Welcome to U.S. Soccer's presentation on our new player development initiatives.

We want to make sure all parts of membership are as informed as possible on our collective plan to develop players to best of their abilities.

Current Zone 1 Landscape

- The playing and coaching environment needs to be improved for players 6-12
  - Too much emphasis on winning at the expense of individual development
  - The priority is developing individual skills
  - Need to educate and empower coaches and parents
  - F License for those working with players 8 and younger

© 2015 U.S. Soccer CONFIDENTIAL - Not to be shared without U.S. Soccer approval

Despite the increased popularity of soccer and the success of our national teams, the youth soccer landscape at the entry level needs to be improved.

Our soccer culture at the youth level focuses on winning and results rather than focusing on developing the skills of individual players.

The concept of a team outweighs the importance of players having fun and developing to the best of their abilities.

As a country, we need coaches and parents to spend less time caring about wins and loses, and more time devoted to teaching individual skills.

Part of this initiative is to educate and empower coaches and parents to change the way we look at the sport.

One example of this is U.S. Soccer's new online F License, which is designed for coaches working with players ages 6-8.

Structural Change

- Long-term development of players is the number one priority
  - No 10 year old has ever been on a World Cup winning team
- Need to put players in the best possible environment to succeed
- There are no shortcuts
  - Long-term approach and commitment

© 2015 U.S. Soccer CONFIDENTIAL - Not to be shared without U.S. Soccer approval

These initiatives are part of a long-term plan that will take time to reap the benefits from.

For example, U10 players don't play in the World Cup, so there is no reason to treat them and the environment they play in the same as our senior teams.

We need to remember that kids at these ages are nowhere near the finished product, and their development process is a long way from being completed.

To succeed, this means that players need to be in the best environment possible, both on the field and at home.

Players should be encouraged to have fun and express themselves.

Working with coaches and being encouraged by parents who support these initiatives is crucial to the overall success of the project.

Winning is not the sole objective and should not be placed ahead of developing the player.

As mentioned before, this is a long term approach with no shortcuts, and results require years of commitment.

Starting Point

- Key initiatives
  - Small sided standards
  - Birth year registration
- Rationale
  - Develops individual skill and intelligence, which impacts creativity and confidence
  - Aligns with individual capabilities
  - Unifies the environment across the country
- Standards are publically available

© 2015 U.S. Soccer CONFIDENTIAL - Not to be shared without U.S. Soccer approval

The starting point for our new player development initiative is to create small sided standards and institute a birth year registration process.

The rationale for the changes is simple.

We want to develop players with more: individual skill, intelligence, creativity and confidence.

Players should be having fun, and feel free to make their own decisions.

These standards were created based on the needs of the players and they also provide for a consistent approach across the country.

This presentation will act as a public resource for the standards as well as an educational tool for membership.

Small sided standards.

Objectives

- Develop skills on the ball
  - Increase number of touches and control
  - Improve confidence
- Develop intelligence
  - Promote faster decisions and better awareness
- Develop partnerships within the team
- Provide age appropriate environment

© 2015 U.S. Soccer CONFIDENTIAL - Not to be shared without U.S. Soccer approval

Here are the core objectives behind the small sided standards.

Fewer players on the field means more touches on the ball and more involvement in the game, which helps develop more individual skill.

Players who are more skilled may become more confident and comfortable when in possession of the ball.

The ratio of players to field size is designed to assist players with making the right kind of decisions and improving their awareness.

As players get older, and numbers increase on bigger fields, this approach builds on itself.

And as players get older, the building block approach also allows them to better integrate into a team model where they develop partnerships with other players that make up the team.

Overall, the standards provide for an age appropriate environment where players can achieve these objectives.

Standards Chart

- The following chart outlines the standards for U6 through U12
- Goal and field sizes are the maximum ranges
  - Smaller dimensions can be used due to equipment facility restrictions
- U13 standards are listed to show the first level beyond U12

© 2015 U.S. Soccer CONFIDENTIAL - Not to be shared without U.S. Soccer approval

The standards for players 6-12 are listed on the next slide.

Please note that the goal and field sizes listed are meant to be maximum sizes used for playing games.

Your local environment may require you to use goals and fields that are slightly smaller, and that's okay.

