

## Why Short Sided Soccer?

The AYSO National Coaching Commission has been promoting AYSO "Short Sided Soccer" for 20 years and yet there are some people in our organization who honestly believe that the AYSO "Short Sided Initiative" is new.

I could have reprinted an article I wrote in 1988 about AYSO short sided soccer or I could have used the article from 1992 or the one I like best from 1999 but I decided, what the heck old is old, but old is not new, so think about this new old information when you think about AYSO short sided soccer.

I have heard from Regional Commissioners, Area Directors, Section Directors, Parents and Coaches who believe that player development will take a hit if their programs and children play short sided. This is not even close to being true. Short sided soccer will improve player development while enabling each young player to develop technically and tactically at a much faster rate than playing in a traditional 11 a-side setting.

Our young soccer players (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 year-olds) need special consideration. They are children playing a child's game and children must be regarded as young children, not mini adults.

All educators agree that early learning experiences are the most important and produce the most retention. Additionally, educators find that because children are young and are essentially self-oriented, they relate naturally to a friend or two and not to large groups.

Those of you who have young children understand most youngsters cannot sustain prolonged activity and function best in suitable starts and stops (rest periods). Young children's concentration span is limited so frequent changes of pace and activity is essential for enjoyment and learning to take place.

Fun and activity factors must always be kept in mind when developing a child centered program and AYSO is about children playing a wonderful game. Children love to learn and they learn a great deal more when the ratio of teacher (coach) to student (player) is reduced.

Short sided play means fewer players on the field; each player gets more touches on the ball and has greater opportunity to change location in a fast-flowing, fluid game. Playing short sided allows players to make simpler decisions and develops a better early understanding of organized play.

On smaller fields, more players are directly involved in play, creating increased levels of both concentration and interest. Because of the small numbers and the simple nature of the game the best teacher is the game itself. Although the goals are smaller the reduced field size encourages more shots on goal by all players, which means more goals are scored.

The above is all about the children playing short sided soccer and how they and the game will benefit from a Region who adopts the full AYSO National Short Sided Guidelines.

The rest of the world is playing short sided. U.S. Soccer has mandated short sided for all U.S. Youth Programs.

AYSO promoted short sided soccer before it was fashionable to do so. Short sided play should not be a vision of the future. It must happen now, because it is what's best for young AYSO soccer players today, just like it was 20 years ago.

John Ouellette  
AYSO National Coach



## 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 doesn't it?