

IFAF tackle rule changes 2025

With "importance to teams" (ITT) and "importance to officials" (ITO) indicated. 5 is high; 1 is low and reflects the likelihood of the change affecting a game.

The complete rulebook incorporating the changes is available at <http://www.myiafoa.org/rules/ifaf2025/index.htm>.

1 Rule changes

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change	ITT	ITO
1.	1-4-7	Illegal equipment Add: "n. Hoodies, if the hood is outside the shoulder pad and overlapping the jersey".	Sometimes players wear hoods that protrude outside the back of the jersey, providing a gripping point for opponents which, due to its position, could create damage to the neck or throat of the player, or increase the risk of a horse-collar tackle.	2	2
2.	1-4-8-d	Mandatory and illegal equipment enforcement Add: "If an official notifies a player to leave the field, but the player does not respond by doing so after two notifications, a timeout shall be charged to the team. Each of the first three infractions in a half carries a charged team timeout, if timeouts are available. Any infraction after a team has exhausted its timeouts is a foul for delay of game and carries a five-yard penalty. 1. If a timeout is available, it is granted. When timeouts are exhausted, the next violation is a dead-ball delay penalty at the succeeding spot. 2. A timeout is called, the offending team is indicated by the referee, then the captains and head coaches are notified through the officials nearest to them. 3. Equipment timeouts are not limited by the prohibition on consecutive team timeouts (Rule 3-3-4) but the additional one minute is not granted."	Impose a penalty (a charged timeout or a delay of game if timeouts are exhausted) on a team where a player does not respond to an official's instruction to leave the field due to illegal equipment or failure to wear mandatory equipment. This applies if the player ignores two notifications during a single dead-ball period. There is a corresponding amendment to AR 1-4-8:IV. In the previous rule, there was no recourse for an official if a player ignored their instruction. Player equipment is a safety issue and we need some form of penalty as part of equipment enforcement. This is similar to the way the rule was before 2016. This was trialled in Great Britain in 2024 without reported problems.	3	4

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change	ITT	ITO
3.	1-4-14	<p>Add:</p> <p>"Accessibility</p> <p>a. In the interests of accessibility, national federations may approve on a case-by-case basis applications to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. permit a participant to use prosthetics during games 2. permit a reasonable adjustment to the uniform and equipment rules for a disabled participant 3. permit a person to participate in a gender different to that assigned to them at birth <p>b. To be approved, it must be demonstrated via a risk assessment that this:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. does not pose an undue risk to the participant 2. does not pose any additional risk to other participants 3. does not convey an unfair competitive advantage to the participant or their team <p>c. Approvals must be notified to potential opponents and relevant officials. Approvals must be notified to IFAF in the case of people who intend to participate in international competitions."</p>	<p>It is important that we make the sport as accessible as possible to people affected by disabilities or gender issues. Provided this can be done without posing undue risks to the participant or others, and without conveying an unfair advantage, it should be approved.</p> <p>Great Britain has had a rule similar to a.1 since 2022, though it is as yet untested in practice. GB also had a case in 2024 where it was deemed OK to make a reasonable adjustment to an equipment rule for a person affected by a disability. To have failed to do so risked legal action under the UK Equality Act 2010, which mandates that reasonable adjustments must be made to accommodate individuals with disabilities. a.3 is good practice in that it does not prejudge that an individual has an inherent advantage due to their sex at birth.</p>	2	1
4.	3-3-5	<p>Two-minute warning</p> <p>Add:</p> <p><u>"Two-minute warning</u></p> <p>a. When the game clock is running and the ball is not live, the Referee shall stop the clock with exactly two minutes remaining in the second and fourth quarters for a <u>two-minute warning</u>. If the ball is live when the game clock reaches two minutes in the second and fourth quarters, play will continue, and the Referee or covering official shall stop the clock when the ball is declared dead for a <u>two-minute warning</u>.</p> <p>b. If relevant, the media broadcast partner will hold back at least one media timeout to coincide with the <u>two-minute warning</u>. If there is no media timeout partner in the game, the timeout shall be one minute plus the five-second referee notification and the 25-second play clock interval.</p> <p>And delete IFAF rule 3-3-8-b.</p>	<p>We have long had a procedure for permitting competitions to have a two-minute warning, even when there is a visible game clock. NCAA has now made this mandatory, which is fine.</p> <p>However, their change provides for a full timeout. Our procedure is to stop the clock, inform the teams and then immediately declare the ball ready for play.</p> <p>By accepting this change, we make two-minute warnings mandatory, without making them a full timeout.</p> <p>This is also why we continue using the term "two-minute warning" rather than NCAA's "two-minute timeout".</p>	2	3

