

FIFA®

Ethical Recruitment Guide



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01

INTRO

Introduction



Introduction

As a football agent, you hold an extraordinary role in shaping the future of the sport we all love. You are not just facilitators of talent but key contributors to players' careers, futures, and dreams. In a world where the stakes are high, and opportunities are abundant, ethical recruitment is not just a responsibility – it's your superpower.

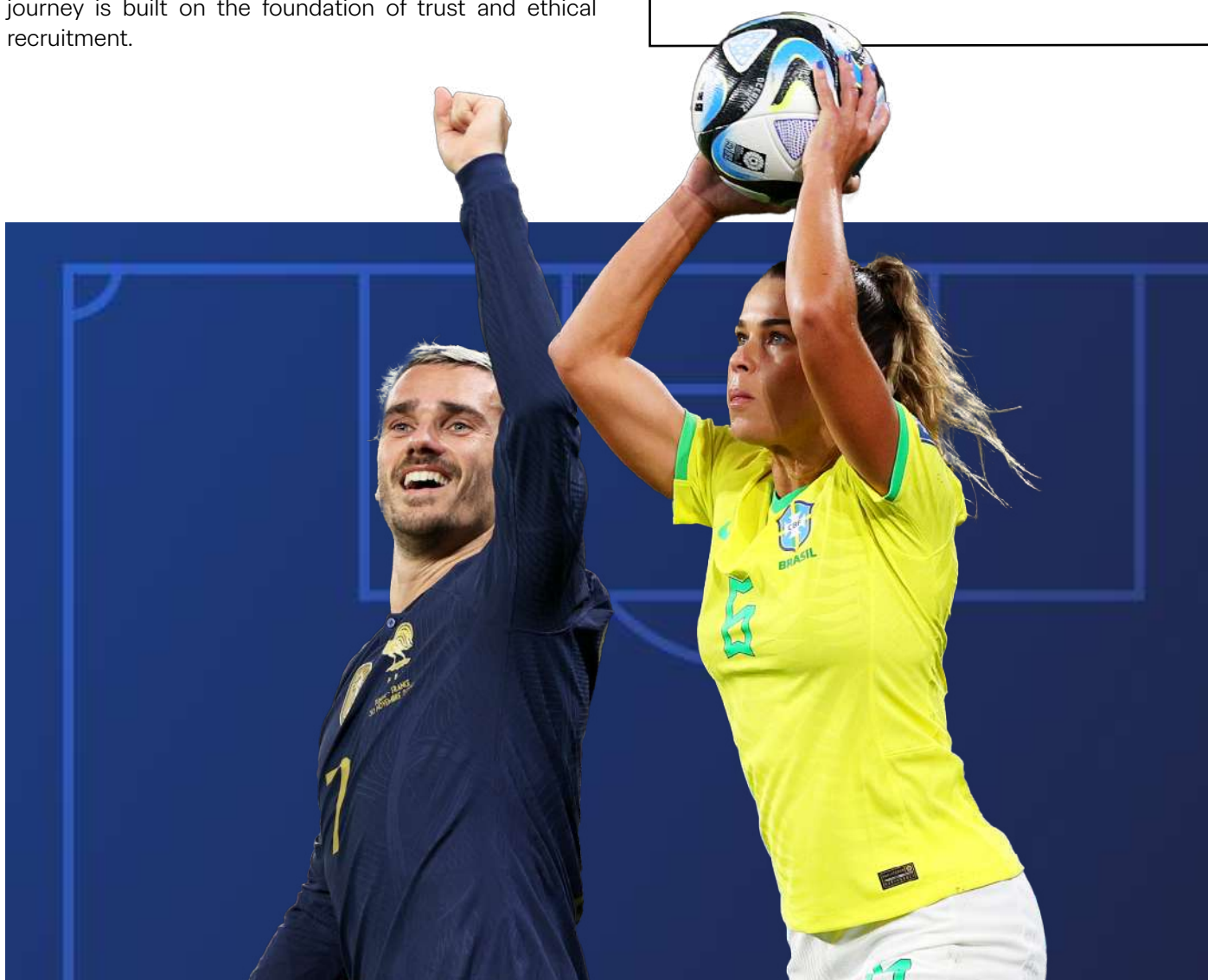
This guide is designed to equip you, as a champion of ethics, with the tools and knowledge to uphold the highest standards in recruitment, especially when it comes to safeguarding young players. From protecting minors from abuse and exploitation to ensuring transparency in every contract, your actions can inspire trust and integrity across the football industry.

By leading with ethics, you don't just comply with regulations – you elevate the entire game. You set the standard for fairness, foster respect in negotiations, and ensure the well-being of players and their families. As a licensed football agent, you are the superhero the football world needs to protect the sport from unethical practices and promote a culture of transparency, respect, and fairness.

Let's work together to create a future where every player's journey is built on the foundation of trust and ethical recruitment.



***Are you ready to be
the ethical superhero
football needs?***



1.1. Objectives of the FIFA ethical recruitment guide

FIFA has developed this ethical recruitment guide to assist licensed FIFA football agents to:



Understand the distinction between the personal values and ethics that they hold as individuals and the professional ethics that they must adhere to licensed FIFA football agents



Increase understanding of ethical recruitment practice



Improve transparency and compliance with FIFA regulations



Identify and resolve professional ethical issues



Reduce the incidence of abuse, exploitation and trafficking of young players



Enhance professional standards and credibility of FIFA-licensed football agents

FIFA-licensed football agents may encounter professional, ethical issues or challenges in their day-to-day business interactions and when complying with their professional responsibilities per the law and the FIFA Football Agents Regulations. Representing a football player requires technical expertise and professional and ethical behaviour.

Applying the insights in this guide and working through the tutorials lays the foundation for a successful career as an ethical and reputable football agent. Always prioritise the player's best interests, act with transparency and integrity, and commit to continuous professional development and improvement.

In this guide, we will explore how ethics can serve as your compass in recruitment, helping you navigate complex situations with clarity and confidence.

1.2. Guide Design and Methodology

The FIFA Ethical Recruitment Guide for licensed football agents was developed through a comprehensive, evidence-based process to address the key challenges and ethical dilemmas faced by football agents in the recruitment and representation of young players.

To ground the guide in both theoretical insights and real-world practices, we drew from three core sources: a review of available literature, a survey distributed to, and completed by, a sample of football agents and focus group sessions conducted with members of the FIFA Football Agent Working Group (FAWG). It draws on the principles and rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the International Safeguards for Children in Sport.



02

UNIT 1

Introduction to Ethical Recruitment in Football



Introduction to Ethical Recruitment in Football

2.1. The Football Agent as a Champion of Ethical Recruitment

As a **FIFA-licensed football agent**, you hold a unique position of influence over the careers of young athletes, particularly minors¹. Your role extends beyond managing contracts and securing deals for your players. You are entrusted with guiding young players through the formative years of their football careers. Ethical recruitment practices are central to this role, ensuring that all interactions are based on fairness, transparency, and integrity. By upholding ethical standards, you play a vital role in shaping the integrity of the football industry while fostering trust with clubs, players, and governing bodies.

This unit explores the concept of ethics and its application to football recruitment, emphasising the importance of maintaining professional standards and the severe consequences of unethical practices. Ethical recruitment is more than a regulatory requirement but is also a moral imperative – it is your ‘duty of care’. It is a commitment to protecting the well-being and future of young players and building trust in the football ecosystem.

2.2. Defining Ethics: Personal versus Professional Ethics



Ethics refers to the principles that govern behaviour, defining what is considered right or wrong in a given context. In football recruitment, ethics shape how football agents, clubs, and other stakeholders interact with players, particularly young and vulnerable athletes.



As a FIFA-licensed football agent, you face ethical decisions daily. Each time you ask yourself questions like ‘What should I do?’ or ‘Is this right?’, you navigate an ethical choice. These choices are more than just technical decisions – they reflect your principles. Common examples of ethical questions you face include:

 Deciding who your client is and understanding the duties you owe them	 Being mindful if they come from a particularly vulnerable background and additional considerations that may be required to represent them
 Whether or not to take on a new client	 Deciding if you should share sensitive information about a client with a third party
 Knowing when to stop representing a client	 Deciding whether to file a complaint with FIFA about the actions of another football agent

1. Minors refer to children under the age of eighteen. Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) defines a child as ‘every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.’

Each of these decisions involves an ethical dimension, and your choices will have consequences for your clients and your reputation as a professional. Your clients place enormous trust in you, expecting competence, honesty, fairness, and integrity in all your dealings.



Personal ethics

Personal ethics are an individual's moral values and beliefs, often shaped by cultural, religious, or societal influences. These principles guide personal decisions and actions in everyday life. Examples of personal ethical values include trustworthiness and honesty, respect and fairness, compliance with the law, and concern for the well-being of others.

When faced with ethical dilemmas, your beliefs, values, and attitudes come into play. However, external pressures, such as peer influence or convenience, can also affect your decisions. Understanding your **personal beliefs, values, and attitudes** is essential for making ethical decisions.



BELIEFS

These are ideas you hold to be true, based on your experiences, education, or cultural norms. Over time, these beliefs become a core part of how you see the world.



VALUES

These are long-standing beliefs about what is important to you. They guide your decisions, helping you prioritise what matters most in your life, whether it's happiness, success, or family.



ATTITUDES

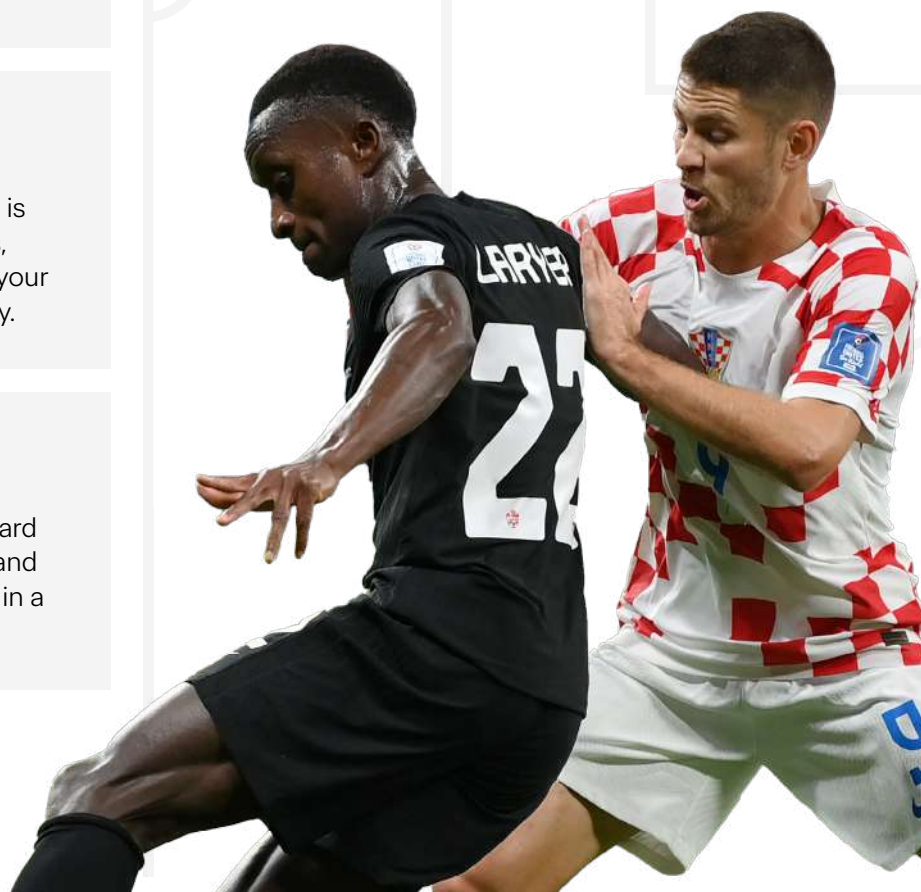
These are mental dispositions you hold toward others or situations, shaped by your values and beliefs. Attitudes influence how you behave in a given situation.



Professional ethics

Professional ethics define how you, as a football agent, should interact with players, clients, other professionals, the public, clubs, and other stakeholders. Professional ethics are the **standards expected in a specific professional context**. In football, these ethics are governed by FIFA regulations and the broader legal framework surrounding sports, as well as national laws – especially those pertaining to child protection. These standards ensure fairness, transparency, and the protection of players, especially those most at risk, such as minors.

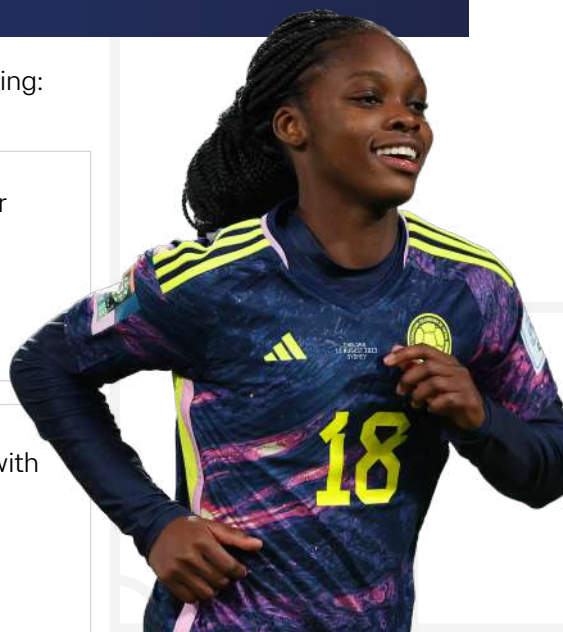
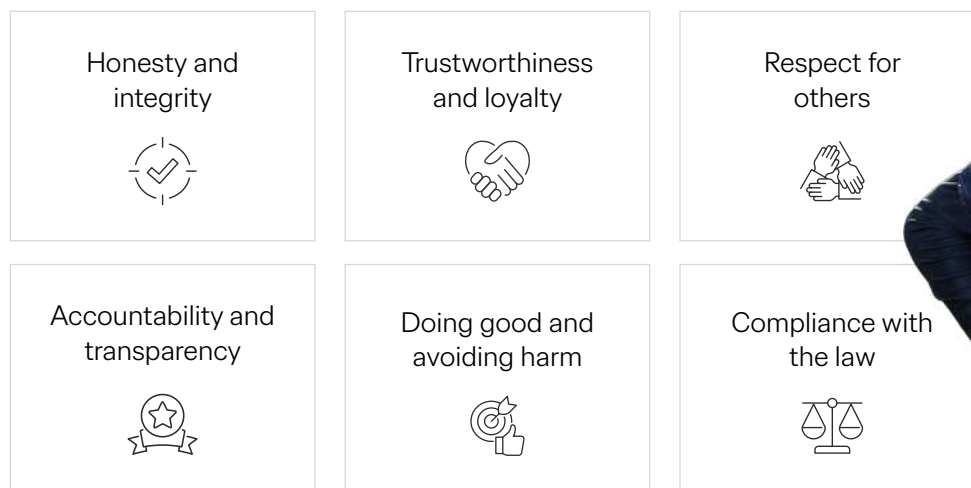
In practice, conflicts may arise between personal and professional ethics. For example, while a football agent may personally believe in keeping certain client information confidential, professional ethics may require them to disclose certain details to a third party to ensure transparency. Balancing personal beliefs with professional obligations is key to ethical decision-making in football recruitment.





Ethical Principles

All professional codes of conduct are underpinned by ethical principles, including:



These principles are universal across professions but are crucial in football recruitment, where football agents hold a position of trust and responsibility.

2.3. Ethics in Football Recruitment: Definition and Scope

Ethics in football recruitment encompasses the principles and standards that regulate players' recruitment, representation, and management. For football agents, ethical recruitment means ensuring that players are treated fairly, their rights are protected, and opportunities are offered based on merit rather than exploitation, coercion or financial inducement. It promotes transparency and builds long-term, trustworthy relationships between football agents, clubs, and athletes. For young players, particularly minors, ethics are critical to safeguarding their well-being and ensuring their rights are respected as they transition into professional careers or exit the industry.



TRANSPARENCY

Ensuring that all communications, contracts, and financial arrangements are clear and understandable to players, especially young athletes. Football agents are responsible for providing players with clear, age-appropriate, accurate, and complete information regarding their contracts, opportunities, and financial arrangements. Players depend on football agents to explain complex agreements and ensure they understand the implications of every decision they make. Transparency builds trust between the football agent and the player, ensuring that decisions are made in the player's best interest. 98% of surveyed football agents viewed ensuring full transparency with the player and their family as a vital component of ethical recruitment.



PROTECTION OF MINORS

Football agents must ensure that minors are not abused, exploited or misled and that their welfare is prioritised in all recruitment processes. Young players, particularly minors, are more susceptible to abuse and exploitation – particularly those who come from impoverished and vulnerable backgrounds. Football agents must act as protectors, ensuring that players are not misled or manipulated. This involves safeguarding their physical, mental, and emotional well-being and ensuring that their careers are developed in a sustainable and ethical manner.



FAIRNESS AND INTEGRITY

Recruitment practices should not favour personal or financial gain over the player's best interests. Football agents should work to foster trust and honesty in their relationships with players and clubs. Ethical football agents always prioritise their players' best interests in every negotiation and decision, and not their own financial interest or incentive. This means securing fair contracts, avoiding exploitative terms, and ensuring that players are placed in environments where they can professionally and personally thrive. Fair representation extends to protecting players from overwork, excessive pressure, and poor living or working conditions, all of which can have long-term detrimental effects on their careers and health.



PREVENTING EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Football recruitment is vulnerable to unethical practices like human trafficking, where young players, especially from underprivileged backgrounds, are exploited and abused. Football agents must act as safeguards against such exploitation. Football agents must actively work to protect their players from any form of financial, emotional, sexual or physical exploitation. This includes ensuring players are not subjected to unfair contracts, excessive training, or conditions that could harm their well-being. Ethical football agents refuse to engage in practices that commodify their players or treat them as mere financial assets.



Football agents are central to upholding these ethical standards as key participants between players and clubs. They serve not only as professional representatives but also as protectors of player welfare, ensuring their actions align with the broader goals of fair competition and respect for human rights – and especially children's rights.



2.4. The Role of Football Agents in Upholding Ethical Standards

As a football agent, your primary responsibility is representing your clients with integrity. This means advocating for their best interests, negotiating fair contracts, and always respecting their rights. Recruiting young players, especially minors, requires even greater ethical vigilance, as these players are more vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation.

