

# Small-Sided Soccer

## The Future of Soccer Development

by

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# REASONS FOR SMALL-SIDED

The fewer players on the field, the more players will get to touch the ball



The more players touch the ball, the more skillful they will become



As skills grow, enjoyment increases 😊

# Why is it more fun?

- Children enjoy participation more than observation
- 1 ball: per 6 players in 3 vs. 3  
per 22 players in 11 vs. 11

# Why is it more fun?

- Every player gets more exposure to the ball ---- more participation!
- In a 40 minute game:
  - each player in 3 vs. 3 averages 6 min 40 sec on the ball
  - each player in 11 vs. 11 averages 1 min 48 sec on the ball

# What is fun?

- Research shows that seeing oneself improve is a large component of fun for youth players
- With increased time on ball in small-sided, children are more likely to see improvement

# The Path to Improvement

*Repetition is the key to technical improvement*

- more overall touches on ball
- more dribbling
- more shooting
- more receiving
- more passing

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# Constant Game Involvement

## *Repeated exposure to defense*

- immediate defensive recovery needed
- more stealing ball from opponent
- more intercepting ball
- more blocked shot attempts
- GK more involved (U10 and above)

# Developmentally Appropriate

## *Age Appropriate Problem Solving*

- Young players have limited ability to conceptualize abstractly
- Young players think in terms of 1 to 2 degrees of separation from themselves
- Learning is dependent on repeated exposure



# Developmentally Appropriate

Players are forced to problem solve  
more often in small-sided



Players face reasonably difficult  
problems and have repeated exposure  
to similar problems

# Confidence Building

Players experience more problem-solving success



Success breeds confidence



Success + confidence = FUN!

# Developmentally Appropriate

*Small field is more physically appropriate*

- **Children's legs are smaller—the field should be too**
- **Average adult step = 2.5 – 3.5 feet  
Average child step = 1.5 (age 6) → 2 feet (age 14)**
- **Smaller field is size/work-rate appropriate**
- **Cooling systems are less developed—don't make them overheat**

# Building Athletic Mentality

- With fewer players on field, players need to maintain focus
- Smaller field and increased involvement fosters aggression
- No time for regrets, get back in the play
- Second chances arrive quickly

# Building Athletic Mentality

- Necessitates development of more leaders
- Players cannot hide, so they must compete
- Games end with more attempts on goal and more...

...G O O O O O O O O O A A A A A A A A L S !!

# Coaching Considerations

- Allows for more individual coaching
- Helps build relationships
- Easier to see shape and paint pictures
- Do not have to worry about subs as much

# US Youth Soccer Recommendations

- Under 6's play 3v3 (*without a goalkeeper*)
- Field Size: 25 yds x 20 yds      Ball: #3
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- Under 8's play 4v4 (*without a goalkeeper*)
- Field Size: 50 yds x 30 yds      Ball: #3
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- Under 10's play 6v6 (*with a goalkeeper*)
- Field Size: 50 yds x 40 yds      Ball : #4

# US Youth Soccer Recommendations

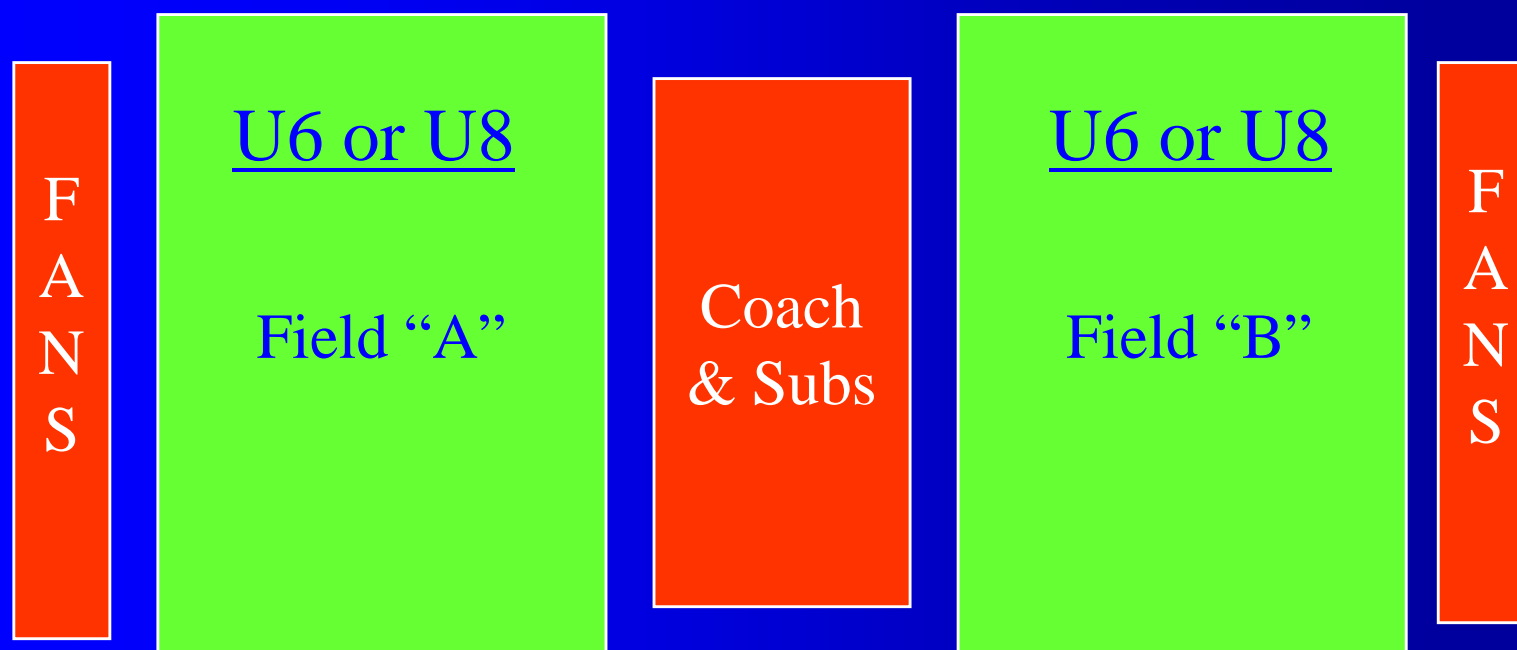
- Under 12's play 8v8 (*with a goalkeeper*)
  - Field Size: 70 yds x 50 yds      Ball: #4
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- Under 13 and older play FIFA rules
- Field Size: 110 yds x 70 yds      Ball: #5

