

# The Implementation of Small-sided Games

Why 4v4 at U8

Why now

---

# Goals for this Presentation

- Unite the CUSL leadership toward the goal of implementation of Small-sided Games as recommended by the US Youth Soccer Association.
- Provide research-based evidence on the merits of 4v4 at U8.



# Soccer Leadership Defined

- Soccer experts are not defined solely as coaches, administrators, or referees.
- Each provide an invaluable service to youth sports.
- When all three branches work in unison toward a common goal, the player benefits.



# C.A.R.E.

- Coaches
  - Player development & peer education
- Administrators
  - Organization, logistics & vision
- Referees
  - Fair Play & peer education
- Each is responsible for improving the Game!



# Region II States & SSG

- Indiana
- Illinois
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- Nebraska
- North Dakota
- Ohio North
- South Dakota
- Wisconsin



# US Youth Soccer States & SSG

- Region I – 12 of 15 states (5, 11v11 @ U12)
- Region II – 13 of 14 states
- Region III – 12 of 12 states
- Region IV – 9 of 14 states (2, 11v11 @ U12)
- Total – 46 of 55 State Associations have adopted SSG, 39 of the 46 through U12



# International Sampling of SSG

<u>Country</u>	<u>U8</u>	<u>U10</u>	<u>U12</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Australia	6v6	9v9	11v11	Modifications at U12
Belgium	5v5	8v8	11v11	
Bolivia	8v8	8v8	8v8	11v11 at U14
Cameroon	7v7	9v9	9v9	11v11 at U14
Canada	4v4	7v7	8v8	Recommendations
El Salvador	4v4	5v5	7v7	8v8 to U14



# International Sampling (cont.)

<u>Country</u>	<u>U8</u>	<u>U10</u>	<u>U12</u>	<u>Notes</u>
England	6v6	9v9	11v11	9v9 at U11
Finland	5v5	7v7	9v9	11v11 at U14
Germany	7v7	7v7	7v7	
Hungary	6v6	8v8	11v11	8v8 at U11
Ireland	5v5	7v7	9v9	
Holland	4v4	7v7	11v11	7v7 at U11





# International Sampling (cont.)

<u>Country</u>	<u>U8</u>	<u>U10</u>	<u>U12</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Norway	5v5	5v5	7v7	
Portugal	N/A	7v7	7v7	11v11 at U14
Romania	5v5	8v8	8v8	
Scotland	4v4	7v7	7v7	
Spain	5v5	5v5	7v7	11v11 at U14
Sweden	5v5	5v5	7v7	





## The Best Arguments Against Small-sided Games

# NOT!

**Thomas W. Turner, Ph.D.,**  
**Ohio Youth Soccer Association North**  
**Director of Coaching and Player Development**  
**US Soccer National Instructional Staff**  
**US Youth Soccer National Instructional Staff**

**Perspective....**

**“As a kid you need to touch the ball as much as you can. You should always be with the ball. You should have a feeling that wherever the ball is, you can do anything with it. No matter where it is, where it is on your body, how it’s spinning, how it’s coming at you, the speed it’s coming at you, anything.....”**



**Landon Donovan, USA World Cup hero, in *Soccer America*, July 2002**



**“You can learn the tactical side of the game later. It’s amazing to me that people put so much emphasis on trying to be tactical and worry about winning when it doesn’t matter when you’re 12 years old. We’re going to have big, strong, fast players. We’re Americans, we’re athletes. But if we never learn at an early age to be good on the ball, then it’s just useless.”**

**Landon Donovan, USA World Cup hero, in *Soccer America*, July 2002**

**It's all about Touches and Opportunities....**

## **4v4 versus 8v8**

**Passes: +135% or 585 more passes in 4v4 games**

**Shots Taken: +260% or 481 more shots in 4v4 games**

**Goals Scored: +500% or 301 more goals in 4v4 games**

**1v1's: +225% or 525 more 1v1's in 4v4 games**

**Tricks, Turns and Moves: +280% or 436 more tricks, turns, and moves**



**These data were collected in a 2002-2003 study conducted for Manchester United Football Club by Dr. Rick Fernoglio, a lecturer in Exercise Science at Manchester Metropolitan University. Fifteen (15) 4v4 and 8v8 games were videotaped and analyzed for the study. This study was reported on page 6 of the March 2004 edition of Success in Soccer magazine.**



