



## **INTRODUCTION TO SMALL SIDED GAMES IN 2008**

In 2007, Football Federation of Australia (FFA) released the National Football Development Plan, in which a key initiative of the staged implementation of small-sided games (SSG) was introduced.

Commencing in 2008, a nationally consistent format of SSG will be introduced as the standard football format for children between six and eight years of age.

### **WHAT ARE SMALL-SIDED GAMES?**

Small-sided games (SSG) are modified forms of 11-a-side football, structured to suitably address the needs of young players, who have different developmental characteristics and needs to adult players.

The philosophy of SSG focuses on enjoyment and freedom of expression with limited emphasis on coaching per se, particular in the formative years of a player's development. They benefit children by making their early contact with the game more enjoyable while simultaneously providing an environment that will facilitate greater skill development

The basis of SSG is that participants, playing on smaller fields and with small numbers, interact with the ball on more occasions and are required to make less complicated tactical decisions. The result for participants is more fun (more successful interactions) and better skill/technique development.

### **RATIONALE FOR INTRODUCTION OF SMALL-SIDED GAMES**

The rationale for the initiative is primarily based on experiences in numerous countries overseas and is broadly based on the following criteria:

- 11-a-side football is in essence an adult game devised by and for adults to play
- more fun and individual enjoyment due to smaller fields and simplified rules
- more playing time, which maximizes individual participation and involvement
- far more repeated touches of the ball by all players on the field
- more shots on goal
- more involvement leads to greater improvement in fitness.

Other benefits not directly associated with the development of players with better technical skills include:

- SSG are truly aimed at young people of all abilities, not simply the more talented players in each age group.
- With the emphasis on participation and enjoyment, and an associate removal of the current emphasis on the importance of winning, children are much more likely to enjoy their football playing experience, will be keen to play more often and are less likely to drop out of the game.
- Parents who are new to the game are likely to be more comfortable playing the role of "game leader" or "supervisor" of teams playing SSG. Given that children playing at this age do not need to be "coached" and by extension, these adults don't need to have a great understanding

of the game to be able to carry out this role effectively, finding parents to volunteer for these roles should become significantly easier.

- SSG also makes more efficient use of facilities, given that there can be multiple games on one standard-size field.

## IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

| 2008                                | 2009                   | 2010                    | 2011                    | 2012                    |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Introduce SSG for U6's, U7's, U8's, | Introduce SSG for U9's | Introduce SSG for U10's | Introduce SSG for U11's | Introduce SSG for U12's |

In 2008 the three youngest age groups (6,7,8) who currently play Rooball (6v6) are introduced to the new structure as they use common sizes for teams, fields, goals and footballs. They also implement the "game leader" and "no goalkeeper" concepts. The only difference is the length of playing halves (15 mins v 20 mins).

In following years, there is just the natural progression of age groups until the completion of 2012 when all required age groups (Under 12 and below) will be playing under the new structure.

## PLAYING CONDITIONS

To ensure that SSG are played in the correct spirit with the focus of these games to be on player development, there will be no competition or official recording of results, tables and statistics for Under 6,7,8,9,10.

## PLAYING FORMATS SUMMARY

| Playing Format                  | Under 6                                  | Under 7 & 8                              |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Numbers</b>                  | 4 v 4                                    | 5 v 5                                    |
| <b>Field Size</b>               | 30m x 20m                                | 30m x 20m                                |
| <b>Field Markings</b>           | Markers or painted line markings         | Markers or painted line markings         |
| <b>Penalty Area</b>             | Nil                                      | Nil                                      |
| <b>Goal Size</b>                | Min: 1.80m x 0.90m<br>Max: 2.00m x 1.00m | Min: 1.80m x 0.90m<br>Max: 2.00m x 1.00m |
| <b>Goal Type</b>                | Markers, Poles, Goals                    | Markers, Poles, Goals                    |
| <b>Ball Size</b>                | Size 3                                   | Size 3                                   |
| <b>Goalkeeper</b>               | No                                       | No                                       |
| <b>Recommended Playing Time</b> | 2 x 15 minutes                           | 2 x 20 minutes                           |
| <b>Half Time Break</b>          | 5 minutes                                | 5 minutes                                |
| <b>Referee</b>                  | Game Leader                              | Game Leader                              |
| <b>Competition</b>              | No                                       | No                                       |

