

US Soccer Player Development Initiatives

FAQ: Birth Year Registration and Small Sided Games

Birth Year Registration

Q: What is the birth year registration age group change that is taking place?

Currently the age group registration cutoff date has traditionally been August 1 – July 31. This was designed to form teams within the same academic grade.

Implementation: Please see birth year matrix

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.

As a side note, players born in the younger half of the year (January-July) on a current 2015/16 team will move up one age group in 2016/2017 — for example, U11 to U12. Players born in the older half of the year (August 1- December 31) on a current 2015/16 team will move up 2 age groups — for example, U11 to U13. In this initial transition, some players will skip an age group.

Q: Why is U.S. Soccer making these changes?

- Combat relative age effect – the selection bias towards players born earlier in the year because they are more physical mature than their peers
- Align players for the purpose of individual development and team competition
- Allows for continued development of players who have yet to mature physically – appropriate challenge level
- Align with International standards and USSF Youth team programs

Q. Who is required to follow the birth year registration initiatives?

These changes impact all age groups across all levels of play. This includes, but is not limited to, all youth members and their respective competitions: State Associations, US Youth Soccer, US Club Soccer, AYSO, SAY, etc.

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

Birth year registration should be based on the year in which the seasonal year ends. For example, if a seasonal year begins in the fall of 2017 and ends in the summer of 2018 (ex: 2017-18 season), the players would be registered based on their age in the year 2018. To

simplify determining the age group, just subtract the birth year from the year the seasonal year ends. Year Season Ends – Birth Year = Age Group:

- 2017-18 – 2003 = U15

Q. Will the birth year registration change reflect the seasonal year?

No. The seasonal year will remain the same. It will be an August through July playing season with the first season happening during the Fall and the second season happening during the Spring.

Q. How is Alabama Soccer handling the birth year mandate with regards to state competitions?

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. We will implement the same 2-year age group advancement for all of our state competitions including: State League, and State Cups (DI and DII). For example, a U13 team in the current 2015-2016 seasonal year will become a U15 team for the 2016-2017.

It should be noted continuity of rosters will be 50% +1 – club based.

Q. Can a player, “play up”?

Yes, players have the ability to “play up” with teammates at older age groups. This will be determined by your club, and if it is developmentally appropriate. A player may play up, stay on the same team, and teams may certainly stay together. Please note that playing up could mean some players could be playing against others who are up to 18 months older than them, which may mean a competitive disadvantage for that particular team.

Small Sided Games

Q: What are the small-sided game changes taking place?

For small-sided play there will be changes to playing numbers, roster sizes, field sizes, goal sizes, game lengths and rules. Alabama Soccer already implements SSG, so the changes will be minimal.

Q: Why is U.S. Soccer making these changes?

- Develop skills on ball at an earlier age (increase number of touches and control, improve confidence)
- Develop soccer “intelligence” (promote faster decisions and better awareness)
- Develop partnership within the team (improve teamwork)
- Provide age appropriate environment

Q: Who does the small-sided games mandates impact and how?

These changes will impact the U6 – U12 age groups across all levels of play.

Q. What are the roster sizes for each age group?

Alabama Soccer will follow the USSF Recommendations:

- U6-8: 4v4; Max roster size of 8
- U9-10: 7v7; Max roster size of 14
- U11-12: 9v9; Max roster size of 18
- U13/above: 11v11; Max roster size of 22

Q. Who is required to follow these initiatives?

All members of U.S. Soccer are required to put these initiatives into place. This includes, but is not limited to, all youth members and their respective competitions: State Associations, US Youth Soccer, US Club Soccer, AYSO, SAY, etc.

Q. Are the goal and field sizes the exact sizes required?

No. The goal and field sizes listed are the maximum sizes for each age group. Alabama Soccer request that member associations and clubs do their best to adhere to the sizes listed. U.S. Soccer understands that facilities don't change overnight.

Q. Our club just purchased new sets of 7x21 goals for our U10 and U12 teams. The US Soccer initiatives state that the new goal sizes for those age groups are 6x18. Does our club need to purchase new goals?

No. 6x18 and/or 7x21 size goals will still work for the U10 and U12 age groups. However, Alabama Soccer does ask that when it is time to buy new goals that all clubs follow the new guidelines.

Q. What is the purpose of including quarters and thirds at certain age groups instead of halves?

The transition from 4 periods (quarters) to 3 periods to 2 periods provides a gradual evolution to the full game from the physical and cognitive development perspectives of the player. The multiple intervals also provide increased opportunities for a coach to manage substitutions and explain changes to the players in a more controlled environment during the break in play. This should also reduce over-coaching during the periods of play.

Q. Are the build-out lines mandatory for 7v7 play?

Yes. The build out lines are required for 7v7 play at the U9 and U10 age groups. The build-out line is used to promote playing the ball out of the back in an unpressured setting.

Q. When does the offside rule come into effect? Do we need assistant referees?

Playing with the offside rule begins at the U9 age group along with the 7v7 game model. Alabama Soccer recommends one center referee in U9 and U10 games since the size of the field is relatively small. We will have the option of providing assistant referees for U9 and 10 games, and it can be useful to use these games for referee training

Q. Will all referees be aware of the small-sided game rule changes when the transition is made?

Alabama Soccer has already contacted the State Referee Administrator regarding the Federation's mandates. The referee community is aware of the initiatives and will plan to inform all referees of the changes for the 2016/2017 seasonal year.