of whether a goal has been scored must be immediate and automatically confirmed within one second by the GLT system only to the match officials (via the referee's watch, by vibration and visual signal); it may also be sent to the video operation room (VOR).

Explanation

Where VARs are in use, the GLT signal may be sent to the video operation room (VOR).

Law 6 – The Other Match Officials

Amended text

The VAR and AVAR are the 'video' match officials (VMOs) and assist the referee in accordance with the Laws of the Game and the VAR protocol ~~as determined by The IFAB~~.

Explanation

There is now a FIFA list of international video match officials (VMOs).

Law 7 – The Duration of the Match

3. Allowance for time lost

Amended text

Allowance is made by the referee in each half for all playing time lost in that half through (...)

Explanation

Clarification that if, for example, there is a stoppage towards the end of the game that is longer than the remaining playing time, the 'additional time' played (and shown by the fourth official) is the remaining playing time, not the length of the stoppage.

Law 11 – Offside

1. Offside position

Additional text

The hands and arms of all players, including the goalkeepers, are not considered. For the purposes of determining offside, the upper boundary of the arm is in line with the bottom of the armpit.

Explanation

The shoulder is not part of the arm for handball. It is therefore a part of the body with which a goal can be legitimately scored and so must be considered when judging offside.

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 someone on the team lists or a match official

Explanation

A free kick/penalty kick can only be awarded for an offence committed against someone on the team lists (players, substitutes, substituted players, sent-off players and team officials) or a match official.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

1. Direct free kick – Handling the ball

Old text (showing deletions)

(…)

It is an offence if a player:

- deliberately touches the ball with their hand/arm, ~~including~~ moving the hand/arm towards the ball
- scores in the opponents' goal directly from their hand/arm, even if accidental, including by the goalkeeper
- after the ball has touched their ~~or a team-mate's~~ hand/arm, even if accidental, immediately:
  - scores in the opponents' goal
  - ~~creates a goal-scoring opportunity~~
- ~~touches the ball with their hand/arm when:~~
  - ~~the hand/arm has made their body unnaturally bigger~~
  - ~~the hand/arm is above/beyond their shoulder level (unless the player deliberately plays the ball which then touches their hand/arm)~~

~~The above offences apply even if the ball touches a player's hand/arm directly from the head or body (including the foot) of another player who is close.~~

~~Except for the above offences, it is not an offence if the ball touches a player's hand/arm:~~

- ~~directly from the player's own head or body (including the foot)~~
- ~~directly from the head or body (including the foot) of another player who is close~~
- ~~if the hand/arm is close to the body and does not make the body unnaturally bigger~~
- ~~when a player falls and the hand/arm is between the body and the ground to support the body, but not extended laterally or vertically away from the body~~

New text

(…)
Not every touch of a player's hand/arm with the ball is an offence.

It is an offence if a player:
- deliberately touches the ball with their hand/arm, for example moving the hand/arm towards the ball
- touches the ball with their hand/arm when it has made their body unnaturally bigger. A player is considered to have made their body unnaturally bigger when the position of their hand/arm is not a consequence of, or justifiable by, the player's body movement for that specific situation. By having their hand/arm in such a position, the player takes a risk of their hand/arm being hit by the ball and being penalised
- scores in the opponents' goal:
  - directly from their hand/arm, even if accidental, including by the goalkeeper
  - immediately after the ball has touched their hand/arm, even if accidental

Explanation

- Not every contact between the hand/arm and the ball is a handball offence.
- Referees must judge the 'validity' of the hand/arm's position in relation to what the player is doing in that particular situation.
- Accidental handball by a team-mate before a goal is scored and accidental handball creating a goal-scoring opportunity have been removed as offences.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

2. Indirect free kick

Additional text

An indirect free kick is awarded if a player:
- (…)
- initiates a deliberate trick for the ball to be passed (including from a free kick or goal kick) to the goalkeeper with the head, chest, knee etc. to circumvent the Law, whether or not the goalkeeper touches the ball with the hands; the goalkeeper is penalised if responsible for initiating the deliberate trick
- commits any other offence (…)

(…)

3. Disciplinary action – Cautions for unsporting behaviour

Amended text

There are different circumstances when a player must be cautioned for unsporting behaviour, including if a player:
- (…)
- ~~uses~~ initiates a deliberate trick for the ball to be passed ~~to pass the ball~~ (including from a free kick or goal kick) to the goalkeeper with the head, chest, knee etc. to circumvent the Law, whether or not the goalkeeper touches the ball with the hands; the goalkeeper is cautioned if responsible for initiating the deliberate trick

Explanation

The offence of using a 'trick' to circumvent the Law that prevents the goalkeeper from handling a deliberate kick from a team-mate will now apply at goal kicks. The goalkeeper is cautioned if responsible for initiating the 'trick'.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

4. Restart of play after fouls and misconduct

Amended text

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

- an opponent – an indirect or direct free kick or penalty kick
- a team-mate, substitute, substituted or sent-off player, team official or a 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.

If the referee stops play for an offence committed by a player, inside or outside the field of play, against an outside agent, play is restarted with a dropped ball, unless a free kick is awarded for leaving the field of play without the referee's permission.

Explanation

A free kick/penalty kick can only be awarded for an offence committed against someone on the team lists (players, substitutes, substituted players, sent-off players and team officials) or a match official. If play is stopped because of an incident involving any other person, animal, object etc. (outside agent), play restarts with a dropped ball, except where a free kick is awarded for leaving the field of play without the referee's permission.

Video Assistant Referee (VAR) protocol

Amended text

The use of video assistant referees (VARs) is only permitted where the match/competition organiser has fulfilled all the Implementation Assistance and Approval Programme (IAAP) ~~VAR protocol and implementation~~ requirements, as set out in ~~the VAR Handbook~~ FIFA's IAAP documents, and has received written permission from ~~The IFAB and~~ FIFA.

Explanation

Written permission to use VARs is only required from FIFA.

Video Assistant Referee (VAR) protocol

4. Procedures

Additional text

Incapacitated VAR, AVAR or replay operator

Law 6 – The Other Match Officials stipulates: "Competition rules must state clearly who replaces a match official who is unable to start or continue and any associated changes." In matches using VARs, this also applies to replay operators.

As special training and qualifications are needed to be a video match official (VMO)/replay operator, the following principles must be included in competition rules:

- A VAR, AVAR or replay operator who is unable to start or continue may only be replaced by someone who is qualified for that role
- If no qualified replacement can be found for the VAR or replay operator,* the match must be played/continue without the use of VARs
- If no qualified replacement can be found for the AVAR,* the match must be played/continue without the use of VARs unless, in exceptional circumstances, both teams agree in writing that the match may be played/continue with only the VAR and replay operator

*This does not apply where there is more than one AVAR/replay operator.

Explanation

Competitions must include in their rules the principles to be followed if a video match official (VMO) or replay operator (RO) becomes incapacitated before or during a match.

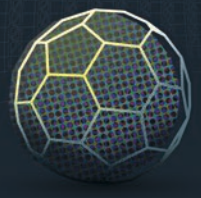
Glossary – Football terms

Offensive, insulting or abusive language/action(s)

Verbal or physical behaviour which is rude, hurtful, disrespectful; punishable by a sending-off (red card)

Glossary – Referee terms

'Video' match officials (VMOs)

These are the VAR and AVAR who assist the referee in accordance with the Laws of the Game and the VAR protocol

IFAB®