

Pitch Inspections

Although Law 1 makes no comment about the quality of surfaces this is left to the referee's discretion. It is the Victorian Technical Committee's recommendation that the following advice be used when assessing the field of play.

The Authority of the referee to do a Pitch Inspections for the Laws of the Game 2018

It is assumed from the Laws of the Game in Law 5, that each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match, which includes the guidelines to Law 1.

In Law 5, under the 'Liability of Match Officials', dot point 6 states that the condition of the field of play or its surrounds or that the weather conditions are such as to allow or not to allow a match to take place. This also assumes that referees will do an appropriate pitch inspection.

Our Advice re Pitch Inspections...

Referees must arrive at a time which allows them to conduct a proper and efficient ground inspection. Introduce yourself to both team officials before the game. Pitch inspections must be carried out with purpose. Avoid doing a pitch inspection whilst a game is in progress. This can be done during the half time break in the reserves game (E.g. senior game 60 minutes prior or junior game 45 minutes prior).

Is there anything on the ground, which might constitute a danger to players (eg. Glass, Sprinklers, Marking in lime, pegs, etc). Avoid giving your opinion, keep comments to the facts and if you find any problems approach the ground official politely, and ask for the problem to be corrected, if possible. If player safety is compromised, do not start the game. Submit a report to the Football Federation Victoria.

Key Points Pitch Inspections...

When inspecting the field of play look for the following:

- Clear boundary markings including the technical area
- Clear goal area markings
- Clear penalty area markings
- Goal posts secure and upright
- Goal nets secured all round
- Corner flags
- Corner arcs correctly marked
- Check pitch for glass, large sticks, etc,
- Check for clear marking
- Check for a stretcher
- Check the Extreme Weather Policy for further information in this area

Wet Weather Pitch Inspections

There are a number of considerations a referee must take into account when making judgement on whether to cancel a match or not.

- The Referee at the venue is the only person who can determine whether the ground is suitable for play. This also includes the situation where the game commences and the conditions deteriorate, he/she has full discretion to terminate play and submit a report to Football Federation Victoria.

The main priority is obviously the safety of the players (and officials).

Note:

- A council, council officer or similarly empowered worker can also close a ground at any stage. As all winter tenant clubs are subject to council control on ground usage, and issues include noise, parking, alcohol usage, protection of the surface, complaints etc as well as their testing of the ground surface are subject to council regulations.
- In the absence of an official referee a club official can also decide that a ground is unplayable and cancel (postpone) a match.
- Just because a pitch is muddy and churned up, it is not necessarily unsafe so a thorough pitch inspection is crucial.
- In regard to any pitch, natural or synthetic another consideration is whether the ball is able to roll on the surface. The easiest thing to do is to take a ball out on the pitch and roll it in a number of areas. If it is only rolling a couple of metres, then there is every possibility that the game will become a farce.
- Heavy rain, wind and cold should not come into consideration, however, should there be thunder and lightning or hail stones then you should consider temporarily halting the match, get the players off the field and then make a call, at, we suggest a 15 minute delay as to whether the game continues. The difficulty with this is that if it is a reserve game or an afternoon game and the club has no floodlights, then the main game has priority and failing light would have to be a consideration.
- Never forget, you need to keep assessing the playing conditions throughout the game and if the pitch does, in your opinion, presents a danger at a later stage, and then you must act accordingly. One important aspect in this area is that the pitch markings must be visible throughout. Regardless of the weather conditions match officials should ALWAYS re check the markings and goal nets after half time.
- What may constitute unfit for play? In the opinion of the referee, the safety of players and/or officials is at risk as a result of excessive water on the field, exposed sprinkler heads on the field, dangerous field surfaces (e.g. exposed holes or chopped surface following previous matches) or no lines marked as a result of rain or water on the field of play.