



## WFA Laws of the Game 1 March 2024

### Introduction

This revised edition of the WFA 'Laws of the Game' 1 March 2024 (V3)

The WFA acknowledges that this unique sport is evolving and developing as it grows, but nevertheless holds fast to the basic ethos and values of the game - To ensure all matches are played safely with full consideration of every participant's age, gender and ability. It is therefore expected that all players, managers and club members will conduct themselves accordingly, respecting all fellow participants, including referees and other match officials. Failure to do so is likely to result in disciplinary action, including disqualification of individuals and/or clubs from WFA events.

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## **Section A: Players, Pitches and Equipment.**

### Players

1. Goalkeepers must be clearly distinguishable from outfield players on both teams.
2. Substitutes must be clearly distinguishable from players on both teams, until they are called into play by the referee during a stoppage in the game.
3. A competitive match should be abandoned if a team is permanently reduced to below the minimum number of players. *'Permanently' does not apply, however, to players who have been sin-binned, but does apply to players who are unable to play through injury or receiving a red card. The minimum number of players per format is:*
  - 5-a-side matches – minimum of 3 players
  - 6-a-side matches – minimum of 4 players
  - 7-a-side matches – minimum of 4 players
4. The team which causes the abandonment of a match will forfeit that match.

### Pitches

5. The standard pitch dimensions for competitions (i.e.6-a-side) are a width between 25 metres (min) and 37 metres (max) and a length between 35 metres (min) and 55 metres (max). It is acknowledged, however, that pitches at some facilities may fall outside these guidelines in which case it is a matter for the referee to decide whether or not that match can be played.
6. The standard goal size for competitions is a width between 3 metres (min) and 5 metres (max) and a height between 1.2 metres and 2 metres (max). The WFA recommend 'Mini-soccer' goals, 12 feet x 6 feet. It is acknowledged however, that goals at some facilities may fall outside these guidelines in which case it is a matter for the referee to decide whether or not that match can be played.
7. A goal area must be clearly marked at each end of the pitch. This must be a semi-circle and should extend between 4 metres (min) and 6 metres (max) from the goal line.
8. A clearly marked penalty mark should be positioned in line with the centre of the goal. A minimum distance of 6 metres and a maximum distance of 7m from centre of the goal line. *Note; If the goal area is 6m then the penalty mark should be an additional 1m outside the 6m area. Thus 7m from the centre of the goal line.*
9. The position of the ball on the pitch is determined when it crosses a line entirely (i.e. the whole of the ball). A ball located on the line marking the goal area is considered to be within that area and can, therefore, only be played by the goalkeeper.
10. Pitches with barriers are deemed acceptable for Club Games, but, for safety reasons, unacceptable for Tournament/Cup Games. Should a team/club be unable to meet this requirement, they must request in writing to the National

Cup Manager, permission to play at a venue with barriers. This may be considered in the early rounds of the National Cup, or such competition.

*Note; If the ball makes contact with the barrier, the ball will be deemed out of play and play will restart in a like manner, eg kick in, goal kick & corner kick.*

## **Section B: Foul Play.**

### **Running, Jogging, Skipping & Crabbing – Not Walking**

1. Running, jogging, skipping or crabbing on or off the ball is not permitted by any player (including goalkeepers) and will usually result in an indirect free kick being awarded. If, in the opinion of the referee, such conduct results in a clear goal-scoring opportunity being denied, then the offending player or players may be removed from play (Red Card) and a penalty kick considered, subject to Section F: DOGSO, Penalty and Red Card, as described in Section F: DOGSO, sub section 1.
2. The referee shall have sole interpretation on deciding what is and what is not walking. A walking action will generally be determined as a progression of steps throughout which there is constantly at least one foot in contact with the ground; both feet are momentarily grounded with the advancing leg straightened.

