

# Player Development Initiatives



A resource for parents, coaches and referees supporting the growth and improvement of grassroots soccer

August 2016

# Current Landscape

The coaching and playing environment needs to be improved for 6-12 year olds

Too much emphasis placed on the result of the game

The priority should be to develop skills

There is a need to educate and empower parents and coaches

- For example, the U.S. Soccer F License is specifically designed for volunteer coaches working with players 8 and younger



# Structural Change

We can't keep doing the same thing and expect to get different results

Long-term development of players is the top priority

- Kids under the age of 12 don't win World Cups so we should not treat them like adults or professional players

Players need to be put in the best possible environment to succeed

There are no shortcuts

- Success requires a long-term approach and commitment



# Starting Point

First set of changes designed to grow and improve the game

## Birth Year Registration

- Registering players according to a January 1 to December 31 timeframe

## Small-Sided Games

- Development philosophy and playing standards for players 12 and younger



# Birth Year Registration

## Objectives

The focus moves away from the team and onto the individual player

- Development and winning don't have to happen independently from one another
- Our misguided desire to win at all costs at the youth levels often comes at the expense of individual player development
- This change will cause many parents and coaches to rethink how teams will be formed moving forward and this should take place with each individual player in mind based on his or her developmental needs



# Birth Year Registration

## Objectives

The focus moves away from bigger, faster, stronger

- Changing to birth year registration doesn't eliminate relative age effect (RAE) because whenever there is a defined age range, someone will be the oldest and someone will be the youngest
- However, this change does help better understand and account for RAE
- Parents and coaches should have an increased awareness of a player's birth month relative to his or her peer group and level of performance
- This should help combat focusing on kids that appear to be better simply because they are up to 364 days older than a teammate or opponent



# Birth Year Registration

## Objectives

Uniformity across the country and across membership

- In addition to the current landscape being in need of repair, it is also highly variable
- Having uniformity doesn't mean that all soccer will look the same in all places at all times
- It does mean that the soccer community can be better aligned with U.S. Soccer's player development objectives and we can collectively harness the advantage our nation's diversity and populations has to offer
- A uniform framework also allows U.S. Soccer, and the programs of our members, to provide consistent messaging and education for parents, players, coaches and referees



# Birth Year Registration

## Objectives

Aligns with international standards for youth development

- This means aligning with the international standards used by the world's leading soccer nations so that kids in the United States are developing in an environment similar to those playing in Germany, France, Spain, etc.





# Birth Year Registration Chart

|                   | U6<br>6 years old<br>and younger | U7<br>7 years old<br>and younger | U8<br>8 years old<br>and younger | U9<br>9 years old<br>and younger | U10<br>10 years old<br>and younger | U11<br>11 years old<br>and younger | U12<br>12 years old<br>and younger |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2016-17<br>Season | Born in 2011                     | Born in 2010                     | Born in 2009                     | Born in 2008                     | Born in 2007                       | Born in 2006                       | Born in 2005                       |
| 2017-18<br>Season | Born in 2012                     | Born in 2011                     | Born in 2010                     | Born in 2009                     | Born in 2008                       | Born in 2007                       | Born in 2006                       |

|                   | U13<br>13 years old<br>and younger | U14<br>14 years old<br>and younger | U15<br>15 years old<br>and younger | U16<br>16 years old<br>and younger | U17<br>17 years old<br>and younger | U18<br>18 years old<br>and younger | U19<br>19 years old<br>and younger |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2016-17<br>season | Born in 2004                       | Born in 2003                       | Born in 2002                       | Born in 2001                       | Born in 2000                       | Born in 1999                       | Born in 1998                       |
| 2017-18<br>Season | Born in 2005                       | Born in 2004                       | Born in 2003                       | Born in 2002                       | Born in 2001                       | Born in 2000                       | Born in 1999                       |



# Small-Sided Games

## Objectives

Develop improved skills with the ball

- Improve confidence and comfort

Develop intelligence with and without the ball

- Promote faster decisions and better awareness

Develop partnerships within the team



# Small-Sided Games

## Objectives

Provide an age appropriate environment

- Standards align with physiological needs of players based on year of birth

Uniformity across the country and across membership

- Similar to the outcomes listed for birth year registration, having consistent standards allows U.S. Soccer, and the programs of our members, to provide more meaningful messaging and education for parents, players, coaches and referees



