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Laws of the Game 2019/20

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In accordance with the requirements of The IFAB that potential Law changes should be considered within the structure of the *play fair!* initiative, all changes for 2019/20 fall into at least one of the initiative's three focus areas. Many of the changes reflect solution to 'problems' aside by all parts of the football family.

improving **player behaviour** and increasing **respect**

increasing **playing time**

increasing **fairness and attractiveness**

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Experiments

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Substituted player leaving the
field

Substituted player leaving the field of play

Rationale for the change

The player who is being substituted must now **leave at the nearest point** (as with an injury) unless the referee indicates otherwise e.g. that the player can leave quickly at the halfway line or because of a safety/security issue or because the player is injured (and needs to leave on a stretcher).

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

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

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Yellow and red cards for team officials

Yellow and red cards for team officials

Rationale for the change

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

If an offence occurs and the offender cannot be identified, the senior team official who is in the technical area at the time of the offence will, as the person responsible for the other team officials, receive the YC/RC.

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Goal kick and defending team
free kick in their penalty area



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Experiments

Goal kick and defending team free kick in their penalty area

Rationale for the change

The experiments that at a goal kick/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** have produced a faster and more constructive restart.

Opponents must remain outside the penalty area (and at least 9.15m away for free kicks) until the ball is in play.

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Dropped ball

Dropped ball

Rationale for the change

The current **dropped ball procedure** is **unsatisfactory** as it often leads to confrontation or a ‘manufactured’ restart which is ‘exploited’ unfairly (e.g. kicking the ball out for a throw-in deep in the opponents’ half).

The procedure has been improved so the dropped ball becomes **‘uncontested’**:

- The ball will be **dropped** for the **goalkeeper** if when play was stopped the ball/last touch was in the penalty area
- In all other cases, the ball is **dropped** for **one player** of the **team that last touched** the ball.
- All other players (of both teams) must be **at least 4m (4.5 yds)** away until the ball is in play.

Dropped ball

Rationale for the change

It can be very unfair if, because the **ball has hit a match official** (especially the referee), a team:

- gains **possession**
- starts a new **attack**
- scores a **goal**

In these i situations, a **dropped ball** will be given.

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Attackers in the defensive 'wall'

The defensive 'wall'

Rationale for the change

There is no legitimate tactical reason for players from the **attacking team** to be **in the defensive 'wall'**

The **attacking team** must be **at least 1m from the 'wall'**.

An attacking player encroaching at the free kick will be **penalised** with an **indirect FK**.

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Handball



Laws of the Game 2019/20



Handball

Law 12 – FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

Rationale for the change

Handball is the most ‘unclear’ area of the Laws which causes much confusion, inconsistency and controversy.

It creates situations where **defenders** often do not stand naturally but try to **hide** their **arms behind their back**.

Law 12 – FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

Rationale for the change

The Laws relating to ‘fouls’ and ‘offside’ were improved by moving the **focus** from ‘intent/interference’ (mental) to ‘**outcome/impact**’ (physical); a similar change has been made for some ‘non-deliberate’ handball situations and when it is unclear if the handball is deliberate.

Players must understand that they ‘**take a risk**’ of being penalised when their hand/arm is in certain positions.

The concept of ‘natural’ position of the arm (very difficult to interpret) had been removed.

The **focus** now is more **factual** - whether the position of the hand/arm has ‘made the **body unnaturally bigger**’ i.e. has the hand/arm had the effect of creating a bigger barrier’ for the ball/opponent (outside the normal ‘playing silhouette’)?

Definition of handball offences

Law 12 – FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

It is an offence if a player:

- deliberately touches the ball with their hand/arm, including moving the hand/arm towards the ball
- gains possession/control of the ball after it has touched their hand/arm and then:
 - scores in the opponents' goal
 - creates a goal-scoring opportunity
- scores in the opponents' goal directly from their hand/arm, even if accidental, including by the goalkeeper

Definition of handball offences

Law 12 – FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

It is usually an offence if a player:

- *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)*

Definition of handball offences

Law 12 – FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

Except for the above offences, it is not usually 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 is falling 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

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Other changes

- If a **team's penalty taker** is injured and requires **treatment** they can stay after treatment and take the kick
- Captain **winning the toss** can now chose the **kick-off**
- At a **penalty kick** the goalkeeper only needs to have **one foot** on the **goal line**
- When the **goalkeeper** clearly **kicks or tries to kick** the ball with the **intention of releasing it into play** if the **clearance is unsuccessful**, he/she **can** then **handle the ball**
- If team take a **quick free kick** and create a **goal-scoring opportunity** referee can **delay YC/RC** until next stoppage