

UNITED STATES SOCCER FEDERATION

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Memorandum 1998

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The 112th meeting of the International Football Association Board (IFAB) was held in Paris on March 6, 1998. Various alterations to the Laws of the Game were discussed. The amendments and other decisions are outlined below.

They are effective as of July 1, 1998, for all affiliated officials, leagues, associations, and competitions. The amendments and other decisions will be implemented for all season schedules and tournaments commencing on or after that date and may not be used prior to then without the express approval of the Federation. They will, however, be enforced during the 1998 World Cup final competition in France.

The "Additional Instructions for Referees" will be updated and published as a separate booklet following approval by the Board at its 1999 meeting in Wales.

I. AMENDMENTS TO THE LAWS OF THE GAME

- **Law 5 – The Referee**

- **New Decision 3**

"Facts connected with play shall include whether a goal is scored or not and the result of the match." *USSF Advice to Referees: This arises from the statement in Law 5 that "the decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play are final." It is intended to confirm that the finality of referee decisions specifically includes goals scored and match results.*

- **Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct**

- **Indirect Free Kick (new word order and additional bullet points)**

"An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a goalkeeper, inside his own penalty area, commits any of the following five offences:

- takes more than four steps while controlling the ball with his hands, before releasing it from his possession
- touches the ball again with his hands after it has been released from his possession and has not touched any other player
- touches the ball with his hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a team-mate

- touches the ball with his hands after he has received it directly from a throw-in taken by a team-mate
- wastes time

An indirect free kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player, in the opinion of the referee:

- plays in a dangerous manner
 - impedes the progress of an opponent
 - prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands
- • commits any other offence, not previously mentioned in Law 12, for which play is stopped to caution or dismiss a player.”

*USSF Advice to Referees: The above revision to Law 12 does two things: it reverses the order of the two sections dealing with technical infringements by players and technical infringements by goalkeepers and it adds a new bullet item under technical infringements by players. The new entry is intended only to return to Law 12 what had been clearly stated in editions of the Law prior to the general rewrite: when play is stopped **solely** to deal with misconduct (e.g., violent conduct, dissent, abusive language, and so forth), the proper restart is an indirect free kick regardless of whether the misconduct results in a caution or a dismissal. Referees are advised to remember that, if a foul is called in addition to the misconduct, the restart is determined by the foul.*

◆ **Sending off offences** (rewording of the fourth offence)

“4. denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to a goalkeeper within his own penalty area).”

USSF Advice to Referees: Handling offenses are not committed against any single opponent and thus the prior language (“denies an opponent a goal”) was felt to be confusing. The change does not affect the nature of the offense or how it should be treated by the referee.

◆ **Decision 3** (last sentence added to the present text)

“The goalkeeper is considered to be guilty of time-wasting if he holds the ball in his hands or arms for more than 5-6 seconds.”

*USSF Advice to Referees: This restriction on the goalkeeper was first stated as a “Mandatory Instruction” in 1997 and is now incorporated more directly into the Law. According to USSF’s **Memorandum 1997**, “referees are reminded that their mechanic for measuring this time should not include any actions which would draw unnecessary attention (for example, audible counting or hand displays of elapsed seconds).”*

◆ New Decision 5

“A tackle from behind which endangers the safety of an opponent must be sanctioned as serious foul play.” This decision means that the player guilty of such an offence has to be sent off in accordance with Law 12 (a video cassette illustrating the way of implementing this new decision will be sent to the national associations later in May).

*USSF Advice to Referees: This new language has received considerable public notice, much of it based on incorrect interpretations. The statement does **not** mandate a send off for every tackle from behind and it does **not** make all tackles from behind illegal regardless of how they are performed. Referees continue to have the full range of options available to them for dealing with actions that are careless, reckless, or performed with excessive force. The IFAB has emphasized, however, that any tackle “**which endangers the safety of an opponent**” must be sanctioned with a send off for serious foul play.*

• Law 14 – The Penalty Kick (additional bullet point)

“A team-mate of the player taking the kick enters into the penalty area or moves in front of or within 9.15 m (10 yds) of the penalty mark:

- the referee allows the kick to proceed
 - if the ball enters the goal, the kick is retaken
 - if the ball does not enter the goal, the kick is not retaken
- • if the ball rebounds from the goalkeeper, the crossbar or the goal post and is touched by this player, the referee stops play and restarts the match with an indirect free kick to the defending team.”

*USSF Advice to Referees: The new bullet point is intended to emphasize that, under the circumstances described, it is proper to stop play and restart with an indirect free kick for the failure to respect the required distance only if the ball goes to and is played by the infringing player. Referees should also note that, in accordance with the guidance given in USSF’s **Memorandum 1997**, the infringing player should not be cautioned even under these circumstances but only upon a repetition of the offense (unless this is already a repetition).*

• Kicks from the Penalty Mark – Procedure

Present text: “The goalkeeper who is the team-mate of the kicker must remain on the field of play, outside the penalty area in which the kicks are being taken, behind the

penalty area border line which runs parallel with the goal line and at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the penalty mark.”

New Text: “The goalkeeper who is the team-mate of the kicker must remain on the field of play, outside the penalty area in which the kicks are being taken, on the goal line where it meets the penalty area boundary line.”

USSF Advice to Referees: The new language defines where the opposing goalkeeper must be during kicks from the penalty mark. The IFAB intended that the goalkeeper should not be in a position to distract the goalkeeper defending on the kick and so changed the location from the top of the penalty area to where the penalty area line intersects with the goal line. The decision as to which side of the field may be used for the opposing goalkeeper should be based on the referee’s position and the direction of his view.

II. OTHER DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE INTERNATIONAL F.A. BOARD

Method of injured players leaving the field of play

The Board reiterated that if an injured player is able to walk off the field of play, he should be encouraged to do so, especially if close to the boundary lines (it is therefore unnecessary to carry him off the field of play on a stretcher in these circumstances).

The Board also confirmed that when returning to the field of play, an injured player can enter the field from any point on the boundary lines if the ball is out of play. If the ball is in play, the player may only re-enter the field of play from a touch line. In each case, he must await the referee’s signal.

*USSF Advice to Referees: The above statement is a straightforward description of what options for returning to the field are available to a player who left the field for an injury with the referee’s permission but who was not substituted. Referees are advised to remember that such a player **can** return during play, but only with the referee’s permission and only from the touch line. This does **not** apply to players instructed to leave the field for bleeding or blood on the uniform or to correct equipment.*