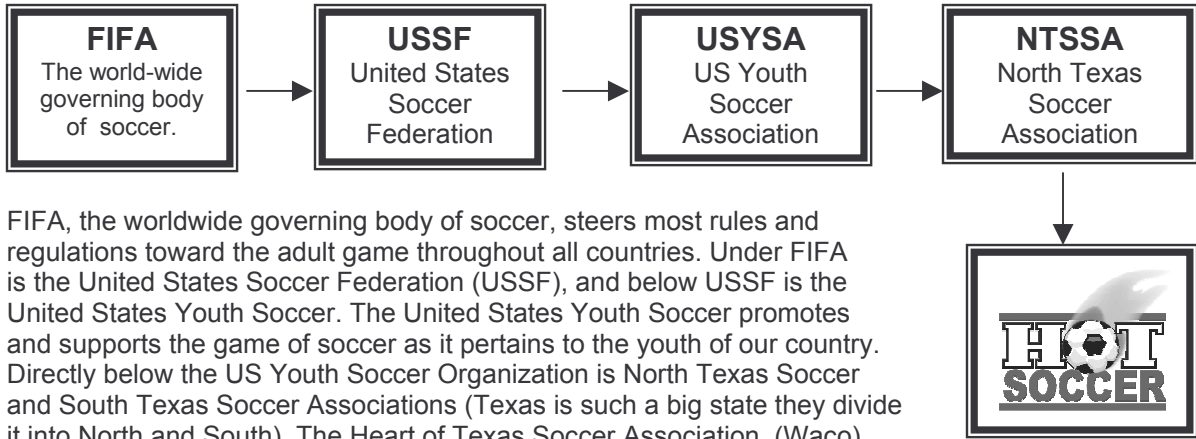


Small-Sided Soccer in Youth Games

Heart of Texas Soccer will introduce “small-sided soccer” into play this 2004 Fall season. Small-sided soccer is terminology used to describe 3 v 3 or 4 v 4 small team play, and will be introduced to the U5, U6, U7 and U8 age groups this Fall.

North Texas Soccer Association has mandated the implementation of small-sided teams this season at HOT. This is a new rule adopted throughout the soccer associations in the United States. Other associations across the U.S. that play in recreational leagues have/or will be adopting small-sided soccer for their youth. Below is the HISTORY and ORGANIZATION of soccer in the United States. It is important you understand that we are a small part of a much larger organization.

HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION



FIFA, the worldwide governing body of soccer, steers most rules and regulations toward the adult game throughout all countries. Under FIFA is the United States Soccer Federation (USSF), and below USSF is the United States Youth Soccer. The United States Youth Soccer promotes and supports the game of soccer as it pertains to the youth of our country. Directly below the US Youth Soccer Organization is North Texas Soccer and South Texas Soccer Associations (Texas is such a big state they divide it into North and South). The Heart of Texas Soccer Association (Waco) reports to North Texas Soccer Association.

In 1992, the United States Youth Soccer backed plans to gradually introduce the small-sided game into youth soccer. This vote brought the USA into line with other top soccer nations and was supported by the coaches and educators throughout the country. With player development in mind, associations across the U.S. adopted these recommendations. North Texas Soccer set forth the following plan, requiring local organizations to implement this plan as closely as possible:

2003 U6 – 3V3 or 4v4 U8 – Stay as you are. U10- Stay as you are. U12 – Stay as you are.	2004 U6 – 3V3 or 4v4 U7 – 4V4 U8 – Stay as you are. U10 –Stay as you are. U12 – Stay as you are.	2005 U6 – 3V3 U8 – 4V4 U9 – 6V6 U10 – Stay as you are. U12 –Stay as you are.
2006 U6 – 3v3 U8 – 4v4 U10- 6v6 U12 – Stay as you are.	2007 U6 – 3v3 U8 – 4V4 U10- 6v6 U11 – 8V8 U12 – Stay as you are	2008 U12 – 9V9

The small-sided approach to soccer is intended to provide each player more touches on the ball. It also allows young players the ability to make decisions for themselves (Afterall, this can only build confidence of play). Changing mindset and philosophy of play is never easy for adults. It must start with YOU, the coach. After seeing the small-sided philosophy put into play, we think that you and the HOT teams you coach will adjust well.

Small-Sided Soccer ...About the Game

Positive key components of soccer become more visible in small-sided soccer play. These areas of growth and mental development are outlined below.

- **Individual Technical Development**: Young soccer players touch the soccer ball more often and become more skillful with it!
- **Tactical Development**: Young soccer players make more, less-complicated decisions during the game!
- **More Physically Efficient**: A reduction in the field size allows our young soccer players to be more physically efficient in the field space they are playing in!
- **Need to feel worthy ...need to feel important**: Young soccer players to have more individual teaching time with the coach! Less players on the field and less players on the team will guarantee this!
- **More opportunity to solve problems that only the game can present**: Young soccer players have more opportunity to be involved through more playing time in the game!
- **More exposure to attacking and defending situations**: Young soccer players have more a greater opportunity to play on both sides of the ball!
- **Pure Excitement!**: Young soccer players have more opportunities to score goals!

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? Yes. 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 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.

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.**

Small Sided Soccer - For good or for bad, small sided soccer is here to stay. For some additional background reading on the subject, go to the national web page, usyouthsoccer.org, and click on *Coaches*, and then scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on *Why Small Sided Games?*