LAWS OF THE GAME FOR COACHES

This information is not intended to replace or modify the SAY Playing Rules but to highlight information contained in the Laws of the Game to help coaches teach the game of soccer to their players. Basic knowledge of the Laws of the Game helps to understand the referee’s decisions and allows a greater sense of accomplishment and enjoyment for coaches and players.

The 17 Laws fall into the following four general categories:

WHAT IS NEEDED TO PLAY

Law I -Field of Play

Law II -The Ball

Law III -Players and Substitutions

Law IV -Players’ Equipment

AUTHORITY

Law V -Referees

Law VI -Assistant Referees

HOW TO PLAY

Law VII -Duration of the Game

Law VIII -The Start and Restart of Play

Law IX -Ball In and Out of Play

Law X -Method of Scoring

Law XIII -Free Kick

Law XIV -Penalty Kick

Law XV -Throw-In

Law XVI -Goal Kick

Law XVII -Corner Kick

TECHNICALITIES

Law XI -Offside

Law XII -Fouls and Misconduct

Information from the Laws are as follows:

LAW I- FIELD OF PLAY

* All lines are part of the areas they encompass.
* A ball on/over a boundary line is in play.
* The halfway line is neutral.

LAW II -THE BALL

* The ball must be of the proper size, properly inflated, and safe (no panels missing or cut and the seams intact).
* Game ball is normally furnished by the home team.

LAW III -PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTIONS

* Teams must have the minimum required number of players and someone responsible for the team (coach or parent) at the field at game time to begin the game (County 20-minute grace period).
* Late-arriving players may be added to the field during play after having their equipment checked by a referee. The referee is the sole judge when this may occur.
* Substitutions are to be conducted from the halfway line with the referee’s permission.
* Players may be substituted from off the bench between quarters, at halftime, and in the event of an injury (the team with the injured player).
* Players, not coaches, are to be cautioned for violation of this Law.

LAW IV -PLAYERS’ EQUIPMENT

* Players shall not wear anything dangerous to themselves or others.
* Some items that are NOT allowed are on page 6 of this handbook.
* The referee’s judgment on allowable equipment is final.
* Casts are not allowed, nor are wrist supports with a hard insert. No finger splints.
* Medic Alert bracelets are to be taped along both sides with the medallion showing.

LAW V -REFEREES

* Referees have the power to stop, suspend, or terminate the game.
* Referees have the power to caution and/or eject players/coaches from the moment they enter the field until they leave after the game.
* Interpretation/explanation of calls should be limited to between quarters and after the game. -Use of the SAY Referees’ signals (page 40, SAY Soccer Playing Rules) is encouraged.
* Referees may change their decision (call) as long as play has not been restarted.
* The Referee’s decision happens when the decision is made in their mind, not when the whistle is sounded.
* Referees use five levels of control for player/game management. From the lowest to the highest they are:
* VOICE. The referee is not yelling at the players. Voice may take the form of the “quiet word” with a player moving up field after a foul; to a stern warning such as, “Knock it off!” to a player bordering on misconduct.
* WHISTLE. The next higher level of control. Players should play to the whistle, but not continue after the whistle is sounded. The shot on goal after the whistle sounds may be considered as a misconduct and the shooter earns the appropriate card.
* CAUTION (Yellow Card). There are seven cautionable offenses. Some offenses are mandatory cautions and require that a caution be issued. Coaches and substitutes in the team area may be cautioned.
* EJECTION (Red Card). There are seven red card offenses. Coaches and substitutes in the team area may be ejected for certain types of misconduct.
* If a player is ejected (red carded) before the match, the team may play at full strength, but that player may not participate in this match nor the next match.
* If a player is ejected during play the team will play shorthanded. The ejected player may not participate in the remainder of the game nor the next match.
* If a team is playing with the minimum number of players and one or more of its players is ejected, the game will be terminated.
* TERMINATION. Ultimate level of control. Games may be terminated for reasons of weather, field conditions, grave misconduct, or mass confrontation.

LAW VI -ASSISTANT REFEREES

* Assistant referees are not used in the dual system of control.
* “Club Assistants” may be used if one of the assigned referees does not show for the game and the referee is familiar with the diagonal system of control (and has flags)

LAW VII -DURATION OF THE GAME

* Two minutes between quarters is allowed for teams to change ends.
* The quarter ends when time runs out, even if the ball is in flight and about to score a goal.

LAW VIII -THE START AND RESTART OF PLAY

* Winner of a coin toss chooses the end to attack. Loser kicks off to start the game.
* Teams change ends after each quarter, kick-off to start the quarter alternates (team A kicks off quarters one and three/same direction, team B kicks off quarters two and four/direction of opening kick-off.
* Whistle needed for the kick off.
* Ball is in play when kicked and clearly moves.
* Another player must touch the ball before the kicker may play the ball a second time. PUNISHMENT: Indirect Free Kick (IFK) to opponents.
* Goal may be scored directly from the kick-off.
* After a goal is scored, restart with a kick-off by the team scored upon.

DROP BALL

* Ball is in play when it touches the ground.
* Drop retaken if the ball is played before it contacts the ground.
* Goal NOT awarded if ball is kicked DIRECTLY into the goal from a drop ball.
* Drop is retaken if the ball leaves the field before being touched by a player after contacting the ground.