### **Ball above Head Height**

3. The ball is not permitted to travel above head height:
  - 3.1. The ball should be deemed dead once it has exceeded head height.
  - 3.2. Head height is defined as 1.83 metres or the height of the goal cross bar, which should not exceed 2 metres (see *Section A: subsection 6*).
  - 3.3. The whole of the ball must exceed head height to be deemed an infringement.
  - 3.4. The referee shall have sole interpretation on the ball exceeding head height.
  - 3.5. A player commits a foul if they cause the ball to travel above head height
  - 3.6. A player commits a foul if the ball deflects off them and goes above head height.
  - 3.7. A player commits a foul if they play the ball off a barrier and it exceeds head height.
  - 3.8. If a ball deflects off the goal frame and exceeds head height, it is not regarded as a foul, but the ball must immediately be deemed dead and retained by the goalkeeper.
  - 3.9. If a ball deflects off the goalkeeper in the process of making a save and exceeds head height before returning to play, it is not regarded as a foul, but the ball must immediately be deemed dead and retained by the goalkeeper.
  - 3.10. If a ball deflects off the goalkeeper in the process of making a save and exceeds head height, but then drops into the goal, a goal should be awarded.
  - 3.11. If a ball deflects off the goalkeeper in the process of making a save and exceeds head height, but then directly leaves the field of play, a corner or kick-in should be awarded, depending at which point the ball crossed the pitch boundary line.

### Physical Contact

4. Physical contact is not permitted and is therefore regarded as foul play.  
The term 'physical contact' includes:
- 4.1. Tackling across a player at a barrier.
  - 4.2. Blocking or cornering a player against a barrier.
  - 4.3. Crowding (two players vs one) a player against a barrier.
  - 4.4. Shoulder charging, pushing or barging.
  - 4.5. Stepping across or obstructing an opponent to gain an advantage or deny that player access to the ball or to a position.

### Foul Play

Foul play is defined as, but not limited to Careless Play / Dangerous Play / Reckless Play / and Serious Foul Play.

#### 1. Playing in a Dangerous Manner

Playing in a dangerous manner is any action that, while trying to play the ball where no physical contact is made, threatens injury to someone (including the player themselves), including preventing a nearby opponent from playing the ball for fear of injury.

#### 2. Careless Play

Any player making a challenge that the referee penalises and records the challenge as 'totting up', as defined in blue card infringements.

#### 3. Dangerous and / or Reckless Play

Any player making a challenge that the referee penalises and shows a straight blue card, as defined in blue card infringements.

#### 4. Serious Foul Play

Any player making a challenge that the referee penalises and shows a straight red card, as defined in red card infringements.

- An indirect free kick is awarded if, in the opinion of the referee, a player:
  - Plays in a dangerous manner
  - Commits a careless challenge
  - Commits a reckless challenge
  - Makes a challenge that the referee deems serious foul play
  - Impedes the progress of an opponent without any contact being made
  - Is guilty of dissent, using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or action(s) or other verbal offences
  - Prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from the hands or kicks or attempts to kick the ball when the goalkeeper is in the process of releasing it.
  - Commits any other offence, not mentioned in the Laws, for which play is stopped to caution or send off a player.

### Goal Area Infringements

5. An outfield player entering the goal area (unless they do so purely as a result of momentum) commits a foul, regardless of whether or not they play the ball. During a stoppage in the game if a player attempts to circumvent Law by moving across the goal area to gain an unfair advantage, that player will receive a warning as part of the totting up procedure.
6. A goalkeeper leaving the goal area during play commits a foul, *except* when this is a result of momentum only and providing that he/she is not in possession of the ball (and does not play the ball) outside the goal area. If the goalkeeper is still in contact with the ball outside the goal area, then a penalty kick shall be awarded.
7. The line marking the goal area is considered to be within that area for the purpose of identifying goal area infringements.

