



To all national football associations  
and confederations

Circular no. 27

# **137<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of The International Football Association Board**

## **Decisions**

Zurich, 23 March 2023  
SEC/2023-C415/bru

Dear Sir or Madam,

The 137<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) of The International Football Association Board (The IFAB) took place in London on 4 March 2023 and was chaired by Debbie Hewitt, Chair of The FA. The main decisions taken and discussions held at the AGM are outlined below.

In order to ensure that preparations to implement the Law changes can begin without delay and to assist with the translation of the Laws of the Game, all the changes are set out in the enclosed document (Law Changes 2023/24), which is also available at <https://www.theifab.com/de/documents>.

Downloadable versions of the full Laws of the Game 2023/24 book will be available on our website shortly. The latest version of the Laws will also be accessible on the IFAB app (<https://www.theifab.com/logapp/>) as from 1 July 2023. As communicated by FIFA in July 2022, in an effort to help safeguard the environment, printed copies will no longer be distributed to the confederations, national FAs or FIFA match officials. However, hard copies can still be pre-ordered through The IFAB's webshop at <https://shop.theifab.com> as from 23 March, at the slightly increased price of CHF 3.50 per copy (due to higher production costs). To ensure the correct number of copies is produced, please place your order by **23 April 2023** at the latest. Please note that late orders may incur greater production costs and thus the price per copy may be higher.

### **1. Laws of the Game 2023/24**

The members approved various changes and clarifications for the Laws of the Game 2023/24, the exact wording of which can be found in the aforementioned enclosure.

The Laws of the Game 2023/24 will be effective from **1 July 2023**. Competitions starting before that date may implement the changes earlier or delay their implementation until no later than the start of the next competition.

#### **Main Law changes:**

##### **Law 10 – Determining the Outcome of a Match**

The term 'kicks from the penalty mark' is to be replaced by 'penalties (penalty shoot-out)'.

##### **Law 11 – Offside**

The guidelines for distinguishing between 'deliberate play' and 'deflection', as outlined in IFAB circular 26 (27 July 2022), are to be incorporated into Law 11. These guidelines are based on the expectation that a player who is clearly in an offside position should not become onside on all occasions when an opponent moves and touches the ball.

##### **Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct**

Clarification that if the referee awards a penalty kick for an offence which involved a defending team player challenging an opponent for the ball (excluding holding, pulling, pushing, no possibility to play the ball), the same sanction should be issued to the offending player as for an offence which was an attempt to play the ball, i.e. if the offence stops or interferes with a promising attack – no caution (no yellow card); DOGSO offence – caution (yellow card).

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**Law 14 – The Penalty Kick**

The goalkeeper must not behave in a way that unfairly distracts the kicker, e.g. delay the taking of the kick or touch the goalposts, crossbar or goal net.

**Other changes and clarifications**

The other changes and clarifications approved for inclusion in the Laws of the Game 2023/24 are detailed in the aforementioned enclosure:

[http://theifab.com/downloads/lotg\\_changes\\_23\\_24\\_en](http://theifab.com/downloads/lotg_changes_23_24_en).

**2. 'Football Rules – simplified Laws of the Game'**

The IFAB has produced a simplified version of the Laws of the Game, which uses more straightforward language and a simpler structure than the official Laws of the Game book. This new compendium of simplified Laws is called 'Football Rules' has been created to make the Laws easier to understand, especially for young people, potential or newly qualified referees, adults who referee occasionally, players, coaches (including those working towards a coaching qualification), spectators and the media. For more information, visit <https://www.footballrules.com>, where you will also find downloadable versions of the simplified Laws that can be viewed alphabetically or by category.

**3. VAR developments**

The members confirmed that the conversations between match officials (including between the referee and the video assistant referee (VAR)) are not permitted to be broadcast or made public 'live'. They may, however, be recorded and used later for educational and informational purposes.

The members were informed of the decision taken at the previous Annual Business Meeting (ABM) to allow trials to take place in which the referee makes a public announcement after certain VAR-related decisions are taken. The initial trials are limited to international competitions organised by FIFA and, after a successful first test which took place during the FIFA Club World Cup 2023™ in Morocco, FIFA will continue to identify best practices during a number of other FIFA tournaments this year, before other competitions may join the trial for a more global experience of how this might work.