Football agents are bound by several ethical responsibilities that guide their professional conduct and decision-making. These responsibilities ensure that the players' interests are protected and that recruitment processes remain transparent and just.



Key ethical responsibilities for football agents

Ethics in football recruitment encompasses the principles and standards that regulate players' recruitment, representation, and management. For football agents, ethical recruitment means ensuring that players are treated fairly, their rights are protected, and opportunities are offered based on merit rather than exploitation, coercion or financial inducement. It promotes transparency and builds long-term, trustworthy relationships between football agents, clubs, and athletes. For young players, particularly minors, ethics are critical to safeguarding their well-being and ensuring their rights are respected as they transition into professional careers or exit the industry.



COMPETENCE

You must be knowledgeable about the legal and regulatory framework of football, ensuring that your actions align with FIFA standards and local laws.



INTEGRITY

Transparency and honesty are crucial in all dealings with players and clubs. Football agents are responsible for providing players with clear, accurate, and complete information regarding their contracts, opportunities, and financial arrangements. Players depend on football agents to explain complex agreements and ensure they understand the implications of every decision they make. Transparency builds trust between the football agent and the player, ensuring that decisions are made in the player's best interest. Any conflict of interest or unethical behaviour can severely undermine trust and damage the player's future.



DILIGENCE

Football agents must continuously work in the best interests of their clients, acting with care and responsibility in every decision they make.

You must also be aware of the ethical risks in football recruitment, including the exploitation of young players for financial gain, falsification of player ages, or involvement in human trafficking rings where players are sold or traded without regard to their well-being. Upholding ethical standards in these areas protects the individual players and the integrity of the football industry.

2.5. Improper and Criminal Conduct (Unethical Practices in Football Recruitment)

Football recruitment has seen increasing instances of improper and criminal conduct that threaten the integrity of the game and the football ecosystem.



Improper conduct includes acts of dishonesty, fraud and misrepresentation, and conflicts of interest. You should not violate or attempt to violate any rules of professional conduct as stipulated in FIFA regulations, or knowingly assist or induce another person to do so; commit a criminal act; engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation; state or imply the ability to influence improperly any stakeholder in the football ecosystem.



Improper and criminal conduct by football agents poses serious risks to players, particularly minors and those from vulnerable backgrounds. This conduct spans from deceit and exploitation to outright criminality, profoundly impacting players' careers, well-being, and lives while tarnishing the sport's integrity. Each form of misconduct has unique implications and often involves hidden layers of abuse and exploitation.

In 2023, **FIFPRO** surveyed 263 professional players (male and female) from seven countries: Botswana, Cameroon, DR Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe. More than 70% of players were contacted by a person claiming to be a football agent, who said they could help them move club; 43% of players approached were offered a trial (43%) or a contract (39%) with a club, 56% of players did not get the trial that was promised to them, and 44% of the players said they did not sign the contract they expected to sign. Around 80% of players contacted were approached more than once, 50% three times or more. 36% of players were approached via social media, and 45% said they were contacted in person. 27% of players approached mentioned that they had a bad experience with this person. 78% of players approached indicated one or more things that this person did not arrange properly, and 70% indicated they had not been educated on football agents. While the majority of these unscrupulous people were not licensed football agents, it is important to note that such actions bring disrepute upon the entire industry.

EXAMPLES OF IMPROPER AND CRIMINAL CONDUCT

01 Misrepresentation and fraud



Misrepresentation by football agents is a prevalent issue in football recruitment. Some football agents may embellish their credentials or connections within the sport to attract clients. These football agents often present themselves as more influential than they are, promising young players contracts with high-profile clubs or quick pathways to stardom. However, once the player is under contract, the promised opportunities either fall through or were never realistic to begin with. Families and young players, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, may lack the knowledge or resources to identify these deceptions, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

Fraud can also manifest itself in upfront fees and misleading contracts. Unscrupulous football agents might charge substantial fees, claiming they cover trial costs, visa applications, or relocation expenses. Players and their families often invest significant sums, taking loans or depleting their savings. When the promised trials or contracts do not materialise, these families face financial ruin, and players are sometimes left in foreign countries without support. It is viewed as a form of human trafficking. Fraudulent contracts were identified by 21% of survey respondents as a serious issue in football recruitment. Fraudulent contracts are often designed to exploit inexperienced, young players.

These contracts may include misleading terms, hidden fees, or deceptive clauses that benefit the football agent or club at the expense of the player's rights and financial well-being. In some cases, football agents may promise benefits that are not legally binding or misrepresent their ability to secure opportunities, leaving players in vulnerable positions with limited recourse. This criminal form of misconduct damages the player's career prospects and creates severe financial hardships for families who hoped their child's talent would lead to a better life.



02 Financial inducements and poaching of young talent



The poaching of young talent by competing football agents before a formal representation agreement is signed is a prevalent issue, often fuelled by financial inducements offered to families. Such practices involve football agents approaching talented young players, particularly those showing early promise, and offering financial rewards or gifts to their families to secure exclusive rights to represent the player. These incentives might include cash payments, gifts, or promises of future financial support, creating a sense of obligation or loyalty before the family can fully evaluate the football agent's qualifications or ethical standards.

This type of poaching undermines fair recruitment practices, prioritising financial gain over genuine, long-term interest in the player's development and well-being. It puts undue pressure on families, who may feel compelled to make hasty decisions based on short-term benefits rather than carefully considering the football agent's suitability and the player's career potential. This issue was identified by survey respondents (96%) and focus group participants as a serious breach of ethical recruitment standards.

03 Bribery and corruption



82.5% of survey respondents indicated that bribery and corruption were prevalent in football recruitment. Corruption in football recruitment involves using undue influence to manipulate outcomes for personal gain. Bribery and corruption by football agents skew recruitment processes, often at the cost of merit and fairness. Bribery is a common form of corruption, where football agents, clubs, or other stakeholders exchange money or favours to secure players or contracts. This would lead to secure a player's place in a club over other possibly more qualified candidates. This creates a system where financial leverage outweighs talent, diluting the quality of the sport. Such practices are particularly harmful in regions where corruption is deeply entrenched, further normalising unethical conduct within the industry. Bribery extends beyond player placement. This includes the use of illicit payments to bypass immigration laws, particularly for young players from developing nations. This type of corruption facilitates the movement of minors across borders without proper documentation or the necessary safeguards. The collusion between football agents, club officials, and sometimes even regulatory authorities weakens the integrity of recruitment processes, replacing merit with monetary influence.

04 Conflict of interest



Conflicts of interest are particularly problematic in football, as football agents may simultaneously represent players, clubs, and even third-party investors, creating a web of competing priorities. Football agents are supposed to prioritise the welfare and career progression of their clients. When they have financial stakes in a particular club or player, they may push clients into deals that serve their interests rather than the players'. For example, a football agent might pressure a young player to sign with a lesser club that offers a high commission rather than a better development opportunity elsewhere.

Conflicted football agents may also engage in 'player trading,' where they repeatedly transfer players between clubs for high transfer fees and commissions. Such movements disrupt the player's career and development, treating them as commodities rather than individuals. The football agent's primary goal becomes profit maximisation rather than career-building, often leading to burnout or loss of motivation in players. Conflicts of interest damage player welfare and degrade the sport by prioritising financial gains over talent cultivation.

05 Financial exploitation and breach of contract



Financial exploitation by football agents is another form of misconduct that disproportionately affects young players who may not fully understand contractual terms. Unfair contracts with high commission rates or rigid clauses leave players financially bound to football agents, sometimes for years, even if they no longer wish to work with them. In some cases, football agents secure a percentage of a player's future earnings, creating a long-term financial dependency that prevents players from retaining full control over their finances.

Breach of contract is equally harmful, often taking the form of football agents failing to provide promised support or information. For example, a football agent might push a player into signing a contract with a foreign club without explaining the risks, such as inadequate pay, poor facilities, or lack of legal protections. If a player wants to leave an exploitative situation, they may find themselves bound by restrictive clauses that require heavy penalties to exit the contract. Such breaches foster an environment of mistrust, making players reluctant to seek professional representation in the future.

06 Human trafficking and exploitation of minors



One of the most serious forms of misconduct in football recruitment involves human trafficking, where primarily unlicensed football agents or those purporting to be football agents lure young talent with false promises (whether in the form of trials or placement with academies or clubs, often in another country). Young players from impoverished or conflict-ridden regions are especially at risk, as families often view football as a path out of hardship. Traffickers or unscrupulous football agents prey on these dreams, charging exorbitant fees for the 'opportunity' to trial abroad. Once abroad, these young players frequently face abandonment, with no legal support, housing, or income. This form of human trafficking not only violates international law but places young players in situations where they are vulnerable to further exploitation, including forced labour or sexual abuse. For minors, this exploitation is particularly harmful, as they lack the psychological and emotional maturity to navigate such predicaments, and it can leave them with life-long consequences affecting their mental health and development. The illegal transfer of minors, circumventing FIFA's age restrictions and transfer regulations, is a problem that persists despite regulatory attempts to curb it. There are also instances of domestic sport trafficking, where unlicensed football agents and other predatory actors make use of unregistered football academies to exploit young talent.

07 Abuse



In some cases, so-called football agents or their associates use coercive tactics, ranging from emotional manipulation to physical threats, and sexual harassment and abuse, to maintain control over players. Players who resist or question the football agent's practices may face further intimidation or even threats of violence. Harassment and abuse of players in sport is widespread globally, with children being particularly vulnerable, particularly in regions with lax enforcement of child/player protection laws. This environment of fear traps players in relationships with their football agents, clubs and/or academies, preventing them from speaking out against unethical practices.

The pressure to perform can also lead to emotional abuse, where football agents push young athletes to train excessively or accept unsuitable contracts. This psychological toll affects the player's mental health and, in severe cases, leads to burnout or mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. For young players, especially those placed in foreign countries with limited support, the stress of such environments can be overwhelming, often forcing them to abandon their careers prematurely, and being discarded by said football agents.

08 Unethical conduct in academies and scouting



Academies are intended to develop young talent, but many serve as hubs for exploitation. Unlicensed football agents sometimes establish 'football academies' as a front to recruit young players from disadvantaged backgrounds, charging high fees under the pretence of professional training and recruitment. These academies often lack formal affiliation with professional clubs or training programmes, resulting in inadequate development and broken promises of advancement.

Scouting practices, too, are frequently manipulated, with football agents targeting impoverished areas or countries where football is seen as a potential escape from poverty. They exploit players' and families' limited understanding of the recruitment process, signing young athletes to exploitative contracts that grant football agents control over their careers from an early age. In some cases, unethical football agents scout players solely for their marketability rather than their potential, leading to rushed development or missed educational opportunities that would support life beyond football.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF IMPROPER AND CRIMINAL CONDUCT



Money laundering and tax evasion

Money laundering occurs when illegally obtained funds are funnelled through legitimate football transfers. Tax evasion, another serious offence, involves football agents or clubs hiding income to avoid paying taxes. Both practices are illegal and damage football's financial transparency and integrity, leading to severe legal consequences.



Manipulation of football matches and competitions

Manipulation of football matches and competitions, whether betting-related or not, is a serious rule breach in football, and in some countries even punishable by criminal law. Football agents, clubs, or players may be involved in manipulating the outcome of matches for financial gain from betting syndicates. This undermines the integrity of the sport and can lead to lifetime bans for those involved.



Non-transparent financial streams

Non-transparent financial transactions are common in football, where football agents or clubs fail to disclose all financial dealings. This includes hidden payments, undeclared commissions, or money being funnelled through opaque structures. These practices are not only unethical but also illegal, as they violate financial transparency regulations set by FIFA and other governing bodies.



Payments into unnamed bank accounts

Football agents or clubs may funnel payments into unnamed or offshore bank accounts to conceal illicit activities. This tactic is commonly used to hide earnings from tax authorities or other governing bodies. Payments of this nature are illegal and subject to prosecution under anti-money laundering laws.



Overvaluation of transfer fees and bungs

Overvaluing transfer fees or accepting 'bungs' (illegal payments) is another unethical practice where football agents or clubs inflate player transfer values for personal gain. These inflated deals often lead to financial imbalances and distort the true value of players, harming the football market's integrity.



Use of talent pools

The creation of 'talent pools' involves grouping multiple players under one management structure, which can lead to unfair favouritism or manipulation. Football agents may prioritise certain players from these pools for personal or financial reasons, rather than making decisions based on the best interests of individual players.



Ghost players and 'One-two pass contracts'

'Ghost players' refer to players included in a team's roster but do not exist or are added solely to manipulate financial records. 'One-two pass contracts' involve temporarily moving players from one club to another in a pre-arranged deal to evade regulations or financial scrutiny. Both practices are fraudulent and can result in severe sanctions for the football agent and club involved.



Misuse of corporate assets

Football agents or clubs misusing corporate resources for personal gain, such as using company funds for private purposes, is a serious breach of fiduciary duty. This undermines the financial health of clubs and can result in legal penalties and professional reputation loss.



Undisclosed payments to football agents

Football stakeholders (clubs, sponsors, or other intermediaries) sometimes make undisclosed payments to football agents for various reasons. These secret payments may be used to influence decisions, such as player transfers or contracts. Such payments are illegal under FIFA regulations, and football agents found accepting or arranging them face sanctions.



Deterioration of family relationships

The strain of unethical recruitment practices extends to families, as they are often deeply involved in the financial and emotional support of the player. When families are misled and suffer financial losses, it can lead to feelings of guilt, betrayal, and frustration. Family members may feel that they failed to protect the player from exploitation, which can erode trust within the family unit and create resentment toward the football industry.



The consequences of unethical recruitment practices

Unethical recruitment practices can have devastating consequences for young players and the football industry at large. These practices often prey on the vulnerabilities of athletes, particularly minors from disadvantaged backgrounds, leading to exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking. These outcomes range from personal and financial harm to broader issues of public trust and industry reputation.

Examples of unethical practices include:

- » Falsifying player ages to increase transfer values.
- » Manipulating players into signing contracts without fully understanding the terms.
- » Charging hidden or excessive fees for services.
- » Misleading young players about career prospects or abandoning them in foreign countries.



Harm to players

88.6% of survey respondents indicated that unethical recruitment practices can deeply affect the mental health and emotional well-being of players, particularly young and vulnerable athletes. Players who are misled by football agents into believing in unrealistic career paths or promises can suffer intense disappointment and frustration when those promises fall through. This disillusionment can lead to a loss of motivation, self-worth, and even depression, especially for young athletes who have invested emotionally in their football careers from an early age.

In cases where players are subjected to coercive practices or abuse, the psychological damage can be more severe, resulting in trauma, anxiety, and fear. This is particularly harmful to minors who may lack the resilience or resources to cope with such experiences, and it may lead to long-term mental health issues that affect both their personal and professional lives.

The consequences of such **abuse in sport** are well documented with the **impact** of such experiences extending to affect players' family, friends, colleagues and peers and persisting long after he/she has left football.



Financial Hardship and Exploitation

Financial exploitation through unethical recruitment can lead to considerable economic hardship for players and their families. When families invest substantial amounts in fees or relocation costs based on false promises of trials or contracts, they often incur debt or sell valuable assets. This financial loss can be devastating, particularly for families from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not recover easily. Players themselves can end up in long-term financial difficulties due to exploitative contracts that drain their earnings through high commission fees or restrictive clauses. These arrangements may leave players bound to football agents or clubs with little financial gain from their career, undermining their autonomy and financial security. This type of exploitation can also make players vulnerable to further unethical practices, as they may feel trapped in these relationships due to financial dependency.



Career instability and stalled development

Unethical recruitment often leads to career instability, as football agents push players into frequent transfers or unsuitable contracts without considering the player's development. When players are repeatedly transferred or placed in clubs with subpar training facilities, their progress can stagnate, diminishing their skills and limiting their long-term potential. This unstable environment may lead players to abandon their football careers prematurely or prevent them from reaching their peak potential, reducing their chances of achieving a stable and successful career in the sport.

Moreover, young players who are recruited into foreign clubs under false pretences may find themselves stranded, without legal status or support networks in the host country. This puts them in an extremely vulnerable position, as they may lack the means to return home or secure new representation. The resulting disruption to their careers can lead to years of lost development, often ending their professional aspirations entirely and leaving them further vulnerable to abuse and exploitation in the host country.



Erosion of trust in football institutions

Widespread unethical practices in recruitment can foster a climate of distrust among players, parents, and the public toward football institutions and football agents. This erosion of trust can make players and families increasingly wary of entering contractual relationships with football agents, even if they are reputable.

The football industry also suffers as scandals involving unethical recruitment practices make headlines. Clubs, leagues, and federations are often perceived as failing to protect young players from exploitation, which harms their reputations and reduces public confidence in football governance.



Legal repercussions and regulatory strain

The prevalence of unethical recruitment practices forces regulatory bodies, such as FIFA and national football associations, to invest substantial resources in monitoring and enforcing football agent conduct. Investigations into human trafficking, fraud, and other illicit activities are time-consuming and costly, diverting resources that could be used for player development, grassroots programmes, or other positive initiatives within the sport.

Legal repercussions are also significant for players and clubs caught up in these practices. Players who unknowingly violate visa or employment laws due to fraudulent recruitment practices may face deportation, legal battles, or career bans. Clubs implicated in unethical recruitment may suffer fines, sanctions, or reputation damage, while regulatory bodies work to close loopholes and tighten football agent standards. This ongoing regulatory strain reflects the pervasive impact of unethical practices, creating a challenging and often hostile environment for all stakeholders.



Undermining of competitive integrity

When football agents prioritise financial gain over fair representation, they contribute to a skewed competitive landscape in football. Unethical recruitment often leads to talented players being overlooked in favour of those with football agents willing to pay bribes, cut corners or benefit themselves. This undermines the sport's meritocratic principles, where players should be evaluated based on skill and potential rather than financial arrangements or corrupt practices.



Damage to reputation and career

Engaging in unethical recruitment practices can lead to severe reputational damage, loss of licensure, and legal consequences. A tarnished reputation can make it difficult for an agent to attract future clients or maintain professional relationships with clubs and governing bodies.

As a football agent, you are in a unique position to champion ethical recruitment and protect the rights of young players. By adhering to FIFA's ethical standards, you contribute to a more transparent, fair, and responsible football industry. Your commitment to ethical practices ensures that the young talent you represent is given the opportunity to succeed in a supportive and honest environment, free from exploitation or abuse.