Standards Chart

	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12	U13
Maximum Field Size (yards)	30x20	30x20	30x20	47x30	47x30	75x47	75x47	112x75
Number of Players	4v4	4v4	4v4	7v7	7v7	9v9	9v9	11v11
GK	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Playing Times (minutes)	4x8	4x8	3x15	2x25	2x25	2x30	2x30	2x35
Break Times (minutes)	5	5	5	10	10	10	10	15
Ball Size	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	5
Goal Size (feet)	4x6	4x6	4x6	6.5x18.5	6.5x18.5	6.5x18.5	6.5x18.5	8x24
Offside	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

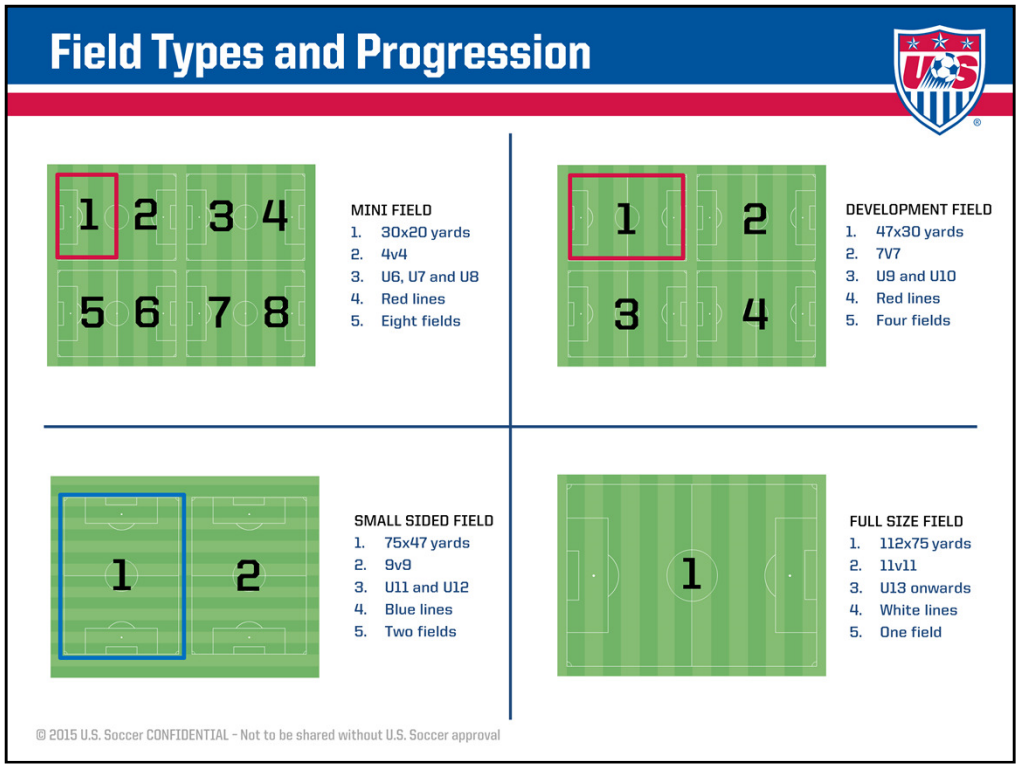
Here are the standards expected by U.S. Soccer for all of our members to support and promote.

Given the current extreme variety of small sided soccer across the country, we realize that some of these may be very similar to what you are doing now while others may completely different.

We also realize that change like this can be challenging and that the complete chart can seem overwhelming.

The plan for implementing these initiatives is an important part of their success.

This will be discussed in detail later in the presentation.



As listed in the standards chart, here is a visual of the field sizes.