The wearing of cameras and microphones by players remains forbidden, and match officials may only wear cameras as part of an approved IFAB trial.

VAR 'light' trials have been positive, and the VAR protocol has been updated in the Laws of the Game 2023/24 to reflect the fact that VAR 'light' does not involve the use of a replay operator. An additional level of video review system was presented with the intention of making this available across the game worldwide.

Other potential developments were discussed, and it was agreed that, after six years of successful implementation, now is an appropriate time to review the VAR protocol with stakeholders to identify if there are any areas which need improvement.

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#### **4. Concussion/head injuries**

The members received an update on the trials with additional permanent concussion substitutes (<https://www.theifab.com/laws/latest/concussion-substitutes/>).

It was agreed that the trials would continue without imposing a time limit, as more data is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of concussion substitutions.

It was also agreed that trials with temporary concussion substitutes would not take place at this stage but would remain under consideration.

The FA reported on the IFAB-approved trial that bans heading for players aged 12 and under in certain competitions where heading in practice or training is already banned or restricted.

#### **5. Increasing playing time/reducing time wasting**

The members discussed the importance of increasing playing time and reducing time wasting, while remaining mindful of the fact that breaks in play give players recovery time and are part of the game.

FIFA reported on the success of calculating additional time more strictly and accurately during the FIFA World Cup 2022™. **Law 7 – The Duration of the Match** has been amended to emphasise the importance of taking into consideration time lost through goal celebrations.

The members agreed that the stricter approach to calculating additional time should be adopted by competitions worldwide, as it will bring consistency to all competitions and ensure a fair amount of playing time.

#### **6. Respect for match officials, players and team officials**

The members agreed to continue to focus on the behaviour of players and to explore ways to ensure that match officials and other participants are treated with more respect. The members approved the recommendation of the ABM to form a working group consisting of stakeholders from all levels of the game.

The FA reported on the launch of an IFAB-approved trial in grassroots football consisting of referees wearing body cameras to record inappropriate behaviour. It is hoped that this measure will act as a deterrent to such behaviour.

#### **7. Decision-making process and application of the Laws of the Game**

The AGM confirmed that the FIFA Statutes require confederations and national FAs to ensure that matches are played in accordance with the Laws of the Game.

Trials involving adaptations of the Laws of the Game (including the VAR protocol) are not permitted in organised matches without the prior agreement of The IFAB.

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Further details will be published soon and will include the procedure for requesting approval for a potential test or trial of an adaptation to the Laws of the Game.

## **8. Other matters**

The members approved the 2024 budget, changes to the Statutes of The IFAB and the composition of the Football and Technical Advisory Panels (FAP-TAP). A report was provided on the trial of a new approach to offside, and it was agreed that a proposal to replace the throw-in with a kick-in will not be pursued.

The IFAB greatly appreciates the support and many suggestions from across the football world, which help the Laws of the Game to continue to evolve to make football, from grassroots to international level, even fairer, more accessible and more enjoyable.

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

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

Yours faithfully, The IFAB



Lukas Brud Secretary

cc: FIFA  
Encl.: as mentioned

# Outline summary of Law changes

## **Law 3 – The Players**

- Clarification relating to extra person(s) on the field of play when a goal is scored

## **Law 6 – The Other Match Officials**

- Reserve assistant referee (RAR) now permitted to assist the referee in the same way as the other ‘on-field’ match officials

## **Law 7 – The Duration of the Match**

- ‘Goal celebrations’ to become a separate bullet point in the list of causes of time lost for which the referee makes allowance

## **Law 10 – Determining the Outcome of a Match**

- The term ‘kicks from the penalty mark’ to be replaced by ‘penalties (penalty shoot-out)’
- Clarification that warnings and cautions for team officials, as well as for players, are not carried forward into penalties (penalty shoot-out)

## **Law 11 – Offside**

- Clarification of guidelines to distinguish between ‘deliberate play’ and ‘deflection’, as outlined in circular 26 (July 2022)

## **Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct**

- Clarification that if the referee awards a penalty kick for an offence which involved a defending team player challenging an opponent for the ball (excluding holding, pulling, pushing, no possibility to play the ball etc.), the same sanction should be issued to the player as for an attempt to play the ball, i.e. if the offence stops or interferes with a promising attack – no caution (no yellow card); DOGSO offence – caution (yellow card)

