

ASA Core Technical Program

The following white paper is presented to the membership for approval and implementation and is not considered policy of Alberta Soccer until such time

The Technical Committee of the Alberta Soccer Association wishes to thank

The St. Albert Soccer Association and Sherwood Park Soccer Association  
for their assistance with the development of the  
RULES for U12 8 a-side Soccer

In addition Alberta Soccer would like to thank  
our soccer colleagues both domestic and abroad  
for their assistance and contributions

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In keeping with the Long-term Player Development Model of Canada's Grassroots Soccer, this white paper deals with U12 soccer and should be considered the next step in the development of Alberta Soccer's U10 Mini-Soccer program.

## **U12 Soccer**

### ***Player Development within an 8 a-side environment***

#### **Why make a change?**

For a number of years, Alberta Soccer and the supporting districts have recognized that mini-soccer at the U10 age level are critical years in the development of children in sports and that we need to provide the appropriate environment for **ALL** of these children.

Currently in Alberta U12 soccer is played in the form of 11 vs. 11 games. In order to develop our young players further, the technical committee is recommending this positive change.

Soccer for players under the age of 12 years old is a topic that has been looked at very carefully. There are many varying opinions and desires among parents, players, coaches, and administrators. However, all research shows that playing small-sided games is far more beneficial to developing soccer skills than playing 11 a-side games.

Progressing from 3 vs. 3, 4 vs. 4, 7 vs. 7 to 8 vs. 8, prior to the 11 vs. 11 games is based on sound educational methods world wide.

The committee believes it is the right thing to do and, it is one more piece of the puzzle in the young players' development.

#### **What is 8 a-side soccer?**

Small sided games are the best way for players to combine nearly all elements of the game. The fewer the players the more game-conditioned touches on the soccer ball. As well as you get all these touches in a 'realistic' and 'live' environment with the addition of tactical applications. This is where the enjoyment happens and after 60 minutes of high activity combined with structured repetition the players learn and go home HAPPY!

The 11 a-side game routinely plays structured formations - defense, midfield and forward. Playing 8 a-side games have the same structure but players are more able to move from position to position, from defense to offence making the game exciting for them. The smaller field and smaller number of players on the field will help the players to develop their technique because they will have more touches of the ball. Because there are fewer players on the field there will be extra space, which will give the player more time to make decisions, this will help develop the tactical side of the game. In a 8 a-side soccer game rules such as throw-ins, free kicks, corner kicks and goal kicks still apply.

Further from a coaching perspective organizing players during the match is far less stressful and practice time is not occupied with trying to demonstrate an 11a-side picture. Valuable training time can be spent on technique and small sided tactics. From a player perspective all players can have more opportunities to attack (develop and identify goal scorers) and all players will recognize that they will have to defend as well.

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### **When will the change occur?**

The Technical Committee of Alberta Soccer is recommending the change be fully implemented for the 2008 outdoor season.

### **How can this be accomplished?**

- A. An Education officer of Alberta Soccer in conjunction with the District Head Coach should be available to work with all districts in organizing, guiding and evaluating the program. In addition licensed mentor coaches could be hired/organized by the districts to assist beginner coaches in the proper "on field" implementation of the program.
- B. With assistance from Alberta Soccer, a strong belief in the 8 a-side game, coupled by creating two streams at the grassroots level for the developing player:

#### **1. Community Stream (Program)**

It is recommended that players should be placed into teams and compete within their district or local association. Games will be played during the months of May and June. Alberta Soccer recommends that practices will be arranged at the discretion of the team coach, in consultation with all parents of the players. Play to train ratio could be 2:1

#### **2. Development Stream (Program)**

This program is recommended to be a far more challenging program. The development stream is designed to create an environment for players who have decided soccer to be their sport of choice. Properly organized this program should demand a greater commitment from players and parents, i.e. training and travel. Play to train ratio should be a minimum of 1:2

##### **Identification of Players:**

Players wishing to be considered to play in this program should be identified through pre-season small-sided games. Where possible it is recommended that independent, qualified coaches should record their playing abilities. Teams could then be formed to compete in a league.

##### **League Program:**

The formed teams should then compete in a league which may include "club" teams from within. One or two games per week will be played during the months of May and June. If districts wish the league could break for the month of July and resume play in August/September. Since U12 soccer is development. – It is important that no league standings be kept!

##### **Practices:**

Two practices per week should be expected as a minimum. Practices should be structured, focus on movement and enjoyment, have a theme and include warm-ups – with the soccer ball, technique and skill training, and small-sided games. Practices must be no longer than one hour in length.

