

LOTG History and Development

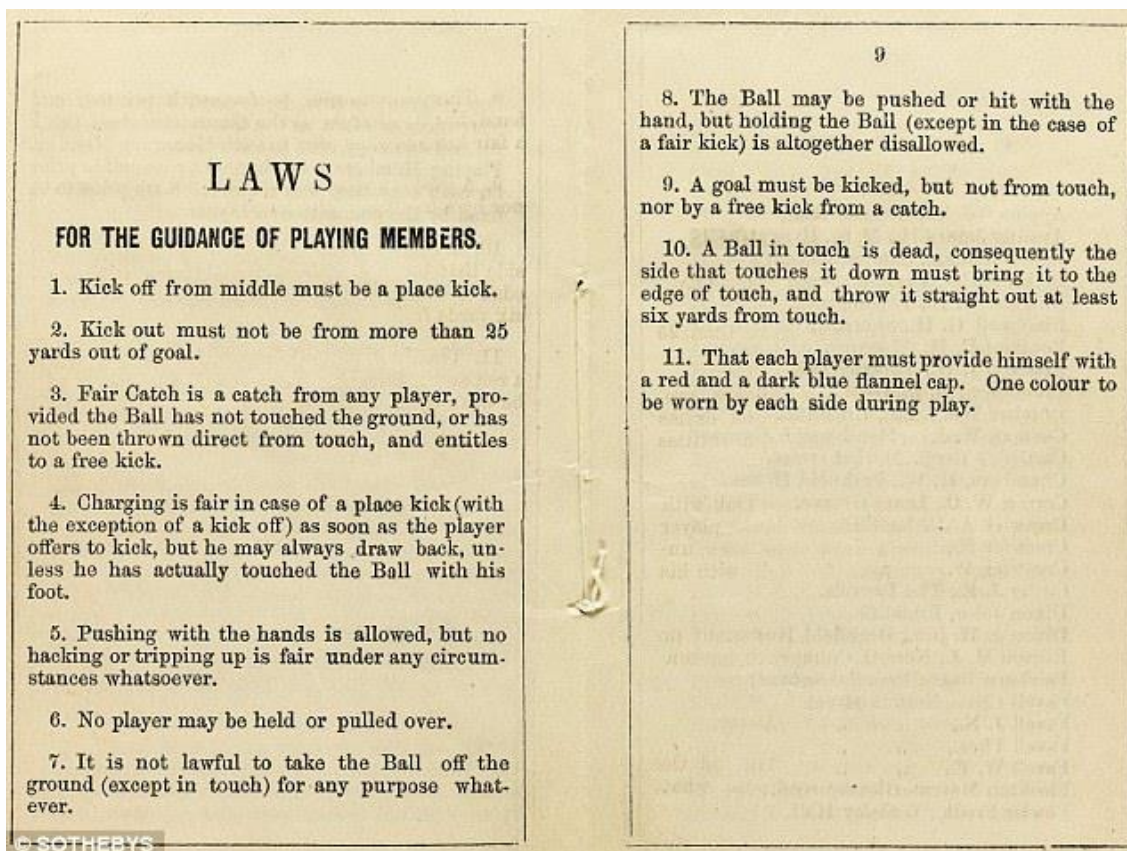
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The Laws of the Game are the codified rules that help define association football. They are the only rules of association football subscribed to by the sport's governing body FIFA. The laws mention the number of players a team should have, the game length, the size of the field and ball, the type and nature of fouls that referees may penalise, the frequently misinterpreted offside law, and many other laws that define the sport. During a match, it is the task of the referee to interpret and enforce the Laws of the Game.

There were various attempts to codify the rules of football in England in the mid-19th century. The extant Laws date back to 1863 where a ruleset was formally adopted by the newly formed Football Association. The original Laws were heavily influenced by the Cambridge rules and their early development saw substantial influence from the Sheffield Rules. Over time the Laws have been amended, and since 1886 they have been maintained by the International Football Association Board.