LAW IX -BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY

* The ball is out of play when it wholly crosses a boundary line or when the game is stopped by the referee.
* The ball is in play at all other times including rebounding off a goal post, cross bar, corner flag, or referee.

LAW X -METHOD OF SCORING

* A goal is scored when it wholly crosses the goal line between the goal posts and under the cross bar regardless if the goal is dislodged from the goal line.

LAW XI -OFFSIDE

* Offside is judged at the time the ball is played by a teammate.
* A player should NOT be declared offside for merely being in an off side position.
* By nature, offside is a “late” call.

LAW XII -FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

FOULS

* A foul is defined as an act committed by a player, on the field, against an opponent, during play. (Handling is an exception to the “against an opponent” clause.)
* A Direct Free Kick (DFK) is awarded to the opposing team at the spot of the foul when a player commits one of the ten major fouls.
* When a player commits a foul in his or her own penalty area the result will be a penalty kick for the opponents.
* Handling must be deliberate.
* A fair charge has players making contact shoulder-to-shoulder with the players each having at least one foot on the ground, within playing distance of the ball.
* An Indirect Free Kick (IFK) will result from a player playing dangerously, fair charge away from the ball, slide tackle from the rear with no contact, obstruction, charging the goalkeeper, improper clearance by the goalkeeper, throw/pass back to the goalkeeper by a teammate and the goalkeeper touching it with their hands.
* Deliberate parrying of the ball by the goalkeeper is not recognized under SAY playing law.

MISCONDUCT

* Misconduct can be committed by players, substitutes, and coaches.
* A player committing one of the ten major fouls in a reckless manner or using excessive force against an opponent may receive a Caution (Yellow Card) or an Ejection (Red Card).
* A cautioned player may stay in the game or be replaced at the discretion of the coach or the team may play shorthanded. If the team elects to play shorthanded the cautioned player may reenter the game at their next substitution opportunity.
* An ejected player may remain in the team area and not participate further except to cheer on his/her team.
* If a player is ejected the team must play shorthanded.
* Continued misconduct by the ejected player will result in game termination.
* If a coach is ejected, he or she will leave the immediate vicinity of the field (out of sight and sound) in a timely manner (two minutes). If the coach refuses to leave, or returns to the vicinity of the field before the game ends the game shall be terminated.

LAW XIII -FREE KICK

* There are two types of free kicks, direct (DFK) and indirect (IFK).
* Another player must touch the ball before the kicker may play it a second time.
* A team may score directly from a DFK.
* The ball must be touched by a second player (either team) for a goal to be awarded from an IFK.
* Ball must be stationary.
* Ball is in play once it has been kicked and moves.

LAW XIII -FREE KICK (CONTINUED)

* Free kicks taken from inside own penalty area are in play once they totally leave the penalty area. Opponents must be out of the penalty area and the required distance away from the ball.
* Free kicks awarded inside a team’s own goal area may be taken from anywhere within the goal area. Opponents must be outside the penalty area.
* IFK awarded to attacking team inside opponent’s goal area must be taken from the six yard line (12 yard line for U8s).
* Penalty kicks and kick-offs must be kicked and moved forward and require a whistle. All other free kicks may be taken in any direction.
* “Quick Free Kick.” Once a free kick is awarded, the kicking team may take the kick once the ball is stationary without waiting for the whistle to be sounded or the opponents given the opportunity to set up a “wall.” This is a legal offensive tactic designed to move the ball quickly on the attack. [Hint: Ground the ball with a hand to prevent the appearance of double touching or a moving ball.]

LAW XIV -PENALTY KICK

* Not used in U8 play.
* Ball must be kicked forward.
* Once kicked forward, another player may run into the penalty area and take the shot on goal.
* Goalkeeper must have both feet on the goal line between the goalposts until the shot is taken. May move from side-to-side on the goal line while facing the field.
* All players except the goalkeeper and the shooter must be outside the penalty area (off the lines) and behind the penalty arc until the ball is kicked.
* Whistle must be sounded to restart play (take the kick).

LAW XV -THROW-IN

* Thrower must have both feet in contact with the ground (no kneeling), on or outside the touchline, ball delivered from behind and over the head.
* Opponents two yards from the spot of the throw. Caution if an opponent doesn’t respect the required distance.
* Flip or somersault throws are legal.

LAW XVI -GOAL KICK

* A goal kick is awarded to the defense if the whole of the ball crosses the goal line, last touched by an attacker, and not scoring a goal.
* The goal kick may be taken from anywhere in the goal area.
* No whistle required to take the kick.
* A team may score directly from a goal kick, but not on themselves.
* All opponents must remain outside the penalty area (goalkeeper area in U8 play) until the ball is in play (ball totally leaves the penalty area).
* No offside for either team directly from the goal kick.

LAW XVII -CORNER KICK

* A corner kick is awarded to the attacking team if the whole of the ball crosses the goal line, last touched by a defender, not scoring a goal.
* The corner kick is taken from the nearest quarter circle from where the ball crossed the goal line.
* No whistle required to take the kick.
* A team may score directly from a corner kick.
* No offside if directly (first touch) from the corner kick.
* Opponents must be the required distance from the corner arc.
* Ball in play once it has been kicked and moves.