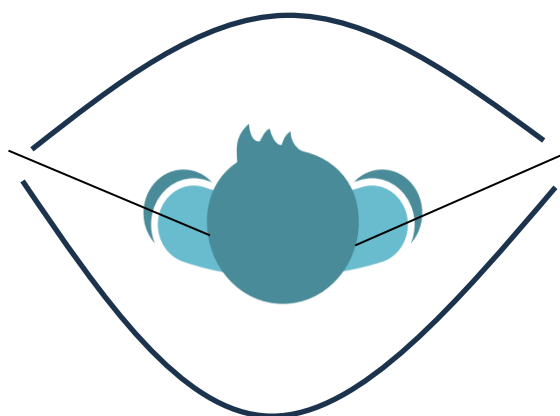
### Other Infringements

8. An outfield player commits a foul if they deliberately head the ball.
9. If an outfield player commits an offence during a stoppage in the game, then that player will receive a warning as part of the totting up procedure. Play will recommence in a like manner to the stoppage.

*Examples of this type of infringement are: When the ball goes out of play for a kick-in, corner kick, goal kick and a player runs or moves through the goal area to gain an advantageous position for the restart of play, then play would restart with a kick-in, corner kick, goal kick, etc.*

10. A player commits a foul by slide tackling, slide blocking and/or can only tackle an opponent from the front of their opponent, as shown in the diagram below.

#### ACCEPTABLE CHALLENGE ZONE



#### FOUL CHALLENGE ZONE

11. A player commits a foul by tackling an opposing player (or poaching) from behind, regardless of whether there is any physical contact.
12. Any player - other than a goalkeeper - commits a foul if they deliberately play the ball with their hand or arm.

13. A player commits a foul if they fail to take a free kick, penalty, kick-in, kick-off or corner in accordance with the rules or as instructed by the referee.
14. A player commits a foul if they take a free kick, penalty, kick-in, kick-off or corner whilst the ball is moving.
15. A player commits a foul if they take a kick-in whilst the ball is not behind the line which marks the pitch area.
16. A player commits a foul if they hold onto a barrier in order to shield the ball or obstruct an opposing player, unless such contact is necessary to prevent a collision or to maintain balance.
17. Any player - other than a goalkeeper - commits a foul if they deliberately play the ball whilst they are on the ground (i.e. having any part of their body other than their feet on the pitch).
18. A goalkeeper commits a foul if they deliberately play the ball other than by rolling it under-arm, or, kicking it from the ground. Drop kick volleys are not allowed.

### **Section C: Sanctions.**

#### Free Kicks

1. All incidents of foul play are worthy of a free kick being awarded against the offending player's team.
2. All free kicks are indirect and should be taken at the location of the infringement, with opposing players being at least 3 metres from the ball, with the exception of a quick free kick. On the referee's instruction free kicks should be taken at least 3m from the goal area.
3. The player may start his/her kicking movement a maximum of one metre from behind the ball, and he/she will be allowed unlimited walking steps in a continuous movement towards the ball.  
The Referee will indicate the one metre starting position.  
(Note: A minor backward step will be acceptable)
4. A player must be stationary before he starts his one metre approach to the ball (this will stop players walking from elsewhere on the pitch and just kicking the ball)
5. At the taking of a free kick if a defender encroaches or attempts to delay the free kick being taken the offender may receive a Blue Card and the kick retaken if a goal is not scored.
6. An attacking player cannot interfere with the defensive wall i.e. stands within one metre of the defensive wall.
7. A player attempting to circumvent the law will be penalised and may receive a Blue Card if the offence is repeated.
8. A goal will only be allowed following a free kick if, in the opinion of the referee, the ball has been actively played by another player from either team.  
A goal will only be allowed following a free kick after the ball has been played by another player, including if a player mis-kicks or mis-controls the ball.  
This does not include a direct shot at goal which deflects into the goal off another player or the goalkeeper, or any form of rebound, the goal will be disallowed.
9. There are, however, a number of exceptions for free kick:

