



To all national football associations
and confederations

Circular no. 30

139th Annual General Meeting of The International Football Association Board

Decisions

Zurich, 26 March 2025
SEC/2025-C454/bru

Dear Sir or Madam,

The 139th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of The International Football Association Board (The IFAB) took place in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on 1 March 2025 and was chaired by Conrad Kirkwood, President of the Irish Football Association. The main decisions taken at the AGM are outlined below.

To assist with the implementation of the Law changes and the translation of the Laws of the Game, please see the enclosed documents (Law changes 2025/26 and 'Only the captain' guidelines), which are also available at <https://www.theifab.com/documents>.

The Laws of the Game 2025/26 take effect from **1 July 2025**. Competitions starting before that date may implement the changes earlier or delay their implementation until no later than the start of the next competition.

1. Laws of the Game 2025/26

Based on compelling results following trials in a number of countries, the members approved a change to **Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct** to combat time-wasting by goalkeepers, who will now be allowed to hold the ball for up to eight seconds, after which they will be penalised, with a corner kick being awarded to the other team. To ensure that goalkeepers are aware of the time that they have left to release the ball, the referee will use a raised hand to count down the last five seconds (for more information, please visit <https://www.theifab.com/documents>, where you can access a detailed Q&A document concerning this specific Law change).

In addition, the members approved the following changes:

- **Law 3 – The Players**

The 'Only the captain' guidelines (enclosed) will be included in the 'Notes and modifications' section and referenced in Law 3. The members urged competitions to implement the guidelines if they have yet to do so, as they have a positive impact on players' behaviour, on rapport between players and referees and on referee recruitment and retention.

- **Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play – Dropped ball**

If the ball is outside the penalty area when play is stopped, it is dropped for a player of the team that has or would have gained possession if this is clear to the referee; otherwise, it is dropped for a player of the team that last touched it. The ball is dropped at its position when play was stopped.

- **Law 9 – The Ball in and out of Play**

If a team official, player temporarily off the field of play, substitute, substituted player or sent-off player touches the ball as it is leaving the field of play, the referee will award an indirect free kick with no disciplinary sanction if there was no intention to interfere unfairly.

- **Video assistant referee (VAR) protocol**

Competitions that use the VAR system may now implement referee announcements after a VAR 'review' or lengthy VAR 'check'.

- **Practical guidelines for match officials**

In competitions using the VAR system, it is recommended that the assistant referee be positioned in line with the penalty mark, which is the offside line, at the taking of a penalty kick because the VAR can monitor encroachment and goal/no goal decisions.

2. Other trials aimed at improving participant behaviour

Based on the positive initial results, it was acknowledged that 'cooling-off periods' could be useful, particularly at lower levels of the game. It was therefore agreed that, for the time being, the trial will continue to be an option for competitions that do not involve teams from the top two domestic levels or senior 'A' international teams.

3. Other matters

In addition to the ongoing trial involving referees wearing body cameras to deter misconduct by participants (<https://theifab.com/trials/body-cameras/>), approval was granted to FIFA to test the use of such cameras in top competitions in order to develop quality and safety standards before possible wider use, including live broadcast/transmission.

FIFA gave updates on the future of Football Video Support, developments in semi-automated offside technology and its 'Suspect and Protect' concussion awareness campaign.

The members approved the composition of the Football and Technical Advisory Panels (FAP-TAP) for the next two-year cycle (<https://theifab.com/organisation/>).

Downloadable versions of the full Laws of the Game 2025/26 book will be available on our website shortly. The latest version of the Laws will also be accessible as from 1 July 2025 on The IFAB's app: <https://www.theifab.com/logapp/>.

Should you wish to order hard copies of the Laws of the Game, these can be pre-ordered through The IFAB's webshop at <https://shop.theifab.com> **as from 26 March 2025**, at the price of CHF 3.70 per copy. To ensure the correct number of copies is produced, please place your order by **23 April 2025** at the latest. Please note that late orders may incur greater production costs and thus the price per copy may be higher.

The IFAB remains committed to working closely with football's stakeholders to ensure the Laws of the Game continue to evolve to promote and protect fairness and integrity on the field of play and reflect changes in the game.

Thank you for your attention. Please contact us if you have any questions or enquiries.

Yours faithfully,
The IFAB



Lukas Brud
Secretary

cc: FIFA
Encl.: as mentioned