SABR

SEASON 2026–27

NEW REFEREE ESSENTIALS

Clear decisions for safe, fair and enjoyable matches

Know the Law. Manage the moment. Protect the players.

Soccer Association of Boca Raton • Recreational Referees

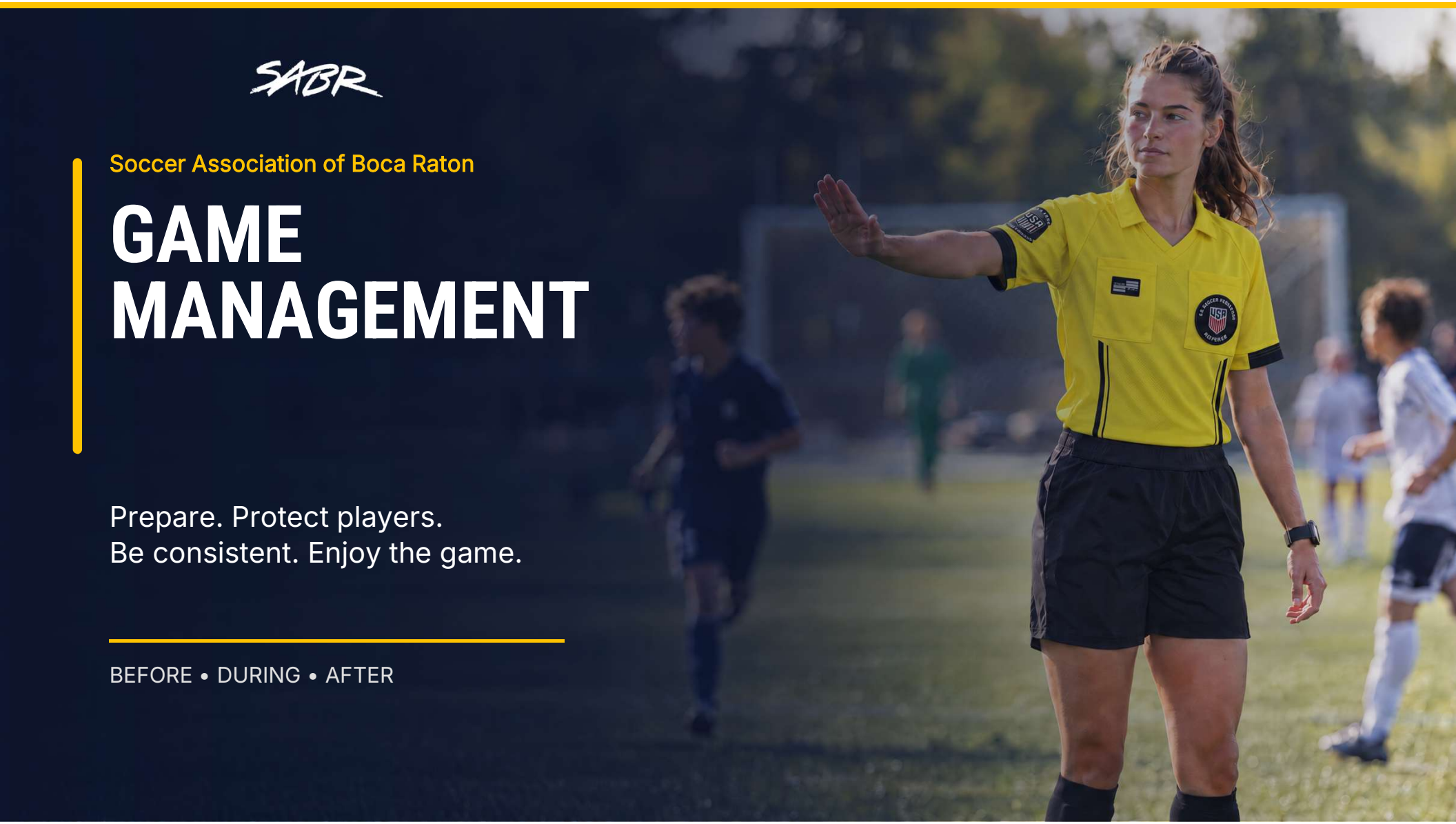
SABR

Soccer Association of Boca Raton

GAME MANAGEMENT

Prepare. Protect players.
Be consistent. Enjoy the game.

BEFORE • DURING • AFTER



WHAT IS GAME MANAGEMENT?



Using preparation, good communication, and the Laws and Spirit of the Game to make every match **safe, fair, and fun.**

NOBODY GOES TO A SOCCER GAME TO WATCH THE REFEREE

BEFORE THE MATCH

PREPARE TO SUCCEED.



PREPARE

- Know the Laws of the Game & SABR rules.
- Bring the right gear.
- Arrive early.



SAFETY FIRST

Field. Nets. Goals. Ball. Weather. Coach introductions. Player equipment.