# Law changes 2023/24

**Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct**

- Clarification that the senior team coach present in the technical area cannot be sanctioned for an offence committed by an 'unidentified' player

**Law 14 – The Penalty Kick**

- Clarification that the goalkeeper must not behave in a manner that fails to show respect for the game and the opponent, i.e. by unfairly distracting the kicker

**Video assistant referee (VAR) protocol**

- Confirmation that the VAR 'light' system does not involve a replay operator (RO)



# Details of all Law changes

The following are the changes to the Laws of the Game for the 2023/24 edition. For each change, the amended or additional wording is provided together with the previous wording, where appropriate, followed by an explanation of the change.

## Key

The main Law changes are underlined in yellow and highlighted in the margin. Editorial changes are underlined.

YC = yellow card (caution); RC = red card (sending-off).

## Law 3 – The Players

### 9. Goal scored with an extra person on the field of play

#### Additional text

If, after a goal is scored, the referee realises, before play restarts, that an extra person was on the field of play when the goal was scored, and that person interfered with play:

- the referee must disallow the goal if the extra person was:
  - a player, substitute, substituted player, sent-off player or team official of the team that scored the goal; play is restarted with a direct free kick from the position of the extra person
  - an outside agent who interfered with play unless a goal results as outlined above in ‘Extra persons on the field of play’; play is restarted with a dropped ball
- the referee must allow the goal if the extra person was:
  - a player, substitute, substituted player, sent-off player or team official of the team that conceded the goal
  - an outside agent who did not interfere with play

#### Explanation

Clarification that the referee should take action against an extra person on the field of play when a goal is scored only if the person affected the play, e.g. the Law does not expect the referee to penalise encroachment onto the field of play if it does not impact the play.

## Law 6 – The Other Match Officials

#### Amended text

Other match officials (two assistant referees, a fourth official, two additional assistant referees, a reserve assistant referee, a video assistant referee (VAR) and at least one assistant VAR (AVAR)) may be appointed to matches. (...)

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

(...)

~~With the exception of the reserve assistant referee, the,~~ The other ‘on-field’ match officials assist the referee with offences when they have a clearer view than the referee (...)

#### Explanation

The use of reserve assistant referees has increased significantly, and it is therefore logical that they should be able to give the same assistance to the referee as the other ‘on-field’ match officials.

## 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:

- substitutions
- (...)
- goal celebrations
- any other cause, including any significant delay to a restart (e.g. ~~goal celebrations~~ due to interference by an outside agent)

#### Explanation

Goal celebrations will henceforth be listed separately to emphasise that they often result in a significant amount of time being lost, for which the referee makes allowance.

## Law 10 – Determining the Outcome of a Match

### 2. Winning team

#### Amended text

(...)

When competition rules require a winning team after a drawn match (...), the only permitted procedures to determine the winning team are:

- away goals rule
- two equal periods of extra time not exceeding 15 minutes each
- ~~kicks from the penalty mark~~ penalties (penalty shoot-out)

A combination of the above procedures may be used.

### 3. ~~Kicks from the penalty mark~~ Penalties (penalty shoot-out)

~~Kicks from the penalty mark~~ Penalties (penalty shoot-out) are taken after the match has ended (...); warnings and cautions issued to players and team officials during the match are not carried forward into ~~kicks from the penalty mark~~ penalties (penalty shoot-out).

#### Procedure

~~Before kicks from the penalty mark~~ penalties (penalty shoot-out)

- (...)

~~During kicks from the penalty mark~~ penalties (penalty shoot-out)

- (...)

**Subject to the conditions explained below, both teams take five kicks**

- (...)
- ~~Kicks from the penalty mark~~ Penalties (penalty shoot-out) must not be delayed for a player who leaves the field of play. (...)

