

2005 International Football Association Board (IFAB) Annual General Meeting (AGM). Report by Julian Carosi.

In accordance with the principle of rotation, the 119th Annual General Meeting of the International F.A. Board was held at the Cardiff Miskin Manor Hotel, situated in the Vale of Glamorgan, Wales on 26 February 2005. Next year, the IFAB will convene in Switzerland 3rd to 5th March at a venue to be selected by the hosts FIFA.

Since its inception in the late 19th century, the IFAB has met annually to review football legislation by accepting or rejecting possible alterations to the Laws. The Board is composed of the Football Associations of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, who each have a single vote, together with FIFA, who represent the other 201 member associations with four votes. For a proposal to succeed, it must receive the support of at least three-quarters of those present and entitled to vote (i.e. six of the eight representatives have to vote in favour of a motion for it to pass.) Changes to the Laws of the Game come into force as from 1 July following the AGM.

In the weeks prior to this year's AGM, the football associations sent in their written proposals to the secretary of the host association. The list of suggestions was then distributed by FIFA to all associations for examination. A large number of the agenda proposals at this year's meeting were accepted; but there were also several proposals, that failed to achieve the required votes. A number of further proposals, such as the Football Association of Wales' submission that a player could only be offside when in the opponents' penalty area, were withdrawn before the meeting.

In addition to discussion of Law changes, the IFAB also considered a proposal relating to the introduction of technology on the field of play. The presentation specifically dealt with the potential use of an innovative ball design, containing a microchip, which its manufacturers claim will assist the task of referees and their assistants in determining whether or not the ball has crossed the goal line in its entirety.

The IFAB meeting commenced at 0930, and was immediately followed at 1300 by an IFAB media conference attended by all the top newspapers and television companies. Also in attendance, were international reporters. Julian Carosi and Colin Harris were in attendance representing the Referees' Association and the 'Refereeing Today' magazine. The IFAB media conference included FIFA president Joseph S. Blatter, Urs Linsi (FIFA General Secretary), Brian Barwick (Chief Executive FA), Howard Wells (FA Northern Ireland), David Collins (FA Wales), and David Taylor (FA Scotland).

Immediately following the end of the IFAB media conference, FIFA president Joseph S. Blatter made himself available for FIFA related questioning during a group session, and later, on a one-to-one basis.

The following law change proposals, which will come into effect on 1 July 2005, were accepted by the IFAB.

Law 3 - The Number of Players

The permitted Number of substitutes.

Other Matches.

In National 'A' team matches, up to a maximum of six substitutes may be used. In all other matches, a greater number of substitutes may be used, provided that:

- the teams concerned reach agreement on a maximum number
- the referee is informed before the match.

Reason - this will clarify the present position. Other than in National 'A' team matches, the teams can agree the number of substitutes before the game and inform the referee. If the referee is not informed, or agreement cannot be reached, no more than 6 substitutes are allowed.

Law 3 - The Number of Players

When a Substitute enters the field of play without the permission of the Referee.

Infringements/Sanctions

The new text will now read:

If a substitute enters the field of play without the referee being informed:

- Play is stopped
- The substitute is cautioned and required to leave the field of play
- Play is restarted with ***an indirect free kick*** at the place it was located when the play was stopped.

Reason - the award of an indirect free kick is now considered to be a more appropriate restart than a dropped ball. When a substitute enters the field of play without the referee's permission, it is considered that this constitutes an infringement by the team of the substitute. His team should therefore be penalised with an indirect free kick, as opposed to a dropped ball.

Law 5 - The Referee

Referee changing a decision after the final whistle.

Decisions of the Referee

(The second paragraph now reads.)

The referee may only change a decision on realising that it is incorrect or, at his discretion, on the advice of an assistant referee, provided that he has not restarted play **or terminated the match**.

Reason - Law 5 states that a referee cannot change his decision once the game has been restarted. The IFAB accepted an additional phrase to prevent the referee from changing his mind after the game has terminated.

The text required clarified because of a practical situation that arose in France, when a referee saw the Assistant Referee signal after he had ended the match. The new text also makes it clear, that if a referee has terminated the match he can no longer take the advice of an assistant referee and change a decision.

Law 11 - Offside

Parts of the body that can be used when calculating offside.

New International FA Board Decision 1

For the first time, there is now a definition of "nearer to his opponents' goal line".

The new decision states:

In the definition of offside position, "nearer to his opponents' goal line means that any part of his head, body or feet is nearer to his opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent. The arms are not included in this definition.

Reason - the new text takes account of the parts of the body with which a player can play football. If any of these parts are nearer to his opponents' goal line, he is considered to be in an offside position. There is no advantage to be gained if only the arms are in advance of the opponent.

New International FA Board Decision 2

The definitions of elements of involvement in active play are as follows:-

- ***Interfering with play means playing or touching the ball passed or touched by a team mate.***
- ***Interfering with an opponent means preventing an opponent from playing or being able to play the ball by clearly obstructing the opponent's line of vision or movements or making a gesture or movement which, in the opinion of the referee, deceives or distracts an opponent.***
- ***Gaining an advantage by being in that position means playing a ball that rebounds to him off a post or the crossbar having been in an offside position or playing a ball that rebounds to him off an opponent having been in an offside position.***

Reason - these definitions on the interpretation of active involvement in play through interfering with play, interfering with an opponent or gaining an advantage, have been tried out over two seasons. This IFAB decision gives the appropriate recognition by placing the active play definitions into the Laws of the Game booklet.

Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct

Incorporating all tackles, which endanger the safety of an opponent into the definition of serious foul play.

The new text for IFAB Decision 4 will be:

A tackle, which endangers the safety of an opponent, must be sanctioned as serious foul play.

Reason - The IFAB accepted, that in addition to a tackle from behind, a tackle from the side or from the front, which endangers the safety of an opponent, must also be sanctioned as serious foul play.

Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct

Definition of when the authority of the referee starts and ends as far as taking disciplinary sanctions is concerned.

The new text is as follows:

Disciplinary Sanctions

Only a player or substitute or substituted player may be shown the red or yellow card.

The Referee has the authority to take disciplinary sanctions, as from the moment he enters the field of play until he leaves the field of play after the final whistle.

Reason - it is important to define when the referee is authorised to show red and yellow cards. When incidents happen on the field of play immediately after the final whistle, a card may now be shown. This would be more effective than the current practice of just reporting the incident.

Law 14 -The Penalty Kick

Awarding indirect free kicks when the ball does not enter goal when a player taking the kick offends, or when a colleague of the kicker encroaches into the penalty area before the kick is taken.

The amendment comes under the **Infringement / Sanctions** section of Law 14.

Infringements/Sanctions

The player taking the penalty kick infringes the Laws of the Game (*e.g. by clearly stopping in his run up, as opposed to feinting but not stopping.*)

Bullet point three will now read:

- If the ball does not enter the goal, **the referee stops play and restarts the match with an indirect free kick to the defending team.**

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

Bullet point three will now read:

- If the ball does not enter the goal, **the referee stops play and restarts the match with an indirect free kick to the defending team.**

Current Law 14 example: A colleague of the kicker encroaches. The ball rebounds to another colleague who has remained outside of the penalty area. The kicker's team would get an advantage having committed an encroachment offence. The new wording states that the referee can now award an indirect free kick.

Reason - the existing Law states that the penalty kick is not retaken in the above two bullet points – but it does not say what should happen. The current words 'the kick is not retaken' are confusing; and in the past, this has led to different interpretations being applied by referees. To address this anomaly, the IFAB have approved the new punishment of awarding an indirect free kick.

Law 15 -The Throw-In

Retiring 2 metres to allow the thrower the opportunity to take an unobstructed throw-in.

To define the minimum distance that an opponent should stand from the thrower, the IFAB approved the insertion of the following additional penultimate sentence into Law 15.

All opponents must stand no less than 2 metres from the point at which the throw-in is taken.

Reason - There is an increasing trend for an opponent to stand immediately in front of the thrower at a throw-in, with his feet virtually on the touchline. There is no breach of Law 15 but without doubt the thrower is being impeded from completing the throw. This creates the possibility of a confrontational situation developing between both players.

A number of National Associations are actually unofficially imposing a prescribed distance in such situations. This new amendment ensures standardisation of the application of the Laws of the Game.

End of accepted Law proposals.

The following items were also discussed at the IFAB.

Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct

Item 9 – Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Unsporting tactics, which delay the restart of play.

The IFAB received a proposal, which would have resulted in a caution for any opposing player touching the ball after a free kick, corner kick, throw-in, or goal had been awarded.

The IFAB felt that this was a little too drastic to be incorporated as written, and the proposal was withdrawn. FIFA have been given permission to experiment with the proposal in their Under 20 and Under 17 world championships; and to report their findings to the IFAB in 2006.

Technical Area

The IFAB discussed advertising in the Technical Area (Decision 4 Law 1). It is increasingly common practice for advertising to take place on the dugout or other shelters within the Technical Area. Clarification is required as to whether this matter should be left to competition rules as opposed to regulation through the Laws of the Game.

The IFAB sub committee was tasked with discussing the question and producing clarification as to whether the covered seating area was part of the technical area.

The Ball (Submitted by FIFA)

"Was that a goal?" is a question that always seems to be on the lips of fans, players, coaches and referees, and not just since England's infamous third goal during the 1966 FIFA World Cup™ final at Wembley. In recent years, the IFAB Board has often debated whether technology could help match officials make quick decisions in unclear situations regarding whether a goal has been scored or not. At its meeting at the Miskin Manor hotel, the Board listened to a presentation by long-term FIFA partner adidas, who together with the German company, Cairos AG and the German Fraunhofer Institute have developed a system with a prototype of a ball with an embedded electronic chip. The presentation also outlined the necessary stadium infrastructure and demonstrated how the entire system would work. It is designed to be particularly helpful in determining whether a goal had been scored. Following the presentation, the International F.A. Board gave permission to allow the system to be tested in competitive football, and empowered FIFA to do so at this year's Under 17 world championship in Peru (16 September to 2 October).

FIFA President Joseph S. Blatter welcomed the Board's decision. "Not a day goes by without technology making progress. We therefore have a duty to at least examine whether new technology could be used in football. The Board had already agreed to test goal-line technology, provided that the systems were available. The critical issue, however, will be to ensure that such technology would not affect the Laws' universal nature or the authority of match officials."

An encrypted microchip inside the ball, could determine whether or not the ball has fully crossed the goal line. An adidas spokesman also stated that the technology would not just refer to the goal line between the goal posts, but would be able to monitor ball movement over all of the boundary lines (i.e. goal lines and touchlines).

Any Other Business

The IFAB sub committee was asked to review the Question and Answer Booklet before the printing of the 2005/2006 Laws of the Game Booklet.