

Small Sided Games 2003

This past August, US Youth Soccer's State Associations approved changes to the Policy on Players and Playing Rules that will affect the game for players under age twelve. Current US Youth Soccer policies require that teams under 10 and younger play games with not more than eight players per side. Effective September 1st, 2003 this rule will detail age group specific playing numbers.

Rule 303. LENGTH OF GAMES, NUMBER OF PLAYERS, OVERTIME PERIODS, AND BALL SPECIFICATIONS

Section 1. (a) Except as provided by USYSA or a State Association, the length of games, overtime periods, ball size, ball circumference, ball weight, and number of players for each age group is as follows:

| <u>Age Group</u> | <u>Game Length</u> | <u>Overtime Periods</u> | <u>Size</u> | <u>Circumference</u> | <u>Weight</u> | <u>Number of Players</u> |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|------------------|--|
| <i>(Under 13- Under 19 are unaffected by rule change)</i> | | | | | | |
| <u>Under 12</u> | <u>Two 30' halves</u> | <u>Two 10' halves golden goal</u> | <u>#4</u> | <u>25-26 in</u> | <u>11-13 ozs</u> | <u>No more than 11, 8 strongly recommended</u> |
| <u>Under 11</u> | <u>Two 30' halves</u> | <u>Two 10' halves golden goal</u> | <u>#4</u> | <u>25-26 in</u> | <u>11-13 ozs</u> | <u>No more than 11, 8 strongly recommended</u> |
| <u>Under 10</u> | <u>Two 25' halves</u> | <u>NONE</u> | <u>#4</u> | <u>25-26 in</u> | <u>11-13 ozs</u> | <u>No more than 7, 6 strongly recommended</u> |
| <u>Under 8</u> | <u>4 12' quarters</u> | <u>NONE</u> | <u>#3</u> | <u>23-24 in</u> | <u>11-12 ozs</u> | <u>No more than 5, 4 strongly recommended</u> |
| <u>Under 6</u> | <u>4 8' quarters</u> | <u>NONE</u> | <u>#3</u> | <u>23-24 in</u> | <u>11-12 ozs</u> | <u>No more than 4, 3 strongly recommended</u> |

Frequently Asked Question's

Why make the change? It makes the game of soccer a better experience for children. More touches on the ball, more opportunities to make decisions, more actual play. Energetic workouts due to playing both attacking and defensive roles. While learning both offense and defense, a player will become more complete and will understand more readily the roles and importance of teammates.

Whose idea was this? US Youth Soccer has been a proponent of small sided games since the 1980's. Small sided games are endorsed by our national coaching committee, the State Directors of Coaching, US National Team Coaches for Men & Women, including many foreign soccer organizations: England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, France, Korea to name a few!

Why can't they play 11v11 like "real" soccer? The 11v11 format is the adult version of the game. Using an adult size field and goals makes little sense for children under the age of twelve.

Other sports don't alter their game- why does soccer? It's not a good comparison with football or baseball- neither has the element of transition that soccer does. Look at basketball- how many kids play basketball 5 on 5? Most basketball is played 1v1, 2v1 or 2v2 in a driveway! Kids don't wait until they have nine friends to have a game! Playing on a small field is a more efficient use of space, it takes less time to advance for a shot on goal, and children are more actively involved for a longer period of time.

I didn't grow up playing this way! True! Whether you grew up in the USA or another country, soccer was traditionally played 11v11 for all age groups. This isn't true any longer- small sided game formats are in use all over the world- not just in the US.

How will they learn to play 11v11? Progressing from 3v3, 4v4, 6v6, to 8v8 BEFORE 11v11 is a sound educational method. The problem is that young players were forced into 11v11 before their bodies were physically developed to play the adult version of the game. Any notion that players will be less prepared to play 11v11 is not justified.

Does competitive or travel have to play by this new rule? The decision to play small sided games is based on "age appropriate" philosophy- the level of play is not a factor. All players of that age group should play the same format.

This will never work! Sure it will! A number of State Associations have been playing 3v3 at under 6 & 4v4 at under 8 successfully for more than a dozen years! Adopting 8v8 for under 11's and under 12's is the fastest growing trend in youth soccer.