The future of football depends on football agents like you who are willing to prioritise integrity and fairness. By taking this responsibility seriously, you not only protect your clients but also help build a football industry that values human dignity, respect, and fair play above all else.

By being an ethical champion, you not only enhance your reputation but also contribute to the long-term success of your players and the football industry as a whole.



03

UNIT 2

Legal Frameworks and
Regulations for Ethical
Recruitment



Legal Frameworks and Regulations for Ethical Recruitment

Football agents operate in a complex environment where clubs, families, and even other football agents may exploit regulatory loopholes, often driven by financial incentives or a lack of understanding of ethical standards.

Clubs may circumvent official processes, offering unofficial perks to families or players to secure their commitment, while some football agents and families, motivated by immediate financial gain, may engage in practices that bypass established guidelines and rules. In many cases, ignorance about the rules among families and younger players adds to the challenge, as they may unknowingly accept offers that violate FIFA regulations or the laws of the country.

Compliance with these regulations is crucial to protecting young players and maintaining integrity within football recruitment practices. This unit presents an in-depth examination of the FIFA regulations and international standards that govern the ethical recruitment of young football players by licensed football agents.

FIFA's Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP), the FIFA Football Agent Regulations (FFAR) outline the scope, limitations, and ethical responsibilities that football agents must adhere to when representing minors.



3.1. FIFA Football Agent Regulations (FFAR)

The regulatory environment for football agents is defined by both FIFA's Football Agent Regulations (FFAR) and national laws, creating a dual regulatory landscape that football agents must navigate to ensure compliance. FIFA's FFAR establishes an international framework aimed at standardising football agent practices worldwide.

ART. 3 | NATIONAL REGULATION REQUIREMENTS

Article 3 plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between FIFA's regulations and national laws. It mandates that member associations adopt their own national regulations for football agents, which govern football agent activities within their territories and apply to representation agreements that do not cross international boundaries. The purpose of Article 3 is to create regulatory consistency across countries by requiring that national regulations incorporate FFAR Articles 11–21. Article 3 further calls for national associations to establish dedicated jurisdictional bodies for resolving disputes and enforcing disciplinary measures.

ART. 12 | REPRESENTATION

Article 12 mandates that representation agreements, the contracts through which football agents are authorised to act on behalf of players or clubs, meet specific requirements. These agreements must be explicit and standardised.

Including:

- i. **Identification of Parties:** Every agreement must clearly state the names of the parties involved – specifically, the football agent and their client (the player, coach, or club). This transparency is critical, especially when minors are involved, as it ensures that all parties understand their rights and responsibilities under the agreement.
- ii. **Duration of Representation:** Article 12 sets a maximum duration of two years for representation agreements involving individuals, with the option for renewal through a new agreement rather than an automatic extension. This helps to prevent long-term binding arrangements that could unduly restrict a young player's career development.
- iii. **Scope of Services:** The agreement must detail the exact services the football agent will provide, preventing football agents from extending their influence or control beyond what has been contractually agreed.
- iv. **Service Fees:** The service fee structure must be clearly outlined. Fee transparency helps protect clients, especially young players, from excessive financial demands and ensures a straightforward compensation model.
- v. **Client Consent and Independence:** Clients must be informed about the importance of considering independent legal advice before signing any representation agreement, reinforcing the client's autonomy in the agreement.

ART. 13 | REPRESENTATION OF MINORS

Article 13 outlines the restrictions and conditions that football agents must follow to represent minors ethically. Football agents are only permitted to approach minors within six months of the player's eligibility to sign their first professional contract (Art. 13, para. 1). This timing restriction is critical in preventing football agents from placing undue pressure on young players and their families, ensuring the player's focus remains on development rather than premature career decisions.

Written consent from the minor's legal guardian is mandatory. Without this consent, any representation agreement with a minor is null and void (Art. 13, para. 3). This provision emphasises the role of parents and guardians in protecting young players from potentially predatory recruitment practices.

Football agents must complete FIFA's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course focused on minors (Art. 13, para. 2). This ensures football agents have knowledge of safeguarding practices and are trained in FIFA's standards. Only football agents who complete this training are qualified to represent minors, reinforcing FIFA's commitment to ethical practices in recruitment.

Representation agreements must be clear, comprehensive, and contain the minimum FIFA-mandated elements: names of parties, duration, scope of services, and fee structure (Art. 13, para. 3). Contracts that lack these details are considered non-compliant. This structure seeks to protect minors from misrepresentation and financial exploitation by making the agreement terms transparent and understandable.

The 2022 FIFA regulations specify that a football agent can only represent a minor player starting 6 months before the player is eligible to sign their first professional contract. As a result, you need to be fully aware of the legal framework in each country where you work. FIFA has made available on their website a general overview of the legal minimum age for signing a professional employment in different jurisdictions.



IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOTBALL AGENTS



Understanding National Regulations

The age at which a minor can sign their first professional contract varies depending on the regulations of the relevant national football association. Therefore, football agents must familiarise themselves with these regulations in each country they operate in. For example, in many European countries, the minimum age for signing a professional contract is 16, but this can differ in other regions.

You can find [here](#) a general overview of the legal minimum age for signing a professional employment contract in the territory under the jurisdiction of each member association.



Assessing Eligibility for Representation

Before approaching a minor, football agents must determine if the player is within the 6-month window leading up to the eligible age for signing a professional contract. If the player is too young, football agents cannot legally represent them under FIFA rules.

You can find some of that information on the [FIFA website](#).



Timing and Strategic Planning

Football agents must strategically time their approach to ensure that they are building a relationship with the minor and their family within the permitted time frame. This requires careful planning and coordination with clubs, academies, and national associations to ensure compliance and avoid penalties for premature representation.



Complying with Local Laws

National laws regarding minors' employment and contracts also vary. Football agents need to ensure that their representation complies with not only FIFA regulations but also national labour and child protection laws, which may impose additional requirements or restrictions.



Ensuring Ethical Practice

Football agents must avoid engaging in informal agreements or indirect influence on minors before the 6-month period begins. This can include any form of promises or guidance that could be interpreted as representation before the player is legally eligible.

ART. 14 | SERVICE FEES

Article 14 specifies regulations governing agent service fees to prevent excessive charges and conflicts of interest. Football agents representing minors may only receive fees when the minor signs their first or subsequent professional contract, ensuring that fees are limited to fair compensation for genuine services (Art. 14, para. 9).

ART. 16 | RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF FOOTBALL AGENTS

Article 16 builds on the contractual requirements of Article 12 by outlining football agents' ethical responsibilities, ensuring that the representation relationship prioritises the client's interests. Together, these articles create a comprehensive framework that governs both football agent-client relationships' structural and ethical aspects. Article 16 details football agents' obligations to safeguard their clients' interests and uphold FIFA's standards.

- i. **Best Interests of Clients:** Article 16, para. 2(a) obligates football agents to act solely in the best interests of their clients, a principle that is especially relevant when working with minors who may not fully understand the terms or implications of their contracts. Football agents must navigate the terms of Article 12 agreements with the client's welfare as the primary concern.
- ii. **Disclosure and Transparency Requirements:** Football agents must include in any representation agreement (as per Article 12) their name, FIFA license number, client name, and specific details of the football agent's remuneration (Art. 16, para. 2(d)). These mandatory inclusions promote accountability and provide clear documentation that FIFA or national associations can audit if necessary.
- iii. **Undue Advantage:** Article 16, para. 3 (b) prohibits football agents from offering or paying any undue personal, pecuniary or other advantage to any official or employee of a club, member association or Single-Entity League. This includes, inter alia, any attempt to influence a coach to select a certain player or any attempt to influence a sporting director or coach to sign a certain player.

3.2. FIFA Regulations

FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP)

ART. 18BIS | THIRD-PARTY INFLUENCE ON CLUBS

- i. Article 18bis safeguards the autonomy and integrity of clubs in their decision-making processes, particularly regarding employment and transfer-related. Clubs cannot enter into contracts that allow any other club or vice versa, third party, or external entity to acquire the ability to influence their policies, independence, decisions or team performance. This includes any arrangement that could compromise the club's autonomy in employment and transfer negotiations or operational strategies.
- ii. Breaching this rule can result in disciplinary measures by the FIFA Disciplinary Committee.



ART. 18TER | THIRD-PARTY OWNERSHIP (TPO) OF PLAYERS' ECONOMIC RIGHTS

- i. Article 18ter forbids third-party investment in a player's economic rights, which could compromise the transparency and fairness of player transfers, and lead to exploitation by third parties and negatively impact the financial integrity of clubs and players.
- ii. Breaching such a rule can result in disciplinary measures imposed by the FIFA Disciplinary Committee.

ART. 18TER, PARA. 1 **Prohibition of TPO Agreements**

Clubs and players are prohibited from entering into agreements with a third party whereby they acquire a financial interest in the respective player's economic rights. A third party shall not be entitled to participate, either in full or in part, in compensation payable in relation to the future transfer of a player from one club to another or be assigned any rights in relation to a future transfer or transfer compensation. The prohibition became effective on 1 May 2015.

ART. 19 | PROTECTION OF MINORS

Article 19 is the cornerstone of FIFA's regulations protecting young players from unethical recruitment and undue influence. It creates a general prohibition on the international transfer of minor players under the age of 18 and is designed to prevent the exploitation of minors. FIFA allows limited exceptions, which are strictly regulated and require documented compliance:

ART. 19, PARA. 2(A) **Parents move countries for reasons not linked to football**

International transfers are permissible if the minor's parents relocate for reasons unrelated to football. This ensures that family stability takes precedence over economic interests. The most common situation is where the player's mother or father is offered a job opportunity abroad, leading the entire family to relocate. Other reasons for relocating may include reuniting with other family members, cultural considerations, or specific circumstances relating to the health of a family member.

ART. 19, PARA. 2(B) **Transfers within the EU/EEA or within the same country**

FIFA permits minors aged 16–18 to transfer within the EU/EEA, or between two associations within the same country², if the new club commits to meeting minimum standards. These standards include:

- i. Adequate football education and/or training
- ii. Educational and vocational training to support the player's future career outside of football
- iii. Living and welfare arrangements – such as appropriate accommodation and a mentor
- iv. Proof of meeting these requirements

2. By way of example, the member associations domiciled in the territory of the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland).

ART. 19 | PROTECTION OF MINORS

ART. 19, PARA. 2(C) Cross Borders Transfers

International transfers are permitted in cases where the minor player lives within 50km from a national border, and the club with which the player wishes to be registered in the neighbouring association is also within 50km of that border. However, the player must continue to live at home and the two associations concerned must give their explicit consent.

ART. 19, PARA. 2(D) Humanitarian Cases

This exception applies to minors recognised as refugees, protected persons or asylum seekers. It protects unaccompanied minors or those whose life is threatened, permitting their transfer while under humanitarian protection. A distinction is made between formally recognised refugees/protected persons and asylum seekers. The former may be registered with a professional or amateur club, while the latter may only be registered with a purely amateur club and are not permitted to register with a professional club until they are 18.

ART. 19, PARA. 2(E) Exchange Students

Minors may transfer temporarily to participate in an academic exchange programme if registered with an amateur club without professional affiliations. This limit on professional engagement helps to keep the focus on the minor's education. Furthermore, it is also assumed that the player will return to their home country immediately after the completion of their studies abroad. Accordingly, the maximum duration of the minor player's registration for the new club is limited and may not last longer than one year.

ART. 19BIS | REGISTRATION AND REPORTING OF MINORS AT ACADEMIES

Article 19bis provides additional protections by establishing obligations for clubs and academies regarding the registration and reporting of minors, such as:

- i. Reporting obligations: Clubs and academies must report all minors in their programmes, even if they are not officially registered. This includes private academies with no formal affiliation to professional clubs (Art. 19bis, para. 1-2)).
- ii. Association record-keeping: Associations are responsible for maintaining a detailed registry of minor players, with information such as full name, nationality, date of birth, country of origin (or previous country of domicile), football agent's involvement (if any), and club affiliation (Art. 19bis, para. 3). This ensures that both FIFA and national associations can monitor the movement and treatment of minors within academies and identify any irregularities.
- iii. Conditions for Minor Trials (Art. 19ter): Article 19ter specifies conditions under which minors may participate in trials. The minor must be turning 16 within the season that the trial is taking place or is turning 15 if both the player and the club are domiciled in Europe. In addition, clubs must obtain written parental consent, designate a mentor, and cover trial-related expenses. Furthermore, minors may only participate in two trials per year, with each trial adhering to FIFA's maximum duration limits. These conditions are in place to prevent excessive trials and safeguard minors' rights and welfare.

3.3. Compliance and Enforcement

FIFA Football Agent Regulations: Enforcement Mechanisms

The 2022 FIFA Football Agent Regulations establish specific compliance and enforcement mechanisms. FIFA's regulations, especially Articles 13 and 16, require football agents to act with a high degree of integrity, especially where minors are involved. These regulations are meant to shape football agents' reputations within the industry by ensuring increased professionalism and enhanced accountability. Football agents must adhere to strict documentation, transparency, and training standards to represent minors, elevating the entire industry's professional standards. This adherence positions football agents as trusted, ethical participants, improving their reputation among clubs, parents, and young players. 95% of survey respondents indicated that they would report infractions to FIFA. 65.9% indicated that they would also report to national football associations and law enforcement in the case of illicit activities. This indicates that the majority of licensed football agents support reporting infractions. However, focus group respondents indicated that they would feel more confident in reporting infractions to FIFA if there was feedback as to the progress of investigations and more stringent enforcement of the regulations and sanctions (disciplinary action).



The mandated elements of representation agreements reduce legal risks, as they standardise contract terms and require explicit clarity on fees and services (Art. 12). For football agents, this ensures that agreements are legally sound and minimises disputes, creating a more predictable and legally compliant professional environment. FIFA requires that these agreements must be accessible to FIFA upon request. This enables FIFA to monitor compliance with representation standards and ensures football agents adhere to the agreed-upon terms.

FIFA's regulations on the representation of minors (Art. 13) and the safeguarding standards under the FIFA Guardians framework place significant ethical responsibilities on football agents. These measures prioritise the safety and well-being of young players. The implications are twofold:

ART. 13 | REPRESENTATION OF MINORS

- i. Article 13 mandates that football agents complete safeguarding and minors-focused training through the FIFA CPD programme. By requiring football agents to undergo continuous professional education, FIFA ensures that football agents working with young players are educated on ethical standards and the unique vulnerabilities of minors. This positions football agents as knowledgeable and ethical professionals, instilling confidence among clients and clubs that their practices align with the highest standards.
- ii. With the restriction on approaching minors until six months before eligibility for a professional contract (Art. 13, para. 1), football agents are limited in how early they can engage with minors. This timing restriction protects young players from early influence and preserves their focus on development rather than commercial pressures.

Misconduct or violations of the FFAR can be reported anonymously via the [FIFA Reporting Portal](#). Football agents are encouraged to use the reporting mechanisms more, as oversight, targeted interventions and enforcement are compromised when football agents fail to report unethical practices.



The FIFA Football Agent Regulations impose substantial responsibilities on football agents, emphasising transparency, child protection, and ethical conduct. The regulatory requirements compel football agents to adopt stringent compliance practices, focus on safeguarding minors' interests, and establish clear and fair contractual relationships. These rules reinforce football agents' roles as ethical stewards in football recruitment. Ultimately, compliance with these regulations helps football agents maintain credibility, build trust within the industry, and promote a safer, more ethical football environment for the next generation of players.





04

UNIT 3

Ethical Principles in Recruitment



Ethical Principles in Recruitment

The demands of professional football carry inherent risks to children's development. Intensive training programmes place physical and mental stress on minors that can conflict with their right to holistic growth, education and well-being. These pressures can disrupt young players' natural development, potentially compromising their long-term health and emotional resilience. Unit 3 outlines the core ethical principles that must guide your conduct, including respect for the rights of minors, transparency and honesty in dealings, and fairness and non-discrimination.



RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS OF MINORS

Historically, warnings about the risks of child exploitation in elite sports have been raised since UNESCO's 1964 Declaration on Sport. These concerns have evolved to focus on the potential for sport to mimic child labour, particularly when children are exposed to gruelling schedules and high expectations that impact their education and well-being. The 2018 Thematic Report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children, and Mission 89's 2024 Global Thematic Report on Sport Trafficking, further underscore the need for reform in sports to eliminate practices that exploit minors.

Recruiting minors (children under the age of 18 years) comes with unique challenges and responsibilities. The recruitment of minors exposes them to various human rights risks and environments that may not prioritise their best interests and well-being. Young players are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, pressure, and unethical practices. The risks associated with these transfers are significant. Without proper legal grounds and safeguards, children may be brought into foreign countries without formal protections, placing them outside the reach of national legal frameworks and institutional support systems, as well as their family and social support networks. While the aim is to identify and nurture talented players and potentially pave the way for a professional career in football, the reality is that only a small percentage of young people will actually make it to the highest levels of the sport.

The high expectations and pressures of professional football can lead to risks for young players, who may lack the maturity or autonomy to navigate the scrutiny and potential sanctions that may arise from decisions made by others on their behalf.



In addition, such recruitment practices may expose children to economic exploitation, as minors cannot legally be direct beneficiaries of contracts, and financial rewards often go to third parties (such as parents, guardians, or football agents). Football agents must ensure that their recruitment and representation of minors **prioritise the best interests of the child** while following both legal and ethical standards.

Football agents must be vigilant about early specialisation and intensive training regimes that push children, some as young as 10, into situations where they may be overworked, pressured, and exposed to significant physical and psychological harm, as well as missed opportunities for broader personal development and educational attainment. You should avoid encouraging premature contracts or exposure to excessive competition, ensuring a healthy balance between football and other aspects of a child's life. Following a child's rights-based approach to representing minors can safeguard against these issues. In the section below, we will unpack some of the most important children's rights that apply to young players.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN FOOTBALL

The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** provides a framework that should guide how football agents work with and represent minors. This includes safeguarding their physical, emotional, and educational development while avoiding any form of abuse or exploitation.

Right to Life and Development (Article 6): Every decision regarding a young player must consider their holistic development, including their physical health, mental well-being, and social growth. Overtraining, exhaustion, and excessive demands (whether by parents, football agents, coaches or clubs) can have long-lasting and harmful effects on a child's development. It is important to ensure that your minor clients can access holistic development programmes via the clubs or academies to which they may be signed.

