



www.smallsidedfootball.com.au

Parents need to understand the philosophy of Optus Small Sided Football and it will be through your support, assistance and positive behaviour the right environment will be created for your child to enjoy their football experience and develop into the best player they can be.

As a parent always remember

- Remember that children participate in sport for their enjoyment, not yours
- Encourage children to participate, do not force them
- Let children play the game and learn by doing, limit constant instruction
- Focus on your child's efforts and performance rather than whether they win or lose
- Encourage children to play according to the rules and spirit of the game
- Encourage children and teams to keep control of ball, rather than the big kick
- Ensure that the time players spend with you is a positive experience
- All young people are deserving of equal attention and opportunities
- Never ridicule or yell at a child or team for making a mistake or losing
- Remember that children learn best by example. Appreciate good performance and skilful plays by all participants
- Smart supporting – not loud and intense but calm, relaxed and at all times positive
- Respect officials' decisions and teach children to do likewise
- Show appreciation for volunteer coaches, officials and administrators without them, your child could not participate
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every young person regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion

Optus Small Sided Football in the younger age groups has been simplified and under-regulated so it easy to understand for both the children and volunteers. The website www.smallsidedfootball.com.au provides a number of educator resources for parents to find out more about Optus Small Sided Football as well as having lots of activities and tips for children.

The major role of the coach/parent helper is to make the football experience of every player and their families as enjoyable as possible. This person will provide the best environment for children to learn, develop and most importantly enjoy the game.

Clubs and Parents can find more information on the community coach education pathway including the Grassroots Football Certificate (an introductory course to help parents and coaches provide quality football experiences for young children), in the coaching section of the FFA website - www.footballaustralia.com.au.



Optus Small Sided Football

PARENT INFORMATION GUIDE

EFFECTIVE FROM 1 JANUARY 2010



FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA





Benefits of Optus Small Sided Football for your child

A significant amount of research has been conducted in countries where small-sided football is prevalent, which overwhelmingly highlight the following benefits:

- more touches of the ball by all players throughout all areas of the pitch
- more shots on goal and 1 v 1 opportunities
- more efficient use of facilities, given there can be multiple games on one standard-size field, re-size existing smaller fields or make use of previously unused areas
- repeated decision-making experience
- the ball is in play far more often
- the emphasis is on player development rather than winning or losing
- better success rate leads to improved quality of play, self-esteem and player retention
- the game is easier to understand
- freedom of expression – no positions in early stages
- less perceived pressure and sideline angst from coaches and parents
- parents more likely to volunteer for Optus Small Sided Football game leader roles
- children enjoy the progressive and sequential game formats

Optus Small Sided Football Formats and the implementation

In 2009 Football Federation Australia (FFA) released the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum was a key initiative put forward in the FFA National Football Development Plan released in November 2007.

The National Curriculum aims to provide national guidance and an integrated and consistent approach to the development of players and coaches throughout the country.

As a result of a combination of the release of the National Curriculum and feedback from the football community, including Member Federations, associations, zones, clubs, parents and players, the Optus Small Sided Football formats have been adjusted for implementation at the commencement of the 2010 season and beyond.

The Optus Small Sided Football formats will be continued to be implemented in a staged approach, over several years under the direction and leadership of your Member Federations, associations, zones and clubs.

The Optus Small Sided Football Formats for the season commencing 2010 and beyond are summarised below:

What is Optus Small Sided Football?

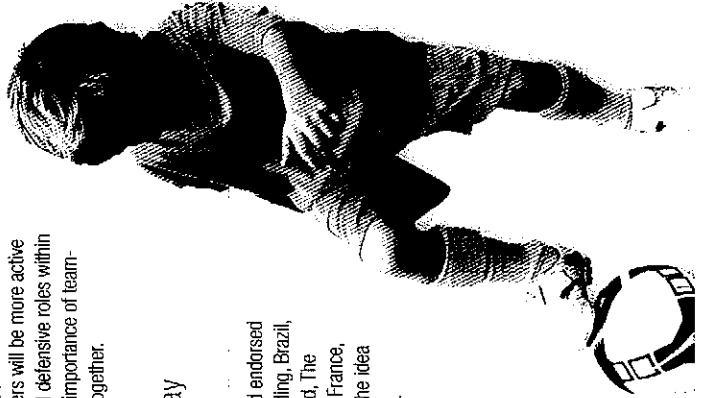
They are football games designed especially for children, with fewer players competing on a smaller-sized field. Players have more contact with the ball because fewer players are playing in a smaller playing area. Optus Small Sided Football meets the developmental needs of younger football players whilst maintaining a strong focus on maximum participation and enjoyment.

Why change to Optus Small Sided Football?

It makes the game of football a better experience for children. More touches on the ball, more opportunities to make decisions, more actual play. Players will be more active due to playing both attacking and defensive roles within a match and will understand the importance of teammates and playing and working together.

Do other countries play small-sided football?

