

# Walking Football Matchplay Laws for Enclosed Pitches 2024

These Matchplay Laws are specifically designed for use by the Walking Football Northern Premier League in their league games and subsidiary competitions played on the 5-a-side pitches at the Goals Leeds football centre, using the Football Association's "Walking Football Laws of the Game Revised February 2023" as a guide. They cannot be changed part way through a league season. They could also be used by other leagues or competitions being played on enclosed pitches at any other venue with any appropriate adjustments made as required.

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## LAW 1 - NOT WALKING

Outfield players are not allowed to run or jog at any time during a walking football match. Walking and speed walking are allowed as long as the player has at least the part of one foot in contact with the ground.

If, in the opinion of the referee, it doesn't look like walking it probably isn't and the player will be penalised as follows:

- first infringement - an indirect free kick awarded to the opposition;
- second infringement - an indirect free kick awarded to the opposition and a warning issued to the player;
- third infringement - an indirect free kick awarded to the opposition and the player sin binned for three minutes of actual playing time.

## LAW 2 - MATCH BALL

Regulation size 5 match balls will be used, inflated to a pressure of 11psi. Each team must provide a match ball and present it to the match referee to select the most suitable. Futsal balls are not permitted.

### Replacement of a defective ball

If the ball becomes defective play is stopped and then restarted by dropping the replacement ball where the original ball became defective. If the ball becomes defective at a restart, the restart is retaken. If the ball becomes defective during a penalty kick as it moves forward and before it touches a player, crossbar or goalposts the penalty kick is retaken.

The ball may not be changed during the match without the referee's permission.

## LAW 3 - THE PLAYERS

Games are 6-a-side with teams selected from squads of up to nine players. Teams must inform the League Organiser of their expected squad including dates of birth by the Friday before the appropriate matchday round. Late changes can be made on the day.

### Minimum ages

All players must be over the required minimum age for the Section on the day of the appropriate matchday, i.e. 50+ Section 50 years of age (men) 44 (women) and 60+ Section 60 years of age (men) 55 (women). Proof of age (e.g. driving licence) will be required. Any team found to be fielding an underage player will be suitably sanctioned by the League Organiser.

### Goalkeepers

Each team must have a goalkeeper on the pitch at all times during the match. They can return the ball into play rolling it out under-arm or by placing it on the ground to kick out. Goalkeepers are not permitted to kick the ball directly from their hands (either by a drop kick or punt) nor to be able to score a goal.

### Substitutes

The number of substitutions made during a match is unlimited and can be made at any time during the game when there is a stoppage in play or the ball is in a goalkeeper's possession. A player who has been substituted may return as a substitute for another player and any of the outfield players or substitutes, may change places with the goalkeeper.

## **Substitution procedure**

- Teams must ask the referee's permission before a substitution can take place;
- A substitute cannot enter the pitch until the player being substituted has left;
- The match will not resume until the pitch gate has been closed;
- All substituted players and substitutes are subject to the referee's authority whether they play or not.

A match will become invalid if a team is permanently reduced by more than two players due to sendings off (not temporarily dismissed) and/or being unable to continue through injury, illness etc.

## **LAW 4 - PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT**

Teams must wear colours that distinguish them from their opponents. Goalkeepers must wear colours which are distinguishable from the other players. Playing kit consists of a shirt with sleeves and, preferably, numbered; shorts or track suit trousers; socks and appropriate footwear. The wearing of shinpads is optional though advisable and must be made of a suitable material to provide reasonable protection and covered by the socks.

Non-dangerous protective equipment, e.g. headgear\*, facemasks and knee and arm protectors made of soft, lightweight padded material is permitted as are goalkeepers' caps\* and sports spectacles.

\* Outfield players wearing peaked caps during matches must have them the wrong way round so that the peak is at the back of the head.

A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous. Wrist watches (including Fitbit and other such fitness monitoring devices) and all items of jewellery are forbidden and must be removed. Boots with screw-in or metal studs or blades are not permitted.