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change	ITT	ITO
5.	3-3-6-f, 3-3-10-b-2, 3-4-4	10-second runoff 10-second runoffs can now happen anytime in the last <u>2</u> minutes of each half rather than just the last minute.	Synchronise with other two-minute rules. There are now no longer rules that only apply in the last minute of a half. A consequent change to the officiating mechanics means that the "under a minute" signal (Sup41) now becomes an "under 2 minutes" signal.	3	4
6.	3-4-3-c (NCAA 3-3-6-f)	Unfair clock tactics Add: "If a player injury occurs <u>or a player's helmet comes completely off through play</u> on a play where there is a temporary stoppage of the clock for a first down, and the clock is stopped with 10 seconds or less remaining in the 2nd or 4th quarters, the opponent has the option of a 10-second runoff. The 10-second runoff may be avoided by the use of a charged team timeout if available."	To prevent a scenario where feigning an injury after achieving a first down would give a team a clock advantage. If the clock had already stopped for the first down, without this change the injury timeout would not carry a 10-second runoff option. Note that this is better placed in Rule 3-4-3 so that it can also apply to helmet-off situations. The underlined text is IFAF text in addition to the NCAA text.	1	3
7.	3-5-2-e	Legal substitutions Add: "Team B's privilege to delay the snap ends if: 1. It does not commence its substitution process within 3 seconds of Team A's latest substitute entering the field of play 2. Any replaced player is not leaving the field quickly 3. Any substitute is not entering the field quickly"	Provide guidance on what happens if Team B does not "react promptly" to Team A's substitutions.	2	3
8.	6-1-7-b, 6-5-1-a and 8-6-2	Touchback and fair catches Re kickoffs: Move the touchback after a kickoff from the 20-yard line to the 25-yard line. Fair caught kickoffs also move to B's 25-yard line.	Reducing the incentive to return a kickoff is considered a safety issue.	2	4
9.	7-2-4	Ball out of bounds Combined paragraphs a and b of this rule so that fumbles and backward passes are treated exactly the same if they go out of bounds.	Simplification. We had previously combined the two for a ball that comes to rest and no player attempts to recover it. It has the consequence that officials need to bean bag the spot of backward passes that have the potential to go out of bounds, but some officials already do that (in error according to current mechanics).	1	2
10	9-1-15	Horse-collar tackle Remove the exception for actions carried out in the tackle box.	Player safety. There is no safe place on the field for a horse-collar tackle.	3	4

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change	ITT	ITO
11	9-2-1-a-1	Unsportsmanlike conduct Add: "m. Requesting use of replay when not allowed by rule (Rule 12-2-1-b)."	Make explicit that players, coaches or others subject to the rules are prohibited from asking for officials to review a replay by any means. The exception is a head coach's review request when instant replay is being used.	2	3
12	AR 9-2-1:IX	Unsportsmanlike conduct Revise this AR so that a player who delays entering the end zone to consume time (e.g. near the end of a half) is not penalised for unsportsmanlike conduct.	It seems unfair to penalise a team for consuming time. Since Rule 9-2-1-a-1-e only applies at the goal line, the tactic of running backwards or sideways to consume time is legal elsewhere on the field. This change makes it legal consistently throughout the field. This change does not affect the situation where a player alters stride as an act of celebration or taunting, which is still unsportsmanlike conduct.	2	3
13	12-1-5	Instant replay - other rulings Add: "a. If a forward passer is ruled down or out of bounds prior to throwing a pass and the video judge has indisputable video evidence that the ball was released prior to the dead ball ruling, replay can rule on the immediate continuing action. If the pass is caught by either team, they are awarded possession at that spot with no advance. If the pass is incomplete, the down counts. b. Fouls that carry 5-yard and 10-yard penalties are not enforced if the ruling is changed and they become dead-ball fouls. c. Personal fouls and unsportsmanlike conduct fouls are always enforced, regardless of the outcome of a replay review.	Provide explicit coverage for situations where a pass was thrown, but the ball was erroneously ruled dead just prior to the pass being thrown. Also, make it clear that 5 and 10-yard penalty fouls are disregarded if they become dead-ball fouls due to the review, but that personal fouls and unsportsmanlike conduct fouls are always enforced.	1	2

2 Editorial changes

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change
1	1-4-2-d	Players' numbering Add "or with a different number than on the game day roster" to the text "changes their number".	Clarify that this rule applies to players who changed their number before first entering the game.
2.	1-4-5-a-2	Jersey design Require names (of players and teams) to be written in Latin script.	Standardise for international audiences, to aid TV and/or spectators in international games. There is already a requirement for jersey numbers to use Arabic numerals. Since this is in Rule 1 and not a safety rule, national federations could vary it for domestic games.

