



REGULATORY AND PROCEDURAL UPDATES IN SPORTS

(January/February 2021)



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FOOTBALL

1. FIFA Publishes Commentary on Eligibility to Play For Representative Teams

FIFA has published a commentary on the Eligibility Guidelines of players. This development is geared towards providing explanations as regards the eligibility of players, and the rules concerning their representation in a national team.

Matters explained in the commentary include:

- The meaning of "holding a nationality";
- Nationality entitling players to represent more than one association;
- Acquisition of a new nationality;
- Stateless individuals; change of association, etc.

Furthermore, annexed to the commentary is a guide on Submitting a Request for Eligibility or Change of Association. It provides a broad overview of the legal process, and the documents necessary for submitting such requests to FIFA.

The detailed Commentary on the Eligibility to Play for Representative teams can be accessed [here](#), while the Guide on Submitting a Request for Eligibility or Change of Association can be accessed [here](#).

2. FIFA Trials Concussion Substitutes at Club World Cup

In a bid to make the game of football safer, and to protect the health of players, FIFA decided to test-run the substitution of players who suffer a suspected or actual concussion on the football pitch, following IFAB'S Annual Business Meeting (ABM) in December 2020.



The aims of this rule are:

- To prevent the player from being involved in another concussion incident during the match;
- To help medical personnel make a proper assessment of the situation;
- To establish a procedure that can apply to all levels of football.

The rule allowed for additional concussion substitutions at the already-held Club World Cup, notwithstanding how many substitutions have already been made. The full details can be accessed [here](#).

3. The English Premier League Makes a Change to The Offside Rule

Controversy surrounded Manchester City's first goal against Aston Villa on 20th January 2021, when Manchester City's Rodri came from an apparent offside position to steal the ball from Aston Villa's Tyrone Mings, resulting in a Bernardo Silva goal. Sequel to the incident, the Premier League has decided to introduce a change to the offside rule.

The new rule states that:

“Where a player in an offside position immediately impacts on an opponent who has deliberately played the ball, the match officials should prioritise challenging an opponent for the ball, and thus the offside offence of ‘interfering with an opponent by impacting on the opponent’s ability to play the ball’ should be penalised”.



4. The FIFA Council Extends Temporary Measures for the Release and Registration of Players

In view of the covid-19 pandemic, the FIFA Bureau, last year, amended the part of the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players that applies to national and international matches, in order to protect footballers.

More recently in February 2021, the Bureau decided to extend those same amendments which provide the guidelines on how players are released, to become applicable till the end of April 2021.

The amendments include:

- i. Players might not be released by their clubs where there is an application of mandatory quarantine for players traveling for an international match, with the quarantine period for 5 days;
- ii. Where the location has a travel restriction, the club can opt to not release its players;
- ii. Where the relevant authorities have not granted a specific exemption to the players of a team, the club an option to not release its players.

Furthermore, the Rules states that a player can only be registered with a maximum of three clubs and can only play for three clubs, officially, in one season.

The full details can be accessed [here](#).





BASKETBALL



1. FIBA Revises Anti-Doping Regulations

FIBA has released its revised Internal Regulations governing anti-doping, which came into effect on January 1, 2021. With strong emphasis on its core principles and proven processes, FIBA incorporated changes made from the 2021 World Anti-Doping Program, which include Athletes' Anti-Doping Rights Act and two new International Standards which relate to results management and education.

Amongst the changes include:

1. Where a player commits a violation, which includes substance abuse and can show (a) it wasn't used during a competition (b) It wasn't related to sport performance, then the ineligibility period will be three months, subject to it being reduced to one month, if the player

completes a treatment program approved by FIBA.

2. There is also a violation for acts where a player tries to retaliate, or discourage against reporting doping activities to authorities. The aim of this is to protect whistle-blowers.

The Code also grants a flexible way of imposing shorter periods of ineligibility in cases involving recreational players and protected persons.

Finally, regarding anti-doping violations, basic sanctions may now be increased by up to an additional period of two years where the circumstances are very serious.

The FIBA Internal Regulations, Book 4, Anti-Doping is available [here](#):





FORMULA 1

1. Formula 1 Introduces New Rules

Ahead of the new 2021 season which begins on March 19, new Formula 1 Rules have been released.

Amongst changes to the Rules are:

1. The alteration of the floor shape of Formula 1 cars, with the floor solid.
2. Alteration to the rear brake duct winglets on the cars.
3. Introduction of a cost cap. The cost cap is the first of its kind and has been set at a baseline of \$145 million. The aim of the cap is to cover the cost of running a Formula 1 team, except marketing costs, drivers' salaries, and the salaries of the three highest earners in the team;
4. Creation of minimum weights of cars and increase in power units;
5. Banning of the Dual Axis Steering System (DAS) which would affect the Mercedes team, etc.



Full information on the new changes can be accessed [here](#):



ANTI-DOPING

1. WADA Releases Updated Guidelines for the 2021 International Standard For Testing and Investigations

Updated Guidelines has been published by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), to complement the Anti-Doping Organizations (ADOs) in terms of interpreting the International Standard for Testing and Investigations (ISTI).

- i. Guidelines for Sample Collection Personnel
- ii. Guidelines for Sample Collection (which was previously titled, Urine Sample Collection Guidelines and Blood Sample Collection Guidelines)



The guidelines have been updated to be in tandem with the 2021 ISTI requirements as well as providing more practical examples for ADOs implementing a sample collection personnel program, as well as procedures of sample collection.

The details can be accessed [here](#).



ABOUT SPORTLICITORS

We are a law firm specialized in sports law practice, covering a variety of areas such as sport governance & regulation; sports contracts; sports dispute resolution; intellectual property rights in sports; sports marketing & sponsorship; sports immigration services, amongst others.

Our firm is one of the foremost fully-specialized sports law firms in Africa. It was established based on the understanding that the African sports industry needs expert lawyers who are fully-devoted to helping sports stakeholders exploit the opportunities, and negotiate the challenges of an ever-changing sports industry.

Over time, we have provided legal services in respect of:

- Sports disciplinary matters;
- Formation of sport leagues/clubs;
- Dispute Resolution before local/international sports tribunals, and civil courts; such as matters of 'overdue payables', 'training compensation', 'solidarity contribution', tort in sport, etc;
- Advice on player management and transfers;
- Club management, employment contracts and commercial contracts, etc.

Our track record includes provision of legal services to clients such as: Fédération Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionnel (FIFPRO), Myron Topclass Sport Outfit, Discovery Sport, Oghenekaro Etebo (Stoke City FC, England), Godbless Asamoah (Rivers United FC, Nigeria), Adama Coulibaly (Warri Wolves FC, Nigeria), Adeola Aminu & Chima Nwosu (Sunshine Queens FC, Nigeria), Gbagada FC (Nigeria), Geedeede FC (Nigeria), Ahmed Kone & Bobbie Ansah (Sunshine Stars FC), among others.

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