

SMALL-SIDED SOCCER

What is Small-Sided Soccer?

Small-sided soccer is about what's best for young soccer players. It's for MYSA coaches, referees, administrators, spectators and anyone else concerned with the development of 5 to 12 year old soccer players.



Why Small-Sided Soccer?

Traditionally, youth soccer programs are viewed from an adult perspective, using the 11-a-side game as a reference.

Over the last few years we have seen a gradual move towards small-sided games for our youngest players. Many people have recognized modified and micro-soccer as the most successful vehicles for the development of players under 12 years of age.

A large percentage of MYSA coaches are first-time coach/parents with little free time. Small-sided soccer is a way to ease adults into coaching as well as to ease children into playing.

Be creative and remember, children play games to have fun. Small-sided games help ensure children have fun and at the same time, maximize their learning opportunities.



"We could drastically improve the standards of English football immediately if we made small children play on small pitches with small goals, so that they can be in the vicinity of each other and learn to pass the ball to each other instead of having to hoof it. They should ban playing on big pitches until children get to 13 or 14." Gary Lineker, Former player on England's national men's team.



Caution - Children at Play Proceed with Care

LEVELS OF INTERACTION

Adding players adds sophistication and complexity. Below are the number of possible interactions between players depending on the number on the field. Our goal is to keep the game simple.

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|--------------|----|--------------|-----|
| • 2-players | 2 | • 11-players | 110 |
| • 3-players | 6 | • 12-players | 132 |
| • 4-players | 12 | • 13-players | 156 |
| • 5-players | 20 | • 14-players | 182 |
| • 6-players | 30 | • 16-players | 240 |
| • 7-players | 42 | • 18-players | 306 |
| • 8-players | 56 | • 20-players | 380 |
| • 9-players | 72 | • 22-players | 462 |
| • 10-players | 90 | | |

CHILDREN GROWING, CHILDREN HAVING FUN

What is MYSA?

All boys and girls under the age of 19 are eligible. Through Minnesota Youth Soccer Association our children and volunteers have access to:

- Free player and coach clinics
- Licensing and certification programs for coaches and referees
- To liability and medical insurance coverage
- MN Thunder Ticket
- Subscription to Soccer Times newspaper
- Olympic Development Program
- Recreational programs for all players



THE ADVANTAGES OF PLAYING SMALL-SIDED GAMES

The benefits are clear:

- It's more appropriate for the players
- Promotes better soccer
- Improves the player development process and speeds up the acquisition of skills
- More enjoyable for the players
- Requires less field space
- Allows the smaller clubs to keep their recreational program in-house.

The Child Has:

- More time with the coach
- More practical space to be successful
- Increased number of contacts with the ball
- More actual playing time
- Energetic workouts due to playing both offense and defense
- Required to make more decisions
- Experience repeating game situations more frequently
- The work rate and involvement of a player stays consistent

The Small Field Allows for:

- More efficient use of space
- Games to be played simultaneously across a full size field
- Children to be physically more efficient in smaller space
- Less time to achieve a goal or advance to goal, successfully
- Children to be actively involved for a longer period of time



YOUTH PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

U6/U8

The fascination for the ball, the desire to master it and the thrill of scoring goals provides the launching pad. The joy and pleasure of the game are best nurtured by encouraging freedom of expression.

U9/U10

The motivation to learn basic skills is very high at this age. Children gradually begin to change from being self-centered to being self-critical and develop the need for group and/or team games.

U11/U12

Hero worship, identification with successful teams/players and a hunger for imaginative skills typify the mentality of this age. This is a time of transition from self-centered to self-critical. Players of this age have high arousal level in relation to the training of basic skills. This is the "Golden Age of Learning" and skill development. Demonstration is very important and the players learn best by doing. This is an appropriate time to introduce and teach basic principles of play.

The "Six principles" of player development should be the cornerstone of any program for players under the age of 12.

1. Developmentally appropriate activities.
2. Provide clear, concise and correct information.
3. Organize activities simple to complex.
4. Provide safe and appropriate training area.
5. Include decision making by the players within activities.
6. Ensure activities have implications for the game.

Practice activities checklist:

- Are the activities FUN?
- Are the activities organized?
- Are the players involved in the activities?
- Is creativity and decision making being used?
- Are the spaces used appropriate?
- Is the coach's feedback appropriate?
- Are there implications for the game?

MYSA The Small-Sided Game



"Kids get tied up in the emotional level of the game. A little one playing 11-a-side says, "We won!" but he touched the ball three times today. Our responsibility is DEVELOPMENT! So we must play 4 v 4 and 6 v 6 with plenty of time and space – to learn combinations, skills, awareness, "smartness". Rinus Michels, former Dutch National Coach

Minnesota Youth Soccer Association

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Revision (1.30.02)