



INTRODUCTION TO SMALL SIDED FOOTBALL IN 2009

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

Commencing in 2008, a nationally consistent format of small-sided games was introduced for children under the age of twelve years. Football Queensland committed to the introduction of the format for the 6, 7 and 8 years age groups in the first year and established an implementation schedule which will see the 9 years age group play the format in 2009.

Recently, Football Federation Australia announced Optus as the Official Partner of the Game Development programs, which includes the naming rights for the program which will now be known as Optus Small-Sided Football (SSF) as well as the community coach education pathway.

WHAT IS OPTUS SMALL-SIDED FOOTBALL?

Optus Small-Sided Football is 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 SSF 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 SSF 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 FOOTBALL

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 linked with the development of players with better technical skills include:

- SSF is aimed at players of all abilities, not simply the more talented 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.
- SSF makes more efficient use of facilities, given that there can be multiple games on one standard-size field.
- Parents who are new to the game are likely to be more comfortable playing the role of “game leader” of teams playing SSF. Given that children at this ages do not need to be “coached” as such, these adults don’t need to have a great technical understanding of the game leading to the search for volunteers for these roles becoming significantly easier.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Introduce SSF for U6’s, U7’s, U8’s,	Introduce SSF for U9’s	Introduce SSF for U10’s	Introduce SSF for U11’s	Introduce SSF for U12’s

In 2008 the three youngest age groups (Under 6,7,8) were introduced to the new format using common sizes for teams, fields, goals and footballs. In 2009, the 9 years age group, consisting primarily of those who played the format as Under 8s in 2008, introduces more players per team on larger playing areas, goalkeepers and penalty areas, larger goals, an increase in game time and an instructing referee.

PLAYING CONDITIONS

The official recording of competition tables, statistics and playing of finals is not permitted at these ages. At all times the focus of these games should remain on player development and providing the best experience possible through participation and enjoyment for the players. This environment will be created by clubs, officials, game leaders and parents.

PLAYING FORMATS SUMMARY

Playing Format	Under 6	Under 7 & 8	Under 9
Numbers	4 v 4	5 v 5	7 v 7
Field Size	30m x 20m	30m x 20m	40m x 30m
Field Markings	Markers or painted line markings	Markers or painted line markings	Markers or painted line markings
Penalty Area	Nil	Nil	8m length x 16m width
Goal Size	Min: 1.80m x 0.90m Max: 2.00m x 1.00m	Min: 1.80m x 0.90m Max: 2.00m x 1.00m	Min: 4.80m x 1.60m Max: 5.00m x 2.00m
Goal Type	Markers, Poles, Goals	Markers, Poles, Goals	Markers, Poles, Goals
Ball Size	Size 3	Size 3	Size 3
Goalkeeper	No	No	Yes
Playing Time	2 x 15 minutes	2 x 20 minutes	2 x 25 minutes
Half Time Break	5 minutes	5 minutes	5 minutes
Referee	Game Leader	Game Leader	Instructing Referee
Competition	No	No	No

OPERATING SSF

There are alternatives for organising SSF for individual Zones and Competition Administrators and consideration should be given to circumstances existing in each area when considering the most appropriate method.

These models are Intra-club SSF, Inter-Club/Hub SSF and Inter-Club SSF, and based on previous experiences, using a combination of the 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 SSF (Under 6, 7 and 8)

Under this model, teams are arranged from within a club's membership and 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, 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 individual club control of match scheduling. Clubs should always allow flexibility in moving players between teams if required.

It remains the authority of the Zone/CA to advise their clubs if such an option is to be offered in their area and to which age groups. This may also include a limit on minimum number of registered players required to operate this model.

2. Inter-Club / Hub SSF (Under 6, 7 and 8)

In the Under 6, 7 and 8 year age groups, 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 SSF. The matches each week will be played at one of the allocated clubs facilities and the CA will work with the clubs in each "hub" 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 regions a central venue is traditionally used for this level of playing. This can still happen where appropriate with the CA arranging the scheduling of matches and the responsibility for match day operations as per a "home" club.

