



LAWS OF THE GAME CHANGES 2025/26

Law 3.10 (Team Captain)- Optional for Competitions

Only The Captain

- Opportunity for the referee to provide an explanation of contested decisions in the match
- Does NOT replace cautions for dissent
- Only the captain can approach the referee in a respectful manner when invited to do so
- Goal is to have stronger cooperation and communication between captains and referees to instil higher levels of fairness and mutual respect.

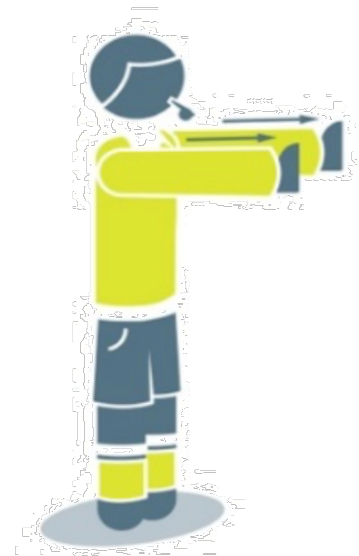
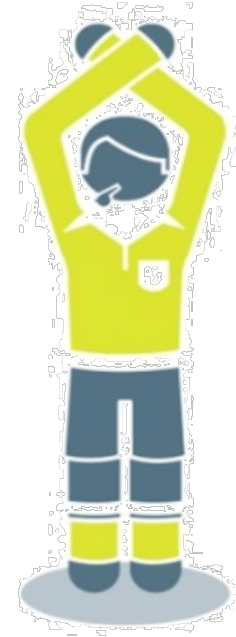
3 Objectives

1. Improve the image of the game
2. Improve cooperation between the captain and the referee
3. Increase respect between teams and the referee

Only The Captains- Protocol

The following procedure will apply:

- The referee can initiate the 'only the captain' protocol at any stage, but it is most likely to be used following major decisions and to prevent major confrontations
- The referee will blow the whistle and initiate the 'only the captain' protocol by using the following new signal:
 - Raising both arms above their head and crossing them at the wrists
 - Uncrossing their arms and moving them in front of their body with their palms open in a forward pushing motion to indicate that the players must not approach
 - Move away from the players to create zone ~4m – only the captain can enter this zone
- After a brief explanation, the captain should be given a few seconds to explain the decision to their team



Law 8.2 Dropped Ball

If the ball is outside the penalty area when play is stopped, it is **dropped for the team that had, or would have gained possession, if this is clear to the referee**; otherwise, it is dropped for the team that last touched it. The ball is dropped at its position when play was stopped.

Law 9.2 Ball in Play

An indirect free kick with no disciplinary sanction will be awarded if a team official, substitute, substituted or sent-off player or player **who is temporarily off the field of play touches the ball as it is leaving the field of play and there was no intention to interfere unfairly.**

Law 12.2 (Indirect free kick) Goalkeeper

Previously, if a goalkeeper held the ball for more than 6 sec, the law required referees to award an indirect free kick to the opposing team, from inside the penalty area

- the reality was that this law was rarely enforced

Law 12.2 (Indirect free kick) Goalkeeper

The new law change allows the referee a more "acceptable" solution to this issue, by changing the restart to a corner kick, and giving the goalkeeper a bit more time

The expectation is that this will be strictly enforced which will reinstate the purpose of this law to allow a more attractive game.

Procedure

- **First 3 seconds are counted silently while the referee gets into position**
- **Final 5 seconds are displayed in the referee's raised hand (and voice ideally)**

Law 12.2 (Indirect free kick) Goalkeeper

If a goalkeeper holds the ball for longer than eight seconds (with the referee using a visual five-second countdown), a corner kick will be awarded to the opposing team (rather than an indirect free kick if a goalkeeper holds the ball for more than six seconds, as per the current Laws).



CLARIFICATION CONCERNING DOUBLE TOUCHES AT
PENALTIES AND A PENALTY KICK

Law 10 – Determining the Outcome of a Match and Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

- In situations where the the penalty taker **accidentally** kicks the ball with both feet simultaneously or the ball touches their non-kicking foot or leg immediately after the kick:
 - **If the kick is successful, it is retaken**
 - If the kick is unsuccessful, an indirect free kick is awarded (unless the referee plays advantage when it clearly benefits the defending team) or, in the case of penalties (penalty shoot-out), the kick is recorded as missed

Law 10 – Determining the Outcome of a Match and Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

- The penalty taker **deliberately** kicks the ball with both feet simultaneously or deliberately touches it a second time before it has touched another player:
 - **An indirect free kick is awarded** (unless the referee plays advantage when it clearly benefits the defending team) or, in the case of penalties (penalty shoot-out), **the kick is recorded as missed**