Where do I find rules? The US Youth Soccer website www.usyouthsoccer.org has playing rules posted in the Coaches, Referees and Download Center pages. A free brochure, "Official Handbook: Introductory Rules for Small Sided Games U6 & U8" is available from your State Association.

Will I need more coaches? No, if you currently play 8v8 for under 8's you probably have eleven or twelve players rostered per team. To play 4v4 without changing your roster sizes simply use the "dual field" method described below.

Will I need more referees? Small sided games rarely need more than one referee to cover the field. Under 6's playing 3v3 rarely have need for the referee to solve a dispute more serious than who's "kick in" it is! If you have a shortage of certified referees consider using coaches or parents as "officials"- someone to monitor the game. Training materials specific to small sided games are available for free from US Youth Soccer or your State Association.

Will I need more fields? Rather than build new fields "convert" your existing ones. For U12 8v8 they can play across the width of an existing full size field. 3v3 and 4v4 fields can be laid out in grassy spaces that were previously unsuitable for soccer. The smaller dimensions of a 3v3 field allow for as

Will I need more goals? YES! But they should not be permanent or expensive. A number of manufacturers offer lightweight portable goals or you can make your own. Remember player safety is a priority- don't let children hang or play on the goals.

We'll have to break up our current team rosters! No, Simply adopt the "dual field" method explained below!

How many players on a roster? If playing 3v3 no more than six, if 4v4 no more than seven. Since participation is a priority, every player should play at least 50% of each game. If playing "dual field" you could have as many as nine or ten on a 3v3 roster and in 4v4 as many as ten or eleven on a roster.

What is the "dual field" method? We recommend the "dual field" method for 3v3 and 4v4- two fields, side by side, with the coaches and substitutes in between. Players rotate from Field "A" to Field "B" to Substitute. Using this method maximizes player participation. (How to coach two fields at once? That's the beauty of two fields- you can't! Let the kids play! Practices are the coaches time, games are for the players.

I've heard of "academy" and "scramble" methods- what are they? Rather than a set number of players on a team roster, each player practices with a larger group of players and several coaches. On game day players are divided into teams of three or four for games. Practice groups or "academies" may be formed around neighborhoods or school attendance zones.

Will other State Associations play the same format as our state? The rule change is to a national policy. While each State Association is free to adopt the format they feel best meets the needs of its members, interplay between States is governed by this rule.

What is the easiest way to implement the new rules? The largest hurdles are education and logistics. Parents, coaches, referees need to be informed of the reasons for the change as well as the rules of play. Your State Association can provide coaching courses and clinics as well as assist with referee training. Converting existing fields is as simple as remarking fields to the small sided games dimensions and acquiring small goals.

Where do I go for help in implementing the small sided games? Coaching courses specific to each age group are available as are free materials dealing with the small sided game. Information is available on the US Youth Soccer website www.usyouthsoccer.org or contact your State Association or US Youth Soccer (800) 4 SOCCER.

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US Youth Soccer Official Under 12 Playing Recommendations

US Youth Soccer recommended modifications to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

FIFA Laws of the Game can be found at www.ussoccer.com/referees.

Please note the U12 addendum and appendix.

Law 1 – The Field of Play

Dimensions: The field of play must be rectangular. The length of the touchline must be greater than the length of the goal line.

Length: minimum 70 yards maximum 80 yards

Width: minimum 45 yards maximum 55 yards

Field Markings: Distinctive lines not more than (5) inches wide. The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line. The center mark is indicated at the midpoint of the halfway line. A circle with a radius of eight (8) yards is marked around it.

The Goal area: Conform to FIFA.

The Penalty Area: A penalty area is defined at each end of the field as follows: Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, fourteen (14) yards from the inside of each goalpost. These lines extend into the field of play for a distance of fourteen (14) yards and are joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line. The area bounded by these lines and the goal line is the penalty area. Within each penalty area a penalty mark is made ten (10) yards from the midpoint between the goalposts and equidistant to them. An arc of a circle with a radius of eight (8) yards from each penalty mark is drawn outside the penalty area.

Flagposts: Conform to FIFA.

The Corner Arc: Conform to FIFA.

