GIRLS ACADEMY

Referee Field Guide

2026–2027 Season

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Contents

1. Match Basics
2. Pre-Game Duties
3. Substitutions
4. Cards & Reporting
5. Referee Crew & Compensation

1. MATCH BASICS

1.1 Laws of the Game

Unless otherwise provided in these Regulations, all games shall be played in accordance with the Laws of the Game in force at the time of the competition and as laid down by the International Football Association Board. In the case of any discrepancy in the interpretation of the Laws of the Game, the English version shall be authoritative.

1.2 Game Length

Age Group	Format
U13, U14, U15	Two (2) 40-minute halves with a 10-minute halftime
U16, U17, U19	Two (2) 45-minute halves with a 10-minute halftime

> ***Note:*** *Stoppage time is added for completion of substitution passes, water breaks, and any significant game stoppage.*

1.3 Referee's Decisions & Protests

- No protests may be made about the referee's decisions regarding facts connected with play; such decisions are final.
- Protests regarding the state of the field, its surroundings, markings, or accessory items (e.g., goals, flag posts, or soccer balls) must be made in writing to the referee before the start of the game by the coach or administrator lodging the protest, and noted on the MDP & MS form. If the playing surface becomes unplayable during a game, the referee shall consult the league Competitions Manager, and both parties shall have joint authority to delay, postpone, or cancel the game.

2. PRE-GAME DUTIES

2.1 Arrival & Check-In

- A home club representative must be at the field one hour prior to game time and will serve as the sole point of contact for the fixture.
- An athletic trainer must be provided for all matches, from at least 60 minutes prior to the first match through the end of the final match. If a trainer is not present, report it to the league office immediately.

2.2 Match Card & Player Eligibility

- Both home and away teams must provide the standard non-photo match card for each match, listing all rostered players, coaching staff, and club/team managers. Players not participating (due to injury, suspension, or not dressing) must be crossed off.
- Check in players on the roster. Any player checked in counts as a rostered player and becomes ineligible for any other match in the fixture.
- No write-ins are allowed, except for emergency use pre-approved by the league office via phone call with written confirmation for tracking. A written-in player is considered ineligible.

- The official game-day roster must be presented to the referee by both teams prior to the game, including team staff. Sign a completed copy for each team's records after the game.
- Only 18 players from the roster are eligible to participate in each game; these players must be shown on the game-day roster/match card as starters or eligible substitutes.
- The bench and technical area are reserved for players and a maximum of four (4) registered club staff members, not including an Athletic Trainer Certified (ATC).

2.3 Field, Goals & Equipment

All determinations regarding the safety of the field, goals, balls, and player equipment are ultimately the responsibility of the referee assigned to the game. Any field, equipment, or ball condition deemed unsafe by the referee must be corrected by the home club before play can begin or resume.

- All goals must be properly anchored. A game will not start without proper equipment, including secured goals, properly lined fields, and corner flags.
- Minimum field size: 70 yards (W) x 110 yards (L). Natural grass should be mowed to 1.5”–2.5” for high-quality ball movement.
- All Girls Academy and GA Aspire member clubs use Adidas soccer balls for league play; at least three (3) Adidas match balls must be available at each match.
- Field markings must be in accordance with FIFA rules, with (4) matching corner flags.

2.4 Uniforms

- Players, coaches, and club officials may not display political, religious, or personal messages in any language or form on their playing/team uniforms, equipment, or body during official league games.
- Home teams wear light-colored uniforms; away teams wear dark-colored uniforms. In the event of a color conflict, the home team is responsible for changing, and the visiting team wears its contrasting uniform.
- Jerseys and socks should match in color/shade (dark/dark or light/light).

3. SUBSTITUTIONS

- The Girls Academy Substitution Sheet must be used for all Girls Academy games and submitted with the match card.
- The home team provides the official Substitution Sheet to the match officials prior to kickoff. Match officials or a designated club official track all substitutions. Both coaches sign the sheet after the match for verification.
- If both teams agree, a club official may complete the substitution sheet in place of a match official/referee.
- All games have five (5) substitution moments per game, with no more than three (3) moments per half. A player who has been substituted in the second half, may re-enter once in the second half, within the allotted moments; once substituted a second time, she may not re-enter the match.
- Halftime does not count as a substitution moment.
- Substitutions are allowed at any stoppage of play.
- Overtime (Playoff and Champions Cup U13–U19 Advancement Games):
  - Once a player is substituted during any overtime period, she may not re-enter the game.
  - Advancement games permit a maximum of three (3) substitution moments across both overtime halves, with a maximum of two (2) moments per half.

  - The stoppage between overtime periods does not count as a moment.

