



WFA Laws of the Game 1st January 2021

Introduction

This revised edition of the WFA 'Laws of the Game' (Jan 2021) acknowledges that this unique sport is evolving and developing as it grows, but nevertheless holds fast to the basic ethos and values of the game - To ensure all matches are played safely with full consideration of every participant's age, gender and ability It is therefore expected that all players, managers and club members will conduct themselves accordingly, respecting all fellow participants, including referees and other match officials. Failure to do so is likely to result in disciplinary action, including disqualification of individuals and/or clubs from WFA events.

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Section A: Players, Pitches and Equipment.

Players

1. Goalkeepers must be clearly distinguishable from outfield players on either team.
2. Substitutes must be clearly distinguishable from players on either team, until they are called into play.
3. A match should be abandoned if a team is permanently reduced to below the minimum number of players. The term 'permanently' does not apply, however, to players who have been sin-binned but does apply to players who are unable to play through injury or receiving a red card. The minimum number of players per format is:

- 5-a-side matches – minimum of 3 players
 - 6-a-side matches – minimum of 4 players
 - 7-a-side matches – minimum of 4 players
4. A team which causes the abandonment of a match will forfeit it.

Pitches

5. The standard pitch dimensions for competitions (i.e. 5-a-side, 6-a-side and 7-a-side) are a width between 25 metres (min) and 37 metres (max) and a length between 35 metres (min) and 55 metres (max). It is acknowledged, however, that pitches at some facilities may fall outside these guidelines in which case it is a matter for the referee to decide whether or not to proceed.
6. The standard goal size for such competitions is a width between 3 metres (min) and 5 metres (max) and a height between 1.2 metres and 2 metres (max). It is acknowledged, however, that goals at some facilities may fall outside these guidelines in which case it is a matter for the referee to decide whether or not to proceed.
7. A goal area must be clearly marked at each end of the pitch. This may be a semi-circle or rectangle and should extend between 4 metres (min) and 6 metres (max) from the goal line.
8. A clearly marked penalty spot should be positioned in line with the centre of the goal and 6 metres from the goal line.
9. The position of the ball on the pitch is determined when it crosses a line entirely (i.e. the whole of the ball). A ball located on the line marking the goal area is considered to be within that area and can, therefore, only be played by the goalkeeper.

Section B: Foul Play.

Running and Jogging

1. Running or jogging on or off the ball is not permitted by any player (including goalkeepers) and will usually result in an indirect free kick being awarded. If, in the opinion of the referee, such conduct results in a clear goal-scoring opportunity being denied, then the offending player or players may be removed from play (Red Card) and a penalty kick considered, subject to Section F: DOGSO, Penalty and Red Card, as described in sub section 1.
2. The referee shall have sole interpretation on deciding what is and what is not walking. A walking action will generally be determined as a progression of steps throughout which there is constantly at least one foot in contact with the ground; both feet are momentarily grounded with the advancing leg straightened.

Ball above Head Height

3. The ball is not permitted to travel above head height:
 - I. The ball should be deemed dead once it has exceeded head height.
 - II. Head height is defined as 1.83 metres or the height of the goal cross bar, which should not exceed 2 metres (see *Section A: subsection 6*).
 - III. The whole of the ball must exceed head height to be deemed an infringement.
 - IV. The referee shall have sole interpretation on the ball exceeding head height.
 - V. A player commits a foul if they cause the ball to travel above head height.
 - VI. A player commits a foul if the ball deflects off them and goes above head height.
 - VII. A player commits a foul if they play the ball off a barrier and it exceeds head height.
 - VIII. If a ball deflects off the goal frame and exceeds head height, it is not regarded as a foul, but the ball must immediately be deemed dead and retained by the goalkeeper.
 - IX. If a ball deflects off the goalkeeper in the process of making a save and exceeds head height before returning to play, it is not regarded as a foul, but the ball must immediately be deemed dead and retained by the goalkeeper.
 - X. If a ball deflects off the goalkeeper in the process of making a save and exceeds head height, but then drops into the goal, a goal should be awarded.
 - XI. If a ball deflects off the goalkeeper in the process of making a save and exceeds head height, but then directly leaves the field of play, a corner or kick-in should be awarded, depending at which point the ball crossed the line.