# SMALL SIDED GAMES

Coaching Education Department  
Sam Snow, Director of Coaching Education

# SSG BENEFITS TO PLAYERS

- ✓ **Players under twelve are routinely structured into formal positions at ages when their spatial awareness and technical range do not lend themselves to a practical understanding of large group tactics.**
- ✓ **More “fun” and personal enjoyment; due to small fields and simplified rules.**

*The Game for **All Kids!***<sup>SM</sup>



# SSG BENEFITS TO PLAYERS

- ✓ **More playing time, which encourages maximum individual participation.**
- ✓ **More individual involvement improves fitness.**
- ✓ **More responsibility, every child has greater opportunities to score or stop the opponents from scoring, this builds their self-esteem and self-confidence.**

*The Game for **All Kids!***<sup>SM</sup>





# EVIDENCE OF VALUE OF SSG

There is also evidence, from exercise physiology studies, of improved physical fitness due to the SSG environment. Anecdotal inquiry shows psychologically children prefer the SSG format.

*The Game for All Kids!*<sup>SM</sup>



# Levels of Interaction

$n(n-1)$

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

*The Game for All Kids!*<sup>SM</sup>



# EVIDENCE OF VALUE OF SSG

## ✓ Observation Analysis

- The purpose of the following study, conducted by the California Youth Soccer Association – South using SoftSport SecondLook software, was to collect data to compare the 4 vs. 4 game to the 8 vs. 8 game for U8 players.

*The Game for All Kids!*<sup>SM</sup>



# Jackie - Player Performance - Total Passes



## Comparison of Jackie's Performance

8 v 8 versus 4 v 4 game

- She had almost 4 times more passes in the small game
- She scored 1 goal and had 1 shot on goal in both games
- Her completion rate was up (from 25% to 35% in the small game)
- She intercepted almost 5 times more balls from the opponent in the small game
- She had 6 times more completed passes in the small game (from 3 to 18 passes)

*The Game for All Kids!*<sup>SM</sup>



# Laura - Player Performance - Total Passes

**Red Team - No "4"**



## Comparison of Laura's Performance

8 v 8 versus 4 v 4 game

- She had almost 4 times more passes in the small game
- She scored 2 goals and 3 shots on the small game
- She intercepted more than 3 times the ball from the opponent
- Her completion rate was down (most of her lost passes were in the attacking 1/2)
- She had 2 times more completed passes in the small game (10 versus 5 passes)

*The Game for All Kids!*<sup>SM</sup>



# Page - Player Performance - Total Passes

Blue Team - No "12"



## Comparison of Page's Performance

8 v 8 versus 4 v 4 game

- She had almost 14 times more passes in the small game
- She scored 2 goals and 5 shots in the small game and none in the large game
- She intercepted almost 15 times the ball from the opponent in the small game
- Her completion rate was 36% in the small game and 0 in the large game
- She went from no completed passes in the large game to 10 completed passes in the large game (from 0 to 10 passes)
- Most of her passes were in the attacking half