History Pre-1863

Games which could be described in the most general sense as 'football' had been popular in Britain since the Medieval period. Rules for these games, where they existed, were neither universal nor codified. A significant step towards unification was the drafting of the Cambridge rules in 1848 – though these were not universally adopted outside Cambridge University. The first and still oldest Football Club was Sheffield FC (founded in 1857), who in 1858 codified the Sheffield rules of football. The Sheffield rules were popular and adopted by several Northern and Midlands clubs.

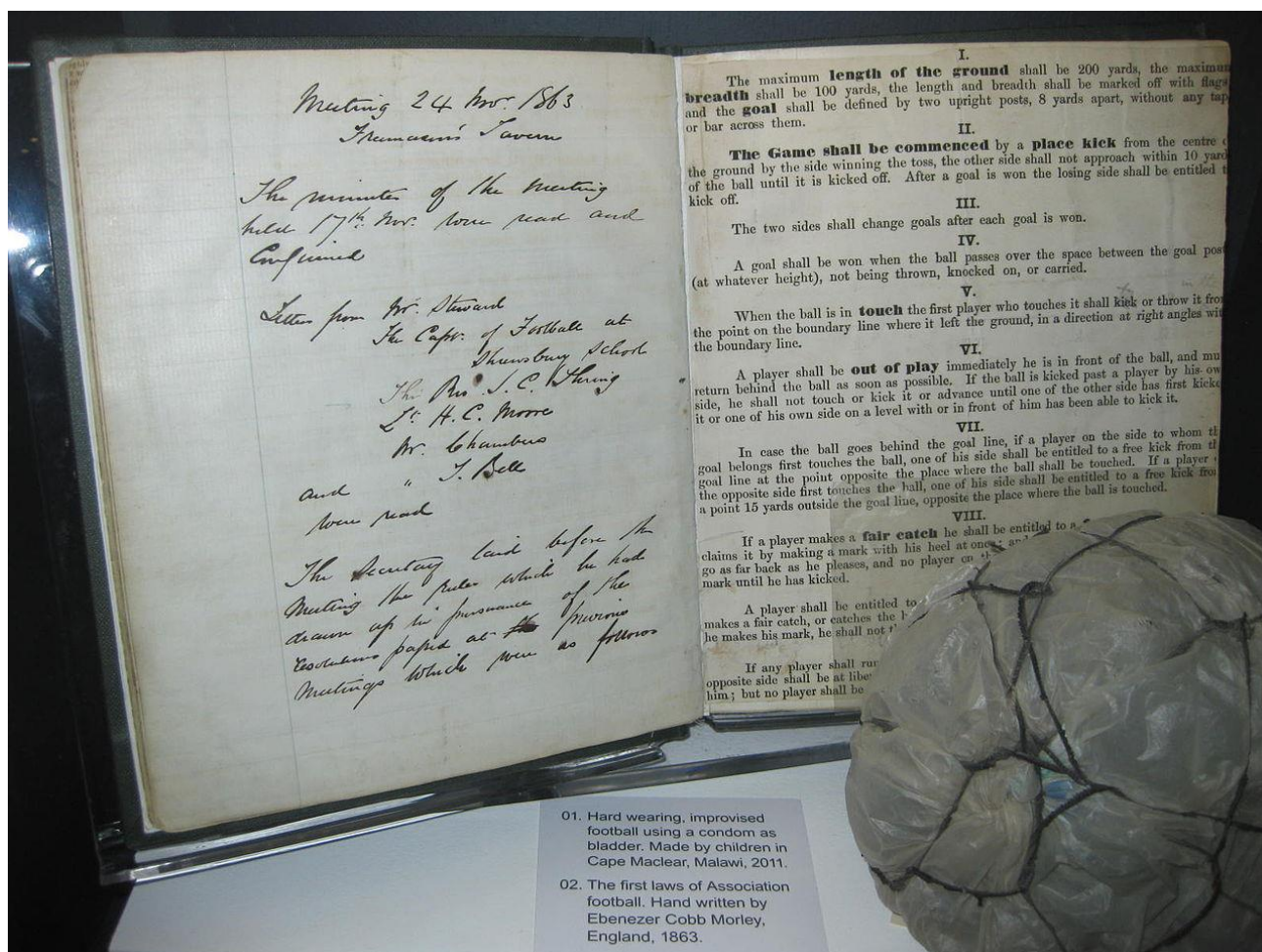


The 1859 printed version of the Sheffield laws

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1863 rules

The Laws were first drawn up by Ebenezer Cobb Morley and approved at a meeting of the newly founded Football Association (FA) on 8 December 1863. These rules were heavily based on the Cambridge rules which were codified in 1848.



