**SOCCER**

Introduction

In the beginning of the 19th century, a people's game that has been around ever since medieval times started becoming more and more popular in England: soccer. Back then soccer was played using ad-hoc pitches and most teams were formed either because they were part of the same village, organization, factory or whatnot.

Obviously, these guys were playing along to some basic soccer rules, but without a referee to enforce them, or clear specifications to these rules. For example, what would have been considered a foul in Liverpool might have been accepted as a fair tackle in London.

Since soccer sparks some pretty intense competition at times, playing it without a lot of strict rules and without a referee to enforce those caused serious troubles in mid-19th century England. Soccer fights became something that was seen as normal and they gave the game an aura of violence that in truth it didn't deserve.

By 1860, soccer clubs were already popping up in England, especially around London and they were becoming semi-professional, as the competition level started rising.

This caused most of the London clubs to meet in the Freemasons' Tavern in London on 26 October 1863, forming the Football Association (FA), which is still the governing soccer organization in England. They decided that they would need certain rules for the game of soccer if they were to keep on playing competitively.

By the second meeting on the 8th of December 1863, they decided to draw up the plans for the Laws of the Game, which is a sort of constitution holding all of the rules for soccer up till this date, with some modifications.

The 17 Rules for Soccer from the Laws of the Game

This soccer constitution that was the Laws of the Game now **holds 17** specific key points that determine the rules of soccer.

**1. *The Field of Play*** - The field of play is the surface on which the game of soccer is played on. This law regulates everything regarding line markings, soccer pitch dimensions and how to use them properly. For example, a soccer pitch must be between 90 and 120 meters long and 45 to 90 meters wide. However, it must also have a rectangular shape, so you can't have a square field with a length and width of 90 at the same time.

Other basic rules of soccer and field measurements are specified in this law, such as the dimensions of each goal (7.32 meters long and 2.44 meters high), the diameter of the center circle (18.30 meters) or the distance between the penalty spot and the goal (11 meters, perpendicularly on the goal).

**2. *The Ball*** - Throughout the time, the rules for soccer regarding the football remained the same, but the way in which they were applied was on a constant change. The rules state that the soccer bull must have a circumference between 68 and 70 centimeters and a weight between 410 and 450 grams but they also state that the ball can be made out of "leather or any similar material". Well that "any similar material" bit constantly improved over time and nowadays soccer balls reached near-perfection. Almost each World Cup brought a new type of soccer ball, with improved characteristics, although all of them stayed inside the official soccer rules stated in the Laws.

**3. *The Number of Players*** - According to the official soccer rules, a team can bring in 10 outfield players and one goalkeeper on the pitch and can have several substitutes on the bench. The numbers of benched subs as well as the actual number of substitutions that are allowed in a single match vary with the type of the game played.

**4. *The Player's Equipment*** - Just like with the soccer ball, soccer equipment maintained most of the original rules in the Laws of the Game, but the way people interpret them today is quite different from how they did back in 1863. Basically the rules of soccer say that a player must wear a shirt or jersey, footwear, shin pads, shorts and socks and the two teams must have different equipment so that they can be differentiated on the pitch.

**5. *The Referee*** - Well the man in black (or more recently phosphorus green) is probably the biggest "invention" that came with the initial soccer rules constitution and his role is to enforce these official rules of soccer "in connection to the match he has been appointed to". The center referee is accompanied and helped by two assistant referees (one on each side of the pitch) and a fourth one that handles small issues like showing injury time duration, checking a substitute player's equipment and replacing one of the three main referees if they can't continue the game.

**6. *The Assistant Referees*** - The assistant referees are placed on the sides of the pitch (one each) and their main role is to help the main referee with some decisions. Actually, the assistant referee has no decision power, he can only signal a game issue (an offside, a foul, handball and so forth) but it's up to the central ref if he's or she is going to take up the assistant's advice.

**7. *The Duration of the Match*** - Standard adult games are limited by the official soccer rules to two halves of 45 minutes each, separated by a 15 minutes break. This is not the actual time of play, since this 90 minute clock ticks even when the ball is out of play, during substitutions and so forth. If the match is tied at the end of extra time as well, the players go on for a penalty-shootout that will eventually decide the winner.

**8. *The Start and Restart of Play*** - There are 8 reasons for which the game can be stopped and similarly, 8 ways to restart it. Each period of time starts with a kick-off **(1)** and the game is also restarted with a kick-off if a team scores a goal. If the ball goes out on the side lines, the player who last touched the ball conceded a throw-in **(2)**. The game is restarted with the other team throwing the ball back into play. The goal kick **(3)** is awarded to the defending team, if the attacking team took the ball out of play on the defending team's goal line. The game is restarted with the goalkeeper kicking it from within the safety box. If the defending team touches the ball last and it goes over their own goal line, outside of the goal itself, then the opposing team earns a corner kick **(4)** and they will be required to restart the game from the corner nearest to where the ball went out.