3. Inter-Club SSF (Under 9)

In the Under 9 age group, the CA can group clubs together based on location to create Inter-club SSF divisions. The matches each week will be played at one of the allocated clubs facilities and the CA will work with the clubs in each division to prepare a complete season draw for the division.

The advantages of this include limited travel for parents, confirmed game scheduling and practical use of individual club facilities.

It is also recognised that, in some regions, a central venue is traditionally used for this level of playing. This can 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

To assist with this continuing implementation, FFA has produced new educational and promotional material which will be available for distribution in December. This material includes Optus Small-Sided Football Handbook and DVD, Laws Leaflets, Parent Information Guide, Game Leader Resource, Instructing Referee Resource and Posters.

A second DVD, providing a guide for parents/coaches as to what they can do with their players at training is currently being developed and will be available for the commencement of the 2009 season.

Football Queensland will distribute the educational and promotional resources required to ensure an efficient roll-out of the 2009 plan as soon as FFA make them available in December.

In Queensland, each Zone will ultimately determine how Optus Small-Side Football will be implemented into their current structures and will be responsible for ensuring these are communicated to their Competition Administrators / Clubs.

Each Competition Administrator will be responsible for the implementation of the chosen formats in their area with approval from their Zone. This will include the distribution of the various educational materials available and may include further information seminars for clubs personnel and direct involvement in the setting of venues and draws.

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

Laws of Small-Sided Football Under 6

The field of play

30 metres x 20 metres

Goal size

Minimum 1.80 metres wide x 0.90 metres high

Maximum 2.00 metres wide x 1.00 metres high

Goal Type

Goals, markers or flags can be used as goals.

Markings

Markers or painted line markings.

Penalty area

No penalty area

The ball

Size 3

The number of players

It is recommended that teams be made up of the numbers of players listed below with all children encouraged to receive equal playing time.

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

Maximum of two substitutes nominated. Unlimited number of substitutions (interchange) can be used during the entire game. The coach or parent is allowed to make the substitutions (interchange) while the ball is in play, but must wait until the substituted player has left the field.

Goalkeeper

No Goalkeeper. Game leaders, coaches and managers should continually discourage children from permanently standing in front of the goal. All players should be encouraged to move with the ball.

Duration of the game

2 x 15 minutes (Half time break 5 minutes)

This may be flexible depending on implementation format.

Start of play

Game is started with a kick forward to a team-mate from the middle of the halfway line. A goal can not be scored with a direct kick from the kick-off. It must touch a team-mate or opposition player to be counted as a goal.

Re-start after a goal

A player from the team that conceded the goal, will kick, pass or dribble the ball into play from anywhere along the goal line.

Upon a goal being scored defenders should retreat and line up along the halfway line and can move once the ball is in play. 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.

Ball crossing the touch line

Kick, pass or dribble ball into play from touch line. For quick decision making a ready, set, go countdown should be used.

Defenders should be 4.5 metres away from the ball. 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.

Ball crossing the goal line after touching the defending team last

Corner kick from corner arc or junction of the touch and goal line.

Defenders should be 4.5 metres away from the ball.

Ball crossing the goal line after touching the attacking team last

A player from the defending team will kick, pass or dribble the ball into play from anywhere along the goal line.

Defenders should retreat and line up along the halfway line and can move once the ball is in play.

Offside

No offside.

Fouls and misconduct

For acts of fouls and misconduct a free kick is awarded. All free kicks are indirect, with defenders 4.5m away from the ball, with exception of a penalty kick (outlined below). Fouls and misconducts include the act or attempt to kick, trip, strike, push, holds, tackle from behind, contact before touching the ball, abusive language, handles ball or play dangerously towards an opponent or official.

