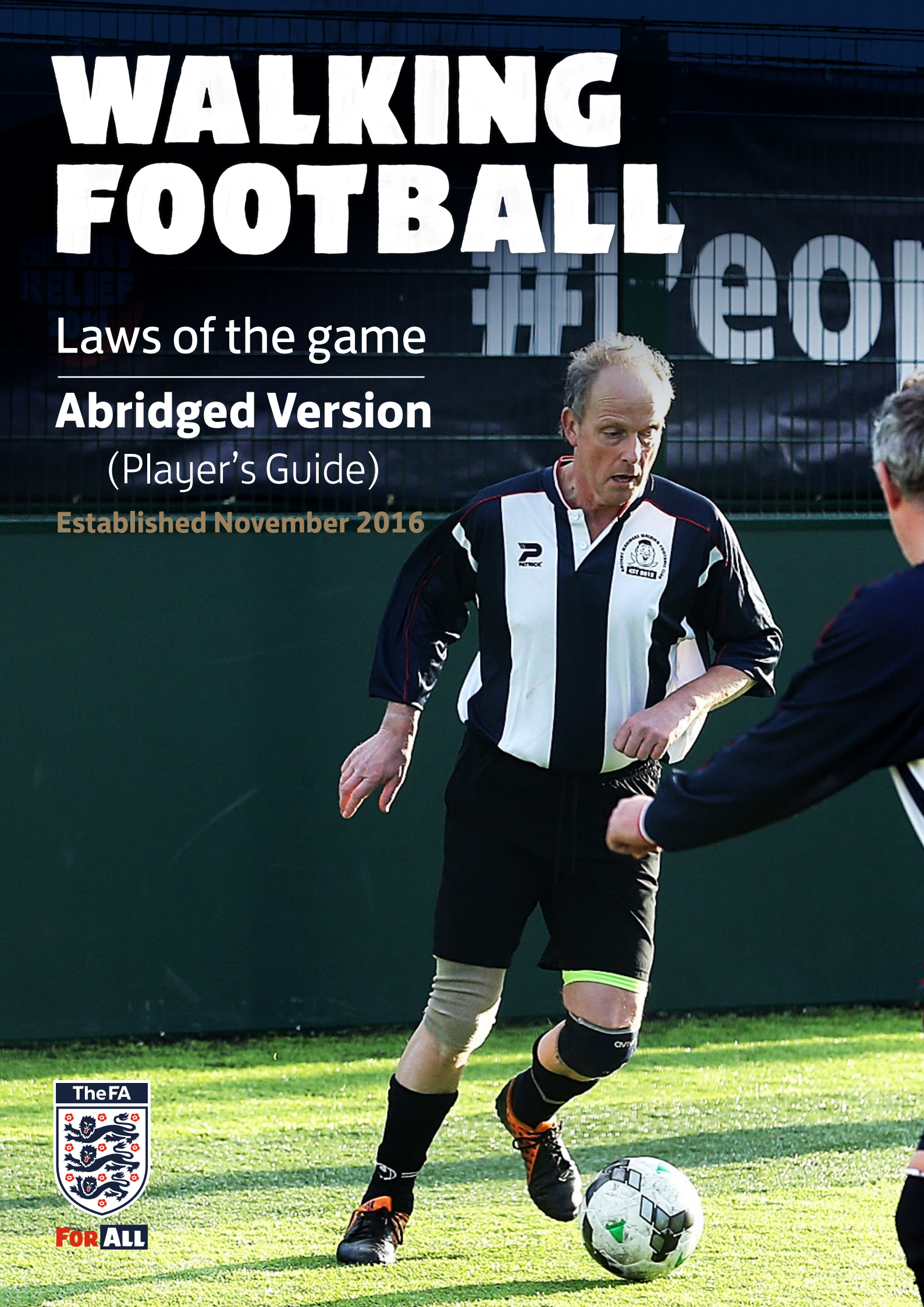
WALKING FOOTBALL

Laws of the game

Abridged Version

(Player's Guide)

Established November 2016



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SMALL SIDED FOOTBALL

Laws of the Game: Player's Guide

1. The Players Equipment
2. The Referee
3. Duration of play
4. Playing the match
5. Making Substitutions and Changes
6. Fouls and free- kicks
7. Discipline Process
8. Returning the ball back into play
9. The Walking Rule
10. Modifications to the Laws

The Normal Laws of Association Football apply with exceptions:

1. The Players' Equipment

A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to themselves or another player. All jewellery must be removed. Shinguards; must be covered entirely by the socks, made of a suitable material (rubber, plastic or similar substances) and provide a reasonable degree of protection.

Goalkeepers are permitted to wear long trousers and must wear colours which easily distinguish them from the other players and the referees

2. The Authority of the Referee

Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match to which they have been appointed, from the moment they enter the locality where the playing area is situated until they leave.