An indirect free kick **(5)** is awarded when a team produces a non-penal foul (dangerous play or offside for example) and the game is restarted with a ground kick that cannot be taken towards goal (if a player scores directly from an indirect free kick, without another player touching the ball, the goal won't stand). A direct free kick **(6)** is caused by a foul or handball and unlike the indirect free kick it can be struck directly towards the goal. A penalty kick **(7)** is similar to a direct free kick in that it is caused by a foul or handball, but the offence occurs inside the defending team's penalty area. The game is restarted with one of the attacking team's players shooting for goal from the penalty spot, with nothing but a goalkeeper to beat. The last of these eight soccer rules is rarer and it's called the dropped ball **(8)**. The dropped ball occurs when the referee stops the game for a special reason (an injured player, ball becoming defective or the interference of an external factor) and the game is restarted with him dropping the ball from shoulder height in front of two players who will battle for possession (sort of how basketball matches decide initial possession).

**9. *Ball In and Out of Play*** - According to the official soccer rules, the ball is in play all throughout the match duration, except when it passes a bounding line (goal lines and touch lines), when an offence occurs or when play is stopped by the referee. In these particular cases, the ball is out of play and the soccer players cannot score goals or interact with the ball. In addition, substitutions can only occur when the ball is out of play according to the rules for the game of soccer.

**10. *The Methods of Scoring -*** As long as the ball is in play and no infringements of any soccer rules are being made, the players can score goals. A goal is considered when the ball crosses one of the goal areas with its entire circumference. Goals can be scored from action, from penalty spots and direct free kicks.

**11. *The Offside*** - Since this is one of the trickiest rules of soccer today, we will continue without it.

**12. *Fouls and Misconduct*** - There's a difference between fouls and misconduct that many people fail to understand. A foul can occur when a player tries to get the ball from his opponent and kicks him or pushes him away accidentally, whereas misconduct means that a player willfully targets his opponent and punches, kicks or pushes him away. Fouls can only occur when the ball is in play, but misconduct can occur when it's out of play as well. Depending on the seriousness of the foul or misconduct, the referee can penalize it with a yellow or red card in addition to a free kick or penalty kick.

**13. *Free Kicks*** - Explained most of the soccer rules regarding free kicks in "Soccer Rule Number 8 – The Start and Restart of Play".One additional soccer rule worth mentioning is that players from the opposing team must be at least 9.15 meters away from the position where the free kick will be struck. Also, the player that kicks the ball initially on a free kick cannot touch it again until a teammate or opposing player touches it.

**14. *Penalty Kicks*** - Penalty kicks are conceded when a defended player fouls or commits handball inside the 18 yard box (commonly known as the penalty box). It's important to know that not all offences inside the penalty box are punished with a penalty kick. When the penalty kick is taken, the only two players in the 18 yard box are the penalty taker and the defending team's goalkeeper. Everyone else must sit outside the box and can only move towards the ball once it is kicked. So if the penalty is saved by the goalkeeper or strikes the bar, a player could run from the edge of the box and gain possession.

**15. *The Throw In*** - When the ball goes out of play on the side lines, the opponent of the player who last touched the ball will take a throw in. The throwing method has to follow some rather strict rules; otherwise the referee might dictate a throw in for the other team. The player taking the throw must keep his feet outside the side line, with the sole on the ground and the actual throw must be executed with the ball over the thrower's head.

**16. *The Goal Kick* -** The goal kick is a means of restarting play after the attacking team took the ball over the defending team's byline. The goal kick acts as a direct free kick, so if a player would kick the ball so hard that it would reach the opposing team's goal and score, the goal would count.

**17. *The Corner Kick*** - The last of the 17 rules of soccer refers to the corner kick, which occurs when the ball passes over the defending player's goal line, with a defender having touched the ball last. The corner kick acts as a direct free kick taken from the corner of the pitch (if the ball passes the line on the left of the goal, the corner is taken from the left corner and if it passes on the right, the corner is taken from the right corner). The same rules as for a direct free kick apply, in that opposing players must be at least 9.15 meters away from the corner, the corner taker may score directly from the corner kick and the kicker can't play the ball a second time until it's touched by another player. The only additional rule is that the ball be placed in the corner arc.

**POINTS OF INTEREST**

* Soccer began in England.
* Teams were initially formed through proximity to location.
* In the beginning, soccer did not use an official.
* In the mid-19th century fighting was something that was common to see in regards to soccer.
* Soccer clubs began in England in 1860.
* In 1863, the Football Association was formed.
* The rules of soccer hold 17 specific key points.
* The dimensions of the field are different within specific parameters.
* The soccer ball is continually evolving every World Cup.
* Each team must have 11 players on the field.
* Shin pads are an example of mandatory equipment for play.
* There are four officials during a soccer match.
* Assistant officials exist in soccer matches.
* An official match is played with two 45 minute halves.
* There are eight reasons for which a match can be stopped.
* The ball is always considered in play while the clock is running unless it crosses a boundary line.
* Goals can be scored from any part of the field.
* Off sides is tricky to catch and therefore not utilized during PE.
* Fouls and player misconducts are different things in soccer matches.
* The goalie is the only person that is allowed to touch the ball with his/her hands unless the ball is out of bounds.