



This past summer US Soccer released a series of Player Development Initiatives. In those initiatives there are a few critical changes to the youth soccer landscape. Some of the most impactful changes in the US Soccer Player Development Initiatives is the switch from determining the soccer playing age from the “seasonal year” or “school year” to the calendar or actual birth year of players. Additionally, there have been modifications to the small sided playing numbers for Under 12 players and below.

These initiatives were first brought to the Kentucky Youth Soccer Membership at the Annual Council Meeting in August and in subsequent District Meetings held in September and October in each of our states four districts. Since the conclusion of those meetings there have been updates to the Player Development Initiatives from US Soccer and US Youth Soccer that we wanted to share. Additionally, we wanted to forward new US Soccer Player Safety initiatives that were released earlier this week. Please feel free to share this information with others in your organization.

For the US Soccer Player Developments Initiatives, US Soccer is requiring that the Player Development Initiatives be in place no later than the beginning of the 2017 fall season. **Kentucky Youth Soccer Board of Directors is planning on making a decision at the December 5th Board Meeting on when the Player Development Initiatives will be mandated in Kentucky. US Youth Soccer has already approved implementation beginning in the 2016-2017 seasonal year and it is likely that Kentucky Youth Soccer will move to implement changes at the same time; however no official action has been taken.**

Please review the following information carefully and thoroughly. The Kentucky Youth Soccer Board of Directors or Staff is more than willing to have individual meetings or calls to discuss this information in more depth.

US Soccer Calendar Birth Year Chart and Matrix

The developmental initiative focused on the change of player registration from the “seasonal year” or “school year” to the calendar year, or birth year of the player has been implemented by US Soccer in order to align the United States to FIFA standards. The US Youth Soccer Board of Directors approved a motion for the implementation of the mandated registration change for all US Youth Soccer programs and competitions for the 2016-17 year. The US Youth Soccer competitions that will introduce the birth-year registration in the **2016-17** soccer year include, but are not limited to, the following:

- US Youth Soccer National Championships Series — including national, regional and state competitions
- US Youth Soccer Presidents Cup — including national, regional and state competitions
- US Youth Soccer National League and Regional Leagues

To calculate the proper year for a player, take the ending year of the seasonal year and subtract the player’s birth year.

- Example #1: 2017 – 2002 = 15; the player is a U15 for the 2016-17 season
- Example #2: 2017 – 2005 = 12; the player is a U12 for the 2016-17 season

Below is the age group matrix for the next three seasonal years beginning with 2016-2017:

Season	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Birth Year			
2013			U6
2012		U6	U7
2011	U6	U7	U8
2010	U7	U8	U9
2009	U8	U9	U10
2008	U9	U10	U11
2007	U10	U11	U12
2006	U11	U12	U13
2005	U12	U13	U14
2004	U13	U14	U15
2003	U14	U15	U16
2002	U15	U16	U17
2001	U16	U17	U18
2000	U17	U18	U19
1999	U18	U19	
1998	U19		

US Soccer Small Sided Games

Small-Sided games recommendations have been part of the youth soccer landscape for over 15 years and internationally accepted as the best practice for player development. The previous recommendations are being replaced with the US Soccer mandate.

The core objectives behind the small-sided standards, from US Soccer, are as follows:

- Fewer players on the field means more touches on the ball and increased touches translates to 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 awareness.
- This approach builds on itself as players get older and start playing with more players on bigger fields.
- And as players get older, the building block approach also allows them to better integrate into a team model where they develop partnerships with the other players that make up the team.

Simply put, US Soccer is mandating all soccer at U8 will play 4v4, U10 will play 7v7 (including goalkeepers) and U12 will play 9v9. 11v11 will begin at U13.

US Soccer Player Development Resources

Below are a few presentations and FAQ's that break down the information above as well as complete birth year charts and field dimensions.

[Player Development Presentation](#)

[Player Development Initiatives FAQ](#)

Midwest Regional League

For the 2016-2017 soccer year, MRL will offer the following age groups of competition: 2003, 2002, 2001, 2000, 1999 and 1998. Information on the competitions to be offered in the younger age groups (i.e.

2003's and 2002's in 2016-17) will be announced in early 2016 after meeting with the Club Directors of Coaching at the NSCAA Convention/US Youth Soccer Workshop in mid-January.

As was discussed during the recent MRL ExCo and subcommittee meetings, we know the following:

- The 2003's competition will mirror our existing 2015-16 U-13 competition with Premier Qualification competition taking place during the Fall Season and normal promotion/relegation competition for all teams during the Spring Season.
- The 2002's competition will likely be split similar to what occurs in our existing 2015-16 U-15 through U-18 competitions (girls teams play either the Fall or Spring Season and boys teams play a Spring Season avoiding high school soccer conflicts). In addition at the 2002's age group (for those players in 8th grade while 9th graders may be competing in their high school soccer programs), the MRL expects to offer additional developmental league play during such seasons.

Kentucky Premier League

For the 2016-2017 season, the KPL will offer the following age groups of competition: 2004, 2003, 2002, 2001, 2000, 1999 and 1998. Additional information on the type of competitions will be released in the spring of 2016.

U9 Academy

For the past 6 years, Kentucky Youth Soccer has managed the U9 Academy Program. The purpose of the Academy Program is to place more importance on technical group training and development with less emphasis on results. With the new birth year change and additional player development initiatives, Kentucky Youth Soccer is evaluating expanding the Academy Program training opportunities at the U9 and U10 age groups to further develop those players.

US Soccer Player Safety

The US Soccer Federation, US Youth Soccer, American Youth Soccer Organization, US Club Soccer and the California Youth Soccer Association have been in concussion litigation and this week announced a resolution of the lawsuit.

The US Soccer Federation and the other youth member defendants have developed a sweeping youth soccer initiative designed to (a) improve concussion awareness and education among youth coaches, referees, parents and players; (b) implement more uniform concussion management and return-to-play protocols for youth players suspected of having suffered a concussion; (c) modify the substitution rules to insure such rules do not serve as an impediment to the evaluation of players who may have suffered a concussion during games; and (d) eliminate heading for children 10 and under and limit heading in practice for children between the ages of 11 and 13.

These are just recommendations from US Soccer and each individual member association can develop concussion management policies. Kentucky Youth Soccer takes concussion management very seriously and in 2015 we implemented concussion management in our state tournaments/league while exploring concussion education at our lowest levels. In the coming month, the Kentucky Youth Soccer Board of Directors will continue to evaluate these new US Soccer initiatives and determine what's best for the players of Kentucky.