Holistic Talent Development is an overarching approach to athletic talent development that aims to develop young athletes in three interrelated domains:

- i. **Athletic Skills:** The development of the skills and characteristics (i.e., technical, tactical, physical, psychosocial) needed to progress towards higher levels of athletic performance and competition.
- ii. **Health and Wellbeing:** The promotion, development, safeguarding and maintenance of physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.
- iii. **Life Readiness:** The development and application of attitudes and skills required to succeed in and outside of sport, now and in the future.

ART. 9 & 10 Right to Family Life

This includes protection against a child's separation from their family when this is not 'in the best interests of the child'.

ART. 12 Right to Express Views and be Heard

Children capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in matters affecting them. Their opinions must be given due weight based on their age and maturity. Moreover, children must have the opportunity to be heard in legal and administrative matters that concern them. The football industry often involves powerful entities (clubs, football agents, sponsors), and young players can be particularly vulnerable. Ensuring they have a voice helps counter these imbalances. In recruitment processes, especially for minors, their consent and understanding should be central. Their views must be heard to ensure decisions align with their best interests, not solely the financial or sporting priorities of adults. Young players should have the opportunity to express their views about transfers, training locations, or contracts. Their preferences, ambitions, and concerns must be given due weight according to their age and maturity. Young players should be consulted about their training schedules, living arrangements (especially for those in residential academies), and educational provisions. If a young player faces exploitation, mistreatment, or unfair dismissal, they have the right to be heard in relevant proceedings. This can include hearings related to disputes with clubs, football agents, or leagues, either directly or through a representative (such as a lawyer).



ART. 19 & 34 Right to Protection from Violence, Abuse, Maltreatment & Exploitation

Young athletes in high-pressure environments are more susceptible to various forms of abuse and exploitation, including physical, psychological, and sexual violence, than the general population. These forms of abuse, by those in positions of power and authority, have been documented in the football ecosystem. Of serious concern is the prevalence of sexual abuse in football globally. As a football agent, you have a duty of care to protect minors by ensuring that the clubs, academies, and environments in which they are placed adhere to strict safeguarding policies, provide mandatory reporting systems, and conduct background checks on all staff. 86.9% of survey respondents indicated that regular welfare checks with players and their families were of paramount importance to prevent abuse and exploitation of minor players. It is thus essential that you build an ethical relationship of trust with your minor clients so that they feel comfortable to report any concerns to you. If they do report concerns to you, it is your responsibility to act on them by referring the concern to the Safeguarding Officer (or Welfare Officer or local equivalent) in the academy or club or respective member association or to the authorities (police and child protection services) if you suspect a possible crime has occurred.

ART. 24 Right to Health and Access to Healthcare

Every child has the right to the highest attainable standard of health and access to healthcare services. Article 24 is crucial in ensuring the physical and mental well-being of young players, especially given the demanding physical nature of football and the risks of exploitation or neglect in the industry. Clubs, academies, and organisations must provide young players with access to medical care, rehabilitation services, and preventive health measures to address injuries, overtraining, and mental health issues. Proper nutrition and safe living conditions should be prioritised, particularly for players in residential academies or those travelling internationally. Practices like overtraining, neglecting injury recovery, or forcing players to perform beyond safe limits can be seen as prejudicial to their health and should be abolished. Parents and young players must be educated on maintaining health, preventing injuries, and identifying risks like doping or unsafe training conditions. International collaborations, especially between clubs, football agents, and organisations in developing countries, should ensure young players' health rights are protected globally, regardless of economic or regional disparities.

ART. 28 Right to Education

Young players often face the dilemma of balancing school and sport. While some better-resourced academies and clubs provide education within their training programmes, others do not. Those that do not should be avoided as it is a violation of children's rights to be denied their education, and in some countries, this is unlawful and counts as negligence. A child's right to an education is crucial for their long-term development. A child's right to education should never be compromised, regardless of the time demands of football training or competition, or pressure placed on children to focus on their football career (whilst neglecting the possibility of injuring out or failing in elite, professional football). You should counsel young players and their families about this and encourage them to think strategically about their future prospects.

ART. 32 Right to Protection from Economic Exploitation

A key obligation as a football agent is to prevent minors from being economically exploited, which includes avoiding premature signing of professional contracts, unfair financial deals, being overworked to secure performance bonuses, or sponsorship arrangements that do not prioritise the child's development. You must protect minors from economic exploitation by negotiating terms that prioritise long-term welfare over immediate gains. You should encourage players and their families to seek legal professionals with child labour and sports law expertise to review all financial agreements/contracts. Similarly, the sale and trafficking of children is strictly prohibited, as outlined in Article 35.

 Taken together, while aiming to develop competitive, talented young players, a child rights and holistic approach prioritises the overall needs, wants and wellbeing of each young footballer. In some Clubs and Associations this is formally referred to as Player Care or Player Welfare. Player Care refers to both the short and long-term well-being of a player and their personal development ensuring they are equipped for life in and beyond football. It covers aspects such as their education, health, nutrition, life skills, participation in decisions affecting them housing, after care, etc.



KEY POINTS

Holistic Development

When representing a minor, your goal should be to foster their athletic skills while also nurturing their emotional and intellectual development.

Education Support

Favour clubs which provide adequate educational support systems for players who are still completing their schooling.

Player Care/Player Welfare

Favour clubs which focus on Player Care and demonstrate a commitment to both the short- and long-term wellbeing of players.

Safeguarding

Favour clubs and academies that have a safeguarding policy in place and a Safeguarding Officer (or local equivalent).

Guardianship of Rights

As their representative, you must champion the rights of minors, ensuring that they are protected from any form of exploitation, including inappropriate work conditions or demands that could impede their development.

**ENSURING INFORMED CONSENT AND AUTONOMY OF YOUNG ATHLETES**

Football agents are pivotal in ensuring that young players and their families make informed decisions (see UNCRC Art. 12 above). Respecting the autonomy of minors requires that football agents facilitate full transparency in all negotiations and agreements. The young player's personal, educational, and long-term development must remain central to any decision-making process.

The **principle of informed consent** is essential in protecting the autonomy and rights of minors. Informed consent means that children and their guardians must fully understand the terms of any agreements they enter, especially regarding training commitments, compensation, risks, and future opportunities. Contracts can be complex and full of legal jargon. It's your responsibility as a football agent to simplify these documents so that young players (and their guardians) can understand the implications of contracts in an age-appropriate and comprehensible manner. For example, you may wish to break down the contract into point form, explaining key obligations, rewards, and risks.

Involve minors in decisions to ensure autonomy. While minors may lack the legal capacity to make decisions independently, they should still be involved in the decision-making process. Parents and guardians often have the final say, but young players must be given a voice, ensuring that their wishes and concerns are considered. This helps to ensure the player feels a sense of control and understanding over their career choices.

It is important to remember that informed consent is not a one-time event but an ongoing process. As a player's career progresses and circumstances change, whether in terms of performance or career direction, you must revisit these agreements with the player and their family to guarantee that everyone remains informed and satisfied with the terms. A review process can be scheduled on a yearly or biannual basis to ensure that a player's changing needs, performance levels, and opportunities are reflected in their agreements.

4.1. Transparency and Honesty

As a FIFA-licensed football agent, your credibility and reputation depend on maintaining transparency and honesty in all interactions with young players and their families. These principles are essential for building trust and ensuring ethical standards are upheld throughout the recruitment process. These principles ensure that young players and their families can make informed, rational decisions based on accurate and complete information.



TRANSPARENCY

In football recruitment, transparency involves ensuring that every party has access to complete and understandable information regarding all aspects of the recruitment process, including contracts, performance expectations, financial arrangements, and career pathways.

You must disclose all relevant information, including details that may not always seem immediately necessary but are crucial for informed decision-making. This includes explaining the risks of injury, potential career setbacks, and the uncertainties inherent in a football career. Discuss both the potential successes and challenges young players may face. While motivating and supporting your clients is important, being realistic about the likelihood of professional success, injury risks, and other factors that could affect their careers is equally important.

Transparency isn't just about what is disclosed but how it is disclosed. Information must be provided in a way that the player and their family can easily understand, considering their level of familiarity with the industry. As previously discussed, you are responsible for breaking down complex legal and financial jargon. In addition, many contracts contain complex financial arrangements, including bonuses, penalties, and performance incentives. Ensure that the family fully understands these terms, including what is guaranteed and what is performance-based. When offering a contract to a young player, ensure that the contract is explained point by point. Avoid rushing the process or overwhelming the family with too much information at once. Allow time for questions and offer independent legal support to help clarify terms. Providing written summaries alongside the contract can help families better understand long-term obligations and potential risks.



HONESTY

Honesty in football recruitment means avoiding any form of deception, exaggeration, or misleading information. Honesty is crucial to managing expectations and ensuring all parties have a realistic view of the player's potential, opportunities, and risks involved.

Honesty requires you to accurately present the player's current abilities and prospects without making exaggerated claims about their potential for stardom. Building false hopes can lead to significant psychological and financial harm, especially for minors who may be counting on success in football to support their families.

During initial recruitment meetings, outline both the player's strengths and areas for improvement. Be transparent about how competitive the professional football world is and the percentage of academy players who make it to the professional level. For instance, of the 1.5 million players who are playing organised youth football in England at any given time, only 0.012% (or 180 players) will make it to the Premier League, while more than 75% of academy players are released between the ages of 13 and 16. Any information provided to the player and/or their family about their prospects must be tempered with the inherent risks and challenges associated with a career in football, such as the potential for injury, lack of playing time, and the possibility of contracts not being renewed. For example, when discussing potential career pathways with a family, highlight the importance of having a backup plan, such as continuing and furthering education or exploring other career opportunities within or outside of football. This balanced representation helps manage expectations and fosters a realistic career outlook.



PROVIDE CLEAR AND ACCURATE INFORMATION TO MINORS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Minors and their families often know little about the football industry. It is essential to guide them through the career pathways available, explaining each step in detail, from academy training to professional contracts, and the challenges or obstacles that may arise. You should delineate possible career trajectories, including typical timelines, potential roadblocks (e.g. injuries), and alternative career paths within the football industry (e.g. coaching or sports management).

As contractual negotiations often involve complex financial arrangements, such as performance-based incentives, bonuses, and signing fees, you must ensure that families fully understand these terms before they commit to anything. Break down the financial terms of a contract into clear, comprehensible sections, explaining what each clause means in simple terms. This could include providing real-world scenarios that demonstrate how bonuses are earned, what penalties might be incurred, and how fluctuating performance levels could affect earnings.



AVOIDING FALSE PROMISES AND EXAGGERATIONS

A common ethical pitfall in football recruitment arises when football agents, in an attempt to secure clients, feed into parents' and young players' dreams of immediate stardom by offering unrealistic promises or exaggerated claims about future success. This was a view held by 94% of survey respondents. Avoiding these practices is fundamental to maintaining integrity.

It is essential to **set realistic expectations** for young players and their families regarding future success in football. Most players in academies do not make it to the professional level, and football agents should be honest about these odds from the outset. As the chances to make it to the top of the football pyramid are so slim, this should not be what defines the success of a journey at a club or academy. You should aim to educate and empower all young players, so that those who do not transition into the professional game have good alternative careers and can continue to play football at some level or in some other capacity (such as a coach or referee, etc). Football is unpredictable, and guaranteeing outcomes – whether it's a professional contract, a spot on a national team, or a sponsorship deal – is unethical. Success depends on a variety of factors, including personal development, injuries, and the availability of opportunities at the right time.

Similarly, over-hyping a player's abilities or potential can place undue pressure on the player and lead to disappointment if expectations aren't met. You must be cautious how you describe a player's talents to both the family and prospective clubs. As such, when scouting talent, avoid comparing the player to high-profile stars unless justified. Focus on the player's actual skills and areas that need improvement, highlighting realistic opportunities for growth rather than unrealistic dreams of fame.



4.2. Fairness and Non-Discrimination

Fairness and non-discrimination are further core principles of ethical football recruitment. Football thrives on diversity and inclusivity as a global sport, but these principles must be actively promoted and enforced to prevent systemic barriers that disadvantage certain groups. FIFA-licensed football agents must be at the forefront of ensuring that recruitment processes are fair, free of bias, and provide equal opportunities to all players, regardless of their background.

Fairness in recruitment refers to treating all athletes equally and without prejudice. This means offering the same opportunities to players based on merit, rather than allowing socio-economic status, race, gender, or nationality to influence decisions.

Fair recruitment is thus about identifying talent based solely on ability and potential. It requires football agents to objectively assess each player's skills and provide them with equal opportunities to succeed. A way to ensure merit-based recruitment is to create a standardised assessment process for evaluating players' abilities during scouting. This ensures that all players are judged on the same criteria, such as technical skills, physical performance, and tactical awareness, without allowing bias to creep in.

Non-discrimination involves actively working against any form of bias or prejudice that might influence recruitment decisions. Discrimination in football can manifest in various ways, including gender bias, racial prejudice, and socio-economic barriers.

Gender Equality in Recruitment

Female athletes often face barriers to recruitment and representation in professional football. Non-discrimination means ensuring that female players are given the same opportunities, support, and resources as their male counterparts. Female players remain marginalised and underpaid compared to their male counterparts in many countries around the world.

Addressing Racial and Ethnic Bias

Despite football's global reach, racial and ethnic discrimination remains an issue. Non-discrimination in recruitment means ensuring that players of all ethnic backgrounds are provided with equal access to scouting networks, training programs, and professional opportunities.



ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES REGARDLESS OF BACKGROUND

Ensuring equal opportunities requires football agents to work actively against structural barriers that may prevent certain groups from accessing professional football. These barriers may include financial constraints, geographic isolation, or lack of access to high-quality training facilities.

Young players from low-income families or otherwise disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds may struggle to afford the costs associated with elite training, travel, and equipment. They are susceptible to abuse and exploitation – and are particularly at risk of being scammed or trafficked. Football agents need to be mindful of this and collaborate with other key stakeholders to level the playing field, by sourcing scholarships, sponsorship deals or financial aid programmes for talented players who cannot afford the costs associated with professional training.

In addition, some regions, particularly rural or economically disadvantaged areas, may be overlooked by traditional scouting networks, opening avenues for predatory, unlicensed football agents and scammers to exploit. Football agents should expand scouting operations to include underrepresented regions and communities, ensuring that talent is identified regardless of geography. A good strategy would be to partner with grassroots football programmes in rural or underserved regions to identify talent that elite clubs may otherwise miss. You can tap into a broader pool of potential players by building relationships with local coaches and organisations.

Leveraging available technology, such as video scouting platforms and remote scouting applications (where local coaches can upload footage of matches or training sessions to platforms which accessible to licensed football agents) may also significantly reduce the costs traditionally associated with scouting in these remote regions. However, such platforms require uploads to come from verified parties (e.g. coaches, academies, or guardians). Furthermore, the platform must comply with data protection laws to secure player information, and age restrictions and strict monitoring to prevent direct, unsupervised contact with minors must be implemented.



ADDRESSING BIASES AND PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY

Bias in recruitment can occur consciously or unconsciously, but it can profoundly affect who gets opportunities in football. Football agents must recognise and address these biases, ensuring that all players are treated fairly and equitably.

Unconscious bias refers to mental processes that lead a person to act in ways that reinforce stereotypes (even when those actions conflict with their consciously held values) or form opinions about candidates based on first impressions or irrelevant criteria. This is closely related to **affinity bias** in which people tend to gravitate towards others who look, act, and think as they do. Unconscious bias can influence recruitment decisions, often leading football agents to favour players who resemble past success stories or who come from familiar backgrounds.

The Halo/Horns effect refers to when a single standout quality – whether a strength or a weakness – shapes the overall perception of a player. For instance, if a player has one impressive skill, it might lead you to overlook other areas that need improvement (halo effect). Conversely, a perceived flaw might overshadow otherwise strong abilities (horns effect). Fair evaluations require a balanced view, considering the player's complete profile rather than focusing on isolated traits.

Stereotyping Bias overgeneralised beliefs about certain groups can lead to unfair judgments. For instance, assumptions based on age, race, nationality, or socioeconomic background might skew perceptions of a player's potential or work ethic.

Gender bias is an unconscious bias that can lead football agents to favour one gender over another despite equal levels of skill or experience.

Confirmation bias occurs when a football agent has a preconceived belief about a player, whether positive or negative, and unconsciously seeks information to support that belief.

Affect heuristics occurs when football agents may take mental shortcuts to judge a player's suitability without thoroughly evaluating all evidence. For example, a football agent might decide that a player lacks potential based on appearance, demeanour, or other factors rather than actual skills and performance metrics.

Inclusivity extends beyond recruitment. It also applies to the culture within clubs and teams. Football agents should work to ensure that all players feel valued and supported, regardless of their background. One way is encouraging clubs to establish mentorship programmes that help underrepresented players adjust to professional environments and build a support network



Fairness and non-discrimination are fundamental to creating an equitable football industry. You play a crucial role in upholding these values by ensuring that recruitment processes are free from bias, promoting equal opportunities, and fostering inclusive environments within clubs. By actively addressing socio-economic barriers, gender bias, and racial discrimination, you can actively contribute to a football industry that reflects the diverse, global nature of the sport.





05

UNIT 4

Best Practices for Recruitment



Best Practices for Recruitment

In an increasingly competitive industry, FIFA-licensed football agents are called to higher ethical standards, especially in the recruitment and development of young players. While securing talent is vital, recruitment must focus on a child-centred ('child-first') approach, emphasising long-term well-being, fairness, and transparency. This unit delves into the best practices football agents should uphold in scouting, communication, and contractual arrangements with minors. By focusing on ethical practices, football agents can play a pivotal role in creating a supportive environment for young players, ensuring that recruitment benefits the sport and the players and their families.

5.1. Scouting and Talent Identification

Scouting and talent identification are fundamental steps in the recruitment process, often shaping the trajectory of young players' careers. For football agents, this stage requires not only skill in assessing potential, but also a commitment to upholding ethical standards that protect young players from exploitation and undue pressure. This section explores best practices for ethical scouting, creating fair and transparent evaluation processes, managing expectations responsibly, and safeguarding young athletes' physical and mental well-being. An ethical approach from the outset sets a positive precedent for the entire recruitment journey, aligning with FIFA's standards and prioritising the welfare of young players.

