



Summary of the 2008 Changes To the Laws of the Game

The 122nd Annual General Meeting of the International Football Association Board was held March 8th in Gleneagles, Scotland. With 2010 FIFA World Cup™ qualification matches underway, the IFAB made minimal revisions.

The only amendment to the substance of the *Laws of the Game* is in Law Two, IFAB Decision One. There was also a revision to Law One (standardizing field of play dimensions for 'A' international matches) approved in March but subsequently suspended at a special IFAB meeting in May; the proposed change will be reviewed at the Board's 2009 AGM in Northern Ireland.

A summary of this year's IFAB actions follows below. But first, the *major* decision by the IFAB.

The 2008 Rewrite of the *Laws of the Game*

Since the 1997 total rewrite of the *Laws of the Game* (the first since 1938) there have been numerous additions and amendments to the Laws. The IFAB, feeling a major update was overdue, approved a revision of the *Laws of the Game* that is intended to contain no significant changes in the Laws, but to consolidate and reorganize the content for the sake of consistency, simplification and clarification.

The 2008/2009 Law Book will also include a section titled '*Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees*', replacing last year's '*Additional Instructions and Guidelines for Referees*'. The reason for this change is to underline that, while the content of this section is intended to complement the Laws, its application is a compulsory requirement.

Additionally, certain principles that are well understood but not explicitly stated in the Laws will be included. The example given was Law 4, which will include: "*The two teams must wear colours that distinguish them from each other and also the referee and the assistant referees.*"

Law 2 – The Ball, IFAB Decision 1

For higher levels of competition (those under the auspices of FIFA or the Confederations) balls must meet certain IFAB standards beyond the minimum specifications of Law 2. There are three categories:

- FIFA APPROVED,
- FIFA INSPECTED, and
- International Matchball Standard

The Board has approved redesigned logos for the three categories of balls.

More from the IFAB AGM

FIFA's proposal to conduct an experiment at a forthcoming tournament involving two additional assistant referees was approved. Their focus will mainly be on fouls and misconduct in the penalty area.

The IFAB decided to 'put on ice' goal-line technology and stop testing, until further notice, systems to determine when the ball totally crosses the goal line between the goalposts and under the crossbar.

Diving, or 'simulation' as it is known in the Laws, is a problem throughout the soccer world. The Scottish FA proposed allowing post-game video evidence to sanction simulation. The IFAB members agreed that simulation is cheating and must be intensively fought and sanctioned during the game, and that all member associations will be encouraged to do so, but did not approve the proposal.

The Board once again stressed that people in the technical areas should have no access to pitch-side monitors.

The amendments to the *Laws of the Game* and decisions of the IFAB become mandatory from 1 July, but for seasons not ended by that date the adopted alterations to the Laws may be delayed until the following season.

The 2008/2009 *Laws of the Game*, AYSO Edition, should be available from the AYSO Supply Center in July.

Bill Mason, FIFA Law Interpreter for the
American Youth Soccer Organization
May 2008



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The 2008/2009 *Laws of the Game* is *expected* to include the following change to Law 12 (Fouls and Misconduct):

There are ten fouls for which a direct free kick (DFK) may be awarded, divided into two groups: those committed in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless or using excessive force, and those for which the mere action occurs.

The DFK foul

“tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball,
making contact with the opponent before touching the ball”

is ***expected*** to change to

“tackles an opponent”

and moved from the second group into the first group.

The DFK fouls will then be referred to as the “7 + 3” rather than the old “6 + 4”.

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