

BAFA contact 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 <https://rules.bafra.info/rulebook/bafa2025/index.htm>

1 Rule changes

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change	ITT	ITO
1.	1-2-1-b	Field markings Make "Red lines on a green field or vice versa" a "REPORT & SANCTION" from 2026 onwards.	Make our fields more accessible to people with red/green colour blindness. Note: this is not a rule that stops a game going ahead.	2	2
2.	1-2-1 Penalty	Field markings Make "Field of play not a multiple of 10 yards" a "STOP, REPORT & SANCTION".	Improving field quality. It is rare that a field is not 80, 90 or 100 yards long, but this prevents those fields being used. All efforts should be made to correct the field to 80, 90 or 100 yards before determining that the game must be abandoned.	2	2
3.	1-4-5-b	Jerseys Include provisions for both teams to wear coloured jerseys provided the home team and competition authority have agreed in writing prior to the game. Change penalty for non-contrasting jerseys to the same as that for non-contrasting numbers.	Jersey rule changes raise the quality of the game as a spectator experience, both in-person and on screen. The rule has not changed - just the penalty for breaching it. Offending teams will be penalised 15 yards after the kickoff of each half and charged a team timeout (or delay of game foul) at the start of each quarter. Brings BAFA into line with the IFAF rule. Also, brings consistency with the jersey number colour rule.	5	2
4.	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
5.	1-4-9	Coaches certification Add "... all players: ... (f) Are fit to play"	By signing the coaches' certification, in addition to the other conditions, the head coach must confirm that their players are fit to play. There is concern that unscrupulous coaches may kit up injured players to meet the minimum number of squad members rule (13-8-6-c). That is prohibited and would be regarded as a breach of coaching ethics.	3	2

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change	ITT	ITO
6.	1-4-14	<p>Add:</p> <p>"Accessibility</p> <p>a. In the interests of accessibility, BAFA 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 field, uniform and equipment rules for a disabled participant <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. Risk assessments are considered by a panel drawn from the Rules Committee, Sports Science and Medicine Committee and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Committee may approve the participation in the sport by the applicant subject to the implementation of the adaptations/adjustments. 2. If the panel cannot approve participation, it may suggest amendments to the risk assessment to make it acceptable. <p>d. Once accepted, risk assessments are shared by the prosthetic user's club with their future opponents, future match officials (via BAFRA) and other relevant parties. 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. 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>BAFA has had a rule like a.1 since 2022, though it is as yet untested in practice. We 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.</p>	2	1
7.	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. <u>If relevant</u>, 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/BAFA 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. This is now mandatory, which is fine because that has been normal practice in BAFA for many years.</p> <p>Note that NCAA rules provide for a full timeout. Our procedure our continues to be to stop the clock, inform the teams and then immediately declare the ball ready for play.</p> <p>This is also why we continue using the term "two-minute warning" rather than NCAA's "two-minute timeout".</p>	1	1

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change	ITT	ITO
8.	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 any 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
9.	3-4-3-c	Unfair clock tactics Add: "If a player injury occurs or a player's helmet comes completely off <u>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."	Prevents 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.	1	3
10	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
11	6-1-7-b, 6-5-1-a, 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 behind the B-25 also move to B's 25-yard line.	Reducing the incentive to return a kickoff is considered a safety issue.	2	4
12	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. The ball will be positioned at the least beneficial spot to the team in possession: the spot where the pass/fumble occurred or the spot where the ball went 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
13	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
14	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. For example, a coach trying to show video of the previous play on a phone. The exception is a head coach's review request when instant replay is being used.	2	3
15	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
16	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
17	13-1-2	Medical facilities Require an immediate care practitioner (ICP) for U19 and U16 games from 2026.	In 2025, U19 and U16 games will be the only ones where a FTT meets the minimum medical requirement. From 2026, we want there to be an ICP at <i>all</i> contact games.	3	2
18	13-5-1-a	Cancellation, Suspension, Abandonment and Forfeiture of Games Add: "2. Where one or more subsequent games are to be played later the same day at the same venue, or the game is part of a multi-team tournament, the referee shall also take into account, where possible, the opinions of the head coaches of each of the other teams involved."	Ensure that other teams affected by a cancellation, delay, suspension or abandonment have their views taken into account.	1	2

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change	ITT	ITO
19	13-8-9-c	<p>Period between games: officials</p> <p>Add:</p> <p>"If one or more officials on an officiating crew is scheduled to officiate games at two different venues, the interval between the scheduled kickoff times shall be increased by the normal, expected travel time between the two venues plus 30 minutes."</p>	<p>The BUCS season (in particular) sees an increasing number of instances where a crew is assigned to cover two games, and the games are at two different venues. There was nothing previously in the rules to cover this situation and officials were being asked to cover combinations of kickoff times that were unreasonable and/or impractical due to not enough time to travel between the venues.</p> <p>This should also find its way into competition regulations and the BAFRA Terms and Conditions.</p>	2	2

