

U.S. Soccer Federation Referee Program
Advice to Referees
June 2012

U.S. Soccer's Advice to Referees is meant to provide officials of all levels with guidance on the interpretation and application of the Laws of the Game and to create consistent guidelines and procedures for officials to follow in all affiliated competitions.

2012-13 Amendments to the Laws of the Game

The 126th Annual General Meeting of the International Football Association Board (IFAB) took place in Surrey (England) on 3 March 2012. The amendments to the Laws of the Game approved at this meeting and the various instructions and directives issued are listed below.

Implementation

The decisions of this year's Annual General Meeting of the Board regarding changes to the Laws of the Game are binding for confederations and member associations as from July 1, 2012 but confederations or member associations whose current season has not ended by July 1, 2012 may delay the introduction of the adopted alterations to the Laws of the Game in their competitions until the beginning of their next season.

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The Circular from the International Board, on which this memorandum is based, anticipates the possibility of certain other modifications in the Law and/or Interpretations being approved later in 2012. Any such further changes will be brought to the attention of the referee community.

Law 1 – The Field of Play

Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees – Commercial advertising

Present text

Commercial advertising shall be at least 1 m (1 yd) from the boundary lines of the field of play.

New text

Advertising **on the ground** shall be at least 1 m (1 yd) from the boundary lines of the field of play.

Upright advertising shall be at least:

- **1 m (1 yd) from the touchlines of the field of play**
- **the same distance from the goal line as the depth of the goal net, and**
- **1 m (1 yd) from the goal net**

Reason

There should be no upright advertising within a one-meter area surrounding the goal net to allow an unrestricted view of the goal for match officials. The proposal was approved with some discretion for certain stadiums where a full meter distance behind the goal may not be possible without major stadium work.

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The above change would be a concern primarily for matches played at the highest competitive level. However, the underlying reason for the change (an unrestricted view of the goal for match officials) should be considered applicable to any equipment, structures, or other conditions which might similarly obstruct the view of the match officials.

Law 3 – The Number of Players

Laws of the Game

New text

If a named substitute enters the field of play instead of a named player at the start of the match and the referee is not informed of this change:

- **the referee allows the named substitute to continue the match**
- **no disciplinary sanction is taken against the named substitute**
- **the number of substitutions allowed by the offending team is not reduced**
- **the referee reports the incident to the appropriate authorities**

Reason

It is not rare that a substitution is made prior to the start of the match and after the referee has been informed of the names of the players and substitutes. This is normally due to an injury of a player during the warm-up. If the referee is informed of the substitution, this is permitted but it is necessary to clarify how to proceed if the referee is not informed of the change.

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The terms “named player” and “named substitute” refer simply to names being on the official roster given to the referee in advance of the match. In the absence of local rules of competition which would make the roster unalterable, names can be switched from player to substitute and substitute to player before the match actually begins. This addition to Law 3 clarifies that such alterations, even if not reported to the referee before the start of play, can be taken without being considered a form of misconduct or affecting competition rules limiting the number of substitutions. However, the match report should include full details of such a roster change.

Law 4 – The Players’ Equipment

Laws of the Game

Present text

stockings

New text

stockings – **if tape or similar material is applied externally it must be the same color as that part of the stocking it is applied to**

Reason

An increasing number of players are using excessive amounts of tape externally on their socks. This can be a multitude of colors and completely changes the look of the sock. This can cause confusion, particularly for assistant referees who may need to look at the sock to determine who last played the ball before it went out of play.

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This new requirement applied to player socks is similar to restrictions on the visible color of clothing a player might wear under the shorts or the jersey. Team socks can come in many different patterns and colors, some of which may make enforcing this change difficult. Referees are advised to understand the underlying purpose of the change (excessive use of tape and tape colors which change the look of the sock) and implement it accordingly.

Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play

Laws of the Game

Present text

Infringements and sanctions

The ball is dropped again:

(...)

New text

Infringements and sanctions

The ball is dropped again:

(...)

If the ball enters the goal:

If a dropped ball is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal kick is awarded

If a dropped ball is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opposing team

Reason

There have been a number of occasions where goals have been scored from “uncontested” dropped balls. This has put a great deal of pressure on the referee as he has to allow the goal to stand. We then have the unseemly situation where the opposition allows the team to score from the kick-off without any players trying to stop them in order to rebalance the game.

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Referees must clearly understand what was changed as regards dropped balls and what was not. It remains the case that the dropped ball restart must be retaken from the original location if, directly from the drop, the ball enters either goal with no player having made contact with the ball. The purpose and effect of this revision was to not allow a goal to be counted if, after the ball is in play after being dropped by the referee, a player kicks or otherwise plays the ball directly into a goal. If the ball enters the player's own goal, the restart is a corner kick; if it goes into the opposing team's goal, it is a goal kick. The change covers only those situations where the ball is played directly into a goal: if the play involves more than one action, it was not kicked “directly into” a goal and the goal would therefore be counted. Examples of this scenario would include (but are not limited to) a player receiving the ball from a drop and taking two or more touches on the ball before the ball goes into the net; or receiving the ball from a drop, flicking the ball up from the foot to the head, and then heading the ball into the net.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Interpretations of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees – Disciplinary sanctions

Present text

Disciplinary sanctions

There are circumstances when a caution for unsporting behavior is required when a player deliberately handles the ball, e.g., when a player:

- Deliberately and blatantly handles the ball to prevent an opponent gaining possession

New text

Disciplinary sanctions

There are circumstances when a caution for unsporting behavior is required when a player deliberately handles the ball, e.g., when a player:

- Deliberately ~~and blatantly~~ handles the ball to prevent an opponent gaining possession

Reason

It is more important to punish the consequence that the hand ball created rather than the fact that it was blatant. In fact, a hand ball could be inconspicuous but certainly very important. Furthermore, it is difficult to define what is meant by “blatantly” and therefore to have a uniform interpretation, especially by referees from different countries or continents with very different experiences. Deleting the word “blatantly” and providing that if the hand ball prevented the opponent from gaining possession the player must be cautioned, makes the interpretation easier.

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The International Board’s explanation for this clarification needs no further comment.