Physical Contact

4. Physical contact is not permitted and is therefore regarded as foul play. The term 'physical contact' includes:
 - I. Tackling across a player at a barrier.
 - II. Blocking or cornering a player against a barrier.
 - III. Crowding (two players vs one) a player against a barrier.
 - IV. Shoulder charging, pushing or barging.
 - V. Stepping across or obstructing an opponent to gain an advantage or deny that player access to the ball or to a position.

Dangerous or Reckless Conduct

5. Deliberate dangerous or reckless conduct, regardless of whether or not there is any physical contact, should be regarded as 'aggravated' foul play.

Goal Area Infringements

6. An outfield player entering the goal area (unless they do so purely as a result of momentum) commits a foul, regardless of whether or not they play the ball.
7. A goalkeeper leaving the goal area during play commits a foul, *except* when this is a result of momentum only and providing that he/she is not in possession of the ball (and does not play the ball) outside the goal area.
8. The line marking the goal area is considered to be within that area for the purpose of identifying goal area infringements.

Other Infringements

9. A player commits a foul if they deliberately head the ball.
10. A player commits a foul by slide tackling and/or slide blocking.
11. A player commits a foul by tackling an opposing player (or poaching) from behind, regardless of whether there is any physical contact.
12. Any player - other than a goalkeeper - commits a foul if they deliberately play the ball with their hand or arm.
13. A player commits a foul if they fail to take a free kick, penalty, kick-in, kick-off or corner in accordance with the rules or as instructed by the referee.
14. A player commits a foul if they take a free kick, penalty, kick-in, kick-off or corner whilst the ball is moving.
15. A player commits a foul if they take a kick-in whilst the ball is not behind the line which marks the pitch area.
16. A player commits a foul if they hold onto a barrier in order to shield the ball or obstruct an opposing player, unless such contact is necessary to prevent a collision or to maintain balance.
17. Any player - other than a goalkeeper - commits a foul if they deliberately play the ball whilst they are on the ground (i.e. having any part of their body other than their feet on the pitch).
18. A goalkeeper commits a foul if they deliberately play the ball other than by throwing it under-arm or kicking it from the ground.

Section C: Sanctions.

Free Kicks

1. All incidents of foul play are worthy of a free kick being awarded against the offending player's team.
2. All free kicks are indirect and should be taken at the location of the infringement, with opposing players being at least 3 metres from the ball.
3. A player taking a free kick is not permitted to take more than one step immediately prior to striking the ball. The ball should not be kicked with undue force or in a manner likely to cause injury.
4. A goal will only be allowed following a free kick once the ball has been played by another player. This does not include a direct shot at goal which deflects into the goal off another player or the goalkeeper.

5. There are, however, a number of exceptions for free kicks:
 - I. If a goalkeeper is deemed to have deliberately caused the ball to exceed head height, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team 3 metres outside the goal area, adjacent to where the infringement occurred.
 - II. If a goalkeeper is deemed to have deliberately played the ball other than by throwing it under-arm or kicking it from the ground, an indirect free kick be awarded to the opposing team 3 metres outside the goal area, adjacent to where the infringement occurred.
 - III. If a goalkeeper leaves the goal area during play, a penalty kick should be awarded to the opposing team. This does not apply when the goalkeeper leaves the area as a result of momentum only, providing he/she is not in possession of (and does not play) the ball outside the goal area.
 - IV. If an outfield player enters the goal area they are defending (unless they do so purely as a result of momentum), regardless of whether or not they play the ball. A penalty kick should be awarded to the opposing team.
 - V. Quick free kicks within the 3 metre area of the goal will have to be moved back, to 3 metre outside the goal area, before the quick free kick can be taken.