3. The Duration of the Match

The duration of the match shall be divided between two and four equal periods of over 5 and up to 30 minutes each period, subject to the following:

- allowance shall be made in either period for time lost through stoppages as decided by the referee.
- the duration of any period shall be extended to enable a penalty kick to be taken.
- between periods, the interval shall not exceed five minutes except by consent of the Referee.
- competition rules may allow for a game to be played in its entirety without any interval or requirement to change ends

4. Kick-off – is a way of starting or restarting play: at the start of the game, after a goal has been scored, at the start of any period of the game, and at the start of each period of extra time, where applicable. A goal may be scored directly from the kick-off. All players must be in their own half of the playing area; the opponents of the team taking the kick-off are at least 3m from the ball until it is in play. The ball must be stationary on the centre mark until the referee gives a signal. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves in any direction. The kicker may not touch the ball a second time until it has touched another player

Drop Ball – is a way of restarting the match after a temporary stoppage. Play restarts when the ball touches the ground. A goal cannot be scored directly from a drop ball situation.

Ball Out of Play – the ball is out of play when: it has wholly crossed the goal line or touchline, whether on the ground or in the air, when the referee has stopped play, or, when playing indoors, the ball hits the ceiling.

Ball In Play – the ball is in play at all other times including when: it rebounds from a goal post, the crossbar, or the barricades onto the pitch, or if it rebounds from the referee when on the playing area. When a game is being played on an indoor playing area and the ball hits the ceiling, the game is restarted by an indirect free kick awarded to the opposing team to the one which last touched the ball.

Height of ball restrictions – a height restriction is set at a designated height of 6ft (1.83metres), above which an indirect free kick shall be awarded to the opposing team. The only exception to this is if the height of the crossbar exceeds 6ft in which instance the height restriction is played to the height of the crossbar. If a height infringement occurs within the penalty area and is committed by the defending team an indirect free kick should be awarded 3m from the penalty area line nearest to where the offence took place. The exception to this rule shall be when the ball rises above the designated height restriction resulting from a save or block performed by a goalkeeper. Play should continue in this circumstance. Should another player then play the ball whilst it is at a height above the designated height restriction, this will result in an indirect free kick to the opposing team.

Offside – there is no offside.

Areas of Play – access to the penalty area is restricted except for the goalkeeper. Goalkeepers are not permitted to exit their penalty area.

5. Substitution Procedure – the maximum number of substitutes permitted is three. The number of substitutions made during a match is unlimited. A player who has been replaced may return to the pitch as a substitute for another player. Substitutions should take place when there is a break in play or during play if the second official is involved in refereeing the game.

Changing Places with the Goalkeeper – any of the other players, or substitutes, may change places with the goalkeeper. The following conditions must be observed: the referee must be informed before the change is made, a change may only be made during a stoppage in play and the replacement goalkeeper must wear a jersey which distinguishes them from all other players and the referee.

Viability of a Match (Playing Numbers) – for 5 or 6-a-side: if a team loses at any time **more than** 2 members of their team the match should be abandoned. For 7-a-side this number should be more than 3 members of a team. However, for all formats this should only apply when players are permanently excluded or lost through injury rather than within the 'Sin Bin' for a two minute suspension.

6. Fouls and Misconduct – fouls and misconduct are penalised as follows:

A Direct Free Kick – a direct free kick is taken from the place where the infringement occurred and can be kicked directly into the opponent's goal to score a goal. The referee keeps one arm horizontal pointing in the direction the kick has to be taken. A direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
- trips or attempts to trip an opponent
- jumps at, pushes or charges an opponent (even with the shoulder)
- strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- tackles an opponent (the key words are doing it carelessly, recklessly or with excessive force)

A direct free kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences:

- running
- deliberately heading the ball
- holds an opponent
- spits at an opponent
- slides in an attempt to play the ball when it is being played or attempted to be played by an opponent (sliding tackle). Additionally no playing from the floor is permitted.
  Handles the ball deliberately, except for the goalkeeper in their own penalty area
- where barriers are in place, players are not permitted to hold onto barriers to shield the ball and should be penalised by the referee for holding

A Penalty Kick – is awarded against a team which commits any of the following offences:

- a defending player enters their own penalty area
- a goalkeeper committing any of the seven sending off offences within their penalty area

Additional time is allowed for a penalty kick to be taken at the end of each half or at the end of each period of extra time.

Position of the Ball and the Players for a Penalty kick – the ball is placed on the penalty mark; the player taking the penalty kick is properly identified. The defending goalkeeper must remain on their goal line, facing the kicker, between the goalposts, until the ball has been kicked. The players other than the kicker are located: inside the pitch, outside the penalty area, behind or to the side of the penalty mark, at least 3m from the ball. The player taking the penalty must kick the ball forward; they may not play the ball a second time until it has touched another player. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward. The player must take a maximum of one step when taking their run up.