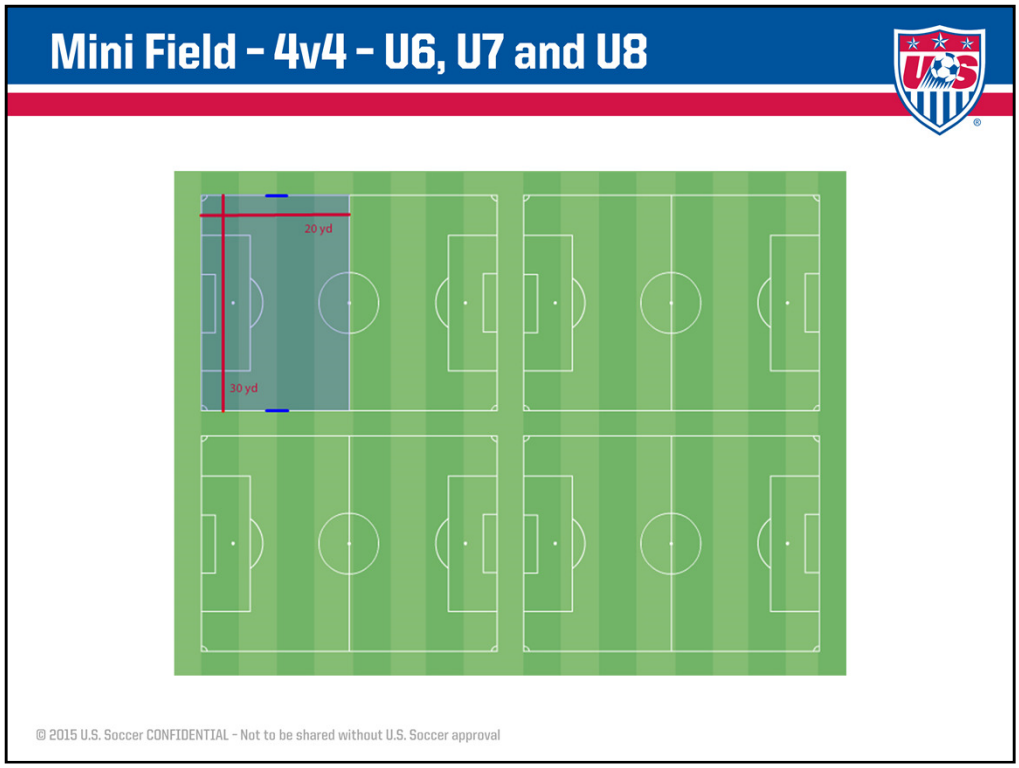
As a frame of reference, the fields are displayed in a way that they show how they fit into the space of a full size field.

The exact color of the lines used and the number of fields utilized in any given area are at the discretion of the competition authorities.

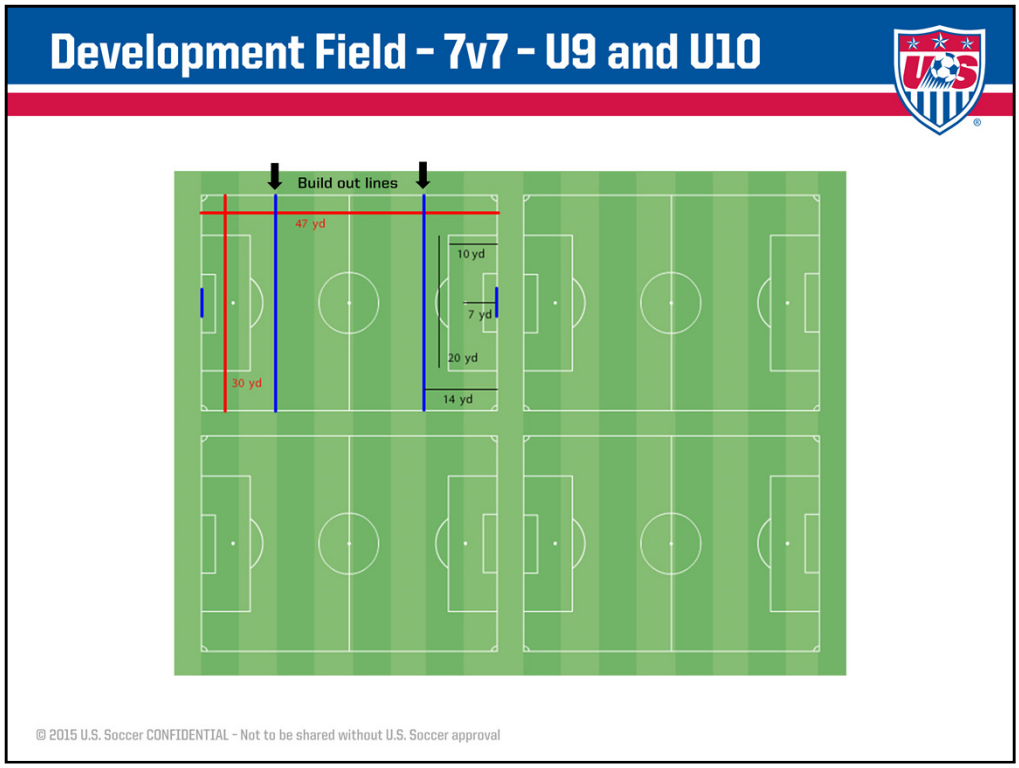
For example, not every full size field needs to be lined out to accommodate for 2 small sided, 4 development and 8 mini fields.