**Substitutions and sendings-off during** ~~kicks from the penalty mark~~ penalties (penalty shoot-out)

The change from 'kicks from the penalty mark' to 'penalties (penalty shoot-out)' will also apply to the following:

- Guidelines for temporary dismissals (sin bins)
- Law 2.2 – Replacement of a defective ball
- Law 3.5 – Offences and sanctions
- Law 5.3 – Powers and duties
- Law 12.3 – Disciplinary action
- Glossary
- Practical guidelines for match officials

#### Explanation

- The term 'kicks from the penalty mark' is outdated and rarely used. Most people refer to 'penalties' or a 'penalty shoot-out'
- Clarification that warnings and cautions for team officials, as well as for players, are not carried forward into penalties (penalty shoot-out)

**Law 11 – Offside****2. Offside offence****Additional text**

(...)

A player in an offside position receiving the ball from an opponent who deliberately ~~plays~~ played\* the ball, including by deliberate handball, is not considered to have gained an advantage, unless it was a deliberate save by any opponent.

\*‘Deliberate play’ (excluding deliberate handball) is when a player has control of the ball with the possibility of:

- passing the ball to a team-mate;
- gaining possession of the ball; or
- clearing the ball (e.g. by kicking or heading it)

If the pass, attempt to gain possession or clearance by the player in control of the ball is inaccurate or unsuccessful, this does not negate the fact that the player ‘deliberately played’ the ball.

The following criteria should be used, as appropriate, as indicators that a player was in control of the ball and, as a result, can be considered to have ‘deliberately played’ the ball:

- The ball travelled from distance and the player had a clear view of it
- The ball was not moving quickly
- The direction of the ball was not unexpected
- The player had time to coordinate their body movement, i.e. it was not a case of instinctive stretching or jumping, or a movement that achieved limited contact/control
- A ball moving on the ground is easier to play than a ball in the air

**Explanation**

The additional wording clarifies the guidelines for distinguishing between ‘deliberate play’ and ‘deflection’ based on the expectation that a player who is clearly in an offside position should not become onside on all occasions when an opponent moves and touches the ball. This wording was published in The IFAB’s circular 26 (July 2022).

**Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct****3. Disciplinary action****Additional text**

(...)

**Cautions for unsporting behaviour**

There are different circumstances when a player must be cautioned for unsporting behaviour, including if a player:

- (...)
- handles the ball to interfere with or stop a promising attack
- commits any other offence which interferes with or stops a promising attack, except where the referee awards a penalty kick for an offence which was an attempt to play the ball or a challenge for the ball
- denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by committing an offence which was an attempt to play the ball or a challenge for the ball and the referee awards a penalty kick

(...)

**Denying an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO)**

Where a player commits an offence against an opponent within their own penalty area which denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the referee awards a penalty kick, the offender is cautioned if the offence was an attempt to play the ball or a challenge for the ball; in all other circumstances (e.g. holding, pulling, pushing, no possibility to play the ball etc.), the offending player must be sent off.

**Explanation**

It is not always clear whether an action was an attempt to play the ball or a challenge for the ball (or both). The same principle should apply for challenging for the ball as attempting to play the ball. Where the referee awards a penalty for a DOGSO offence, the offending player is only sent off if the offence was committed without the possibility to play the ball.

## Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

### 3. Disciplinary action

#### Additional text

(...)

#### Team officials

Where an offence is committed by someone from the technical area (substitute, substituted player, sent-off player or team official) and the offender cannot be identified, the senior team coach present in the technical area will receive the sanction.

#### Explanation

Clarification that the senior team official can be sanctioned only for an offence committed by an ‘unidentified offender’ who is in/from the technical area, i.e. this does not apply to an offence committed by an ‘unidentified player’.

## Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

### 1. Procedure

#### Additional text

(...)

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 goalkeeper must not behave in a way that unfairly distracts the kicker, e.g. delay the taking of the kick or touch the goalposts, crossbar or goal net.

#### Explanation

Clarification that the goalkeeper must not behave in a manner that fails to show respect for the game and the opponent, i.e. by unfairly distracting the kicker.

## Video assistant referee (VAR) protocol

### 3. Practicalities

#### Amended text

The use of VARs during a match involves the following practical arrangements:

- The VAR watches the match in the video operation room (VOR) assisted by one or more assistant VARs (AVARs) and replay operator (RO)
- Depending on the number of camera angles (and other considerations), there may be more than one AVAR and one or more replay operators (ROs)
- (...)

#### Explanation

Amended wording reflects the VAR ‘light’ system, which does not involve a replay operator.