USSF CHANGES TO THE LAWS OF THE GAME
2016-2017

LAW 1 (The Field of Play):

The field of play must be a wholly natural or, if competition rules permit, a wholly artificial playing surface except where competition rules permit an integrated combination of artificial and natural materials (hybrid system).

(Grass and Turf combination may be used-with approval)

LAW 2 (The Ball):

LAW 3 (The Number of Players):

Substitutes can take any restart provided they first enter the field of play.

Players and substitutes sent off
A player who is sent off:
• before submission of the team list cannot be named on the team list in any capacity
• after being named on the team list and before kick-off may be replaced by a named substitute, who cannot be replaced; the number of substitutions the team can make is not reduced
• after the kick-off cannot be replaced

Anyone not named on the team list as a player, substitute or team official is an outside agent.

If play is stopped and the interference was by:
• a team official, substitute, substituted or sent off player, play restarts with a direct free kick or penalty kick
• an outside agent, play restarts with a dropped ball
If a ball is going into the goal and the interference does not prevent a defending player playing the ball, the goal is awarded if the ball enters the goal (even if contact was made with the ball) unless the ball enters the opponents’ goal.

If, after a goal is scored, the referee realizes, before play restarts, an extra person was on the field of play when the goal was scored:
- the referee must disallow the goal if the extra person was:
  - a player, substitute, substituted player, sent off player or team official of the team that scored the goal
  - an outside agent who interfered with play unless a goal results as outlined above in ‘extra persons on the field of play’

Play is restarted with a goal kick, corner kick or dropped ball.
- the referee must allow the goal if the extra person was:
  - a player, substitute, substituted player, sent off player or team official of the team that conceded the goal
  - an outside agent who did not interfere with play

If, after a goal is scored and play has restarted, the referee realizes an extra person was on the field of play when the goal was scored, the goal cannot be disallowed. If the extra person is still on the field the referee must:
- stop play
- have the extra person removed
- restart with a dropped ball or free kick as appropriate

The referee must report the incident to the appropriate authorities.

The team captain has no special status or privileges but has a degree of responsibility for the behavior of the team.

**LAW 4 (The Players Equipment):**

socks – tape or any material applied or worn externally must be the same color as that part of the sock it is applied to or covers

A player whose footwear or shin guard is lost accidentally must replace it as soon as possible and no later than when the ball next goes out of play; if before doing so the player plays the ball and/or scores a goal, the goal is awarded.

Undershirts must be the same color as the main color of the shirt sleeve; undershorts/tights must be the same color as the main color of the shorts or the lowest part of the shorts – players of the same team must wear the same color.
Non-dangerous protective equipment, for example headgear, facemasks and knee and arm protectors made of soft, lightweight padded material is permitted as are goalkeepers’ caps and sports spectacles.

The use of any form of electronic communication between players (including substitutes/substituted and sent off players) and/or technical staff is not permitted.

A player who leaves the field of play to correct or change equipment must:
• have the equipment checked by a match official before being allowed to re-enter
• only re-enter with the referee’s permission (which may be given during play)

**LAW 5 (The Referee):**

Decisions of the referee:
Decisions will be made to the best of the referee’s ability according to the Laws of the Game and the ‘spirit of the game’ and will be based on the opinion of the referee who has the discretion to take appropriate action within the frame work of the Laws of the Game.

The referee may not change a decision on realizing that it is incorrect or on the advice of another match official if play has restarted or the referee has signaled the end of the first or second half (including extra time) and left the field of play or terminated the match.

**Disciplinary action:**
• punishes the more serious offence, in terms of sanction, restart, physical severity and tactical impact, when more than one offence occurs at the same time
• takes disciplinary action against players guilty of caution able and sending-off offences
• has the authority to take disciplinary action from entering the field of play for the pre-match inspection until leaving the field of play after the match ends (including kicks from the penalty mark). If, before entering the field of play at the start of the match, a player commits a sending-off offence, the referee has the authority to prevent the player taking part in the match (see Law 3.6); the referee will report any other misconduct
• has the power to show yellow or red cards from entering the field of play at the start of the match until after the match has ended, including during the half-time interval, extra time and kicks from the penalty mark

an extra ball, other object or animal enters the field of play during the
match, the referee must:
-- stop play (and restart with a dropped ball) only if it interferes with play unless the ball is going into the goal and the interference does not prevent a defending player playing the ball, the goal is awarded if the ball enters the goal (even if contact was made with the ball) unless the ball enters the opponents’ goal
-- allow play to continue if it does not interfere with play and have it removed at the earliest possible opportunity

**LAW 6 (The Assistant Referee):**

Other match officials (two assistant referees, fourth official, two additional assistant referees and reserve assistant referee) may be appointed to matches. They will assist the referee in controlling the match in accordance with the Laws of the Game but the final decision will always be taken by the referee. The match officials operate under the direction of the referee.

