

# SOCCER CAPE BRETON UNDER 11 HANDBOOK - 2024



# The Why

By starting with answering the question, “**Why the changes to soccer in Cape Breton**”, we can understand the true purpose of these league modifications and the advantages that will be seen. Once we have examined research surrounding talent development, talent identification, and children’s sporting motivations we can see flaws in the traditional model of how soccer is delivered for the earlier age groups. The *Canada Soccer Skill Centre and Dedicated Player Program Support Manual*<sup>1</sup> states that the traditional model of choosing a select number of players based on their performance levels at a specified time, organizing them into a team, and competing against other teams is flawed in the following ways:

- Does not accurately predict potential or future performance.
- Often turns away players who might have high potential but who are simply inexperienced at that moment relative to their peers.
- Early selection prior to physical maturation implies early exclusion of the majority and can discourage players who might otherwise become as good, or better, if given the time and chance to develop.
- Characteristics that define “talented” athletes in early age are not the characteristics that define elite athletes later in their career.

With this knowledge and awareness, the concept of open rosters, which is a feature of the SCB Grassroots League, is a way to lessen the effects of these flaws. This concept allows for players to be grouped according to criteria other than current ability and removes a fixed roster system. This concept is introduced in Canada Soccer’s Club Licensing Program<sup>2</sup> and has an impact on leagues, and clubs. Within the licensing requirements is the introduction of the Skill Centre Program.

## **A Skill Centre has the following goals<sup>1</sup>:**

1. To produce better players across Canada by increasing opportunity and access to better training and competition for more young players.
2. Produce clear training guidelines for clubs so that they can deliver the best possible environment for young players in their region.
3. Keep more young players involved in the game for longer by providing them with an enjoyable experience within the game.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.canadasoccer.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Canada-Soccer-Skill-Centre-Program-Manual\\_EN-updated.pdf](https://www.canadasoccer.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Canada-Soccer-Skill-Centre-Program-Manual_EN-updated.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.canadasoccer.com/play-landing/club-licensing-program/>

## **The Skill Centre Program principles<sup>1</sup> that affect how SCB's league operates are the following:**

- Contact time with a ball will be high
- Training will resemble the game
- Training will be fun for everyone

The above principles and goals are being adopted in SCB's approach to grassroots soccer. SCB is committed to having enjoyable, inclusive, and child-centered programming so children can participate in soccer safely and develop to their own potential.

### **Game Night Format**

- SCB will schedule on game night per week, where one club will host 1 or 2 other teams that evening.
- If only two teams, they will play a 2 x 30 min game
- If 3 teams at the same location:
  - Team A will play Team B in a 30 min mini game.
  - After the first mini game, Team B will play Team C in a 30 min mini game.
  - After the second mini game, Team A will play Team C in a 30 min mini game.
- If we have to have 4 teams at one location for some reason:
  - will require two fields
  - teams to play each other in a 20 min mini game.

### **Skills Centre Training**

Clubs should be holding at least one skills centre development session at least once a week for their players.

Soccer Cape Breton's Technical Director will provide a Skill Centre curriculum before the summer kick-off with a 20-session selection of activities for each club. SCB will also provide a membership of top grassroots platform [scoreboardsoccer.com](https://scoreboardsoccer.com) as a resource tool.

As well, the SCB Technical Director will arrange visits to each club (on their request) as early as possible to help get the coaches up to speed on best practices and qualify them for the area that is relevant to their own club.

For any player who wants more developmental training, SCB will be hosting additional skill centres. More information on our skill centres can be found on our Facebook page and our website

This handbook addressed modified game laws for U11 games. For the complete league administration policies and procedures, please read the SCB Rule of Play 2024 document.

## U11 Modified 7v7 Laws of the Game

### Law 1 - Field Markings & Equipment

#### Dimensions

The field of play shall be rectangular and marked with lines.