You are empowered to organize your fields as needed based on the facilities available.

Again, this visual provides a frame of reference for how full size fields can be used to contain each of the other smaller size field.



The mini field for playing 4v4 is a maximum of 30x20 yards and is about half the size of a development field.

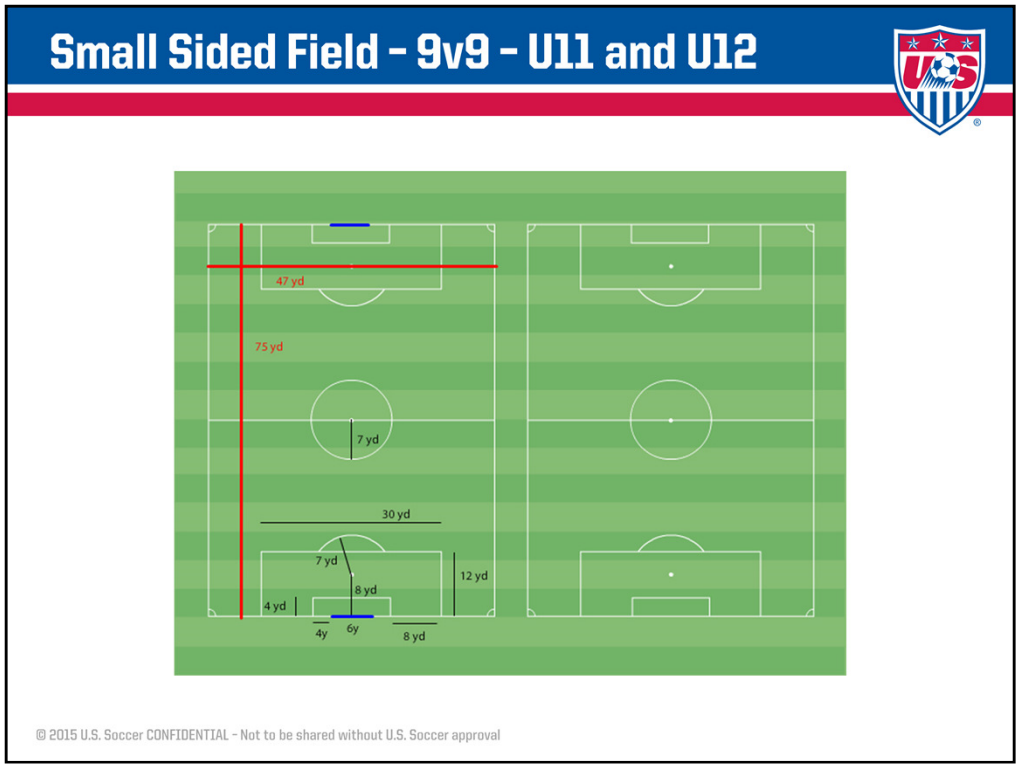


The development field for playing 7v7 is 47x30 yards with a few special features.

The build out line, which we will cover in more detail in just a moment, is found 14 yards from each goal line.

This field also features a penalty area since goalkeepers are introduced at this level of play.

