

## 2005 FIFA Law Changes

The International Football Association Board (IFAB) held its 119th Annual General Meeting near Cardiff, Wales, on 26 February 2005.

FIFA will be supervising the first official tests of technical systems that could determine whether the ball has fully crossed the goal-line at the FIFA U-17 World Championship 2005 to be held in Peru from 16 September to 2 October.

The Board also clarified the current offside rule by further defining the meaning of being "actively involved in play" and decided to impose stricter sanctions for any tackles deemed to be endangering the safety of an opponent. From now on, match officials must also show the red card to players who make dangerous tackles from the front or the side.

"Was that a goal?" is a question that always seems to be on the lips of fans, players, coaches and referees, and not just since England's infamous third goal during the 1966 FIFA World Cup™ final at Wembley. In recent years, the Board has often debated whether technology could help match officials make quick decisions in unclear situations regarding whether a goal has been scored or not.

At its meeting at the Miskin Manor hotel, the Board listened to a presentation by long-term FIFA partner Adidas, who together with the German company, Cairos AG and the German Fraunhofer Institute have developed a system with a prototype of a ball with an embedded electronic chip. The presentation also outlined the necessary stadium infrastructure and demonstrated how the entire system would work. Following the presentation, the International F.A. Board decided to allow the system to be tested in competitive football and empowered FIFA to do so at the U-17 world championship in Peru.

FIFA President Joseph S. Blatter welcomed the Board's decision. "Not a day goes by without technology making progress. We therefore have a duty to at least examine whether new technology could be used in football. The Board had already agreed to test goal-line technology, provided that the systems were available. The critical issue, however, will be to ensure that such technology would not affect the Laws' universal nature or the authority of match officials."

Law 11 - Offside - was also the subject of several proposals, and as a result, by introducing the new International F.A. Board Decision 2 for Law 11, the Board also clarified when a player is to be regarded as "actively involved in play"

" Interfering with play means playing or touching the ball passed or touched by a team mate.

" Interfering with an opponent means preventing an opponent from playing or being able to play the ball by clearly obstructing the opponent's line of vision or movements or making a gesture or movement which, in the opinion of the referee, deceives or distracts an opponent.

" Gaining an advantage by being in an offside position means playing a ball that rebounds to him off a post or crossbar or playing a ball that rebounds to him off an opponent having been in an offside position.

Moreover, the Board clarified the explanation of a player being offside "if he is nearer to his opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent". As a result, the position of any part of the player's head, body or feet will be the deciding factor, and not the player's arms.

Further IFAB decisions:

" With respect to Law 3 (The number of players), in National A team matches, up to a maximum of six substitutes may be used. In all other matches, a greater number of substitutes may be used provided that the teams concerned reach agreement on a maximum number and the referee is informed before the match.

" Regarding Law 12 (Fouls and Misconduct), once a referee has terminated a match, he cannot change a decision. However, the referee has the authority to impose disciplinary sanctions from the moment he enters the field of play until he leaves the pitch after the final whistle.

" In relation to Law 15 (Throw-in), in future all opponents must be at least two metres from the thrower until the ball is in play.

The International F.A. Board is composed of the football associations of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, who each have a vote, together with FIFA, who represent the other 201 member associations with four votes. For a proposal to succeed, it must receive the support of at least three-quarters of those present and entitled to vote. Changes to the Laws of the Game come into force as from 1 July following the Annual General Meeting.

From <http://www.fifa.com>