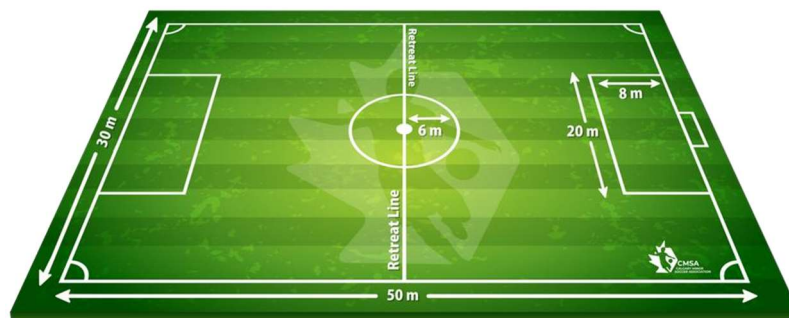
The playing area will be 30 meters wide x 50m long. Games may be played on mini fields or may be played within or across standard fields.

#### Markings

Distinctive lines and markings are required:

- Fields marked by distinctive lines not more than twelve (12) centimeters in width.
- The two longer boundary lines are called touchlines, the two shorter boundary lines are called goal lines.
- The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line, which joins the mid-points of the two touchlines. This line is also used as the Retreat Line for some restarts (see Rule 8)
- A centre mark is marked at the mid-point of the halfway line. A circle with a radius of 6 meters is marked around it.
- A corner arc with a 1-meter radius should be indicated at the four corners of the field.
- A goal area should be indicated by a rectangular box 8 meters x 20 meters.
- A flag post, at least 1.5 meters high, with a non-pointed top and a flag can be placed at each corner. If flag posts are not available, place a cone on each corner to mark it.

Example Field Markings:



## Goals

- The goal should be 1.8 meters high (6 feet) x 3.66 meters wide (12 feet).
- Nets may be attached to the goals and the ground behind the goal, ensuring they are properly supported and do not interfere with the goalkeeper.
- Goals must be anchored securely to the ground. Portable goals may only be used if they meet this requirement.

## Law 2 - The Ball

- The ball will be size 4, spherical, and in suitable condition (not torn or damaged etc.)
- If a ball becomes defective during the game, the game is stopped until a replacement ball is provided.
- Play is restarted by dropping the replacement ball at the place where the original ball became defective.
- The ball should be inflated to 8lbs—9lbs pressure.

## Law 3 - The Number of Players

- Each team will consist of seven (7) players, one of whom must be a goalkeeper.
- Substitutions may be made at any stoppage, with the referee's permission, and shall be unlimited.
- The minimum number of players is five (5) for a game to start or continue.
- All U11 teams have the option to use the "4 Up 1 Up", "Swap GKs", and "Mix 'Em Up" during any game.
  - o 4 Up 1 Up – When a team is losing by four (4) or more goals, that team can add an extra player onto the field.
  - o Swap GKs – Swap goalkeepers if the run of play is not allowing for goalkeepers to develop.
  - o Mix Em Up – Mix all players together from both teams if mismatched and the game is becoming lopsided.
- We strongly encourage the teams do use one of the options if the game becomes unbalanced in favour of one of the teams.

## Law 4 - The Players' Equipment

Players shall not wear anything that is dangerous to themselves or other players which includes any type of jewelry.

### The Basic Compulsory Equipment Shall Consist of:

- A numbered jersey or shirt with sleeves.
- Shorts.
- Socks.
- Shin guards.
- Appropriate footwear for the surface you are playing on.
- Jewelry is not permitted and cannot be taped. Medic Alert bracelets/necklaces are the exception if they are fastened securely so as not to be dangerous to any other player. The referee should be aware of any player that is wearing one of these.

### Shin Guards

- Must be completely covered by the socks.
- Are to be made of rubber, plastic, or similar suitable material.
- Must provide a reasonable degree of protection.

