

**F.I.S.T.F. Sports Rules of  
Table Football (version 5.0)**  
***Explanatory notes on Changes***





## 1. Deliberate "last-minute" infringements

3.2.1. In case of substitution of a playing figure or goalkeeper, a delaying interruption of the match, time wasting by either player, *or in case of a deliberate infringement (free-flick, back or obstruction) by either player at the expiration of a period of the game (approximately the last 30 seconds)*, the referee shall add lost time at the end of the affected period. See rule 10.8.

3.2.2. At the end of normal time, the referee shall announce how long extra time shall last. Thereby, it may occur that the extra time is extended based on occurrences during the extra time. *Every new extension of time will start when the referee declares the match to continue by stating: "play!"; therefore the time required for repositioning the affected ball and/or playing figures and for taking any positional flicks will not be considered.*

**Summary:** a. The duration of the game will be prolonged if a free-flick, back or obstruction is deliberately committed by a player during the last 30 seconds of a period (first half or second half). b. Every time the game duration is extended because of such deliberate infringements, the time will start counting after the repositioning of the ball and playing figures and the taking of positional flicks.

**Explanation:** Two changes are proposed. The first change aims to ensure that deliberate free-flicks, backs or obstructions (now happening very often when there are a few seconds for a game or a period to end) will be committed less frequently, since a preventive mechanism (addition of extra time) is provided against the players who use the tactic of committing infringements on purpose when the first half or the game is ending. The second proposal for modification makes sure that such actions will not be repeated during the additional time.



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The **referee alone decides** how much the extra time will be.

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3.2.2. At the end of normal time, the referee shall announce **how long extra time** shall last. Thereby, it may occur that the extra time is extended based on occurrences during the extra time. *Every new extension of time will start when the referee declares the match to continue by stating: "play!"; therefore the time required for repositioning the affected ball and/or playing figures and for taking any positional flicks will not be considered.*

Only **deliberate** offences are penalised with extra time.

The time starts counting again **after** all the playing figures and the ball have been repositioned **and** any positional flicks have been taken.



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## 2. Free-flick and flick-in positional flicks

*10.7.2.8. The attacker may choose that no positional flicks will be taken by any player in case of a free-flick or a flick-in: "no flicks!".*

11.2.2/14.2.3. Each player may proceed with one positional flick with the attacker flicking first. *Optionally, the attacker has the right to decide that no positional flicks will be taken by any player, by stating "no flicks!".* The ball and the playing figure nominated to take the free-flick /flick-in may be removed from the playing area by the referee to allow the positional flick to be taken by either player. A positional flicked playing figure may not touch any other playing figure (including the one nominated to take the free-flick/flick-in) or the ball, if still on the playing surface.

11.2.3/14.2.5. The offended player/attacker may claim "distance" in accordance with rule 2.6, if any opposing playing figure is positioned within 40 mm away from the ball after the positional flicks have been made. *No "distance" may be claimed by the offended player/attacker if "no flicks" is asked.*

**Summary:** In free-flicks and flick-ins the attacker may decide that he and his opponent will take no positional flicks.

**Explanation:** The change in 10.7.2.8 (also in 11.2.2/14.2.3) allows the attacker to accelerate the game and to take advantage of weak spots in the defence. However, when choosing to skip positional flicks, the attacker has no right to claim a "distance".



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The option is only for **free-flicks** and **flick-ins**.

The attacker **may not claim distance** if he asks for no positional flicks.



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### ***3. Avoidance of defence-smashing practice***

5.3.3. After having touched the ball, the attacking playing figure may touch any *other attacking* playing figure, a goalkeeper or the defender's body before coming to rest. *However, the attacker's flick may not cause (either directly or indirectly) the displacement of two or more defending playing figures standing completely inside the defender's half.*

*When the offence occurs:*

*Referee's expression: "Smashing - Free-flick"*

*Punishment: Free-flick from where a second defending playing figure was touched. See rule 11.*

*Remark: Notwithstanding the above restriction, an attacker's flick which a) is obviously a shot at goal or an attempt to force a flick-in, a corner-flick or a goal-flick or b) is taken while the ball is moving, may cause the displacement of any number of defending playing figures without being punished.*

**Summary:** An attacking playing figure is not allowed to touch more than one defending playing figure positioned in the defender's half, after it has touched the ball. Shots at goal and forcing attempts that cause such displacements of defending playing figures are not punished. Also, flicks that are taken while the ball is moving are not punished if they cause a "smashing".

