

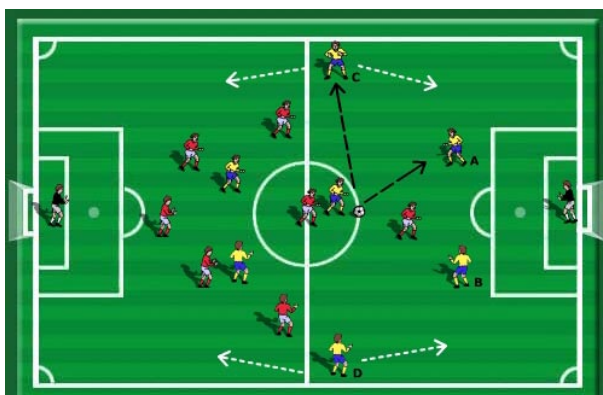
# Alberta Soccer Association



## U12 8 A-Side Soccer

# Technical Handbook

(Booklet 3 of 3)



*This handbook contains a series of exercises to be used a guide to assist with U12 8-A-Side soccer.*



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## Acknowledgements

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For articles and research studies on the topic:

- ✓ United States Youth Soccer Association
- ✓ Canadian Soccer Association
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- ✓ Tino Fusco ASA Staff Coach

**In addition Alberta Soccer would like to thank our soccer colleagues both domestic and abroad for their assistance and contributions.**

## **Introduction**

### **U12 Soccer: Player Development within an 8 a-side environment**

In keeping with the Long-term Player Development Model of Canada's Grassroots Soccer, this booklet deals with U12 soccer and should be considered the next step in the development of Alberta Soccer's U10 Mini-Soccer program.

#### **Purpose:**

The Technical committee would like to emphasize that the program is designed as a progressive step from the U10 program. We consider it still to be development and learning, therefore requiring some variation from the full FIFA rules.

#### **Player Development:**

This program is designed to assist the development of young players. As such the rules reflect this philosophy.

#### **Referee Development:**

This program provides an opportunity for the development of young referees.

#### **Coach Development:**

**This Program provides an opportunity for the development of coaches**

## Overview

### What is 8-a-side soccer?

Small sided games (SSG) are any games played with less than eleven players aside and the best way for players to combine nearly all elements of the game. The fewer the players the more game-conditioned touches on the soccer ball. As well as you get all these touches in a 'realistic' and 'live' environment with the addition of tactical applications. This is where the enjoyment happens and after 60 minutes of high activity combined with structured repetition the players learn and go home HAPPY!

11v11 soccer is an adult game devised by and for adults to play. The 11 a-side game routinely plays structured formations - defense, midfield and forward. Playing 8 a-side games have the same structure but players are more able to move from position to position, from defense to offence making the game exciting for them. The smaller field and smaller number of players on the field will help the players to develop their technique because they will have more touches of the ball. Because there are fewer players on the field there will be extra space, which will give the player more time to make decisions, this will help develop the tactical side of the game. In a 8 a-side soccer game rules such as throw-ins, free kicks, corner kicks and goal kicks still apply.

Further from a coaching perspective organizing players during the match is far less stressful and practice time is not occupied with trying to demonstrate an 11a-side picture. Valuable training time can be spent on technique and small sided tactics. From a player perspective all players can have more opportunities to attack (develop and identify goal scorers) and all players will recognize that they will have to defend as well.

### What are the training priorities for this age group?

#### U12 Developmental Soccer Training Priorities

The number one goal of the U12 Player Development Program is to develop players. Players grow and develop at different rates. Just because a player isn't the strongest, fastest or most technical player

today, does not mean they cannot grow and develop into the great player of the future.

## **Technical Skills**

Establish a base. Develop individual skills under pressure of time, space and an opponent. Increase technical speed.

- ✓ Passing (long, short, inside of foot, crosses)
  - Proper technique for instep, inside and outside. Work on short and long.
- ✓ Receiving (balls on ground, balls in air)
  - Body behind ball, cushion ball ground, bouncing, and air. All surfaces from partner on the move.
- ✓ Dribbling (beating challenges from front, behind, side)
  - Risk taking. Moves to beat your opponent. Keeping possession shielding and spin turns: changing speed and direction.
- ✓ Finishing (instep, inside of foot, volleys, half volleys, headers)
  - Proper striking of the ball plant foot, toe down, ankle locked, strike ball with instep and follow through. Hitting moving balls.
- ✓ Heading (basic introduction to proper technique)
- ✓ Individual Defending.