# Small-Sided Games Chart

|                                | U6<br>6 years old<br>and younger | U7<br>7 years old<br>and younger | U8<br>8 years old<br>and younger | U9<br>9 years old<br>and younger | U10<br>10 years old<br>and younger | U11<br>11 years old<br>and younger | U12<br>12 years old<br>and younger |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Field Size<br>(yards)          | Length 25-35<br>Width 15-25      | Length 25-35<br>Width 15-25      | Length 25-35<br>Width 15-25      | Length 55-65<br>Width 35-45      | Length 55-65<br>Width 35-45        | Length 70-80<br>Width 45-55        | Length 70-80<br>Width 45-55        |
| Maximum<br>Goal Size<br>(feet) | Height 4<br>Width 6              | Height 4<br>Width 6              | Height 4<br>Width 6              | Height 6.5<br>Width 18.5         | Height 6.5<br>Width 18.5           | Height 7<br>Width 21               | Height 7<br>Width 21               |
| Ball Size                      | 3                                | 3                                | 3                                | 4                                | 4                                  | 4                                  | 4                                  |
| Players                        | 4v4<br>No GK                     | 4v4<br>No GK                     | 4v4<br>No GK                     | 7v7                              | 7v7                                | 9v9                                | 9v9                                |
| Game Time<br>(minutes)         | 4x10                             | 4x10                             | 4x10                             | 2x25                             | 2x25                               | 2x30                               | 2x30                               |
| Offside                        | No                               | No                               | No                               | Yes                              | Yes                                | Yes                                | Yes                                |



# 4v4 Standards



# 4v4

## Player Development Philosophy

Coaches should have the age appropriate license issued by U.S. Soccer

Formal games are not needed so playing with and against teammates at the end of each training session (1-2 per week) should be sufficient

Formal rosters and teams are not needed so having a flexible and fluid approach to training and playing is recommended

- While playing, everyone should participate a minimum of 50% of the time
- With 4 players on the field, having 6 players on each “team” when the “game” is played helps maximize participation and engagement



# 4v4

## Player Development Philosophy

Here are some examples of having a flexible and fluid approach to training and playing

- Utilize “in-house” programs that have everyone train and play as a pool of players rather than as distinct teams
- This approach allows players to train and play with a variety of other kids based on numbers, ability, age, height, weight, etc.
- If using teams with a set roster of players, players can be mixed up during the game at the end of the training session to provide variety



# 4v4

## Player Development Philosophy

Results and standings should not be recorded

Travel should be limited as much as possible

Players should not be participating in events (tournaments, showcases, festivals, etc.)

Remember that safety and fun are the top priorities so make adjustments as needed to ensure both are being promoted





# 4v4

## Concussion Initiative

Per U.S. Soccer's Concussion Initiative, if a player is suspected to have a head injury the referee\* is instructed to stop play to allow for treatment/evaluation as needed

If the player leaves the field of play for additional evaluation, a substitution can be made in that moment

The player with the suspected head injury may not return to the game unless a Health Care Professional (HCP) or Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) has cleared the player

Any coach or parent insisting on returning the player to the game without approved clearance will result in the referee\* ending the game

\*Since there is no referee in 4v4, this responsibility falls to the coaches and parents involved



# 4v4

## Concussion Initiative

Deliberate heading is not allowed in 4v4 games

If a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense



# 4v4

## Standards of Play

### Field

- 25-35 yards (length)
- 15-25 yards (width)
- Goals should be no larger than 4 feet (height) x 6 feet (width)
- Corner flags are not needed



# 4v4



# 4v4

## Standards of Play

### Games

- Size 3 ball
- 4v4
- Shin guards are required
- Substitutions are unlimited and can occur at any time
- 4 quarters
- No more than 10 minute quarters
- 5 minute breaks between quarters
- Playing times can be less than 10 minutes when managed by the coaches and parents



# 4v4

## Standards of Play

### Games

- Kick offs, free kicks, throw-ins, goal kicks and corner kicks are used to start or restart play
- Kick-ins and/or dribble-ins are also acceptable
- Goal kicks and corner kicks should be taken in the general vicinity of the respective goal or corner
- If used, all free kicks are indirect
- Opponents should be 10 feet away from the ball on all restarts
- No penalty kicks
- No offside



# 4v4

## Standards of Play

### Games

- Registered and certified referees are not needed at this level
- Since there is no referee, coaches are expected to manage the game environment from the touchline using these standards of play and their best judgement
- Together, coaches and parents are expected to create and promote a fun and safe environment for the players



# 7v7 Standards





# 7v7

## Player Development Philosophy

Coaches should have the age appropriate license issued by U.S. Soccer

The training-to-game ratio should be 1-2 training sessions per game played

Rosters should include no more than 12 players

Players should participate in no more than 20 games per calendar year and in no more than one game per day

Every player should play a minimum of 50% of the time in each game



# 7v7

## Player Development Philosophy

Results and standings should not be recorded

Players should have a minimum of 2 rest days per week during the season along with planned breaks from organized soccer during the calendar year

Any travel should be limited to no more than an hour away

Events (tournaments, showcases, festivals, etc.) should provide a predetermined number of games with no advancement, placement games or champions