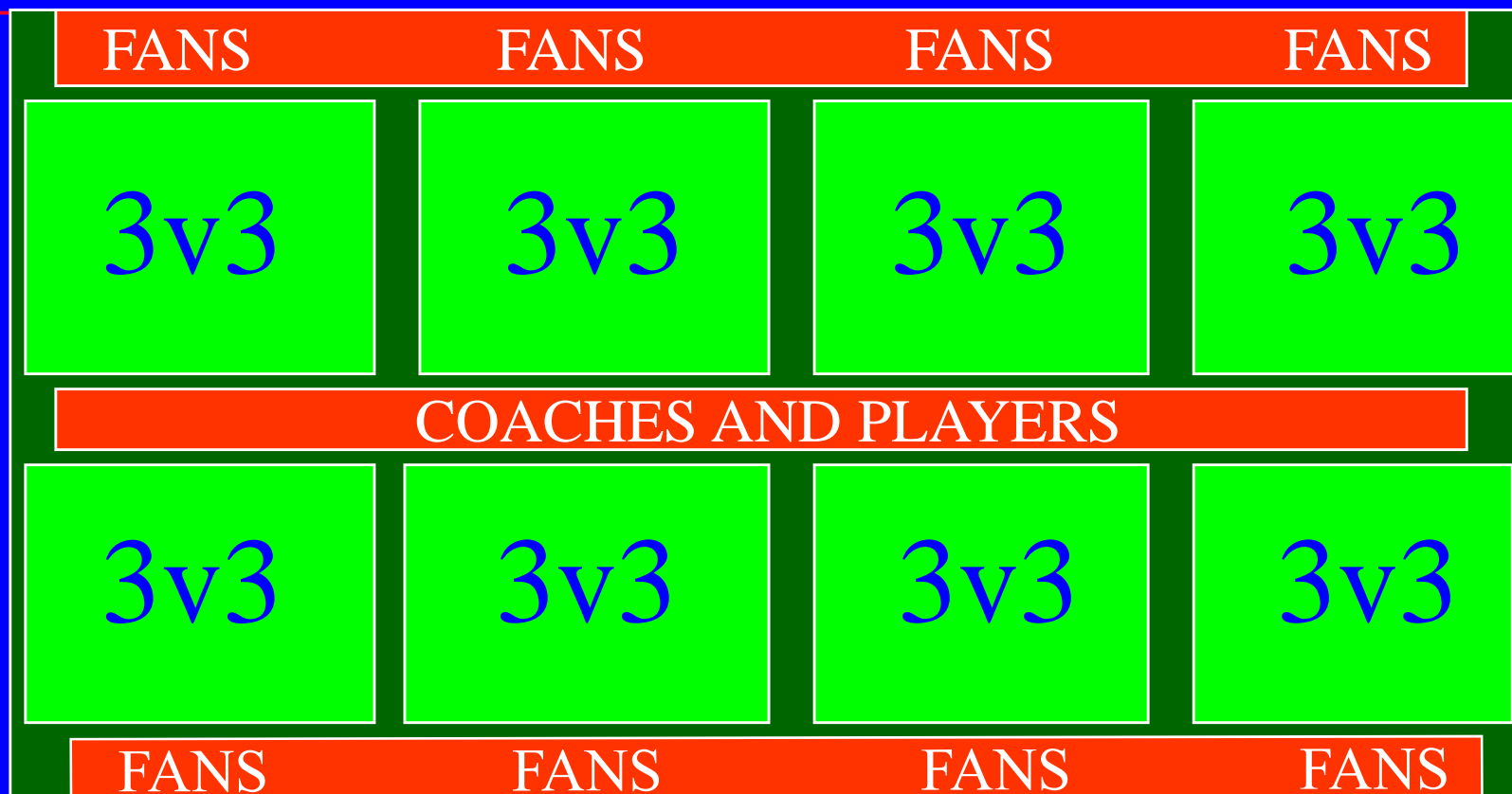


# Game Day Arrangement

- 3v3 & 4v4: Play "dual field" format



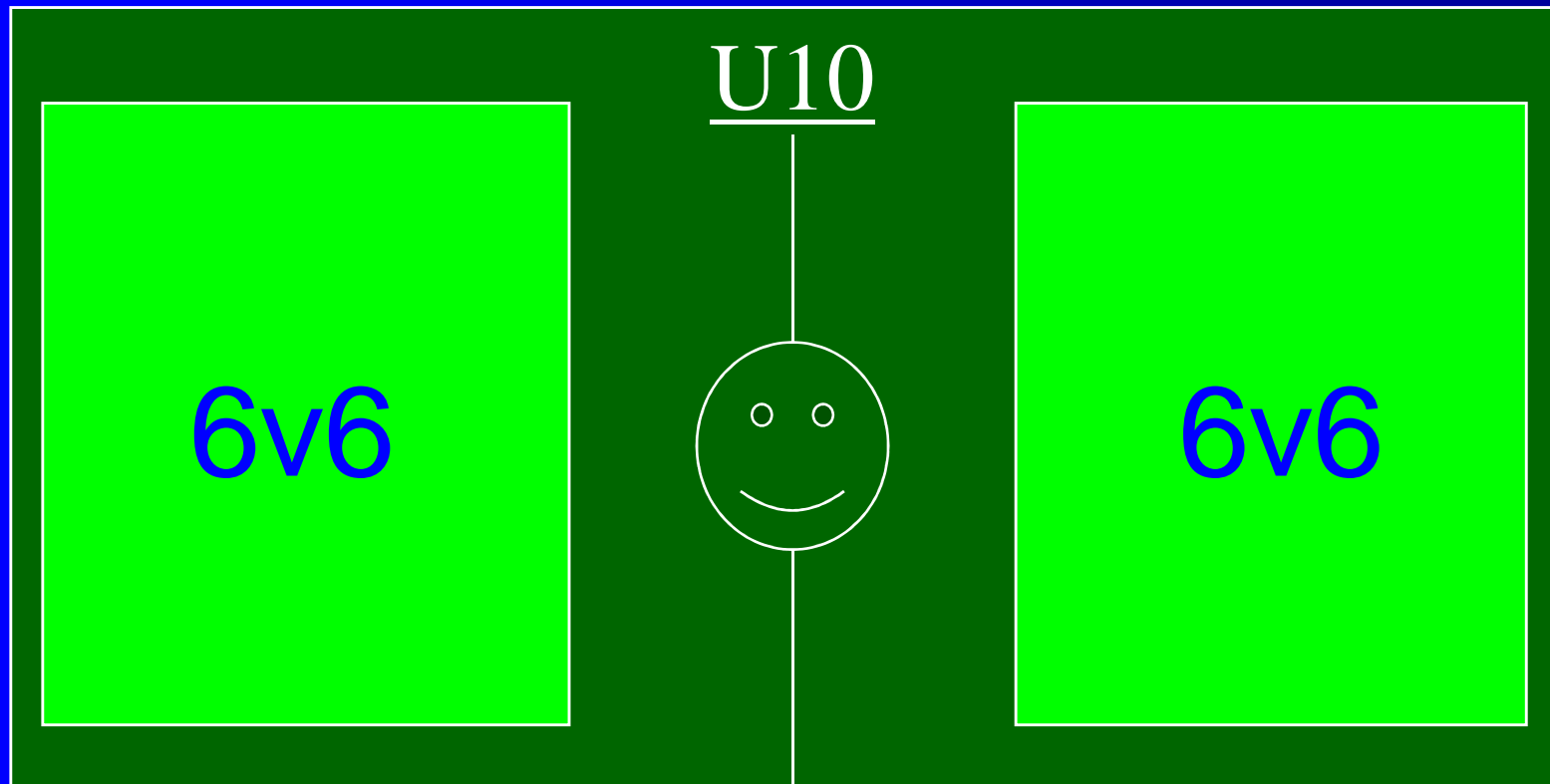
# 48 players on a 110yd x 70yd field



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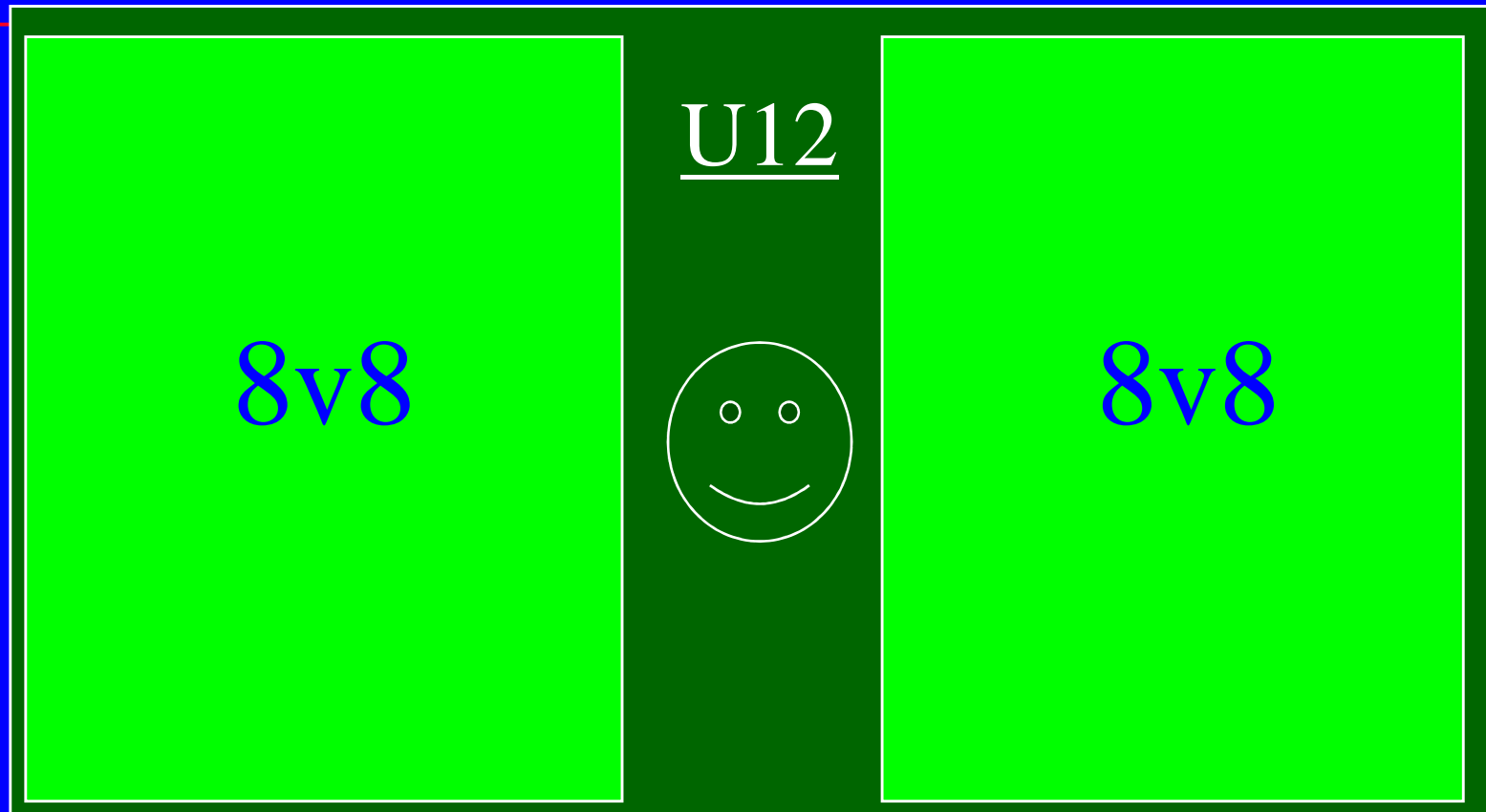
# 24 players on a 100yd x 55yd field



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# 32 players on a 110yd X 70yd field



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# Potential Hurdles

- Need more coaches?
- Need more fields?
- Need to line more fields?
- Need more referees?
- Need more goals?
- Need help with parents?

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# Frequent Questions

- How will this get them ready for 11 vs. 11?
- Is this for travel and recreational?
- What if players have already played with more numbers?
- How can we implement with minimal headaches?

# A World of Progress

## *Who endorses small-sided games?*

- Every US Youth Soccer State Director of Coaching
- US Youth Soccer National Director of Coaching -- Tom Goodman
- US Soccer National Staff Coaches
- Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB)
- The Football Association (English FA)
- The French Football Federation

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