## **OPERATING SSG**

There are two alternatives available for organising SSG in individual Zones and C/As and careful consideration should be given to the circumstances that exist in each area when considering the most appropriate and practical method.

These two models are Intra-club SSG and Inter-Club/Hub SSG and, based on previous experiences with associations that have already introduced the SSG initiative, using a combination of the two models is likely to be the best model to cover the different circumstances that are likely to exist.

However in all cases standard game formats and playing rules are to be adopted as per FFA guidelines and recommendations.

### **1. Intra-Club SSG**

Under this method, teams are arranged from within a club's membership and the play each other on a weekly basis. The individual clubs are then responsible for arranging players into teams and scheduling matches each week. These teams can be either organised at the start of the season so that players remain with the same team each week for the whole season and arrange a season long set of game times, or alternatively, the club can allow the players to attend each week, and then allocate players to a team for that day. This would be more appropriate if starting all specific age games at a regular time.

The advantages of the intra-club method include less travel for parents, confirmed game scheduling, maximises efficient use of club facilities, wider scope for volunteers to be found each match-day, greater opportunities for mentoring and supporting volunteers, flexibility in selection of teams and players and individual club control of match scheduling. Clubs should always allow flexibility in moving players between teams if required.

To operate this method a club must have a minimum number of registered players in the age group (Under 6 – 36 players : Under 7/8 – 42 players). The club must advise the local CA of their intention to operate this method.

### **2. Inter-Club / Hub SSG**

Where clubs are unable to reach the required numbers to facilitate intra-club matches, the CA can group two or more clubs together based on location to create Inter-club/Hub SSG. The matches each week will be played at one of the allocated clubs facilities and the CA will work with the clubs in each neighbourhood to allocate an appropriate share of "home" matches, dependant on the number of players registered at each club. It will then be the responsibility of the host club to arrange game times for its own venue and collate a complete season draw with the other neighbourhood clubs. CAs should assist in the preparation of this scheduling wherever necessary.

The advantages of this include restricted travel for parents, confirmed game scheduling, efficient use of individual club facilities (more games on specified days) and less necessity for club volunteers on a weekly basis. Clubs should still allow flexibility in moving players between their own teams if required.

It is also recognised that in some CAs a central venue is traditionally used for this level of playing. This would still happen where appropriate with the CA arranging the scheduling of matches and the responsibility for match day operations as per a "home" club.

## **REGISTRATION OF PARTICIPANTS**

All participants must be registered in line with FFA National Registration Regulations and comply with Football Queensland (FQ) and local Competition Administrators (CA) Registration Procedures and Guidelines. Players can not register until he/she has attained the age of five (5) years.

## **SEASON PLAYING DATES**

CAs will determine the start and finish dates of the playing season. These dates must be registered with and approved by each Zone prior to the start of the season.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

FFA will be producing a dedicated SSG handbook and DVD for each Zone/CA and club. The content will include;

- Why the move to SSG
- Officials, Coaches, Managers, Parents and Volunteers Education
- Playing Formats
- Rules
- Field Layouts and set-up
- Role of Referee
- Codes of Conduct – Players, Spectators, Coaches, Referees, Administrators

Each Zone will determine how SSG will be implemented into their current structures and will be responsible for ensuring these are communicated to their CAs / Clubs. They will facilitate the changes required and be responsible for the education of CAs / Clubs in the SSG philosophy.