##### **Games**

By implementing this program the difficulty with lack of proper fields is reduced (one full field can now be divided into two smaller fields) while the number of players on one full field is increased from twenty-two (22) to thirty two (32). In addition the program can act as a good development opportunity for the districts youth referees.

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### **3. Festivals**

Rather than offering Provincial Championships at the U12 age group Alberta Soccer is recommending Festivals be held on a regional basis.

In addition, districts can host festivals, as these provide a popular format for districts and clubs who come together at a central venue with teams playing a small number of games on a friendly basis. Results are not kept and the importance is placed on fun and enjoying the next game without the pressure of league tables.

### **4. Organization**

All youth districts shall administer leagues and programs under the Alberta Soccer regulations. Included will be U12 development soccer.

In all U12 development soccer, emphasis shall be placed on enjoyment, sportsmanship (fair play), education, skill development, and respect for teammates, opponents and referees.

#### **Keeping U12 Development Soccer Simple**

The game U12 soccer (8 a-side) provides the best environment for youth players to develop soccer skills and techniques. When coaching, officiating or parenting remember to keep the game simple. Over complicating things can loose the flow of the game in turn inhibiting a player's development. Encourage the players to discover the love of the game through the game.

In addition a small sided game is a great teacher.

The teaching of the game and the organization of the practices will require time for everyone to familiarize themselves with the game. After a week or two, however, there should be no difficulties.

Be Patient! The principles of the game are right. The game is right. The rewards will be in the children's enjoyment of playing and their positive development.

## **Typical comments and questions for U12 8 a-side Soccer**

### **Why 8 a-side?**

It makes the game a better experience for children. More touches on the ball, the more a player will develop his/ her skills, having more opportunity to be actively involved in the game. Energetic workouts occur due to players playing both defensive and offensive roles.

### **Why shouldn't they play 11 vs. 11 like 'real' soccer?**

The 11 vs. 11 format is the **adult** version of the game. It makes little sense for Under 12 players to play on a full size field with full size goals, as they do not have the strength and size to play such a game. The players at this age have difficulty taking a goal kick that will reach out side of the goal area or a corner kick that reach the opponents goal mouth. The game will be played in a small area of the field for long periods of time as players do not have the strength to get the ball up the field. This would not help them develop their soccer skills.

### **I did not grow up playing this way.**

True. Whether you grew up playing here or elsewhere, soccer was traditionally played 11 vs. 11 for all age groups. This is no longer true. Players under the age of twelve are now playing small-sided games in soccer rich nations all over the world.

### **How will they learn to play 11 vs. 11?**

Young players were forced to play 11 a-sides before their bodies were physically developed to play the adult version of the game. Any notion that players will be less prepared to play 11 vs. 11 is not justified.

## Soccer Rules of the U12 Game

Game Format	Team Size	Game Duration	Ball Size	Field Size Min/Max Width	Field Size Min/max Length	Goal Size (no larger than)
8 vs. 8	Ideal 11/Max 14	2 X 30 min	4	42 to 55m 45 to 60 yd	60 to 75m 65 to 82 yd	6ft/1.83m X 18ft/5.49m

The Canadian Soccer Association highly recommends no 11 a-side soccer be played before U13

### Rule 1: Field of Play

- Whenever possible the field size will be 60 yards long X 40 yards wide, and marked out as shown in Fig 1. For practical reasons this may not always be possible and games could be played, for example across the width of a regular soccer pitch. However the internal markings should remain the same.

If the existing field is 120yd in length, the width of the 8 a-side field is from the center line of the large field to the edge of the 18 yard box and the length of the field is simply from sideline to sideline. If the length of the large field is less than 120 yd, then the sideline will need to be extended accordingly beyond the 18 yd box – toward the full fields goal.

- The size of goals should be standard portable goal from manufactures which tend to be approximately 12 ft wide X 6'6" high.
- Goal nets should be used.
- The goal area and penalty area are one and the same. From here on in it shall be referred to as the goal area.

