

# Why Small Sided Games?

*by*

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US Youth Soccer

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Soccer



# WHY SMALL-SIDED?

*Because we want our young soccer players to touch and play the ball more often and become more skillful with it!*

The fewer players on the field, the more possible times a player will come in contact with the ball. In fact, players will find they have no choice; the ball will quickly find them!

(3v3 = 1 ball per 6 players) vs. (11v11 = 1 ball per 22 players)

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# WHY SMALL-SIDED?

*Because we want our young soccer players to make more, less complicated decisions during the game!*

*More opportunities to scheme...*

As we play we must constantly change and adapt to our surroundings. This challenge is the basis for tactics. How do we solve the puzzle?

*Less players on the field = less complicated decisions.*

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# WHY SMALL-SIDED?

*Because we want our young soccer players to be more physically efficient in the field space they are playing in! (Reduced field size)*

## **Economical Fitness Training...**

Short duration, high intensity play with ball versus running laps.

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# WHY SMALL-SIDED?

*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!

Players need to feel worthy...they need to feel important!

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# WHY SMALL-SIDED?

*Because there are more opportunities to coach*

The small-sided game allows coaches a perfect opportunity to observe and analyze the individual and collective responses of players under quick game-like conditions in a simple environment.

It is easier to coach on a smaller field...easier to observe...parent coaches will be more successful!

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# WHY SMALL-SIDED?

*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 can present.*

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# WHY SMALL-SIDED?

*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...*

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# WHY SMALL-SIDED?

## *More Attacking Opportunities:*

dribbling to take on defenders

dribbling into open space

shooting and scoring

receiving

passing

heading (at older age groups)

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# WHY SMALL-SIDED?

## *More Defending Opportunities:*

intercepting the ball from the other team  
stealing the ball from the opponent  
stopping shots

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# WHY SMALL-SIDED?

*Because we want our young soccer players to have more opportunities to score goals! (Pure excitement)*

Many players in an 11v11 game are not inclined to seek the goal, because they are so far away or because of defensive restraints.

The smaller field size and fewer players will foster more shooting.

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# WHY SMALL-SIDED?

*More Goalkeeping Opportunities  
(U10 and older)*

Greater number of shooting opportunities gives goalkeepers more chances to actually improve their goalkeeping skills.

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# WHY SMALL-SIDED?

*Because the environment fosters development of mentally strong athletes.*

Players cannot hide or get lost in the small-sided environment. It helps improve competitiveness & aggressiveness.

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# What can we teach?

## *Technique...*

Every player will get multiple opportunities to use dribbling, passing, receiving, shooting, heading and tackling.

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# What can we teach?

## *Tactics of Defending & Attacking*

Smaller numbers mean more opportunities for decision making by each player.

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# What can we teach?

## *Team Shape*

In larger numbers bad “shape” is hidden.

The Principles of the game are much easier to see for coaches and players.

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# What can we teach?

## *Transition*

Encourages “fast play”. No cushion of teammates to delay attack when possession is lost.

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# Modifying the Game

## US Youth Soccer recommends:

Under 6's play 3v3 (*without a goalkeeper*)

Field Size: 25 yds x 20 yds Ball: #3

Under 8's play 4v4 (*without a goalkeeper*)

Field Size: 50 yds x 30 yds Ball: #3

Under 10's play 6v6 (*with a goalkeeper*)

Field Size: 50 yds x 40 yds Ball : #4

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# Modifying the Game

## US Youth Soccer recommends:

Under 12's play 8v8 (*with a goalkeeper*)