**Explanation:** This aims to limit the practice of bashing attacking figures against the defensive formation in an effort to smash one's way through it. This ugly, repetitive approach, used by more and more players nowadays, depletes the beauty and the technical appeal of the game, and unfairly trashes the most intelligently deployed defence. For many players, even at the top level, defence-smashing has become the only tactic used instead of outflanking or penetrating techniques which demand patiently prepared and skilfully executed attacking plans. By adopting this new rule, defenders will not be completely helpless anymore against the defence-smashing technique and attackers will be discouraged from using it.



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The offence is committed even when the defending playing figures **are not hit directly** by the flicked attacking playing figure, but also by **any other** affected attacking or defending playing figure (**not** by the ball).

There is no offence if the attacker's flick **is taken** while the ball is moving.

**ATTENTION:** An offence which **happens while the ball is moving is of course punished** if the attacker's flick that caused the offence was taken against a stationary ball and was not a shot or a forcing attempt.

The offence is committed **only** when the defending playing figures are **fully inside** the defender's half.



#### 4. Spare-goalkeeper removing

9.2.1. The spare-goalkeeper may be taken off the playing area any time to reinstall the goalkeeper provided that the ball is stationary, the spare-goalkeeper's player is in possession of the ball and the spare-goalkeeper has played the ball at least once after it entered the game. If the spare-goalkeeper's player has lost possession of the ball, the spare-goalkeeper remains in the game and the goalkeeper may be reinstalled only when:

a., b., c., d., ...

*e. The attacker has played the ball five times and the ball is stationary. The attacker is allowed to exceed the number of five attacking flicks and score in the empty goal while the ball is still moving.*

*9.2.1.1. If a free-flick (see rule 6.2.4) is committed by the defender while his spare-goalkeeper is still in the playing area and the attacker does not request to play on, the last attacking flick is not added to the already taken attacking flicks against the empty goal. Furthermore, the taking of the free-flick is also not added to the number of taken attacking flicks. Thus, after the attacker has taken the free-flick, he has exactly the same number of remaining attacking flicks against the empty goal, as he had before he last played for the ball.*

*9.2.1.2. The spare-goalkeeper is not allowed to play the ball again when the ball is completely outside his shooting-area and the ball has been played by another attacking playing figure.*

*When the offence occurs:*

*Referee's expression: "Illegal flicking – Free-flick"*

*Punishment:*

*a. Free-flick from where the attacker has flicked illegally. See rule 11.*

*b. Free-flick from the penalty-spot if the offence has been committed in the attacker's penalty-area. See rule 11.1.3.*

6.2.3.4. Rule 9.2.2: Removing of the spare-goalkeeper: *The referee interrupts the game and allows the defender to reinstall his goalkeeper as soon as the attacker has completed the five attacking flicks provisioned by Rule 9.2.1.e, provided that the ball is stationary.* After the spare-goalkeeper has been removed from the playing area, the referee allows the defender to take an untaken block-flick.





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#### ***4. Spare-goalkeeper removing***

**Summary:** a. The spare-goalkeeper is taken off the playing area and the goalkeeper is reinstalled when the attacker has completed five flicks after the change of possession. The attacker can take more flicks against the empty goal while the ball is still moving. If the defender commits a free-flick while his goal is empty, the number of the remaining attacking flicks against an empty goal is not reduced. b. The spare-goalkeeper is not allowed to play the ball again after another attacking playing figure has played the ball and the ball is outside the attacker's shooting-area.

**Explanation:** The combined use of the proposed modifications aims to eliminate the slow and unrealistic evolvement of the game, when a player loses possession of the ball while he has his spare-goalkeeper in the playing area.