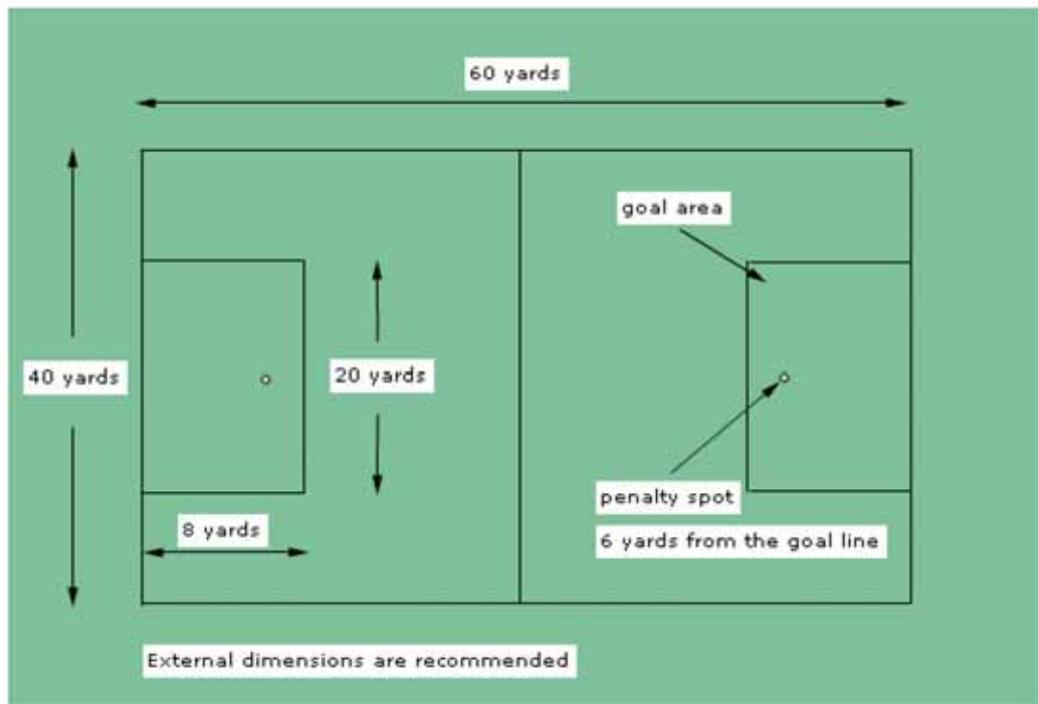


FIG 1

### **Rule 2: The Ball**

1. The ball shall be spherical and constructed of material which is not dangerous to the players.
2. The ball size shall be 4.

### **Rule 3: Number of Players**

1. The game shall be played by two teams, each consisting of 8 players, one of whom shall be a goalkeeper. Teams must dress a minimum of 6 players and a maximum of 14.
2. Unlimited substitutions shall be allowed at any stoppage in the game. The referee should determine how players will leave and enter the field.

### **Rule 4: Player's Equipment**

1. Equipment shall consist of shorts, socks, shin-guards, footwear, and a numbered shirt. Goalkeepers must wear colors that are distinguishable from those of other players, and the referee. Goalkeepers may wear gloves and tracksuit type pants.

### **Rule 5: Duration of the Game**

1. The game shall be divided into two equal halves. Each half shall be 30 minutes in length. The referee should determine the length of the half time break but it shall be not less than 5 minutes.

### **Rule 6: Start of Play**

1. At the beginning of the game the referee, by toss of a coin will determine choice of halves and kick off. The winner of the coin toss shall choose the half to defend and the opposing team will get the kick off. The order is reversed for the start of the second half.
2. At a kick-off, all players shall be in their own half. All players opposing the team taking the kick off shall be not less than 6 yards from the ball until it is kicked. The game shall be started by the referee giving a signal. The ball shall be kicked forward into the opponents half of the field. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves. For any infringement of rule the kick off shall be retaken.
3. The player taking the kick off must not play or touch the ball a second time before it has been played or touched by another player.
4. After a goal has been scored, the game shall be restarted by a kick off, to be taken by a player of the team against which the goal was scored.
5. After the first half of play, the teams shall change halves and the kick-off shall be taken by a player of the team opposing that which started the game.
6. For any stoppage not mentioned in these rules, the referee shall restart the game by dropping the ball at the place where it was when play stopped, unless play was stopped in the goal area. In this case, the ball shall be dropped on that part of the goal area line which runs parallel to the goal line, at the point nearest to where the ball was when play stopped. The ball shall be in play as soon as it touches the ground.
7. A goal may be scored directly from a kick off

### **Rule 7: Ball in and out of Play**

1. The ball is out of play
  - When the whole of the ball has crossed the goal-line or touch line, whether on the ground or in the air.
  - When the game has been stopped by the referee.
2. The ball is in play at all other times.