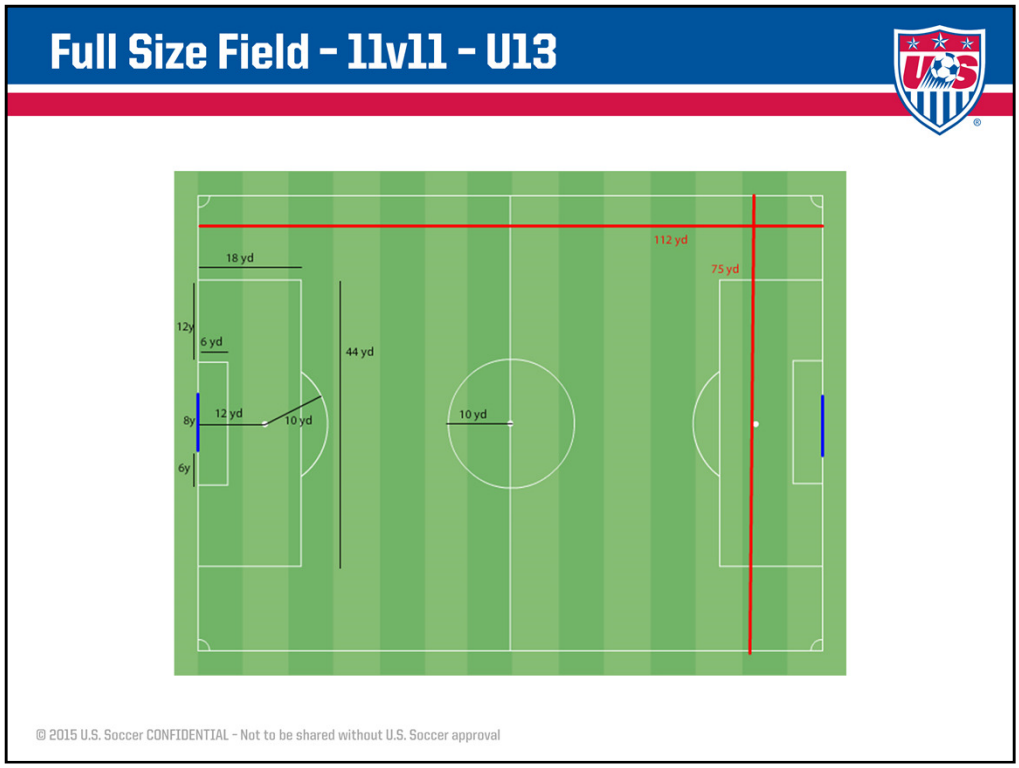
Two development fields are about the size of small sided field, which is used for 9v9.



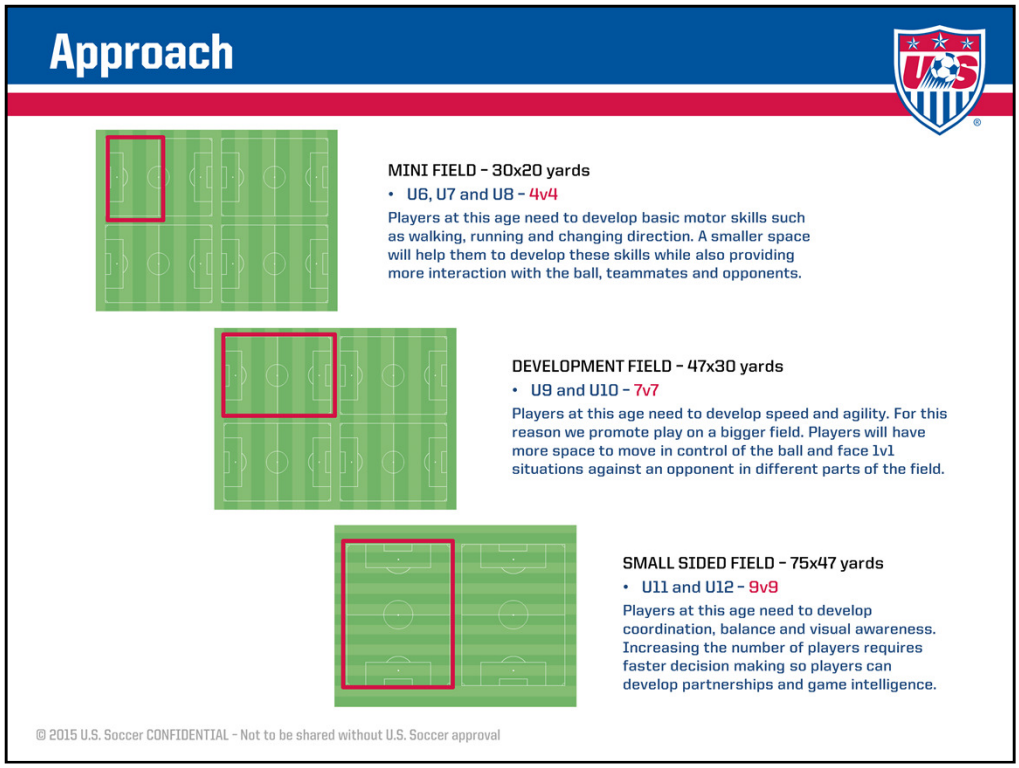
The small sided field is 75x47 yards and is used for 9v9 play.

