



Laws of the Game 2021/22

Clarifications and associated Law changes



Main changes and clarifications



Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

The 'handball' section of Law 12 was not radically changed at the IFAB AGM in 2019. It was revised to make the Law clearer and to incorporate guidelines which were already given to referees and were not well known by the football community.

The application of the revised wording has often been inconsistent and this has been made worse by some high-profile decisions being viewed as 'correct' when they were incorrect applications of the Law. This has caused uncertainty and unfair criticism of the Law.

Confusion has also resulted from some referees and VARs applying the Law too strictly, especially in relation to 'unnaturally bigger' and the hand/arm being above the shoulder.

However, whatever the wording, there will always be some inconsistency and debate around handball as its assessment is subjective.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

Revised wording for 2021/22

- ▶ Not every 'handball' is an offence
- ▶ The simpler wording reflects football's desire for match officials to use their judgment in determining the 'validity' of the hand/arm position in relation to what the player is doing in that particular situation.
- ▶ Wording focusses on three main categories of offence:
 - deliberate handball
 - non-deliberate handball – unnatural position of hand/arm
 - non-deliberate handball – scoring a goal immediately after accidental handball by the scorer
- ▶ Accidental handball by a team-mate immediately before a goal is scored or which creates a goal-scoring opportunity are no longer offences.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

New text

~~Deleted text~~

Existing text

1. Direct free kick - Handling the Ball

Not every touch of a player's hand/arm with the ball is an offence.

It is an offence if a player:

- *deliberately touches the ball with their hand/arm, for example moving the hand/arm towards the ball*
- *touches the ball with their hand/arm when it has made their body unnaturally bigger. A player is considered to have made their body unnaturally bigger when the position of their hand/arm is not a consequence of, or justifiable by, the player's body movement for that specific situation. By having their hand/arm in such a position, the player takes a risk of their hand/arm being hit by the ball and being penalised*
- *scores in the opponents' goal:*
 - *directly from their hand/arm, even if accidental, including by the goalkeeper*
 - *immediately after the ball has touched their ~~or a team-mate's~~ hand/arm, even if accidental*

~~○ creates a goal-scoring opportunity~~

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

VIDEO EXAMPLES

Handball offence: deliberate handball

The hand/arm deliberately makes contact with the ball by:

- ▶ moving towards the ball
- ▶ moving into the path of the ball



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Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

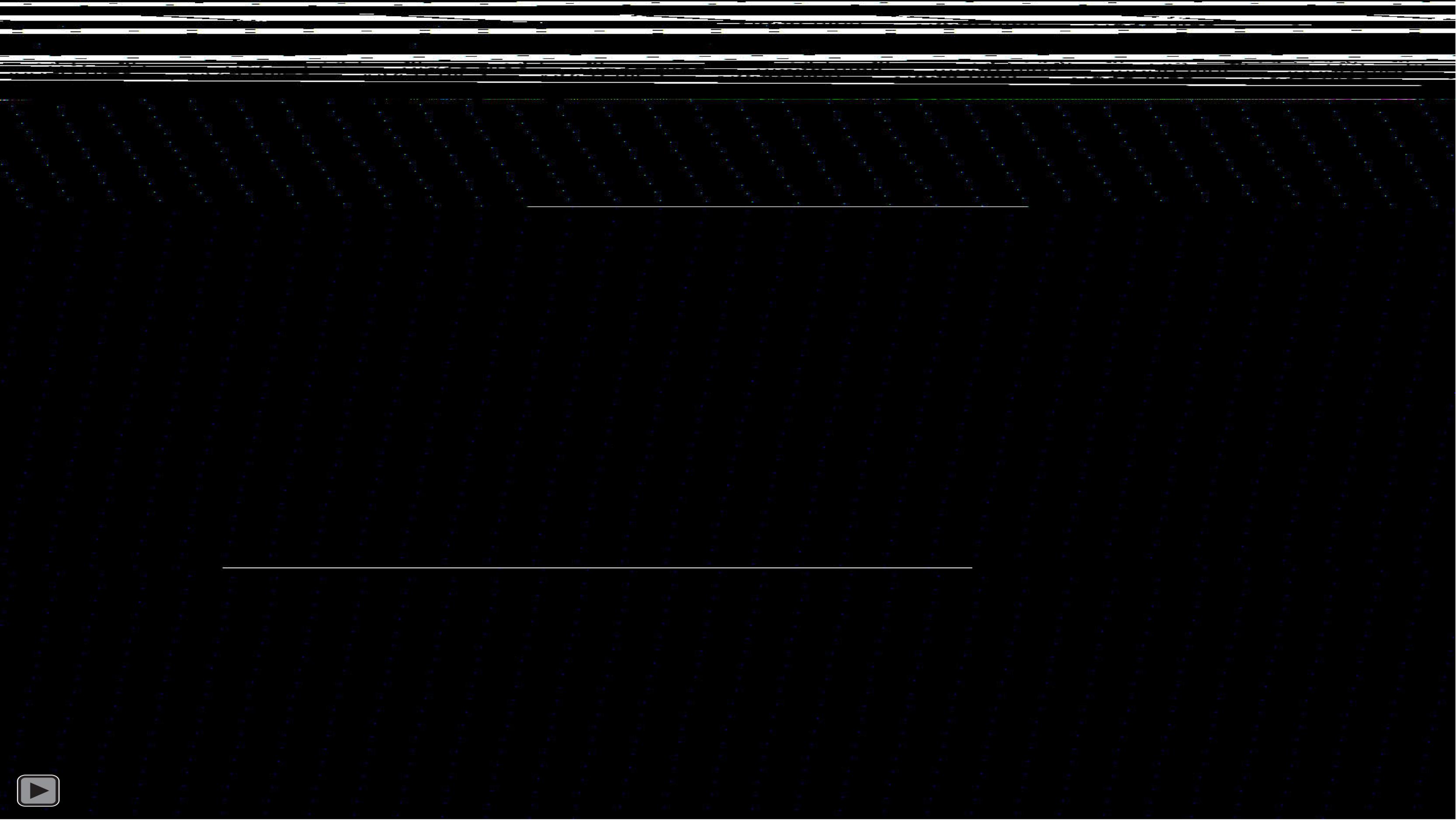
VIDEO EXAMPLES

Handball offence: unnaturally bigger

The hand/arm has made the body unnaturally bigger by being in a position which is not a consequence of, or justifiable by, the player's body movement in that situation

