

Encouragement of the Small Sided Games

As most recreational players are in the younger to youngest age groups, the first initiative to convert as many as possible to the suggested small sided games format to allow for them to develop in a size appropriate environment.

The "**Participation and Pleasure**" model works exceptionally well in the small sided games environment.

Model	Emphasis	Excellence	Body	Decisions	Opponents
Pleasure and Participation	Active participation	Perform to capabilities	Source of enjoyment	Shared	Needed

- Participation is maximized as small sided produces active participation and constant opportunities to play with the ball
- Excellence is achieved as each player has repeated opportunities to perform, perfect skills and to increase capabilities
- With the increased number of touches, the player is active, gets constant exercise and has opportunities for enjoyment
- Small sided games forces shared decision making, players have to think, learn to anticipate and to react.
- Opponents are valued as they increase the opportunities for exploring the game, learning to use the body with skill and enhance participation.

Small sided is truly the player's game. Coaching needs are minimized and player involvement is maximized.

Selling recreational parents and coaches is easier when they are shown the game with explanations of why it works – more touches, more participation and more fun. Asking kids to explain what they like after playing small sided will often sell the most ardent opponent of less than the "real games."

The use of small sided games can be used as a tool to grow the older ages as well. With the drop off of players at U14 and U16 due to high school play, small sided provides a way for smaller programs to still offer recreational play for the older players who want to stay involved. The new rules adopted with small sided no longer require any age group to play 11 a side. Smaller fields and few players have the same benefits in recreational for high school players as it does for the young players for players who just want to play to have fun. *(See the section in this manual on Small Sided Games for further information.)*

Youth Modules and USSF Courses

Use of the [Youth Modules](#) and the "E" and "D" courses improve coach education at all levels. As described above, lack of effective coaching is one of the major causes of player attrition. Encouraging recreational coaches to attend course may not be all that easy as many do not have a deep commitment to coaching but it is rewarding. Encourage attendance by stressing that training makes coaching more fun for both the player and the COACH.