

Micro Soccer Description and Rules

The following is an excerpt from the book
"Coaching 6, 7 and 8 Year Olds" by Tony Waiters and Bobby Howe

This excerpt can be found on the "World of Soccer" web page at
http://www.worldofsoccer.com/books/6_7_8/Introduction/Micro_Soccer.html

What Is Micro Soccer®?

Micro Soccer® is 3-a-side soccer, the Waitersway. It uses simple game rules that will be explained on the pages that follow. Of the three players on each team one is a goalkeeper, although the player in goal is changed frequently (on a rotating basis).

The practices of Micro Soccer® use the Micro Soccer® field to assist in the organization of the practices. The 10 Micro Soccer® practices are fun games and drills that specifically develop the basic skills of soccer.

Micro Soccer® and its practices have been developed to give the coach of the novice player a simple formula that guarantees fun, skills development and a fundamental knowledge of soccer in such a way that a child of 6, 7 or 8 years of age can understand.

The base is 3-a-side

A 6-year-old relates to and co-operates with one or two friends (this is accepted educational psychology).

One ball among 6 guarantees the opportunity for all players to kick, dribble and score.

Three makes the triangle - the basic team unit of soccer.

The 3-a-side game has always been played *naturally* by youngsters around the world. The great players have developed from this type of environment.

Children do not play naturally in Canada and the United States. Street soccer is not a part of North American society's sports mosaic.

The Waitersway of coaching for 6, 7 and 8-year-olds uses Tony Waiters' own 3-a-side game with 10 other standard fun practices based on the 3-a-side game. The practices produce skills development *just by playing*. To quote Bobby Howe: "The game is the great teacher."

Introducing Micro Soccer®

When players are being introduced to Micro Soccer® for the first time, you cannot expect anything to go perfectly.

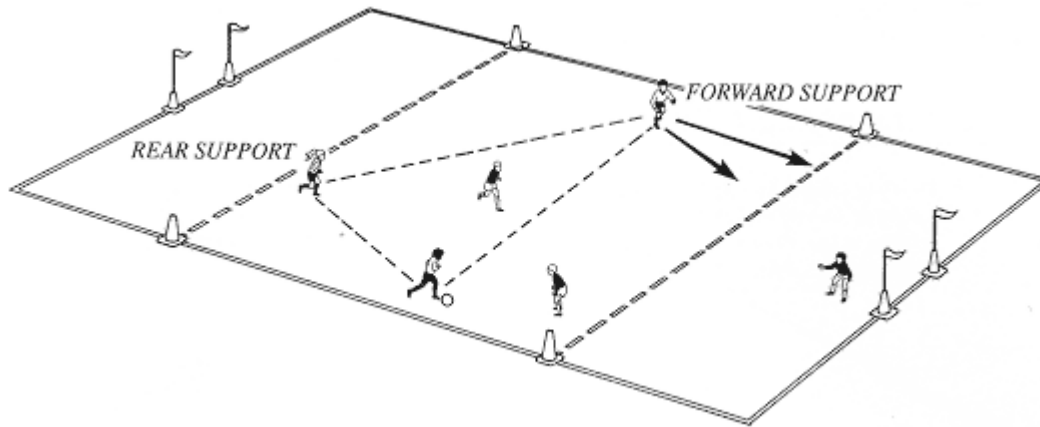
The teaching of the game and the organization of the practices will require time for everyone to familiarize themselves with the requirements. After a few weeks, however, there should be no difficulties.

Do not be deterred. The principles are right. The game is right, so persist. The rewards will be there for all, and particularly for the players, after a short period of time.

Why 3-a-side?

Why not 1 vs 1, or 2 vs 2?

The basic team unit of soccer is three. The triangle forms the basic tactical configuration. An attacker with the ball should have at least *two* passing options.



Forward support gives the player a creative, positive passing option. Rear support gives the player insurance, in case a mistake is made or the player with the ball cannot use the front supporting player but wishes to pass.

Why not 4-a-side?

The 4-a-side game is good but...