Again, a penalty area is utilized and this field is the last step before progressing to a full size field used for players 13 and older playing 11v11.

Two small sided fields roughly make up the size of one full size field.



Finally, there is a full size field with a maximum range of 112x75 yards.



Players 8 and younger playing 4v4 need to develop basic motor skills such walking, running and changing direction.

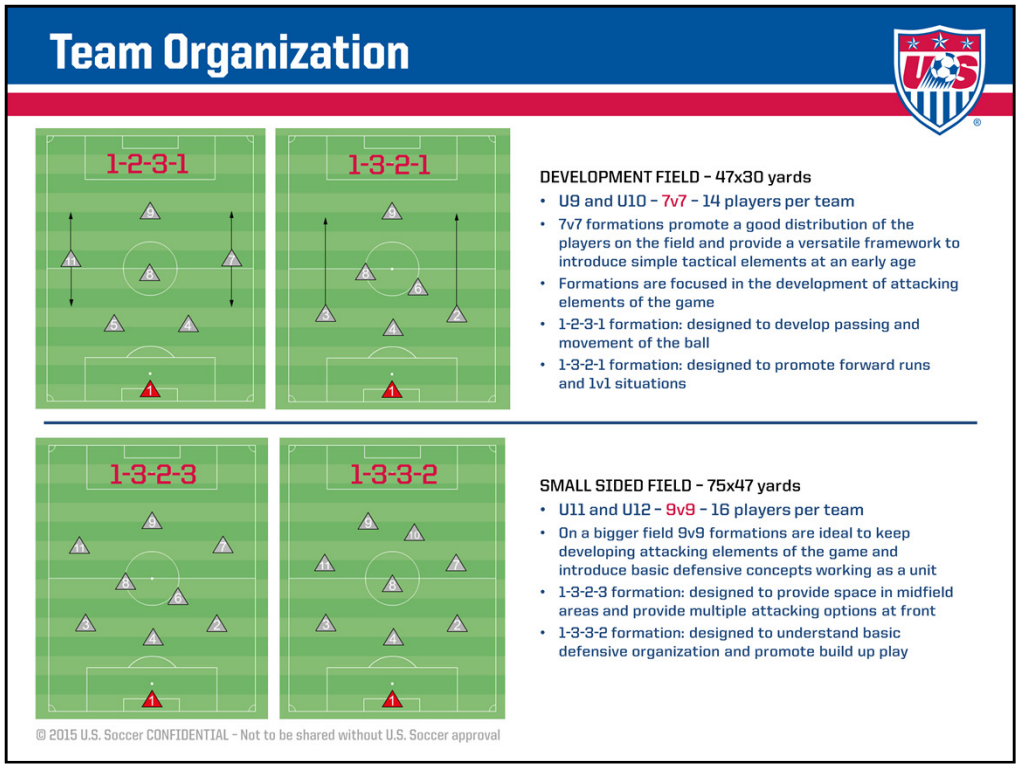
A smaller space will help develop these skills while also providing more interaction with the ball, teammates and opponents.

9 and 10 year old players need to develop speed and agility.

For this reason, 7v7 play happens on a larger field where there is more space to control the ball and encounter 1v1 situations.

The small sided field for 9v9 allows 11 and 12 year olds to develop coordination, balance and visual awareness.

Increasing the number of players requires faster decision making so players can develop partnerships and game intelligence.