A Penalty kick is awarded for deliberate hand ball or serious acts of fouls and misconduct occurring in the attacking half. A penalty kick will be taken from an 8m spot with an empty goal – all other players must stand behind the half way line

Most fouls and misconduct at this level are not deliberate and intentional and often caused by lack of coordination or skill. Game Leaders should give advantage to the attacking team, be fair to both teams and continue play, limiting stoppages.

Method of scoring

A goal is scored when the whole ball crosses the line. Where cones are used as goals, a goal is scored when the ball passes through the cones without touching or knocking them over.

Referee

A game leader is used as the referee. This person's main role is to keep the game moving fluently, limit stoppages and assist players with all match restarts. This person can be a club official, parent, older child / player or beginning referee.

The official recording of competition tables, statistics and playing of finals is not permitted at this age. At all times the focus of these games should remain on player development and providing the best experience possible through participation and enjoyment for the players. This environment will be created by clubs, officials, game leaders and parents.

Laws of Small-Sided Football Under 7 & 8

The field of play

30 metres x 20 metres

Goal size

Minimum 1.80 metres wide x 0.90 metres high

Maximum 2.00 metres wide x 1.00 metres high

Goal Type

Goals, markers or flags can be used as goals.

Markings

Markers or painted line markings.

Penalty area

No penalty area

The ball

Size 3

The number of players

It is recommended that teams be made up of the numbers of players listed below with all children encouraged to receive equal playing time.

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

Maximum of two substitutes nominated. Unlimited number of substitutions (interchange) can be used during the entire game. The coach or parent is allowed to make the substitutions (interchange) while the ball is in play, but must wait until the substituted player has left the field.

Goalkeeper

No Goalkeeper. Game leaders, coaches and managers should continually discourage children from permanently standing in front of the goal. All players should be encouraged to move with the ball.

Duration of the game

2 x 20 minutes (Half time break 5 minutes)

This may be flexible depending on implementation format.

Start of play

Game is started with a kick forward to a team-mate from the middle of the halfway line. A goal can not be scored with a direct kick from the kick-off. It must touch a team-mate or opposition player to be counted as a goal.

Re-start after a goal

A player from the team that conceded the goal, will kick, pass or dribble the ball into play from anywhere along the goal line.

Upon a goal being scored defenders should retreat and line up along the halfway line and can move once the ball is in play.

Ball crossing the touch line

Kick, pass or dribble ball into play from touch line. For quick decision making a ready, set, go countdown should be used.

Defenders should be 4.5 metres away from the ball.

Ball crossing the goal line after touching the defending team last

Corner kick from corner arc or junction of the touch and goal line.

Defenders should be 4.5 metres away from the ball.

Ball crossing the goal line after touching the attacking team last

A player from the defending team will kick, pass or dribble the ball into play from anywhere along the goal line.

Defenders should retreat and line up along the halfway line and can move once the ball is in play.

Offside

No offside

Fouls and misconduct

For acts of fouls and misconduct a free kick is awarded. All free kicks are indirect, with defenders 4.5m away from the ball, with exception of a penalty kick (outlined below). Fouls and misconducts include the act or attempt to kick, trip, strike, push, holds, tackle from behind, contact before touching the ball, abusive language, handles ball or play dangerously towards an opponent or official.

A Penalty kick is awarded for deliberate hand ball or serious acts of fouls and misconduct occurring in the attacking half. A penalty kick will be taken from an 8m spot with an empty goal – all other players must stand behind the half way line.

Most fouls and misconduct at this level are not deliberate and intentional and often caused by lack of coordination or skill. Game Leaders should give advantage to the attacking team, be fair to both teams and continue play, limiting stoppages.

Method of scoring

A goal is scored when the whole ball crosses the line. Where cones are used as goals, a goal is scored when the ball passes through the cones without touching or knocking them over.

Referee

A game leader is used as the referee. This person's main role is to keep the game moving fluently, limit stoppages and assist players with all match restarts. This person can be a club official, parent, older child/player or beginning referee.