This includes when the hand/arm:

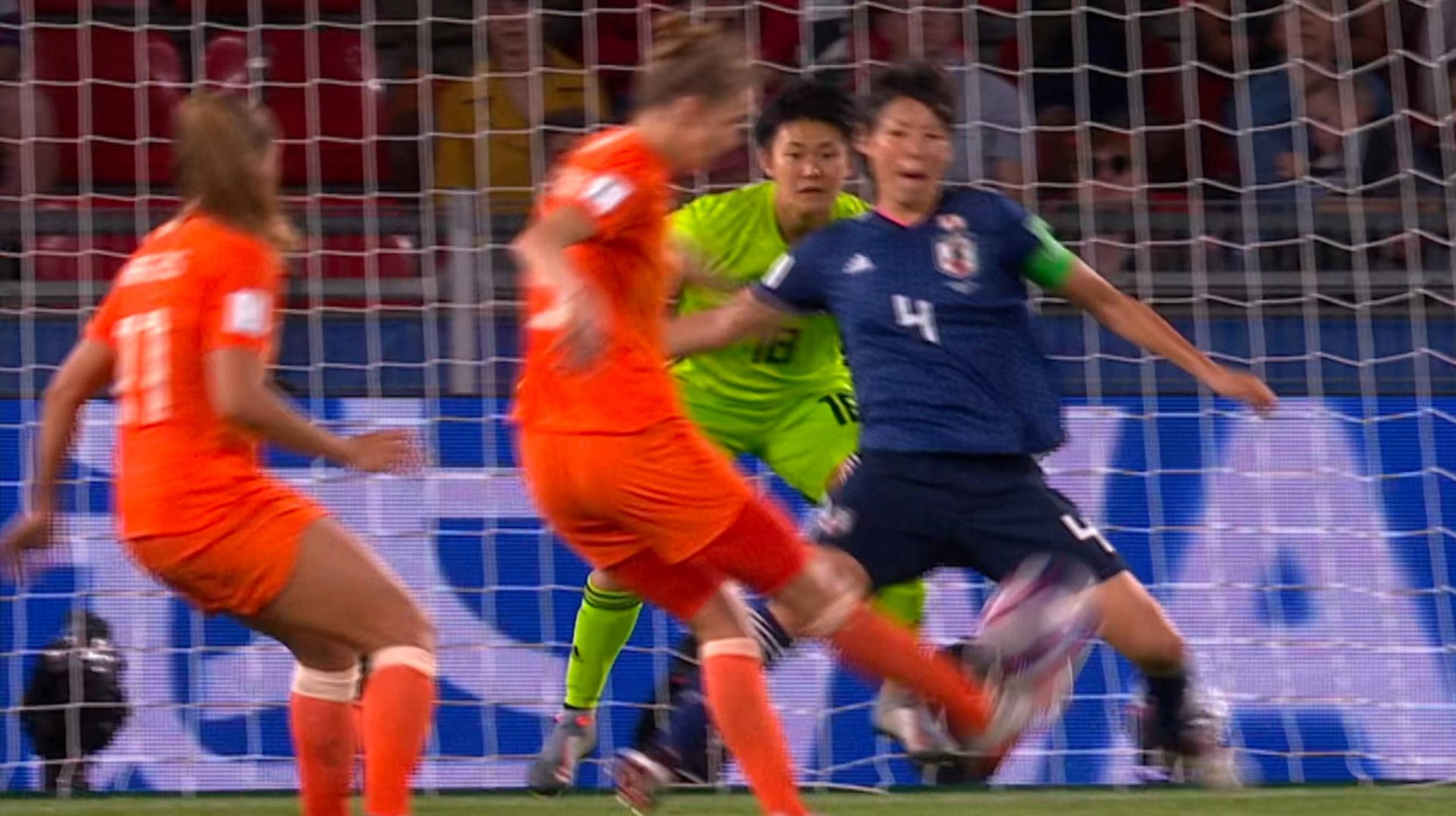
- ▶ is clearly extended away from the body (to create a bigger barrier)
- ▶ is clearly extended above the shoulder (to create a bigger barrier)
- ▶ moves towards or is on the ground and does not support the player's body