The main disadvantage of the existing rule is that it creates a totally unrealistic outcome when possession changes while the spare-goalkeeper is in the playing area. What happens frequently is that the attacker slows down the game, trying very carefully to get the ball anywhere inside his opponent's shooting-area, in order to score in the empty goal. This procedure usually lasts for one or even two minutes, until the attacker can slowly and safely put the ball inside the shooting-area. In the meantime the goal is empty, no matter how long this lasts. As a result, the game is actually punished more than the player who misused his spare-goalkeeper.

The rule in its current form was introduced to prevent players from frequently using their spare-goalkeepers. The older rule (three attacking flicks without goalkeeper) failed to deal with situations where a player placed his spare-goalkeeper in the playing area and used it as an 11<sup>th</sup> field playing figure. What made the rule inadequate was the fact that when possession was lost by a player who used his spare-goalkeeper, there was not enough time for his opponent to take advantage of the situation, especially when the ball was far from the empty goal. So, it had become a habit for many players to always have their spare-goalkeeper in the playing area at practically no risk.

The modifications aim to create a realistic and faster evolvement of the game, while at the same time they prevent players from using their spare-goalkeepers much too often.

The first set of modifications (actually a restoration of the older rule) gives the defender the chance to reinstall his goalkeeper after a reasonable amount of time has passed and the ball has stopped moving. In the same time, the defender is not permitted to commit deliberate free-flicks in order to reinstall his goalkeeper. The second change makes it impossible for the attacker to use his spare-goalkeeper as an 11<sup>th</sup> field playing figure.



#### 4. Spare-goalkeeper removing

In case of free-flick, **the last flick** of the attacker and **the taking of the free-flick** do not count. For example, if the attacker played the ball with his fifth flick and after that the defender committed a free-flick, the attacker may take the free-flick and play the ball one more time against the empty goal.

The attacker may take more than five flicks against the empty goal, only if the ball is still moving **after** he takes his fifth flick.

9.2.1. If a free-flick (see rule 6.2.4) is committed by the defender while his spare-goalkeeper is still in the playing area and the attacker does not request to play on, the last attacking flick is not added to the already taken attacking flicks against the empty goal. Furthermore, the taking of the free-flick is also not added to the number of taken attacking flicks. Thus, after the attacker has taken the free-flick, **he has exactly the same number of remaining attacking flicks against the empty goal, as he had before he last played for the ball.**

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9.2.1.2. **The spare-goalkeeper is not allowed to play the ball again when the ball is completely outside his shooting-area and the ball has been played by another attacking playing figure.**

When the offence occurs:

Referee's expression: "Illegal flicking – Free-flick"

Punishment:

- a. Free-flick from where the attacker has played the ball
- b. Free-flick from the penalty-spot if the offence occurred in the penalty-spot

6.2.3.4. Rule 9.2.2: Removing of the spare-goalkeeper as soon as the attacker has completed his free-flick. The spare-goalkeeper is allowed to install his spare-goalkeeper as soon as the attacker has completed his free-flick. After the spare-goalkeeper has installed his spare-goalkeeper, he is allowed to take an untaken block-flick.

The spare-goalkeeper is allowed to play the ball even if the ball is outside his shooting-area, provided that **no other attacking playing figure has played the ball** after the spare-goalkeeper entered the playing area. Also, the spare-goalkeeper is allowed to play the ball after another attacking playing figure has played it, **if the ball is still in his shooting-area**. Finally, the spare-goalkeeper may play the ball again after **the ball has touched** (not played by) another attacking playing figure.



## 5. Flick-in restrictions

14.2.7. The attacker *does not have to* wait for the defender to take a block-flick *after he takes a flick-in*.

*14.2.9. After the taking of a flick-in the ball may not change more than one field-quarter. The ball is considered to have changed more than one field-quarter, if it completely enters with its full size a field-quarter which is not adjacent to the field-quarter from where the flick-in was taken. If the flick-in is taken from a point between two different field-quarters, the ball is not allowed to move completely out of any one of these two field-quarters.*

*When the offence occurs:*

*Referee's expression: "Illegal flicking – Change!"*

*Punishment: The possession of the ball changes to the defender.*

**Summary:** a. The attacker does not have to wait for his opponent to take his block-flick after the taking of a flick-in. b. Also, after a flick-in the ball cannot run a distance longer than two field-quarters.

