

## ***Player Development/Small Sided Games***

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“Player Development” and “Youth Soccer”. These are the two terms that should concern us the most. Can we meet the challenge of improving player development and player enjoyment in youth soccer? At the same time can we help coaches, parents and fans improve their enjoyment and make the best use of our available resources?

Much of the “education” of coaches and parents has been attempted in classrooms, in adult only field sessions and by documented position statements. We think this educational methodology should be continued and improved. We also think, however, that we need to change the environment that the players, coaches and parents are asked to work in to more effectively improve the development and enjoyment of the youth player.

Below you will see our recommendation for three, progressive models of play that are a departure from what is most commonly seen now. We recommend U6/8 play 4v4 with no keepers, U9/10 play 6v6, which includes keepers, and U11/12 play 8v8, again including keepers. (We would argue that 11v11 could begin at U13 and then introduce Premier at U14). What follows is a proposal that would allow a club to run these models of play with hopefully decreasing strain on space and equipment. Please take a close look at the following and look for the merit and the problems.

To use the recommended models below you would start out with a 50 x 90 yard field playing 8v8 and divide the field into smaller fields from there (see attached fields).

### Recommended field and goal sizes for Small-Sided play:

#### **Age: U6/U8 (1st and 2nd Grade)**

4 v 4 (no goalkeepers)

Field: 23 x 40 yards

Goal: 6' x 4' or cones or flags

Refs: None

#### **Age: U9/U10 (3rd and 4th Grade)**

5 v 5 + goalkeepers

Field: 40 x 50 yards

Goal: 6' x 12'

Refs: One (no offside)

#### **Age: U11/U12 (5th and 6th Grade)**

7 v 7 + goalkeepers

Field: 50 x 90 yards

Goal: 6' x 18' or 7' x 21'

Refs: One or three (depending on grade)