Ethical scouting begins with transparency and a fair, unbiased approach. Football agents should establish clear and consistent criteria to assess talent fairly, focusing on objective factors such as skill level, physical development, commitment, and growth potential. By standardising evaluation methods and leveraging technology, football agents can avoid biases that might lead to preferential treatment based on socioeconomic status, geographic location, or other unrelated factors. Scouting should prioritise inclusivity, allowing talented players to be evaluated fairly – regardless of their background or initial resources.



Ethical scouting requires football agents to establish clear, consistent criteria for talent identification, allowing young athletes to be evaluated based on their skills, commitment, and growth potential rather than any biases that may arise in the scouting process. Football agents should design fair and transparent evaluation methods, focusing on talent and potential rather than economic or regional backgrounds.



A key principle of ethical scouting is **accessibility** to minimise financial or logistical burdens on young athletes and their families. This approach discourages 'pay-to-play' scenarios, where access to professional opportunities is dependent on a family's financial status rather than the child's talent. In addition, ethical scouting avoids informal recruitment or hidden costs, which can place undue financial stress on families who might be willing to sacrifice considerably to see their child succeed. You should focus on balanced and evidence-based evaluation practices that accurately reflect the player's potential while respecting their stage of physical and psychological development. It is important to recognise that young players are in varying growth and maturity phases, and pushing them into intense professional environments too early can lead to burnout, injury, or other developmental issues. You should tailor scouting assessments to account for age-appropriate physical and psychological benchmarks, focusing on gradual progression rather than immediate output.



Scouting methods should emphasise skill and commitment as primary metrics, while also considering an athlete's physical and psychological development stages to avoid pushing young talent too hard, too soon.

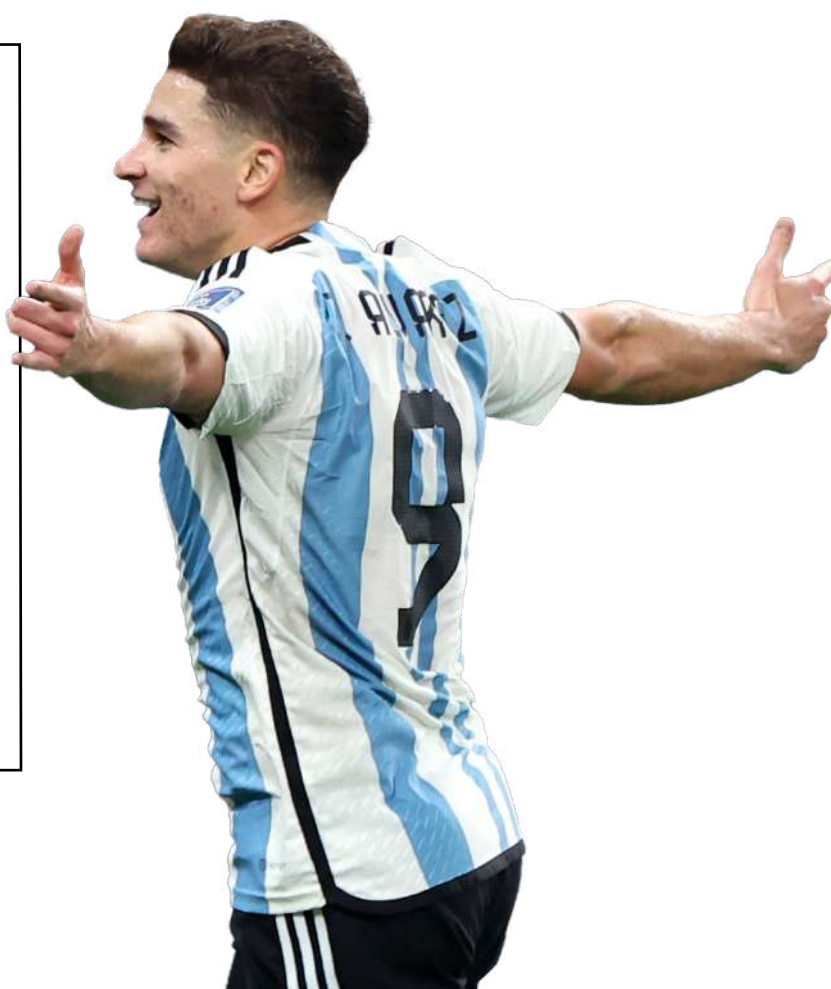


One of the most critical aspects of ethical scouting is managing expectations and preventing exploitation.

The allure of professional football can create immense pressure, as families and players often invest significant time and resources into realising the dream of a successful career. You should be mindful of this vulnerability, acting as a stabilising influence by providing honest, balanced feedback grounded in realistic assessments of the player's current abilities and future potential. This transparency helps to set realistic expectations, which is essential for the mental well-being of young athletes and fosters a foundation of trust between football agents, players, and families. This, in turn, will help young talent and their families make informed decisions about the player's future. Moreover, you should advise on pathways that prioritise the player's long-term career prospects over immediate gains, aligning with the broader commitment to ethical practices in youth football.



Ethical scouting also means recognising the limits of early talent identification and prioritising pathways that support the player's well-being. For example, if a young player shows promise but lacks certain foundational skills or physical readiness, you should consider a phased approach to development. This might involve recommending local leagues or development programmes instead of pushing the player into high-stakes, competitive environments immediately. This protective measure guards against burnout and allows the young player to develop at a pace that is physically, mentally, and emotionally sustainable.



5.2. Communication with Minors and Families

Clear, transparent, and ethically grounded communication is at the core of any recruitment relationship. Building trust requires football agents to be honest and forthcoming about the recruitment process, providing accurate information on timelines, expectations, and realistic career prospects. As discussed in the previous unit, you should explain both the positive aspects and challenges of pursuing a professional football career, addressing the inherent uncertainties in football. This openness forms the basis of trust and helps parents or guardians, and young players make sound decisions without undue pressure. Effective communication fosters trust, eases the transition for young players entering a highly competitive field, and builds a foundation of support that upholds the player's best interests at every stage of their development.

Effectively communicating with minors requires a nuanced approach that respects their developmental stage and comprehension levels. See **FIFA's Football Agents Ethical Communication Guide**, which accompanies this ethical recruitment guide.

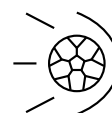
Young players are often impressionable, and their understanding of complex contractual, financial, or career-related matters can be limited. When communicating with minors, football agents must adapt their language and approach to the child's level of understanding. Effective communication should avoid jargon and complex contractual language, replacing it with clear, age-appropriate terms that ensure the minor fully understands the implications of recruitment. Simple explanations, illustrative examples, relatable analogies, and encouragement to ask questions are valuable tools to ensure young players, and their legal guardians, grasp the recruitment process and their role within it. Rather than viewing questions as interruptions, football agents can encourage them as signs of engagement and curiosity. By showing patience and openness, you help young players feel confident in seeking clarification or expressing their concerns. Fostering a two-way dialogue demonstrates to young players that their thoughts and opinions are valued. This reinforces a sense of autonomy and involvement in the recruitment process.

Engaging families in the decision-making process is essential. Families provide crucial emotional, financial, and logistical support, and their involvement is vital to ensuring that young players make informed choices. Parents or guardians are ultimately the ones who make the legal decisions on behalf of minor players. The presence of family members in the decision-making process also serves as a protective measure, ensuring that choices are made in the best interests of the player. You should schedule regular updates and offer families access to information regarding the player's progress, opportunities, and challenges. For example, if a young player is considering an offer requiring relocation, you should work closely with the family to discuss the logistical, emotional, and educational implications of such a move and ensure it is in line with the FIFA RSTP. This participatory approach reassures families and fosters a sense of partnership between football agents and parents, strengthening the trust necessary for a productive recruitment relationship.



Recruitment involves complex commitments, and parents or guardians must have access to full, clear information to make informed choices. Football agents should take the time to explain contract terms, training schedules, and other commitments, actively seeking feedback from family members to confirm their understanding.

Family involvement ensures that every decision made aligns with the child's best interests, and families feel empowered in supporting their child's ambitions within a realistic framework.



You should also be mindful of cultural differences and sensitivities affecting communication with families. Recognising and respecting cultural dynamics allows football agents to approach families in a way that aligns with their values, encouraging open and comfortable dialogue. By being culturally aware and adaptive in their communication strategies, you can ensure that families feel respected and included, further strengthening the support network surrounding the young athlete.

5.3. Contracts and Agreements

Contracts are the legal backbone of recruitment and set the expectations, rights, and responsibilities for all parties involved. However, when dealing with minors, contracts must be crafted with heightened ethical responsibility and clarity, as young players and their families may lack familiarity with the professional football landscape. Contracts should be drafted in straightforward, clear language, avoiding legalese and complex clauses that could obscure the terms. This transparency allows young players and their families to make informed decisions without feeling overwhelmed or pressured.

A representation agreement is essential for establishing a legally secure and transparent relationship between the football agent, the player, and the player's family. A well-drafted contract helps prevent misconduct by clearly detailing the responsibilities and obligations of each party. Contracts with minors require particular care to ensure that the terms are accessible and protective, offering both parties security against breaches of professionalism or unfair treatment. A carefully constructed representation contract provides the player with a mechanism to exit the agreement if the football agent fails to uphold professional standards and protects the football agent through clauses like exclusivity, which helps prevent the player from engaging with other football agents simultaneously. A template of a representation agreement that parties may use is provided on the FIFA website.



DRAFTING CLEAR AND FAIR CONTRACTS

The primary purpose of a representation agreement is to define the legal relationship and expectations between the player and the football agent in compliance with FIFA's Football Agent Regulations. FIFA has mandated that all representation contracts contain specific clauses to ensure uniform standards across member associations. These essential clauses include: the names of the parties, scope of services, contract duration, remuneration, payment terms, termination provisions, date of conclusion, and signatures from all relevant parties, including legal guardians when the player is a minor.

You should ensure the correct spelling of names and clearly define the scope of services. These are crucial aspects, as they form the basis for mutual understanding and prevent misunderstandings down the line. For example, your responsibilities might encompass contract negotiations, career management, and endorsement deals. However, it is essential that these duties align with what the player actually requires.

The contract's duration and termination provisions are particularly significant. FIFA's regulations mandate that the contract duration and terms be clearly outlined, and are limited to a maximum of two years with an option to be extended (Art. 12, FFAR). The ability to exit or renegotiate the contract allows young players to change representation if the football agent's performance or alignment with their goals no longer meets expectations. Exit clauses should permit the player to terminate the contract for 'just cause' without penalties if the football agent breaches the agreement or acts unprofessionally. Football agents who focus on providing flexible, fair termination conditions foster greater trust and security for young players.

Where the player is a minor, you should consider including clauses that protect the player's access to education and well-being services, recognising that the primary focus at this stage should be balanced growth and learning. Contracts that balance football commitments with educational and developmental support demonstrate an ethical focus on the young player's well-being, reflecting FIFA's standards for safeguarding young players.



ENSURING CONTRACTS ARE UNDERSTOOD BY ALL PARTIES INVOLVED

Given the complexity of representation agreements, it is critical that both players and their families fully understand the terms before signing. Contracts should not be presented as mere formalities or rushed through without proper explanation. Instead, you should allocate time to walk the player and their family through each section of the agreement, answering any questions and clarifying any points of confusion. This patient, thorough approach reinforces the football agent's commitment to transparency and respect, helping families feel more confident in the recruitment process.

Most national football associations provide template contracts as a baseline, but football agents can tailor additional clauses specific to their services or national standards. However, these templates often include standardised clauses, which may not always be easily interpreted by young athletes or their families. You are responsible for explaining each section of the contract in accessible language, using age-appropriate terminology for younger players and ensuring that guardians comprehend the full scope of the obligations.

You should also be mindful of potential language or cultural barriers that may affect a family's understanding of the contract. In cases where families are not fluent in the language in which the contract is written, football agents should offer translation services or provide a bilingual version of the contract. This inclusivity promotes fairness and ensures that all parties are equipped with the information needed to make an informed decision.

Effective communication of the contract's terms also involves verifying that the young athlete themselves has a basic understanding of the agreement. While minors may not grasp all the legal nuances, football agents can explain fundamental points in age-appropriate language, ensuring that young players understand the main commitments and expectations. For instance, football agents can outline what the athlete will be expected to do regarding training and matches and any educational or developmental opportunities provided within the contract. This respect for the young player's autonomy reinforces a sense of agency and responsibility, preparing them for the professional aspects of a football career.



LEGAL SAFEGUARDS FOR MINORS IN CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS

Contracts involving minors demand specific legal safeguards to protect their interests and ensure international standards and regulations compliance. Since minors are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, football agents must prioritise legal protections that prevent undue influence, misrepresentation, or coercion. These protections are essential for maintaining the ethical integrity of the recruitment process and for safeguarding young players' rights. One crucial safeguard is the inclusion of parental or guardian consent for any contractual agreement. In most jurisdictions, minors cannot legally enter into binding contracts without parental approval. Football agents must respect this legal requirement, ensuring that contracts are co-signed by a parent or legal guardian who understands the agreement's implications. Additionally, football agents should verify that families are not pressured into signing and are given ample time to review the contract, seek independent legal advice, and discuss the terms without feeling rushed.

Another key component of legal safeguarding is the inclusion of 'best interest' clauses that prioritise the minor's well-being over profit or performance metrics. For example, these 'player care' or 'player welfare' clauses should stipulate conditions that allow the player to continue their education, receive adequate rest and leisure time, and access healthcare services. Such clauses align with the FIFA standards for youth recruitment and demonstrate a commitment to the holistic welfare of young players.

FIFA stipulates that all representation contracts must include a series of minimum clauses that detail critical aspects, some of which were discussed in the previous section, including remuneration, termination, exclusivity, and image rights, each of which is integral to the young player's career and personal protection.



Remuneration and Commission

This clause specifies the football agent's commission, which is often set as a percentage of the player's gross, net salary. Understanding these financial obligations is essential for families to ensure that remuneration terms are fair, competitive, and aligned with the services the football agent will provide.



Image Rights

Another critical consideration is the inclusion of image rights within the representation contract. Image rights and commercial endorsements typically come with higher commission percentages, usually around 20%, reflecting such arrangements' heightened visibility and commercial value. Some football agents circumvent minimum age requirements by signing players to 'image rights' contracts with big brands before transitioning them into full representation agreements when they reach the appropriate age. In such cases, the player and family must fully understand the implications, as these agreements often establish a commercial precedent that carries forward into the representation contract.



Exclusivity Clauses

An exclusivity clause means that the player is represented solely by one football agent for football agent services, which can help streamline the representation process. However, players and families must be aware of the potential limitations this imposes. In cases where exclusivity is permitted, such as in some international jurisdictions, the player may face restrictions that prevent working with other football agents even when beneficial opportunities arise elsewhere. In terms of FIFA's Regulations, a football agent may not approach a player subject to an exclusive representation agreement with another football agent, except in the final two months of that exclusive representation agreement. Whereas in countries like Germany, where exclusivity clauses are prohibited to prevent players from being restricted to a single football agent, some football agents who work internationally circumvent this by registering in other jurisdictions, a practice worth noting as it impacts a player's autonomy and market access. Football agents should clarify these limitations to the player and family, particularly where certain territories or mandates may warrant a separate, specialised football agent.



Territories

The scope of a football agent's jurisdiction is an additional consideration within representation contracts. Most contracts specify global representation to prevent overlapping jurisdictions. However, it is essential for players and families to recognise the impact of these clauses on their freedom to pursue opportunities in other regions.

Contracts with minors should also include protective exit clauses. As young players are still at a formative stage, it is crucial to offer them the flexibility to reassess their commitments as they mature. Exit clauses allow young players to withdraw from or renegotiate the agreement under certain conditions, such as a desire to focus on education or health concerns. This flexibility recognises the evolving nature of young players' lives and ensures that they are not bound to commitments that may later conflict with their personal development.

It is essential that s comply with any national or international legal frameworks governing contracts with minors. Contracts should also include clearly defined mechanisms for dispute resolution. Dispute resolution provisions allow young athletes and their families to address grievances or misunderstandings without resorting to lengthy or costly legal proceedings. This is particularly important in cases where disagreements might arise over training conditions, payment terms, or other aspects of the player's commitment. By providing clear steps for resolving disputes, you create a transparent and fair process that prioritises the minor's interests and prevents potential exploitation or unfair treatment.

This includes respecting restrictions on child labour, age-appropriate working hours, and any specific rules governing child athletes. Complying with these standards ensures that recruitment practices are legally sound and ethically responsible, protecting young players from harm and maintaining your credibility and the wider football ecosystem.



KEY POINTS

- Creating contracts that are clear and fair is the cornerstone of ethical recruitment. The contract should clearly outline all terms and conditions, including financial arrangements, training requirements, and performance expectations, in a way that minimises ambiguity. The contract should specify not only the roles and responsibilities of both the football agent and the player but also outline any developmental or educational support offered to the young player. Compensation, career planning, and opportunities for progression should be clearly laid out, and any clauses that impose limitations on the young player's autonomy, such as restrictive exclusivity clauses, should be avoided or minimised. Such restrictions can harm the player's long-term career prospects and create undue dependency on a single football agent, which is counterproductive to the principles of ethical recruitment.
- Ensuring that contracts are understood by all parties is another ethical priority. Football agents should take the time to go over each section of the contract with the young player and their family, breaking down the terms into digestible information. This might include translating contracts if the family's first language differs from the contract language or providing simplified summaries to ensure comprehension. Moreover, football agents should encourage players and their families to seek independent legal advice, as this offers an additional layer of protection and reinforces the commitment to transparency and fair dealing.
- Legal safeguards are especially crucial in contracts involving minors, as they help protect the rights and well-being of young athletes. For example, football agents should include clauses that permit contract termination or amendment in cases where the young player's rights or welfare may be compromised. These safeguards should comply with both the local and international regulations governing minor employment, child protection and contractual rights. Furthermore, football agents must adhere to relevant youth safeguarding and protection guidelines in the host country, particularly if the young athlete will be training or competing abroad. This adherence demonstrates a commitment to the young player's safety and development, reinforcing the ethical standards expected of FIFA licensed football agents.

In short, representation agreements should meet legal requirements and embody a broader ethical commitment to protecting and supporting young talent. This approach builds trust and reinforces the football agent's role as a mentor and advocate for the young player's growth, fostering a partnership based on mutual respect, transparency, and a shared commitment to ethical recruitment practices. By embedding these safeguards and best practices into contracts, football agents can contribute to a sports industry that prioritises its youngest members' welfare and fair treatment.





