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## **IHF DECISIONS AND ADVICE REGARDING RULES INTERPETATIONS Based on experience during Junior and Youth World Championships**

The rules changes that took effect on August 1 got an immediate test during the three Junior/Youth World Championships during the month of August. As promised, on the basis of that experience, the IHF is hereby offering more definitive rules interpretations for all member federations. (We are asking federations to spread the word to referees, teams, and delegates as quickly as possible). We are pleased to report that the transition to the new rules was generally very easy and successful. As on previous occasions, the concerns that had been expressed about a quick and consistent adaptation turned out to be unwarranted. However, the following points are worth noting:

1. The game is now restarted with a goalkeeper-throw, if the opponents have interfered in the goal area. Goalkeepers have already started adapting and are instinctively throwing the ball from within goal area, often starting a quick counterattack or at least gaining an advantage, precisely as was intended with this rules change. The key is to have the referee help remind the goalkeeper by making the hand signal for goalkeeper-throw in a very visible and emphatic way. (The signal for entering the goal-area is virtually never necessary). By contrast, if the referee decision is a free-throw, e.g., for an offensive foul just outside the goal area, then the referee should clearly signal for a free-throw and support this by pointing to the correct location.
2. The new regulations for a free-throw after the expiration of playing time occasionally caused some confusion. For the most part, the throwing team reacted correctly, with only one player coming forward, ready to take the free-throw. The referees should encourage this quick execution, as this is the best way of avoiding other problems. The defending teams sometimes had misunderstood the change and thought that also they were entitled to substitute one player (or a short player in the defense simply ran off from the court out of old habit). The coaches must be more firmly instructed, and the referees must pay attention in the hope that they can prevent such an incorrect and punishable action.
3. Most teams came well prepared and had a 'vest' in the right color for the case where a court player is put in as goalkeeper in the last moments of a game. This temporary goalkeeper is now only allowed if he/she wears the same color as the regular goalkeeper. However, some teams came with a vest in a different color. Referees or delegates should be encouraged to remind teams about this in the first games of the new season, and teams should not be allowed to violate this rule. One assumes that a team will quickly correct the problem after it has been pointed out to them.
4. Finally, most of the concerns or questions raised had been about the removal of the obligation to give time-out when a 7-meter throw is called. Such time-outs are now to be given on a subjective basis by the referees, depending on the circumstances in each case. There had been concerns about a possible lack of consistency in these decisions.

The key to the correct interpretation is to follow the principles and criteria contained in **Clarification No. 2 in the Rule Book**. This is an integral part of the rules.

Here it is made clear that a **time-out is not justified**, if the thrower and goalkeeper are ready to go ahead with the 7-meter throw **within a normal timeframe, without any unusual delay**. This principle applies regardless of other considerations, such as the result of the match etc. (This is in analogy with the situation where the ball temporarily leaves the playing court but clearly is going to be back in play within a few seconds). Such interruptions are a normal part of the game and a time-out must be avoided.

**If there is an unusual delay**, perhaps because the thrower or the goalkeeper is substituted, or because the floor needs to be wiped prior to the throw, then it **might** be justified to give a time-out. **The main consideration is whether it would create an unfair disadvantage for one of the teams**, if the clock was not stopped. This would primarily depend on the result of the game and the remaining playing time. **If the result is relatively even, especially in the later stages of a game, then a time-out is obviously warranted**. (If the game is the second part of a two-game “home and away” format, then it is clearly the aggregate result that matters). **Similarly, if one of the teams has a numerical advantage (because of a 2-minute suspension), and the game is not completely one-sided, then it would be appropriate to give a time-out**, so that the effect of the suspension is not reduced.

Under these guidelines, which were easy for the referees and did not create any problems for the teams, this rules change was applied consistently in the World Championships, with the intended result of avoiding a large number of clearly unnecessary time-outs.

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