Goals: Conform to FIFA with exception that the maximum distance between the posts is eighteen (18) feet and the maximum distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is six (6) feet.

Law 2 – The Ball: Size four (4).

Law 3 – The Number of Players: A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than eight players, one of whom is the goalkeeper. A match may not start if either team consists of fewer than seven players.

Substitutions: At any stoppage and unlimited.

Law 4 – The Players Equipment: Conform to FIFA. Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but uniforms must still distinguish teams.

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Law 5 – The Referee: Registered referee.

Law 6 – The Assistant Referee: Use U.S.S.F. registered referees or club linesmen/women.

Law 7 – The Duration of the Match: Conform to FIFA with the exception of the match being divided into two (2) halves of thirty (30) minutes each. There shall be a half-time interval of five (5) minutes.

Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play: Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents of the team taking the kick-off are at least eight (8) yards from the ball until it is in play.

Law 9 – The Ball In and Out of Play: Conform to FIFA.

Law 10 – The Method of Scoring: Conform to FIFA.

Law 11 – Offside: Conform to FIFA.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct: Conform to FIFA with the exception that an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team at the center spot on the halfway line if a goalkeeper punts or drop-kicks the ball in the air from his/her penalty area into the opponents penalty area.

Law 13 – Free Kicks: Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents are at least eight (8) yards from the ball.

Law 14 – The Penalty Kick: Conform to FIFA with the exceptions that the penalty mark is at ten yards and that players other than the kicker and defending goalkeeper are at least eight (8) yards from the penalty mark.

Law 15 – The Throw-In: Conform to FIFA.

Law 16 – The Goal Kick: Conform to FIFA.

Law 17 – The Corner Kick: Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents remain at least eight (8) yards away from the ball until it is in play.

PLEASE ALSO READ THE U12 ADDENDUM AND APPENDIX.



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ADDENDUM

MODIFIED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GAME FOR U12

Law 1 The Field of Play dimensions are smaller to accommodate the eight-versus-eight game and are appropriate for the movement capabilities of ten- and eleven-year-old children. These adjusted dimensions provide more practical space allowing players to be successful.

Field Markings: per FIFA with the exception of the center circle, penalty area, penalty mark and penalty arc.

Goals: the goal, 6 x 18 feet, is the same for the U10 and U12 age groups. By using the same size goal for both age groups clubs will have to buy fewer goals.

Law 2 The Ball: must be a size four. The smaller ball is lighter and more easily kicked, received, headed, dribbled, caught, thrown and passed.

Law 3 The Number of Players: The eight-a-side game includes the goalkeeper. The smaller number of field players will provide the opportunity for the children to further develop their physical and technical abilities. These are valuable traits for all soccer players to develop. With fewer players on the field each child has an increased number of contacts with the ball and has more actual playing time. Additionally the players will be required to make more decisions and experience repeating game situations frequently. The work rate and involvement of players will be more consistent. While learning both offense and defense, players will become well rounded and will understand more readily the roles and importance of teammates. The smaller field dimensions and number of players on the field of play will require more concentration on transition, which is a vitally important tactical concept for the players to learn. The minimum number of players to begin a match for preteen players in SSG should be one (1) less than the number required on the field. That is for U12 the minimum will be seven (7) and for U10 the minimum will be five (5). There should not be a minimum for U8 and U6 and clubs, administrators, coaches and referees should be encouraged to allow players from the team with sufficient numbers to 'loan' a player or two to the team that is short players and then PLAY.

Law 6 The Assistant Referees: per FIFA. Use registered referees or club linesmen/women.

Law 7 The Duration of the Match: per FIFA with the exception of the halves being 30 minutes each.

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Law 8 The Start and Restart of Play: per FIFA. The distance the defending players must be away from the ball until it is kicked is the same as the radius of the center circle.

Law 10 Goal Scored: shall conform to FIFA and the sections concerning Winning Team and Competition Rules shall conform to US Youth Soccer guidelines.

Law 12 The rule on the goalkeeper's distribution still allows for the ball to be punted the entire length of the field, it just can not go directly into the opponents' penalty area

Law 13 Free Kicks: per FIFA. The distance the defending players must be away from the ball until it is kicked is the same as the radius of the center circle.