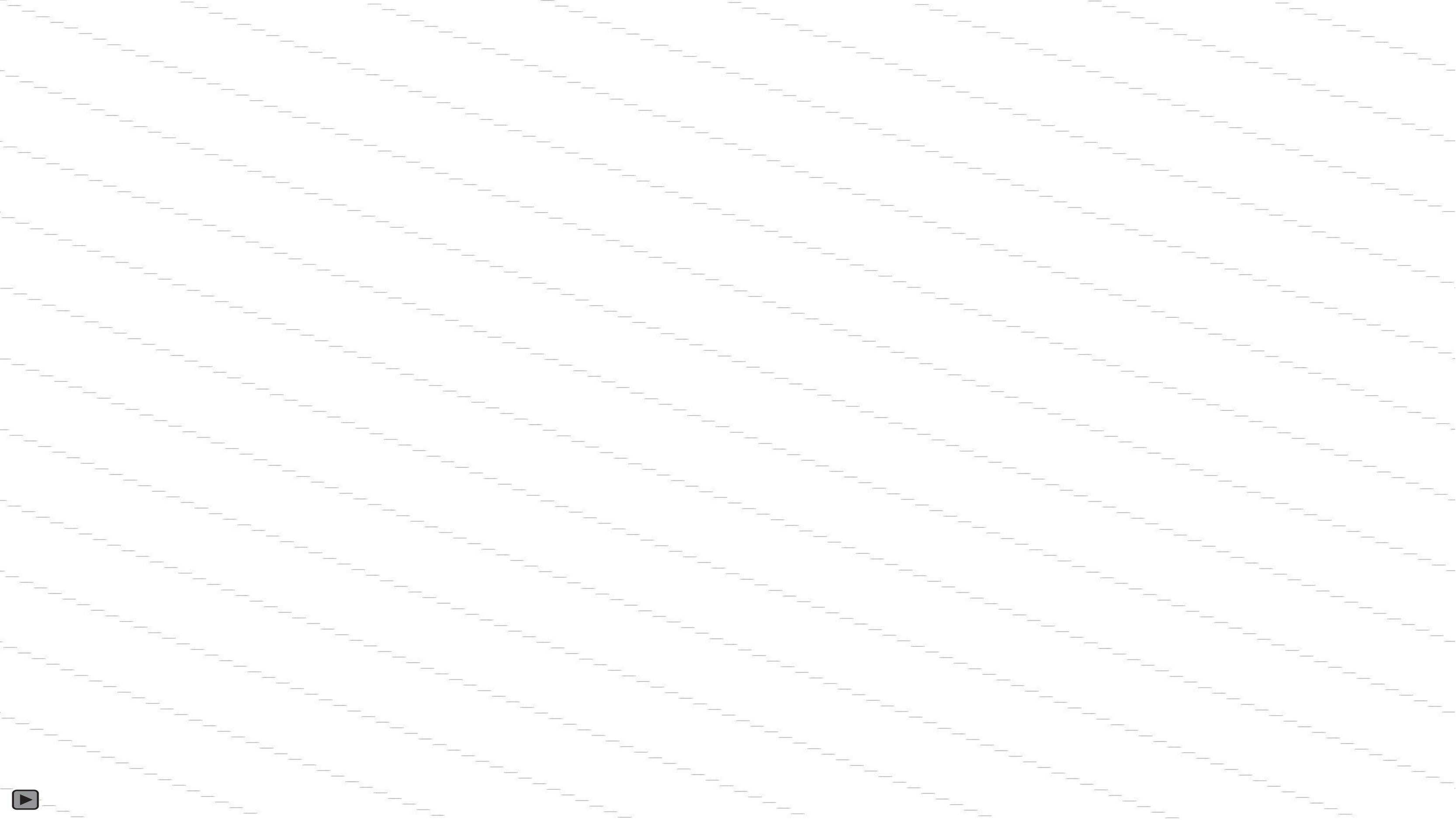












Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

VIDEO EXAMPLES

Not a handball offence: not unnaturally bigger

The hand/arm has not made the body unnaturally bigger because its position is a consequence of, or justifiable by, the player's body movement in that situation

This includes when the arm/hand:

- ▶ is close to the body
- ▶ is away from the body because of the player's 'natural' movement
- ▶ contact is a consequence of the player deliberately playing the ball with another part of the body (against himself/herself)
- ▶ moves towards, or is on, the ground to support the player's body

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

VIDEO EXAMPLES

Not a handball offence: not unnaturally bigger

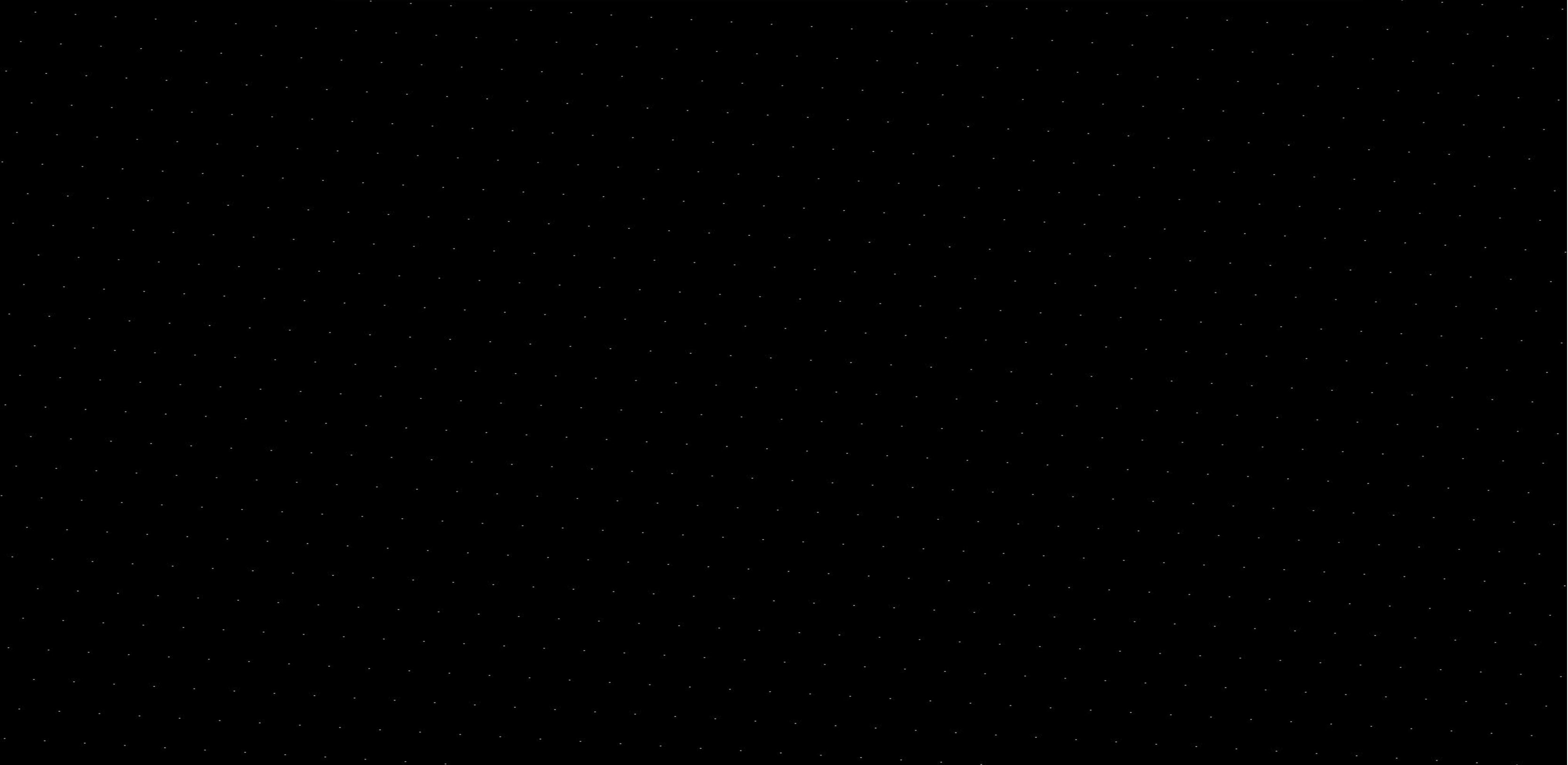
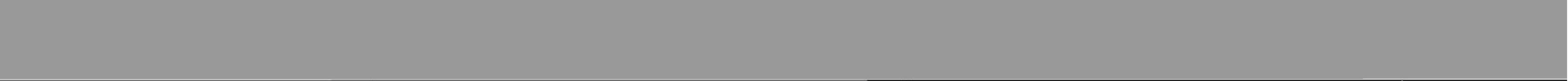
Justifiable position – players cannot be expected to move with arms by their side.