3.1 Temporary Substitutions — Head Injury (Concussion) and Blood Injury

- A player who suffers a potential head injury may be temporarily substituted to be evaluated by an ATC.
- A player with a blood injury may be temporarily substituted to receive treatment, stop the bleeding, clean any blood from her person or equipment, and replace any blood-soiled uniform or equipment before returning to play.
- The temporary substitute may be any player who has not previously been substituted for in that half; if all players have been substituted for in that half, a substituted player may re-enter as the temporary substitute.
- This process uses a traffic-light system:
  - Green Light: if the injured player is cleared to return and does so, she replaces the temporary substitute; no substitution or moment is charged.
  - Red Light: if the injured player is not cleared to return, or is cleared but opts not to return for her safety, the temporary substitution becomes permanent — only a substitution is charged (no moment is charged for a temporary substitution).
- No Remaining Substitutions: if the team has no remaining substitutions, the temporary substitute is permitted to remain in the match.
- Delays in Evaluation: if the injured player's clearance is delayed beyond the half/match, or the half/match ends during evaluation, the temporary substitute remains in the match and is recorded as a substitution for that half.

Case examples (all cases relate to presumed head injuries; each is independent and occurs in a different match):

Scenario	Ruling
Team A #1 is removed to be evaluated in the 8th minute and is cleared to return in the 15th.	A temporary substitution occurs in the 8th; upon clearance she returns to the match, so no substitution is charged.
Team A #2 is removed in the 19th minute to be evaluated; #3 enters as a temporary substitute and is not cleared pending further evaluation.	#3 becomes a permanent substitution in the first half; a substitution is charged.
Team B #1 is removed in the 38th minute to be evaluated; #2 enters as a temporary substitute. At halftime, #1 is cleared or not cleared.	In both circumstances, Team B is charged the first-half substitution, since #2 ended the period in #1's absence.
Team A #4 is removed in the 30th minute; Team A has used all of its substitutions in that half. #5 enters as a temporary substitute, and 5 minutes later #4 is not cleared to return.	#5 may remain in the match.

4. CARDS & REPORTING

Every dismissal is documented, but what happens to a player's or coach's eligibility afterward (suspension length, carryover between seasons, etc.) is administered by the league office — not the referee. Your responsibility is to issue the correct card and complete the reporting below.

4.1 On-Field Consequence of a Red Card

A player or coach receiving a red card is suspended for the remainder of that match. Any additional suspension (which match(es) she or he must sit out afterward) is tracked and enforced by the league through GotSport — you do not need to track or communicate that part.

4.2 Reporting

- Referees complete the RED CARD REPORT at the end of any game in which a dismissal occurs — including player/coach red cards, non-coaching staff member send-offs, or spectator send-offs.
- This includes send-offs for violent conduct, abusive language, or abusive behavior by any player, coach, staff member, or spectator, whether before or after the match.
- Both member club directors (home and away) are separately responsible for notifying the league of significant disciplinary incidents — your report is what they, and the league, rely on for the facts.

5. REFEREE CREW & COMPENSATION

5.1 Referee Crew

Each member club is expected to seek the best available referees in its geographic area; Regional Referees or higher are preferred when available. All referees must be registered with US Soccer and in good standing.

All GA matches are expected to have 3 referees. If an emergency renders a 3rd official unavailable or unable to continue, the home club must immediately notify the visiting club and GA Director of League Competitions via email (admin@girlsacademyleague.com), and a “club linesperson” may be utilized.

> ***Note:*** *A club linesperson is only responsible for notifying the Center Referee when the ball goes out of bounds — not indicating throw-in direction, calling fouls, or signaling offside (though staying in line with the last defender). A certified, uniformed referee subbing in is compensated by the home club; a club linesperson is not.*

5.2 Referee Compensation

All referee costs are the responsibility of the home club. If a neutral site is used, the designated home club pays unless the league pre-approves a shared cost. It is suggested the home team pay referees prior to the game upon arrival, via the Arbiter system or direct deposit through US Officials or other avenues. No payment of any type post-game. At Conference/National Events, referee fees are included in event fees.

Age Group	Center / AR1 / AR2	4th Official
Girls Academy U13–U15	$90 / $60 / $60	+$45
Girls Academy U16–U19	$100 / $70 / $70	+$45
Aspire U13–U15	$85 / $55 / $55	+$45

Age Group	Center / AR1 / AR2	4th Official
Aspire U16–U19	$95 / $65 / $65	+$45

Note: *4th Officials are not required for Girls Academy or Aspire matches.*

5.3 Emergency Contact

Emergency match day concerns or questions should be directed to the Director of League Competitions by calling the GA phone line at 317-401-6335.