

Small Sided Games Operations Manual

For Club Programs – Prepared by Auckland Football Federation

Adapted for use with Small Whites League involving Papakura City FC, Manurewa AFC, Clendon United and Drury United.

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Overview

Small Sided Games are designed to be appropriate to the age of the players and their developmental needs. They allow greater touches on the ball, a greater number of simpler decisions, more participation for all players and are more enjoyable.

The following guide will detail the set up of the games, how they are run, some of the organization required, and how to effectively manage the games. Once the fields are set up and players are in teams, the games themselves should be easy to run. To get parents on board, a brochure is available from Auckland Football with information regarding the games, including benefits and how parents can help on the sideline.

As the teams split in half for each game, you only need one coach per 8-10 players (a “team”), as each coach will look after one of the Small Sided Games that their “team” is playing. The role of the coach is to get the game started, keep the ball in play by throwing one in when the ball goes out, and keeping track of the time (if this is not done centrally).

Each club will need a leader at the games to organize the set up. A group of parents could be used to set up the fields, or the first teams could get there early to do this (under the guidance of the leader) and the last teams packing up after their games.

The Small Sided Games involve groups of four or five players playing on a small field to small goals without goalkeepers. The ball is kept in play by the coach returning a ball once one goes out, and there are minimal rules required.

Format of SSG

The Small Sided Games use the following structure and format:

Age	Playing Numbers	Field Size (min)	Field Size (max)	Goal size (m)	Playing Time	Ball size	Goalkeeper
5th - 6th	4v4	20x15	25 x 20	2x1	2x15 min	3	No
7th - 8th	5v5	30x20	35x25	2x1	2x20 min	3	No

Teams can be created with 8 players per squad for 5th and 6th grades and 10 players per squad for 7th and 8th grades. These squads can then be split in half to allow teams of 4-5 players to play in each game. The table above outlines the numbers per team in a game, the recommended size of the field, the size of the goal and the amount of time for each half.

For 5th and 6th Grade, the games are 4v4 for two 15minute periods. For 7th and 8th Grade, the games are 5v5 for two 20minute periods. You can have a 5minute break in between games. The games are played to goals on small sized pitches. For 5th and 6th Grades, the coach or game leader should keep putting the ball back into play so that the game is continuous. For 7th and 8th Grades, the ball can be passed in from the side.

The rules are minimal for these ages. In general fouls will be the result of poor timing or poor coordination rather than intentional, so there shouldn't be much need for free kicks etc.

For 5th and 6th Grades:

- No Goalkeepers. Everyone plays with their feet.
- No off sides.
- There are no corners or throw-ins – if the ball goes out the coach just rolls another one in.
- When a goal is scored, the play is restarted from half way.

For 7th grade:

- No Goalkeepers. Everyone plays with their feet.
- No off sides.
- Players begin to pass the ball back in with their feet for throw-ins, corners and goal kicks.
- For goal kicks the attacking team must be 10m from the goal line.
- When a goal is scored, the play is restarted from half way.

Fields should be set up according to the size ranges listed in the table. Please ensure that you leave space between fields so that fields are not backing up onto each other (safety) and to allow parents around the outside of each pitch if desired. Fields could be marked out with paint or cones, and cones can be used for goals if no appropriately sized goals are available. For 7th grade fields place cones at each end 10m from the goal line to aid the positioning of the attacking players.

Teams will be split in half and play against another team. Each coach will take one of the games (so half of their players with half of the other teams players). So as an example:

Team Lions is split into two teams – L1 and L2, with 4 players in each team.

Team Tigers is split into two teams – T1 and T2, with 4 players in each team.

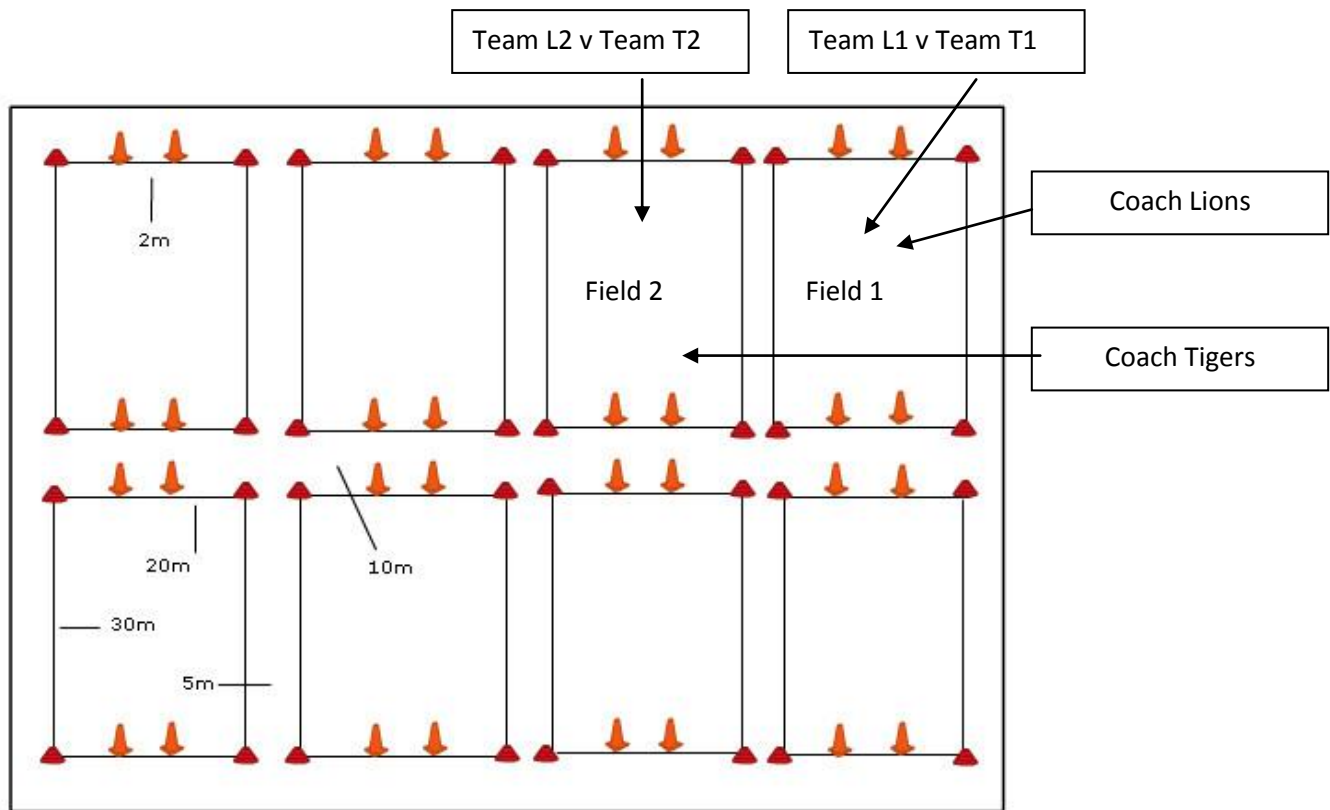
L1 plays against T1 on Field 1, while L2 plays against T2 on Field 2.