Field Size: 70 yds x 50 yds

Ball: #4

Under 13 and older play FIFA rules

Field Size: 110 yds x 70 yds

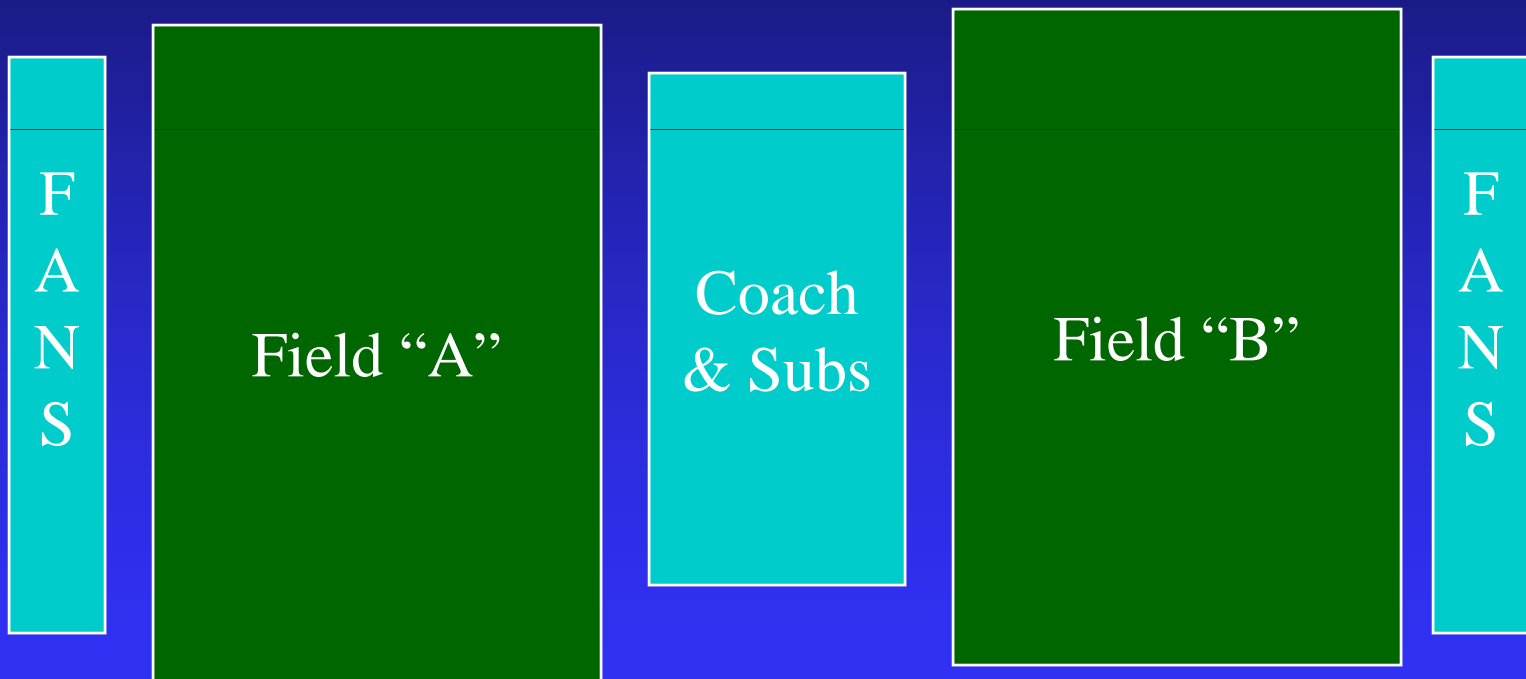
Ball: #5

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# How to do it