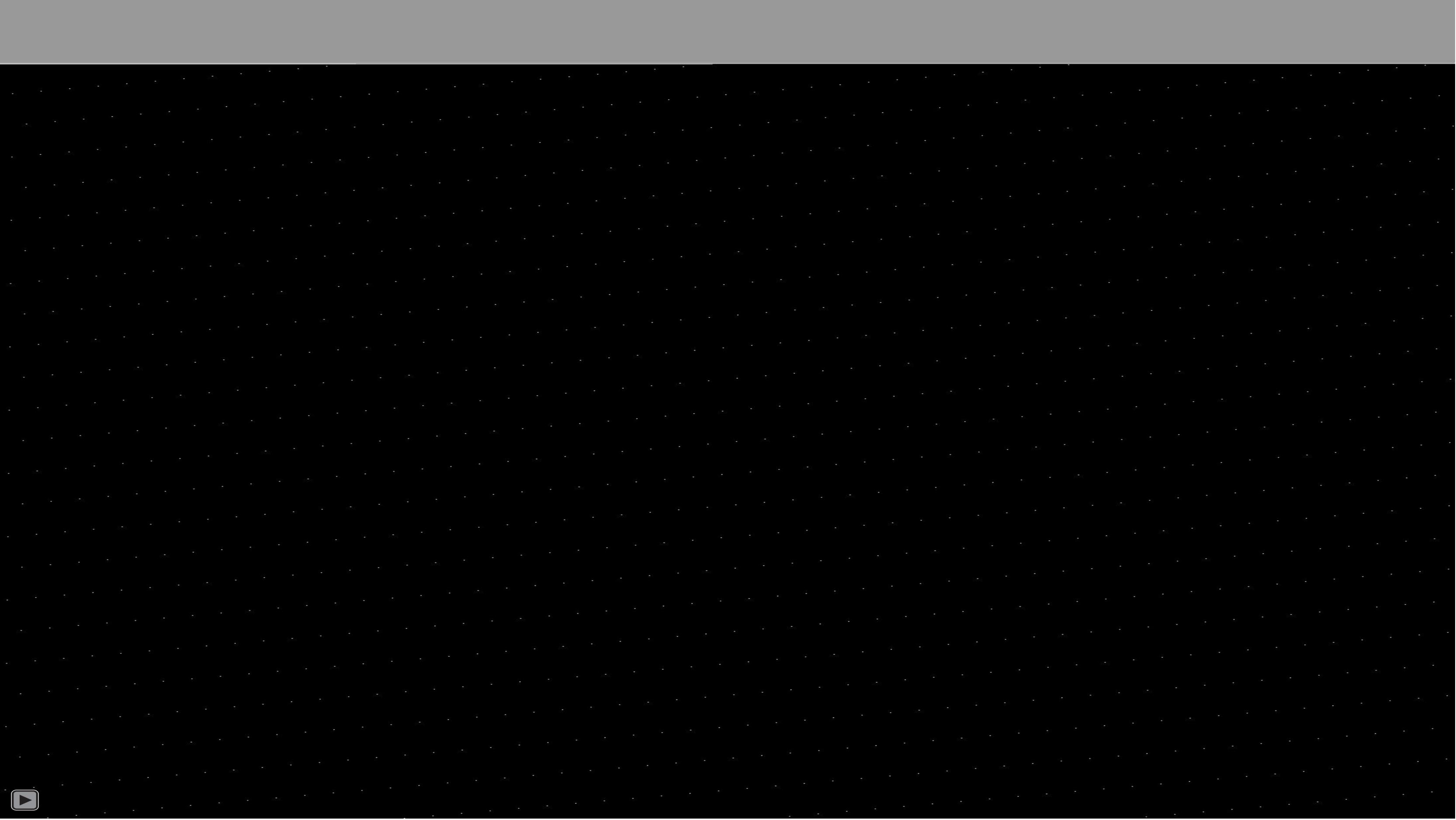
This means:

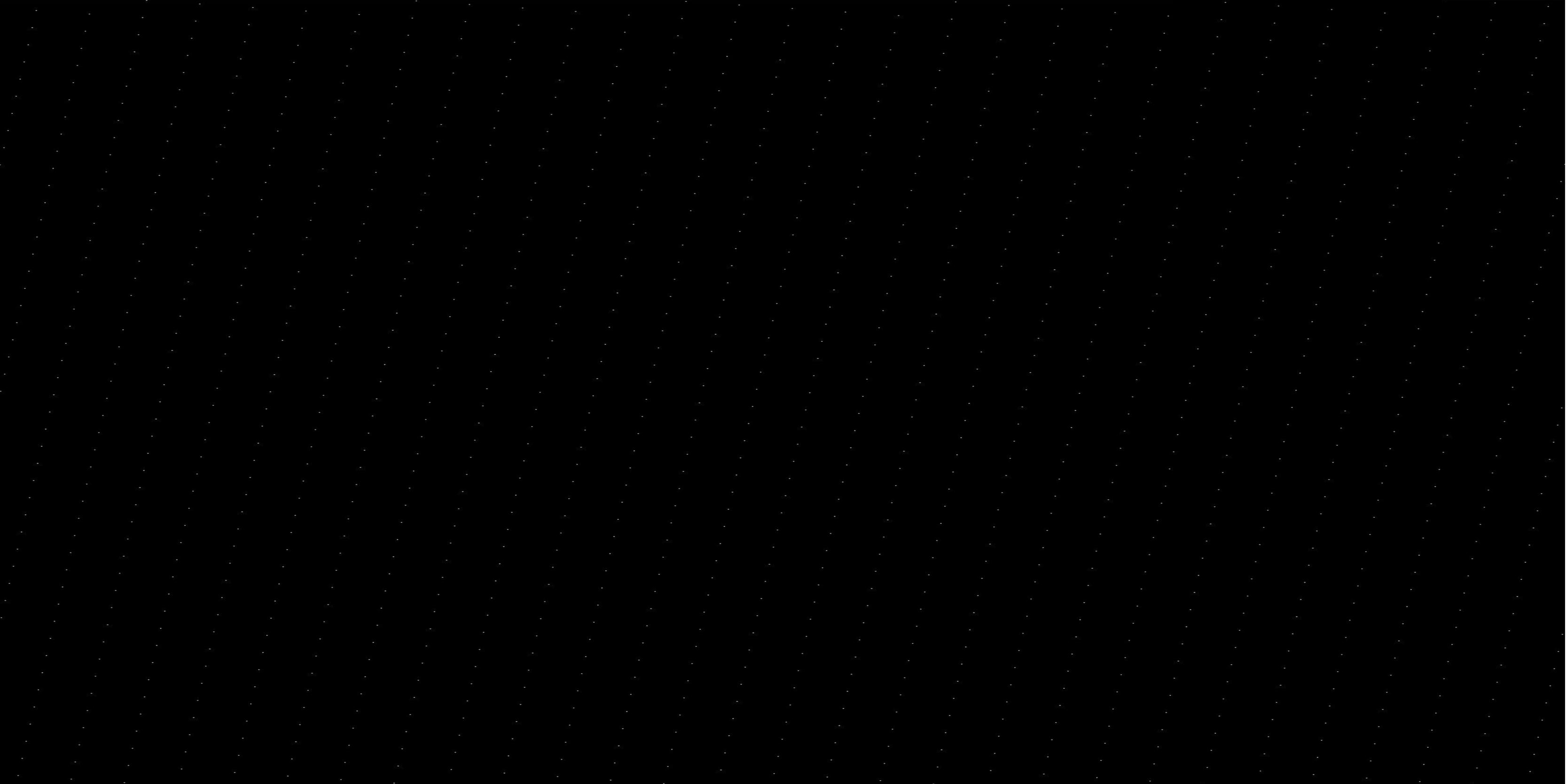
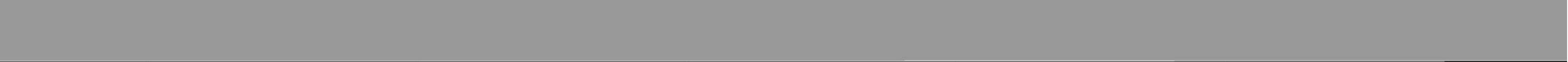
- ▶ hand/arm position can be understood/explained by the player's body movement
- ▶ hand/arm position is the result (consequence) of the player's normal movement
- ▶ hand/arm is moving into the body to avoid contact with the ball











Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

VIDEO EXAMPLES

Not a handball offence: not unnaturally bigger

Deliberately playing the ball with another part of the body (against herself/himself)



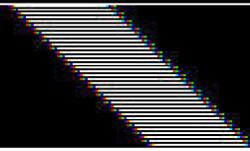
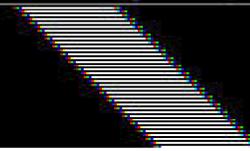
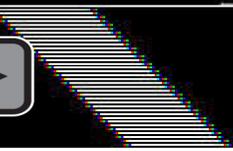
Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

VIDEO EXAMPLES

Not a handball offence: not unnaturally bigger

Exceptions e.g. the player's arm is already extended when there is no expectation of the ball coming at, or near, the player from a team-mate





Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

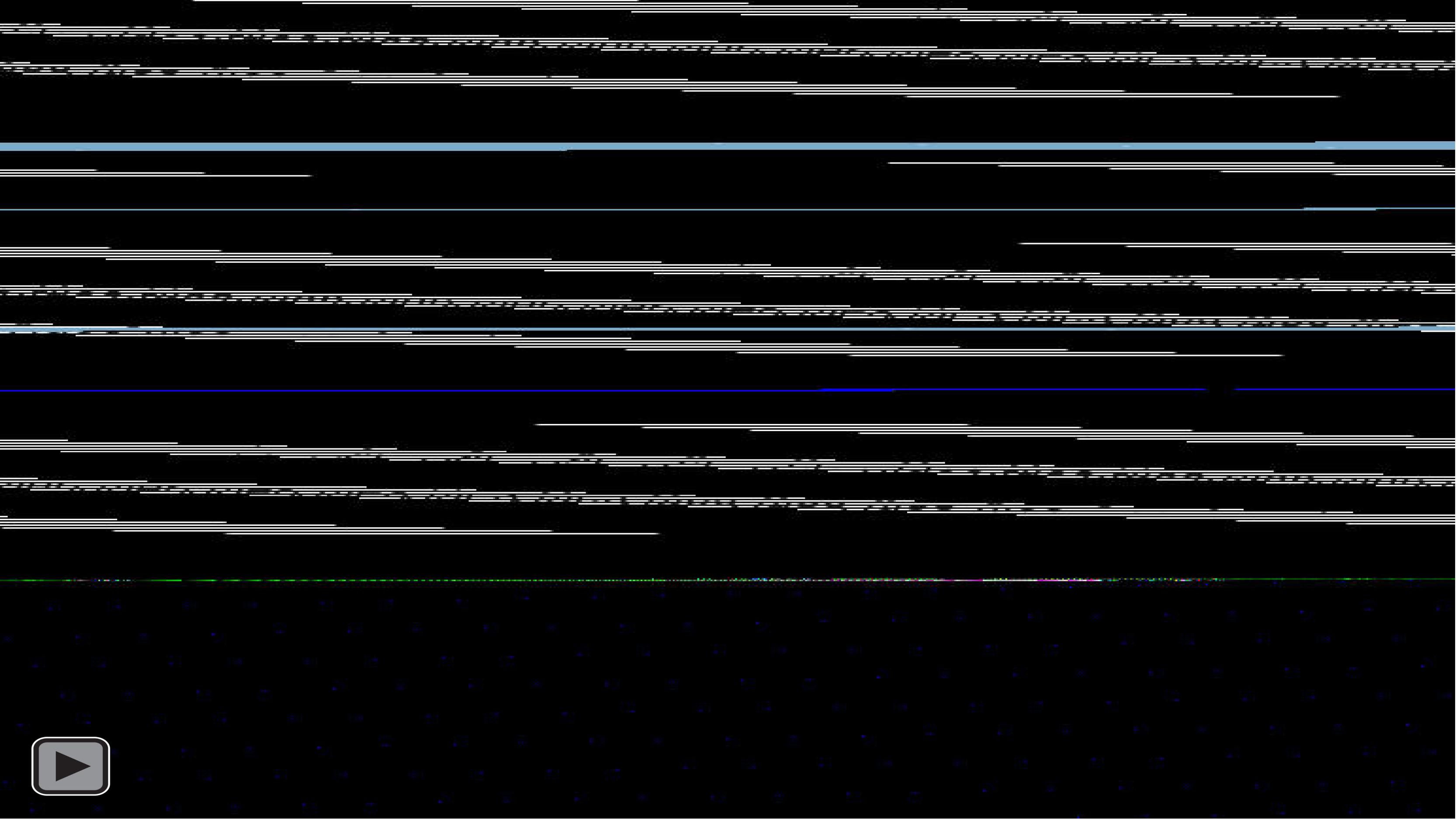
VIDEO EXAMPLES

Not a handball offence: not unnaturally bigger

Arm position is for support when falling or when getting up from the ground







Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

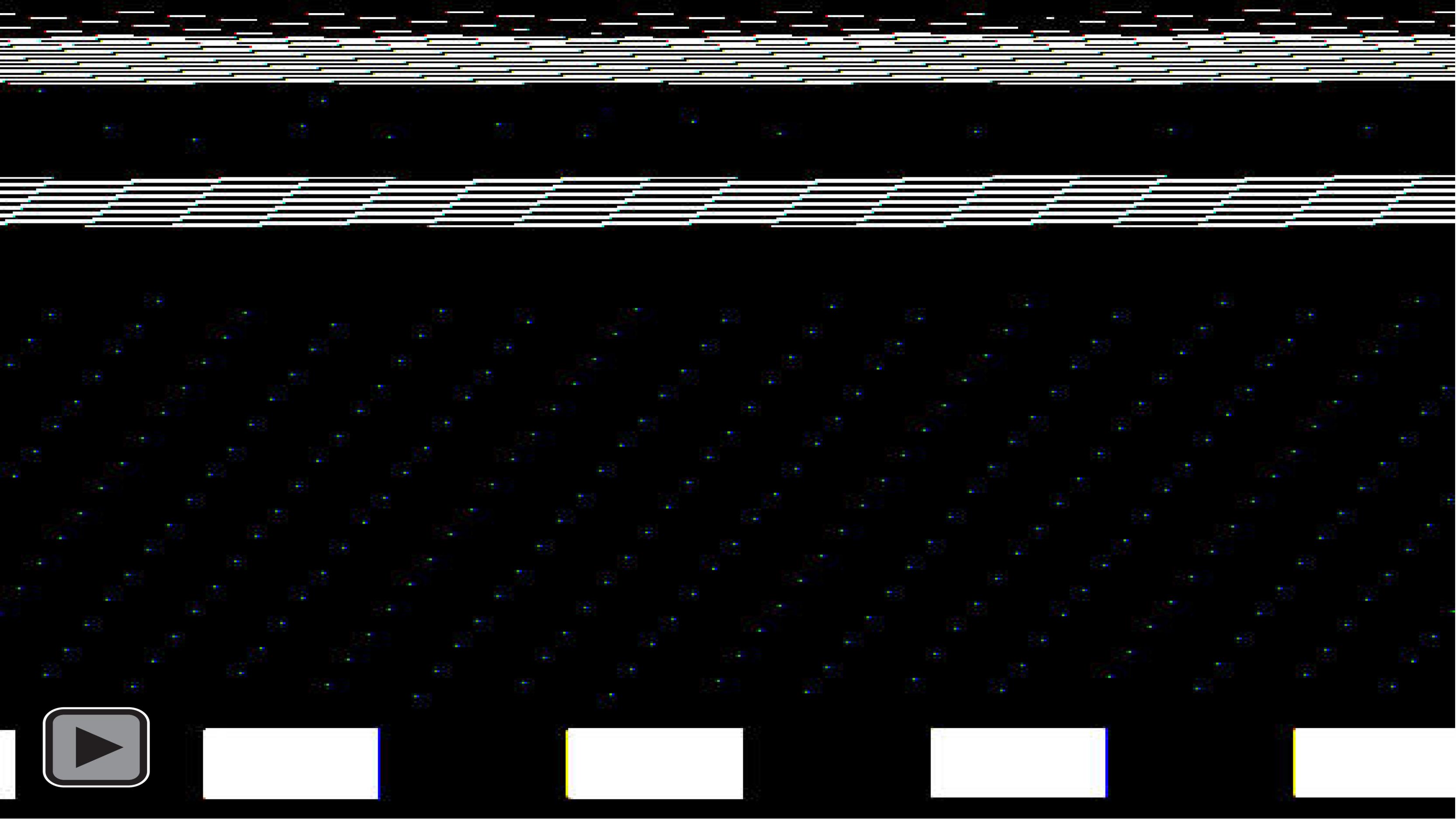
VIDEO EXAMPLES

Handball offence: handball by scorer

The goal-scorer:

- ▶ scores directly with the hand/arm, even if accidental
- ▶ scores immediately after the ball has made contact with his/her hand/arm, even if accidental









Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

VIDEO EXAMPLES

Not a handball offence: handball by scorer

Accidental handball which is not immediately before scoring





Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Handball

No longer handball offences:

As from 2021/22 the following are no longer handball offences:

- ▶ Accidental handball by a team-mate prior to a goal being scored
- ▶ Accidental handball which creates a goal-scoring opportunity



Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Circumventing the Law

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Circumventing the Law

New text
Existing text

The offence of using a 'trick' to circumvent the Law that prevents the goalkeeper from handling a deliberate kick from a team-mate will now apply at goal kicks. The goalkeeper is cautioned if responsible for initiating the 'trick'.

