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When Does a Regulatory Change Take Effect? The Colorno–Fiorenzuola Dispute and the Temporal Effect of FIGC Regulations

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PROCEDURAL PATH:
***TFN-SVE**: First Instance*
***CFA** (Corte Federale d'Appello) – Sezioni Unite: Appeal*
***Collegio di Garanzia dello Sport**: Final Appeal*

1. Introduction

The temporal application of sporting regulations can become particularly complex when a regulatory amendment and the sporting transaction to which it may apply occur on the same day. This issue was at the centre of the dispute between **ACD Colorno** and **U.S. Fiorenzuola 1922 SSD**, concerning the payment of technical training compensation following the registration of a young player.

The dispute arose from the registration of Mirko Manella, a player born in 2009, and Colorno's subsequent claim for €3,960 in technical training compensation. The case ultimately reached the Sezioni Unite of the Corte Federale d'Appello (CFA) and was subsequently challenged before the Collegio di Garanzia dello Sport of the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI).

The case raises a broader regulatory question: **can a sporting regulation published during the course of a day apply to a transaction completed earlier on that same day?**

Manella was registered with ACD Colorno during three consecutive sporting seasons: 2020/2021, 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, making Colorno a training club under the relevant FIGC[1] rules.

On 4 August 2023, Manella was registered by U.S. Fiorenzuola 1922 SSD a r.l. under a two-year registration as a "***Giovane di serie***".[2]

[1] *FIGC: Italian Football Federation*

[2] Under Article 33 NOIF (FIGC Internal Organisational Regulations), "*Giovani di Serie*" are young players

The same date was significant because the FIGC Federal Council approved and published Official Communication No. 59/A (Comunicato Ufficiale n. 59/A), amending **Article 99 of the FIGC Organisational Regulations of the Internal Structure (NOIF)**.[3]

The amendment extended the obligation to pay technical training compensation to certain training clubs where players were registered for two years as *Giovani di serie*. The regulatory change therefore potentially created a financial obligation for Fiorenzuola in relation to a registration that had already taken place that same day.

2. The Dispute: €3,960 and a Question of Timing

On 26 August 2025, the FIGC Awards Platform issued an assessment recognising Colorno's entitlement to **€3,960**, corresponding to €1,320 for each of the three seasons during which Manella had been registered with the club.

Fiorenzuola rejected the claim on 6 November 2025, relying essentially on the timing of the relevant events. According to the club, the player's registration had been entered into the relevant system during the morning of 4 August 2023, whereas Official Communication No. 59/A was published only later that day[4].

Fiorenzuola therefore argued that the amended version of Article 99 NOIF could not govern a registration completed before the amendment had been published and made available to the club.

The club relied, in particular, on the principle expressed by the maxim ***tempus regit actum***, as well as on legal certainty and legitimate expectations. Applying the amendment to the registration, it argued, would effectively impose an economic obligation on the basis of a rule that was not yet available when the transaction was completed

3. The First Instance: The TFN Rejects Colorno's Claim

Colorno brought the dispute before the Tribunale Federale Nazionale – Sezione Vertenze Economiche (TFN-SVE) on 28 January 2026.

In **Decision No. 483/TFNSVE-2025-2026**, deliberated on 27 February and filed on 9 March 2026, the TFN rejected Colorno's claim.

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from the age of 14 who acquire this status upon signing and obtaining approval of their registration with a club affiliated with one of the professional leagues.

[3] Article 99 NOIF, as amended by FIGC Official Communication No. 59/A of 4 August 2023, introduced the obligation to pay technical training compensation in connection with certain two-year registrations of players as *Giovani di serie*.

[4] Italian Football Federation (FIGC), Official Communication No. 59/A of 4 August 2023.

The Tribunal approached the issue through the general principles governing the temporal effectiveness of legal rules, referring in particular to Article 11 of the Preliminary Provisions to the Italian Civil Code (Preleggi).[5]

According to the first-instance reasoning, where a new rule does not expressly establish a different effective date, its effects cannot precede the moment at which the rule becomes legally effective and capable of being known by its addressees.

The TFN therefore concluded that the amended provision could not apply to a registration carried out before the publication of the new rule on the same day. The decision consequently placed emphasis on the actual sequence of events during 4 August 2023.

Colorno appealed.

4. The CFA Sezioni Unite: The Day of Publication as the Relevant Temporal Unit

On 16 March 2026, Colorno challenged the TFN decision before the Corte Federale d'Appello. Given the significance of the legal issue, the case was assigned to the Sezioni Unite.

In **Decision No. 112/CFA-2025-2026**, issued on 9 April 2026 with reasons filed on 13 April, the CFA fully upheld Colorno's appeal and ordered Fiorenzuola to pay €3,960.

The central element of the CFA's reasoning was **Article 13 NOIF**, which governs the effectiveness of FIGC decisions and communications.

Under **Article 13(2) NOIF**[6], federal decisions are deemed to be known from the date of publication of the relevant ***Comunicato Ufficiale***, which constitutes the relevant point from which their effects run.

