

ELFA at the Soccer Dome - Guidance

CREATING THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

The principles behind ELFA's mini-soccer are taken from the FA Youth Module age appropriate coaching courses that have now been inaugurated into Level 1 and Level 2, and the FA's Youth Development programmes.

We are looking to create an environment in which children can learn to play football in a safe, friendly environment that is above all enjoyable. We also believe it is just as important for coaches, managers and parents to enjoy their football too.

With this in mind, the 'rules' we apply to our mini-soccer games are geared to help the children develop, remove much of the contention, and to keep everything as simple as possible. There are progressions at every age group and obviously there are variants between indoors and outdoors.

Please be aware that the FA's Standard Code of Rules for Mini-Soccer (Rule 18(C)) states:

"A child who has not attained the age of 6 shall not play, and shall not be permitted or encouraged to play, in a match of any kind."

When a child reaches their 6th birthday, they will become eligible to play with an U7 team at the Soccerdome, but prior to this the child can only take part in their club/development training sessions.

We strongly support the FA guidelines that all team members should have equal playing time where possible with a best practice recommendation of a minimum of 50% playing time.

Our attitude to 'competition' reflects the views contained in the FA Youth Development programme. We have never seen a game of mini-soccer played in the ELFA that is not 'competitive'. But development football is designed to do what it says – help children develop. It gives coaches an opportunity to try different things, to see if their coaching is effective, without the added pressure of playing for points or cups. We do intend to run mini-competitions in line with the FA guidelines at ALL mini-soccer age groups.

Our view is that we all benefit when everyone 'buys-in' to the idea of creating the environment. When coaches refrain from constantly shouting instructions, when parents do not get anxious about how their children are performing and when the children are just allowed to play.

So far, this approach has been an enormous success with the ELFA being used by the FA as an example for other leagues to follow.

If we create the right environment, we believe everyone will benefit.

COURTS AND GAMES

The courts are booked for one hour per age group.

It is essential that teams arrive at least 15 minutes before the games begin.

There will always be three teams per court unless you are informed otherwise by a member of the ELFA committee.

The games will be played on a round robin basis – 1v2 2v3 1v3.

Referee for Game 1 – Mgr of Team 1

Referee for Game 2 – Mgr of Team 2

Referee for Game 3 – Mgr of Team 3

Court Numbers are allocated on the fixture list issued to club secretaries.

A size 3 football will be used – Home team to provide the ball each game.

Games should be started as soon as possible. Teams should be ready to go on the court at the allocated time.

Games will be a set 15 mins one way - courts are booked for an hour at 9.00, 10.00 and 11.00am. It is essential that teams are ready to start at the designated time – games must finish on time so enough time is given for the next game to get organised.

Any team who consistently fails to adhere to the timings and makes the sessions over run will have fixtures removed.

The games shall be played 5v5.

If both coaches agree, the games can be 4v4 or 3v3.

The games are played on an adult five-a-side court, so play is continuous with the ball allowed to be played off the sidewalls and backboards.

The courts are marked with a five-a-side 'D' but all players are allowed in all areas of the pitch at all times.

There will be NO penalties given for fouls in the 'D'. A direct free kick will be awarded from the place where the offence took place.

In line with the new FA guidelines for Youth Football we will be playing a 'retreat line' at this age. When the ball is in the goalkeepers hands the attacking team must 'retreat' to the half-way line to allow the defending team to play the ball out. Once the goalkeeper has released the ball the game continues as normal. Goalkeepers are allowed to kick or throw the ball.

Should a goalkeeper handle the ball outside the area a free kick will be given to the opposing side.

Substitutions can be made at any time.

A player substituted can in turn be re-introduced as a substitute at any time.

Players should be five yards back at kick off.

There will be no cards issued in the ELFA mini soccer. If a child is persistently fouling or misbehaving the referee will ask for them to be substituted, or to have a period not involved in the game.

Remember, players are learning to tackle like any other skill, so don't unduly blow for fouls but let's talk and educate the children. What does need to be discouraged is running into someone up against the perimeter boards as this can cause injury.

FLEXIBLE FIXTURES

Fixtures will be published on the ELFA website, but they can change for various reasons on the day – teams being delayed etc. EVERY team should be in the hall ready to play regardless of whether they think they are playing in the first fixture or not.

Teams will NOT play each other the same number of times during the season.

Scores for development football will not be published anywhere. However, once the season is underway, we will look to match up teams by ability.

WHO AND WHAT IS ALLOWED ON COURT

All substitutes should be inside the court at all times.

Each team is allowed a maximum of two adults on the court with them at any time. Ideally the adults should be a coach or a manager of a team. They should stand on the halfway line, not in the corners of the court.

ELFA officials will actively discourage over-zealous or vociferous coaching.

We expect every club to have informed parents about the standard of behaviour we expect, preferably through the LFA Adults In Junior Football Workshop.

All bags and bottle crates should be left outside the court.

Hot drinks are not allowed on court in any circumstances.

MATCH DAY TIPS FROM THE FA YOUTH DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

Play players in different positions during different periods of the game if they are happy to do so.

Allow players to learn as much of the game for themselves as they can, but be prepared to support their learning needs when necessary.

Play different formations and sometimes allow the children to help in picking these.

Allow players to play on different sides of the pitch, sometimes on the left and sometimes on the right.

Things to consider when talking to players:

- Use age-appropriate language
- Get the attention of your players before speaking
- No 'second ball' and 'play in the hole'.
- Keep it simple - Be positive at all times - Focus on the most important aspects
- Have the kids enjoyed themselves?
- Give clear instructions to your players and always finish with a positive
- Don't forget they are just children, not professional footballers!
- Allow the players to be involved in decision making processes.
- Give the players ownership, - if the players do something well, praise them.
- If they make a mistake, they didn't do it on purpose, so offer some words of encouragement or help.

After the game, ask the players whether they thought they achieved the targets - not just scoring, passing, moving into space, tackling etc

NO ANGRY POST MORTEMES!