### Colours

- The two teams must wear colours that distinguish them from each other and the referee.
- Each goalkeeper must wear colours which are distinguishable from all outfield players and the referee.
- Pinnies/bibs are recommended to save jersey switching.
- Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but uniforms must still distinguish teams.
- A player who is asked to leave the field of play because of defective or dangerous equipment may not re-enter the field of play until the referee is satisfied that the equipment is permissible. The equipment may only be inspected during a stoppage in play.
- Any hair apparel must be of soft fabric; no plastic or metal items are to be worn.
- Sports hijabs/headscarves are permitted.
- Referees have the final say on the safety of equipment.

## Law 5 - The Referee

### The Authority of the Referee

Each game is facilitated by an ASA-accredited referee who has full authority to enforce the 7v7 Modified Laws of the Game. The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play, including whether a goal is scored and the result of the game, is final.

### Powers and Duties

The referee:

- Enforces the 7v7 Modified Laws of the Game.
- Ensures that the ball meets the requirements of Law 2.
- Ensures that the player's equipment meets the requirements of Law 4.
- Acts as a timekeeper and keeps a record of the game.
- Stops, suspends, or terminates the game, at his discretion, for any infringements of the Rules.
- Stops, suspends, or terminates the game, because of outside interference of any kind (lightning etc.)
- Stops the game if a player is injured and ensures that the player is attended to.
- Ensures that any player that is bleeding from a wound leaves the field of play. The player may only return once the referee is satisfied that the bleeding has stopped.
- Ensures no unauthorized persons enter the field of play.
- Indicates the restart of the game after it has been stopped.
- Acts against team officials who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and may, at his discretion, expel them from the field of play and its immediate surroundings.

## Law 6 - Assistant Referees

There are no Assistant Referees in 7v7 matches.

## Law 7 - Duration of Game

### Periods of Play

Length of the periods will depend on the format set up on that particular date and location. If there are only 2 teams, it will be 2 x 30 min halves. If there are 3 or more teams, then it will be 20 min mini games.

### HALFTIME

- If 2 teams are playing a 2 x 30 minute game format, then halftime interval will be 5 minutes. If 3 or more team format, space between games will be 10 mins.

## Law 8 - The Start and Restart of Play

### Definition of Kick-Off

A kick-off is a way of starting or restarting play:

- at the start of a game.
- after a goal has been scored (The kick-off will be taken by the team who conceded the goal).
- at the start of the second half.
- A goal may not be scored directly from a kick-off and is treated as an in-direct free kick.

### Procedure

- Before the kick-off at the start of the game:
- The home team will sit on the right-side benches when facing the field.
- Teams will start on the side of the field that their bench is on for the first half.
- The away team will start with kick-off. No coin toss is needed.
- If there is a second half of the game (only 2 teams at a location), the teams will change ends and attack the opposite goals.

### Kick-off

- After a team scores a goal, the kick-off is taken by the other team.
- All players, except the player taking the kick-off must be in their own half of the field.
- The opponents of the team taking the kickoff must be 6 meters away from the ball until it is in play.
- The ball must be stationary on the centre mark.
- The referee gives a signal.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves in any direction.
- The kicker must not touch the ball again until it is touched by another player.

### Infringements and Sanctions

For any infringements of the kick-off procedure, the kick-off is retaken.

### Definition of dropped ball:

*A dropped ball is a method of restarting play when, while the ball is still in play, the referee is required to stop play temporarily for any reason not mentioned elsewhere in the Modified Laws of the Game. Some examples of this are an injury or interference by an outside agent.*



## Procedure

1. The referee drops the ball at the place where it was located when play was stopped unless play was stopped inside the goal area, in which case the referee drops the ball on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was located when play was stopped.
2. Play restarts when the ball touches the ground.

The ball is dropped again:

- if it is touched by a player before it makes contact with the ground
- if the ball leaves the field of play, after it contacts the ground, without touching another player.