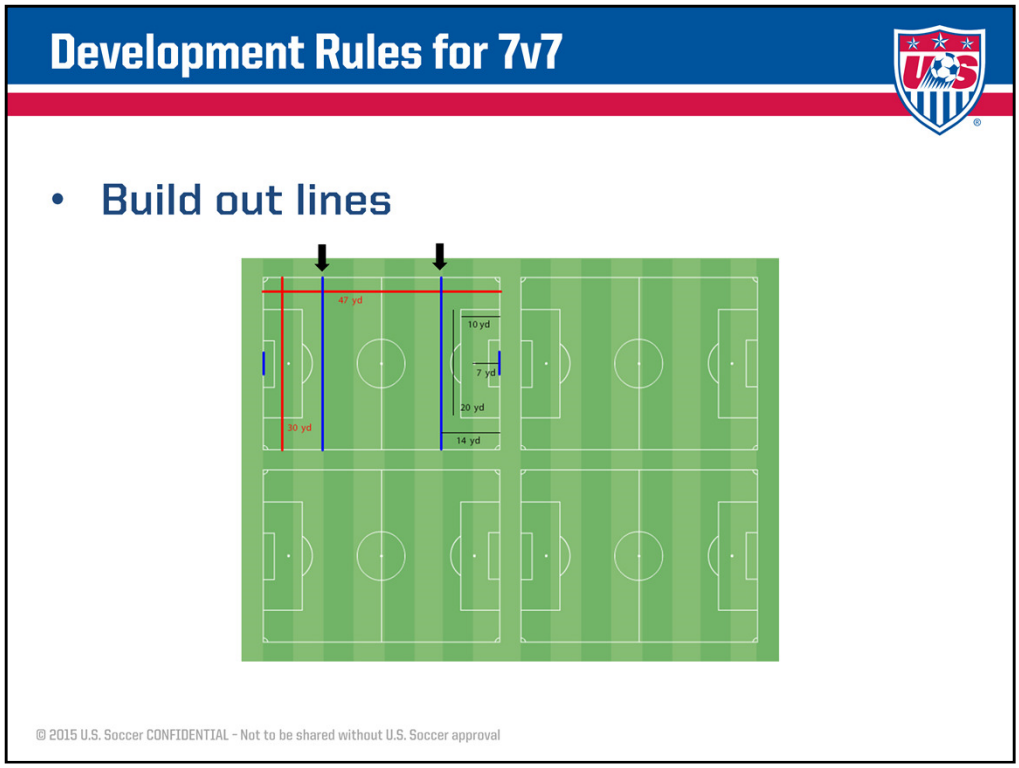


Building on the approach, the organization of the team is also an important factor for player development.

Please note that while the development of the individual player is the priority, an individual plays games as part of a team model.

As reference, the visuals listed show the numbers of players on a team and formations that can be utilized to promote development.

Again, these formations are consistent with, and specific to, the player development objectives at the respective age groups.



In addition to the standards, U.S. Soccer also believes that certain rules are needed to promote development.

For the 7v7 game, the field will include build out lines to promote individual skills and facilitate game flow.

Development Rules for 7v7

- The build out line is used to promote playing the ball out of the back in an unpressured setting
- When the goalkeeper has the ball, either during play (from the opponent) or from a goal kick, the opposing team must move behind the build out line

© 2015 U.S. Soccer CONFIDENTIAL - Not to be shared without U.S. Soccer approval

The build out line is used to promote playing the ball out of the back in an unpressured setting.

When the goalkeeper has the ball, either during play or from a goal kick, the opposing team must move behind the build out line.

Development Rules for 7v7

- Once the opposing team is behind the build out line, the goalkeeper can pass, throw or roll the ball to a teammate (no punting)
- After the ball is put into play by the goalkeeper, the opposing team can cross the build out line and play resumes as normal

© 2015 U.S. Soccer CONFIDENTIAL - Not to be shared without U.S. Soccer approval

Once the opposing team is behind the build out line, the goalkeeper can pass, throw or roll the ball to a teammate.

Punting the ball is not allowed as this would defeat the purpose of the build out line and reduces the opportunity to play out of the back in an unpressured setting.

After the ball is put into play, the opposing team can then cross the build out line and play can resume as normal.

Birth year registration.

Birth Year Registration

- Objectives
  - Align with the international standard
  - Combat relative age effect

© 2015 U.S. Soccer CONFIDENTIAL - Not to be shared without U.S. Soccer approval

In addition to small sided standards, birth year registration is also part of U.S. Soccer's new player development initiatives.

Unlike small sided standards, birth year registration applies to all age groups of players and not just players 12 and younger.

Not only will this change align our players with the international standard, but it will allow us to be better informed to combat relative age effect when making teams for youth players.

Birth Year Chart

	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
2016-17	Born in 2011	Born in 2010	Born in 2009	Born in 2008	Born in 2007	Born in 2006	Born in 2005
2017-18	Born in 2012	Born in 2011	Born in 2010	Born in 2009	Born in 2008	Born in 2007	Born in 2006

	U13	U14	U15	U16	U17	U18	U19
2016-17	Born in 2004	Born in 2003	Born in 2002	Born in 2001	Born in 2000	Born in 1999	Born in 1998
2017-18	Born in 2005	Born in 2004	Born in 2003	Born in 2002	Born in 2001	Born in 2000	Born in 1999

© 2014 U.S. Soccer CONFIDENTIAL – Not to be shared without U.S. Soccer approval

To assist with any confusion, here is a list of the birth years that will correlate with the age groups when using birth year registration.