DO A GOOD PREGAME

- Roles & priorities
- Positioning & eye contact
- Communication
- Key match incidents.

CONTROL WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL AND PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED.

DURING THE MATCH

BE PRESENT & PROACTIVE.



PROTECT PLAYERS

Set the tone early.
Stop unsafe play.
Read the temperature of the match.



BE VISIBLE

Proper positioning (distance & angle), talk to players, use your whistle, and confident signals.



CALM & CONSISTENT

Communicate early.
Be consistent.
Do not debate.

YOUR PRESENCE IS IMPORTANT.

AFTER THE MATCH

FINISH LIKE A PRO.



LEAVE TOGETHER

Regroup with your crew. Keep exchanges brief. De-escalate.



REPORT FACTS

Record and report what happened clearly, promptly, and objectively.



REFLECT

Ask what worked. Pick one adjustment for your next match.

EVERY GAME IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND IMPROVE.

TAKE THIS TO YOUR NEXT MATCH

THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER



PREPARE

Know the game. Check safety. Align the crew.



PROTECT

Be present. Keep players safe. Be fair.



RESET

Stay calm. Report facts. Learn one thing.

PROTECT THE GAME. RESPECT THE PEOPLE.

Keep Matches Moving: time and substitutions

Own the clock. Well-organized substitutions help every game begin and finish on schedule.

Manage the clock

Start and finish on time. The referee owns the match time.

Do not add significant extra time in recreational matches.

At the end, wait for a natural moment — do not end a clear attacking play in progress.

Use the SABR substitution routine

1. Permission: coaches ask the referee before substitutes enter.

2. Position: substitutes wait at halfway; the player leaves before the substitute enters.

3. Count: check the number of players before restarting.

4. Opportunities: both teams may substitute at a goal, half, injury stoppage, water break or either goal kick. On a throw-in, the other team substitutes only if the throwing team does too.

Assistant referees help count players and flag an excess-player problem before play restarts.

Handball: use a simple decision process

Do not call every ball-to-arm contact. Look for the action, the position, and the result.

1

Was it deliberate?

Did the player move a hand or arm toward the ball?

2

Was the body bigger?

Was the arm in an unnatural position that made the body bigger?

3

Did it score directly?

A direct hand/arm goal is not allowed, even if accidental.

Remember: the shoulder is not part of the arm. Not every accidental arm contact is a handball offense.

Restarts that New Referees Should Know

Make the restart clear. Know when the ball is in play, where people must stand and when you can restart.

Goal kick

The ball is in play once it is kicked and clearly moves. Opponents stay outside the penalty area until then.

Kick-off

The ball is in play once it is kicked and clearly moves. It may go forward or backward.

Defensive wall

When three or more defenders form a wall, attackers must stay at least 1 yard away until the ball is in play.

Use a clear signal, take a breath, scan positions — then restart with confidence.

Source: IFAB Laws 8, 13 and 16.

Penalty Kicks and The Technical Area

Set the standard early. A simple instruction delivered calmly usually prevents a bigger problem later.

At the penalty kick

Goalkeeper: at least part of one foot must be touching, in line with or behind the goal line when the kick is taken.

The goalkeeper must not unfairly distract the kicker.

Substitution exit: players normally leave at the nearest boundary line unless you direct otherwise.

Manage team officials

1. **Set the boundary and expectation.**
2. **Give a short, clear warning.**
3. **Escalate only when needed:** caution or send off a team official.

Referee Contact and Dropped Balls

Most referee contact means play continues. Stop only when the contact clearly changes the match.

Did the ball touch a referee?

Stop play only if it starts a promising attack, changes possession or goes directly into goal.

Yes — stop and use a dropped ball

Do not guess. Identify which team had or would have gained possession.

Inside the penalty area

Drop the ball to the goalkeeper.

Outside the penalty area

Drop it to the team with expected possession.

Everyone else

Keep all other players 4 meters away.

Source: IFAB Laws 8 and 9.

Goalkeeper Control: the 8-second rule

For SABR U11 and above, use a clear and visible count to prevent delay. U9/U10 are excluded.

8

SECONDS TO RELEASE

What the referee does

Decide when goalkeeper control begins. Count silently first, then show the last five seconds with a raised hand.

After 8 seconds

Corner kick to opponents.

Use good management

Prompt first; then apply the Law.

SABR local application: the 8-second rule is not used in U9/U10 matches.

Source: IFAB Law 12; SABR local age-group application.

Your Match Checklist

Keep it simple. Build these habits from your first whistle.

1. Read the SABR rules for your age group.
2. Arrive early and check the field, goals and equipment.
3. Meet the referee team before every match.
4. Make calm, clear decisions and communicate simply.
5. Ask your mentor, assignor or Director when you need help.

Safe.
Fair.
Confident.

Questions? Contact your SABR assignor or Director of Referees before match day.