- 9.1. If a goalkeeper is deemed to have deliberately caused the ball to exceed head height, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team 3 metres outside the goal area, adjacent to where the infringement occurred.
- 9.2. If a goalkeeper is deemed to have deliberately played the ball other than by throwing it under-arm or kicking it from the ground, an indirect free kick be awarded to the opposing team 3 metres outside the goal area, adjacent to where the infringement occurred.
- 9.3. If the goalkeeper deliberately heads the ball within the goal area, to prevent the ball from entering his goal, the goalkeeper will be deemed guilty of a DOGSO offence. The goalkeeper will be shown a red card by the referee and dismissed from the pitch. The referee will awards a penalty kick to the goalkeeper's opponents.
- 9.4. If the goalkeeper deliberately heads the ball within the goal area but the ball is not travelling towards the goalkeeper's goal the referee will penalise the goalkeeper and award an indirect free kick to the opposing team 3 metres outside the goal area, adjacent to where the infringement occurred.
- 9.5. If a goalkeeper leaves the goal area during play, a penalty kick should be awarded to the opposing team. This does not apply when the goalkeeper leaves the area as a result of momentum only, providing he/she is not in possession of (and does not play) the ball outside the goal area.
- 9.6. If, when the ball is in play, an outfield player enters the goal area they are defending (unless they do so purely as a result of momentum), regardless of whether or not they play the ball. A penalty kick should be awarded to the opposing team.
- 9.7. Quick free kicks 3 metres outside the goal area boundary line will be allowed but must be taken in accordance with Section D, sub sections 4. and 5.

### Penalty Kicks

10. A penalty kick is a direct free kick.
11. The player may start his/her kicking movement a maximum of one metre from behind the ball, and he/she will be allowed unlimited walking steps in a continuous movement towards the ball.  
The Referee will indicate the one metre starting position.  
(Note: A minor backward step will be acceptable as long as it remains within the 1 metre zone)
12. A player in the process of taking a penalty kick commits a foul if they initially simulate striking the ball, in order to cause the goalkeeper to move in a specific direction.
13. When facing a penalty kick, a goalkeeper is permitted to move any part of their body and to travel along the goal line, however the goalkeeper must have both feet in contact with the goal line, between the goals, until the ball is in play. It is not permitted for the goalkeeper to advance off the goal line prior to the kick being taken; this should result in the retaking of a saved or missed penalty.



14. All players, with the exception of the defending goalkeeper and the penalty kick taker, must be behind the ball and a minimum of 2m from the ball immediately prior to the kick being taken.

#### Blue Card and Red Card Infringements

15. If a player commits 3 infringements (totting up) for running, foul play or a combination of both, the referee should show a blue card and cause them to leave the game (sin-bin) for a period of time as stated below;
  - 15.1. Up to and including a game of 20 minute duration (eg 10 minutes each way) sin-bin punishment of 2 minutes of playing time.
  - 15.2. Any game in excess of 20 minute duration (e.g. 11 min or more each way) sin-bin punishment of 10% of the duration of the game. (e.g. 30 minute duration sin-bin punishment of 3 minutes of playing time. – 60 minutes, 6 minutes of playing time)
  - 15.3. If a player who is being sin-binned shows dissent to the referee, a further blue card will be shown to the offender followed by a red card and the offender will take no further part in that game.
  - 15.4. If a player returning from the sin-bin commits a further 3 infringements, the referee should cause them to play no further part in the game (sent off)
  - 15.5. The referee shall have sole discretion to determine which infringements are worthy of 'totting up'.
16. If a player is guilty of dissent the referee may show a Blue Card and cause them to leave the game (sin-bin) for a period of playing time as defined in sections 16,1 and 16.2.
17. If a player is guilty of reckless play the Referee should show a Blue Card and cause them to leave the game (sin-bin) for a period of playing time as defined in sections 16,1 and 16.2.
18. If a player returning from the sin-bin commits a further 3 infringements, the referee should show them a second Blue Card, followed by a Red card, which will cause them to play no further part in the game (sent off) and, if applicable, the competition.
19. If a player is guilty of serious foul play the referee may show a Red Card and cause them to play no further part in the game (sent off) and, if applicable, the competition.
20. Dangerous or reckless conduct, this amounts to 'aggravated' foul play and the referee should, in such circumstances, show a Red Card and cause them to play no further part in the game (sent off) and, if applicable, the competition.
21. If a player (including an off-field substitute or Team Official) uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour towards any other player, a referee, an official or any other participant, the referee should show a Red Card and cause them to play no further part in the game (sent off) and, if applicable, the competition.
22. If the referee plays advantage for a Red Card or a Blue Card offence (totting up procedure) and the offending player then gets involved in the game, the referee shall immediately stop play, take appropriate disciplinary action against the