The CFA consequently rejected the argument that publication could produce legal effects only from the precise time at which the communication was uploaded or made available.

For the Court, the relevant temporal unit within the FIGC regulatory system was the **calendar day**, rather than the **individual hour or minute**.

Accordingly, once the amendment had been published on 4 August 2023, it was considered effective from that date, even though the player's registration had been processed earlier that same day.

[5] Art.11 Preliminary Provisions: "The law shall have effect only for the future and shall not have retroactive effect."

[6] Article 13(2) of the FIGC Organisational Regulations of the Internal Structure (NOIF) provides that decisions adopted by federal bodies are presumed to be known from the date of publication of the relevant Official Communications and that, unless specific notification procedures are provided, "the date of publication constitutes, for all purposes, the starting date."

5. The Significance of Intra-Day Timing

This represented the most distinctive feature of the dispute.

Fiorenzuola argued that the precise chronology was decisive: first, the registration of Manella; second, the publication of **Official Communication No. 59/A**.[7]

The CFA considered this distinction legally irrelevant.

According to the Sezioni Unite, the FIGC regulatory system does not divide the legal effectiveness of a Comunicato Ufficiale into different periods within the same day. The relevant regulatory date is the **day of publication itself**.

The Court therefore rejected Fiorenzuola's request to obtain the relevant **IT logs** from FIGC and Lega Pro in order to establish the exact time at which the registration and publication had occurred.

Even if those logs had demonstrated that the registration preceded publication by several hours, the CFA considered that such evidence would not have altered the legal outcome.

6. Legal Certainty and Legitimate Expectations

The second major issue concerned the protection of legitimate expectations.

Fiorenzuola argued that applying the new rule to a transaction completed before its publication would undermine the principles of **legal certainty, reasonableness and protection of legitimate expectations**, also referring to Articles 3 and 97 of the Italian Constitution.

The club maintained that it had completed the registration on the basis of the regulatory framework applicable at that moment and could not reasonably have anticipated an additional financial obligation introduced later that same day.

The CFA did not accept this argument.

The Court emphasised the particular nature of the federal sporting regulatory system and the obligation of affiliated clubs to operate within a regulatory framework that is inherently dynamic.

It therefore considered that applying the amended Article 99 NOIF did not amount to unlawful retroactivity. Both the registration and the publication of the amendment occurred on 4 August 2023.

From the CFA's perspective, the new rule was therefore not being applied to a transaction carried out under an earlier regulatory regime. Rather, both events belonged to the same legally relevant day.

[7] https://www.figc.it/media/209882/59-modifiche-noif.pdf

7. The Collegio di Garanzia: The Appeal Is Upheld

On 28 July 2026, the Fourth Section of the Collegio di Garanzia dello Sport delivered **Decision No. 70/2026**, following Fiorenzuola's appeal. The decision was subsequently filed on **22 September 2026**.[8]

The Collegio upheld the appeal, departing from the interpretation adopted by the CFA Sezioni Unite.

The central issue was whether Article 13(2) NOIF could make the new version of Article 99 NOIF effective from the beginning of 4 August 2023, even though the relevant Comunicato Ufficiale had only been published later that day.

The Collegio answered in the negative.

According to the decision, Article 13(2) NOIF provides that federal decisions are presumed to be known from the day of publication and that, unless different notification requirements apply, publication constitutes the relevant starting point for their effects. However, the provision **does not allow those effects to be anticipated to a moment preceding the actual publication.**

The Collegio therefore rejected the CFA's conclusion that the amended provision could be regarded as effective from **00:00:01** on 4 August 2023, regardless of the actual time of publication.

Such an interpretation, the Collegio reasoned, would allow the new rule to operate before it had been made publicly available. This would effectively transform the presumption of legal knowledge into a mechanism capable of imposing obligations during a period in which the relevant regulatory provision was objectively unknowable to the affected parties.

8. Conclusion

The Colorno–Fiorenzuola dispute illustrates how a seemingly technical question of regulatory timing can have significant consequences within the sporting legal system. Although the dispute concerned only **€3,960**, its significance extends to how the temporal effectiveness of sporting regulations should be determined within a highly dynamic regulatory environment. While the CFA Sezioni Unite adopted a formal approach centred on the **calendar day of publication**, considering the intra-day sequence of the registration and regulatory amendment irrelevant, the Collegio di Garanzia rejected the possibility of extending the effects of a new rule to a period preceding its actual publication. The case therefore

[8] https://www.coni.it/images/collegiodigaranzia/Decisione_n._70-2026_-_Ric._39-2026.pdf

highlights the tension between the need for a clear and administrable regulatory framework and the protection of clubs' legitimate expectations that they will be subject only to obligations reasonably knowable when they act. **When a sporting regulation is published after a transaction has already been completed on the same day, should the legal system look to the date of publication or to the precise moment at which the parties acted?** The answer has important implications for the interaction between **regulatory certainty**, **legitimate expectations** and **the temporal application of sporting rules within the FIGC regulatory framework**.