Small-sided football is played and endorsed throughout many countries including, Brazil, Argentina, Japan, England, Ireland, The Netherlands, Scotland, Germany, France, Korea and USA, to name a few. The idea of small-sided football is not new.



Playing Format	Under 6 & 7	Under 8 & 9	Under 10 & 11
Numbers	4 v 4	7 v 7	9 v 9
Field Size	Length: 30m Width: 20m	½ Full Size Pitch Length: 40m - 50m Width: 30m - 40m	½ Full Size Pitch Length: 60m - 70m Width: 40m - 50m
Field Markings	Markers or line markings	Markers or line markings	Markers or line markings
Penalty Area	Nil	5m depth x 12m width	5m depth x 12m width
Goal Size	Width: 1.5m - 2.0m Height: 0.9m - 1.0m	Width: 2.5m - 3.0m Height: 1.8m - 2.0m	Width: 4.5m - 5.0m Height: 1.8m - 2.0m
Goal Type	Goals, Poles or Markers	Goals, Poles or Markers	Goals, Poles or Markers
Ball Size	Size 3	Size 3	Size 4
Goalkeeper	No	Yes	Yes
Playing Time	2 x 15 minutes	2 x 20 minutes	2 x 25 minutes
Half Time Break	5 minutes	5 minutes	7.5 minutes
Referee	Game Leader	Instructing Referee	Instructing Referee

When implementing Optus Small Sided Football formats your club may:

For the Under 8 and 9 age groups, it is recommended that clubs that wish to and have the capacity to do so use 3m x 2m goals. Should a club not be able to do this, the 5m x 2m goal is most acceptable for use on fields for the Under 8 & 9 age groups. FFA understands that clubs will use their existing goals however, when they need to replace existing goals or are in a position to make a change they should use the prescribed dimensions.

In the Under 11 age group, the final stage of development in the Optus Small Sided Football formats before players commence 11 v 11 football, it is recommended that where facilities and scheduling allows, clubs set-up the field from penalty box to penalty box and adjust the width of the field with use of markers to meet the maximum specified width.

How will children learn to play 11 v 11?

11 v 11 is a game designed for adults, progressing from 4 v 4, 7 v 7 and 9 v 9 BEFORE 11 v 11 is a sound educational method and process. The progression helps players discover the differences in the size of the field and size of the goal, and the benefits of having more space, learning to use different and better developed techniques to play a more tactical game, as well as understanding the role of different positions and determining what best suits them.



Why no goalkeepers until under 8's?


The role of the goalkeeper in football is uniquely specialised and typically players develop as keepers at a later age. In the youngest age groups, keepers can be uninvolved in the game for long periods, which can be uninteresting and means they are not part of the team for long periods of the game. The role of the goalkeeper has changed in the modern game, they need to be capable to act in the game as "sweeper" who can kick a ball, control a ball and build up the game without using their hands. Most goalkeepers have played for many years as field players before deciding to become goalkeepers.

Moving the focus away from winning or losing

The emphasis of Optus Small Sided Football is on participation and enjoyment, and an associated 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.

To ensure that Optus Small Sided Football is played in the correct spirit and gives all players the best possible chance to develop into the best players they can be, FFA advises that Member Federations, zones, associations and clubs adopt and promote the following advice and recommendation:

- Under 6 - 10 FFA advises that the keeping of points tables and playing of finals must not be done.
- Under 11 FFA recommends that the keeping of point's tables and playing of finals should not be done. FFA recommends that the keeping of point's tables and playing of finals should not start until children commence playing 11 v 11 football on a full size pitch in the Under 12 age group.



Role of game leader and instructing referee

Under 6 and 7 age groups - Game Leader

The main role of the game leader is to keep the game moving fluently, limit stoppages and assist players with all match re-starts. Most importantly, they must make every effort to create an environment that ensures that all players have fun and have maximum involvement. The children are learning the game at this level, be flexible and patient. The game leader can be a club official, parent, older child or player or beginning referee and should always be enthusiastic and approachable.

Some tips;

- Encourage all children to have fun and different children to take re-starts.
- Discourage players from permanently over-guarding the goal.
- Use a "Ready, Set, Go" prompt to encourage quick decisions when restarting play.
- Encourage children to dribble or pass the ball into play from all re-starts rather than a big kick.
- Ensure opposing team is back to the half way line, for all goal line restarts.

Under 8 - 11 age groups - Instructing Referee

The main role of the instructing referee is to control the game to ensure it is played fluently and instruct and correct the players (with minimal blowing of 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.

Some tips;

- Discourage players from permanently standing in blatant offside positions and instruct them to move into onside positions. In the Under 10 & 11 age groups children should be made aware of the offside rule during training and be encouraged to adopt this philosophy during the game at all times.

"Optus Small Sided Football will accelerate the technical development of children who start to play football and provide a more logical pathway leading up to playing 11 v 11"

"Optus Small Sided Football is implemented for the development and enjoyment of the children. It's their game, we as adults only need to create a stimulating and entertaining environment for them".



Han Berger
National Technical Director,
Football Federation Australia (FFA)