

To all national football associations and confederations

Circular no. 11

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Clarifications to the Laws of the Game 2017/18

Following recent meetings of our Technical Subcommittee (TSC) and the Technical and Football Advisory Panels (TAP + FAP), the Board of Directors of The IFAB approved the following clarifications to the Laws of the Game 2017/18 which apply with immediate effect:

MODIFICATIONS TO THE LAWS OF THE GAME

SUBSTITUTIONS

- the number of substitutes each team is permitted to use up to a maximum of five, except in youth football where the maximum will be determined by the national association, confederation or FIFA.

Explanation

The revision of the Modifications aimed to increase participation but unintentionally reduced participation in some countries which already allowed more than 5 substitutes in youth football; this clarification therefore enables more than 5 substitutes to be used in youth football.

LAW 4 – THE PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT

SLOGANS, STATEMENTS, IMAGES AND ADVERTISING

The following guidance (which will become part of Law 4 in 2018/19) is to help competition organisers, national FAs, confederations and FIFA decide what can be visible on players' equipment.

Principles

- Law 4 applies to all equipment (including clothing) worn by players, substitutes and substituted players; its principles also apply to all team officials in the technical area
- The following are (usually) permitted:
 - the player's number, name, team crest/logo, initiative slogans/emblems promoting the game of football, respect and integrity as well as any advertising permitted by competition rules or national FA, confederation or FIFA regulations
 - the facts of a match: teams, date, competition/event, venue
- Permitted slogans, statements or images should be confined to the shirt front, sleeve and/or armband
- In some cases, the slogan, statement or image might only appear on the captain's armband

Interpreting the Law

When interpreting whether a slogan, statement or image is permissible, note should be taken of **Law 12 (Fouls and Misconduct)**, which requires the referee to take action against a player who is guilty of:

- using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures
- gesturing or acting in a provocative, derisory or inflammatory way

Any slogan, statement or image which falls into any of these categories is not permitted.

Whilst 'religious' and 'personal' are relatively easily defined, 'political' is less clear but slogans, statements or images related to the following are not permitted:

- any person(s), living or dead (unless part of the official competition name)
- any local, regional, national or international political party/organisation/group, etc.
- any local, regional or national government or any of its departments, offices or functions
- any organisation which is discriminatory
- any organisation whose aims/actions are likely to offend a notable number of people
- any specific political act/event

When commemorating a significant national or international event, the sensibilities of the opposing team (including its supporters) and the general public should be carefully considered.

Competition rules may contain further restrictions/limitations, particularly in relation to the size, number and position of permitted slogans, statements, images and advertising. It is recommended that disputes relating to slogans, statements or images be resolved prior to a match/competition taking place.

LAW 11 – OFFSIDE

When judging an offside position, the first point of contact of the 'play or touch' of the ball should be used.

Explanation

This definition is required as the VAR use of slow motion shows a detectable difference between the first and last contact with the ball when it is 'passed'.

LAW 12 – FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

OFFENCE AGAINST A TEAM-MATE (OR A TEAM SUBSTITUTE/TEAM OFFICIAL)

If a player commits an offence against a player, substitute or team official of his/her own team when the ball is in play:

- offence on the field of play – direct free kick (or penalty kick)
- offence off the field of play – indirect free kick (IDFK) on the boundary line closest to the offence if the referee stops play to issue a caution (YC) or dismissal (RC)

TWO OFFENCES AT THE SAME TIME/IN QUICK SUCCESSION

Where two separate cautionable (YC) offences are committed (even in close proximity), they should result in 2 x cautions (YCs), for example if a player:

- enters the field of play without the required permission and commits a reckless tackle/stops a promising attack with a foul/handball, etc.

HANDLING THE BALL

Throwing an object is a direct free-kick offence (not a handling offence) so a goalkeeper who throws an object and hits the ball/an opponent in their own penalty is sanctioned with a penalty kick and a caution (YC) or dismissal (RC).

GLOSSARY

KICK

- The ball is kicked when a player makes contact with the foot and/or the ankle

Explanation:

This clarifies the parts of the body used to 'kick' the ball (especially in terms of passing the ball to the goalkeeper etc.). The shin, knee or any other part of the body 'play' rather than 'kick' the ball.

The Laws of the Game are a crucial tool in making football, from grassroots to the highest levels, fair, accessible and enjoyable. The IFAB will continue to work to ensure that the Laws of the Game serve and protect the nature, fairness and integrity of the game.

Thank you for your attention and please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions or enquiries.

Yours sincerely,
The IFAB



Lukas Brud
Secretary