### **Rectifying incorrect equipment**

An offending player will be instructed by the referee to leave the pitch to correct their equipment or to obtain any missing item of equipment. The player is only allowed to re-enter the pitch when there is a stoppage in play or the ball is in the possession of a goalkeeper and must first report to the referee, who then checks that the player's equipment is correct.

## **LAW 5 - REFEREES**

Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Matchplay Laws. The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play are final and must always be respected.

The referee shall:

- Act as timekeeper and keep a record of the match;
- Supervise and/or indicate the restart of play;
- Take the appropriate disciplinary action against players who commit offences. This may be the temporary exclusion of players from the match for three minutes of actual playing time (sin bin) or the permanent exclusion of a player from the match (sent off);
- Show a red card to indicate that a player has been sent off and a blue card to indicate that a player has been sin binned;
- Make sin binned players aware of the end of their period of exclusion;
- Allow play to continue when the team against which an offence has been committed will benefit from such an advantage and penalises the original offence if the anticipated advantage does not ensue at that time.
- Advise the players when an advantage is being played and when that advantage is over;
- Punish the more serious offence in terms of sanction, restart, physical severity and tactical impact when more than one offence occurs at the same time;
- Keep count of each player's "not walking" offences (Law 1);
- Take action against team officials who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and may, at their discretion, expel them from the pitch and its immediate surrounds;
- Allow play to continue until there is a stoppage in play if a player is, in their opinion, only slightly injured;
- Stop the match if a player is seriously injured so that the necessary treatment can be given. The injured player can be temporarily substituted for treatment to be continued off the pitch;
- Ensure that any player bleeding leaves the pitch;
- Stop, suspend or terminate the match for any offence of the Laws or due to any kind of outside interference;
- Not allow unauthorised persons to enter the pitch;
- For each match the referee shall report the following to the League Organiser:
  - The final result,
  - The name of any player sin binned or sent off and the reason for their dismissal particularly if a sending off is for violent conduct or foul or abusive language or gesture towards the referee,
  - Any action taken against any team official(s) as described above.
- For each player sent off, the referee shall also advise the referee of that player's team's next match that the

named player had been sent off and the appropriate suspension should apply.

## **LAW 6 - MATCH DURATION**

The duration of matches shall be in accordance with the Fixtures Schedules detailed in the NPL Format for the appropriate season, unless pre-determined otherwise by the League Organiser, subject to the following:

- Allowance shall be made in each period for time lost through stoppages;
- The duration of the match or first half shall be extended to enable a penalty kick to be taken;
- If relevant, the half time interval shall not exceed five minutes, except with the referee's permission.

## **LAW 7 - START AND RESTART OF PLAY**

A kick off starts each half of a match and restarts play after a goal has been scored. Indirect free kicks or penalty kicks restart play after an offence had occurred when the ball is in play. An offence which occurs when the ball is not in play does not change how the play is restarted. A dropped ball restarts play when the referee has stopped play for any other reason.

### **'Home' team**

Unless otherwise stipulated in tournament formats, the first named team in fixture lists shall be designated the 'home' team. The 'home team' shall have the kick off and defend the gate end of the pitch in the first half of the game. The 'away' team shall have similar for the second half.

### **Kick off procedure**

- All players, except the kicker, must be in their own half of the pitch;
- The opponents must be at least three yards from the ball until it is in play;
- The ball must be stationary on the centre spot;
- The kicker must wait until the referee gives a signal for the kick off to be taken;
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves;
- A goal may not be scored directly from the kick off. If the ball enters the kicker's goal without being touched by another player, the goal is disallowed and an indirect free kick is awarded to the opponents to be taken from the centre spot. If the ball directly enters the opponents' goal, the goal is disallowed and the ball returned into play by the goalkeeper.
- If the player taking the kick off touches the ball again before it has touched another player an indirect free kick is awarded. In the event of any other kick-off procedure offence the kick off is retaken.