## **Tactical**

- ✓ Basic principles of play.
- ✓ Promote attacking soccer, i.e. 1v1 duals.
- ✓ 1v1 - 3v3 games to develop technical skills.
- ✓ First defender (pressure) and Second Defender (cover)
- ✓ Combination play (wall pass, takeover, overlap)
- ✓ Angles of Support
- ✓ Possession (small games 2v1, 3v1, 4v2).
- ✓ All training should involve transition

## **Mental**

- ✓ Create fun in practice environments.
- ✓ Introduce competition to training environments.
- ✓ Encourage decision-making.
- ✓ Increase demands.

- ✓ Discipline
- ✓ Begin to create students of the game. Encourage players to watch games on television; take your team to college games or to watch older teams in the league.

## **Physical**

- ✓ All fitness is done with the ball or is agility based.
- ✓ Focus on developing player coordination and balance with ball.
- ✓ Training Focus; all training should be fun.
- ✓ Sessions should be devoted to 1v1, 2v2, 3v3 games to develop technique with the main focus on attacking.
- ✓ Players should be going to goal as often as possible.
- ✓ Begin keeping score throughout the year to make games competitive.

## **Possible 8v8 Team Formations** (derived from 11v11 game)

8v8 (7+ goalkeeper) is the final category of SSGs. The seven outfield player model is one highly recommended as a team frequently carries 16-18 players on the squad so almost the entire squad can be utilized in a structured game which, somewhat, resembles a full game. The 8v8 systems shown here represent a smaller version of an 11v11 system, which is notated in the box on the right and can be used to teach many of the principles which the players will utilize in the 11v11 system.

The coach can structure the 8v8 game in several ways depending upon the desired training or playing emphasis.

### GK-2-3-2 – Teaching possibilities:

- This system gives the players many of the same visual cues as the 4v4 except there are two diamonds. It is a logical progression from the four outfield player game and some countries move straight to 8v8 from 4v4.
- Training two center backs to cover and balance
- Training two center forwards to combine and score
- Training flank players to play in three thirds of the field
- Training same visual cues as four outfield player diamond



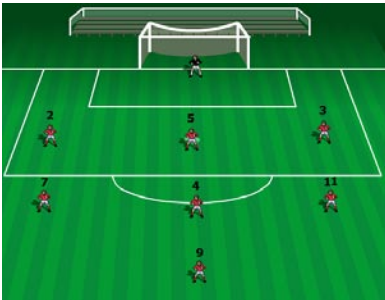
GK-2-3-2



GK-3-4-3

GK-3-3-1 – Teaching possibilities:

- Training overlapping, especially 2 and 3 around 7 and 11
- Teaching zonal defending and double teaming
- Teaching counter attacking
- Changing the point of attack
- Numbers even. Players further forward develop faster than back players because they operate under pressure and need to be technically cleaner.



GK-3-3-1



GK-4-4-2

GK-3-2-2 – Teaching possibilities:

- Overlapping of 2 and 3
- Training two center midfielders
- Training two center forwards



GK-3-2-2



GK-4-3-3

GK-2-4-1 – Teaching possibilities:

- Training two center backs to pressure and cover and work with defensive midfielder.
- Training changing the point of attack.
- Training the counter attack
- Training 7 and 11 to operate down the length of the flank
- Training 8 to coordinate with 9 and 4



GK-2-4-1



GK-3-5-2

### Why small-sided games?

- We want our youth to have more touches on the ball and become more creative with it.
- We want our players to develop an understanding of tactical play and solving problems on the field.
- We want our youth to get quality instruction from the coach; less players on the squad and field, smaller field = easier for novice coach.
- Allows more opportunities to observe and analysis the individual and collective responses of players under quick decision-making conditions in a simple environment.
- More space + fewer numbers = less bunching. Enhance tactical awareness (positioning)
- Players under twelve are routinely structured into formal positions at ages when their spatial awareness do not lend themselves to a practical understanding of larger group tactics.
- More playing time, which encourages maximum individual participation → more individual involvement thereby improves fitness
- Want our youth to be more involved in the game including transition from defending to creating attacking opportunities
- More opportunities for youth to score goals! (Pure excitement!) → improves self-esteem and self-confidence
- U12: greater development for goalkeepers; more shots = more ACTION!
- The small sided environment is a developmentally appropriate environment for our youth players; it's a fun environment that focuses on the player development.

## The Future of U12 Soccer...

All over the World soccer leagues have begun to realize...

- Soccer is viewed differently by younger players than older players
- Young players cannot fully grasp the complexity of 11v11 soccer and learn best through a progression of building blocks
- Without building blocks, many players are forced into more tactical situations bypassing technical and personal growth
- We set the youngsters up for failure if we continue at larger numbers for younger ages.

## Keeping U12 Development Soccer Simple

The U12 8-a-side game provides the best environment for youth players to develop soccer skills and techniques. When coaching, officiating or parenting remember to keep the game simple. Over complicating can lose the flow of the game, in turn inhibiting development. Encourage the players to discover the love of the game through the game.

