



Summary of the 2005 Changes To the Laws of the Game

This year's Annual General Meeting of the International Football Association Board (IFAB), its 119th, was held February 26th in the Vale of Glamorgan, Wales. Several significant changes were made this year, the two new Law 11 board decisions being the most controversial.

The annual amendments to the Laws of the Game and Decisions of the IFAB become mandatory each July First. A summary of this year's changes follows.

Law 3 – The Number of Players; Substitution

The IFAB has clarified substitution rules. This supercedes last year's Law change, which read, "*In other matches, up to six substitutes may be used.*" The maximum number of substitutions now permitted is:

- FIFA, Confederation and National Association Matches: Three
- Other National A Team Matches ('Friendlys'): Six
- Other Matches: Number set by the competition rules, or agreed to by the teams. In the latter case, if the teams before the match reach no agreement, or the referee is not informed, the maximum number is six.

Law 3 – The Number of Players; Infringements/Sanctions

If a substitute enters the field without the referee's permission play is stopped, the substitute is cautioned and required to leave the field of play. Play is restarted with an *indirect free kick*, rather than a dropped ball as previously required. The IFK is taken from the location of the ball when play was stopped (unless it was within the goal area).

Law 5 – The Referee; Decisions of the Referee

The referee cannot change an incorrect decision once the game has been restarted *or terminated*.

Law 11 – Offside; New IFAB Decision 1

"In the definition of offside position, 'nearer to his opponents' goal line' means that any part of his head, body or feet is nearer to his opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent. The arms are not included in this definition."

Previously the USSF instruction was that the players' torsos determined relative position.

Law 11 – Offside; New IFAB Decision 2

"The definitions of elements of involvement in active play are as follows:

- *"Interfering with play means playing or touching the ball passed or touched by a team-mate."*

When the player who was in an offside position touches the ball, the assistant referee signals offside for *interfering with play*. The kick is taken from the player's position when the ball was last played to him by one of his teammates (unless the player was within the goal area).

- *"Interfering with an opponent means preventing an opponent from playing or being able to play the ball by clearly obstructing the opponent's line of vision or movements*

or

making a gesture or movement which, in the opinion of the referee, deceives or distracts an opponent."

If a player in an offside position interferes with an opponent, the player does **not** need to touch the ball to be called offside. Example: A player, in an offside position, and the opposing goalkeeper are both moving toward the ball. Offside should be called because the player is *interfering with an opponent*.

- *“Gaining an advantage by being in that position means playing a ball that rebounds to him off a post or the crossbar having been in an offside position or playing a ball that rebounds to him off an opponent having been in an offside position.”*

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct; Disciplinary Sanctions

“The referee has the authority to take disciplinary sanctions, as from the moment he enters the field of play until he leaves the field of play after the final whistle.”

Previously the referee could only report misconduct that occurred before the kick-off or after the game, and could not show the red or yellow cards.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct; IFAB Decision 4

“A tackle, which endangers the safety of an opponent, must be sanctioned as serious foul play.”

The words *“from behind”* have been deleted.

The IFAB stated that any tackle (from behind, the side, or the front) *“considered to be done with excessive force which injures or could have injured the opponent, must be sanctioned as serious foul play and therefore the offender must be sent off.”*

Law 14 – The Penalty Kick; Infringements/Sanctions

If the player taking the penalty kick infringes the Laws of the Game, or a teammate of the player taking the kick enters the penalty area or moves in front of or within 9.15m (10 yds) of the penalty mark:

“If the ball does not enter the goal, the referee stops play and restarts the match with an indirect free kick to the defending team”.

The change, in two Law 14 bullet points, is the awarding of an **indirect free kick**. Previously the two bullet points said, “the kick is not retaken.”

Law 15 – The Throw-In; Procedure

The Law now states *“All opponents must stand no less than 2 meters from the point at which the throw-in is taken.”*

Players who fail to respect this required distance are to be cautioned and shown the yellow card for unsporting behavior.