

Player Development Initiatives



A resource for parents, coaches and referees supporting the growth and improvement of grassroots soccer

February 2017

Starting Point

First set of changes designed to grow and improve the game

Birth Year Registration

- Registering players according to a January 1 to December 31 timeframe

Small-Sided Games

- Development philosophy and playing standards for players 12 and younger



Birth Year Registration

Objectives

The focus moves away from the team and onto the individual player

- Development and winning do not have to happen independently from one another
- Our misguided desire to win at all costs at the youth levels often comes at the expense of individual player development
- This change will cause many parents and coaches to rethink how teams will be formed moving forward and this should take place with each individual player in mind based on his or her developmental needs



Birth Year Registration

Objectives

The focus moves away from bigger, faster, stronger

- Changing to birth year registration doesn't eliminate relative age effect (RAE) because whenever there is a defined age range, someone will be the oldest and someone will be the youngest
- However, this change does help better understand and account for RAE
- Parents and coaches should have an increased awareness of a player's birth month relative to his or her peer group and level of performance
- This should help combat focusing on kids that appear to be better simply because they are up to 364 days older than a teammate or opponent



Birth Year Registration

Objectives

Uniformity across the country and across membership

- The current landscape is highly variable
- Having uniformity doesn't mean that all soccer will look the same in all places at all times
- It does mean that the soccer community can be better aligned with U.S. Soccer's player development objectives and we can collectively harness the advantage our nation's diversity and populations has to offer
- A uniform framework also allows U.S. Soccer, and the programs of our members, to provide consistent messaging and education for parents, players, coaches and referees



Birth Year Registration

Objectives

Aligns with international standards for youth development

- This means aligning with the international standards used by the world's leading soccer nations so that kids in the United States are developing in an environment similar to those playing in Germany, France, Spain, etc.



Small-Sided Games

Objectives

Provide an age appropriate environment

- Standards align with physiological needs of players based on year of birth

Uniformity across the country and across membership

- Similar to the outcomes listed for birth year registration, having consistent standards allows U.S. Soccer, and the programs of our members, to provide more meaningful messaging and education for parents, players, coaches and referees



Small-Sided Games Chart

	U6 6 years old and younger	U7 7 years old and younger	U8 8 years old and younger	U9 9 years old and younger	U10 10 years old and younger	U11 11 years old and younger	U12 12 years old and younger
Field Size Ranges (yards)	Length 25-35 Width 15-25	Length 25-35 Width 15-25	Length 25-35 Width 15-25	Length 55-65 Width 35-45	Length 55-65 Width 35-45	Length 70-80 Width 45-55	Length 70-80 Width 45-55
Maximum Goal Size (feet)	Height 4 Width 6	Height 4 Width 6	Height 4 Width 6	Height 6.5 Width 18.5	Height 6.5 Width 18.5	Height 7 Width 21	Height 7 Width 21
Ball Size	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
Players	4v4 No GK	4v4 No GK	4v4 No GK	7v7 GK	7v7 GK	9v9 GK	9v9 GK
Game Time (minutes)	4x10	4x10	4x10	2x25	2x25	2x30	2x30
Offside	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



9v9 Standards



9v9 Player Development Philosophy

Coaches should have the age appropriate license issued by U.S. Soccer

The training-to-game ratio should be 2-3 training sessions per game played

Rosters should include no more than 16 players

Players should participate in no more than 30 games per calendar year and in no more than one game per day

Every player should play a minimum of 50% of the time in each game



9v9 Player Development Philosophy

Results and standings should not be recorded

Players should have a minimum of 2 rest days per week during the season along with planned breaks from organized soccer during the calendar year

Any travel should be limited to day trips with limited allowances for overnight stays

Events (ex: tournaments, showcases, festivals, etc.) should provide a predetermined number of games with no advancement, placement games or champions



9v9

Concussion Initiative

Per U.S. Soccer's Concussion Initiative, if a player is suspected to have a head injury the referee is instructed to stop play to allow for treatment/evaluation as needed

If the player leaves the field of play for additional evaluation, a substitution can be made in that moment

The player with the suspected head injury may not return to the game unless a Health Care Professional (HCP) or Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) has cleared the player

Any coach or parent insisting on returning the player to the game without approved clearance will result in the referee ending the game



9v9

Concussion Initiative

Deliberate heading is not allowed in U11 games. Heading is currently allowed in U12 games without limitations but membership is empowered to limit or ban heading at this level of play

If a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense

If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred

In a controlled and individual environment (where heading is an isolated skill being taught away from any form of opposition or other aspects of the game), the use of lightweight balls (foam, balloon, etc.) would be acceptable for teaching heading technique