2 Editorial changes

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change
1.	1-2-3	<p>Limit lines</p> <p>Add to b:</p> <p>"(Exception: Hand-held cameras under the supervision of the television partners may briefly be between the limit lines and the sideline after the ball is dead and the game clock has been stopped. This exception does not allow cameras to be on the field of play or in the end zone at any time.)"</p> <p>Add after c:</p> <p>"d. The safety zone is defined as the area within 18 feet of the playing surface (field of play plus end zones), excluding areas located behind a safety fence. This area applies even if the limit lines are marked closer to the playing surface.</p> <p>e. With the exception noted in b above and the team videographer exception (Rule 1-4-11-c Exception 5), no spectator, photographer, videographer or other media person may be located within the safety zone at any time during the game except the coin toss ceremony and the period between halves.</p> <p>f. No object (e.g. furniture, equipment) may be placed on the ground within the safety zone at any time during the game except the period between halves (Exceptions: Rules 1-2-5, 1-2-6, 1-2-7, 1-2-8-e).</p> <p>g. Any person legally allowed to be within the safety zone (e.g. coaches, substitutes, team personnel, officials' assistants) must always remain upright and on their feet during play. Persons with mobility limitations are prohibited in this area. A mobility limitation is anything that would prevent a person moving quickly out of the way should a participant approach them. (Persons sitting, crouching, kneeling or lying on the ground, or requiring walking aids, may be unable to get out of the way of rapidly approaching players.)"</p>	<p>Clarify the rules for the safety of all those on or near the field. No spectators or media personnel can be within the safety zone - normally 18 feet around the field. There are exceptions for the coin toss and during half time.</p> <p>This change also emphasises that the sideline area is not a safe place to be if you have mobility limitations, and it is not the place to dump equipment.</p> <p>Disabled coaches who need to be in the coaching box/team area may apply for a reasonable adjustment by following the procedure in Rule 1-4-14 and providing a risk assessment. BAFA's view is that anyone who has regularly used a wheelchair in the team area in the past is probably aware of the hazards and are likely to be low risk.</p>

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2.	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.
3.	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.
4.	1-4-5-b-3	Jersey design Replace "the visiting team" by "either team"	Make the teams equally liable to be penalised for wearing the wrong-coloured jersey.
5.	1-4-5-c	Jerseys Clarify that when we talk about contrasting colours, we mean the colour of the numerals compared with the colour of the part of the jersey that forms their background.	We realise that some teams have multi-coloured jerseys where other parts of the jersey are the same colour as the numerals - that's OK. This was set out in a Newsflash rules clarification in April 2024.
6.	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.
7.	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.
8.	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.
9.	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.
10	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.
11	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.

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change
12	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.
13	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.
14	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.
15	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 and BAFA already had). We continue to call it a "two-minute warning" because it does not have the duration of a timeout.
16	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).
17	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. The running clock rule does not look at the score in the first half, only at half time or after.

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change
18	3-3-4-a	<p>Charged team timeouts</p> <p>Add:</p> <p>"A successful replay challenge does not count as a timeout."</p> <p>Amend new AR 3-3-4:II so the ruling is:</p> <p>"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."</p>	<p>Make clear that if a team invokes a challenge which is unsuccessful, it cannot call another timeout in the same dead-ball period.</p> <p>In IFAF/BAFA rules, a challenge isn't a timeout unless unsuccessful.</p>
19	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>
20	6-3-10-c	<p>Legal and illegal kicks</p> <p>Change:</p> <p>"when the after a 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>
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>. <u>This includes abruptly shifting a player or players that simulates the start of a play.</u>"</p>	<p>Clarify that an abrupt shift should be treated as a false start.</p>

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change
22	7-1-5-a-4	Defensive team requirements "No player 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."	Clarifies that a Team B lineman can be penalised whether stationary or not.
23	7-3-2-g & h	Illegal forward pass Change to "into an area where there is no eligible Team A receiver <u>other than themselves</u> "	Make clear that it is not acceptable for the passer (normally an eligible receiver) to throw the ball at their feet.
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. The Rules Committee is the approving authority in BAFA.
31	13-1-1-c	Medical provision Clarify that anyone who is a paramedic registered with the HCPC meets the criteria for an immediate care practitioner.	We have learned that FPHC courses are mainly aimed at other healthcare practitioners to give them the same sort of training that paramedics get as standard. This was set out in a Newsflash rules clarification in April 2024.

#	Rule	Change	Rationale for change
32	13-1-4-a	Concussion protocol Change: "This decision should be communicated to the referee by the professional practitioner." to: "This decision should be communicated to an official by the professional practitioner."	The most likely official for the professional practitioner to communicate with will be one of the sideline officials, not the Referee.
33	13-5-2-b	Team arrival Change to: "(Note: delays due to <u>foreseeable</u> traffic hold-ups, navigational difficulties, <u>late departures</u> , <u>required stops</u> , etc. are not to be considered as being beyond a team's control.)"	It is clearly unreasonable to hold a team responsible for a sudden road closure (for example). However, a team is responsible if they set off late or stop on the way.
34	13-9	Prosthetics Delete rule 13-9-1. Adapt and move rule 13-9-2 to become part of new IFAF rule 1-4-14.	This rule has been superseded by IFAF Rule 1-4-14, which covers prosthetics and similar issues. We retain the BAFA process for approving such requests.

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