If the ball enters the goal:

- if a dropped ball is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal kick is awarded.
- if a dropped ball is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kick is awarded.

## Retreat Line

The Retreat Line will come into effect in **two (2)** situations during the game:

- A Goal Kick
- A Free Kick to the defending team within its own goal area

At these two (2) restarts, the opposing team is required to move beyond the Retreat Line. The goalkeeper or player taking the goal kick or free kick can then pass the ball to one of his teammates without the pressure of an opposing player nearby. Once the ball leaves the penalty area, or a teammate touches the ball, the opposition players advance over the Retreat Line.

The Retreat Line in 7v7 will be the Halfway Line for U11.

If a member of the opposing team comes into the defending team's side of the field before the ball leaves the goal area or fails to drop behind the line and interferes with play, the referee will stop play and the restart will be retaken from the original restart location. If a player is trying to retreat behind the centre line and the ball is put into play before this player can retreat the full way, play shall continue and the player is eligible to challenge the ball.

Should a goalkeeper or player play the ball over the retreat line, the game continues as normal.

Retreat Line Example:



## Law 9 - Ball In and Out of Play

### Ball Not in Play

The ball is not in play when:

- it has wholly crossed the goal line or touch line whether on the ground or in the air.
- the play has been stopped by the referee.

### Ball in Play

The ball is in play at other times, including when:

- it rebounds off the goalpost, crossbar, or corner flag post and remains in the field of play.
- it rebounds off the referee.

## Law 10 - The Method of Scoring

A goal is scored when the whole of the ball has crossed over the goal line between the goal posts and under the crossbar, provided that no infringement of the 7v7 Modified Laws of the Game has been previously committed by the team scoring the goal.

## Law 11 - Offside

There is no offside in the 7v7 match format.

## Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct

An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences in a careless manner:

- kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
- trips or attempts to trip an opponent
- strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- unfairly tackles or challenges an opponent
- handles the ball deliberately (except for a goalkeeper, within their own goal area)
- jumps at an opponent
- charges an opponent
- pushes an opponent
- holds an opponent
- bites or spits at an opponent

*Careless is when a player shows a lack of attention or consideration when making a challenge or acts without precaution.*

The indirect free kick is taken from where the offence occurs.

If the defending team commits an offence inside their own goal area, a penalty kick is awarded.

Referees should not issue cautions or red cards to players. If a player is playing roughly, or commits an offence that would be deemed beyond careless, the referee should request that the coach substitute the player, and the coach will discuss the player's behavior with the player, and advise the player to play in a fair manner. Any player who spits at, bites or strikes an opponent should take no further part in the game.

### Goalkeepers

Goalkeepers are allowed to handle the ball inside their own goal area.

Goalkeepers have six (6) seconds to release the ball from their hands. Goalkeepers may not touch the ball with their hands if:

- It has been deliberately kicked to them by a teammate.
- They have released the ball from their hands, and it has not been touched by an opponent.
- For any of these three offences, an indirect free kick will be awarded to the opposing team on the goal area line closest to where the offence occurs.

## Law 13 - Free Kick

- All free kicks are indirect for the U11 age group. A goal may not be scored directly from an indirect free kick.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves.
- If an indirect free kick is kicked directly into the opponent's goal, a goal kick will be awarded to the opposing team.
- If an indirect free kick is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kick will be awarded to the opposing team.
- A player may not touch the ball a second time on a free kick until it has been touched by another player from either team. If this happens, the opposing team will receive an indirect free kick.
- All opponents must remain at least 6m from the free kick until the ball is in play.

### Free Kicks Taken From Inside a Team's Own Goal Area

- All opponents must be beyond the Retreat Line until the ball has left the Goal Area (See Rule 8—The Start & Restart of Play, Retreat Line).

## Law 14 - Penalty Kick

A penalty kick is awarded if a player commits an offence inside their goal area. A goal can be scored directly on a penalty kick.