Law 14 Conform to FIFA with the exceptions that the penalty mark is ten yards from the center of the goal line and those players other than the kicker and defending goalkeeper are at least eight yards from the penalty mark. The distance of eight yards conforms to the radius of the center circle. The distance of ten yards from the center of the goalmouth for the penalty mark fits within the reduced dimensions of the penalty area and is a reasonable distance for the kick.

Law 17 The Corner Kick: per FIFA. The distance the defending players must be away from the ball until it is kicked is the same as the radius of the center circle.

- ⇒ Roster Size: The recommended minimum roster size is eleven and the maximum recommended roster size is thirteen.
- ⇒ Playing Time: refer to the Effective Playing Time chart.

ADVANTAGES OF PLAYING SMALL SIDED GAMES

- More time with the coach
- Energetic workouts due to playing both offense and defense
- More efficient use of field space
- Matches can be played simultaneously across a full size field
- Children are physically more efficient in smaller space
- Children are actively involved for a longer period of time
- It takes less time to score a goal or advance to goal
- Greater success rate for the players

US Youth Soccer Recommendations

- ❖ Opposing coaches, players and parents should shake hands after each match.
- ❖ Parent/coaches, non-participating players and spectators should be there to enjoy and encourage the activity of the youngsters.
- ❖ Spectator and team benches should be on opposite sides of the field.
- ❖ No alcoholic beverages or tobacco products will be consumed or allowed near the playing area.

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- ❖ Coaches of U12 teams should attend the U10/U12 Youth Module coaching course and the Grade 9 referee course.

Effective Playing Time Relative to Game Format and Roster Size

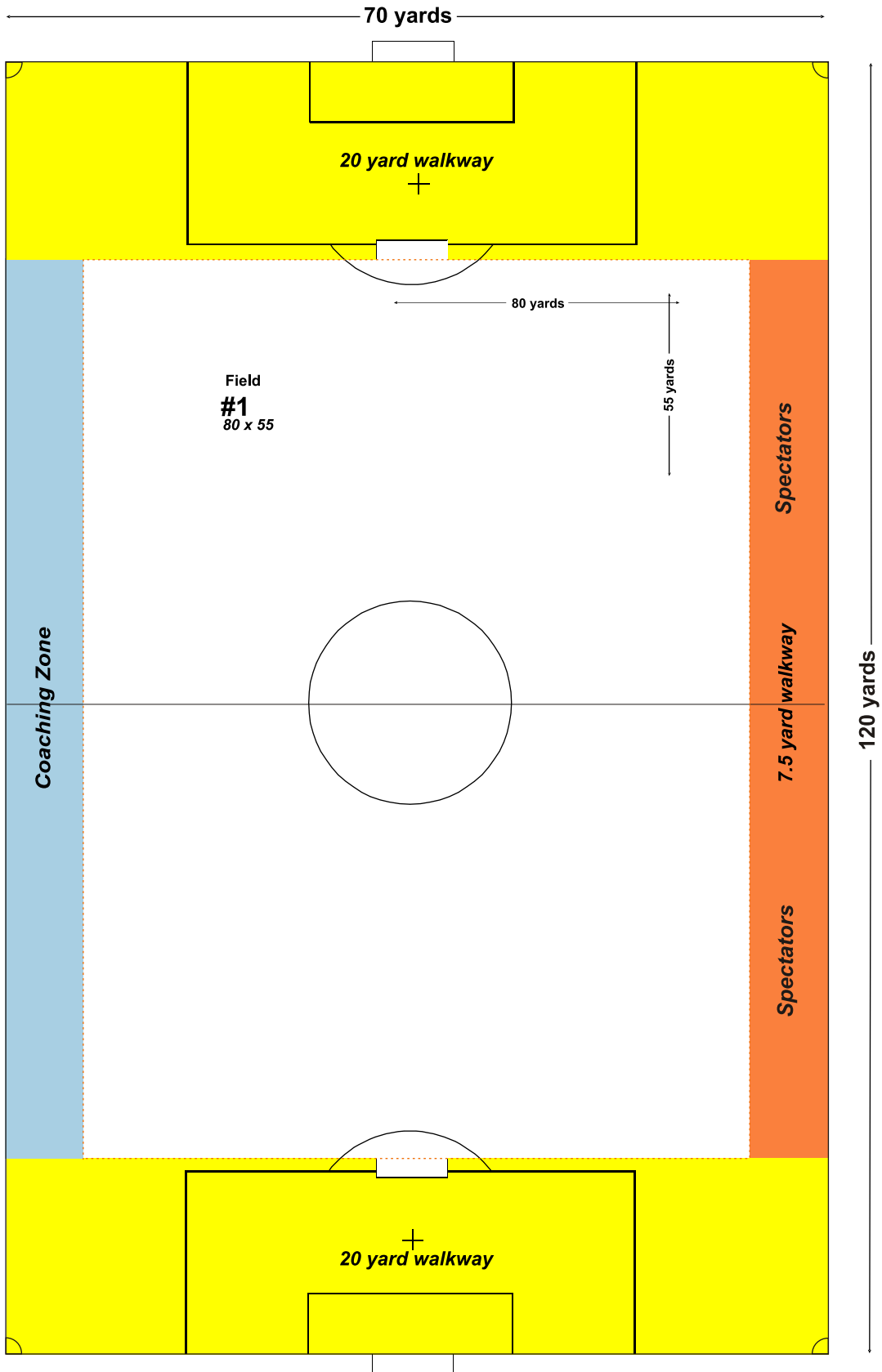
| Single Game | Roster Size > | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----|----|
| Game Format | Game Duration | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 v 3 (U-5/6) | 4 x 8 min. quarters | 100% 32 min | 75% 24 min | 60% 19 min | 50% 16 min | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 v 4 (U-7/8) | 4 x 12 min. quarters | | 100% 48 min | 80% 38 min | 66% 32 min | 57% 27 min | 50% 24 min | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 v 5 (U-7/8) | 4 x 12 min. quarters | | | 100% 48 min | 83% 40 min | 71% 34 min | 62% 30 min | 55% 26 min | 50% 24 min | | | | | | | | |
| 6 v 6 (U-9/10) | 2 x 25 min. halves | | | | 100% 50 min | 85% 42 min | 75% 37 min | 66% 33 min | 60% 30 min | 54% 27 min | 50% 25 min | | | | | | |
| 8 v 8 (U-11/12) | 2 x 30 min. halves | | | | | | 100% 60 min | 88% 53 min | 80% 48 min | 72% 43 min | 66% 40 min | 61% 36 min | 57% 34 min | 53% 32 min | 50% 30 min | | |

