



Summary of the 2003 Changes To the Laws of the Game

At the 117th Annual General Meeting of the International Football Association Board (IFAB), held in Belfast, Northern Ireland, several proposals for changes to the Laws of the Game were discussed. The changes approved by the Board, and their reasons for the changes, are given below. New text is indicated with bold type. The Board also issued additional instructions and directives, which are effective immediately.

A few comments regarding the application of these changes in AYSO are also shown, along with some additional background information.

These amendments to the Laws become effective on 1 July 2003.

Changes to the Laws of the Game

Law 4 – The Players’ Equipment; Decision 1

At the 2002 meeting of the Board a new three-part decision was added to Law 4. At this year’s meeting the Board removed the requirement that read *“Advertising is permitted only on the players’ jerseys. It may not be worn on shorts, stockings or footwear.”* The revised decision now reads as follows:

- *Players must not reveal undershirts which contain slogans or advertising. A player removing his jersey to reveal slogans or advertising will be sanctioned by the competition organiser.*
- *Jerseys must have sleeves.*

AYSO Comment: AYSO referees must **not** prohibit players from participating because they are wearing sleeveless jerseys. This is consistent with the instructions given last year, and with US Soccer’s position as stated in their memo dated November 4, 2002, which is still in effect.

The Fourth Official

The sentence shown in bold below was removed from the seventh bullet point and added to the first bullet point.

- *The fourth official may be appointed under the competition rules and officiates if any of the three match officials is unable to continue. **He assists the referee at all times.***

The remainder of the seventh bullet remains unchanged, and reads:

- *He must indicate to the referee when the wrong player is cautioned because of mistaken identity or when a player is not sent off having been seen to be given a second caution or when violent conduct occurs out of the view of the referee and assistant referees. The referee, however, retains the authority to decide on all points connected with play.*

IFAB’s Reason: *“By stating in bullet point 7 that ‘the fourth official assists the referee at all times,’ there is an inference that this could be in respect of matters of misconduct, the topic of the remainder of the paragraph. It is not expected or desired that the fourth official should be extending his role to include reporting cautionable offences and therefore for reasons of clarity and interpretation it is more appropriate to have the phrase in bullet point 1.”*

Kicks from the Penalty Mark

The second bullet has been revised as follows:

- *The referee tosses a coin and the team whose captain wins the toss **decides whether to take the first or the second kick.***

IFAB’s Reason: *“To give the team which wins the toss a fair choice and not to insist that they take the first kick, which can be perceived as an advantage to the team which loses the toss.”*

AYSO Comment: Previously the winner of the coin toss was required to take the first kick.

Additional Instructions for Referees, Assistant Referees and Fourth Officials

From 1994 through 1996 the Law Book contained a section titled "Additional Instructions Regarding the Laws of the Game". These were absent in the 1997–2001 Law books. However, in 2000 a section titled "Additional Instructions for Referees, Assistant Referees and Fourth Officials" was added to FIFA's "Questions and Answers to the Laws of the Game" booklet. In 2002 these were relocated to the Law Book, following the Law 12 Illustrations. The Board has now added the following paragraph to these instructions:

The Penalty Kick

It is an infringement to enter the penalty area before the kick has been taken. The goalkeeper also infringes the Laws if he moves from his goal line before the ball has been kicked. Referees must ensure that when players infringe this Law appropriate action is taken.

IFAB's Reason: *"Law 14 was amended in 1997, taking away the necessity for referees to caution when player(s) entered the penalty area prior to a penalty kick being taken. The amendment also allowed the goalkeeper to move along his goal line. Nowadays, infringements often occur at a penalty kick, yet the referee seldom takes action."*

AYSO Comment: If the offenses have no impact on the play or the outcome of the kick, then the referee should consider them trifling and a word to the offenders is sufficient. In youth games it is recommended that the referee remind the goalkeeper to not move forward when the whistle blows, but to wait until the ball is kicked.

Information, Instructions and Directives

Temporary Expulsions ("Cooling Off Periods")

"The Board re-affirmed the decision taken at its last meeting that the temporary expulsion of players is not permitted at any level of football."

AYSO Comment: A coach may call a player to the touch line to receive a few words of "positive instruction" concerning his or her behavior. A coach also has the option of telling a player to ask the referee's permission to leave the field, getting the player under control, and then having the player request permission to reenter the game. No rule is permitted mandating that referees give a "cooling off period".

Artificial Surfaces

"The Board recognised the advances in artificial surface technology and the major benefits of using artificial surfaces in areas with climatic problems. It also recognised that artificial surfaces allowed multiple and extended use of facilities in urban environments. The Board mandated FIFA to create clear procedures for the use of artificial surfaces, to unify the quality system and apply it worldwide, taking into consideration the best resources and knowledge available."

Discussed but Not Adopted

The 9.15 Meter Advancement: The Board decided to continue for one more year the experiment whereby play is moved forward 9.15 meters (10 yards) if a free kick is delayed by a player failing to respect the required distance or by showing dissent.

Goal Line Assistants: At the FIFA Referees' Committee meeting in February the members expressed reservations about the experiment with goal line assistants. At the Board's request FIFA withdrew its proposal for this experiment.

Video Evidence & Referees' Decisions: The use of video evidence to alter refereeing decisions (an item submitted by the Irish FA) was discussed. The Board reconfirmed its previous position that the decisions of the referee, and in particular factual decisions related to the result of a match, are final.