



To all national football associations,
and confederations

Circular no. 19

Temporary amendment to Law 3

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SEC/2020-C350/bru

The International Football Association Board

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theifab.com

Dear Sir or Madam,

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a far-reaching impact on daily life, including sport, around the world. As many countries begin to emerge from this situation, the focus is slowly turning to the resumption of football competitions that have been affected by the virus. When competitions resume, matches may be played in a condensed period (e.g. to reduce the impact on future competitions) and in different weather conditions, both of which could have an impact on player welfare.

Consequently, The IFAB has approved FIFA's proposal to introduce a temporary amendment to **Law 3 – The Players** relating to the maximum number of permitted substitutions (details below and on page 3) for competitions **scheduled to be completed in 2020**, whether or not they have already started.

Competition organisers have discretion as to whether or not to apply this temporary amendment. The IFAB and FIFA will determine at a later stage whether this option will need to be extended, e.g. to competitions due to be completed in 2021.

Law 3 – The Players – temporary amendment

The exact wording can be found on page 3 of this document, but in summary:

- Each team will be permitted to use a maximum of five substitutes.
- To reduce disruption to the match, each team will have a maximum of three opportunities to make substitutions during the game; substitutions may also be made at half-time.
- If both teams make a substitution at the same time, this will count as one of the three opportunities for each team.
- Unused substitutions and opportunities are carried forward into extra time.
- Where competition rules allow an additional substitution in extra time, teams will each have one additional substitution opportunity; substitutions may also be made before the start of extra time and at half-time in extra time.

NB: the use of return substitutes is not an option for senior competitions.

The IFAB also takes this opportunity to draw competition organisers' attention to existing options within the Laws of the Game concerning the welfare and safety of the players and other participants, in particular those related to drinks breaks and cooling breaks contained in Law 7.

Competitions in which video assistant referees (VARs) are implemented are permitted to cease their use upon their restart, at the discretion of the competition organiser. However, where VARs are used, all aspects of the Laws of the Game and, by extension, the VAR protocol will remain in place.

Competitions eligible to use the temporary amendment to Law 3, or any of the other existing options, do not require permission from The IFAB to do so.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the Laws of the Game 2020/21

The Laws of the Game 2020/21 come into force for competitions (and non-competition matches) as from 1 June 2020, but competitions suspended because of COVID-19 have the option of completing the competition using the Laws of the Game 2019/20 or the Laws of the Game 2020/21, even if the restart is after 1 June 2020. 'Friendly/warm-up/practice' matches in preparation for the restart of the competition should use the version of the Laws that will be used when the competition restarts.

Thank you for your attention and please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or enquiries.

We hope you stay safe and healthy.

Yours sincerely,
The IFAB



Lukas Brud
Secretary

cc: FIFA

Law 3 – The Players: number of substitutions

Current wording:

2. Number of substitutions

Official competitions

The number of substitutes, up to a maximum of five, which may be used in any match played in an official competition will be determined by FIFA, the confederation or the national football association except for men's and women's competitions involving the 1st teams of clubs in the top division or senior 'A' international teams, where the maximum is three substitutes.

Temporary amendment:

Competition organisers have the option of applying either or both of the following:

- *During the match, each team:*
 - *may use a maximum of five substitutes*
 - *has a maximum of three substitution opportunities**
 - *may additionally make substitutions at half-time*
- *Where extra time is played, each team:*
 - *may use an additional substitute (whether or not the team has used its maximum number of substitutes)*
 - *has one additional substitution opportunity* (whether or not the team has used its maximum number of substitution opportunities)*
 - *may additionally make substitutions:*
 - *in the period before the start of extra time*
 - *at half-time in extra time*

If a team has not used its maximum number of substitutes or substitution opportunities, the unused substitutions and opportunities may be used in extra time.

**Where both teams make a substitution at the same time, this will count as a used substitution opportunity for each team.*