| Split Game | Roster Size > | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|----------------------|----------------------|---|---|---|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Game Format | Game Duration | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 v 3 (U-5/6) Split | 4 x 8 min. quarters | | | | 100% 32 min | 85% 27 min | 75% 24 min | 66% 21 min | 60% 19 min | 54% 17 min | 50% 16 min | | | | | | |
| 4 v 4 (U-7/8) Split | 4 x 12 min. quarters | | | | | | 100% 48 min | 88% 42 min | 80% 38 min | 72% 34 min | 66% 32 min | 61% 29 min | 57% 27 min | 53% 25 min | 50% 24 min | | |
| 5 v 5 (U-7/8) Split | 4 x 12 min. quarters | | | | | | | | 100% 48 min | 90% 43 min | 83% 40 min | 76% 36 min | 71% 34 min | 66% 32 min | 62% 30 min | 58% 28 min | 55% 26 min |
| 6 v 6 (U-9/10) Split | 2 x 25 min. halves | | | | | | | | | | 100% 50 min | 92% 46 min | 85% 42 min | 80% 40 min | 75% 37 min | 70% 35 min | 66% 33 min |

These tables show effective playing time relative to game format and roster size. The figures are presented as a) percentages of total playing time and b) as actual minutes played. Both figures assume equal rotation of players. At the youth level, a minimum goal of 70% playing time is recommended. Tables provided by Dr. Thomas Turner with contributions from Mr. Bill Spens.

Suggested Set-up for 8v8 Fields

Dividing a 120 x 70 field into 1 - 80 x 55 field (maximum field size)



Suggested Set-up for 8v8 Fields

Dividing a 120 x 70 field into 2 - 60 x 45 fields (minimum field size)