### **Drop ball procedure**

- The referee drops the ball for one player of the team that last touched the ball at the position where it last touched a player or the referee, or two yards infield from the pitch barrier near that position.
- All other players of both teams must remain at least three yards from the ball until it is in play.
- Play restarts when the ball touches the ground.
- If a player touches a dropped ball before it touches the ground the ball is dropped again.
- If the ball was in the goalkeeper's possession the goalkeeper will return the ball into play when informed by the referee.
- A dropped ball must be touched by at least two players for a goal to be scored. If the ball enters the goal without touching at least two players play the goal is disallowed and is returned into play by the goalkeeper.

## **LAW 8 - BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY**

### **Ball out of play**

The ball is out of play when play has been stopped by the referee or if it touches the referee and a team starts a promising attack, the ball goes directly into the goal or the team in possession of the ball changes. In all of these cases, play is restarted with a dropped ball - see Law 7.

### **Height of ball restrictions**

If, in the opinion of the referee, the whole of the ball goes above the height restriction of six feet, an indirect free kick is awarded against the player who last touched the ball at the point from which the ball was kicked or a deflection occurred. However:

- if the ball goes above the height restriction from a goalkeeper's save it is retained by the goalkeeper to return into play;
- if, from a shot at goal, the ball does not go above the height restriction until it rebounds off the frame of the goal or the barrier within the line of the goal area, it is retained by the goalkeeper to return into play;
- if, when the ball is kicked and it does not go above the height restriction until it rebounds off the barrier anywhere else around the pitch, an indirect free kick is awarded against the player last touching the ball, to be taken one yard in from where the ball hit the barrier;
- if a goalkeeper throws or kicks the ball out (not from the result of making a save) and the ball goes above the height restriction, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposition to be taken three yards outside the goal

area nearest to where the infringement occurred.

## **LAW 9 - DETERMINING THE OUTCOME OF A MATCH**

### **Goal scored**

A goal is scored when the whole of the ball passes over the line between the goalposts and under the crossbar, provided that no offence has been committed by the team scoring the goal. Goalkeepers are not allowed to score (unless during a penalty shoot-out). If a goalkeeper does play the ball into the opponents' goal, the goal is disallowed and the ball returned into play by the opposing goalkeeper.

### **Winning team**

The team scoring the greater number of goals during a match are the winners. If both teams score an equal number of goals or if no goals are scored at the end of a league match, the match is drawn. If scores are level at the end of regulation time in the knock-out stages of a tournament then a penalty shoot-out will be used to decide the winning team.

### **Penalty shoot-outs**

- Kicks in penalty shoot-outs must be taken in accordance with Law 11.
- Kicks will be taken at the goal at the gate end of the pitch unless determined otherwise by the referee.
- The team that wins the toss of a coin shall elect to take the first or the second kick.
- The referee shall keep a record of the kicks being taken.
- All players in the teams' named squad are eligible unless they have been sent off (red card) during the match or are suspended from a previous one.
- Both teams must have the same number of eligible players to take the kicks.
- The referee must be given the names of each team's eligible players.
- Only eligible players and referee are permitted to remain on the pitch whilst the penalty shoot-out is in process.
- All players, except the kicker and the two goalkeepers, must remain in the opposite half of the pitch.
- The goalkeeper not facing a kick must wait in the corner of the pitch as directed by the referee and not be in the eye-line of the goalkeeper facing the kick.
- The kick is completed if a goal is scored, the goal is missed, the goalkeeper makes a save or the referee has declared the kick to be invalid.
- Each team shall take three kicks alternately. If, during these three kicks each, one team has scored more times than the other could score, no more kicks need to be taken. If the scores are still level, kicks shall continue to be taken in the same order of players until one team has scored more times than the other (sudden death).
- Any eligible player may change places with his team's goalkeeper.
- If a goalkeeper is unable to continue before or during the penalty shoot-out, he may be replaced by another player in the named squad not previously eligible. The replaced goalkeeper, though, takes no further part in the match and may not take a kick.

## **LAW 10 - FREE KICKS**

All free kicks in walking football, unless a penalty kick, are indirect.