*The Game for All Kids!*<sup>SM</sup>



# More Players Benefited

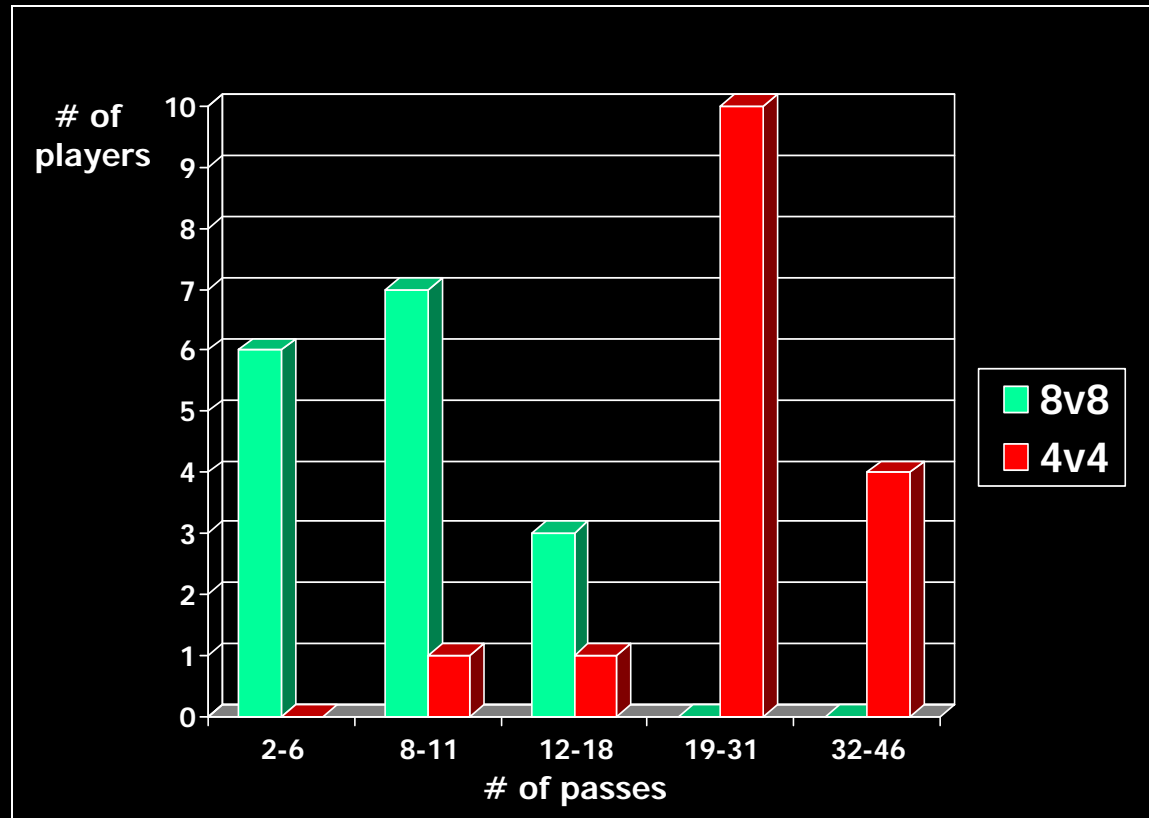
## 4 vs. 4

- 14 of 16 players had over 19 passes
- Only 1 less than 12
- None less than 8

## 8 vs. 8

- Only 3 of 16 players had more than 12
- None more than 18
- 6 between 2-6

20 minute games



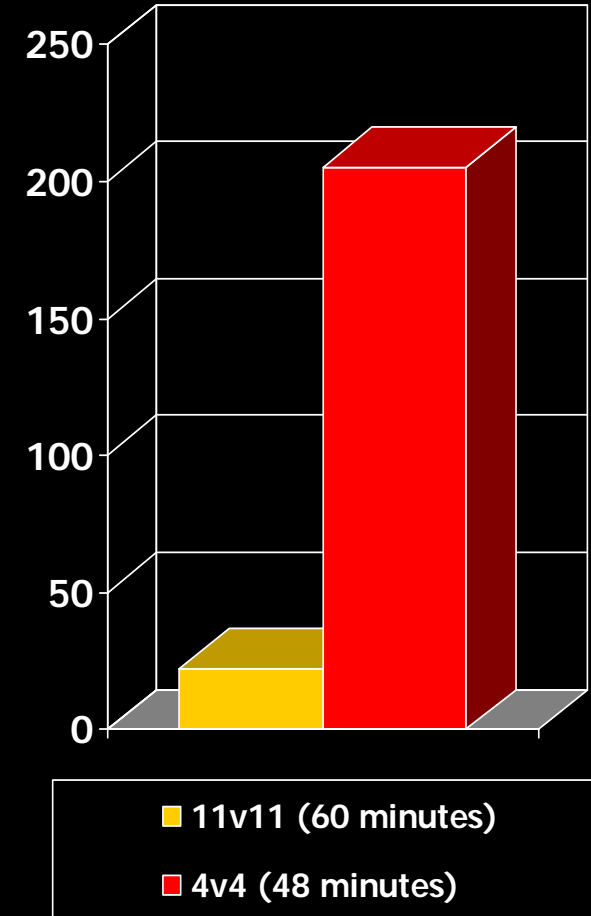
*The Game for All Kids!*<sup>SM</sup>



# Touches per Game Study (U10 boys)

## For U10 team

- **11 vs. 11**
  - 22 touches in 60 minutes
  - Average (.37 touches per minute)
- **4 vs. 4**
  - 205 touches in 48 minutes
  - Average (4.3 touches per minute)



The Game for *All Kids!*<sup>SM</sup>





# Characteristics of U8 Soccer Players Second & Third Grade



Psychomotor Development

Cognitive Development

Psychosocial Development

