

Form & Function

The Laws of the Game are the preserve of the International Football Association Board, which thus occupies a major position in world football.

The Board holds an Ordinary Annual General Meeting, normally in the United Kingdom, to debate and decide upon changes in the rules and to issue official decrees relating to other football matters.

The International F.A. Board is composed of four representatives of FIFA and one each from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – an abiding acknowledgement of the historic significance of the British associations in world football. The FIFA representatives normally include the President and the General Secretary.

A three-quarters majority (i.e. six of the eight votes) is required for any item to be passed.

While the International F.A. Board is by no means a mysterious institution, it does have a somewhat secretive aura. This has little to do with the Board's venerable age but more with the fact that it has a decisive influence on the rules of the world's most popular sport without ever appearing in the foreground (or being pushed there).

But in recent years particularly, the Board has been subject to more public and media attention, largely because of the ongoing discussion about alterations to the rules. Whether the topic is substitutions, duration of games, the offside rule, unsporting conduct, advertising on the field or thermal underwear, the Board has to deal with the fundamentals of the game as well as with less weighty items.

It is largely thanks to the conservative yet far-sighted attitude of the International F.A. Board that the Laws have undergone little change since the beginning, as any alterations need a three-quarters majority. But recent innovations such as the back pass rule and modifications pertaining to it, the different interpretations of the offside Law, goalkeeper substitution, punishment for tackles from behind, experiments with kick-ins instead of throw-ins and other ideas have proved that the Board is alert and receptive to ways of encouraging development and meeting the needs of modern football.

History

1848: Representatives of public school teams agree in Cambridge on a set of rules that will be binding for all. These are based on three principles (practical, fair and reasonable) and become the foundation for the Laws of the Game.

1863: The Football Association is founded on 26 October in the Freemason's Tavern in Lincoln's Inn Fields (England). The F.A. sets down 14 rules which are drawn up and declared official.

1886: First meeting of the International F.A. Board. The authority of the Board, then as now, is of a purely ethical nature.

1913: FIFA, founded in 1904, joins the Board.

1938: Revision of the Laws of the Game. The Board had decided in 1937 that the rules, now numbering 17, should be revised in the light of half a century of changes and additions and newly drafted in a rational order.

1958: New voting rights are determined and they are still the same today.

1997: A new version of football Laws of the Game comes into force. The change is in the style and the format of the text, which is approximately 30 per-cent shorter than the current version and in a more modern idiom.

IFAB Meetings 1914-2005

Date	City	Country
13.06.1914	Paris	FRA
14.06.1924	London	ENG
13.06.1925	Paris	FRA
12.06.1926	St. Andrews	SCO
09.06.1928	Newcastle	NIR
08.06.1929	Paris	FRA
14.06.1930	Bournemouth	ENG
13.06.1931	Gleneagles	SCO
11.06.1932	Llandudno	WAL
10.06.1933	Portrush	NIR
09.06.1934	Cannes	FRA
08.06.1935	Shanklin	ENG
12.06.1937	Llandudno	WAL
11.06.1938	Portrush	NIR
10.06.1939	Nice	FRA
08.06.1940	London	ENG
14.06.1947	Torquay	ENG
12.06.1948	Montreux	SUI
11.06.1949	Pitlochry	SCO
10.06.1950	Beaumaris	WAL
09.06.1951	Portrush	NIR
14.06.1952	Capri	ITA
20.06.1953	Eastbourne	ENG
19.06.1954	Berne	SUI
18.06.1955	North Berwick	SCO
16.06.1956	Llandudno	WAL
15.06.1957	Portrush	NIR
07.06.1958	Stockholm	SWE
20.06.1959	Jersey	ENG
18.06.1960	St. Andrews	SCO
17.06.1961	Porthcawl	WAL
23.06.1962	Newcastle	NIR
15.06.1963	Venice	ITA
20.06.1964	Jersey	ENG
19.06.1965	Edinburgh	SCO
11.06.1966	Llandudno	WAL
17.06.1967	Newcastle	NIR
15.06.1968	Dubrovnik	YUG
21.06.1969	Jersey	ENG

Date	City	Country
27.06.1970	Inverness	SCO
19.06.1971	Swansea	WAL
10.06.1972	Vienna	AUT
23.06.1973	Guernsey	ENG
09.07.1974	Rottach-Egern	GER
21.06.1975	Auchterarder	SCO
18.06.1976	Porthcawl	WAL
19.06.1977	London	ENG
01.06.1978	Buenos Aires	ARG
16.06.1979	Auchterarder	SCO
07.06.1980	Craigavad	NIR
13.06.1981	Ruthin, Clwyd	WAL
06.07.1982	Madrid	ESP
09.07.1983	Hampshire	ENG
02.06.1984	Ayrshire	SCO
15.06.1985	Craigavad	NIR
30.06.1986	Mexico City	MEX
13.06.1987	Llandudno	WAL
04.06.1988	London	ENG
07.06.1989	Edinburgh	SCO
28.06.1990	Rome	ITA
08.06.1991	Craigavad	NIR
30.05.1992	Newport	WAL
27.02.1993	Hertfordshire	ENG
05.03.1994	Zurich	SUI
04.03.1995	Ayrshire	SCO
09.03.1996	Rio de Janeiro	BRA
01.03.1997	Craigavad	NIR
06.03.1998	Paris	FRA
20.02.1999	Vale of Glamorgan	WAL
19.02.2000	Cliveden	ENG
10.03.2001	Edinburgh	SCO
16.03.2002	Zermatt	SUI
15.03.2003	Belfast	NIR
29.02.2004	London	ENG
26.02.2005	Vale of Glamorgan	WAL
04.03.2006	Lucerne	SUI
04.03.2007	Manchester	ENG