# 7v7

## Concussion Initiative

Per U.S. Soccer's Concussion Initiative, if a player is suspected to have a head injury the referee is instructed to stop play to allow for treatment/evaluation as needed

If the player leaves the field of play for additional evaluation, a substitution can be made in that moment

The player with the suspected head injury may not return to the game unless a Health Care Professional (HCP) or Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) has cleared the player

Any coach or parent insisting on returning the player to the game without approved clearance will result in the referee ending the game



# 7v7

## Concussion Initiative

Deliberate heading is not allowed in 7v7 games

If a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense

If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred



# 7v7

## Build Out Line

The build out line promotes playing the ball out of the back in a less pressured setting

When the goalkeeper has the ball, either during play (from the opponent) or from a goal kick, the opposing team must move behind the build out line until the ball is put into play

Once the opposing team is behind the build out line, the goalkeeper can pass, throw or roll the ball into play (punting is not allowed)

After the ball is put into play by the goalkeeper, the opposing team can cross the build out line and play resumes as normal



# 7v7

## Build Out Line

If a goalkeeper punts the ball, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense

If the punt occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred



# 7v7

## Build Out Line

The build out line will also be used to denote where offside offenses can be called

Players cannot be penalized for an offside offense between the halfway line and the build out line

Players can be penalized for an offside offense between the build out line and goal line



# 7v7

## Modified Laws of the Game

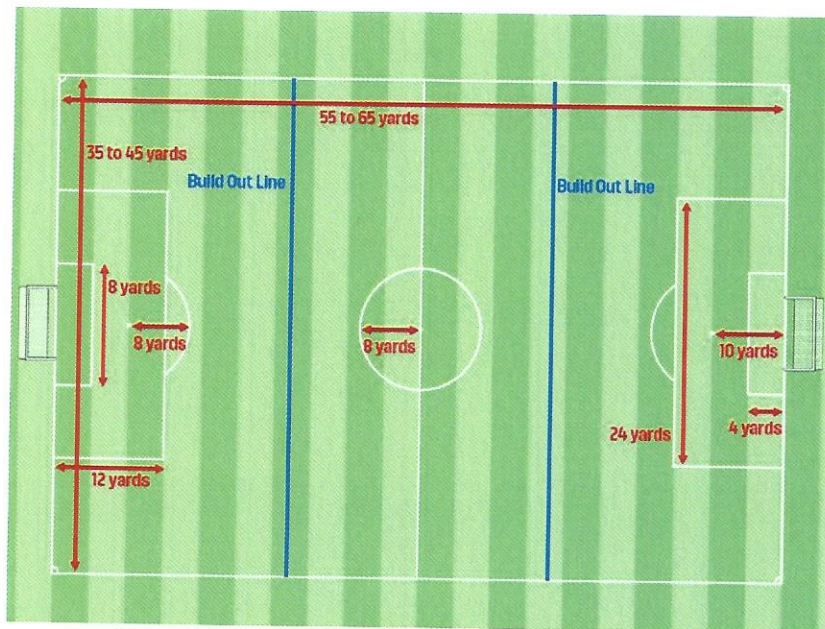
### Law 1 – Field of Play

- 55-65 yards (length)
- 35-45 yards (width)
- Goals should be no larger than 6.5 feet (height) x 18.5 feet (width)
- A 6.5 feet (height) x 12 feet (width) goal is recommended based on the age and ability of the players
- Diagram contains recommended field markings and dimensions
- Build out lines should be equidistant between the penalty area line and halfway line





7v7



# 7v7

## Modified Laws of the Game

### Law 2 – Ball

- Size 4

### Law 3 – Players

- 7v7 (6 field players and 1 goalkeeper)
- Game may not start or continue if there are less than 5 players on a team
- Substitutions are unlimited and can occur at any stoppage



# 7v7

## Modified Laws of the Game

### Law 5 – Referee

- Minimum certification as a U.S. Soccer Grade 9 Referee

### Law 6 – Other Match Officials

- Used at the discretion of the competition



# 7v7

## Modified Laws of the Game

### Law 7 – Duration of the Match

- 2 halves
- 25 minutes halves
- 10 minute halftime
- No added time



# 7v7

## Standard Laws of the Game

Law 4 – Players' Equipment

Law 8 – Start and Restart of Play

Law 9 – Ball In and Out of Play

Law 10 – Method of Scoring

Law 11 – Offside

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct\*

Law 13 – Free Kicks

Law 14 – Penalty Kicks

Law 15 – Throw-in

Law 17 – Corner kick

\*With the exception of deliberate heading and punting



# 9v9 Standards



# 9v9

## Player Development Philosophy

Coaches should have the age appropriate license issued by U.S. Soccer

The training-to-game ratio should be 2-3 training sessions per game played

Rosters should include no more than 16 players

Players should participate in no more than 30 games per calendar year and in no more than one game per day