# Cognitive Development

- Concrete operational stage (Piaget)
- The limited ability to tend to more than one task at a time leaves little or no capacity for “tactical” decision making.
- Concept of time and space relationship is just beginning to develop and will be limited by the capacity to attend to multiple tasks.

# Cognitive Development

- Limited experience with personal evaluation; effort is synonymous with performance.
- Knowledge is compartmentalized; some relationships that 'do' exist are not recognized and some relationships that 'do not' exist are assumed.

# Psychosocial Development

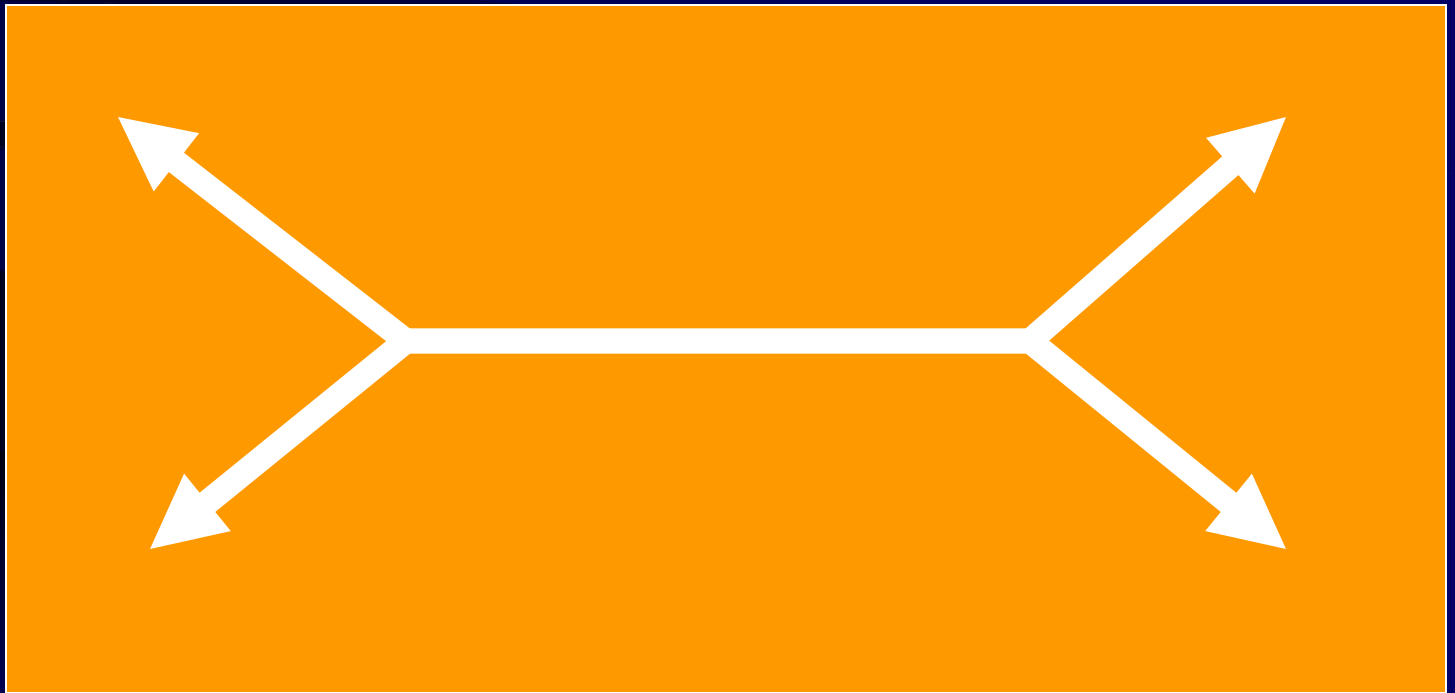
- Self-concept and body awareness are beginning to develop, but very fragile.
- Great needs for approval from adults such as parents, teachers, and coaches; like to show individual skill.