Indirect Free Kicks – An indirect free kick is taken from the place where the infringement occurred, unless this was in the penalty area, in which case the indirect free kick is taken 3m from the penalty area line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. An indirect free kick is awarded for the following offences;

- a Goalkeeper touches or controls the ball with their hands or feet, in the penalty area, for more than six seconds
- a Goalkeeper receives the ball back directly from a team mate to whom they have just passed the ball without the ball having made contact with any other player
- a Goalkeeper allows the ball to stop in a stationary position in the penalty area without touching it for more than six seconds
- af a height infringement occurs within the penalty area and is committed by the defending team an indirect free kick should be awarded 3m from the penalty area line nearest to where the offence took place
- the exception to this rule shall be when the ball rises above the designated height restriction resulting from a save or block performed by a goalkeeper. Play should continue in this circumstance unless the ball hits the roof when play should be restarted with a drop ball. However, should another player play the ball whilst it is at a height above the designated height restriction, this will result in an indirect free kick to the opposing team
- a goalkeeper exits their own penalty area
- if in the opinion of the referee, a player: plays in a dangerous manner, deliberately impedes the progress of an opponent when the ball is not being played, prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from their hands, commits any other offence, not previously mentioned for which play is stopped to administer a temporary timed suspension or dismiss a player

From an Indirect Free Kick a goal can be scored only if the ball subsequently touches another player before it enters the goal. For an Indirect Free Kick: the referee indicates an indirect free kick by raising their arm above their head. They maintain their arm in that position until the kick has been taken and the ball has touched another player or goes out of play.

Position of Free Kick – all opponents must be at least 3m from the ball until it is in play. The ball is in play after it has been touched or played.

7. Disciplinary Sanctions – the use of temporary time suspensions ('sin bins) and the exclusion of a player arising from the issuing of a red card are the recommended disciplinary sanctions for use in walking football. Match officials should employ the use of temporary timed suspensions (blue cards) in all cases traditionally regarded as cautionable offences. Yellow cards are no longer to be used in walking football unless the use of temporary timed suspensions is impractical due to the nature of the venue; i.e. referees cannot supervise players who have been dismissed. In these cases yellow cards may continue to be used.

The options for a match official imposing disciplinary sanctions are therefore;

- player issued with a blue card and temporarily suspended from play
- player issued with a red card and permanently excluded from play

A blue card offence should always be accompanied by a temporary suspension from play of two minutes in duration. The release of players from a temporary suspension should be at the direction of the Referee or a Match Official if one is available.

SMALL SIDED FOOTBALL

Laws of the Game: Player's Guide

Temporary Timed Suspensions – a player is shown the blue card and temporarily excluded from play if they commit any of the following offences: is guilty of unsporting behaviour, shows dissent by word or action, persistently infringes the Laws of the Game, delays the restart of play, fails to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick, kick-in, free kick or goal clearance. Enters or re-enters the pitch without the referee's permission or infringes the substitution procedure, deliberately leaves the pitch without the referee's permission.

For any of these offences, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred. If the offence was committed within the penalty area the indirect free kick is taken 3m from the penalty area line at the place nearest to where the infringement occurred.

Sending-Off Offences – a player is sent off and shown the red card if they commit any of the following offences: is guilty of serious foul play, is guilty of violent conduct, spits at an opponent or any other person, denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to a goalkeeper within their own penalty area). Denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offence punishable by a free kick or a penalty kick. Uses offensive, insulting or abusive language. Or if a player receives a second blue/yellow card in the same match.

Decisions – a player who has been sent off may not take any further part in the game nor may they sit on the substitutes' bench, where provided. Following a 2 minute time suspension after the sending-off incident the offending team is allowed to replace the sent off player with a substitute.

8. The Kick-In/Roll-In – is a method of restarting play. A goal cannot be scored directly from a kick-in/roll-in. A kick-in/roll-in is awarded if; the whole of the ball passes over a touch line, either on the ground or in the air, or hits the ceiling. A kick-in/roll-in is taken from the place where it crossed the touchline or 2m into the playing area adjacent to where the ball left the playing area when barricades are in use. The kick/roll is awarded to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball.

The player taking the kick-in/roll-in may not play the ball a second time until it has touched another player. The ball is in play immediately after it is kicked or touched. The players of the defending team must be at least 3m from the place where the kick-in/roll-in is taken. The feet of the player taking the kick-in/roll-in must not cross the line and they must use an underarm action when rolling the ball in.

The Corner Kick – a goal may be scored directly from a corner kick.

9. Walking Rule

Walking is defined as 'always having at least one foot in contact with the ground'. The referee will award a direct free kick against any player who is seen to be not walking. If a player is penalised on three occasions for infringing the walking rule, they receive a blue card and are sin binned for duration of two minutes.

10. Modifications to the Laws –

Any or all of the following modifications are permissible:

- size of the playing area
- size, weight and material of the ball
- width between the goalposts and height of the crossbar from the ground
- the duration of the periods of play
- substitutions
- number of designated penalties to be taken when deciding the outcome of a game.
- players are not permitted to hold onto barriers when in place to shield the ball and should be penalised by the referee for holding and a direct free kick awarded

Modifications to the laws should be detailed in the competition regulations.