**Explanation:** The first change aims to make the game faster after a flick-in is taken, as the defender will not have the opportunity to delay taking his block-flick.

The second change aims to make the flick-in different from a free-flick. According to current rules, taking a flick-in is more or less the same as taking a free-flick. The ball can go anywhere, even from one shooting-area to the other, which is something totally unrealistic.



## 5. Flick-in restrictions

14.2.7. The attacker *does not* take a flick-in.

A "change" is announced by the referee when the ball passes the line **completely**. If the attacker attempts to play a moving ball with another attacking playing figure after the flick-in, there is no offence if the attacking playing figure touches the ball before the ball passes the line completely.

14.2.9. After the taking of a flick-in the ball may not change more than one field-quarter. The ball is considered to have changed more than one field-quarter, if it **completely enters with its full size** a field-quarter which is not adjacent to the field-quarter from where the flick-in was taken. If the flick-in is taken from a point **between two different field-quarters**, the ball is not allowed to move completely out of any one of these two field-quarters.

When the offence occurs:

Referee's expression: "Illegal flicking – Change!"

Punishment: The possession of the ball changes to the defender.

This means the flick-in is taken from a point on the touch-line which **crosses** a shooting-line or the half-line.



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## ***6. Right to new block-flick when a "play on" is requested after an offence***

*6.2.4.1. In case the attacker requests to play on after the defender has committed an offence, the defender is never entitled to a new block-flick.*

**Summary:** After an offence has been committed and the attacker requests to play on, the defender is never allowed to perform a defensive flick.

**Explanation:** This change is aimed to simplify game-play and to homogenize it at an international level. The change sets a common standard, by not allowing the defender to take a block-flick when a "play on" is requested after an offence.



## 6. Right to new block-flick when a "play on" is requested after an offence

6.2.4.1. In case the attacker requests to **play on** after the defender has committed an offence, the defender **is never** entitled to a new block-flick.

The defender may not take a new block-flick even if the offence was committed by a block-flick that corresponded to a previous flick of the attacker.

The defender may not take a new block-flick also when the attacker does not request to play on. See Rule:  
6.2.7. The **right to take a block-flick ends** when:  
a. The attacker has touched the ball with the next attacking flick - no accumulation of block-flicks; or  
b. Possession of the ball has changed to the defender; or  
c. The ball has completely crossed the goal- or touchlines; or  
d. A free-flick has been awarded and the offended player **does not request to play on.**



## 7. Positioning of the goalkeeper before a shot

8.2.1. Before, during and after a shot at goal the goalkeeper may be held in any desired position in attempt to play or save the ball within the goal-area. However, no part of the goalkeeper may go past the line of the goal-area or touch the goal-area line.

*When the offence occurs:*

*Referee's expression:* "Illegal manipulation - Free-flick / Penalty-flick"

*Punishment:*

*a. Interruption of the game, if the referee notices that a part of the goalkeeper goes past the line of the goal-area or touches the goal-area line before a shot is taken and while the ball is stationary. This interruption must be accompanied by the disallowance of any untaken block-flick. After the defender has corrected the position of his goalkeeper, the referee gives the signal to play on.*

*b. Free-flick from the penalty-spot the first time the goalkeeper saves a shot while illegally positioned. See rule 11.*

*c. Penalty-flick for each of the goalkeeper's following offences or if the law has been broken intentionally. See rule 12.*

4.3.4. The referee shall also interrupt the game as provided by the rules in the following situations:

a., b., c., d., e., ...

