

USSOCCER 2020 CHANGES IN THE LAWS OF THE GAME (LOTG)

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USFF Laws of the Game (LOTG) are ever-changing. There are many changes that have been implemented over recent years. Referees must learn and keep current each year by completing their mandatory recertification training. For coaches it is a greater challenge to stay current and knowledgeable. Coaches that may have played high school or college soccer should know that high school and college rules differ from the USSF LOTG. Coaches are encouraged to go on line to the link provided by VSA to review the USSF LOTG and the 2019-2020 changes.

The additional challenge is that at the younger youth levels, small-sided games as well as 11 v 11, some coaches may never have played the game or seen a LOTG book. Newer, younger referees who have completed their referee certification training and have good knowledge of the LOTG may be challenged as they learn to how best apply the LOTG and interact with players, coaches and fans that may be less than positive with their support of the game or the referee. Your support is called for to maintain the intended spirit of the game.

The following law changes will be implemented in Vermont for spring, 2020 youth and adult games. We are instructing all referees on these changes as part of their 2020 Referee Certification and Recertification training. We ask that you share these changes and all the LOTG with your coaches and club officers.

1. **Team officials can be shown a Yellow Card or Red Card for Misconduct**

When team officials fail to act in a responsible manner, misconduct (i.e. unsporting behavior, dissent, enter the field without permission,), they are to be shown a YC/RC. If the irresponsible conduct has come from the technical area (the bench) but the offender cannot be identified the card is to be shown to the team's senior most team official, the head coach. (Thus, the head coach is responsible for the behavior of all team personnel, players, team officials in the technical area.)

2. **All free kicks, including goal kicks, taken by the defending team from inside their penalty area** no longer must clear the penalty area to be put into play. The ball is in play once it is kicked and clearly moves.

Opponents must clear the penalty area before the ball is put in play. Once the ball is put in play, opponents are permitted to enter the penalty area to play the ball.

If the kicking team chooses to put the ball in play prior to the opponent(s) clearing the penalty area, the opponents are allowed to play the ball once it is in play.

For U9-U10 games, opponents should clear the penalty area back to the build out line prior to the restart of play. Once the ball is put in play, opponents are allowed to cross the build out line. They no longer have to wait for the ball to clear the penalty area to cross the build out line.

If the kicking team chooses to put the ball in play prior to the opponent(s) retreating to the build out line, opponents may advance and enter the penalty area to play the ball.

3. **Referees used to be considered part of the playing field.** Now, if the ball touches any match official and stays on the field of play **AND** leads to a promising attack, the ball goes in the goal or there is a change of possession; the play should be stopped (via whistle). The restart is a drop ball.

If the ball touches an official **AND** does not lead to a promising attack, go in the goal or change possession then "advantage" should be applied and play should continue.

4. **Drop Ball Procedures** Dropped balls are no longer contested. The ball is to be dropped for 1 player. All other players are to be a minimum of (4 meters) 4.5 yards from the drop ball.

When play is stopped in the penalty area and the restart is a drop ball, the ball is dropped for the keeper.

When play is stopped outside the penalty area the ball is dropped for a player from the team who last touched the ball at the spot where it was last touched.

5. **Penalty Kick Procedures** When the ball is put in play (kicked), the keeper must have part of one foot in touch with or in line with the goal line. If the keeper does not comply AND a goal is not scored the result is the penalty kick is to be retaken.
6. **Coin Toss** The winner of the coin may now choose to kick off OR which side they would like to defend. If the winner of the toss chooses to kick off, the other team may choose which side they would like to defend. If the winner chooses to defend a side, the other team gets the kick off.
7. **Managing the wall** When the defending team uses a wall of 3 or more players the attacking may have no player closer to that wall than 1 yard.
If the attacking team encroaches on the wall to less than 1 yard, the penalty is to restart with an IFK from the spot of the encroachment. The encroachment must be deemed to have occurred after the ball was put into play (as any dead ball foul, in this case encroachment, does not change the restart).
8. **A quick restart to create a promising attack can delay the issue of YC/RC** If a YC/RC foul is committed by the defending team and the offensive team choose to put the ball in play with a quick restart in an effort to create a goal scoring opportunity, issuing the card may be delayed until the attempted promising attack is concluded. This may include stopping play if there is a change of possession.
9. **Substitutions from the closet point** Please note that Vermont is allowing some flexibility for the referees in applying this law change. *For safety and game management reasons, all games played in Vermont will give referee the latitude to have all substitutions take place at the halfway line.*
10. **Interference by technical area personnel or a substitute** If play is stopped due to interference of play by a person in the technical area, team official or substitute player, the restart, a DFK is taken from where the ball was when play was stopped. If play was stopped while the ball was in the penalty area and the offense is against the defending team, the restart is a PK.
Interference by an outside agent (i.e. a fan, a dog, etc.); the restart is a dropped ball.
11. **Handball / handling** There is further clarification defining what "is" and what "usually is" to be interpreted as a handball/handling. I refer you to the explanations provided in the LOTG.

This message is intended to touch on most of the LOTG changes for 2020. It does not cover all the changes. If you want to familiarize yourself with the additional changes and interpretations go to USSoccer Referee Program, Laws of the Game, IFAB 2019-2020 LOTG Changes.

We hope this information will help you with your 2020 coaching endeavors and serve to help you support the decisions of referees officiating your matches. Have a great year and enjoy the game.