

Small Sided Soccer Play

There is a growing trend in youth soccer to keep the game small sided for all age groups through U12. Smaller fields and fewer players generally allows for more interaction on the field. In over half the states in the U.S. and in most of Connecticut this is already in place. In Fall 2007 the State ([CJSA](#)) has added an 8v8 format to the Connecticut Cup. In addition, several districts in Connecticut have mandated 8v8 for the U11 age group. Our district ([SWDCJSA](#)) is currently running U10 as 8v8 and has added an 8v8 league as an option for the U11 age group.

Why 8v8? U.S. Youth Soccer (<http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/coaches/smallsidedgames.asp>) lists several reasons why small sided games are better for the development of young soccer players:

- Technical development - More touches on the ball helps individual technical skills
- Tactical development - We want our young soccer players to make more quality decisions during the game!
- Reduced field size - Teaches efficiency on a smaller field
- More teaching time - Better coach to player ratio
- More involved playing time - More opportunity to solve problems that only the game presents
- More opportunity to play on both sides of the ball - More play both attacking and defending
- More opportunity to score goals and make saves!

SCOR endorses this philosophy as a developmentally appropriate and fun playing environment for our young soccer players. Fewer players on the field provide ample opportunity to make quality decisions more often, reinforcing the tactical basics. In Ridgefield we currently utilize the 8v8 format with our U10 and U11 teams. The transition to small sided play through U12 in Connecticut is likely to take several years but we intend to follow the lead of our Southwest district and CJSA on this matter.

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