Watch 6-year-olds playing 7-a-side soccer. When they swarm for the ball, there are still "passengers" on the field. Playing positions is for the birds as far as they are typically concerned. Why play position to get an occasional kick at the ball?

Some players are non-assertive, others non-physical, still others limited in skill. While 7-a-side will definitely leave them on the outside looking in, 4-a-side is only an improvement. One player will often be excluded, either by choice or uncertainty. But 3-a-side soccer eliminates this. Every player has an easily understood role which *guarantees* involvement.

There is nothing revolutionary about the Micro Soccer® game or its practices. It might be regarded as the BGO, the Blinding Glimpse of the Obvious! It only intends a formalizing on the "natural" game and its practices.

For the first time, a method of introducing soccer has been devised which looks specifically at the needs of the beginning player. It starts here and progresses from that base, growing and developing as the player does, into the adult game.

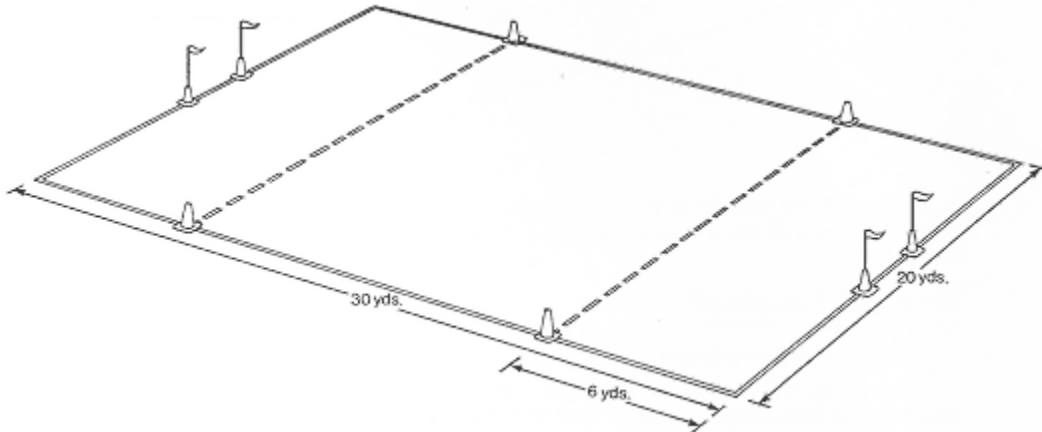
Until now, the reverse has been true. The game has been presented as a watered-down version of the adult game. The reduction in scale has been the only concession to the small 6-year-old adult.

Micro Soccer® Organization and Rules

Micro Soccer® is used to distinguish the game beyond that of small-sided games, mini-soccer and mod-soccer. Micro Soccer® uses the fundamental team unit - three - as the basis for learning and for having fun.

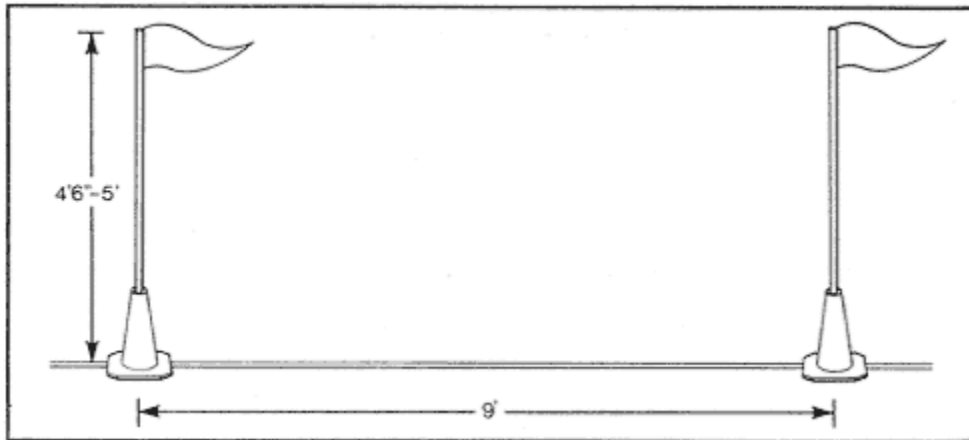
There are variations in the way 3-a-side soccer can be played. Some are presented in this manual. The rules of Micro Soccer® and its organization are covered below. **The Rules of Micro Soccer®**

1. The field is approximately 30 x 20 yards, although the size can be adjusted over a period of time by trial and error. The dimensions should vary according to player age and abilities. It is not possible to line the fields, use existing field markings, cones and/or frisbees.