Penalty Kicks

6. A penalty kick is a direct free kick.
7. A player taking a penalty kick is permitted to take only one step immediately prior to striking the ball.
8. A player in the process of taking a penalty kick commits a foul if they initially simulate striking the ball, in order to cause the goalkeeper to move in a specific direction.
9. When facing a penalty kick, a goalkeeper is permitted to move any part of their body and to travel along the goal line, but is not permitted to advance off the goal line prior to the kick being taken; this should result in the retaking of a saved or missed penalty.
10. All players, other than the goalkeeper defending the penalty kick, must be behind the ball immediately prior to the kick being taken.

Blue Card and Red Card Infringements

11. If a player commits 3 infringements (totting up) for running, foul play or a combination of both, the referee should show a blue card and cause them to leave the game (sin-bin) for 2 minutes.
 - I. A player receiving such a sanction must miss 2 minutes of playing time

- II. If a player returning from the sin-bin commits a further 3 infringements, the referee should cause them to play no further part in the game (sent off)
 - III. The referee shall have sole discretion to determine which infringements are worthy of 'totting up'. For example, causing the ball to travel above head height may not necessarily warrant such action.
12. If a player is guilty of deliberate dangerous or reckless conduct, this amounts to 'aggravated' foul play and the referee should, in such circumstances, show a red card and cause them to play no further part in the game (sent off) and, if applicable, the competition.
 13. If a player (including an off-field substitute) uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour towards any other player, a referee, an official or any other participant, the referee should show a red card and cause them to play no further part in the game (sent off) and, if applicable, the competition.
 14. If the referee allows a quick free kick to be taken following a red card or a blue card offence (totting up procedure) and the offending player then gets involved in the game, the referee shall immediately stop play; take appropriate disciplinary action against the offending player. The game shall restart with an IDFK to the opponents taken from where the offending player became involved with play.
 15. If the referee plays advantage for a red card or a blue card offence (totting up procedure) and the offending player then gets involved in the game, the referee shall immediately stop play, take appropriate disciplinary action against the offending player and restart the game with an IDFK to his opponents taken from where the offending player became involved with play.
The previous wording meant that if a player committed a sending-off offence but the opponents had a good scoring opportunity, the referee could play advantage. However, the player was not sent off until play next stopped which meant the player could score a goal, or stop a goal. This is clearly unfair as the player should not be on the field of play to do this. The Law now requires the referee to stop play and send the player off / sin-bin the player as soon as the player becomes involved in active play – the restart is an IDFK unless the player commits a an offence resulting in the award of a penalty kick. This applies for 'direct' sending-off (RC) offences, for a second blue card offence (2nd BC) or, a first blue card offence (1st BC)

Section D: Starting, Stopping and Continuing Play.

Starting a Match

1. A coin toss shall be used at the start of a game to determine whether a team wishes to kick-off or choose which end they wish to attack. The team winning the toss is granted first choice.
2. The match shall commence only when the referee blows the whistle.
3. A goal cannot be scored directly from a kick-off, even in the event of a deflection into the goal from an opposing player or the goalkeeper. The goal should be disallowed and a free kick awarded to the opposing team.

Stopping and Resuming Play

4. If the referee stops play by blowing the whistle, play should only be resumed upon a clear signal by the referee. This signal may be a whistle, voice or arm signal. **Exception being 'Quick Free Kicks'**
5. Quick free kicks may be taken without a referee's signal to resume play, **as long as the Referee deems the action to be safe**. If play is restarted in an unsafe manner the referee may decide to take appropriate action as he deems fit. This could be either the retaking the free kick, or reversing the decision and awarding the free kick to the opposing team.

Note for clarification:

- A player who intentionally tries to prevent the taking of a quick free kick will receive a Blue card.
 - It is the referee's decision to award a free kick
 - It is the players' decision to take a quick free kick
6. A drop ball may be used to resume play when it is not possible to determine which team should have possession - for example, following a sudden halt in play caused through injury.
 7. A kick-in shall resume play (on pitches with touchlines) at the point where the ball left the field of play.
 8. A corner kick shall resume play (on pitches with goal lines) on the same side of the pitch that the ball left the field of play.