Procedure:

- The ball is placed on the centre of the line marking the top of the goal area.
- The ball must be stationary before kicked.
- The player taking the penalty kick must be clearly identified.
- The defending goalkeeper must remain on the goal line, facing the kicker, between the goalposts, until the ball is kicked. The goalkeeper must not behave in a way that unfairly distracts the kicker.
- The players other than the kicker and goalkeeper must be behind the ball and at least 3 metres from the ball.
- After the players have taken positions in accordance with this Law, the referee signals for the penalty kick to be taken.
- The player taking the penalty kick must kick the ball forward.
- When the ball is kicked, the defending goalkeeper then can move off the goal line.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves.
- The kicker must not play the ball again until it has touched another player.
- The penalty kick is completed when the ball is touched by another player, goes out of play or the referee stops play for any offence.

- Additional time is allowed for a penalty kick to be taken and completed at the end of each half of the match or extra time. When additional time is allowed, the penalty kick is completed when the ball is touched by another player, goes out of play or the referee stops play for any offence. There are no rebounds. If the play is stopped due to an offence, a retake shall be taken if deemed so by the referee.

### **Law 15 - Throw-In – Modified to Dribble-In or Pass-in**

- The dribble-in or pass-in will be awarded to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball when the whole of the ball crosses the touchline in the air or on the ground.
- The player who will restart the game through a dribble-in will put the ball on the touchline, remove their hand, and they are free to dribble the ball or pass the ball into the field in any direction.
- A “Ready, Set, Play” countdown may be used to ensure play is continued. Players should be encouraged to restart the game within three (3) seconds.
- Opponents should be backed off three (3) meters to give the player an opportunity to dribble/pass the ball into the field of play unless the player taking the dribble/pass-in wishes to restart play quickly.
- Goals may not be scored from the player restarting the game from a dribble/pass-in as this restart is treated the same as a throw-in and is considered an indirect restart of the game. For a goal to be scored from a dribble/pass-in, the ball will need to be touched by another player on the field before entering the goal.

### **Law 16 - Goal Kick**

- A goal kick will be awarded to the defending team, when the whole of the ball crosses the goal line, in the air on the ground, when last touched by a player on the attacking team.
- The kick may be taken from any point in the goal area.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked directly out of the goal area, or is touched by a teammate.
- All opponents must be beyond the Retreat Line until the ball has left the goal area or is touched by a teammate (See Rule 8—The Start & Re-start of Play, Retreat Line).
- The kicker may not touch the ball a second time until it has been touched by another player.
- A goal may not be scored directly from a goal kick.

## Law 17 - Corner Kick

- A corner kick will be awarded to the attacking team, when the whole of the ball crosses the goal line, in the air or on the ground, when last touched by a player on the defending team.
- The kick may be taken from any point in the corner arc, or within 1m of the corner of the field, if no arc is marked.
- The flag post must not be moved.
- All opponents must be at least 6m from the ball until it is in play.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves.
- The kicker may not touch the ball a second time, until it has been touched by another player.
- A goal may not be scored directly from a corner kick as this restart is indirect.

## MISCELLANEOUS

- Team roster: Minimum of 10 players, maximum of 14 players.
- Team Officials: There must be two team officials on the bench at all times. The head coach must be an adult (19 years of age or older).
- Players should have fair and equal playing time in each game as possible.

# FAQ's and Myth Busting

## **BREAKING TEAMS UP WILL HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON KIDS**

SCB is not breaking teams up with these modifications. Soccer is an individual game played in a team environment. Research suggests that forming groups of players for matches based on mixed ability raises the standard of all players and reduces achievement gaps (Ability Grouping in New Zealand High Schools: Are Practices Evidence-Based? – Hornby and Witte 2014). Combining this with social relationships being the primary grouping criteria will lead to positive effects on retention and enjoyment.