2. Indirect free kick

An indirect free kick is awarded if a player:

- (...)
- *initiates a deliberate trick for the ball to be passed (including from a free kick or goal kick) to the goalkeeper with the head, chest, knee etc. to circumvent the Law, whether or not the goalkeeper touches the ball with the hands; the goalkeeper is penalised if responsible for initiating the deliberate trick*

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Circumventing the Law

New text

~~Deleted text~~

Existing text

3. Disciplinary action – Cautions for unsporting behaviour

There are different circumstances when a player must be cautioned for unsporting behaviour, including if a player:

- (...)
- ~~uses~~ initiates a deliberate trick for the ball to be passed ~~to pass the ball~~ (including from a free kick or goal kick) to the goalkeeper with the head, chest, knee etc. to circumvent the Law, whether or not the goalkeeper touches the ball with the hands; the goalkeeper is cautioned if responsible for initiating the deliberate trick



Other changes and clarifications

Changes affecting more than one Law

Changes affecting more than one Law

New text

~~Deleted text~~

Existing text

Laws 4, 5, 12 and VAR protocol – non-violent inappropriate behaviour

To allow some forms of non-violent inappropriate behaviour (e.g. offensively touching another person) to be considered '*offensive, insulting or abusive*' and thus a sending-off offence, 'action(s)/acting' replace '~~gesture(s)/gesturing~~' in the following Laws:

- ▶ Law 4 – The Players' Equipment
- ▶ Law 5 – The Referee
- ▶ Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct
- ▶ VAR Protocol

Changes affecting more than one Law

Notes on the Laws of the Game (all Laws) – metric units

Clarification that, if there is any divergence between metric and imperial units, the metric units are authoritative

Laws 1, 2 and 4 – FIFA Quality Programme

Information about the FIFA Quality Programme is now included after the VAR protocol – details have been removed from the Law text

Other changes and clarifications

Individual Law changes (in Law order)



Law 1 – The Field of Play

Goals

Law 1 – The Field of Play

Goals

New text

~~*Deleted text*~~

Existing text

- ▶ The goalposts and crossbar must be the same shape; both goals must be the same.
- ▶ A reference to the FIFA Quality Programme for Football Goals has been added.

10. Goals

(...)

A goal consists of (...) The goalposts and crossbar must be made of approved material ~~They must be square, rectangular, round, elliptical or a combination of these shapes~~ and must not be dangerous. The goalposts and crossbar of both goals must be the same shape, which must be square, rectangular, round, elliptical or a hybrid of these options.

It is recommended that all goals used in an official competition organised under the auspices of FIFA or confederations meet the requirements of the FIFA Quality Programme for Football Goals.



Law 1 – The Field of Play

GLT signal to video operation room (VOR)

Law 1 – The Field of Play

GLT signal to video operation room (VOR)

Where VARs are in use, the GLT signal may be sent to the video operation room (VOR).

11. Goal line technology (GLT)

Principles of GLT

The indication of whether a goal has been scored must be immediate and automatically confirmed within one second by the GLT system only to the match officials (via the referee's watch, by vibration and visual signal); it may also be sent to the video operation room (VOR).



Law 6 – The Other Match Officials

Video Match Officials (VMOs)

Law 6 – The Other Match Officials

Video Match Officials (VMOs)

New text

~~Deleted text~~

Existing text

There is now a FIFA list of international video match officials (VMOs):

The VAR and AVAR are the 'video' match officials (VMOs) and assist the referee in accordance with the Laws of the Game and the VAR protocol ~~as determined by The IFAB.~~

Law 7 – The Duration of the Match

Allowance for time lost

Law 7 – The Duration of the Match

Allowance for time lost

New text
Existing text

Clarification that if, for example, there is a stoppage towards the end of the game that is longer than the remaining playing time, the 'additional time' played (and shown by the fourth official) is the remaining playing time, not the length of the stoppage.

3. Allowance for time lost

Allowance is made by the referee in each half for all playing time lost in that half through (...)



Law 11 – Offside

Offside position

Law 11 – Offside

Offside position

New text
Existing text

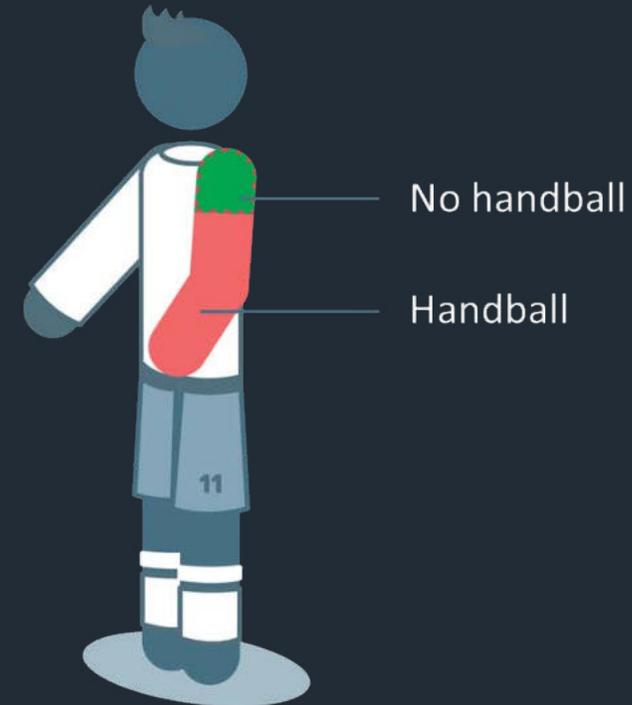
The shoulder is not part of the arm for handball. It is therefore a part of the body with which a goal can be legitimately scored and so must be considered when judging offside.

It is important to note that the 'bottom of the armpit' is not the same as the bottom of the 'T shirt' sleeve.

1. Offside position

The hands and arms of all players, including the goalkeepers, are not considered.

For the purposes of determining offside, the upper boundary of the arm is in line with the bottom of the armpit.





Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Offences against those on team lists and match officials

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Offences against those on the team list and match officials

A free kick/penalty kick can only be awarded for an offence committed against someone on the team lists (players, substitutes, substituted players, sent-off players and team officials) or a match official:

1. Direct free kick

A direct free kick is awarded if a player commits any of the following offences:

- (...)
- *bites or spits at someone on the team lists or a match official*

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

Restart after misconduct

New text

~~*Deleted text*~~

Existing text

A free kick/penalty kick can only be awarded for an offence committed against someone on the team lists (players, substitutes, substituted players, sent-off players and team officials) or a match official. If play is stopped because of an incident involving any other person, animal, object etc. (outside agent), play restarts with a dropped ball, except where a free kick is awarded for leaving the field of play without the referee's permission.

4. Restart of play after fouls and misconduct

If the ball is in play and a player commits a physical offence inside the field of play against:

- *an opponent – an indirect or direct free kick or penalty kick*
- *a team-mate, substitute, substituted or sent-off player, team official or a match official – a direct free kick or penalty kick*

~~• *any other person – a dropped ball*~~

All verbal offences are penalised with an indirect free kick.

