



Explanation of the changes in the 2010 Edition of the Laws of Cricket

The changes to Laws 3.8 and 3.9 relate to the umpires suspending play as a result of the fitness of the ground, weather or light. The main change is that the umpires will no longer “offer the light” to the batting side. It was felt that, at present, the decision to stay on or come off the field was often made on tactical grounds based on what best suits the batting side, rather than on grounds of safety or visibility. In bad light, umpires will now only suspend play when they consider it to be unreasonable or dangerous. Unreasonable is to be regarded as being inappropriate, rather than conditions simply not being very good. The new Law should result in less playing time being lost. This concept has been trialled by the ECB in county cricket with generally positive feedback.

The changes to Laws 12.4 and 12.5 involve the toss. In Law 12.4, it was felt that it would be good practice to say that the toss should be made in the presence of one or both of the umpires. Law 3.1 already states that the umpires shall be at the ground at least 45 minutes before the scheduled start of play. Furthermore, Laws 1.2, 3.3 and 3.4 lay down a number of points that need to be agreed between the umpires and the captains before the toss and the Laws sub-committee thought that having at least one umpire at the toss would help to formalise the whole process. Some people have expressed concerns over this new Law for certain games at amateur level where there are no formal umpires but the Laws must set out what is best practice. Laws 1.2, 3.3 and 3.4 have been in the Code since 2000 without drawing complaints. The new 12.5 forces the captain winning the toss to notify his decision to bat or field to the other captain straight away. The current Law states the notification could be delayed until 10 minutes before the scheduled start of play and the Laws sub-committee heard of examples where this Law was being exploited as a means of gamesmanship to give the other team less time to prepare.

Law 17 concerns Practice on the field. Law 17.1 has clarified the area that can never be used for practice as being the pitch and the two strips either side of it. Laws 17.2 and 17.3 clearly outline when and what practice may take place on the rest of the square (17.2) and on the outfield (17.3). A ban has been placed on fielders partaking in practice with a coach or 12th man during play. The Club has noticed that such practice is becoming more prevalent and felt it should not be allowed. With slow over rates becoming an increasing problem, the fact that practice should not waste any time is reinforced more strongly than before. It is also clarified that deliberately bowling the ball into the ground in practice will contravene Law 42.3 (The match ball – changing its condition).

A new 19.4 has been created to clarify further when the ball is beyond the boundary. In recent years, increasingly athletic pieces of fielding on the boundary have brought this area of the Law into the spotlight. The Laws sub-committee felt that it would be wrong to allow a fielder, seeing a ball flying over his head and over the boundary, to retreat beyond the boundary and then to jump up and parry the ball back towards the field of play. Consequently, Law 19.4(i) requires that the fielder’s first contact with the ball must be when some part of his person is grounded within the boundary or, if he is airborne, that his final contact with the ground before touching the ball was within the boundary.

Law 24.5 (Fair delivery – the feet) has been amended in relation to the landing of the bowler’s front foot. It became apparent that some slow bowlers were bowling with their front foot going right

across to the other side of the stumps. This meant that a bowler could, for example, say that he was bowling over the wicket but release the ball as though bowling round the wicket. The Laws sub-committee felt that this is not fair, particularly taking into account the positioning of the sight-screen, and consequently altered the Law so that the bowler's front foot must land with some part of his foot, whether grounded or raised, between the return crease on the side on which he runs up past the wicket and an imaginary line joining the two middle stumps.

Law 28.1 (Wicket put down) has been amended so that any part of the striker's bat is capable of putting the wicket down. Although it is a rare occurrence, the Club is aware of situations where the bat has broken while hitting the ball and a part of the bat has hit the stumps, putting the wicket down. The Laws sub-committee felt that, whilst this would be an unfortunate method of dismissal for a batsman, a part of a bat that has broken off should be treated in the same way as a bat that has fallen out of the batsman's hand.

Law 29.1 (When out of his ground) has been amended so that a batsman who has been running to make his ground will be considered to be in his ground if, having grounded some part of his foot behind the popping crease, and still with continuing forward momentum, he loses contact with the ground. This will particularly be useful in televised games where a player has clearly made his ground but, at the moment that the wicket was put down, he is not in contact with the ground because he is running and, for example, his bat has flicked up off the ground after passing through a bowlers' foothole. It is in the nature of running that in every stride, both feet are simultaneously not in contact with the ground. It would therefore be unjust if a batsman were to be out in such circumstances.

Law 42.14 (Batsman damaging the pitch) has been amended so that the batting side receives one less warning than under the current Law. Currently, on the first offence the side is warned; on the second offence, there is a further warning and any runs scored are disallowed; on all subsequent offences, any runs scored are disallowed, 5 penalty runs are awarded to the fielding side and a report is lodged with the appropriate Governing body. In the proposed new version, there is a warning on the first offence but any repetition will see any runs scored disallowed, 5 penalty runs awarded to the fielding side and a report being lodged with the appropriate Governing body. This is consistent with Law 42.13 (Fielder damaging pitch), where there is only one warning before penalty runs are issued.

Appendix D sets out definitions and explanations of words or phrases not defined in the Laws of Cricket. As a result of the Law changes set out in this Explanatory Note, there will be consequential additions and changes to Appendix D.

MCC Laws Department
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