



J-League / Player contract / Player Registration / Youth training system / Multi-Club Ownership (MCO)

2026 J.League Legal Structural Reforms: Integration into the Global System

By **Shogo TSUNODA**

Lawyer, Anderson Mori & Tomotsune
Tokyo – Japan



Introduction

Since its establishment in 1993, the *Japan Professional Football League (J.League)* has reached a paradigm shift in its history. The reforms to be implemented in 2026 constitute far more than mere adjustments to schedules or regulations. Rather, they represent a fundamental realignment intended to reposition *J.League* within the global market, triggering important legal developments. This article examines the impact of this historic transformation on international football law.

Season Transition: From Spring-to-Autumn to Autumn-to-Spring¹

The center of this reform is the shift in the seasonal calendar. Starting in 2026, *J.League* will transition from the spring-to-autumn format (commencing in February and concluding in December) to the autumn-to-spring format (commencing in August and concluding in June), harmonizing its schedule with major European leagues and Asian Football Confederation (AFC) competitions.

On-Field Rationale: Sporting Competitiveness

The basis for this shift lies in critical environmental and competitive necessities. First, the severe Japanese summer (June to September) has caused a demonstrable decline in athletic performance, with data indicating significant drops in players' total high-intensity running distance. Second, the

¹ See *J.League*, '[Season Transition](#)'.