



SCOTTISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

THE SMALL SIDED GAME

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THE SMALL SIDED GAME

The small sided games principle is based on sound educational and developmental evidence. Children learn in a progressive and sequential way using a building block approach.

- The 11 v11 game is a game designed by adults for adults and should be seen as the last part of the learning journey.
- The 7 v7 game is the intermediate step
- The 4 v4 game is the first step in the ladder

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THE SMALL SIDED GAME –ADVANTAGES FOR PLAYERS

- Repeated touches of the ball
- Repeated decision making experience
- Repeated experience of basic tactical situations
- More active participation is directly related to fun and enjoyment
- More active participation leads to an optimal fitness load
- Better success rate leads to better quality of play and player retention
- Better success rate leads to better self esteem and self confidence
- More individual responsibility – every player must attack and defend
- The game is easier to understand
- Freedom of expression – no positions in early stages
- Should be more child centred – not adult controlled
- Less stress on the player when playing trophy free football

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THE SMALL SIDED GAME –ADVANTAGES FOR PLAYERS

•Repeated touches of the ball

Many studies have shown the empirical evidence that the small sided game allows more successful contact with the ball, eg,

Grant, Williams and Johnson 1999

	7v7	11v11
Successful Passes	61.2%	46.7%
Successful technical skills	61.8%	43.1%
Attempts at Goal	17.7	6.06

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•Repeated touches of the ball

Or The Dept of Exercise and Sport Science at Manchester Metropolitan University 2002/03

	4 v4	8 v8
Total Passes per	49	36
Total shots per game	17.33	6.66
Total Goals per game	8.33	1.66

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Finally US Youth Soccer, Sam Snow

U -10	4 v4	11 v11
Total Touches per game	205	22
Average touches per	4.3	0.37
Time of game	48 min	60 min

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The number of players in your team [and opposition] will determine the complexity of the decision making process and will have a direct correlation to your success rate. The table below shows the number of passing interactions that could occur in 4,7 and 11 a side football.

Number of Players	4	7	11
Number of passing	12	42	110

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The ability of children to make decisions in a difficult, ever changing environment will be dictated by their developmental age, their preparation and the complexity of the situation. Professional educators and football coaches from around the world are agreed that the small sided game is the best developmental tool for under 13's considering all of the above information.

The use of the 4 and 7 a side games are the best means of teaching the technical and tactical [decision making] parts of the game in preparation for the adult game.

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- More active participation leads to an optimal fitness load

•A study of 10 year olds by the Sports University of Cologne on behalf of the German FA showed that the lactate levels in the children were high in the 11 a side game[3 mmol/l] compared to a moderate level in the 7 a side game [2 mmol/l] Also Caprinica [2001] found heart rates in the small sided game and the adult version to be in a similar range.

•They concluded that the level of lactate in the 7 a side game indicated the optimal physical load for fitness whilst preventing too much fatigue that would affect technique.

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- Better success rate leads to better quality of play and player retention
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- Should be more child centred – not adult controlled

Again there are plenty research and anecdotal evidence that children prefer the small sided game as they feel more successful and are more involved in the game. The most recent study from the Manchester Utd. 4v4 Pilot Scheme indicated that 75% of the players enjoyed the 4v4 over the 8v8

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From the same study the players were asked about the coaches not instructing as much from the side lines, one player responded

'Yea, it is better. When my old coaches used to do that in front of my parents and friends, it was like..... really embarrassin'.

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•Less stress on the player when playing trophy free football

Competition is a process of social comparison. Children will compete in music, education and sport allowing a natural opportunity to test and evaluate themselves in comparison to their peer group. The potential for stress exists in football because they may doubt their own ability to meet the demands imposed [usually by adults]. Fear of failure is a primary source of worry in addition to the fear of social evaluation. Children do not want to let down their friends, parents or coaches and the added stress of competition at too young an age may well put many children off continuing in the game.

It is thought by educationalists and football coaches that competing to win games should be secondary to the goal of teaching the skills of the game, especially in children under 12 years.

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THE SMALL SIDED GAME – ADVANTAGES FOR COACHES

•The coach can have more children playing

•There is less space required to play

•A chance for more individual coaching

•A better standard of play as the children will be more successful performing in the small sided format

•The coach is following the accepted developmental pathway for children and can be confident that he/she is given their players the best chance at success

•Players are more likely to stay in the game if they feel successful, therefore the coach will have less player retention issues

•Less pressure on the coach to win when playing trophy free football