9v9 Standards of Play

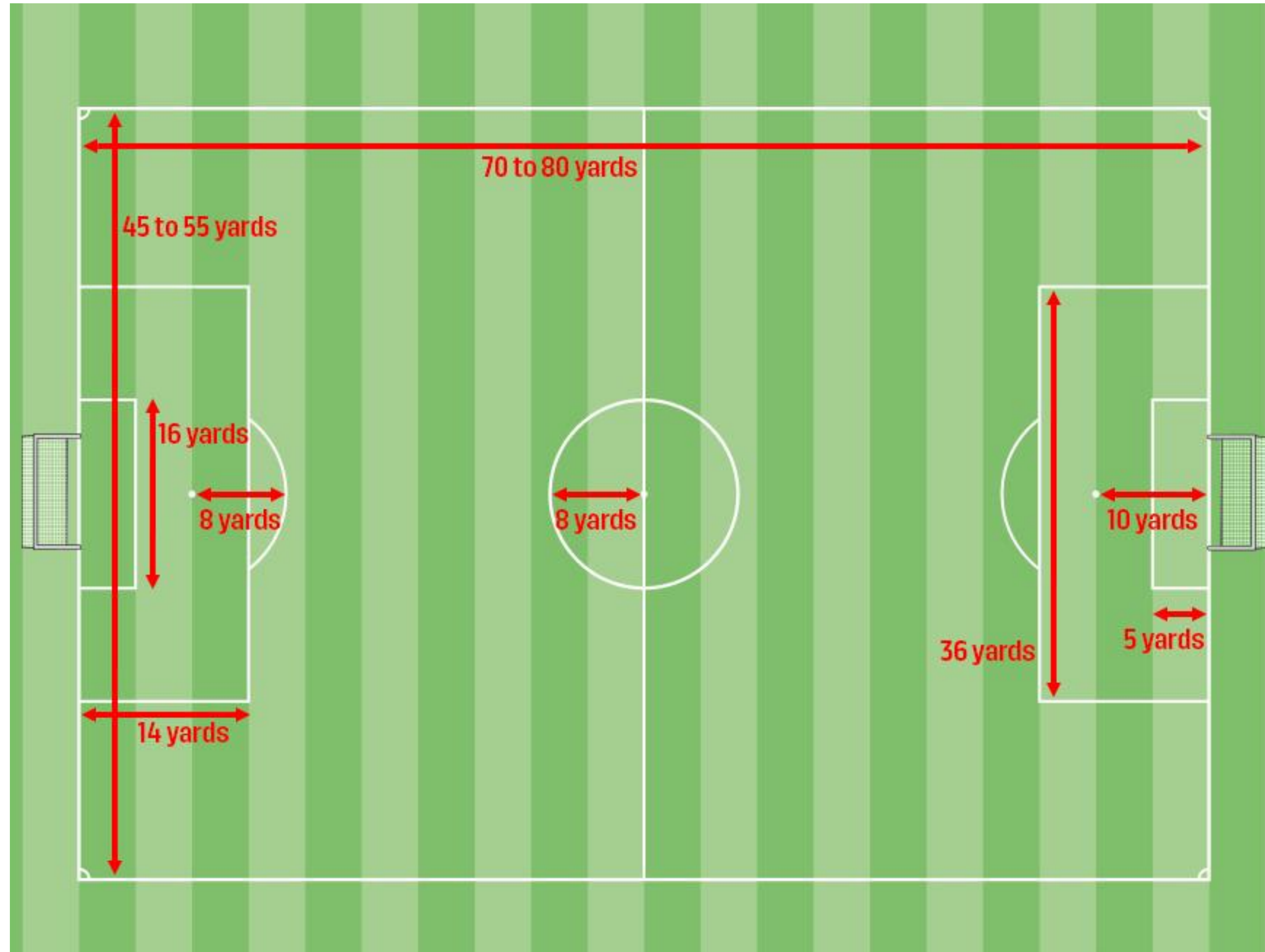
Modified Laws of the Game

Law 1 – Field of Play

- 70-80 yards (length)
- 45-55 yards (width)
- Goals should be no larger than 7 feet (height) x 21 feet (width)
- A 6.5 feet (height) x 18.5 feet (width) goal is recommended based on the age and ability of the players
- Diagram contains recommended field markings and dimensions



9v9 Standards of Play



9v9 Standards of Play

Modified Laws of the Game

Law 2 – Ball

- Size 4

Law 3 – Number of Players

- 9v9 (8 field players and 1 goalkeeper)
- Game may not start or continue if there are less than 6 players on a team
- Substitutions are unlimited and can occur at any stoppage



9v9 Standards of Play

Modified Laws of the Game

Law 5 – Referee

- Minimum certification as a U.S. Soccer Grade 9 Referee

Law 6 – Other Match Officials

- Used at the discretion of the competition authority



9v9 Standards of Play

Modified Laws of the Game

Law 7 – Duration of the Match

- 2 halves
- 30 minutes halves
- 10 minute halftime
- No added time



9v9 Standards of Play

Standard Laws of the Game

Law 4 – Players' Equipment

Law 5 – The Referee

Law 8 – Start and Restart of Play

Law 9 – Ball In and Out of Play

Law 10 – Method of Scoring

Law 11 – Offside

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct*

Law 13 – Free kicks

Law 14 – Penalty Kick

Law 15 – Throw-in

Law 16 – Goal kick

Law 17 – Corner kick

*With the exception of deliberate heading in U11 games



Implementation

Timeline

All information about the Concussion Initiative is implemented with immediate effect

Birth year registration and the small sided standards will be mandated in August 2017

- Some members have chosen to adopt earlier as a best practice and will begin implementing in August 2016
- Please contact your local member for more information on implementation

The Player Development Philosophy information is provided as best practice standards

- Although not currently mandated, U.S. Soccer believes members should adopt these principles to align with our values and objectives for player development



What You Can Do

How to Best Support the Changes

Have patience

Stick to the facts

Read the FAQ

Communicate with and get answers from your local member and leaders



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September 2016