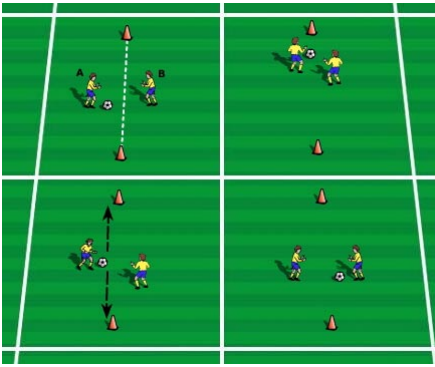
In addition a small sided game is a great teacher.

The teaching of the game and the organization of the practices will require time for everyone to familiarize themselves with the game. After a week or two, however, there should be no difficulties.

Be Patient! The principles of the game are right. The game is right. The rewards will be in the children's enjoyment of playing and their positive development.

*"We should respect the soccer of the past, analyze the soccer of the present, and anticipate the soccer of the future."*

## 1 v 1 Feints



### Emphasis:

Quick changes of direction, use of feints.

### Set-up:

10 x 10 yard grid.

Players are organized in pairs with one ball.

Cones are placed 7 yards apart at either side of the grid (as shown). An imaginary line exists between these two cones.

Repeat set-up to accommodate entire team.

### Objective:

Player (A) starts with the ball. They must dribble the ball and stop it next to either cone to win a point.

Player (B) must try to block the cone with his foot. Player (B) is NOT allowed to touch the ball or cross the imaginary line. Both players must try to face each other at all times to encourage lateral (side-to-side) movement. Player with most points at end of game wins.

Change roles after 30 seconds. Switch partners after each game.

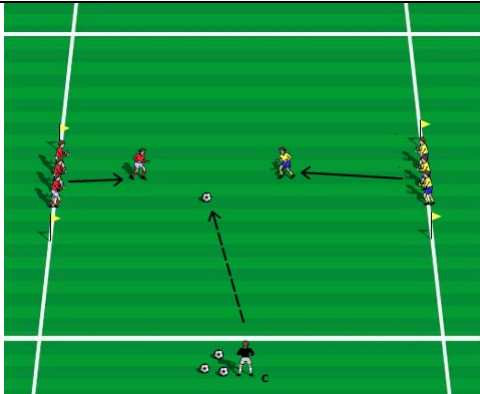
### Progressions:

Two points are awarded if player uses a feint or move prior to scoring at the cone.

### Coaching Points:

- Accelerate quickly to cone.
- Keep eyes up to scan the area and opponent.
- Utilize moves, dodging fakes etc.

## Numbers Game



### Emphasis:

1v1 attacking/defending  
Transition play

### Set-up:

20 x 20 grid.  
Two groups of players with one ball per group.

Repeat set-up to accommodate additional players. Two sets of colored bibs required.

### Objective:

- Number players in group (1-n)
- Coach calls out a number & passes a ball into the middle of the grid. Both numbers from each group come out and try to win possession the ball by shielding then scoring on the opposing goal.
- 20-30 seconds interval mini-games
- Goals can be scored below knee height
- Remainder of players link arms to create keeper wall to disrupt scoring opportunities. Players in wall may only move horizontal along goal line.

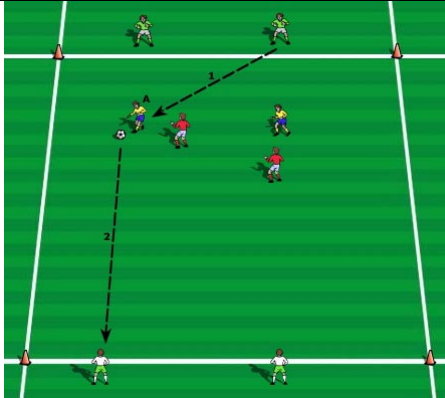
### Progressions:

- Coach may call out more than one number to create 2v2,3v3,3v2,etc

### Coaching Points:

- ✓ Encourage aggressiveness in 50-50 balls
- ✓ Shielding and protecting ball once under possession
- ✓ 1v1 attacking/defending principles

## 2 v 2 to Targets



### Emphasis:

To encourage players to lift their head and switch the ball quickly.

### Set-up:

20 x 20 yard grid. Eight players per grid with one ball.

Two target players are positioned at each end of the grid as shown.

Four players are positioned inside the playing area creating a 2v2 situation.

### Objective:

Play begins with a pass from one of the target players. The team in possession must attempt to turn and play a pass to the targets at the opposite end of the grid. The target players must return the ball to whichever team passed to them.

Play is continuous in both directions for a designated period of time. Points are awarded for each successful pass to the target players. Players cannot score at the same side twice in a row. Back passes can be made to the target players. Rotate the teams regularly to avoid fatigue.

