

The philosophy and spirit of the Laws

Football is the greatest sport on earth. It is played in every country and at many different levels. The Laws of the Game are the same for all football throughout the world from the FIFA World Cup™ Final through to a game between young children in a remote village.

That the same Laws apply in every match in every confederation, country, town and village throughout the world is a considerable strength which must be preserved. This is also an opportunity which must be harnessed for the good of football everywhere.

Football must have Laws which keep the game 'fair' as a crucial foundation of the beauty of the 'beautiful game' is its fairness – this is a vital feature of the 'spirit' of the game. The best matches are those where the referee is rarely needed as the players play with respect for each other, the match officials and the Laws.

The integrity of the Laws, and the referees who apply them, must always be protected and respected. All those in authority, especially coaches and team captains, have a clear responsibility to the game to respect the match officials and their decisions.

Football's Laws are relatively simple, compared to other team sports, but as many situations are 'subjective' and referees are human (and thus make mistakes) some decisions will inevitably cause debate and discussion. For some people, this discussion is part of the game's enjoyment and attraction but, whether decisions are right or wrong, the 'spirit' of the game requires that referees' decisions are always respected.

The Laws cannot deal with every possible situation, so where there is no direct provision in the Laws, The IFAB expects the referee to make a decision within the 'spirit' of the game – this often involves asking the question, "What would football want/expect?"

The IFAB will continue to engage with the global football family so changes to the Laws benefit football at all levels and in every corner of the world, and so the integrity of the game, the Laws and the referees are respected, valued and protected

Laws of the Game 2018/19 | Introduction