

To all national football associations
and confederations

Circular no. 16

Zurich, 7 August 2019
SEC/2019-C316/bru

Clarification: Law 16 – The Goal Kick

Dear Sir or Madam,

The changes to the Laws of the Game 2019/20 have proved successful, as seen at the FIFA Women's World Cup™ and the FIFA U-20 World Cup as well as in confederation and national competitions. The changes to **Law 16 – The Goal Kick** have often led to the game being restarted quickly and positively, but there are two situations that have generated questions from across the football world that we would like to clarify.

1. Goalkeeper “lifting” the ball to a team-mate, who heads/chests it back to the goalkeeper

There has been much debate about whether, at a goal kick, the goalkeeper is permitted to “lift” the ball by chipping it to a team-mate for the latter to head or chest it back to the goalkeeper to catch and then put into play. The views of technical and refereeing experts about whether this is within the “spirit” of the Laws are divided, so the matter will be discussed by The IFAB Technical Sub-Committee. Until then, this practice should not be permitted, nor should it be penalised – if it occurs, the referee should order the goal kick to be retaken (but without taking any disciplinary action).

2. Opponent in the penalty area when a goal kick is taken

Law 16 requires all opponents to be outside the penalty area until the goal kick is taken and if an opponent remains inside or enters the penalty area before the kick is taken and plays, challenges for or touches the ball, the goal kick is retaken.

However, Law 16 also applies the “quick” free-kick principles outlined in **Law 13 – Free Kicks, 3. Offences and sanctions**, in that if any opponents are in the penalty areas because they did not have time to leave, the referee allows play to continue.

In practical terms, this means that referees should manage goal kicks (and defending team free kicks in their own penalty area) in the same way as they manage free kicks:

- Unless the kick is taken quickly, opposing players should be required to be outside the penalty area and remain outside it until the kick has been taken.
- If the kick is taken quickly and an opponent genuinely did not have time to leave the penalty area, the opponent may not interfere with or prevent the taking of the kick but may intercept the ball once it is in play. This is allowed because the defending team, as at a quick free kick, tried to gain an advantage by taking the kick quickly and if this “goes wrong”, the Law is not there to “save” them.
- Players who deliberately remain inside or enter the penalty area before the kick is taken should not gain an unfair advantage, even if the kick is taken quickly.

If an opposing player commits an offence (as outlined above), the goal kick is retaken; there is no disciplinary sanction unless the offence occurs a number of times (persistent misconduct).

Referees are skilled at managing a distance of 9.15m at free kicks and they should apply these skills and principles to the management of goal kicks and defending team free kicks in their own penalty area.

We hope that these clarifications will be helpful in the application of Law 16 and would ask that you communicate them to your referees, participants and the media.

If any further clarifications are required, please contact us at lawenquiries@theifab.com.

Yours sincerely,
The IFAB



Lukas Brud
Secretary

cc: FIFA