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TO UEFA MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

For the attention of
the President and the General Secretary

Your reference	Your correspondence of	Our reference	Date
		C/WFC/nke/voz	2 September 2021

Regulatory updates for the UEFA European Qualifying Competition for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup

Dear Sir or Madam,

At its meeting of 11 July, the UEFA Executive Committee approved certain amendments to the *Regulations of the UEFA European Qualifying Competition for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup* due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and to bring the provisions in line with new regulatory standards.

These amendments are outlined below and the updated regulations are available on [UEFA Documents](#).

1. Away goals rule

Following a decision of the UEFA Executive Committee on 24 June 2021, the so-called away goals rule has been removed from all UEFA club competitions (men's, women's and youth) as of the 2021/22 season. At its meeting of 11 July, the Executive Committee also decided to abolish the away goals rule for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup European Qualifiers.

For the European Qualifiers, which are played with a group stage followed by single-leg play-off matches, this required an amendment to paragraph 13.01 to remove the rule from the criteria used to determine the rankings when two or more teams are equal on points in the group stage, i.e. the criteria applied to matches played by the teams in question. They will not be removed from the additional criteria applied to all group matches if the teams remain equal, in order to retain a maximum number of sporting criteria.

Paragraph 13.01

If two or more teams in the same group are equal on points on completion of the group stage, the following criteria are applied, in the order given, to determine their rankings:

- a. higher number of points obtained in the group matches played among the teams in question;
- b. superior goal difference from the group matches played among the teams in question;
- ~~c. higher number of away goals scored in the group matches played among the teams in question;~~
- c. higher number of goals scored in the group matches played among the teams in question;

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- d. if, after having applied criteria a) to c), teams still have an equal ranking, criteria a) to c) are reapplied exclusively to the group matches between the remaining teams to determine their final rankings. If this procedure does not lead to a decision, criteria e) to k) apply in the order given to the two or more teams still equal;
 - e. superior goal difference in all group matches;
 - f. higher number of goals scored in all group matches;
 - g. higher number of away goals scored in all group matches;
 - h. higher number of wins in all group matches;
 - i. higher number of away wins in all group matches;
 - j. lower disciplinary points total based only on yellow and red cards received by players and team officials in all group matches (red card = 3 points, yellow card = 1 point, expulsion for two yellow cards in one match = 3 points);
 - k. higher position in the UEFA women's national team coefficient rankings used for the group stage draw (see Annex B.1.2.a).

2. Refusal to play

The refusal to play provisions have been updated with the new standard for all UEFA competition regulations, whereby in case an association refuses to play or is responsible for a match not taking place/being played in full, the UEFA Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body declares the match forfeited by the association and, if the circumstances of the case so justify, may impose further disciplinary measures, including disqualification.

Paragraph 21.01

If an association refuses to play or is responsible for a match (including kicks from the penalty mark) not taking place or not being played in full, the UEFA Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body **declares the match forfeited by the association concerned. Moreover, if the circumstances of the case so justify, the UEFA Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body may impose any further disciplinary measures deemed appropriate on the association concerned, including the disqualification from the competition.**

3. Five substitutions

IFAB Circular letter 23 of 28 May 2021 confirms the extension of the temporary amendment introduced to Law 3 of the *IFAB Laws of the Game* to use up to five substitutions for national team competitions until 31 December 2022.

As the reasons for the five-substitutions rule remain valid against the background of national and international football calendars affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and given that the rule is already in place for all other applicable UEFA national team competitions, the amendment will also apply for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup European Qualifiers.

Paragraph 33.04

Up to a maximum of **five** of the substitutes listed on each team's match sheet may take part in the match. Exceptionally, a **sixth** substitute listed on the match sheet may take part exclusively during extra time. **Each team may use a maximum of three stoppages in play to make substitutions (one additional stoppage in extra-time can be used). Substitutions made before the start of the match, during half-time, between the end of normal playing time and extra time, and at half-time during extra time do not reduce the number of stoppages in play that can be used.** A player who has been substituted may take no further part in the match.

Paragraph 33.05

After the validated match sheets have been submitted no changes are allowed. Before the match has kicked off, the following exceptions are possible:

[...] The quota of substitutes is not reduced so that during the match, **five** players may still be substituted.

[...]

4. Replacement of referees

The provisions regarding the replacement of referees have been updated for the new standard replacement rules which allow video assistant referees to take over referee or assistant referee duties in case the appointed match officials become unfit or incapacitated to officiate.

Paragraph 39.04

If a referee, assistant referee or video assistant referee becomes unfit to officiate **or is otherwise incapacitated** before or during a match, she is replaced by another member of the referee team as follows, **in accordance with the IFAB Laws of the Game:**

- a. The referee is replaced **either** by the fourth official **or the video assistant referee if one has been appointed and is available on-site**, or by an assistant referee.
- b. An assistant referee is replaced by the fourth official or by the reserve assistant referee if one has been appointed.
- c. A video assistant referee is replaced by the assistant video assistant referee **(if certified as video assistant referee), or by the referee if she is unfit to referee but able and certified to serve as video assistant referee.**

If necessary, the match will take place without video assistant referees and/or without a fourth official.

5. Special COVID-19 rules

As already established and applied to other UEFA national team competitions (see circular letters no. 66/2020 and 33/2021), the following specific COVID-19 rules have been introduced for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup European Qualifiers in order to guarantee the continuity of the competition:

Annex D (new)

1. Should a group of players of a team be placed into mandatory quarantine or self-isolation following a decision of a competent national/local authority, the match will go ahead as scheduled as long as the team has at least 13 players available (including at least one goalkeeper), irrespective of any other provision of the relevant competition regulations (including the deadline for the submission of the list of players), provided that all players are eligible to represent the national team in accordance with Art. 36 of the competition regulations and have been tested negative as required by the UEFA Protocol. Any additional player called up to meet the minimum of 13 players requires that an equivalent number of quarantined players are definitively withdrawn from the 23 players list.
2. If a national association is not in a position to field a team with the above-mentioned minimum number of players (i.e. 13 including at least one goalkeeper), the match may, if possible (i.e. subject to viable rescheduling options being available), be rescheduled within the next 48 hours of the date of the relevant match by the UEFA administration, which shall also have the power to assign the rescheduled match to an alternative venue.
3. If the match cannot be rescheduled, the UEFA Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body (CEDB) will take a decision on the matter. The national association that is responsible for the match not taking place will be declared by the UEFA CEDB to have forfeited the match and will be considered to have lost the match 3-0.
4. If any member of the appointed referee team for a match tests positive for COVID-19, UEFA may exceptionally appoint replacement match officials who may be of the same nationality as one of the national associations concerned and/or may not be on the FIFA list.

Yours faithfully,

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Theodore Theodoridis
General Secretary

cc

- UEFA Executive Committee
- UEFA Women's Football Committee
- European members of the FIFA Council
- FIFA, Zurich