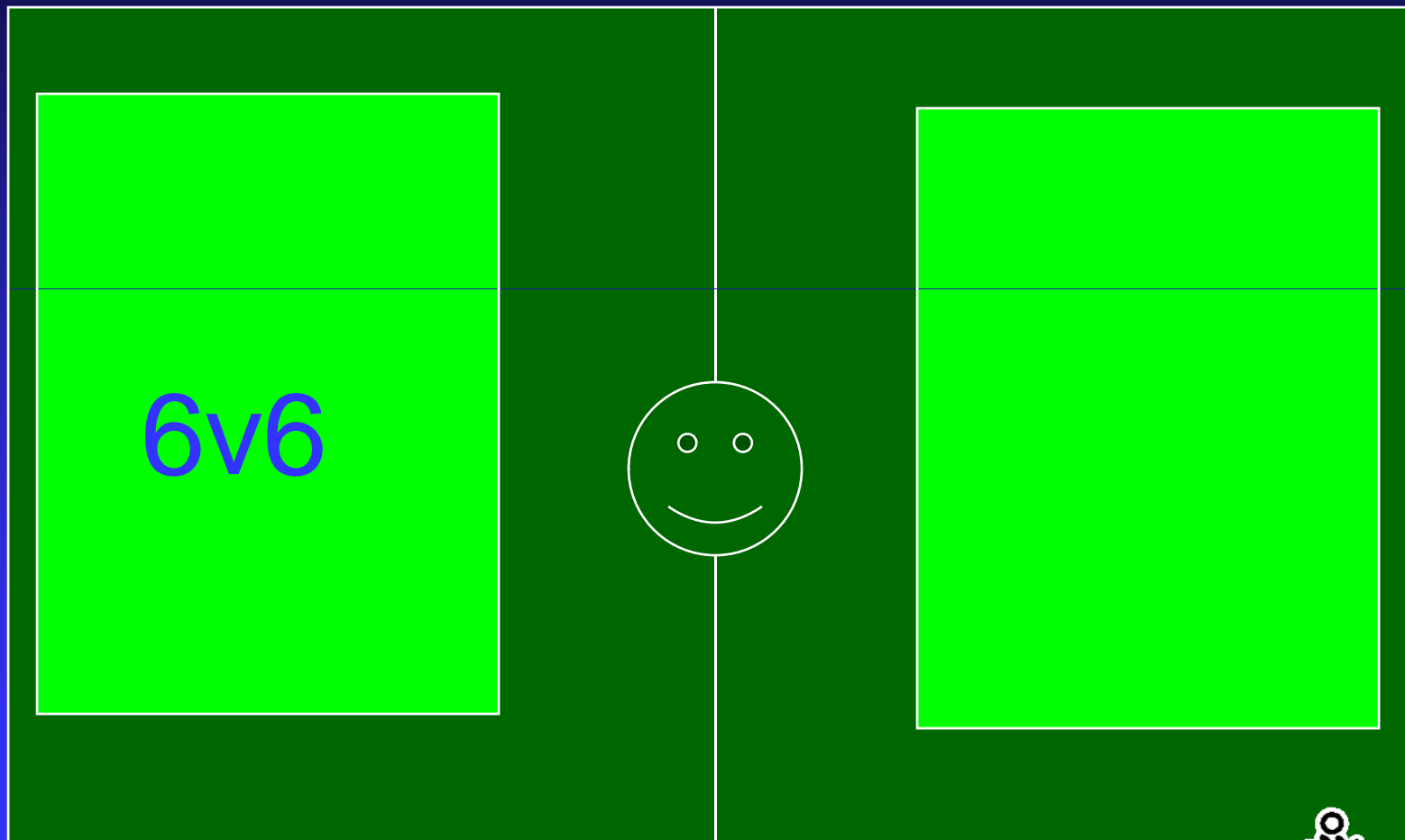
- 3v3 & 4v4: Play “dual field” format.



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Full size field allows TWO 50x40yd fields for Under 10's 6v6. 24 actually playing vs 22 in 11v11 !