Each CA will be responsible for the implementation of the chosen formats in their area. This will include the distribution of the various educational material available and may include further information seminars for clubs personnel and direct involvement in the setting of venues and draws.

Clubs will be required to appoint a person or committee to co-ordinate the implementation of SSG at their club in line with the adopted method. This will assist to ensure the smooth operations of match days with regards to field set-ups, team selections, game scheduling and the general adoption of the SSG philosophy.

## **LAWS OF SMALL-SIDED GAMES**

### **The field of play**

#### *Dimensions*

The field of play should be rectangular in shape. Sizes for each age group are as follows:

Under 6, 7 & 8 years of age – 30m x 20m

#### *Markings*

Markers or painted line markings.

#### *Goal Size*

The size of the goal should be:

Under 6, 7 & 8 years of age – Minimum 1.80m x 0.90m  
Maximum 2.00m x 1.00m

#### *Penalty Area*

Under 6, 7 & 8 years of age – No penalty area

#### *Goal Type*

Goals, markers or flags can be used as goals.

### **The ball**

Under 6, 7, 8, years of age – Size 3

### **The number of players**

#### *Under 6 years of age – 4 v 4 (no goalkeeper)*

Maximum of two substitutes who may rotate during the entire game. The coach or parent is allowed to make the substitutions while the ball is in play, but must wait until the substituted player has left the field.

#### *Under 7 & 8 years of age – 5 v 5 (no goalkeeper)*

Maximum of two substitutes who may rotate during the entire game. The coach or parent is allowed to make the substitutions while the ball is in play, but must wait until the substituted player has left the field.

### **Duration of the game**

Under 6 years of age – 2 x 15 minutes (half-time break 5 minutes)

Under 7 & 8 years of age – 2 x 20 minutes (half-time break 5 minutes)

### **Referees**

Under 6, 7 & 8 years of age – Game leader

### **Role of the referee/Game Leader**

#### *Under 6, 7 & 8 years of age groups*

We advise that a club member or parent assist the players during the game. His or her main role is to keep the game moving fluently and with minimal breaks. He or she is more of a game leader than a referee.

Their main role as game leader is to explain to the children that when the ball goes behind the back line or when a goal is scored the game is restarted from the back line. Keep the opponents 4.5m away from all restarts.

**Note:** Football is a contact sport and each action is dealt with at the time it occurs. Explain the foul in simple terms, restart and let the game continue!

## **The start of play**

### *Under 6 years of age*

It is important that parents/teachers/coaches who start with this age group have minimal involvement in the actual game – all they need to do is tell the players which goal they need to score in! Let them have fun and assist them where necessary to enjoy the game even more.

In principle there are no rules, just a ball and eight players running and trying to get the ball into the opposition's goal!

### *Under 7 – 8 years of age*

Kick-off is determined by a choice between the “captains” as to which hand the “match leader” has his or her whistle in, or coin, or grass with soil or any other alternative.

A game is started with a kick forward to a team-mate from the middle of the halfway line. The opposition must be 4.5m away from the ball at this time. **Note:** If the player kicks the ball into the goal without a team-mate touching the ball, it is no goal; when it deflects off a defender into the goal, it is a goal.

For the Under 7 and 8 years of age group only, when a goal is scored there is no kick-off but a restart from the back line.

## **Ball in and out of play**

The ball is out of play when it has wholly crossed the goal line or the back line, or when play has been stopped by the referee.

### ***Ball crossing the side line***

#### *Under 6, 7 & 8 years of age*

No throw-in but a kick from behind the sideline. To encourage quick restarts and decision-making under pressure, the team in possession has three seconds to recommence the play from a restart. This can be done by the match leader having a countdown of “Ready-set-go!” When the match leader shouts out: “Go!” the ball is deemed to be in play and the defending team can encroach within the 4.5m zone and attempt to win the ball.

### ***Ball crossing the back line after touching the defending team last***

#### *Under 6 – 8 years of age*

Corner kick.