All free kicks are taken from the place where the offence occurred, except:

- Free kicks to the attacking team near the goal line are taken three yards back from the line at the point nearest to where the offence occurred;
- Free kicks to the defending team in their goal area may be taken anywhere in that area by the goalkeeper but not rolled back into play.

The ball must be stationary on the ground and the kicker must not touch it again until it has touched another player. If, after the ball is in play, the kicker touches the ball again before it has touched another player an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team.

The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves except for a free kick to the defending team in their goal area where the ball is in play when it is kicked directly out of the goal area.

Until the ball is in play all opponents must remain at least three yards from the ball. If, though, an opponent is closer to the ball than three yards the kick is retaken unless advantage can be applied or a quick free kick has been permitted. Defending players who have been instructed to observe the required distance and do not do so can be shown a blue card for dissent.

### **Ball enters the goal**

If the ball directly enters the goal from an indirect free kick, the goal is disallowed and the ball returned into play by the goalkeeper.

### **Quick free kicks**

- Quick free kicks are allowed to be taken at the referee's discretion. However, players must wait for the referee's signal if player may be injured, the referee needs to speak to a player or the referee is not ready.

- If a player takes a quick free kick and the ball hits an opponent who clearly had no chance of getting out of the way, then play on. It's the kicker's own fault for not waiting until the opponent is the required distance.
- If a player takes a quick free kick and the ball is deliberately stopped by a defender who is not the required distance then the free kick should be retaken.

### **Play on**

A free kick need not necessarily be awarded if there is a clear attacking opportunity for the team in possession, where advantage can be played and the offender sanctioned once play has stopped or the advantage has not accrued. If, in the opinion of the referee, there has not been sufficient advantage gained play may be brought back and an indirect free kick then awarded.

## **LAW 11 - WALKING PENALTY KICKS**

A goal may be scored directly from a penalty kick.

The ball must be stationary on the penalty spot and the player taking the penalty kick must be clearly identified. Until the ball is in play, the players other than the kicker and goalkeeper must be at least three yards behind the penalty spot. Goalkeepers must stand between the goalposts as close to the crossbar as possible and must not move their feet until the ball is in play.

Once the referee has signalled for the penalty kick to be taken, it must be taken. The player taking the penalty kick must walk directly to the ball from a standing position at about two yards from the ball to take the kick and kick the ball forward.

If, in the opinion of the referee, the player has not walked to the ball, makes a feinting movement before kicking the ball or plays the ball again before it has touched another player, the kick shall be declared invalid. It shall not be retaken and any goal scored shall be disallowed. Unless the kick has been taken during a penalty shoot-out, an indirect free kick awarded to the defending team to be taken from the penalty spot.

Offences before the ball is in play:

- by a player of the defending team and a goal is not scored, the kick is retaken.
- by a team-mate of the player taking the kick and a goal is scored the kick is retaken. The kick is not retaken if a goal is not scored.

The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves and the penalty kick is completed if:

- A goal is scored;
- The goalkeeper makes a save;
- The ball rebounds out of the goal area from the back boards, the frame of the goal or the goalkeeper;
- The referee stops play for any offence. If that offence is by the player taking the kick once the ball is in play, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team and any goal scored is disallowed.

## **LAW 12 - FOULS AND MISCONDUCT**

The ethos of Walking Football is one that expects a non-contact match, with the players, referees and other participants all understanding the spirit of the game. The ethos of the NPL is that matches will be played in a competitive yet sporting manner and referees' decisions accepted without argument and that referees will uphold these matchplay laws properly, fairly, consistently and not stand for any form of dissent.

If any accidental contact occurs and, in the opinion of the referee, is minimal then play on. However, if the referee decides that contact is made with perhaps a bit more force then an indirect free kick is awarded.