The official recording of competition tables, statistics and playing of finals is not permitted at this age. At all times the focus of these games should remain on player development and providing the best experience possible through participation and enjoyment for the players. This environment will be created by clubs, officials, game leaders and parents.

Laws of Small-Sided Football Under 9

The field of play

40 metres x 30 metres

Goal size

Minimum 4.80 metres wide x 1.60 metres high

Maximum 5.00 metres wide x 2.00 metres high

Goal Type

Goals, markers or flags can be used as goals.

Markings

Markers or painted line markings.

Penalty area

Rectangular – 8 metre length x 16 metre width

This can be marked through use of marked lines, flat or soft markers or cones

The ball

Size 3

The number of players

It is recommended that teams be made up of the numbers of players listed below with all children encouraged to receive equal playing time.

Under 9 years of age – 7 v 7 (including goalkeeper)

Maximum of three substitutes nominated. Unlimited number of substitutions (interchange) can be used during the entire game. The coach or parent is allowed to make the substitutions (interchange) while the ball is in play, but must wait until the substituted player has left the field.

Goalkeeper

Under 9 age group teams include a goalkeeper and it is recommended that the player filling this position be rotated either week by week or during the game to receive equal playing time in goal as on the field.

The goalkeeper is permitted to handle the ball in the penalty area. To restart play after a save or gathering the ball, **a goalkeeper is not permitted to kick the ball directly from their hands**. The ball must be thrown or rolled from the hands or played from the ground with their feet.

This is designed to prevent the ball being kicked from one end to the other on the full and encourages teams to build from the back through passing and player movement.

Duration of the game

2 x 25 minutes (Half time break 5 minutes)

Start of play and re-start after a goal

Game is started at the start of each half and after a goal with a kick forward to a team-mate from the middle of the halfway line. A goal can not be scored with a direct kick from the kick-off. It must touch a team-mate or opposition player to be counted as a goal.

Ball crossing the touch line

Throw in: Player faces the field of play; part of each foot either on or behind the touch line, uses both hands and delivers the ball from behind and over his or her head. The thrower may not touch the ball again until it has touched another player; a free kick is awarded if this happens.

Defenders should be 4.5 metres away from the ball.

A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw in.

Ball crossing the goal line after touching the defending team last

Corner kick from corner arc or junction of the touch and goal line.

Defenders should be 4.5 metres away from the ball.

Ball crossing the goal line after touching the attacking team last

Goal kick from anywhere inside the penalty area.

Defenders should be 4.5 metres away from the ball.

Offside

No offside

Fouls and misconduct

For acts of fouls and misconduct a free kick is awarded. All free kicks are indirect, with defenders 4.5m away from the ball, with exception of a penalty kick (outlined below). Fouls and misconducts include the act or attempt to kick, trip, strike, push, holds, tackle from behind, contact before touching the ball, abusive language, handles ball or play dangerously towards an opponent or official.

A Penalty kick is awarded for deliberate hand ball or serious acts of fouls and misconduct occurring in the penalty area. A penalty kick will be taken from an 8 metre spot with a goalkeeper in position – all other players must stand behind the half way line.

Instructing referees should instruct the players and attempt to give advantage to the attacking team, be fair to both teams and continue play, limiting stoppages if the foul or misconduct is not deliberate and intentional.

Method of scoring

A goal is scored when the whole ball crosses the line. Where cones are used as goals, a goal is scored when the ball passes through the cones without touching or knocking them over.

Referee

An instructing referee is used as the referee. This person's main role is to control the game to ensure it is played fluently and instruct and correct the players without blowing the whistle on how to behave and what the rules are, e.g. what a foul is, what a free kick is and how to throw in etc... Should these indiscretions happen a second time the referee should stop the game and apply the appropriate action and decisions. This person can be a club official, capable parent, older child or player, beginning or official referee from the federation or association.