# Psychosocial Development

- Easily bruised psychologically by adults; negative comments carry great weight.
- Like to play soccer because it is “fun”; intrinsically motivated.

# U8 Tactical Sign

## Change of Direction



# US Soccer National Staff Quotes

“At the younger ages (6 to about 10), soccer is not a team sport. On the contrary, it is a time for children to develop their individual relationship with the ball. The fact that younger children are placed into team environments is not their fault.”



# US Soccer National Staff Quotes

“Do not attempt to replicate organization schemes that you have seen older teams doing. Seven and eight year olds are not capable of playing anything that resembles organized soccer. For example, team concepts such as combination play or positions should not be introduced at this age.”





# US Soccer National Staff Quotes

“U.S. Soccer recommends that there be no organized matches at this age. Consistently set up mini games at practice for your kids to compete with and against each other...They are not ready for specific soccer type information and there should be no emphasis on team concepts or positions.”



# Recreational Soccer?

- If Classics Hammer FC is only interested in select soccer and U8 soccer is by its very nature recreational, the question can be asked why do we care?
  - Skill Development
  - Coaching
  - Player Retention



# Summary

- Countries such as England, Holland, Spain
- Recommended by U.S. Soccer National Staff, US Youth Soccer, US Clubs
- Mandated in 46 of 55 State Associations, including 13 of 14 in Region II



# Closing Thoughts

- The training curriculum for a U8 player includes 95-100% focus on technical training
  - Dribbling, passing & receiving
- If 7 and 8 year olds are not able to focus on more than one thing at a time, each level of interaction added to the game makes their focus on performing a skill more difficult.



# More Closing Thoughts

- Failure affects a 7 or 8 year-old's psyche in a negative way and should be much less part of the learning cycle than at older ages.
- Identifying children as “Premier”, “Competitive 1”, etc... is inappropriate for a 7 or 8 year old.



# Last Closing Thoughts

- Since 7 and 8 year olds view their effort as synonymous with performance, increasing their time on task will positively impact their self-perception.
- Think about it, would you have more FUN playing 8v8 or 4v4?



# Why 4v4 at U8?

- Because it is more FUN...which will necessarily instill a **Love of the Game** in the child and increase player retention.
- Because it is right...for all players.
- Because learning a skill in a less competitive environment will lead to a greater sense of accomplishment.



# References

- The Best Arguments Against Small-sided Games - NOT!
  - Thomas W. Turner, Ph.D., DOC, Ohio-North
- Small-sided Games
  - Sam Snow, US Youth Soccer Director of Coaching





# References

- California South Youth Soccer SSG Study
  - John Weinerth
- U8 Powerpoint Presentation
  - Dr. Ron Quinn, National Youth License
- Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States
  - United States Soccer Federation





# Contact Information

- Mike Cullina
  - Technical Director, Classics Hammer FC
  - Former DoC, Nebraska State Soccer
  - US Youth Soccer Region II ODP Staff Coach
  - USSF “A” & “National Youth” License
  - NSCAA “Premier” & “GK II” Diploma
  - (E) - [cullina@classicshammerfc.com](mailto:cullina@classicshammerfc.com)



# Thank You