If the referee stops play for an offence committed by a player, inside or outside the field of play, against an outside agent, play is restarted with a dropped ball, unless a free kick is awarded for leaving the field of play without the referee's permission.



VAR protocol (and handbook)

VAR protocol (and handbook)

New text

~~*Deleted text*~~

Existing text

Written permission to use VARs is only required from FIFA:

The use of video assistant referees (VARs) is only permitted where the match/competition organiser has fulfilled all the Implementation Assistance and Approval Programme (IAAP) ~~VAR protocol and implementation~~ requirements, as set out in ~~the VAR Handbook~~ FIFA's IAAP documents, and has received written permission from ~~The IFAB and FIFA~~.

N.B.: Law 5.4 has also been amended

Competitions must include in their rules the principles to be followed if a video match official (VMO) or replay operator (RO) becomes incapacitated before or during a match.

4. Procedures

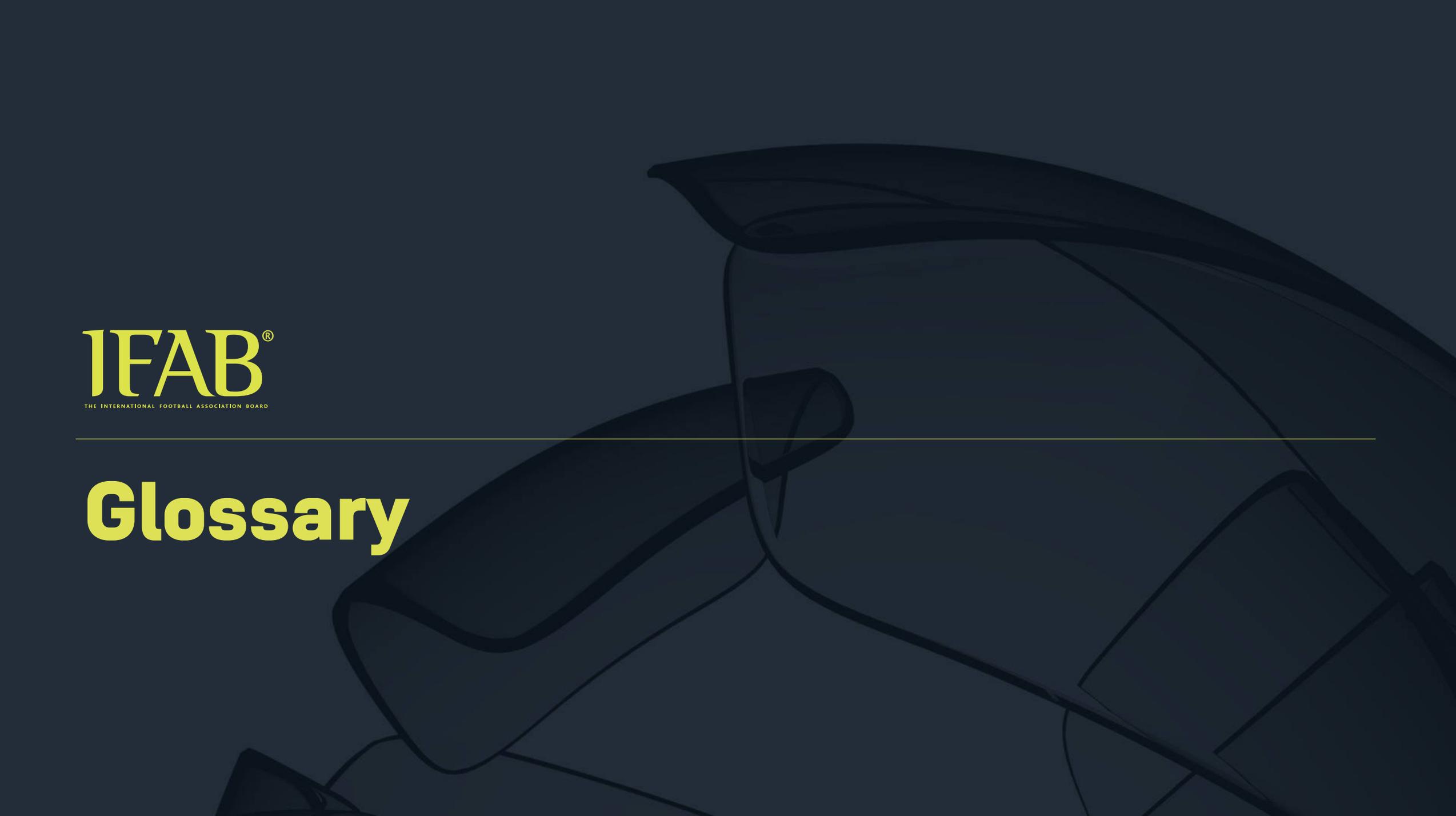
Incapacitated VAR, AVAR or replay operator

Law 6 – The Other Match Officials stipulates: “Competition rules must state clearly who replaces a match official who is unable to start or continue and any associated changes.” In matches using VARs, this also applies to replay operators.

As special training and qualifications are needed to be a video match official (VMO)/replay operator, the following principles must be included in competition rules:

- A VAR, AVAR or replay operator who is unable to start or continue may only be replaced by someone who is qualified for that role
- If no qualified replacement can be found for the VAR or replay operator, * the match must be played/continue without the use of VARs
- If no qualified replacement can be found for the AVAR, * the match must be played/continue without the use of VARs unless, in exceptional circumstances, both teams agree in writing that the match may be played/continue with only the VAR and replay operator

*This does not apply where there is more than one AVAR/replay operator.



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Glossary

Football terms

Offensive, insulting or abusive language /action

Verbal or physical behaviour which is rude, hurtful, disrespectful; punishable by a sending-off (red card)

Referee terms

'Video' match officials (VMOs)

These are the VAR and AVAR who assist the referee in accordance with the Laws of the Game and the VAR protocol



Effective date

Change to 1 July

Effective date

Change to 1 July

To allow players, coaches, match officials etc.. more time to prepare for any Law changes, the effective date have been moved from 1 June to 1 July.

This means:

- ▶ Competitions starting after 1 July are required to implement all Law changes
- ▶ Competitions starting/started before 1 July have the option to implement all Law changes

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Laws of the Game 2021/22