The Coach of Team Lions looks after Field 1, while the Coach of Team Tigers looks after Field 2.

See the field set up diagram for a picture of the above set up.

Field Set Up

A diagram detailing field setups is provided below. Depending on the space available, 8 pitches can be set up on a full sized pitch, with a 5m gap between the sides and 10m between the ends of each field. Goals should be 2m wide, and if none are available then cones are fine. The day will run smoothly if you set the fields up prior to the teams arriving to play, and you could get parent help here. While you may need to vary the size of the fields according to the space you have available, try to stay to the recommendations or close to them, in order to ensure that the games are appropriate to the player's age and stage of development.



In terms of equipment, the following is desirable, and the amount will depend on the number of fields you need to set up, which depends on the number of players you have:

- Enough disc cones to set out fields (5m between cones is ideal, although 10m is fine)
- Goals or pointy cones to make goals
- At least two footballs per field
- Bibs (one per player or half if playing bibs vs. non bibs)
- A white board to display where each team is playing, along with a layout of the fields

Game Day Instructions

The following is a list of activities that will need to be undertaken on game day to run the Small Sided Games. Tasks may be carried out by club officials, coaches or parent helpers. A Game Leader should be responsible for overseeing the running of these.

Activity	Description	Time
1. Arrival, organise helpers / game leaders	Brief on tasks required to set up fields etc	5 mins
2. Set up equipment	Mark out fields, set up goals, arrange bibs etc	10 mins
4. Send players / teams to pitches	A white board with teams and field layout may be helpful for allocating players to fields	2 mins
5. Split teams to create two teams	Hand out bibs	1 min
6. Start first half		15 - 20 mins
7. Half time break		5 mins
8. Start second half		15 - 20 mins
9. End of session	Pack up gear if no games scheduled after	5 mins

Creating a draw

Players should be placed into teams at the start of the year. By doing this you can set up a draw at the start of the season.

Remember teams will get split in half for each game. So when two teams play each other, they will use two fields, with half of each team on each field. The next game day where the teams play each other, the teams can be mixed up again so different players end up playing with and against each other.

Sample draws are contained in the appendix section, and can be modified for the number of players that you have and the resulting number of teams. 5th and 6th Grade should have teams of 8 players, and 7th and 8th Grade should have teams of 10 players. Remember, these will be split in two for each game day.

Once you know how many teams you have for each age group you can prepare a draw for the season. For each game day, allocate two teams to play each other. If you have an odd number of teams, then one team can play against itself. As the teams get split in half, it is not an issue if two teams play each other two game days in a row.

It is a good idea to schedule the two games for a team to be side by side – e.g. if Team A and Team B are being split to play each other, have them on fields 1 and 2 etc.

FAQ and Trouble Shooting

Below are some potential problems and solutions to help you to implement the Small Sided Games successfully.

What happens if a player / players are missing?

You have a couple of options when players do not turn up. The games will still work 5v4 or 4v3, and you may need to change the players around to get a balanced game. If a few players are missing then players can be shuffled so that you end up with the appropriate 4v4 or 5v5 games. Remember it is not the team that they are on that is important, it is that each player is playing that is of most importance.

What can we do if one team is winning by a large amount and the game is not very balanced?

You can swap players around between the teams to get a more balanced game. You may restart the game when the ball goes out by passing the ball to the team that is behind. You may decide to make the goal that the losing team is attacking bigger.

How will players learn to be goalkeepers if there are none?

Goal keeping is a specialized position, and players should not be limiting themselves to one position until they are in their teens. At any rate, all goalkeepers need good outfield skills which they will develop in the Small Sided Games. Also we want kids to experience scoring goals, so putting someone in the way at this age is not going to help this!

We have 7 players in a team – why don't we play all of them 7v7?

The Small Sided Games have been designed to be appropriate for the age of the players. Increasing the number of players on the field negates the benefits of the smaller format, and just because all 7 players are on the field does not mean they are all involved in the game.

If you have 7 or so players in a team, you should split the team as discussed in the instructions above (3 players and 4 players). If you have one extra player (say 6 for 7th and 8th Grade), they can either go into a team that is short for the day, or you can play with a sub. If doing this then rotate the players every minute or two, so that the players spend most of their time on the field.