Continuing Play

9. Goalkeepers may distribute the ball when grounded.
10. Unlimited back passes between a player and goalkeeper are permitted.
11. Goalkeepers can handle the ball directly from a back pass.
12. Goals may be scored by any player (except a goalkeeper) from any outfield position. In the event of a goalkeeper scoring, the goal should be disallowed, and the ball (deemed dead) retained by the opposing goalkeeper.

Kick-ins and Corners

13. Kick-ins and corners are indirect, with opposing players being at least 3 metres from the ball. A goal will only be allowed following a kick-in or corner once the ball has been played by another player: direct shots at goal from a kick-in or corner are not permitted and any such goals will be disallowed, even if deflected in off another player (goalkeeper included).
14. A player executing a kick-in or corner is not permitted to take more than one step immediately prior to striking the ball. The ball should not be kicked with undue force or in a manner likely to cause injury

Playing an Advantage

15. Although the decision to play an advantage can depend on many circumstances, FA referees are advised to only take such action if:
- it benefits the team which did not commit the infringement
 - it is safe to do so and unlikely to result in a confrontation, especially following physical contact

Referees should clearly indicate that an advantage is being allowed and also ensure that they take the appropriate remedial action (blue card, warning/advice) when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Section E: Safety

1. Players must refrain from openly wearing jewellery or watches. Tape may be used to cover rings
2. All players must wear shin pads, covered by their socks.

Section F: DOGSO

Penalty and Red Card

1. Denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity (DOGSO) is a red-card offense. This rule is to prevent the defence from illegally stopping their opponents' most dangerous scoring opportunities and takes into account handling the ball and fouling an attacker moving toward the goal by an offense punishable by a free kick or penalty kick. It's obviously a very important decision for the referee to determine DOGSO as the team would then be playing one player short.
2. Handling the ball. This obviously does not apply to a goalkeeper within his or her own penalty area but applies to the goalkeeper who comes out of the penalty area to deliberately handle the ball or an outfield player who deliberately handles the ball on a shot that was going into the goal.
3. Please be aware that it is not an offence when a goalkeeper makes a save inside the penalty area and his momentum takes the ball outside the area while still holding it.
4. Should a defender (not the goalkeeper) deliberately handle the ball that does go into the goal, you allow the goal and record the foul under the totting up process. If this is the player's third or sixth offence the referee shall take the appropriate disciplinary action.
5. When an attacker moving toward the opponent's goal is fouled by a defender, or the goal bound shot being blocked by a defender running the referee has to make a very important decision.

6. These decisions must be based on four elements for an obvious goal scoring opportunity before the foul becomes a red card offense. They are described as the four D's:
 - Defenders: Not counting the player committing the foul, there is at most one defender between the foul and the goal. That other defender is generally the goalkeeper. The keeper committing a foul can be sent off for this offense as well.
 - Distance to the ball: The attacker must be close enough to the ball to continue playing it at the time of the foul.
 - Distance to the goal: The attacker must be close enough to the goal to have a legitimate chance to score. So being near the opponent's penalty area is more likely to be an obvious goal-scoring opportunity than the attacker being in his /her team's defensive half of the field.
 - Direction: The attacker must be moving toward the opponent's goal at the time of the foul, not toward a corner flag or away from the goal.
7. For a DOGSO offence play must restart with a penalty kick to the offended team.
8. For a DOGSO offence the offending player must be shown a Red card.
9. ***Example; For reference only, and is intended to STOP a so called 'Professional Foul'***
If an attacker in possession of the ball and is deemed to have a Goal scoring opportunity, and is deliberately fouled or prevented from such an opportunity by a defender or goalkeeper, then that defender or goal keeper will be sent off and a Penalty awarded.