*f. Rule 8.2.1: Correction of the goalkeeper's position.*

**Summary:** When a goalkeeper is positioned on (or past) the goal-area line before a shot, the referee stops the game and instructs the defender to position his goalkeeper within the borders of the goal-area. Any untaken block-flick is disallowed following the correction of the position of the goalkeeper.

**Explanation:** A goalkeeper going past the goal-area line is a common sight during competitive table football games. The specific addition to the current rule aims to discourage players from illegally manipulating their goalkeepers. Players will now be more cautious with their goalkeepers' positioning and referees will have the chance to correct the position of a goalkeeper before a shot is taken, by interrupting the game at the expense of the defender.



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*a. Interruption of the game, if the referee notices that a part of the goalkeeper goes past the line of the goal-area or touches the goal-area line before a shot is taken and while the ball is stationary. This interruption must be accompanied by the disallowance of any untaken block-flick. After the defender has corrected the position of his goalkeeper, the referee gives the signal to play on.*

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4.3.4. The referee shall also interrupt the game as provided by the rules in the following situations:

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*f. Rule 8.2.1: Correction of the goalkeeper's position.*

Any untaken block-flick is **lost** if the referee interrupts the game to correct the position of the goalkeeper.





## ***8. Illegally stopped shots***

*7.1.4. Provided that all conditions for correct scoring are satisfied (see rules 7.1.1 and 7.3), if the ball destined to end up in the defender's goal is stopped illegally by the unfastened goal-net or the defender's goalkeeper while the spare-goalkeeper is in the playing area (either on purpose or by mistake), a penalty-flick shall be awarded to the attacker. See rule 12.*

*Remark: Before awarding a penalty-flick, the referee must be 100% certain that the ball was definitely going into the goal.*

12.1. Definition

...

12.1.1.2. Illegal manipulation of the goalkeeper. See rules [7.1.4](#), 8.1.2 and 8.2.1.

...

*12.1.1.6. Ball illegally stopped by the unfastened goal-net. See rule 7.1.4.*

**Summary:** If a regular shot heading into the goal is saved by illegal means, a penalty-flick is awarded to the attacker.

**Explanation:** This rule addition corrects all those cases where a goal is prevented by the use of obviously illegal means. The examples given are some of the situations that sometimes happen, which result in the prevention of the scoring of an otherwise inevitable goal. While the new rule applies mostly to cases where the defender deliberately stops the ball from getting into the goal, it also covers situations where this happens by mistake while the scoring of a goal was equally unavoidable.



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## 9. Offside Declaration

- 13.1.2.1. An attacking playing figure in offside position shall be declared offside when
- a. the slightest part of the ball has passed the last (or second-last if the spare-goalkeeper is in use) defending playing figure's base and the ball is positioned completely in the defender's shooting-area; or
  - b. the attacking playing figure in offside position has been touched by the ball.*

**Summary:** An attacking playing figure in offside position is declared offside if it is touched by the moving ball, even if the ball does not pass the last defending playing figure or does not enter completely the shooting-area.

**Explanation:** It sometimes happens that an attacking playing figure in offside position is touched by the moving ball before the ball passes the last defending playing figure's base. In most such cases the ball stops there and the condition of the offside declaration is never satisfied, although the ball would normally have passed the last defending playing figure's base if it was not for the attacking playing figure that stopped the ball. The specific modification remedies this injustice, introducing the declaration of an offside when the moving ball touches an attacking playing figure in offside position.



## 10. Dimensions of the goalkeeper figure and rod

The goalkeeper shall consist of a figure or of a figure with a base. *The outline of the goalkeeper's shape must have the form of a trapezoid, with a small and a large upper and lower side.* The goalkeeper shall be firmly fixed to a rod, have a three dimensional defending contents of maximum 2700 mm<sup>3</sup> excluding the rod, and restricted by the following regulations by fulfilling the following standards:

- 5.1.1. Maximum height of the goalkeeper: 39 mm
- 5.1.2. Maximum thickness of the goalkeeper figure: 6 mm
- 5.1.3. *Maximum width of the small side of the goalkeeper: 13 mm*
- 5.1.4. *Maximum width of the large side of the goalkeeper: 21 mm*
- 5.1.5. The goalkeeper shall symbolize a human body

*Remark: FISTF reserves the right to choose not to grant homologation to a goalkeeper, if the shape of the figure is deliberately and heavily departed from the natural human form, in order to utilise as much as possible of the given maximum dimensions.*

- 5.2.1. The goalkeeper's rod shall be a straight rod up to 20 cm in length and 4.5 mm of maximum width, excluding the handle.