**LAW 7 (The Duration of the Match):**

**LAW 8 (The Start and Restart of Play):**

If an infringement occurs when the ball is not in play this does not change how play is restarted.

For Kickoffs:
• the ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves (includes backwards)
• a goal may be scored directly against the opponents from the kick-off

Dropped Ball:
The referee drops the ball at the position where it was when play was stopped, unless play was stopped inside the goal area in which case the ball is dropped on the goal area line which is parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was when play was stopped. The ball is in play when it touches the ground. Any number of players may contest a dropped ball (including the goalkeepers); the referee cannot decide who may contest a dropped ball or its outcome.

If a dropped ball enters the goal without touching at least two players play is restarted with:
• a goal kick if it enters the opponents’ goal
• a corner kick if it enters the team’s goal

**LAW 9 (Ball in and out of Play):**

The ball is in play at all other times, including when it rebounds off a match
official, goalpost, crossbar or corner flag post and remains in the field of play.

**LAW 10 (The Method of Scoring):**

**Before kicks from the penalty mark start**

- Unless there are other considerations (e.g. ground conditions, safety etc.), the referee tosses a coin to decide the goal at which the kicks will be taken which may only be changed for safety reasons or if the goal or playing surface becomes unusable

- The referee tosses a coin again and the team that wins the toss decides whether to take the first or second kick
- With the exception of a substitute for an injured goalkeeper, only players who are on the field of play or are temporarily off the field of play (injury, adjusting equipment etc.) at the end of the match are eligible to take kicks
- Each team is responsible for selecting from the eligible players the order in which they will take the kicks. The referee is not informed of the order
- If at the end of the match and before or during the kicks one team has a greater number of players than its opponents, it must reduce its numbers to the same number as its opponents and the referee must be informed of the name and number of each player excluded. Any excluded player is not eligible to take part in the kicks (except as outlined below)
- A goalkeeper who is unable to continue before or during the kicks and whose team has not used its maximum permitted number of substitutes, may be replaced by a named substitute, or a player excluded to equalize the number of players, but takes no further part and may not take a kick

**During kicks from the penalty mark**

- Only eligible players and match officials are permitted to remain on the field of play
- All eligible players, except the player taking the kick and the two goalkeepers, must remain in the center circle

The kick is completed when the ball stops moving, goes out of play or the referee stops play for any infringement of the Laws

The above principle continues for any subsequent sequence of kicks but a team may change the order of kickers

- Kicks from the penalty mark must not be delayed for a player who leaves the field of play. The player’s kick will be forfeited (not scored) if the player does not return in time to take a kick

**LAW 11 (Offside):**

A player is in an offside position if:
any part of the head, body or feet is in the opponents’ half (excluding the halfway line) and
any part of the head, body or feet is nearer to the opponents’ goal line than both the ball and the second-last opponent
The hands and arms of all players, including the goalkeepers, are not considered
A player in an offside position at the moment the ball is played or touched by a team-mate is only penalized on becoming involved in active play

If an offside offence occurs, the referee awards an indirect free kick where the offence occurred, including if it is in the player’s own half of the field of play.
A defending player who leaves the field of play without the referee’s permission shall be considered to be on the goal line or touchline for the purposes of offside until the next stoppage in play or until the defending team has played the ball towards the halfway line and it is outside their penalty area.
If the player left the field of play deliberately (in an attempt to put an attacher into an offside position), the player must be cautioned when the ball is next out of play.
An attacking player may step or stay off the field of play not to be involved in active play. If the player re-enters from the goal line and becomes involved in play before the next stoppage in play, or the defending team has played the ball towards the halfway line and it is outside their penalty area, the player shall be considered to be positioned on the goal line for the purposes of offside.
A player who deliberately leaves the field of play and re-enters without the referee’s permission and is not penalized for offside and gains an advantage, must be cautioned.
If an attacking player remains stationary between the goalposts and inside the goal as the ball enters the goal, a goal must be awarded unless the player commits an offside offence or Law 12 offence in which case play is restarted with an indirect or direct free kick.

