

Why Small-Sided Games?

US Youth Soccer has thought long and hard about the answer to the question, "Why Small-Sided Games?"

What does "Small-Sided Games" mean? These are soccer games with fewer players competing on a smaller sized field. These are fun games that involve the players more because fewer players are sharing one ball.

All ages can play "Small Sided Games", but it has a definite developmental impact on our younger *soccer* players. US Youth Soccer recommendations for "number of players" at the various age groups are as follows:

U6 3 against 3 no goal keepers
U8 4 against 4 no goal keepers
U10 6 against 6 with goal keepers
U12 8 against 8 with goal keepers
U13+ 11 against 11 with goal keepers

Here are some of the reasons why we believe, as soccer coaches, administrators and parents must guarantee that our young soccer players play small-sided games:

1. Because we want our young soccer players to touch the soccer ball more often and become *more skillful* with it! (Individual technical development)
2. Because we want our young soccer players to make *more, less-complicated decisions* during the game! (Tactical development)
3. Because we want our young soccer players to be more physically *efficient* in the field space they are playing in! (Reduced field size)
4. Because we want our 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! (Need to feel worthy and need to feel important)
5. Because we want our young soccer players to have *more, involved playing time* in the game! (More opportunity to solve problems that only the game presents)
6. Because we want our young soccer players to have *more opportunity to play on both sides of the ball!* (More exposure to attacking and defending situations)
7. Because we want our young soccer players to have *more opportunities to score goals!* (Pure excitement)

These are the reasons why we adults must foster "Small-Sided Games" in our youth soccer programs. The "Small-Sided" environment is a *developmentally appropriate environment* for our young soccer players. It's a FUN environment that *focuses on the young soccer player*.

It just makes sense it!

Oscar DeLemos
Director of Coaching Education
Soccer Rhode Island