

To all national football associations
and confederations

Circular no. 7

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131st Annual Business Meeting (ABM) of The International Football Association Board (The IFAB) - decisions

The 131st ABM of The IFAB took place in London on 3 November 2016, in preparation for the upcoming 131st Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 3 March 2017.

The ABM received updates on a number of experiments, including video assistance for referees (VARs), 4th substitutes in extra time, temporary dismissals (sin bins) and Law 12 - denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO).

The ABM was pleased to learn that the 2016/17 revision of the Laws of the Game has been well received and agreed to recommend for approval at the AGM a small number of Law changes for 2017/18 and, following requests from national football associations, some clarifications to the Laws, primarily to assist translation – the most important of these clarifications are set out below.

It was agreed that as the major revision is almost completed, The IFAB's strategy for any future changes to the Laws of the Game will focus on three important areas:

- Fairness and integrity
- Universality and inclusion
- The growth of technology

All proposed changes will be examined in the context of these three strategic pillars.

Some details of the ABM's decisions and discussions are outlined below; the minutes of the meeting will be available in due course on www.theifab.com.

1. Unsporting behaviour

The ABM approved FIFA's request to highlight two areas of unsporting behaviour which seem to be increasing:

- At a goal kick, a defending player deliberately plays the ball before it has left the penalty area.
- A player deliberately takes a throw-in so the ball does not enter the field of play.

Often the player is deliberately attempting to waste time and knows that the throw-in/goal kick will be retaken as the ball was not in play. Referees are asked to be vigilant and a player who deliberately attempts to waste time in these ways should be cautioned (yellow card, YC); due allowance must always be made for the time lost.

2. Clarifications to the Laws of the Game 2016/17

The IFAB has been asked to clarify, often for translation purposes, some parts of the Laws of the Game 2016/17. The wording for all these clarifications will form part of the proposals for the Laws of the Game 2017/18 which will be considered at the AGM. However, the ABM wishes to highlight the following important clarifications:

LAW 5 – THE REFEREE

- If a team's medical person is dismissed from the technical area, that person is still allowed to treat players if no other medical person is available.

LAW 10 – DETERMINING THE OUTCOME OF A MATCH

Kicks from the Penalty Mark

Offence by the kicker

- If the kicker offends the kick is forfeited (recorded as 'missed').

Offence by goalkeeper and kicker

- If both the goalkeeper and kicker offend:
 - if a goal is scored, the kicker is cautioned (YC) and the kick is recorded as 'missed'.
 - if a goal is not scored, both players are cautioned and the kick is re-taken.

LAW 12 – FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

Indirect free kicks

- Verbal/gesture offences are punished with an indirect free kick even if the player is cautioned (YC) or sent off (RC). The direct free kick for 'offences against a match official' is for direct physical offences (pushing, holding, striking etc.) and not verbal or gesture offences.

Sending-off offences

- If, in the final stage of an attack, the attacker moves diagonally to go past a goalkeeper/defender an obvious goal-scoring opportunity still exists if the overall/general movement of the player was towards the opponent's goal.

Denial of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by entering the field of play

- Any player, substitute or team official who enters the field of play without the required referee's permission and prevents a goal or denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity must be sent off, even if no other offence is committed.

LAW 14 – THE PENALTY KICK

Offence by goalkeeper and kicker

- If both the goalkeeper and kicker offend:
 - if a goal is scored, the kicker is cautioned (YC) and play is restarted with an indirect free kick to the defending team from the penalty mark.
 - if a goal is not scored, both players are cautioned and the kick is re-taken.

3. Laws of the Game 2017/18

A small number of Law changes will be proposed for 2017/18; almost all follow logically from the 2016/17 revision of the Laws of the Game.

Furthermore, the AGM will consider changes to the “Modifications” section of the Laws of the Game to give national football associations (and the competitions they oversee) greater flexibility to modify some ‘organisational’ parts of Laws, e.g. the length of the game, substitutions etc. to benefit and promote football in their countries.

4. Video Assistant Referees (VARs)

Major progress has been made with preparations for the video assistance for referees (VAR) experiment; 20 competitions (including FIFA) are involved. Main features:

- **“Minimum interference – maximum benefit”** – the VAR is only for key match-changing incidents (goals, penalty situations, direct red cards + mistaken identity) and serious missed incidents. This is to prevent the essential flow and emotion of the game being lost by constant interruptions for reviews
- **“Was the referee’s decision CLEARLY wrong?”** – VARs will be used only to correct CLEAR errors
- **“One protocol – used by all”** – every competition is using exactly the same protocol which has been designed to give the VAR experiment the greatest chance of success

More information about the VAR experiment is available on www.theifab.com.

5. Electronic communication

The IFAB AGM will discuss the use of electronic communication systems by occupants of the technical area. However, The IFAB wish to make it very clear that:

- **players may not use or wear any form of electronic or communication equipment** (except where EPTS is allowed).
- team officials may use electronic communication where it relates **directly to the welfare and safety of the players**.

6. Logos on goal nets

National associations and confederations (and their competitions) are reminded that Law 1 prohibits any logos, emblems or advertising on goal nets, even if they are integrated in the goal nets (including club logos).

The Laws of the Game are a crucial tool in making football, from grassroots to the highest levels, fair, accessible and enjoyable.

In close cooperation with FIFA, The IFAB will continue to work to ensure that the Laws of the Game serve and protect the fairness and integrity of the game on the field of play.

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

CC: FIFA

