



Summary of the 2012 Changes to the Laws of the Game

The 126th Annual General Meeting of the International Football Association Board (IFAB) was held in Surrey, England on March 3, 2012. The 2012 revisions to the Laws of the Game became mandatory on July 1st. A summary of the changes follows (quotations are italicized; new or revised wording is in bold text; deleted text has a strikethrough; comments are the author's).

Law 1 – The Field of Play (Interpretation of the Laws of Game and Guidelines for Referees – Commercial Advertising)

~~Commercial~~ 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 touch lines 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**

Comment: This change has no impact on AYSO. Questions related to advertising should be directed to the National Office.

Law 3 – The Number of Players (Laws of the Game - Substitute Starts Match Instead of Player)

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***

Comment: This change has no impact on AYSO because any player on a team roster is eligible to start the match.

Law 4 – The Players' Equipment (Laws of the Game - Tape on Socks)

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

Comment: In AYSO matches, referees are encouraged to apply the same "let them play" latitude to this requirement that they currently apply to the requirement for sleeves, under-short color, etc.

Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play (Laws of the Game - No Goal Directly from a Dropped Ball)

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***

Comment: This Law change should be interpreted by AYSO referees as follows:

- After a dropped ball restart, the first touch of the ball by any player may not result in a goal.
- The second and subsequent touch, including by the player who made the first touch, may result in a goal.

IFAB's intent is to prevent accidental goals resulting from a player's attempt to give an uncontested dropped ball to the opposing team. This Law change should be applied in that spirit.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct (Interpretations of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees - Disciplinary Sanctions)

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***

Comment: This change removes the need for referees to decide what "blatant" means, and also codifies IFAB's opinion that even inconspicuous handballs can have game changing results and should be sanctioned.

Other Decisions of the IFAB

- IFAB approved the use of vanishing spray to indicate the required distance for opponents during a restart. AYSO referees are encouraged to continue to enforce the required distance without using such sprays, and are reminded that the use of such devices during youth games can be distracting and may have the unintended consequence of making the referee appear overly authoritarian or dramatic.
- IFAB approved the principle of players wearing headscarves. This decision was taken in order to allow international play by women from countries that require females to wear head scarves while in public. IFAB gave final approval to the wearing of headscarves after FIFA's medical committee met on July 5th and decided that two scarf designs do not threaten the safety of female players. The approved designs use quick-release Velcro fasteners and magnets. AYSO referees are reminded that the Laws of the Game prevent players from wearing equipment or adornment that presents a danger to the players or to others.