offending player and restart the game with an IDFK to his opponents taken from where the offending player became involved with play.

## **Section D: Starting, Stopping and Continuing Play.**

### Starting a Match

1. A coin toss shall be used at the start of a game to determine whether a team wishes to kick-off or choose which end they wish to attack. The team winning the toss is granted first choice.
2. The match shall commence only when the referee blows the whistle.
3. A goal cannot be scored directly from a kick-off, even in the event of a deflection into the goal from an opposing player or the goalkeeper. The goal should be disallowed and a free kick awarded to the opposing team.

### Stopping and Resuming Play

4. If the referee stops play by blowing the whistle, play should only be resumed upon a clear signal by the referee. This signal may be a whistle, voice or arm signal. **Exception being 'Quick Free Kicks'**
5. Quick free kicks may be taken without a referee's signal to resume play, **as long as the Referee deems the action to be safe.** If play is restarted in an unsafe manner the referee may decide to take appropriate action as he deems fit. This could be either the retaking the free kick, or reversing the decision and awarding the free kick to the opposing team.

#### *Note for clarification:*

- *A player who intentionally tries to prevent the taking of a quick free kick may receive a Blue Card.*
  - *It is the referee's decision to award a free kick*
  - *It is the players' decision to take a quick free kick*
6. If, during open play the ball hits the Referee and the opposing team gain an advantage, the Referee will stop play and restart the game with an uncontested dropped ball to the team that last played the ball.
  7. A drop ball may be used to resume play when it is not possible to determine which team should have possession - for example, following a sudden halt in play caused through injury.
  8. A kick-in or roll-in shall resume play (on pitches with touchlines) at the point where the ball left the field of play.  
A restart of play taken from the touch line (e.g. a kick-in) shall be taken from behind the touch line.
  9. A corner kick shall resume play (on pitches with goal lines) on the same side of the pitch that the ball left the field of play.
  10. When the whole of the ball has crossed over the goal line and passed out of play by an attacker, play will be restarted with the goalkeeper taking a goal kick. The goal kick may be taken from any point within the goal area. The ball

must be stationary before the goalkeeper kicks the ball into play. The goalkeeper may start their kicking movement a maximum of one metre from behind the ball. If the goalkeeper contravenes this Law the referee will stop play and the goal kick will be retaken in accordance with Law.

If a player of the opposition attempts to prevent the goalkeeper releasing the ball into play the player shall be penalized. The offended goalkeeper will restart the game with a free kick taken anywhere from within the goal area.

11. A 'minor backward step' is a backward step of no more than half a metre.

### Continuing Play

12. When receiving the ball, a player may have both feet off the ground, as long as they do not step forwards or backwards.
13. Goalkeepers may distribute the ball when grounded.
14. Unlimited back passes between a player and goalkeeper are permitted, however, if in the opinion of the referee their actions are a time-wasting tactic the referee may award a free kick to their opponents taken 3m from the goal area boundary line of the goal area where the offence occurred.
15. Goalkeepers can handle the ball directly from a back pass.
16. Goals may be scored by any player (except a goalkeeper) from any outfield position. In the event of a goalkeeper scoring, the goal should be disallowed, and the ball (deemed dead) retained by the opposing goalkeeper.