## **KIDS CAN'T CREATE TEAM COHESION AND TEAMS CAN'T WORK ON TACTICAL WORK**

Tactical work should not be the priority of coaching in these foundational age groups. Love of the game, technique, skill, and teaching principles of the game need to take priority over tactics. This model of play will allow kids to play with different players from time to time, but it will allow for a large group of players to develop a bond in a club environment. This will help develop a club culture and identity and will reduce the negative long-term effects of tiering players early and placing them on teams.

## **THIS METHOD OF COMPETITION “WATER’S DOWN” THE QUALITY OF AGE GROUPS BECAUSE ALL THE WEAK PLAYERS ARE MIXED WITH THE STRONG PLAYERS**

Previously, “weaker” players may not have been given the time to develop, or train in the best environment possible. Often when a coach or club labels a player “weak” from an early age, that label sticks with them for many years and thus creates a bias. Research shows that by streaming or tiering kids from an early age increases the achievement gap and this gap becomes incredibly difficult to narrow as time goes on. The other consideration is that if we are going to operate in an environment where “as many as possible, for as long as possible, in the best environment as possible” takes place, we need to keep the player pool deep and large to have viable and competitive leagues by U13 and onwards.

## **COMPETITION IS THE “CORNERSTONE” OF DEVELOPMENT AND BY ELIMINATING COMPETITION OUR KIDS WON'T DEVELOP OR LEARN HOW TO WIN OR LOSE**

Children compete, adults compare. Children naturally compete and balance teams when there is no adult interference in sport. In addition, there is no evidence that shows competition is the key factor in development. When do people need to learn how to win and lose? LTPD suggests

that Stage 4: Training to Train (U11-15 Female and U12-16 Male) is when this should become a part of the “Mental” corner of development<sup>3</sup>.

### **THESE MODIFICATIONS ARE A WASTE OF TIME FOR TALENTED PLAYERS. WHERE IS THE VALUE FOR COMPETITIVE U9 PLAYERS?**

All players will flourish in these game formats. “Competitive” and “talented” are not words to be used when describing children. These are adult words from an adult model forced upon children.

### **WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF THESE MODIFICATIONS ON THE PLAYERS?**

Through these modifications, SCB has been able to give children an age and stage appropriate playing environment that allows expression, creativity, and development to flourish. We are also allowing clubs to be flexible in how they develop players and encouraging them to put the needs of each child first.

### **IN THIS MODEL THE BEST KIDS IN THE AGE GROUP DON'T GET BETTER.**

This model allows for players of all abilities to be challenged to a level that they want. If a player is more developmentally advanced than their peers, they can be moved into an older age group, across gender, or into another group of players from the same club. If there are players who are not as developmentally advanced, this model allows for them to move to a younger age group or find groups of players who may be at their relative level. This is often best done in consultation with the players’ parents and explaining the benefits of these initiatives to long-term development and enjoyment of soccer. There are many benefits to the mental, physical, social, emotional, technical, and tactical development when a child is left in their own age group whether they are developmentally advanced or developmentally behind.

All the research around talent identification suggests it is nearly impossible to predict future elite performance prior to puberty. If we believe that the best seven-year-old will become a professional or international player because they are the best seven-year-old then this suggests some fundamental problems with our environment, system, and culture. We will be turning away many players who, if given the time to develop, could become as good or better than the current best seven-year-old.



## **YOU WOULDN'T PUT A AAA HOCKEY PLAYER WITH A HOUSE LEAGUE HOCKEY PLAYER.**

SCB, and hopefully our community clubs, are not going to put players in matches or environments that are potentially going to harm a child physically, mentally, emotionally, or socially. For this reason, we have open rosters where clubs can move individual players, or entire groups of players in their club to form a new group/team or field to ensure the players have meaningful competition for them.

---

<sup>3</sup> Wellness to World Cup – Long-Term Player Development – Canadian Soccer Association