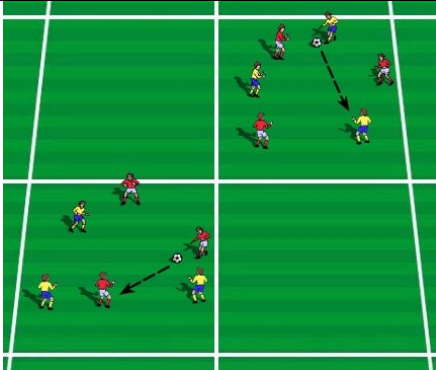
### Progression:

(1) Reduce the size of the playing area.

### Coaching Points:

- ✓ Passing must be sharp and accurate – keep the ball moving.
- ✓ Players must try to receive the ball in a half-turned position.
- ✓ Communication is vital – “turn”, “man on” etc.

### 3 v 3 Possession



**Emphasis:**

Passing & Receiving.

**Set-up:**

20 x 20 yard grid.

Six players per grid with one ball per group.

Repeat set-up to accommodate entire team. Two sets of colored bibs.

**Objective:**

The game is played in a 3v3 format. Players try to maintain possession of the ball by constant passing and moving. 1 point is awarded for 5 successful passes. Play for a designated number of goals or for a predetermined time.

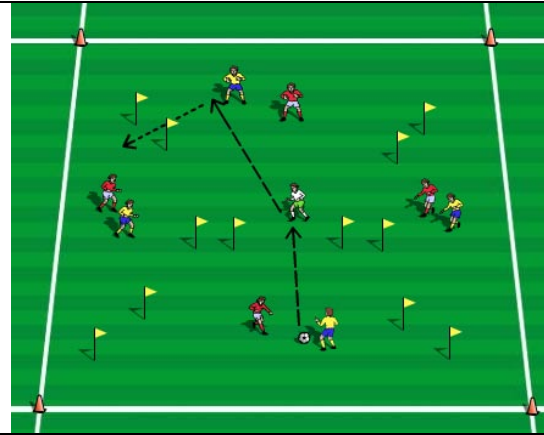
**Progressions:**

- Play 2-touch.

**Coaching Points:**

- ✓ Constant movement.
- ✓ Communication is vital.
- ✓ Angles of support to receive ball.
- ✓ Pass must have appropriate weight to ensure that teammate can deal with it.

## Gate Game



### Setup

Divide players into two teams.

### Sequence

Teams play 4v4+1 on multiple goals inside the playing area.

This game teaches: changing the point of attack, combining, creating space, diagonal/lateral running, dribbling for possession, dribbling to attack space, dribbling to beat opponents, group defending, individual defending, passing skills, receiving skills, rhythm of play, speed of play, support, transition to attack, transition to defense and vision.

## End Line Game



### Setup

Divide players into two teams.

### Sequence

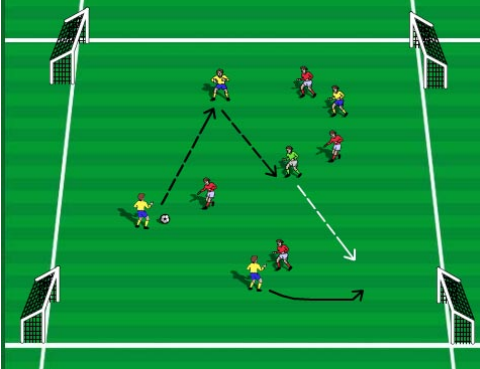
Teams play 4v4 inside the playing area attempting to dribble and control the ball over the opponent's end line.

### Objective:

- A goal is scored by dribbling and stopping the ball anywhere behind the end-line under control.
- The entire end-line is the goal.

**Progression:** players can pass into the end zone to have another team mate receive under control in the area for a point.

## Four Goal Game



### **Emphasis:**

Decision-making, switching point of attack, vision.

### **Set-up:**

30 x 30 grid

4v4 (8 players)

Two teams of colored bibs.

Small goals (4-6 wide); no goalkeepers

### **Objective:**

To score in either of your opponents' goals while defending your own two goals. 4v4 is the closest to presenting match-like situations where the numbers are small enough to allow a high percentage of ball contacts, whilst encouraging proper tactics (width, depth, off-ball movement).

Play multiple 2-8 minute high intensity games.

### **Progressions:**

- Add attacking Neutral player to create 5v4 for attacking play.
- Modify playing area shape.

### **Coaching Points:**

- Apply basic passing technique in practice
- Encourage quick passes
- First touch away from defenders
- Encourage off-the-ball movement from players

**NOTES**

**NOTES**

**For Further information with regards to the development of soccer in Alberta:**

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