

To all national football associations  
and confederations

## **Circular no. 17**

Zurich, 21 August 2019  
SEC/2019-C320/bru

## **Laws of the Game 2019/20 – Important clarifications**

Dear Sir or Madam,

Following a number of requests, The Board of Directors of The IFAB has approved the following clarifications, guidelines and reminders in relation to the Laws of the Game 2019/20. The Board of Directors of The IFAB also takes this opportunity to stress the important requirement, embodied in the FIFA Statutes, of respecting the Laws of the Game as interpreted by The IFAB and FIFA.

### **Law 3 – The Players**

The change to the substitution procedure requires the player being substituted to leave the field of play at the nearest point on the boundary line. This should be strictly enforced unless there are clear safety reasons or the referee allows the player to leave quickly at the halfway line, in which case if the player does not leave quickly, a caution (yellow card) should be issued.

### **Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play**

It is only a dropped ball when the ball touches the referee (or another match official) and ‘remains in play’. If the ball goes out of play, the game restarts as if it had not touched the match official.

### **Law 10 – Determining the Outcome of a Match**

In June 2019, FIFA (FIFA Women’s World Cup 2019) and CONMEBOL (Copa América, Copa Libertadores and Copa Sudamericana) were given special dispensation, where VARs were in use, not to issue a caution (yellow card) if a goalkeeper committed an offence during kicks from the penalty mark which resulted in the kick being retaken.

This dispensation is now extended to any competition using VARs that wishes to use it, but only for kicks from the penalty mark; it does not apply to penalty kicks during ‘normal’ time. However, if a goalkeeper persistently offends during kicks from the penalty mark, the referee should issue a caution (yellow card) for persistently offending or unsporting behaviour.

### **Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct**

Referees are now required to show a yellow or red card to team officials for the offences listed in Law 12. Particular attention is drawn to the requirement for a red card to be shown if a team official enters the field of play to confront a match official, including at half-time and full-time.

### **Law 14 - The Penalty Kick**

One of the main changes in the penalty kick procedure (including kicks from the penalty mark) gave goalkeepers greater freedom of movement by reducing the requirement to have all/part of both feet in contact with the goal line when the kick is taken to only one foot, with the additional 'freedom' that the foot does not have to be touching the line but can be above it (in the air).

Having been given this greater freedom, goalkeepers are now required to respect the Law and match officials should ensure that, if the goalkeeper encroaches before the ball is in play and saves the penalty kick, the kick is retaken. However, if the kick misses the goal, or if the ball rebounds from the goalpost(s) and/or crossbar, the referee will usually apply the 'spirit' of the Law and not order a re-take unless the encroachment clearly impacted on the kicker. This continues to apply in VAR matches where the VAR must 'check' for any offence by the goalkeeper and/or the kicker.

### **Video Assistant Referee (VAR) protocol**

The use of VARs is only for 'clear and obvious errors' and for 'serious missed incidents' (where the match officials have not seen what has happened) in relation to a goal/no goal, penalty/no penalty or direct red card incident, or for mistaken identity relating to a yellow or red card.

The principle that the original on-field decision remains unless it is a 'clear and obvious error' applies to all reviewable decisions and a decision is not changed unless it is 'clearly wrong'.

For factual decisions (e.g. location of an offence, position of players for offside, offence by the goalkeeper at a penalty kick or kick from the penalty mark, ball in/out of play etc.) the VAR must inform the referee if there is clear replay evidence. If the replay evidence is not clear (because of camera position/angle, difficulty determining the exact moment the ball is played etc.) the VAR does not intervene.

The protocol does not allow referees to 'review' an incident where the original on-field decision is not a 'clear and obvious' error; 'reviews' are not permitted for a 'second chance' to look at an incident or to confirm or 'sell' a decision which was not clearly wrong.

We hope that these clarifications will help in the application of the Laws of the Game 2019/20 and ask that you communicate them to your referees, participants and the media as soon as possible.

If any further clarifications are required, please e-mail [lawenquiries@theifab.com](mailto:lawenquiries@theifab.com).

Yours sincerely,  
The IFAB



Lukas Brud  
Secretary

cc: FIFA