The official recording of competition tables, statistics and playing of finals is not permitted at this age. At all times the focus of these games should remain on player development and providing the best experience possible through participation and enjoyment for the players. This environment will be created by clubs, officials, instructing referees and parents.

Game Leader – Small-Sided Football Under 6 – 8 age group

The main role of the game leader is to keep the game moving fluently, limit stoppages and assist players with all match re-starts. This person can be a club official, parent, older child / player or beginning referee.

The basic laws and playing conditions;

- **Start of play** – Kick forward to a team-mate from the middle of the halfway line.
- **Re-start after a goal** – Kick, pass or dribble ball into play from anywhere along back line. Defenders retreat to half way line and move once ball is in play.
- **Ball crossing the touch line** – Kick, pass or dribble ball into play from touch line. Defenders should be 4.5 metres away from the ball.
- **Ball crossing the goal line after touching the defending team last** – Corner kick. Defenders should be 4.5 metres away from the ball.
- **Ball crossing the goal line after touching the attacking team last** – Kick, pass or dribble ball into play from anywhere along back line. Defenders retreat to half way line and move once ball is in play.
- **Fouls and misconduct** – Indirect free kicks are awarded for acts of fouls and misconduct with defenders 4.5metres away from the ball. For deliberate or serious acts of fouls and misconduct in the attacking half of field a penalty kick is awarded from an 8m spot with an empty goal – all other players must stand behind the half way line.

The game leader should;

- Promote player development, participation and fun
- Ensure the correct number of players are on the field
- Discourage players from permanently over-guarding the goal – encourage maximum involvement for all players
- Use a “ Ready, Set, Go” prompt to encourage quick decisions when restarting play
- Most fouls and misconduct at this level are not deliberate and serious. Give advantage to the attacking team and let the game flow, limiting stoppages.
- Ensure team officials and parents create a safe and positive playing environment for the children
- Ensure team officials and parents uphold a player development and participation focus rather than winning and losing
- Ensure there are no positions at this age, children should be involved in all aspects of the game
- Praise and encourage both teams
- Be enthusiastic, consistent and approachable
- Remember the children are learning the game – be flexible and patient

Instructing Referee – Small-Sided Football Under 9 – 12 age group

The main role of the instructing referee is to control the game to ensure it is played fluently and instruct and correct the players without blowing the whistle on how to behave and what the rules are, e.g. what a foul is, what a free kick is and how to throw in etc... Should these indiscretions happen a second time the referee should stop the game and apply the appropriate action and decisions. This person can be a club official, capable parent, older child or player, beginning or official referee from the federation or association.

The basic laws and playing conditions;

- **Start of play & re-start after a goal** – Kick forward to a team-mate from the middle of the halfway line.
- **Ball crossing the touch line** – Throw in.
Defenders should be 4.5 metres away from the ball.
- **Ball crossing the goal line after touching the defending team last** – Corner kick.
Defenders should be 4.5 metres away from the ball.
- **Ball crossing the goal line after touching the attacking team last** – Goal kick from anywhere inside the penalty area.
Defenders should be 4.5 metres away from the ball.
- **Goalkeepers** - The goalkeeper is permitted to handle the ball in the penalty area. To restart play after a save or gathering the ball, **a goalkeeper is not permitted to kick the ball directly from their hands**. The ball must be thrown or rolled from the hands or played from the ground with their feet.
- **Fouls and misconduct** – Indirect free kicks are awarded for acts of fouls and misconduct with defenders 4.5 metres away from the ball. For *deliberate* or *serious* acts of handball or fouls and misconduct in the penalty area a penalty kick is awarded from an 8m spot with a goalkeeper in position – all other players must stand behind the half way line.