### **Rule 8: Method of Scoring**

1. A goal is scored when the whole of the ball has crossed the goal line, between the goalposts and under the crossbar, provided it has not been thrown, carried, or intentionally propelled by hand or arm, by a player of the attacking team. The exception is for goalkeepers from within their own goal area.

### **Rule 9: Free Kick (All restarts are indirect)**

1. For any infringement of the Rules of the Game when the ball is in play, the referee may award a free kick to the team opposing that of the offending player. The free kick shall be taken from the place where the infringement occurred, unless the free kick is awarded to the attacking team within the opponent's goal area. In this case, the kick shall be taken from that part of the goal area line which runs parallel to the goal line, at the point nearest to where the offence was committed.
2. At the taking of a free kick the ball shall be stationary and all opponents shall be not less than 6 yards from the ball until it is kicked.
3. Players taking a free kick within their own goal area shall kick the ball into play beyond the goal area. The ball is in play when it is kicked, moves, and has passed outside the goal area. All opponents shall be outside the goal area and not less than 6 yards from the ball until it has been kicked. For any infringement of this rule the free kick shall be retaken.
4. A player taking a free kick shall not play or touch the ball a second time until it has been played or touched by another player.
5. A goal may **not** be scored directly from a free kick.

### **Rule 10: Penalty Kick**

1. A penalty kick shall be taken from the penalty mark. All players, with the exception of the defending goalkeeper and the player taking the free kick must be outside the goal area, but within the field of play.
2. The goalkeeper must remain on the goal line, facing the kicker, between the goalposts until the ball has been kicked.
3. The player taking the penalty kick must not play or touch the ball a second time until it has been played or touched by another player.
4. The time of play shall be extended at half or full time to allow a penalty kick to be taken. In the event time is extended, play shall end when a goal is or is not scored.

### **Rule 11: Fouls and Misconduct**

1. A player who, in the opinion of the referee, intentionally commits any of the following offences shall be penalized by the awarding of a free kick to the opposing side.
  - Kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
  - Trips an opponent
  - Jumps at an opponent
  - Charges an opponent in any manner
  - Strike, attempts to strike, or spits at an opponent
  - Holds an opponent
  - Pushes an opponent
  - Handles the ball, i.e. strikes, carries or propels the ball with hand or arm, excepting the goalkeepers within their own goal area.

Should any player commit any one of the above offences in their own goal area while the ball is in play, irrespective of the position of the ball, a penalty kick shall be awarded to the opposing team.

### **Rule 12: Throw in**

1. When the whole of the ball has crossed the touch line, either on the ground or in the air, the ball shall be thrown in from the point where it left the field of play, by a member of the team opposing that of the player who last touched it.
2. Players taking a throw in shall face the field of play and have part of both feet on the ground, on or behind the touch line. The throwers shall use both hands to deliver the ball from behind and over their head. The ball shall be in play immediately after it enters the field of play.
3. Players taking a throw in must not touch the ball a second time before it has been played or touched by another player.

*Note for referees: Please do not repeatedly stop the flow of a game by the retaking of an incorrectly thrown ball.*

### **Rule 13: Goal Kick**

1. When the whole of the ball has crossed the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, excluding that portion between the goalposts having last been played or touched by a member of the attacking team, a goal kick shall be awarded to the defending team. The ball shall be kicked into play from a point within that half of the goal area nearest to where the ball crossed the goal line.
2. At the taking of a goal kick, all opponents shall be outside the goal area and not less than 6 yards from the ball until it has been kicked into play. The ball shall be in play when it has traveled the distance of its own circumference and has left the goal area.
3. The player taking the goal kick must not play or touch the ball a second time before it has been played or touched by another player.
4. A goal may be scored direct from a goal kick, but only against the opposing team.

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### **Rule 14: Corner Kick**

1. When the whole of the ball has crossed the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, excluding that portion between the goal posts, having last been played or touched by a member of the defending team. A corner kick shall be awarded to the attacking team.
2. The corner kick shall be taken within the corner arc nearest to where the ball crossed the goal line. All opponents shall be not less than 6 yards from the ball until it has been kicked. The ball must travel the distance of its own circumference to be in play.
3. A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick.

### **OFFSIDE:**

The offside rule is in effect at the attacking 3rd of the field. This line may be marked as a dotted line, and solid line or single cones or flags on the touch line.

This will allow players to develop an understanding of spreading out and creating depth in attack and at the same time parents are not calling players "a bunch of goal sucks".