### Kick-ins and Corners

17. Kick-ins and corners are indirect, with opposing players being at least 3 metres from the ball. A goal will only be allowed following a kick-in or corner once the ball has been legitimately played by another player: direct shots at goal from a kick-in or corner are not permitted and any such goals will be disallowed, even if deflected in off another player (goalkeeper included).
18. A player executing a kick-in or corner. The player may start his/her kicking movement a maximum of one metre from behind the ball, and he/she will be allowed unlimited walking steps in a continuous movement towards the ball. The Referee will indicate the one metre starting position. (A minor backward step is allowed.)

The ball should not be kicked with undue force or in a manner likely to cause injury to any player.

### Playing an Advantage

19. Although the decision to play an advantage can depend on many circumstances, WFA referees are advised to only take such action if:
  - it benefits the team which did not commit the infringement
  - it is safe to do so and unlikely to result in a confrontation, especially following physical contact

Referees should clearly indicate that an advantage is being allowed and also ensure that they take the appropriate remedial action (Blue Card, warning/advice) when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

### **Section E: Safety**

1. Players must refrain from openly wearing jewellery or watches. Tape may be used to cover rings.
2. All players must wear shin pads, covered by their socks unless they have medical dispensation.

### **Section F: DOGSO**

#### Penalty and Red Card

1. Denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity (DOGSO) is a red-card offense. This rule is to prevent the defence from illegally stopping their opponents' most dangerous scoring opportunities and takes into account handling the ball and fouling an attacker moving toward the goal by an offense punishable by a free kick or penalty kick. It's obviously a very important decision for the referee to determine DOGSO as the team would then be playing one player short.

*Note: However, where a player commits an offence against an opponent which denies an opponent an obvious goal scoring opportunity and the Referee awards a penalty kick, the Referee may caution the offending player with a Blue Card, if the Referee deems the offence was an attempt to play the ball. In all other circumstances (e.g. running, holding, pulling, pushing, no possibility to play the ball etc) the offending player must be Red Carded.*

2. Handling the ball. This obviously does not apply to a goalkeeper within his or her own penalty area but applies to the goalkeeper who comes out of the penalty area to deliberately handle the ball or an outfield player who deliberately handles the ball on a shot that was going into the goal.
3. Please be aware that it is not a DOGSO offence when a goalkeeper makes a save inside the penalty area and his momentum takes the ball outside the area. However, play will be restarted with a penalty kick to the goalkeeper's opponents.
4. Should a defender (not the goalkeeper) deliberately handle the ball that does go into the goal, allow the goal and record the foul under the totting up process. If this is the player's third or sixth offence the referee shall take the appropriate disciplinary action.
5. When an attacker moving toward the opponent's goal is fouled by a defender, or the goal bound shot being blocked by a defender running, the referee must make a very important decision.

6. These decisions must be based on four elements for an obvious goal scoring opportunity before the foul becomes a Red Card offense. They are described as the four D's:
  - Defenders: Not counting the player committing the foul, there is at most one defender between the foul and the goal. That other defender is generally the goalkeeper. The keeper committing a foul can be sent off for this offense as well.
  - Distance to the ball: The attacker must be close enough to the ball to continue playing it at the time of the foul.
  - Distance to the goal: The attacker should be, or have the opportunity to be, close enough to the goal to have a legitimate chance to score. Therefore being near the opponent's penalty area is more likely to be an obvious goal-scoring opportunity than the attacker being in his /her team's defensive half of the field.
  - Direction: The attacker must be moving toward the opponent's goal at the time of the foul, not toward a corner flag or away from the goal.
7. For a DOGSO offence, play must restart with a penalty kick to the offended team.
8. For a DOGSO offence the offending player must be shown an appropriate Card.
9. ***Example; For reference only, and is intended to STOP a so called 'Professional Foul'***  
***If an attacker in possession of the ball and is deemed to have a goal scoring opportunity, and is deliberately fouled or prevented from such an opportunity by a defender or goalkeeper, then that defender or goal keeper will be sent off (Red Card) and a Penalty awarded.***