06

CHECKLIST 1

Ethical Decision-Making Framework



Ethical Decision-Making Framework

The **Ethical Decision-Making Framework** is a structured process that helps football agents navigate complex ethical dilemmas. It guides football agents through a series of steps to ensure that decisions align with ethical principles such as fairness, transparency, and integrity. By following this framework, football agents can evaluate their options, consider the impact of their actions on all stakeholders, and make informed, ethical choices that prioritise the well-being of their clients.

Steps in the Ethical Decision-Making Framework



STEP 1

Recognise the Ethical Issue

The first step is identifying whether an ethical issue exists. This could include conflicts of interest, exploitation of players, or unclear contract terms. **Ask yourself:**

- » Does this situation involve a choice between right and wrong?
- » Is the player from a vulnerable background?
- » Are there conflicting interests or values at play?
- » Could someone be harmed (physically/psychologically/emotionally/financially) as a result of this decision?



STEP 2

Gather the Facts

Understand the full context of the situation by collecting all relevant information:

- » What are the key details and facts of the case?
- » Who are the stakeholders involved (e.g. players, clubs, coaches, sponsors, or other third parties)?
- » What are the potential risks and consequences?

This might include reviewing the player's contract, financial details, or feedback from other stakeholders.



STEP 3

Evaluate the Options

Consider all possible courses of action, weighing their ethical implications:

- » What are the potential outcomes of each option?
- » Will any party be harmed or unfairly treated?
- » Are there legal, regulatory, or FIFA rules that influence your options?

For example, if you are tempted to prioritise one player over another due to a financial incentive, this choice will compromise your ethical responsibilities.

**STEP 4** Make the Decision

Based on the information gathered and the evaluation of options, choose the course of action that best aligns with ethical standards:

- » Which option is the most ethical and fair?
- » Does this decision uphold your responsibility to the player and maintain transparency?
- » Can you justify this decision to others?

At this stage, it's crucial to select the option that minimises harm and promotes fairness, even if it comes with personal or financial drawbacks.

**STEP 5** Test the Decision

Before implementing the decision, test it by asking:

- » Would you be comfortable explaining your decision publicly to stakeholders, FIFA, or the media?
- » Does the decision feel right to you personally and professionally?
- » Would this decision hold up under scrutiny?

If the decision does not pass these tests, reconsider your approach or seek additional input.

**STEP 6** Implement the Decision

Once confident in the decision, take action:

- » Communicate the decision clearly to all parties involved.
- » Document the reasoning behind the decision for transparency and accountability.
- » Ensure that the decision is executed fairly and ethically.

This might involve explaining your decision to the player, the club, or other stakeholders, ensuring that they understand the rationale behind it.

**STEP 7** Reflect on the Outcome

After implementing the decision, reflect on the results:

- » Did the decision achieve the intended ethical outcome?
- » Were there any unforeseen consequences?
- » What can you learn from this situation to apply to future decisions?





07

CHECKLIST 2

Ethical Recruitment Checklist



Ethical Recruitment Checklist

» Transparency and Honesty

Full Disclosure of Financial Arrangements



- ☒ I have clearly communicated all fees, commission structures, and contract terms with the player and their family.
- ☒ I have provided a simplified, written breakdown of financial terms, including performance incentives, potential penalties, and payment schedules.
- ☒ I have ensured that the player and their family understands the long-term financial commitments and implications of any contract.

Accurate Representation of Career Opportunities



- ☒ I have avoided exaggerating career prospects or overpromising outcomes to attract clients.
- ☒ I have clearly explained the realistic challenges and uncertainties involved in a football career, including injury risks, competition levels, and retention challenges.
- ☒ I have encouraged the player and their family to consider alternative career or educational plans alongside football.

Accessible Contract Information



- ☒ I have offered contracts/representation agreement in clear, plain language, avoiding legal jargon.
- ☒ I have informed the player and the family in writing that they should consider taking independent legal advice in relation to the representation agreement.
- ☒ I have allowed adequate time for the player and their family to review the contract with independent legal advice, should they wish to.
- ☒ I have regularly reviewed contract terms with the player and family to ensure understanding and satisfaction with the terms.

» Safeguarding and Protection of Minors

Representation of Minors



- ☒ I have complied with article 13 of the FFAR regarding any approach to a minor player or the representation of a minor.
- ☒ I have ensured the guardians are fully informed of the rights, responsibilities, and risks involved.

Verification of Safe and Supportive Environment

- ☒ I have confirmed that clubs, academies, and other organisations involved have safeguarding policies in place, such as background checks, reporting mechanisms, and zero-tolerance policies on abuse, as well as a designated safeguarding officer or local equivalent.
- ☒ I have documented all safeguarding measures that are in place at clubs or academies, and provided guardians with this information.

Education, Player Care and Development Balance

- ☒ I prioritise clubs or academies that offer adequate educational and welfare programmes for minors.
- ☒ I advocate for the minor's right to balanced development, ensuring that football training does not interfere with education or well-being.
- ☒ I have provided my client and their family access to educational materials on managing a balanced lifestyle between sport and education.

Regular Welfare Check-Ins

- ☒ I schedule check-ins with the minor and their family to discuss well-being, career progress, and any concerns.
- ☒ I have documented any welfare concerns raised by the player or family and followed up with the appropriate clubs or authorities when necessary.

Safeguarding Training Compliance

- ☒ I have completed FIFA's safeguarding training and any other mandatory professional development courses focusing on protecting minors.
- ☒ I keep up-to-date with the latest safeguarding standards and best practices.

Accountability and Compliance**Adherence to FIFA's Regulations**

- ☒ I have familiarised myself with FIFA's relevant regulations, especially those regarding minors, representation agreements, and fee structures.
- ☒ I use standardised contract templates that comply with FIFA and national regulations to ensure consistency and transparency.
- ☒ I have successfully completed the designated CPD course on minors provided by FIFA.

Avoiding Conflicts of Interest



- ☒ I have disclosed any potential conflicts of interest to all parties (e.g. representing both a player and a club) and seek written consent.
- ☒ I have ensured that decisions are made in the player's best interest, even if this means stepping back from a conflicted role.

Reporting Unethical Practices



- ☒ I will report any observed unethical practices, such as unauthorised recruitment activities, exploitation, or breaches of safeguarding standards, to FIFA or its member association.
- ☒ I will maintain a record of any unethical situations encountered and actions taken to ensure accountability and transparency.

Ethical Communication and Documentation



- ☒ I keep detailed records of all communications with the player, their family, and any associated clubs or academies.
- ☒ I have ensured that all documents, agreements, and relevant communication are accessible to the player and their family for review.

» Fairness and Non-Discrimination

Non-Biased Recruitment Practices



- ☒ I assess players solely based on their talent, commitment, and growth potential, disregarding race, nationality, socioeconomic status, or gender.
- ☒ I have created a standardised evaluation method to ensure fair and objective assessments.

Equal Access to Opportunities



- ☒ I provide equal opportunities for players regardless of their background.
- ☒ I avoid 'pay-to-play' scenarios

Promotion of Gender Equality



- ☒ I strive to ensure that female players receive the same level of support, resources, and opportunities as their male counterparts.
- ☒ I advocate for gender equality in all recruitment and representation efforts.

Cultural and Socioeconomic Awareness

- ☒ I am mindful of cultural or socioeconomic barriers and make accommodations to help underprivileged players navigate recruitment processes.
- ☒ Where possible, I connect disadvantaged players with support programmes, scholarships, or sponsors that can assist with costs associated with training and travel.

Avoidance of Stereotyping and Unconscious Bias

- ☒ I regularly review my recruitment practices to identify and correct any unconscious biases.
- ☒ I have educated myself on how to avoid stereotyping players based on physical attributes, nationality, or background.

» Ensuring the Minor's Autonomy and Family Involvement**Informed Consent and Autonomy for Minors**

- ☒ I respect the player's autonomy by involving them in decision-making processes, even though final consent is given by their legal guardians.
- ☒ I have explained all agreements and commitments in age-appropriate terms, allowing the player to ask questions and express concerns.

Ongoing Consent and Periodic Reviews

- ☒ I revisit consent with the player and their guardians periodically, especially when significant decisions or changes arise.
- ☒ I allow the player and family to review and update representation agreements to reflect their evolving goals and preferences.

Transparency in Communication with Families

- ☒ I keep open lines of communication with the player's family, updating them on their child's progress, potential risks, and any changes in representation terms.
- ☒ I actively encourage the player's family to voice concerns and offer feedback on representation practices.

» Additional Checks and Best Practices

Due Diligence with Third-Party Collaborations



- ☒ Conduct background checks and verify the legitimacy of third parties involved with the player, such as training academies or sponsors.
- ☒ Ensure any collaborators uphold ethical standards and are free from past incidents of exploitation or abuse.

Mitigating Risks of Relocation and Cultural Adjustment



- ☒ For international placements, assess the player's readiness and provide support for cultural and environmental adjustment.
- ☒ Partner with trusted local organisations to assist with relocation logistics, housing, and legal support to ensure a smooth transition.

Educational Support and Life Skills Training



- ☒ Advocate for life skills training at academies or clubs to help minors develop resilience, financial literacy, and communication skills.
- ☒ Where possible, facilitate mentorship programmes with older players to guide young recruits through the pressures of professional sports.

Encouraging Balanced Development



- ☒ Encourage players to prioritise their education and personal well-being.
- ☒ Provide resources and counselling to help minors manage their time and maintain a balance between sports and other developmental pursuits.

FIFA Football Agents Code of Conduct



FIFA Football Agents Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct establishes the ethical and professional standards required for FIFA licensed football agents. It reflects FIFA's commitment to safeguarding the integrity of football, ensuring player welfare, and promoting fair, transparent, and lawful representation practices.

01 Compliance with Regulations

- 1.1.** The Football Agent is bound by and will comply with all applicable FIFA regulations, including the FIFA Football Agent Regulations and national laws governing player representation.
- 1.2.** The Football Agent shall familiarise themselves with FIFA regulations and act in strict compliance with them as if each obligation is incorporated into this Code.

03 Transparency and Disclosure

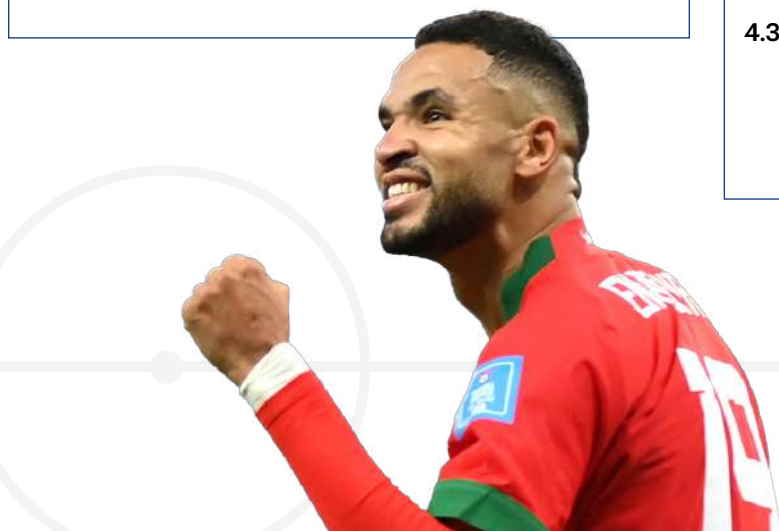
- 3.1.** The Football Agent will disclose all terms, conditions, and fees related to representation agreements, ensuring the player fully understands their rights and obligations.
- 3.2.** Before entering into any representation agreement, the Football Agent will disclose any conflicts of interest or existing agreements with clubs or other entities that may affect their impartiality.
- 3.3.** The Football Agent shall not provide materially false or misleading information and will take reasonable steps to verify the accuracy of information shared with players and clubs.

02 Integrity and Best Interests of Players

- 2.1.** The Football Agent will always act in the legitimate best interests of the player, ensuring that their career, welfare, and financial security are prioritised.
- 2.2.** The Football Agent shall represent only those players with whom a valid representation agreement has been signed and will not solicit players who are under representation agreements with other football agents.
- 2.3.** In all dealings, the Football Agent will act honestly, diligently, and fairly with players, clubs, coaches and third parties agreements with other football agents.

04 Safeguarding and Representation of Minors

- 4.1.** The Football Agent will only approach or represent a minor player in compliance with the FIFA Football Agent Regulations and/or any applicable national law.
- 4.2.** The Football Agent will not offer financial inducements, gifts, or material goods to minors or their families as a condition for signing a representation agreement.
- 4.3.** Contracts involving minors must comply with FIFA's safeguarding regulations, including limited contract duration and a focus on the minor's education and development.



05 Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest

- 5.1. The Football Agent will disclose any potential or actual conflicts of interest and will not represent both a player and a club in the same transaction unless all parties provide written consent.
- 5.2. The Football Agent will avoid any activity that compromises their ability to act in the player's best interests, including financial arrangements that create conflicts with clubs, their officials or other entities.

07 Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 7.1. The Football Agent will maintain the confidentiality of all player-related information and will not disclose such information without the player's consent, except as required by law or FIFA regulations.
- 7.2. The Football Agent will comply with data protection laws and ensure the secure handling of all personal and financial information related to their clients.

09 Professional Competence and Development

- 9.1. The Football Agent shall participate in FIFA continuing professional development to maintain their accreditation and enhance their knowledge of industry best practices.
- 9.2. The Football Agent will continuously update their knowledge of FIFA regulations, player welfare practices, and contract negotiation strategies to provide high-quality representation.

06 Prohibited Practices

- 6.1. The Football Agent will not engage in or encourage any practices that induce players to breach existing contracts or violate FIFA regulations.
- 6.2. The Football Agent shall not misappropriate funds, engage in embezzlement, fraud, bribery, any abusive or exploitative practices, or other unlawful activities that compromise their integrity or the interests of the player.
- 6.3. The Football Agent shall not solicit, accept, or offer any unauthorised payments, gifts, or commissions from clubs, players, coaches, sponsors, or other third parties.

08 Record Keeping and Financial Transparency

- 8.1. The Football Agent will maintain accurate financial records of all transactions, contracts, and negotiations conducted on behalf of players.
- 8.2. Upon request, the Football Agent will provide FIFA or other regulatory bodies with access to these records to ensure compliance with financial and ethical standards.

10 Cooperation with FIFA and Disciplinary Procedures

- 10.1. The Football Agent will cooperate fully with any inquiries, investigations, or disciplinary actions initiated by FIFA or other relevant authorities.
- 10.2. The Football Agent acknowledges that violations of FIFA Regulations may result in disciplinary actions, including fines, suspension, or withdrawal of their FIFA license, in accordance with the FIFA Disciplinary Code.

FIFA Football Agents Ethical Communication Guide



FIFA Football Agents Ethical Communication Guide

Introduction

Football agents serve as crucial participants in the careers of athletes, especially in facilitating player transfers, negotiating contracts, and providing guidance to athletes. Additionally, they are instrumental in upholding the transparency and integrity of the football transfer system, safeguarding the welfare of the professionals they represent, and contributing to the fair and ethical operation of player contracts and transfers within the beautiful game.

This communication guide, grounded mostly in FIFA's regulations, provides a comprehensive framework for promoting ethical and transparent practices within the international transfer system. It advises football agents on how to communicate openly and transparently with key stakeholders—parents, athletes, football academies, clubs, government agencies, and football federations—thus supporting ethical practices in football transfers.

The document seeks to provide clear guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders and their interactions with football agents, fostering a fair and accountable environment. By recommending strategies for communication and stakeholder engagement, football agents can maintain open and honest communication and ensure the protection of the athlete while upholding the core values of the sport.

Objectives

The objectives are to establish and maintain consistent messaging regarding ethical recruitment practices among football agents.



This includes promoting transparency between football agents, players, families, and clubs to ensure that all parties are well-informed.



All communications will be aligned with FIFA's ethical standards and regulations to uphold the highest level of integrity.



Finally, it is intended to foster trust and protect young players from exploitation in the recruitment process.



Football Agents and Their Responsibility

Football agents play a critical role in the professional sports ecosystem, acting as necessary participants between players, clubs, and other stakeholders. Their primary responsibility is to represent the interests of the players they manage, guiding them through various aspects of their careers, including contract negotiations, transfers, endorsements, and other business matters. However, their influence extends beyond just the players—they are also expected to act in a way that benefits the football clubs, sponsors, and the overall integrity of the sport.



Acting in the Best Interest of the Player

For players, football agents are often more than just business representatives; they are career strategists and advisors. Particularly for younger or less experienced players, football agents are entrusted with navigating complex legal, financial, and contractual landscapes. They must ensure that the player's professional and personal welfare are prioritised. This includes securing fair financial terms, protecting the player from potential exploitation, and promoting long-term career growth instead of short-term gains.

Moreover, football agents are responsible for informing players about their decisions, from club transfers to brand endorsements. This includes offering advice on career direction, potential club environments, playing time, and even the cultural fit within a team. For young players, agents often have a fiduciary duty, acting in loco parentis (in place of the parent), especially when dealing with sensitive issues like housing, education, and well-being.



Acting in the Best Interest of the Club

While football agents' primary allegiance lies with the player, they are also responsible for maintaining a professional relationship with clubs. A successful football agent should facilitate a mutually beneficial relationship between the player and the club, ensuring the club can meet its operational and financial goals while prioritising the player's professional development.

In practice, this might mean working towards a fair market value in player transfers or salary negotiations that benefit both parties. For example, a football agent focusing solely on maximising a player's salary without considering the club's financial constraints may risk damaging the player's long-term prospects with that club or others. Effective football agents, therefore, seek to strike a balance where both parties feel respected and satisfied with the outcome, contributing to the player's career stability and the club's operational continuity.



Acting in the Best Interest of the Football Ecosystem

Football agents also serve as custodians of the broader football ecosystem. Adhering to ethical standards contributes to a fair and transparent environment that benefits all stakeholders—players, clubs, sponsors, and fans. They are expected to follow guidelines set by governing bodies like FIFA, which regulate player transfers, service fees, and player welfare. When football agents engage in unethical practices like misrepresenting players, inflating transfer fees, or undermining fair competition, they not only harm their clients but also damage the reputation of the sport.

A responsible football agent will also be mindful of the ripple effects that their actions can have on the football industry. For example, unethical behaviour in negotiations can harm the reputation of a player or club, negatively affect future business dealings, and erode trust between stakeholders. Therefore, football agents who focus on long-term sustainability, rather than short-term profits, can help to preserve the integrity of the sport and related competitions.

