

INTRODUCTION

THE RULES OF SOCCER

Association football, known in the United States as soccer, is governed by 17 Laws of the Game. These Laws are reviewed annually by the International Football Association Board (IFAB), an organization allied with soccer's governing body, the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), which publishes the Laws each year. Appended to the Laws, and considered as part of them, are Decisions of the IFAB which clarify some points about the Laws. FIFA also publishes periodically a series of Questions and Answers on matters relating to the Laws, as well as various directives, instructions, and memoranda that explain points requiring special emphasis and aid referees in applying the Laws correctly. The Laws of the Game are intended to regulate international play between teams of various nations. Beyond this, they are the basis for play at every level; FIFA and the IFAB also permit National Associations, such as our United States Soccer Federation (USSF) and United States Youth Soccer Association (USYSA) to establish certain "rules of competition" for cups and allow leagues to do the same, provided there is no compromise of the standards set by the IFAB or of the Spirit of the Game. Changes to the Laws can be proposed by National Associations to FIFA through the FIFA Referee Committee.

THE UNITED STATES AND WORLD SOCCER

The United States is one of over 160 member nations of FIFA; however, world soccer is so large that this body, based in Switzerland, cannot oversee everything. To serve local needs better, area confederations have been formed. USSF belongs to the Football Confederation of North and Central America and the Caribbean, known more familiarly as CONCACAF. Other confederations serve Europe (UEFA), South America (CONMEBOL), Asia (AFC), Africa (CAF), and Oceania (OFC).

The USSF is the national governing body for soccer in the United States.

REFEREEING IN THE UNITED STATES

Soccer referees in the United States are affiliated with USSF through their state associations. The National Referee Development Program is governed by the USSF National Board of Directors through the National Referee Committee and its equivalents at state level.

The National Referee Committee has a Chairman and three Program Directors, one each for Administration, Instruction, and Assessment. Other members include representatives of the Youth, Amateur, and Professional

divisions of USSF and other allied organizations. The National Referee Committee prepares the budget for the National Referee Program, sets various nationwide standards, establishes program policies and procedures, and deals with many other problems.

At the state level, referees usually are governed by state referee committees, composed of a chairman, the State Referee Administrator, the State Youth Referee Administrator, the State Directors of Instruction and Assessment, and representatives of the state amateur and youth associations. The State Referee Committees operate along lines similar to those of the National Referee Committee.

Active referees are ranked in grades ranging from Associate Referee through International Referee. Full details of what these grades are and how referees can advance through the system are published annually by USSF in the Referee Handbook.

Many states have established minimum requirements for number of games worked, hours of in-service clinics that must be attended, and for observations, evaluations, or assessments of their referees. This information should be available to each student in this class, together with information on where and how to get appropriate games and where to purchase referee uniforms and equipment.