The mandates don't go into effect until the 2017-18 season but we have listed the 2016-17 season for those members adopting earlier as a best practice.

A more complete list of birth years and competitive seasons can be found in our FAQ document.

Note that the "U" listed before the number can sometimes be misleading.

When you see U6, remember that it means 6 and younger, and the same applies for all age groups.

Calendar Birth Years

- Relative age effect
  - There is a selection bias towards players born earlier in the year because they are more physically mature than their peers
  - A balance of players born throughout the entire year is recommended
  - Allows for the continued development of players that have yet to mature physically

© 2015 U.S. Soccer CONFIDENTIAL - Not to be shared without U.S. Soccer approval

Relative age effect refers to the selection bias towards players born earlier in the year.

For example, players who are born on January 1 are 364 days older than someone born on December 31 of the same year.

This gap may result in the player born in January being more physically mature (taller, faster, stronger, etc.) than the player born in December, especially at the younger ages.

Studies from a variety of sports, including soccer, show that physically mature players are often selected ahead of their more talented but less physically developed peers at the key developmental years (ages 12-15).

Given the variance of growth rates, it's important that skilled players don't fall by the wayside just because someone is bigger or faster.

It may be the case that taller and stronger players have far less talent, and once the physical maturation levels out, these players may not fulfill their misleading potential.

This approach may be very new for many clubs and coaches when it comes to making teams but registering players according to birth year will help everyone understand the potential for bias.

U.S. Soccer recommends that a player's individual skills be prioritized ahead of their physical maturation and this is especially true for the ages before and during puberty.

"Playing Up"

- Existing teams can stay together
- Training and competing with older players can aid in development

© 2015 U.S. Soccer CONFIDENTIAL - Not to be shared without U.S. Soccer approval

To keep existing teams intact, players still have the ability to "play up" with older teammates.

In addition to being on a team with their peers, "playing up" can also allow players to compete in a more challenging environment, which can also aid in their future development.

Implementation.

Implementation

- Small sided standards and birth year registration
  - Announced in August 2015
  - Recommended as a best practice beginning in August 2016
  - Will be mandated in August 2017
- Provides two full years for planning and execution

© 2015 U.S. Soccer CONFIDENTIAL - Not to be shared without U.S. Soccer approval

Given some of the challenges associated with change, U.S. Soccer wanted there to be as much advance notice as possible to plan and implement these initiatives.

We recommend that members spend the next year planning to adopt these changes as a best practice beginning in August of 2016.

This will help everyone be better prepared for August of 2017 when the changes are mandated across membership.

What you can do to help make these initiatives a success.

What You Can Do

- Support the initiatives
- Have patience
- Stick to the facts
- Communicate with key stakeholders
- Do your best
- Encourage and educate parents
- License coaches

© 2015 U.S. Soccer CONFIDENTIAL - Not to be shared without U.S. Soccer approval

Support is key.

Unless we do this together, we wont be successful.

These changes are not as easy as flipping a switch, as change takes time and it can be uncomfortable.

Please have patience as these changes are implemented.

It is also important to avoid misinformation and communicate with your local leaders.

This presentation is meant to provide everyone with accurate and consistent information about the changes.

Feel free to share it and use it when speaking with key stakeholders such as parents, coaches, players, club directors and league presidents.

Some parts of the initiatives are easier than others to implement.

For example, we realize not every field will have the exact dimensions listed in the initiatives.

We understand that facilities don't change overnight so do your best to meet the standards.

Communicating these changes now allows for two full years of planning in case you need to adjust goal or field sizes.

Educating parents on these standards will help reinforce the importance of player development and help make significant cultural change in the soccer landscape.

U.S. Soccer also recommends that all coaches pursue the appropriate licenses so they are trained and prepared to best teach and develop players.

Overall, the success of these initiatives will be limited without the support and execution at the local level.

This long-term plan is truly a collaborative effort between U.S. Soccer and all of its members.

Together, we have the ability to transform the soccer landscape to develop players to best of their abilities.

Changing our soccer culture to prioritize the development of individual players ahead of team results will also allow us to create a future generation of players that can compete and succeed domestically and internationally for years to come.