



FOOTBALL RULES AND INTERPRETATIONS

2026 EDITION

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Foreword

The rules are revised each year by IFAF to improve the sport's level of safety and quality of play, and to clarify the meaning and intent of rules where needed. The principles that govern all rule changes are that they must:

- be safe for the participants;
- be applicable at all levels of the sport;
- be coachable;
- be administrable by the officials;
- maintain a balance between offense and defense;
- be interesting to spectators;
- not have a prohibitive economic impact; and
- retain some affinity with the rules adopted by NCAA in the USA.

IFAF statutes require all member federations to play by IFAF rules, except in the following regards:

1. national federations may adapt Rule 1 to meet local needs and circumstances, provided no adaption reduces the safety of the players or other participants; BAFA takes advantage of that to allow (for example) 90-yard fields and reduced end zones that are our solution to using rugby pitches and the like;
2. competitions may adjust the rules according to (a) the age group of the participants and (b) the gender of the participants;
3. competition authorities have the right to amend certain specific rules (listed on page 37);
4. national federations may restrict the above so that the same regulations apply to all competitions under their jurisdiction.

These rules apply to all contests involving BAFA-affiliated teams and take effect from 1st March 2026. (*Exception:* Competitions that began before 1st March 2026 will continue to use 2025 rules until the end of their competition). Friendly fixtures played on or after 1st March will use these rules, though accommodations may be made for BUCS teams to continue to play to previous uniform or field marking rules until 31st May.

BAFA has established a Rules Committee to discuss and decide future changes to this book. The Committee is also our liaison to IFAF on rules matters. You may make suggestions for changes at any time, but to be eligible for consideration for the following year they must be received by 31st August.

Dr Jim Briggs (Editor)
on behalf of the
BAFA Rules Committee

Those who find it necessary to write to the editor for interpretations of rules or play situations will receive prompt replies if they number their questions and send them to rules@britishamericanfootball.org by email.

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