### ***Ball crossing the back line after touching the attacking team last***

#### *Under 6, 7 & 8 years of age*

Goal kick off the ground from the back line.

## **Method of scoring**

A goal is scored when the whole ball crosses the line. When original goals or goal posts (poles) are not available and cones are used for goals then a goal is scored when the ball passes between the cones without knocking them over.

## **Offside**

There is no offside for the Under 6 – 8 year-old age groups.

### **Fouls and misconduct**

There are only **indirect** free kicks with the exception of a penalty kick (refer below). All indirect free kicks within the penalty area shall be taken outside the 8m penalty box line.

Fouls and misconduct are:

- Kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
- Trips or attempts to trip an opponent
- Jumps at an opponent
- Charges an opponent
- Strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- Pushes an opponent
- Tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball???
- Making contact with the opponent before touching the ball
- Holds an opponent
- Spits at an opponent
- Handles the ball deliberately
- Plays in a dangerous manner
- Impedes the progress of a player.

In Under 6, 7 and 8 years age groups, no player is allowed to deliberately handle the ball with his or her hand and or arm anywhere on the field.

A penalty kick is given because of deliberate “hand ball” in the penalty area or when the opponent commits a deliberate serious foul such as: kicking an opponent, striking an opponent, tackling an opponent in a dangerous manner etc.

In Under 6, 7 and 8 years of age, the penalty kick is taken from an 8m spot with an empty goal – all other players must stand behind the halfway line.

When a penalty kick is taken, the next penalty kick has to be taken by another player until all players have been used.

## **SOME PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

- All players must get an equal amount of playing time.
- Three-goal margin rule: When the difference in score between the two teams reaches three or more goals at any point during the match the losing team is allowed to restart from the middle line when a goal is scored against them instead of from their own back line – Under 8 years of age and below.
- When an individual player is completely dominating the game and has already scored three goals and their team is winning by a three-goal margin, he/she can only score another goal when one of their team-mates has scored a goal.

This is to encourage good players to include other members of their team and to force them to create opportunities for others. If the particular player scores a fourth goal before any of his/her team-mates has scored and the goal margin is three or more goals, the goal does not count and play is restarted with a goal kick/dribble.

- The game leader must use common sense to ensure that the game flows as much as possible. He or she must assist players in getting the game moving quickly. He or she should try to encourage as many players as possible to get involved. The idea is that the game leader is not punishing players but “instructing” them and helping them to enjoy the game all of the time. Most fouls and hand balls at this level are committed through lack of coordination. There is rarely intent. Try to give advantage to the attacking team when you can. Be fair to both sides.
- Once a player has been allocated to a team of five players on game day, he/she cannot be transferred across to the other field to help out a losing team, unless a player on the other field is unable to continue due to an injury and not transferring the player would result in a team being one player short.

## **Warm-up**

The following are recommended:

- Before the match starts the “coach-parent” will have to do a short warm-up. This can be done by starting with a small-sided game or position game between the members of the team (3 v 3, 4 v 3, 5 v 2).

Or,

- Put the players in a circle of 10m and let them dribble the ball to a team-mate and take his/her position. Later pass the ball and take his/her position, or the coach stands in the middle and passes the ball to a player and receives it back and the player runs around the circle until he/she is back in his/her own position etc.

**Note:** Directly after each match each player is allowed to take a “penalty” from the 8m spot. First, all players of the A-team and second, all players of the B-team take their penalty kicks (free shot from 8m spot – no goalkeeper).

## **Note for the coaches/team leaders/parents**

It is advised by FFA to use the breaks to make some internal changes to the team when one team is far too strong and leading with more than three or four goals.

It is a good measure to create more equal teams and play 2 x 20 minutes but start the second half again with a blank score, so there might be two winners that day. The same option is open to start a “new match” every 10 minutes (even more fun for the children).