Football Agents and Their Responsibility

ART. 13 | FIFA FOOTBALL AGENT REGULATIONS (FFAR)

Article 13 of the FIFA Football Agent Regulations (FFAR) focuses specifically on the representation of minors, providing clear guidelines to protect young athletes and minors from abuse and exploitation. As football agents play a crucial role in shaping the careers of players, particularly during their early development, it is vital that they adhere to these regulations to ensure the safety and well-being of minors under their representation.

Key Provisions of Article 13 – Representation of Minors

a Age Restrictions on Representation

This provision is put in place to protect young players from entering into professional agreements too early in their development, ensuring that they focus on their growth and education without undue pressure.

b Consent from Legal Guardians

A football agent can only sign a representation contract if written consent is obtained from the player's legal guardian(s). This ensures that the minor's best interests are represented and that their families are fully aware and involved in the decision-making process.

c Prohibition on Inducements

Football agents must refrain from offering any form of inducement, such as financial rewards or gifts, to minors or their families to secure representation contracts. This regulation is designed to prevent agents from exploiting families' financial vulnerabilities, keeping the focus on ethical recruitment and the player's development rather than monetary gain.

d Transparency in Contractual Agreements

Any contract signed with a minor must be transparent and clearly understood by all parties involved. Football agents must explain all contractual terms in simple, clear language, ensuring that minors and their families are fully informed of their rights and obligations before signing.

e Best Interest of the Minor

The primary responsibility of the agent representing a minor is to act in the best interest of the young player. This means considering the player's long-term development, both in their career and personal life, rather than seeking short-term financial gain. Agents must prioritise the welfare, education, and future prospects of the minor throughout the representation period.

f Duration of Contracts

According to Article 13, representation contracts with minors must be limited in duration. The maximum contract term is two years, preventing minors from being tied to long-term agreements that may not serve their evolving needs and interests as they grow.

Ethical Considerations in the Representation of Minors

As football agents working with minors, it is essential to go beyond legal compliance and adopt a strictly ethical approach. This includes:



Ensuring the player's education is prioritised.



Respecting family dynamics and involving guardians in major decisions.



Maintaining transparency in all transactions and communications with the minor and their family.



Avoiding any form of manipulation or pressure on the minor to enter into agreements that may not align with their best interests.

Article 13 of the FIFA Football Agent Regulations provides a critical framework for safeguarding young players from exploitation during the recruitment process. As a football agent, adhering to these regulations is not only an ethical and legal obligation but a responsibility to protect the future of football's next generation.

» The Importance of Ethical Conduct and Football Agents as Bridges Between Players, Clubs, and Families

A football agent must operate transparently and fairly, avoiding exploitative practices that could jeopardise the well-being of young or vulnerable players. Ethical behaviour ensures that all parties—players, clubs, and families – are treated with respect and fairness. This is especially important in high-stakes negotiations, such as transfers or contract renewals, where emotions and financial pressures can run high.



Building Trust with Players and Families

Trust is one of the most critical components of the football agent-player relationship, particularly for younger athletes navigating professional football for the first time. Players and their families rely on football agents to guide them through complex decisions. Ethical football agents ensure that they communicate openly, explain the implications of every decision, and provide honest advice—even when it may not align with the player's initial desires.

In addition, football agents often serve as the primary liaison between clubs and families. For young players, parents or guardians are deeply involved in decision-making processes and need a football agent who can explain complex contractual or legal matters in simple, understandable terms. Transparency ensures that the family feels informed and empowered throughout the process.



Facilitating Club and Player Relationships

Football agents also act as vital bridges between clubs and players. Their role is to ensure that both parties' interests align as closely as possible, mitigating conflicts that could arise during negotiations. Ethical football agents foster open communication between clubs and players, which helps avoid misunderstandings and ensures that both parties work towards common goals.

For instance, if a club is interested in a player but cannot meet certain financial demands, a football agent willing to work transparently with both sides can negotiate a mutually beneficial solution—perhaps through performance-based bonuses or a staggered payment schedule. In this way, football agents serve as problem solvers who help maintain positive relationships between players and clubs, even in challenging negotiations.



Safeguarding Young Players from Abuse and Exploitation

Young football players are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and other kind of abuse due to inexperience and the pressure to succeed. Football agents are often the first line of defence against such exploitation and other kinds of abuse. By ensuring that players fully understand their contracts, rights, and long-term career implications, ethical football agents help protect their clients from predatory practices by unscrupulous clubs, football agents or any other individuals that pertain themselves as football agents.

Moreover, football agents with a strong ethical foundation will avoid practices that jeopardise a player's career or personal well-being. For example, they will not push players into risky transfers for high service fees or manipulate their choices to favour particular clubs or sponsors without considering the player's interests.

Ethical Recruitment Practices: Core Objectives

Ethical recruitment practices are foundational to the integrity and sustainability of football as a global sport. The core objectives of ethical recruitment can be broken down into three primary pillars: ethics, transparency, and protection of young players. These principles not only ensure fair and responsible conduct in the recruitment process but also serve to safeguard the long-term interests of all parties involved—players, football agents, clubs, and football associations. When these objectives are pursued rigorously, they promote trust, fairness, and a level playing field within the football ecosystem.



ETHICAL RECRUITMENT: A COMMITMENT TO FAIRNESS AND INTEGRITY

At its heart, ethical recruitment emphasises fairness and integrity, requiring football agents and other stakeholders to act in good faith throughout the recruitment process. The goal is to ensure every decision and action prioritises players' welfare, respects clubs' rights and upholds the sport's moral and legal frameworks.

For football agents, this means adhering to regulations set by governing bodies like FIFA, which have established comprehensive guidelines to protect the interests of all parties. FIFA's regulations, for example, outline clear rules for how football agents should manage transfers, negotiations, and contracts, particularly concerning younger or vulnerable players.

KEY PRACTICES FOR ETHICAL RECRUITMENT



Avoiding conflicts of interest

Football agents must represent their clients without being influenced by personal financial incentives that could harm the player's career. This means rejecting under-the-table deals, inflated fees, or collusion with clubs to achieve outcomes that serve their interests rather than the player's.



Fair contract terms

Contracts should reflect the player's value and potential without exploiting their lack of experience or knowledge. Football agents must ensure that terms such as salary, bonuses, and performance clauses are reasonable, attainable, and aligned with market standards.



Full disclosure

Football agents should be transparent about their service fee structures, ensuring that players are fully aware of what fees they will pay and what services they receive in return.

EXAMPLE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

Consider a young player from an underdeveloped footballing country with a major European club offering a contract. A football agent would ensure that the player understands the terms of the deal, particularly any clauses that might affect their playing time or development. They would also evaluate whether the contract serves the player's long-term career growth or if alternative opportunities may be more beneficial, even if they don't provide immediate financial rewards.



TRANSPARENCY: BUILDING TRUST THROUGH OPEN COMMUNICATION

Transparency is another cornerstone of ethical recruitment practices. It fosters trust between players, football agents, clubs, and families by ensuring that all parties have access to the same information and understand the details of every transaction. Transparency requires football agents to communicate openly about the terms of contracts, financial arrangements, and career implications. Without it, young players and their families—often inexperienced with the legal and financial intricacies of professional football—can easily become victims of exploitation.

For agents, practising transparency means:



CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Football agents must explain the implications of contracts, clauses, and agreements in simple, understandable language, particularly for younger players and their families. Complex legal jargon should be broken down, and all parties should understand their agreement.

For example, when negotiating a transfer for a young player, the football agent should fully explain any signing bonuses, salary structure, or performance-based incentives to the player and their family. They should also discuss long-term career impacts, such as how joining a specific club might affect the player's development and future opportunities.



OPEN NEGOTIATIONS

Transparency in negotiations means that football agents should openly communicate the terms they discuss with clubs or other stakeholders. There should be no hidden clauses or secret agreements that could later harm the player.

For example, FIFA regulations require transparency in disclosing the transfer fee and any other financial agreements when a player is transferred from one club to another. A football agent who complies with these rules ensures that the player and the clubs involved are fully informed and protected from under-the-table deals or conflicts of interest. FIFA's rules also mandate that the player be involved in all key decisions, further promoting transparency.



DISCLOSURE OF SERVICE FEES

Many ethical breaches occur when players are unaware of how much they pay their football agents. Ethical football agents should disclose all fees upfront, explaining how their service fees work, and avoid hidden charges common in less ethical practices.

During a transfer negotiation, a club might offer a contract with several performance-based bonuses. An ethical football agent would sit down with the player and family, clearly explaining what each bonus entails—whether it depends on goals scored, minutes played, or other metrics. They would ensure the player understands the probability of achieving those bonuses and what that means for their income. If the terms seem difficult to achieve, the football agent will negotiate on the player's behalf for more realistic bonuses, ensuring the player isn't unfairly disadvantaged.





PROTECTION OF YOUNG PLAYERS: GUARDING AGAINST ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

Young players, especially minors, are particularly vulnerable to abuse, neglect and exploitation in the football world due to their inexperience, emotional investment in the sport, and the overwhelming nature of international attention. Protecting young players is one of the core objectives of ethical recruitment, and this requires football agents to prioritise not just the short-term financial gain of the player but their long-term well-being and career development.

FIFA's regulations impose several specific safeguards aimed at protecting young players. These include restrictions on international transfers for players under 18 and the requirement that the player's parents or guardians approve any contracts involving minors. Football agents must strictly comply with these rules to ensure young players are not pushed into situations that could harm their development or well-being.



KEY PRACTICES FOR PROTECTING YOUNG PLAYERS



Career Path Planning

Ethical football agents should help young players map a clear development path, including education, training, and playing opportunities, rather than focusing purely on early financial returns. The emphasis should be on the player's holistic development - both professionally and personally.



Ensuring Family Involvement

For minors, football agents must include the family or guardians in all decisions, ensuring they are fully informed about contracts, transfers, and training schedules. This prevents misunderstandings and ensures the player has a strong support system.



Post-Career Planning

Ethical football agents recognise that a footballer's career can be short-lived and should encourage players to think about life after football, offering advice on financial planning, education, or career diversification.





CRITICAL SCENARIOS WHERE TRANSPARENCY AND ETHICAL CONDUCT ARE VITAL



CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

During contract negotiations, football agents must be transparent with the player and the club, ensuring that all parties understand the terms. A football agent should explain contract clauses such as transfer rights, release fees, and performance incentives in detail. This helps clarity later when the player may feel misled about their rights.



CLUB TRANSFERS

Transfers are often where ethical breaches occur, particularly when football agents inflate fees or misrepresent player conditions to clubs. Therefore, football agents must ensure that the transfer is in the player's best interest, considering playing time, club stability, and development opportunities rather than pushing for the highest transfer fee.



ENDORSEMENT DEALS

Players often rely on agents to secure endorsement deals with brands or sponsors. Ethical football agents ensure that the terms of these deals align with the player's personal values and career goals rather than simply seeking the most lucrative offers.

By committing to fairness, transparency, and protecting young players, football agents can ensure they always act in the best interests of their clients. Through clear communication, compliance with FIFA's regulations, and a long-term focus on player welfare, ethical recruitment practices can foster a more trustworthy, fair, and sustainable football environment.



Tone and Style Guidelines: In-Depth Analysis and Evaluation

Effective communication is key to maintaining trust, credibility, and professionalism in recruitment, particularly when agents interact with players, families, clubs, and regulatory bodies. Football agents must adopt a specific tone and style in their communications to navigate the complexities of contract negotiations, career decisions, and ethical dilemmas. These guidelines provide a framework for how agents should approach various stakeholders.



TONE: PROFESSIONAL, EMPATHETIC, AND TRANSPARENT

When communicating, football agents should focus on three core tones—professional, empathetic, and transparent—to ensure clarity and foster trust among all parties involved.



PROFESSIONAL TONE

Football agents need to establish authority and respect through a professional tone. This means avoiding casual or informal language, particularly in formal negotiations or written communication. A professional tone conveys competence, reliability, and trustworthiness, which are critical in high-stakes situations such as contract discussions or transfers.

- **Why this matters:** Football agents manage players' careers and guide families through complex decisions. A professional tone gives stakeholders confidence that the football agent is experienced and capable.
- **How to achieve it:** Use formal language, precise terminology, and maintain a neutral tone when addressing all stakeholders, ensuring that emotions or personal biases do not seep into conversations.
- **An example:** *We have thoroughly reviewed the contract and, based on our analysis, recommend a few modifications to ensure your long-term growth and financial security in the club.*



EMPATHETIC TONE

Football agents often interact with players and their families during pivotal moments – such as career decisions, contract negotiations, or transfers – which can be emotionally charged. An empathetic tone acknowledges these emotions and ensures the football agent is seen as caring and supportive.

- **Why this matters:** Football agents must demonstrate understanding and compassion, especially when dealing with young players or families with little knowledge of the football industry. Empathy fosters trust and strengthens the relationship between agents and their clients.
- **How to achieve it:** Active listening, asking open-ended questions, and acknowledging the emotional weight of the situation helps convey empathy. Phrasing statements in a way that shows you understand their concerns is key.
- **An example:** *I understand this decision is difficult, and I want to ensure you're comfortable with every step. Let's review your options to ensure we choose what's best for your future.*



TRANSPARENT TONE

Transparency is essential in ensuring all parties fully understand the decisions and processes. This is especially important in an industry where ethical concerns and misunderstandings can easily arise.

- **Why this matters:** In football recruitment, the stakes are high, and players and families rely on football agents for honest advice. A transparent tone reassures stakeholders that there are no hidden agendas, promoting trust in the football agent's intentions and actions.
- **How to achieve it:** Be upfront about the processes, decisions, and potential challenges, and avoid withholding information. Ensure clarity by breaking down details of all offers presented and explaining them fully, even when the news may not be favourable.
- **An example:** *While this offer may seem lower than expected, let me explain the club's reasoning and why I believe it could still be a good opportunity.*



SIMPLIFYING COMPLEX LEGAL TERMS

Football contracts and recruitment agreements often contain complex legal language that can be difficult for players and their families to understand. Football agents must simplify these terms to prevent confusion and ensure informed decision-making.

- **Why this matters:** Contracts can include terms like "transfer rights," "buyout clauses," or "performance-related bonuses," which may not be familiar to most people outside the football or legal industry. Simplifying these terms ensures that clients fully understand what they agree to, which is crucial for transparency and long-term trust.
- **How to simplify legal terms:**
 - Define key terms upfront**
Provide clear definitions for complex terms at the start of any contract discussion.
 - Use analogies or examples**
Simplify using everyday language or analogies to make abstract terms relatable.
 - Provide summaries**
Instead of focusing on the fine print, provide a high-level summary of key points, then break down any complicated clauses.
- **An example:** *the term 'buyout clause' means that another club can pay a set amount to take you away from your current team. Think of it as a price tag—if another team is willing to pay that price, you'll have the option to leave your current club.*
- **Here's a tip for football agents:** Make the explanations interactive by asking the client if they understand each concept. If necessary, use visual aids, diagrams, or charts to make the legal concepts easier to follow.

Stakeholder Engagement: Communicating Efficiently

Football agents are also pivotal in managing the relationships between various stakeholders in a player's career. Their responsibilities extend beyond mere representation; they encompass advocacy, education, and ethical oversight, ensuring that all parties involved can navigate the complexities of professional football while maintaining integrity. This guide will provide an in-depth analysis of how football agents can responsibly and ethically manage relationships with **players, families, clubs, academies and regulatory bodies**, fulfilling their responsibilities and fostering a healthy football ecosystem.



ENGAGING WITH PLAYERS: SUPPORTING PLAYERS IN CAREER DECISIONS

Football agents must act in the best interests of their players, offering guidance on career decisions while protecting them from neglect, abuse or exploitation. This is especially important for younger or inexperienced players who may not fully understand the complexities of professional football.

How Football Agents Can Support Young Players



i. Provide Clear Career Path Planning:

Football agents should work with players to map out short-term and long-term goals. This involves identifying which clubs, leagues, and competitions are most beneficial for the player's development, rather than focusing on immediate financial gain.

For young players, explain the importance of playing time and development over securing a high salary. Let the player understand how regular playing time in a smaller club might be more valuable than sitting on the bench at a larger club.

ii. Offer Full Disclosure on Contracts and Negotiations:

Break down the terms of contracts (salaries, bonuses, release clauses, etc.) in language that the player can easily understand. Ensure the player fully knows what they are signing and its potential long-term implications.

Ensure players know the financial aspects of deals, such as service fees, tax obligations, and future earnings potential.

iii. Educate Players on Their Rights

Inform players of their rights under FIFA regulations, such as restrictions on international transfers for minors or protecting young players from unfair contracts. By doing so, football agents can protect them from being exploited by clubs or third parties.

For instance, a 17-year-old player is approached by multiple European clubs offering lucrative contracts. As the football agent, your responsibility is to assess the options based on the player's development needs, potential playing time, and overall growth opportunities. After informing of any written offer they have received and related detailed discussions with the player, you could recommend a club that offers a structured development program, even though the financial rewards are less immediate. By prioritising development, you safeguard the player's long-term career prospects.



ENGAGING WITH FAMILIES: EMPATHY AND TRANSPARENCY IN COMPLEX LEGAL PROCESSES

Families often play a significant role in a player's decision-making, especially when the player is still young. Football agents must communicate openly with families, simplify complex legal matters, and show empathy to build trust and ensure informed decisions are made.

How Football Agents Can Support Engage Families



i. Simplify Legal Terms and Processes:

Contracts and negotiations can be complex and filled with legal jargon that may confuse families. Break down complex terms into simple language, explaining things like "transfer rights," "performance clauses," or "release fees" in clear terms.

Offer visual aids or summaries to help families grasp key points, focusing on the terms directly affecting the player's welfare, such as playing time guarantees or financial stability.

ii. Foster Open Communication:

Ensure families feel included in decision-making processes. Hold regular meetings to discuss the player's options, potential transfers, or contract renewals. Be open to questions, no matter how basic they may seem.

Be honest about the challenges and risks of certain decisions, such as moving to a foreign club or signing a long-term contract with limited playing opportunities.

iii. Show Empathy in Sensitive Situations

Career decisions can be emotionally charged for players and families, especially in contract negotiations or transfers. Show empathy by understanding their concerns - the player's physical well-being, educational opportunities, or emotional needs. Acknowledge the pressures they may feel and provide reassurance through consistent, transparent communication.