Every player should play a minimum of 50% of the time in each game



# 9v9

## Player Development Philosophy

Results and standings should not be recorded

Players should have a minimum of 2 rest days per week during the season along with planned breaks from organized soccer during the calendar year

Any travel should be limited to day trips with limited allowances for overnight stays

Events (ex: tournaments, showcases, festivals, etc.) should provide a predetermined number of games with no advancement, placement games or champions





# 9v9

## Concussion Initiative

Per U.S. Soccer's Concussion Initiative, if a player is suspected to have a head injury the referee is instructed to stop play to allow for treatment/evaluation as needed

If the player leaves the field of play for additional evaluation, a substitution can be made in that moment

The player with the suspected head injury may not return to the game unless a Health Care Professional (HCP) or Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) has cleared the player

Any coach or parent insisting on returning the player to the game without approved clearance will result in the referee ending the game



# 9v9

## Concussion Initiative

Deliberate heading is not allowed in U11 games

If a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense

If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred

Heading is allowed in U12 games without limitations



# 9v9

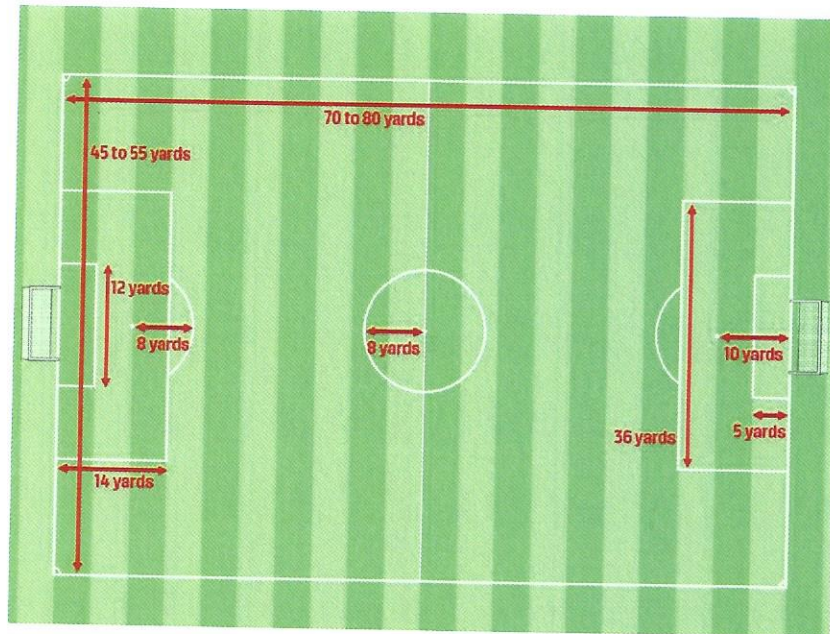
## Modified Laws of the Game

### Law 1 – Field of Play

- 70-80 yards (length)
- 45-55 yards (width)
- Goals should be no larger than 7 feet (height) x 21 feet (width)
- A 6.5 feet (height) x 18.5 feet (width) goal is recommended based on the age and ability of the players
- Diagram contains recommended field markings and dimensions



# 9v9



# 9v9

## Modified Laws of the Game

### Law 2 – Ball

- Size 4

### Law 3 – Number of Players

- 9v9 (8 field players and 1 goalkeeper)
- Game may not start or continue if there are less than 6 players on a team
- Substitutions are unlimited and can occur at any stoppage



# 9v9

## Modified Laws of the Game

### Law 5 – Referee

- Minimum certification as a U.S. Soccer Grade 9 Referee

### Law 6 – Other Match Officials

- Used at the discretion of the competition authority



# 9v9

## Modified Laws of the Game

### Law 7 – Duration of the Match

- 2 halves
- 30 minutes halves
- 10 minute halftime
- No added time



# 9v9

## Standard Laws of the Game

Law 4 – Players' Equipment

Law 5 – The Referee

Law 8 – Start and Restart of Play

Law 9 – Ball In and Out of Play

Law 10 – Method of Scoring

Law 11 - Offside

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct\*

Law 13 – Free kicks

Law 14 – Penalty Kicks

Law 15 – Throw-in

Law 16 – Goal kick

Law 17 – Corner kick

\*With the exception of deliberate heading in U11 games





# Implementation

## Timeline

All information about the concussion initiatives are implemented with immediate effect

Birth year registration and the small sided standards will be mandated in August 2017

- Some members have chosen to adopt earlier as a best practice and will begin implementing in August 2016
- Please contact your local member for more information on implementation



# What You Can Do

## How to Best Support the Changes

Have patience

Stick to the facts

Read the FAQ

Communicate with and get answers from your local member and leaders



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June 2016