

## WINTER 2017 FUTSAL PLAY

By John Hannan

This winter the Roadrunners SC have decided to use futsal as its primary soccer developmental tool.

The vast majority of our club will be participating in the futsal league at Step Ahead Sports in Bolingbrook as well as all of our teams training futsal once per week along with playing in our own in-house futsal league. So in most cases, three events per week beginning the week of January 2nd thru March 26th. The decision to have our teams play futsal was purely for soccer development reasons. Namely, comfort level with the ball; individual and small group tactics; engagement and work rate.

As I shared with you in an article last winter ('Why Futsal?') which expounded upon the benefits of futsal, there are many unique qualities that are present within this sport. By playing with five players (four field players and a goal keeper), this naturally lends itself to the aforementioned soccer development characteristics. While it is a mistake to generalize, there are definitely some common deficiencies that our players have and that most youth players share. Technical execution of individual foot skills (how to do) and its tactical application (when, where, why); movement off the ball to create space for oneself and others; comfort level in front of goal; combination play and purposeful possession to breakdown defenses; and before all of these can be formed, self discipline, engagement and work rate. For me, the true values of futsal are that players are always on task; individual player contact with the ball is very high; and that players receive immediate feedback on their skill and decisions. There is no hiding in futsal. All the good and the bad are exposed and then the absolute necessity of quality training, high attendance and individual work on own are all reinforced.

It will be important that all players and interested parents/guardians use this time prior to the start of the futsal league to familiarize themselves with the futsal rules, which are much different than the outdoor soccer rules. These will also be reinforced in our own in house futsal sessions and at trainings held at Walker Athletics and Avery Coonley School, both of which are on basketball courts. I strongly encourage all of you to read the Step Ahead futsal rules and Tips so to get a cognitive understanding of them. But also to either go to Step Ahead Sports to watch a match or two and/or to watch a futsal match via web, a few links are below. The better option would be to watch the match in person as you get a better sense of the size of the court and how the game is played out.

In addition to the differences in rules, the other noticeable difference is the soccer ball that is used in futsal. It would be equivalent to a size #4 ball but is made such that it does not have the bounce of a normal soccer ball so to offset the fast playing surface. This allows the ball to stay on the floor more and thus players are forced to solve problems with skill and thought rather than merely physical ones. Skill and decision making makes a good futsal player where in the outdoor game, the better athletes can more easily dominate the game. This is why so many of the top soccer players, particularly those from South America, grew up playing futsal. They include such great names as Messi, Neymar, Ronaldo,...

Once the skill set is present and players learn to make good decisions using the game as 'the best teacher' while blending in their own personality and imagination, a player's athletic ability only enhances their overall performance. But first priority is the skill and making good decisions.

I am excited about the prospects of what our players could accomplish this winter using futsal as our platform. While the outdoor game will always remain our clubs objective, winter and futsal provides us with a unique opportunity to further our player's growth in a meaningful and fun experience. I know you will share my excitement once you and the players have had a chance to learn more about futsal and the many benefits it offers.

Have a wonderful Christmas & Happy New Year and we look forward to seeing you all in 2017.

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## LINKS

A basic picture of futsal:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=q6fuxeESym4>

Roadrunners 2016 BU17 Premier win Championship at Futsal regionals:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8NAMmXaShNI>

Rule video- (doesn't talk about gk back pass which is in the Step Ahead Rules)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=eVXRGRflR7w>

Step Ahead Rules and tips:

[http://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0112/9493/SAS\\_Futsal\\_Rules\\_Tip\\_Sheet\\_as\\_of\\_Winter\\_16-17.pdf](http://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0112/9493/SAS_Futsal_Rules_Tip_Sheet_as_of_Winter_16-17.pdf)