The original hand-written 'Laws of the Game' drafted for and on behalf of The Football Association by Ebenezer Cobb Morley in 1863 on display at the National Football Museum, Manchester UK.

The Football Association Laws of 1863 were published on 5 December in *Bell's Life in London* for approval. While the game described in the original Football Association Laws is substantially different from the modern game, 1863 is generally considered to be the beginning of modern association football, and the point of divergence of the game from rugby football.

Adoption of the laws was not universal among English football clubs. The Sheffield Rules continued to be used by many. Additionally, in preference of a more physical game with greater emphasis on handling of the ball, several decided against being part of the FA in its early years and would later form the Rugby Football Union.

At its meeting on 8 December the FA agreed that, as reported in *Bell's Life in London*, John Lillywhite would publish the Laws. The first game to be played under the new rules was a 0-0 draw between Barnes and Richmond.

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IFAB created

Minor variations between the rules used in England (the jurisdiction of the Football Association) and the other Home Nations of the United Kingdom: Scotland, Wales and Ireland, led to the creation of the International Football Association Board to oversee the rules for all the home nations. Their first meeting was in 1886. Before this, teams from different countries had to agree to which country's rules were used before playing.

FIFA adoption

When the international football body on the continent FIFA was founded in Paris in 1904, it immediately declared that FIFA would adhere to the rules laid down by the IFAB. The growing popularity of the international game led to the admittance of FIFA representatives to the IFAB in 1913. Up until 1958 it was still possible for the British associations to vote together to impose changes against the wishes of FIFA. This changed with the adoption of the current voting system whereby FIFA's support is necessary, but not sufficient, for any amendment to pass.

Notable amendments

Notable amendments to the rules include:

- **1866** – Forward passes are permitted, as long as there are three defending players between the receiver and the goal. This was the first step from a consideration of offside as seen in modern rugby towards the offside rule known in association football today. The fair catch (still seen in other football codes) is eliminated.
- **1871** – Introduction of the specific position of goalkeeper.
- **1877** – Full unity with the Sheffield Rules is established – several features of the northern code had been incorporated into the London-based association rulebook over the preceding 14 years.
- **1891** – The penalty kick is introduced.
- **1925** – The offside rule is reduced from three to two defending players between the player and the opponent's goal line.
- **1958** – Introduction of substitutes.
- **1970** – Introduction of red and yellow cards.
- **1992** – Introduction of the back-pass rule.
- **1997** – Major rewrite.
- **2012** – Goal-line technology permitted (but not required); first used in competition at the 2012 FIFA Club World Cup
- **2016** – Major rewrite and changes.

Summary

1863 – 1970 The Birth of Modern Football

Before football became the most played, watched and talked about discipline on the planet, it was lacking a uniform set of laws. Years 1863 to 1970 was a period when many fundamental and timeless laws of football originated.

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1970 – 1980 Towards Fair Play

The period 1970-1980 saw significant amendments in laws against fouls and misconduct. Introduction of red and yellow penalty cards in 1970 was a milestone which helped to give football the shape we know today.

1980 – 1990 Streamlining the Game

Changes to the Laws of the Game introduced in years 1980-1990, among other things, further regulated on- and off-side, penalty kicks, and tackled time-wasting.

1990 – 2000 Professional Foul and Simulation

Among other changes, the period 1990-2000 brought notable additions to the Laws of the Game like the introduction of professional foul, simulation, back-pass rule and further adjustments in fouls and misconduct laws.

2001 – 2018 Modern Era Football

Changes in the Laws of the Game are made not only to make football safer, more enjoyable and fair, but also to better adjust the game to the modern world and make the most of the available technology, which is particularly evident in the recent changes.

Click on the following link to obtain a full detail of the LOTG changes over the years:

<http://www.theifab.com/history/laws>

Please note: Click on the “Continue” button to expand and read the changes of note introduced over the years.