**LAW 12 (Fouls and Misconduct):**

Direct and indirect free kicks and penalty kicks can only be awarded for offences and infringements committed when the ball is in play.

If an offence involves contact it is penalized by a direct free kick or penalty kick.

**Denying a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity**
Where a player denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by a deliberate handball offence the player is sent off wherever the offence occurs.
Where a player commits an offence against an opponent within their own penalty area which denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity
and the referee awards a penalty kick, the offending player is cautioned unless:

- The offence is holding, pulling or pushing or
- The offending player does not attempt to play the ball or there is no possibility for the player making the challenge to play the ball or
- The offence is one which is punishable by a red card wherever it occurs on the field of play (e.g. serious foul play, violent conduct etc.)

In all the above circumstances the player is sent off.

**Violent conduct**

Violent conduct is when a player uses or attempts to use excessive force or brutality against an opponent when not challenging for the ball, or against a team-mate, team official, match official, spectator or any other person, regardless of whether contact is made. In addition, a player who, when not challenging for the ball, deliberately strikes an opponent or any other person on the head or face with the hand or arm, is guilty of violent conduct unless the force used was negligible.

If the ball is in play and a player commits an offence inside the field of play against:
- an opponent – indirect or direct free kick or penalty kick
- a team-mate, substitute, substituted player, team official or a match official – a direct free kick or penalty kick
- any other person – a dropped ball

if the player leaves the field of play to commit the offence, play is restarted with an indirect free kick from the position of the ball when play was stopped. However, if a player leaves the field of play as part of play and commits an offence against another player, play is restarted with a free kick taken on the boundary line nearest to where the offence occurred; for direct free kick offences a penalty kick is awarded if this is within the offender’s penalty area

**LAW 13 (Free kicks):**

All free kicks are taken from the place where the infringement occurred, except:
- indirect free kicks to the attacking team for an offence inside the opponents’ goal area are taken from the nearest point on the goal area line which runs parallel to the goal line
- free kicks to the defending team in their goal area may be taken from anywhere in that area

free kicks for offences involving a player entering, re-entering or leaving the field of play without permission are taken from the position of the ball when play was stopped. However, if a player leaves the field of play as part of
play and commits an offence against another player, play is restarted with a free kick taken on the boundary line nearest to where the offence occurred; for direct free kick offences a penalty kick is awarded if this is within the offender’s penalty area

**LAW 14 (The Penalty Kick):**

A penalty kick is awarded if a player commits a direct free kick offence inside their penalty area or off the field as part of play as outlined in Laws 12 and 13.

The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves. The kicker must not play the ball again until it has touched another player. The penalty kick is completed when the ball stops moving, goes out of play or the referee stops play for any infringement of the Laws.

**Once the referee has signaled for a penalty kick to be taken, the kick must be taken. If, before the ball is in play, one of the following occurs**

except for the following when play will be stopped and restarted with an indirect free kick, regardless of whether or not a goal is scored:

- a penalty kick is kicked backwards
- a team-mate of the identified kicker takes the kick; the referee cautions the player who took the kick
- feinting to kick the ball once the kicker has completed the run-up (feinting in the run-up is permitted); the referee cautions the kicker

Outcome of the penalty kick:

**WHEN SOMEONE "CHEATS"**

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If the outside agent, IE (balloon, beach ball) does not change the path of the ball and does not interfere with the defenders chance at the ball, and it goes in the net for a goal then the goal is counted.

**LAW 15 (The Throw-In):**

Throw the ball with both hands from behind and over the head from the point where it left the field of play.

An opponent who unfairly distracts or impedes the thrower (including moving closer than 2 m (2 yds) to the place where the throw-in is to be taken) is cautioned for unsporting behavior and if the throw-in has been taken an indirect free kick is awarded.

**LAW 16 (The Goal Kick):**

A goal may be scored directly from a goal kick, but only against the opposing team; if the ball directly enters the kicker’s goal a corner kick is awarded to the opponents if the ball left the penalty area.

The ball must be stationary and is kicked from any point within the goal area by a player of the defending team.

If an opponent who is in the penalty area when the goal kick is taken touches or challenges for the ball before it has touched another player, the goal kick is retaken.

**LAW 17 (The Corner Kick):**

A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick, but only against the opposing team; if the ball directly enters the kicker’s goal a corner kick is awarded to the opponents.

The ball must be stationary and is kicked by a player of the attacking team. The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves; it does not need to leave the corner area.