*Remark: Players are allowed to use a metallic screw nut or any other fixing mechanism to attach a goalkeeper to the goalkeeper's rod, provided that the aggregate thickness of the screw nut (or other attaching mechanism) added to the thickness of the goalkeeper figure's legs (excluding the protruding parts of the feet) is not larger than the allowed 6 mm.*

...

- 5.2.3. *However, the aggregate length of the rod and the handle may not exceed 25 cm.*

5.2.4. *The bending of the goalkeeper's rod is strictly forbidden. Only a slight angle (<10°) at the junction point between the rod and the handle is allowed.*



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## ***10. Dimensions of the goalkeeper figure and rod***

**Summary:** Goalkeeper's shape and maximum dimensions are strictly defined. The length of the rod itself can be up to 20 cm, while the total length of the rod including the handle remains unchanged (25 cm). Also, bending of the rod is authorised only under certain conditions. Use of screw-nuts as means of fixing is allowed under conditions.

**Explanation:** These modifications help establishing fair-play, by preventing players from tampering with their goalkeepers to make them bigger in any sense. They also ensure that the rules correspond to the shapes of the existing goalkeepers, without actually changing the regulated dimensions of the goalkeeper. Bending of the rod is allowed only at the junction point between the rod and the handle.



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5.1.1. Maximum height of the goalkeeper: 39 mm

5.1.2. Maximum thickness of the goalkeeper figure: 6 mm

5.1.3. Maximum width of the small side of the goalkeeper figure: 18 mm

5.1.4. Maximum width of the large side of the goalkeeper figure: 25 mm

5.1.5. The goalkeeper shall symbolize a player in the game.

*Remark: FISTF reserves the right to change the dimensions of the goalkeeper, if the shape of the figure is deliberately and heavily departed from the natural human shape.*

The rod may be up to 20 cm long, as long as the handle is not longer than: 25 cm **minus** the length of the rod.

*Remark: The length of the rod shall be the length of the rod, if the shape of the figure is deliberately and heavily departed from the natural human shape.*

5.2.1. The goalkeeper's rod shall be a straight rod of maximum width, excluding the handle.

For example, if the handle is 7 cm long, the rod may be up to 18 cm long.

*Remark: The length of the rod shall be the length of the rod, if the shape of the figure is deliberately and heavily departed from the natural human shape.*

*Remark: Players are allowed to use a mechanism to attach a goalkeeper to the goalkeeper's rod, provided that the aggregate thickness of the screw nut (or other attaching mechanism) added to the thickness of the goalkeeper figure's legs (excluding the protruding parts of the feet) is not larger than the allowed 6 mm.*

...

5.2.3. *However, the aggregate length of the rod and the handle may not exceed 25 cm.*

5.2.4. *The bending of the goalkeeper's rod is strictly forbidden. Only a slight angle (<10°) at the junction point between the rod and the handle is allowed.*



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## ***11. Taking of a goal-flick***

15.2.1.4. The attacker then places the playing figure taking the goal-flick as desired by the ball. The goal-flick shall be taken by placing *the ball anywhere within the goal-area or centrally on the goal-area line. The ball may be partly outside the goal-area, but no more than half of the ball may be seen outside of it when observed directly from above.* Any attacking playing figure, the spare-goalkeeper, or the goalkeeper may be used to take the goal-flick.

**Summary:** When taking a goal-flick, the attacker may place the ball on the goal-area line as well as within the goal-area.

**Explanation:** No significant improvement is achieved by this slight modification apart from the fact that it makes the rule easier to use and hard to violate, thus avoiding needless free-flicks.