The following fouls and misconduct are penalised with an indirect free kick:

- Running or jogging (i.e. not walking) - see Law 1;
- Deliberately handling the ball but not denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goalscoring opportunity;
- Jumping to challenge for or try to control a high ball;
- Deliberately heading the ball;
- Holding an opponent;
- An attacking player playing the ball inside the opposition's goal area;
- Playing the ball whilst on the floor;
- Preventing a goalkeeper from returning the ball into play;
- Deliberately gripping the pitch barrier in order to shield the ball;
- Holding on to the pitch barrier to correct balance for too long after being instructed to let go;
- 'Crowding' - A player who is in possession of the ball must not be tackled or attempted to be tackled by two or more opponents near the pitch barriers.
- 'Cornering' - A player who is in possession of the ball must be allowed at least a yard of space to be able to play the ball out of the corner of the pitch.
- Unreasonably delaying playing the ball out of the corner of the pitch;
- Tackling or attempting to tackle an opponent from behind even if there hasn't been any contact with the

- opponent or ball;
- Committing any other offence, not mentioned in the laws, for which play is stopped to caution or sending off a player.

An indirect free kick is awarded against a goalkeeper if one of the following offences is committed:

- Controlling the ball with hands or feet in the goal area for more than six seconds;
- Allowing the ball to stop in a stationary position in the goal area without touching it for more than six seconds;
- Receiving the ball back directly from a team mate to whom they have just passed the ball without it having made contact with any other player;

The following fouls and misconduct are penalised with an indirect free kick and the offender sin binned for three minutes of actual playing time:

- Offences against an opponent in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless or using excessive force, i.e. charging, jumping at, pushing, tackling or challenging, unless the offended player has been forced into a barrier surrounding the pitch;
- Sliding in an attempt to play the ball when it is being played or attempted to be played by an opponent even if there isn't any contact with the opponent or ball (slide tackle);
- Throwing an object at the ball or making contact with the ball with a held object;
- Showing dissent towards a referee's decision. This includes argumentative behaviour, sarcasm, failure to heed the referee's instruction and any other action deemed by the referee to be dissent, including attempting to "wake" the referee.

A player may also be sin binned for three minutes of actual playing time if they commit any of the following offences:

- Unsporting behaviour;
- Showing dissent by word or action, including attempting to "wake" the referee;
- Persistently offending these Matchplay Laws, with exception to that covered under Law 1;
- Delaying the restart of play, including kicking or carrying the ball away and deliberately touching the ball to prevent the restart;
- Failing to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a free kick;
- Entering or re-entering the pitch without the referee's permission;
- Committing a substitution procedure offence - see Law 3;
- Deliberately leaving the pitch without the referee's permission outside of a substitution.
- Deliberately falling to the ground feigning an injury to try and trick the referee into giving a free kick (cheating).

The following fouls and misconduct considered by the referee to be dangerous, reckless or using excessive force are penalised with an indirect free kick, the offender sent off for the remainder of the match and be suspended for his team's next match:

- Kicking or attempting to kick;
- Tripping or attempting to trip;
- Using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures or other verbal offences unless directed at the referee.

A player can also be sent off for the remainder of the match for any of the following:

- Denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goalscoring opportunity by a deliberate handball offence;
- Denying the opposing team an obvious goalscoring opportunity by moving towards the player's goal by an offence punishable by a free kick or a penalty kick;
- Committing a second blue card offence.

The following fouls and misconduct are considered to be violent conduct and are penalised with an indirect free kick, the offender sent off for the remainder of the match and will receive a three match suspension:

- Striking or attempting to strike, including head-butting;
- Biting or spitting at someone;
- Charging, pushing or tackling the offended player into a barrier surrounding the pitch;
- Using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures or other verbal offences directed at the referee;
- Throwing an object at an opponent or the referee.

A penalty kick is awarded if one of the following offences is committed:

- A defending player deliberately entering their own goal area;
- A goalkeeper deliberately leaving their own goal area;
- A goalkeeper committing any of the sending off offences within their own goal area.

However, any player whose foot/feet, in the opinion of the referee, are wholly on the goal area line and they are not attempting to play the ball in the goal area are not considered to be in the goal area (or outside it in the case of goalkeepers).

Any player or team official who physically assaults a referee will be banned for the entire competition and the police may be summoned.