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FIFA RSTP 2027 Edition: Extended Contracts for Players Under 18

By *Enriko Janek & Brunno Couto*

1. Introduction

Another substantive change in the FIFA RSTP coming into force on January 1st, 2027, concerns the length of a contract for minors. In the 2025 interim RSTP, following wording was established: "*Players under the age of 18 may not sign a professional contract for a term longer than three years. Any clause referring to a longer period shall not be recognised.*"[1]

This particular part of Article 18(2) of the 2025 edition of RSTP must have been addressed by the stakeholders, as the new RSTP is a product of collective bargaining and a a "joint agreement between the representatives of employees (players and their unions) and employers (clubs and leagues)", developed through a social dialogue process that takes place via the Global Social Dialogue Platform.[2]

2. Substance of the Change

The length of contracts between professionals and clubs is governed by Article 18 paragraph 2 of the FIFA RSTP.[3] Previously, players under the age of 18 could not sign professional contracts for a term longer than three years. The new version introduces an exception allowing contracts of up to five years, subject to the following conditions:

- the player must have been registered with the club for 20 months or two consecutive competition periods (whichever is shorter) before signing the contract with said club;
- the player's fixed remuneration must increase by at least 10% in the fourth year, with an additional 20% increase if the player makes at least ten appearances in official

[1] FIFA, *Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players* (January 2025), art. 18(2).
[2] FIFPro, 'The Lassana Diarra judgement explained: What does it mean for footballers?' (22 May 2025) <https://www.fifpro.org/en/articles/2025/05/the-lassana-diarra-judgement-explained-what-does-it-mean-for-footballers> accessed 13 October 2026.
[3] FIFA, *Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players* (January 2027).

matches of the first team during the third year. In the fifth year, there must be a 20% increase if the player makes at least ten appearances in official matches of the first team during the fourth year;

- a club may sign no more than five new contracts per season with players under 18 for a term exceeding three years.

The exception does not apply where it is prohibited by national law or by a validly negotiated collective bargaining agreement at a domestic level.

In light of the previously discussed changes regarding the consequences of breach of contract, this measure adds a much-needed layer of protection for training clubs. However, given young players' weak negotiating position, and the fact that they are often pressured into signing longer first contracts in exchange for the promise of more playing time, it is questionable whether this change achieves a fair balance between protecting clubs' investment in youth development and safeguarding the interests of the most vulnerable players.

Another question is whether the mandatory remuneration increases are sufficient. As a thought experiment, it is worth seeing what a 10% increase in the fourth year means in practice. Take Brazil, whose annual inflation rates over the last five years were as follows: 10.06% in 2021, 5.79% in 2022, 4.62% in 2023, 4.83% in 2024 and 4.26% in 2025 (Banco Central do Brasil, n.d.). Imagine a 16-year-old who signed a five-year contract in January 2021 on a fixed salary. By the start of 2024, prices had risen by 21.8% since he signed with the club, so even with the mandatory 10% increase, his salary would buy about 10% less than at the start of his contract. If he did not reach ten first team appearances in the fourth year, the gap would widen to around 14% in 2025.

To be clear, we do not expect FIFA to tailor the RSTP to each country's inflation rate, this is simply an illustration of how the guaranteed increase works with regard to purchasing power.

It is also worth remembering that all of these increases, whether the mandatory 10% in the fourth year or the additional ones tied to first team appearances, are percentages of a modest starting point, as youth salaries tend to be among the lowest on most clubs' payrolls.

Finally, the limit of no more than five such contracts per season seems somewhat arbitrary. The cap may suit smaller clubs, but it places well-established academies in the difficult position of having to choose which of their prospects receive extended contracts.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the change itself is a step in the right direction, as it provides a higher degree of certainty for the most vulnerable – young players, and smaller clubs who are dependent on player development and their subsequent sale.

Regulations are not set in stone. Once the new RSTP comes into effect, its positives and shortcomings will be visible, creating other opportunities for adjustments and improvements via social dialogue.