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change
3.	1-4-5-b-4	Jersey design Replace "the visiting team" by "either team"	Make the teams equally liable to be penalised for wearing the wrong-coloured jersey.
4.	1-4-10	Prohibited signal devices "Players may not be equipped with any <u>wearable</u> electronic, mechanical or other signal devices for the purpose of communicating with any source"	Make clear that this rule applies to any wearable device.
5.	1-4-10	Prohibited signal devices "Players may not be equipped with any wearable electronic, mechanical or other signal devices for the purpose of communicating with any source or recording sound <u>or vision</u> "	Extend the explicit prohibition against recording sound to vision as well.
6.	1-4-11-a	Prohibited field equipment Change to: "Photographs (digital or otherwise), computers and other electronic communication devices are permitted for coaching purposes during the game or between periods."	Clarify wording with respect to NCAA changes.
7.	1-4-11-a	Prohibited field equipment Add: "They may not be used in the field of play or end zones."	Clarify that photographs and devices cannot be taken onto the playing surface.
8.	1-4-11-d	Prohibited field equipment "unmanned aerial vehicle" to "uncrewed aerial vehicle"	Adopt gender-neutral term.
9.	2-16-7-c	Scrimmage kick "A scrimmage kick made when <u>a ball carrier's</u> entire body <u>and the ball is or has been</u> beyond the neutral zone is an illegal kick ..."	Clarify that it is an illegal kick if the ball has already been in player possession beyond the neutral zone before the kick.
10	2-29-2	Play clock Add: "The play clock operator will consistently start the 40-second play clock within one second of any official signalling that the ball is dead after a play."	Clarify for consistency when the play clock should start.
11	3-2-1-c	Intermissions Add: "At the end of the first half, after the teams have left the field and the Referee has: (1) Cleared the final play with the on-field crew; (2) Cleared the final play with the video judge (if present); and (3) There is no head coach video review challenge, the Referee will declare the first half ended. After the Referee declares the first half ended, there shall be no additional replay reviews from the previous play."	Establishes conditions beyond which a replay review cannot be instigated at the end of the first half.

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change
12	3-2-2-f	Timing adjustments Change to: "The 40/25-second <u>play</u> clock is not started even if the game clock is running with fewer than 40 or 25 seconds, respectively, in a period. The play clock shall be set appropriately and continuously display this time (40 or 25 seconds) and hold. "	To avoid confusion, the play clock will now run, even if the game clock will expire before it.
13	3-2-4-c-5	25-second clock Add: "A 25-second play clock will always be used after a charged team timeout or the <u>two-minute warning</u> ."	Clarification based on NCAA editorial changes relating to the play clock after an injury or helmet off.
14	3-3-2-d-2, 3-3-2-e-3, 12-1-3-b (was 12-2-3-b), 12-2-4-c-5 (was 12-3-5-c-3)	Timing Phrases like "with less than two minutes remaining in the 2nd quarter or the 4th quarter" replaced by "anytime after the <u>two-minute warning</u> ".	NCAA introduced the concept of the two-minute timeout (that IFAF already had). We continue to call it a "two-minute warning" because it does not have the duration of a timeout.
15	3-3-2-d	Starting and stopping the clock Add: "12. <u>Two-minute warning</u> . *"	With the deletion of Rule 3-3-8-b, we need this to confirm that the clock starts on the snap after the <u>two-minute warning</u> (unless during a running clock session).
16	AR 3-3-2:XIII	Starting and stopping the clock Add: In a competition that forgoes the running clock rule in the first half, one team takes a 35-point lead in the second quarter. Before half-time, the trailing team reduces the margin to 35-6. RULING: A running clock session does not start. No session could begin in the first half, and the conditions for one do not exist at the start of the second half.	Clarify intent of rule.
17	3-3-4-a	Charged team timeouts Add: "A successful replay challenge does not count as a timeout." Amend new AR 3-3-4:II so the ruling is: "The timeout is granted. Since replay upheld the challenge and Team A was not charged with a timeout, it is legal to request a timeout."	Make clear that if a team invokes a challenge which is unsuccessful, it cannot call another timeout in the same dead-ball period. In IFAF rules, a challenge isn't a timeout unless unsuccessful.