Here's an example:

An overseas club offers a 16-year-old player a contract, but the family is concerned about the impact on his education and cultural adjustment. As the football agent, you simplify the contract terms and explain the club's developmental and educational programs. You also arrange for the family to meet with a player who made a similar transition, easing their concerns by offering real-life insights and emotional support.





ENGAGING WITH CLUBS: MAINTAINING CLEAR COMMUNICATION AND FOSTERING TRUST

A football agent's essential objective is to maintain a professional relationship with clubs. This involves communicating clearly and aligning expectations between the player and the club. This fosters trust and ensures long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships.

How Football Agents Can Improve Communication with Clubs



i. Establish Open Channels of Communication:

During negotiations, football agents must keep lines of communication open between the club and the player, ensuring transparency regarding the club's expectations and the player's needs. Misunderstandings can lead to disputes, which can be avoided through open dialogue.

Maintain regular updates with club representatives, especially regarding the player's development, injuries, or personal matters affecting performance or playing time.

ii. Balance the Needs of Both Parties:

In negotiations, ensure that the players' and the club's interests are represented fairly. For example, if a club cannot meet a player's financial expectations, look for alternative ways to meet both parties' goals, such as performance-based incentives or contract extensions with future guarantees.

Manage the player's expectations regarding playing time, salary, and club culture to align with the club's objectives. This avoids future conflicts and builds trust between both sides.

iii. Maintain Integrity During Transfers:

When arranging transfers, be transparent about all terms, including agent fees, and avoid inflating transfer prices or engaging in unethical practices. A transfer must benefit all parties—the player's development, the club's financial health, and the football agent's integrity.

Example:

A club is interested in signing your client but cannot meet their desired salary due to budget constraints. Instead of walking away from the negotiation, you suggest a performance-based bonus system, which aligns with the club's financial limitations and allows players to increase their earnings based on performance. This solution fosters trust between the player, football agent, and club.



ENGAGING FIFA & OTHER REGULATORY BODIES: UPHOLDING INTEGRITY THROUGH COMPLIANCE

Football agents must adhere to all regulations and other national or international governing body standards. These rules protect all stakeholders, particularly players, from unethical practices. Football agents must operate within these frameworks to maintain integrity and fairness in football.

Government bodies, including ministries of sport and immigration authorities, regulate player movements across borders. Football agents must understand the legal requirements surrounding player transfers, including visa regulations, work permits, and the legality of contracts in different jurisdictions. Engaging with government agencies is particularly important in preventing trafficking, as illegal or undocumented transfers often occur in regions with weak regulatory frameworks.

How Football Agents Can Improve Communication with Governmental Agencies and Regulatory Bodies



i. Stay Informed and Compliant with Regulations:

Regularly update yourself on all regulations regarding player transfers, agent regulations, and the treatment of young players. Ensure all your practices are in line with these standards.

Attend FIFA/member association/agent organisation workshops or educational seminars to stay up-to-date with rule changes or new ethical guidelines.

Football Agents should establish direct lines of communication with relevant government authorities to ensure compliance with local and international laws governing athlete transfers. They should also work to ensure that young players are not subjected to exploitative conditions under the guise of legal transfers.

ii. Adhere to FIFA's Ethical Standards:

Ensure you operate transparently in matters such as service fees.

Follow FIFA's rules on recruiting and transferring minors, which aim to prevent young players from being taken advantage of. For instance, international transfers are prohibited for players under 18 unless specific conditions are met. These include the player's parents moving to the country for non-footballing reasons, the transfer within the European Union or European Economic Area, and the player aged between 16 and 18.

iii. Collaborate with Member Associations:

Work with local football associations and governing bodies to ensure that contracts and transfers are conducted fairly and in compliance with local laws. If an issue arises, report unethical behaviour or regulation breaches to the appropriate authorities to protect the integrity of the sport.

For instance, a 16-year-old player is offered a contract by a foreign club. As the football agent, you ensure compliance with FIFA's regulation on the transfer of minors by verifying the club's adherence to educational and welfare provisions. You also work closely with the national football association to meet all legal obligations, protecting the player from unethical recruitment.

Football agents are crucial in ensuring that all stakeholders – players, families, clubs, and regulatory bodies—work together smoothly and responsibly. Upholding these values not only protects players but also enhances the credibility and professionalism of the agent's role. This communication guide serves as a roadmap for football agents seeking to act in the best interests of all stakeholders while adhering to ethical and regulatory standards.

Crisis Communication Guidelines: Addressing Ethical Breaches

Football agents must manage the crisis swiftly and efficiently when ethical breaches occur – such as a misunderstanding about player contracts, financial irregularities, or unethical recruitment practices. A well-structured crisis communication approach ensures the situation is handled carefully while maintaining trust and accountability.



TRANSPARENT AND HONEST COMMUNICATION

In crises, transparency is vital to maintain trust. Football agents must acknowledge the issue, explain what went wrong, and provide details on how the situation will be addressed. Avoiding or concealing information can damage the football agent's credibility.

- **Why this matters:** Transparency shows accountability, which is critical in regaining trust after an ethical breach. Players, families, and clubs must know that the football agent takes the matter seriously and plans to rectify it.
- **How to achieve it:** Provide a factual, detailed account of what happened. If the breach was an honest mistake, clarify that and explain the corrective actions being taken.



URGENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Crises require prompt action to avoid further escalation. Football agents must communicate with a sense of urgency while maintaining calm. At the same time, taking full accountability for the situation is crucial to reassure stakeholders that the football agent is responsible and proactive in finding a solution.

- **Why this matters:** By addressing the issue quickly and showing accountability, football agents can prevent damage to their reputations and demonstrate their commitment to ethical practices.
- **How to achieve it:** Clearly outline the timeline of actions and the next steps to resolve the issue.



SOLUTION-ORIENTED APPROACH

It's not enough to merely acknowledge the problem; football agents must present a clear plan for resolving the crisis and preventing future occurrences. Offering solutions demonstrates that the football agent is in control of the situation and is committed to making things right.

- **Why this matters:** Stakeholders want to know that the problem is being addressed and will not happen again. A solution-oriented approach builds confidence in the football agent's ability to manage crises effectively.
- **How to achieve it:** Provide a detailed action plan, specifying what steps will be taken immediately and in the long term to prevent similar issues.

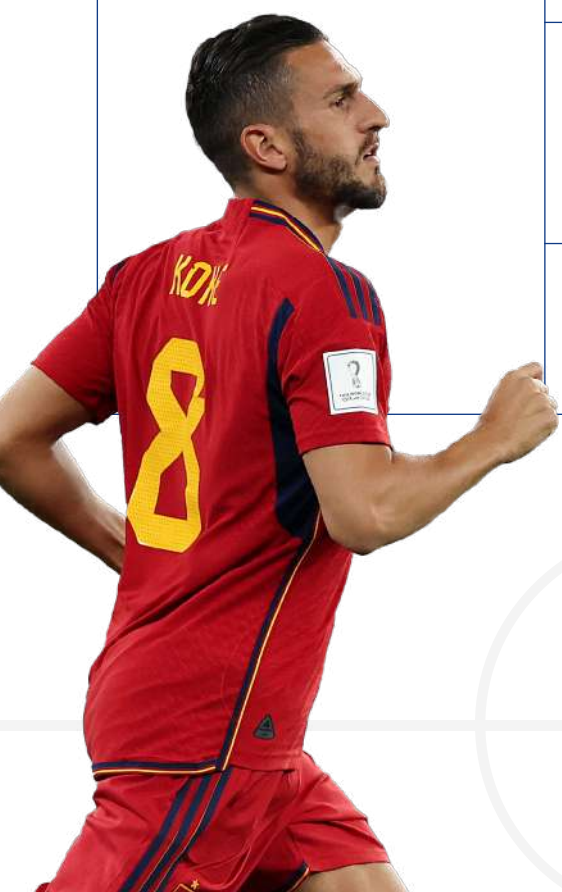


In a crisis, football agents must act swiftly, strategically, and thoughtfully to manage situations effectively while preserving their credibility and trust with stakeholders. Below are several common crisis scenarios agents may face and strategies for managing them:

SCENARIO	ACTION STEPS
Breach of Contract	Immediate Response: Promptly inform all relevant parties (player, club, legal representatives) of the breach, maintaining transparency and professionalism.
	Acknowledge Responsibility: Depending on the situation's sensitivity, publicly or privately acknowledge and commit to resolving the issue.
	Legal Recourse: If the issue escalates, utilise the Agents Chamber (when operational), national-level dispute resolution body or Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) as necessary. Ensure all parties are aware of legal processes.
	External Communication: If made public, control the narrative by issuing a well-crafted statement, focusing on the steps toward resolution and ensuring the player's or agency's reputation remains intact.

SCENARIO	ACTION STEPS
Conflict of Interest	Early Disclosure: To maintain transparency, immediately disclose the conflict of interest to all stakeholders (player, club).
	Offer Solutions: Present viable solutions, such as having another football agent represent the other party, to prevent potential biases or favouritism or request the prior written consent of the relevant parties.
	Recusal: If necessary, to protect integrity, recuse yourself from the decision-making process or recruitment, ensuring a neutral party can handle the matter.
	Internal Review: Conduct an internal review to assess the situation and improve policies that prevent future conflicts of interest.
	External Communication: If the conflict becomes public, issue a clear and honest statement emphasising the swift resolution and the proactive measures taken to avoid conflicts in the future.

SCENARIO	ACTION STEPS
Allegations of Exploitation Against Club	Immediate Engagement: Before making any external statements, the football agent should conduct an internal review to understand the full scope of the allegations.
	Communicate with the Player and Family: Before making any external statements, the football agent should conduct an internal review to understand the full scope of the allegations.
	Open Dialogue with the Club: Once the internal review is complete, the football agent should initiate a discussion with the club to address the allegations. Opening a channel for dialogue may reveal information that could help resolve the issue diplomatically.
	Engage Legal Counsel: Exploitation allegations can have significant legal implications, so it is critical to involve legal professionals early in the process.
	Engage Relevant Regulatory Bodies: If the club is in breach of ethical standards, it is crucial to involve football regulatory bodies to hold the club accountable.
	Protect the Player's Mental and Emotional Well-Being: The football agent should take proactive steps to protect the player's mental health, especially when the player is young and inexperienced.
	Explore Exit Strategies if Necessary: If the club refuses to cooperate or the allegations prove true, the football agent may need to explore alternative career options for the player, such as leaving the club. This is a last resort but may be necessary if the club cannot provide players with a safe and ethical environment to continue their careers.
	Long-Term Measures: In addition to resolving the immediate crisis, the football agent should implement long-term strategies to prevent similar situations from occurring in the future.



In all scenarios, it's critical to:



Maintain confidentiality where necessary, but be transparent and proactive in addressing the crisis.



Have a designated spokesperson to ensure consistent messaging.



Monitor media and public sentiment to adjust communication strategies if needed swiftly.



MONITORING AND FEEDBACK PROCESSES & TOOLS

SCENARIO	ACTION STEPS
Feedback Mechanism	Action Collect regular feedback from key stakeholders—players, their families, and clubs—on the recruitment and representation process.
	Methods Agencies can gather insights using a combination of surveys (anonymous or personalised) and direct interviews. Individual agents can also conduct monthly/weekly check-ins (phone calls and/or chats) with the players or their families.
	Timing Schedule feedback at key stages, such as after recruitment, contract negotiation, or significant events (e.g., transfers, training camps).
	Focus Areas Assess the quality of communication, transparency, fairness, and overall satisfaction with the process.
	Action Plan Act on feedback promptly by addressing concerns and improving the agency's practices.

SCENARIO	ACTION STEPS
Monitoring Compliance	Action Implement a continuous review system to monitor agents' adherence to ethical standards and regulatory frameworks.
	Review Panels Establish an internal compliance committee to periodically review internal compliance, agents' behaviour, contracts, and client relations.
	Frequency Conduct compliance reviews on a quarterly or annual basis, with additional reviews following significant client events
	Audit Trails Maintain detailed documentation of recruitment and contract activities, allowing for comprehensive audits when necessary.
	Corrective Measures If compliance issues are found, apply corrective measures, including retraining or disciplinary actions, as needed.

SCENARIO	ACTION STEPS
Measuring Success	Action Use qualitative and quantitative metrics to assess the impact of the agency's communication and ethical practices.
	Engagement Metrics Track social media engagement (e.g., reach, interaction rates), participation in training programs, and event attendance to measure public perception.
	Case Studies Document case studies of successful, ethical recruitment and representation. Use these as benchmarks for future efforts.



COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Football agents must adhere to all regulations and other national or international governing body standards. These rules protect all stakeholders, particularly players, from unethical practices. Football agents must operate within these frameworks to maintain integrity and fairness in football.

Government bodies, including ministries of sport and immigration authorities, regulate player movements across borders. Football agents must understand the legal requirements surrounding player transfers, including visa regulations, work permits, and the legality of contracts in different jurisdictions. Engaging with government agencies is particularly important in preventing trafficking, as illegal or undocumented transfers often occur in regions with weak regulatory frameworks.

Social Media Platforms



- » **Action:** Utilize platforms like Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook to share success stories and build trust with potential clients.
- » **Content Strategy:** Regularly post player testimonials, case studies of successful negotiations, and behind-the-scenes glimpses of the recruitment process.
- » **Engagement:** Use interactive features like Q&A sessions, live streams with agents or players, and polls to engage with followers and promote transparency.
- » **Target Audience:** Tailor posts to attract players and their families, clubs, and other stakeholders interested in ethical sports management.

Agency Website



- » **Action:** Ensure the website serves as an authoritative resource on ethical recruitment.
- » **Ethics Statement:** Prominently display an ethics statement outlining the agency's commitment to fair and transparent recruitment.
- » **FAQs and Guides:** Create an easily accessible section with FAQs and detailed guides for players, families, and football agents on the recruitment process, contract terms, and dispute resolution.
- » **Success Stories:** To build credibility, showcase case studies of ethical recruitment and player development on the homepage or in a dedicated section.

Direct Communication (Emails/Phone Calls):



- » **Action:** Use formal, direct communication channels for high-stakes discussions like contract negotiations, player updates, and addressing concerns.

- » **Emails:** Send personalised emails with detailed updates, professional advice, and follow-ups on recruitment or contract matters.

- » **Phone Calls:** For urgent or sensitive issues, use phone calls to ensure clarity and a more personal touch, offering immediate responses to concerns.

- » **Documentation:** Ensure all important communication is well-documented to maintain transparency, confidentiality and professionalism.

Workshops/Webinars



- » **Action:** Organise educational sessions to improve football agents' skills and knowledge and educate players and families on recruitment.

- » **For Staff:** Provide training on FIFA regulations, compliance standards, and best practices in ethical recruitment.

- » **For Players and Families:** Host webinars to help them understand contracts, rights, and how to navigate their football careers ethically and successfully. Feature industry experts, legal professionals, or veteran players to enhance credibility and provide diverse perspectives on ethics in football.

Conclusions

Building a sustainable and ethical environment within football recruitment is vital for the long-term well-being of young players, their families, and the broader football ecosystem. This responsibility primarily falls on football agents, who act as necessary participants and advocates for players. They must ensure that their conduct adheres to the highest ethical standards and fosters trust among all stakeholders.



Call to Action: Upholding Ethical Standards

Football agents must take an active role in creating a transparent, ethical football ecosystem. This responsibility transcends individual deals or transactions; it involves setting a standard of integrity that others in the industry will follow. To achieve this:



Football Agents as Ethical Stewards

Football agents must see themselves as negotiators or as stewards of the sport's ethical foundations. Every decision they make, from signing a player to negotiating transfers, reflects on them and the broader football community. Therefore, they must commit to transparency, fairness, and integrity in every interaction.

Football agents should educate players and families on their rights, responsibilities, and the potential risks of the recruitment process. By fostering an environment of informed decision-making, they empower players to take control of their careers.



Fostering Transparent Communication

Transparency is a cornerstone of trust. Football agents must ensure that all communications with players, families, and clubs are clear, honest, and straightforward. This includes simplifying complex contractual language, openly discussing the risks involved in any deal, and maintaining open communication channels throughout the recruitment process.

In contract negotiations, football agents should prioritise clarity and openness. This builds a solid foundation of trust between the football agent and the player and with clubs and regulatory bodies.



Continuous Compliance with FIFA Regulations

Football agents must stay updated with FIFA's evolving standards and ensure their practices are always compliant. This involves understanding the regulations and actively contributing to a culture that values ethical conduct over profit-driven shortcuts.

Football agents should hold themselves accountable for their actions and decisions. When mistakes occur, they must be transparent about the issue and take corrective measures immediately. This accountability strengthens their reputation and the trust others place in them.

In essence, ethical recruitment and transparent communication are not just about safeguarding young players but about building a sustainable future for football. Football agents have a unique and powerful role in shaping the sport's future by championing transparency, trust, and ethical behaviour. By committing to these values, football agents safeguard the interests of the players they represent, contribute to a more just and accountable football industry and ensure that their conduct is consistent with the core objectives of the football transfer system and of the FIFA Football Agent Regulations.

The call to action for football agents is clear: uphold ethical standards, foster trust, and ensure transparency in every aspect of recruitment. For parents, athletes, and clubs football agents should encourage regular communication between parents, athletes, and clubs. This can be achieved through meetings, newsletters, and informational sessions informing all parties about developments and expectations. In dealing with regulatory bodies, football agents must maintain open lines of communication with government agencies and football federations to stay updated on regulations and best practices.

In conclusion, football agents must be transparent in their dealings with clubs and federations, ensuring that all parties understand the terms of contracts and transfers. This transparency is crucial in building trust and preventing misunderstandings that could lead to exploitation. By doing so, football agents can create an environment where players can thrive, clubs can operate with integrity, and the football ecosystem can grow sustainably for generations as per the relevant objectives of football transfer system.



Ethical Recruitment Guide

In collaboration with Mission 89 and the FIFA Football Agent Working Group



Please note that this guide presents the FIFA administration's views and guidelines concerning the interpretation and application of various provisions of the Football Agent Regulations and the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players. Please be mindful that the FIFA Tribunal or the relevant FIFA Judicial bodies (FIFA Disciplinary Committee, Ethics Committee or Appeals Committee) may take different views on those provisions and any decision from those bodies always remain reserved.