

Players must arrive  
at middle cone  
at same time

# NATIONAL YOUTH COACHING COURSE

## Street Soccer | Play Day

Mission Statement  
US Youth Soccer is a non-profit and educational organization whose mission is to foster the physical, mental and emotional  
growth and development of America's youth through USA soccer at all levels of age and competition.

One or two generations ago "youth sports" usually meant pickup games arranged by children themselves on  
the nation's sandlots and playgrounds, without participation by parents or other adults.



## Street Soccer | Play Day

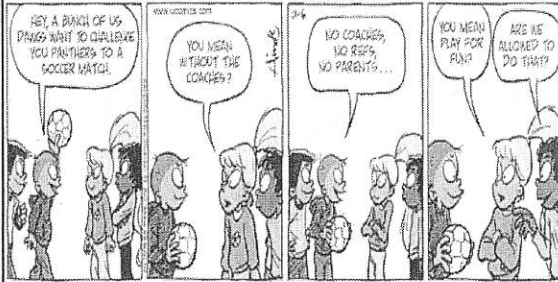
Some children find ways to play on their own. But the era of the sandlot or unstructured play, of kids making up games and playing  
with friends for hours on end, is largely gone. Today, adult-led competition dominates and tryout-based, multi-season travel teams  
form as early as age 5, siphoning players from and support for in-town recreation leagues that serve all kids. We emphasize  
performance over participation well before kids' bodies, minds, and interests mature. And we tend to value the child who can help  
win games or whose families can afford the rising fees. The risks for that child are overuse injuries, concussion, and burnout.

## Street Soccer | Play Day

The "adultification" of youth sports now means nearly all sports for children are conducted by adults, who create, incorporate, administer, outfit, coach and officiate clubs and leagues. Many children today graduate from high school without ever having played a pickup game. The virtual adult monopoly means that most kids seeking athletic competition have little choice but to depend on whatever the community youth sports system offers.

The case is lining up for adults to get out of the way more often—and let the game, and child peers, be the teacher.

## Street Soccer | Play Day



Soccer, as a team sport, provides opportunities to nurture physical fitness and social interaction skills.

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## Street Soccer | Play Day

### Soccer America – Youth Soccer Insider

SA: You've talked about *pickup games* – such as soccer at recess in grade school and playing with your brother – being a key to your development.

MIA HAMM: That helped a lot. Playing against boys, against older kids who were more talented than I was -- and bigger, stronger, faster. But in the end what was so great was I put myself in those situations, and it was an environment to be able to hang out with my brother. You don't hear of as many kids playing *pickup soccer* as they used to because they're training five days a week and play 12,000 games on the weekend.

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## Street Soccer | Play Day

Street Soccer provides the possibility of mixing playing levels, genders and age groups.

Daily put older players in the windshield of young players.

It can be used to assist with player development, player identification and player selection.

Can sandlot/pick-up soccer evolve from this environment? Players choose teams, resolve problems and set up the field!

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## Street Soccer | Play Day

Here is an example of how you could run some street soccer events

- 4-8 minute match, depending on numbers
- 4 matches
- 4 vs. 4 w/o keepers
- use cones for corners of the field
- use flags for goals
- have bibs at each field
- each player is given a number
- reset teams after each match
- players control subs

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## Street Soccer | Play Day

### Play Day Example

#### Divisions

Start by identifying the number of players in each age. The 5 and 6 year olds should play together, as should the 7's and 8's, but there are times to mix up the age groups. Boys and girls should play together, but accommodations can also be made for girls who want to play with other girls.

#### Playing Numbers

The playing numbers are 3 vs. 3 for 6 and younger and 4 vs. 4 for 7's and 8's. The actual playing numbers should remain flexible to ensure that every child plays all the time.

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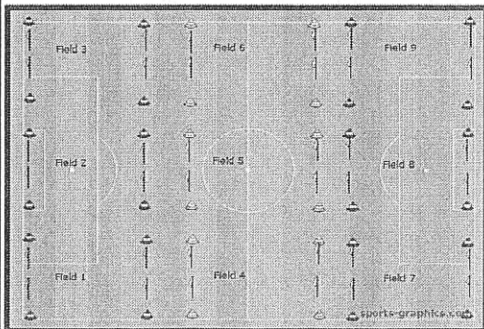
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Play Day - Sample Field Set-Up



Street Soccer | Play Day

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## Street Soccer | Play Day

Jürgen Klinsmann – U. S.A. Men's National Team

Commented on the importance of **free play**.

"Soccer, in my opinion, is self-teaching. The more you play, the better you get.

You don't see kids play in the park these days. It's only in an organized environment. Certain things are not teachable. What is really missing compared to the leading soccer nations around the world, the top 10-12 nations around the world, is the amount of time kids play the game."

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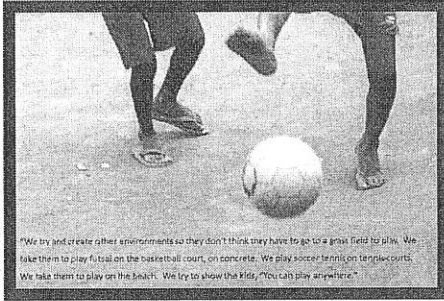
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## Street Soccer | Play Day



"We try and create other environments so they don't think they have to go to a grass field to play. We take them to play futsal on the basketball court, on concrete. We play soccer tennis on tennis courts. We take them to play on the beach. We try to show the kids, 'You can play anywhere.'"

Where there's a Will there's a Way!

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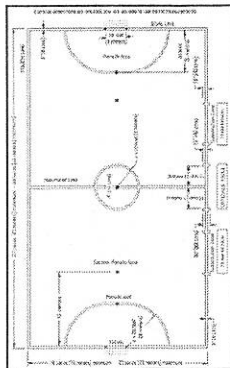
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## Street Soccer | Play Day

### FINDING SUCCESS

While many community soccer programs ignore U.S. Soccer's best practices document—or don't even know it exists—the Portland City United Soccer Club is on board. Once a week, the organization rents a small indoor court designed for futsal, a fast-paced game popularized in Brazil, and invites kids to play for free. The director restricts parents to the restaurant and elevated viewing area, explaining: "We are trying to set up an avenue for the kids to play some street soccer where they can explore the game and play on their terms."



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## Street Soccer | Play Day

### Conclusion

Remember to really give the game back to the players we have to let them set up the field, make their own rules and pick their own teams.

So now let's go out and try a little Street Soccer ourselves. **You take charge of the game** – and the staff will help manage the time and safety.

"Good coaches use the basic criteria of street soccer for their vision of grassroots development; they realize that these elements produce a natural process that gives the most efficient training for young kids."

Rinus Michels, who coached the "total soccer" Dutch national team of the 1970s.

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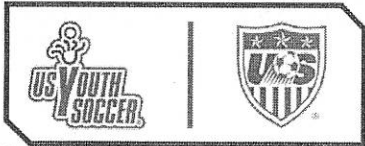
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## National Youth Course

Organized youth soccer provides a great opportunity for kids to have fun and be active through soccer, but it cannot provide the whole answer in terms of supporting a child's athletic, social, emotional and mental development. By engaging in "street soccer" or unstructured play, kids can have fun, practice independent decision making, develop social skills, expand their creativity and increase their activity and fitness levels and skill development without adult judgement or oversight (including parents).

# The Game for All Kids!®



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