The instructing referee should;

- Promote player development, participation and fun
- Ensure the correct number of players are on the field
- Most fouls and misconduct at this level are not deliberate and intentional. Give advantage to the attacking team and let the game flow, limiting stoppages.
- Instruct players in the first instance before blowing the whistle
- Ensure team officials and parents create a positive playing environment for the children
- Ensure team officials and parents uphold a player development and participation focus rather than winning and losing
- Ensure a safe playing environment for the children
- Praise and encourage both teams
- Be enthusiastic and approachable
- Be prepared, fair and consistent

SOME FURTHER PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Field size and layout

It is important that clubs ensure the size of the fields prescribed for each SSF format are adhered to and the appropriate actions are taken to ensure this is rectified immediately if need be.

The size of the field for Under 6 – 8 SSF formats is 30 metres x 20 metres, in the under 9s the field size is 40m x 30m. In the interests of safety and club duty of care it is important that fields are not adjoining either along the side line or goal line. There should be at least a minimum of 2 – 3 metres between each field and this gap may also provide an appropriate area for parents to support from.

Fields can be marked through the use of painted line markings, flat or soft markers or cones.

Goals

Football Federation Australia and Football Queensland understand that purchasing new goals that fall strictly within these tolerances will likely be expensive and a difficult logistic exercise. Both organisations encourage a common sense approach in implementation and accept the use of existing Rooball goals, commercially available portable options and, if necessary, poles or markers.

Playing Numbers

It is important that team coaches, managers and game leaders ensure the appropriate playing numbers prescribed for each SSF format are adhered to.

For the Under 6 age group, matches will be 4 v 4 and unlimited substitutions are permitted throughout the match with all children encouraged to receive equal playing time. The recommendation is for teams to have squads of 6 players to allow 2 players to substitute.

For the Under 7 and 8 age group, matches will be 5 v 5 and unlimited substitutions are permitted throughout the match with all children encouraged to receive equal playing time. The recommendation is for teams to have squads of 7 players to allow 2 players to substitute.

For the Under 9 age group, matches will be 7 v 7 and unlimited substitutions are permitted throughout the match with all children encouraged to receive equal playing time. The recommendation is for teams to have squads of 10 players to allow 3 players to substitute. Under 9 also include a goalkeeper which will be encouraged to be rotated either week by week or during the game.

Situations where teams have 6, 7 or 8 children in a squad should not just agree to play 6, 7 or 8 children on the field at a time. The field sizes are specific to 4v4, 5v5 and 7v7 and are not big enough to cater for more numbers. The use of more playing numbers on the field than are prescribed will not achieve the benefits and philosophy of SSF.

Playing Philosophy

- All players should 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.
- 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.

- Directly after each Under 6,7,8 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).
- 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. e.g. 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).

Game Leader

The game leader must use common sense to ensure that the game flows as much as possible. He/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.

Re-start from the back line (Under 6, 7, 8)

The experiences we have seen and feedback received has resulted in the following advice in regards to the restart of play from the back line after a goal has been scored and a goal kick is taken. All defenders should go back to the halfway line and on the instruction of your coach or game leader play can be re-started with the ball kicked, passed or dribbled back into play. This will encourage the team restarting play to keep the ball and give them a greater chance to get out of their own half of the field. It is important this message is communicated to all team coaches, managers and game leaders. This will be officially addressed in SSF print resources for the 2009 season.

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).
- 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.

Organisation

It is important that host clubs of SSF matches are adequately resourced with the appropriate field set-up, equipment and a SSF venue coordinator. An SSF venue coordinator dedicated to the SSF matches is vital to the successful running of the matches. This person will coordinate the games starting on time, timing the matches and notifying when and where teams will move on to as well as communicating with the host club, coaches and game leaders on field set-up, transition and pack-up.

The above recommendations should be communicated to all clubs and officials immediately for appropriate action where required. This will assist greatly to ensure the positive experience of all players and parents is upheld and continues to improve. Football Queensland, in conjunction with Football Federation Australia, will continue to make Optus Small-Sided Football education and practical demonstrations available to ensure club officials, coaches and parents can attend.