

STYSA position on the USSF Player Development Initiatives

This document contains an overview of STYSA's position and recommendations to the mandates and changes required by US Soccer. We hope to minimize confusion for our member associations and players about how STYSA will implement these changes and how we can best move forward together to grow the game.

Small-Sided Progression and Standards

The reasons behind US Soccer moving to these new standards have been supported by the overwhelming majority of soccer experts across the country. Many coaches cite the clear benefits of players participating in small-sided games on smaller fields. A player's love of soccer as well as his or her development is enhanced with the:

1. Statistical increase in the number of touches per game for each player which has been shown to increase skill development.
2. Recommended sizes and distances are appropriate for their younger bodies that are still growing and developing as players can \ deal with the field size.
3. Small-sided games create tactical problems (e.g. 2v1, 2v2 3v2) that their developing minds can cope with more readily than the chaos of 11v11.
4. More touches on the ball is more fun as it leads to more direct involvement in the game for all players.

Standards Chart 								
	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12	U13
Field Size	30x20 yards	30x20 yards	30x20 yards	47x30 yards	47x30 yards	75x47 yards	75x47 yards	112x75 yards
# of Players	4v4	4v4	4v4	7v7	7v7	9v9	9v9	11v11
GK	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Playing Times	4x 8 min	4x 8 min	3x 15 min	2x 25 min	2x 25 min	2x 30 min	2x 30 min	2x 35 min
Break Times	5 min	5 min	5 min	10 min	10 min	10 min	10 min	15 min
Ball Size	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	5
Goal Size	4'x6'	4'x6'	4'x6'	6.5'x18.5'	6.5'x18.5'	6.5'x18.5'	6.5'x18.5'	8'x24'
Offside	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Do we have to implement the number of player's standard?

STYSA was forward-thinking a few years ago and implemented mandatory small-sided games so the impact at this time should be minimal to member associations and clubs. There are proposed rule changes that would make the new small-sided changes mandatory for STYSA starting in Fall 2016. If passed then the new standards would have to be implemented. If not passed then STYSA rules would allow the current format for the 2016/2017 season but the new standards would become a mandate for 2017/2018.

Field and Goal Sizes

Are the goal and field sizes the exact sizes required?

No. The goal and field sizes listed in the US Soccer Standards Chart are the maximum sizes for each age group. STYSA requests that member associations and clubs do their best to adhere to the sizes listed; however, STYSA will not be "bringing out a tape measure" for local leagues. Please consult with your local member association for any specific requirements that they may be choosing to implement.

What is the build out line for 7v7?

For the 7v7 game, the field will include build out lines to promote individual skills and facilitate game flow. The lines are parallel to and 14 yards from the goal line. 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. 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. Additional development guidelines for proper implementation of the build out line are being created.

Birth Year Registration

As previously announced in August 2015, US Youth Soccer, along with other youth soccer sanctioning bodies, will be implementing the U.S. Soccer Federation's birth-year registration mandates on August 1, 2016.

Beginning August 1, 2016, US Youth Soccer will be using the following birth-year "labels" for competition, based upon the season in which competition ends. For example:

- Players born from August 1, 1997 – December 31, 1998 will be labeled as Under-19/20s.
- Players born from January 1, 1999 – December 31, 1999 will be labeled as Under-18s.
- Players born from January 1, 2000 – December 31, 2000 will be labeled as Under-17s.
- Players born from January 1, 2001 – December 31, 2001 will be labeled as Under-16s.
- Players born from January 1, 2002 – December 31, 2002 will be labeled as Under-15s.
- Players born from January 1, 2003 – December 31, 2003 will be labeled as Under-14s.

- Players born from January 1, 2004 – December 31, 2004 will be labeled as Under-13s.
- With the exception of the US Youth Soccer Under-19/20s, the age group “label” will be determined by subtracting the year in which the players participating in the competition were born from the year in which competition ends.

The changes to birth year age groups and to the “labels” for naming each age group have been made by U.S. Soccer. You may [view the U.S. Soccer matrix here](#), please note the definition for US Youth Soccer Under-19/20s competitions above.

Why is the birth year registration mandate going into effect for all levels of play and all age groups?

Having players train and play according to their age and developmental stage supports the objectives of the small-sided standards by focusing on the physiological and developmental needs of the player. This change is meant to better safeguard the development of youth players at all ages and levels.

Why can't there be different standards for recreational and competitive teams?

There is no universal definition of what separates recreational from competitive soccer. In addition to supporting the overall objectives of player development, U.S. Soccer believes that having separate registration systems based on undefined levels of play would create unnecessary confusion, and this would not provide a consistent approach across the soccer landscape. Players should also be provided the opportunity to develop to best of their abilities regardless of the level of play they are participating in.

Is my son or daughter still going to be able to play with his or her friends and classmates?

The answer to this depends on a variety of factors, and one major consideration is how your club will form teams. Playing on a team with all of your friends isn't always a reality in the current environment. This is similar to not having all of your friends in the same class or classes at school. Another factor is that the age cutoff used for school registration varies across the country. This means that there are already a variety of unique player age and grade combinations. Participation in scholastic sports can also impact the composition of some teams, so clubs should plan accordingly for players leaving club soccer for school sports. The placement of individual players on specific teams will remain a function of the local clubs and league to help find the players the best possible environment for their development.

How is STYSA handling the birth year mandate?

US Youth Soccer mandated a 2-year advancement policy for teams registered in any USYS competition including: National League, Regional Premier Leagues, the National Championship Series, and Presidents Cup. The STYSA Executive Committee voted to implement the same 2-year age group advancement for all of our state competitions including: State Classic League, District-wide competitions (DI and SII), STYSA Fall Championships, and Spring Cups. For example, a U13 team in the current 2015-2016 seasonal year will become a U15 team for the 2016-2017. Clubs may continue to organize their teams for competition with players of any age younger than the age group cut-off. Local member associations will have the authority to implement changes based on what they determine best suits the needs of their local leagues.

Will team “core” requirements still be required?

For roster consistency, STYSA will continue to require the same “more than 50%” returning players to retain a pre-qualified slot for a STYSA competition; however, this core requirement will change from a team only to the entire club. This means that a club can meet the core requirement with an eligible player that was rostered to a primary team in their club during the same seasonal year. STYSA, in conjunction with its Member Associations and club DOCs, will continue to evaluate core requirement rules for seasonal year 2017/2018 and beyond. Please consult with your local member association for any specific player retention requirements that they may be choosing to implement beyond these requirements.

How do I determine the birth year used for a competition?

Birth year registration should be based on the year in which the season ends. For example, if a season begins in the fall of 2016 and ends in the summer of 2017 (ex: 2016-17 season), the players would be registered based on their age in the year 2017. To simplify determining the age group, just subtract the birth year from the year the season ends.

For instance, the 2016-2017 seasonal year for a player born in 2003:
 $2017 - 2003 = 14$ (U14)

What about “Play-ups?”

Players have the ability to “play up” with teammates at older age groups. Beginning August 1, 2016, the STYSA play-up restrictions for U10 players into Competitive levels of play have been removed based on rule change that was passed at the 2016 STYSA Winter GBM in San Antonio. There are no “play downs.”

Who can I talk to if I have more questions?

The STYSA State Office staff is a good starting point and can provide accurate answers to your questions and concerns about these mandates. However, it is also very important to communicate with your local member association and club leadership to avoid misinformation about these initiatives and their objectives.