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change
18	AR 3-5-2:IX	<p>Legal substitutions</p> <p>Add new AR:</p> <p>"1/10@A-25. Late in the 1st quarter, ball carrier A21 circles right end toward his team area and is hit by B54 at the A-30. A21 continues to drive forward and lands with his body down at the A-34 (a) just inbounds; (b) out of bounds in the white; (c) out of bounds in or near the team area having crossed the sideline at the A-34. There are no other substitutions for Team A. RULING: Team A will have 2/1 @ A-34. In (a), the game clock will not stop, and the play clock will be set to 40 and started within 1 second from when the ball is declared dead. Team A may snap the ball when the ball is ready for play. In (b), the game clock will be stopped, and will be restarted on the Referee's signal. The play clock will be set to 40 and will start within 1 second from when the ball is declared dead. In (c), if the referee considers that the snapper is at, near or moving towards their position at the line of scrimmage, they will give the matching substitutes signal signifying substitution mechanics are in place and Team B will be given the opportunity to substitute. When Team A players go into the team area after the play between the twenty-yard lines on their team area's side of the field, the referee will consider the substitution mechanics process."</p>	<p>Clarifies that if a player goes out of bounds <u>into</u> his team area, his return to the field of play should be considered as a substitution for the purposes of Rule 3-5-2-e.</p>
19	6-3-10-c	<p>Legal and illegal kicks</p> <p>Change:</p> <p>"when the <u>after a</u> ball carrier's entire body and the ball are or have been beyond the neutral zone"</p> <p>"PENALTY - For an illegal kick beyond the neutral zone <u>(or when a ball carrier and ball have been beyond the neutral zone)</u> ..."</p>	<p>Clarify that a kick is illegal if made after any Team A ball carrier has been in possession of the ball beyond the neutral zone.</p> <p>This is the wording used in the illegal pass rule: "after a ball carrier's entire body and the ball have been beyond the neutral zone"</p>
20	AR 6-3-13:IV	<p>Fouls by kicking team</p> <p>Clarify that the penalty moves the ball "<u>from the B-45 to the A-45</u>".</p>	<p>Remove ambiguity that the ball may end up at the B-45.</p>
21	7-1-2-b-1	<p>Shift and false start</p> <p>"Any movement by one or more players that simulates <u>action at the snap</u>. This includes abruptly shifting a player or players that simulates the start of a play."</p>	<p>Clarify that an abrupt shift should be treated as a false start.</p>
22	7-1-5-a-4	<p>Defensive team requirements</p> <p>"<u>No player</u> within one yard of the line of scrimmage (<u>stationary or not</u>) may make quick, abrupt or exaggerated actions that are not part of normal defensive player movement."</p>	<p>Clarifies that a Team B lineman can be penalised whether stationary or not.</p>
23	7-3-2-g & h	<p>Illegal forward pass</p> <p>Change to "into an area where there is no eligible Team A receiver <u>other than themselves</u>"</p>	<p>Make clear that it is not acceptable for the passer (normally an eligible receiver) to throw the ball at their feet.</p>

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change
24	8-5-1-a Ex (c)	Safety Add "or at rest and no player attempts to secure it (Rule 7-2-5)"	Make clear that a fumble at rest is handled the same as a fumble out of bounds.
25	9-2-2-b	Unfair tactics Add: "This includes any hideout tactic with or without a substitution." "PENALTY - <u>Team</u> unsportsmanlike conduct"	NCAA became aware of teams that contrived hideout plays when there was no substitution involved. This included having a player go out of bounds into their team area during the previous play and then return to the field covertly. Also clarify that the foul is against the team not the individual player.
26	AR 9-2-7:l	Removing persons from the playing enclosure Add: "During the game, (i) a player; (ii) a coach; (iii) a squad member in the team area, is observed to be obviously intoxicated (due to drugs including alcohol). RULING: In each case, the referee may require game management to remove them from the playing enclosure."	Clarify that the referee has the right to require removal of anyone (including a participant) who is intoxicated.
27	12	Instant replay Change title of rule from "Video judge" to "Instant replay"	Reflects that we can have replay without necessarily having a video judge.
28	12-1	Instant replay Remove the preamble about the philosophy and rationale for replay.	Outdated.
29	12-1-3-f	Instant replay Allow review of illegal substitution situations even if the ball is not live.	Clarify that a review can be used for dead-ball illegal substitution situations as well as live-ball ones.
30	12-2-1-d (was 12-3-1-d)	Instant replay Add: "National federations may implement a process by which game management must seek prior approval of sideline video equipment before it can be used in a competitive game."	Give control to national federations to vet the quality of sideline video equipment, thus maintaining high standards.

In the event of any discrepancy between this document and the rulebook, the rulebook takes precedence.