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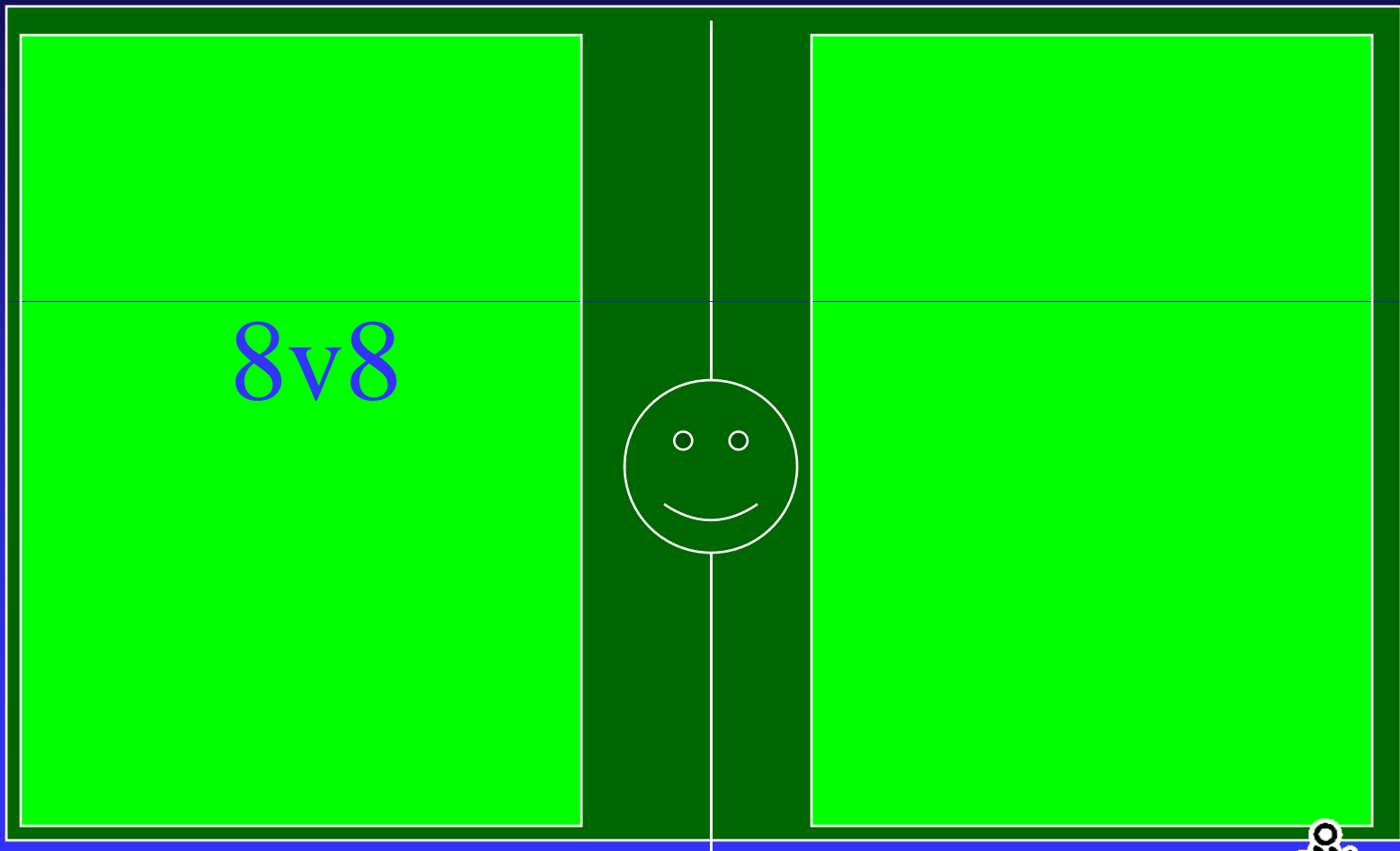
# 8v8 for U11 & U12

- Fastest growing trend in youth soccer!  
Eleven State Associations have adopted 8v8 for these age groups.
- Full size field and goal inappropriate for ten and eleven year olds.

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A large full size field allows for TWO 70x50yd fields for Under 12's 8v8. 32 actually playing vs 22 in 11v11 !



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# Hurdles?

- Need more coaches
- Need more fields
- Need more referees
- Need more goals
- Have to reline fields
- We'll have to break up existing teams
- It's not "real" soccer
- I didn't grow up playing this way
- It won't get them "ready" for tryouts or comp soccer
- How will they learn to play 11v11

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# *Who endorses small sided games?*

- Every US Youth Soccer State Director of Coaching
- US Soccer National Staff Coaches
- Tom Goodman,  
US Youth Soccer  
Director of Coaching  
Education

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# WHY SMALL-SIDED?

The “Small Sided” environment is a developmentally appropriate environment for our young players.

It’s a FUN environment that focuses on the **PLAYER!**

It just makes sense...doesn’t it?

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