2. If the field is not lined, marker cones are placed on the sidelines, six yards out from goal lines. These mark an imaginary line forming the goalkeeping zone. The goalkeeper can handle the ball inside this zone, but may play (and should be encouraged to do so) beyond the line in a conventional manner, using feet and body but not the hands.

3. Goals are set up using corner flags (preferably free-standing ones), nine feet apart. An ideal method is to use poles or corner flags inserted in large cones.



4. Goals can be scored from anywhere but the ball must pass below the imaginary line across the goal tops.

5. The coach referees, or appoints his assistant or a parent.

6. Time-outs are called every two or three minutes, when substitutions are made.

7. Each team has a goalkeeper, but the goalkeepers are changed at each time-out on a rotating basis so that equal time is established for the goalkeeping function.

8. If there are six players on a team (three on, three off), lines changes can be made periodically so the same three players do not always play together.

9. When the ball goes out of play, the game is re-started by one of the following ways:

Over the sidelines, with a throw-in (or kick-in, if the coach so desires).

Over the goal line, with a goal kick if attacking team last touched the ball; or corner kick if defending team last played ball (goal kick is taken from anywhere in the goalkeeper handling zone; corner from where goal line and sideline meet).

After a goal is scored, re-start the game with a goal kick. Alternatively, with the youngest players, mark a centre spot, and re-start with a kick-off from the centre.

Note: Goals cannot be scored directly from a goal kick, a throw-in, a kick off or a free kick. There are no penalty kicks in Micro Soccer®.

10. If a foul throw is committed, a coach explains the correct method and lets the offender re-take the throw. Discretionary power is then given to the referee if another foul throw is committed but, most times, it won't be called.

11. Because of the small field size and the end-to-end nature of the game, the ball may go out to play frequently. Coaches should encourage parents to participate as *ball parents* to help the flow and the enjoyment of the game. Any players on the sidelines should be encouraged to help get the ball back in play quickly. On gymnasias, artificial turf, all-weather and other hard surfaces the ball will run more quickly. If possible, compensate by widening the playing area or by reducing the air pressure of the ball.

12. Practice sessions (and games) are *no longer* than 35 to 40 minutes. Because of this, parents are encouraged to stay for both practices and games and to participate in practice sessions.

13. All infringements - tripping, handling, etc. - are punished by an indirect free kick (i.e., ball must be passed before a shot can be taken). There are no penalties (players of this age are completely honest and do not commit deliberate fouls; and the "indirect" free kick encourages passing and co-operation).

14. All opposing players must be at least five yards from the ball on free kicks, corner kicks and goal kicks.

Please note: a more comprehensive and formalized Micro Soccer® rule book for tournament and match play is available from the publishers.

System for Substitutions and Rotation

A substitution or rotation system will depend on the number of players available:

With 3 players - There are no substitutes. Increase the number of time-outs and reduce playing time of game. Remember, "equal time" for goalkeepers. Because game's intensity is, for young players, impossible to sustain for a long period, a two-minute system is most effective. The ideal practice number.

With 4 players - One substitute. The sequence proceeds as follows: goalkeeper becomes the substitute, substitute becomes the outfield player and one outfield player becomes the goalkeeper.

With 5 players - An awkward number. The two substitutes always come back on the field as the two outfield players: one of the previous outfield players become a substitute, the other the goalkeeper, with the replaced goalkeeper becoming the other substitute. Each rotation must have equal time and equal goalkeeping time must be observed.

With 6 players - The perfect substitute system. With three on/three off, there is a different goalkeeper each time and when all six have played goal, repeat the procedure. Make line changes periodically. A 6-player system is good for games and tournaments, but is not enough activity for practice situations.