

## **MINI FOOTBALL**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Football Association of Wales (“FAW”) recognises that children do not perform the same as adults in an 11-a-side game. Therefore, a modified version is required to meet the developmental needs of young players while maintaining all the features and essence of the full game. Mini Football is recognised by the FAW as the only form of football in Wales for children Under 11 years of age.

### **WHAT IS MINI FOOTBALL**

Mini Football is a modified version of the 11-a-side game. It gives children the chance to play real football, for a real team, whilst experiencing an enjoyable and fun introduction to football through small sided games.

### **MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN**

All available research shows that children have more fun and learn more playing a game within smaller teams. Mini Football is therefore ideal for girls and boys under 11 years of age in terms of maximizing their enjoyment and technical/skill development.

### **IF CHILDREN ARE TO ENJOY AND TAKE PART IN FOOTBALL THEY NEED TO:**

- Take an active part in the game and have fun without any pressure from parents, coaches or managers.
- Learn to play within a team.
- Understand and observe the rules of football.
- Develop the skills and techniques to play football.
- Be able to take part whatever their ability.
- Have plenty of contact with the ball.

### **KEY VALUES OF MINI FOOTBALL**

Mini football is for girls and boys aged 5 to 11 of all abilities who are interested in football (all children of primary school age). The FAW believes that children should learn how to compete to win fairly, skilfully and within the rules of the game. At this age striving to win is more important than the outcome, winning is not everything, making the effort is.

Mini Football:

- Recognises that children do not perform and compete as adults and therefore its rules are adapted to meet the needs of children.
- Has all the features of real football for children.
- Recognises the value of competitiveness for children and provides an appropriate environment.
- Sets a standard and a framework of behaviour on and off the pitch.
- Is for boys and girls regardless of their ability.

### **SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

- There is more contact with the ball in Mini Football leading to a better technique. In 11v11 the ratio of ball to outfield players is 1:20, because there are fewer players in Mini Football each player has more regular contact with the ball. More contact with the ball helps players practice technique and develop technique into a skill through 1v1 competition.
- Decision making is easier and occurs more often because of the small numbers involved. As a result, the players will gain a greater understanding of the game. The basic football situations are easier to see and simpler to solve.
- Because the ball is never far away from the player, the chance of developing concentration is greatly increased. Playing 11-a-side football, many children lose interest in the game because the ball goes out of their immediate vicinity and they quickly become bored spectators.
- Fewer players, more space and simpler decisions will encourage more movement of players whatever the situation.
- More contact leads to more participation and usually, more enjoyment, success is easier to achieve.

## **MINI FOOTBALL IS THE BASIS OF ALL FOOTBALL**

Small sided games have been played for hundreds of years in the street, the playground, or on the beach and many professional teams use them as the basis for their coaching. They invariably lead to basic football situations, such as, 1v1, 2v2 and 3v3 so typical of the 11-a-side game. Mini-football, through its dynamic tempo, produces more vigorous exercise than 11-a-side football and so helps to improve children's core components of fitness – speed, agility, balance and coordination.

## **ORGANISATION OF MINI FOOTBALL**

The general aim of Mini Football is to provide a safe, supervised environment for children to enjoy their introduction to the game.

### **1. Playing Surface**

- 1.1 Mini football pitches must be specifically laid out on any suitable open spaces or conventional grass or AstroTurf football pitches which can be converted for Mini-Football.
- 1.2 There must be no debris or dangerous hazards either on the field of play or in the immediate surrounding area.
- 1.3 Markings must be laid out with the use of conventional lines, marker discs or small cones.

### **2. Playing Equipment**

- 2.1 Children must wear footwear suitable to the surface being played on.
- 2.2 All children must wear suitable shin guards.
- 2.3 All jewellery must be removed.

### **3. Organisation of Games, Festivals and Fun Days**

- 3.1 The FAW believe that the game of Mini Football provides children with the necessary introduction to competition. The game itself is a sufficient skill development challenge for children.

- 3.2 As a consequence no league competition must be organised (or will be sanctioned) involving Mini Football, save for the exemption set out under clause 3.5 below.
- 3.3 Matches can be scheduled in a number of different ways to be determined by the Junior League:
- 3.3.1 On a 'Home and Away' basis as determined by the organising junior league.
  - 3.3.2 On a round robin basis where 3 or 4 teams play at one venue against each other, teams can rotate on and off the pitch having rest breaks when not playing.
  - 3.3.3 On a festival basis where a number of teams play round robin games at a central venue. Each team plays against each of the other teams, until all of the teams have played against each other OR have played a suitable number of games in line with point 11.
- 3.4 Clubs affiliated to the FAW or its Area Associations may organise one or two-day competitive tournaments with the approval of the relevant association and with the written consent of the players' parents or guardians (refer to Section H of the FAW Rules).
- 3.5 League and Knockout competitions may be organised for the 9v9 Mini Football format where children from Academic Year seven (7) are involved.

*Coaches/Managers should ensure suitable breaks are provided between games.*

#### **4. 'Behind the Line, Behind the Team' Campaign**

This is mandatory at all Mini Football age groups. As a consequence at all Mini Football games clubs must:-

- 4.1 Create a 'Buffer zone' that runs parallel to pitch, ideally 2 metres from both touchlines, a smaller buffer zone can be used where space doesn't allow 2 metres.
- 4.2 Buffer zone should be marked by cones or additional marked line.
- 4.3 Only players, designated coaches and 1st Aider allowed within zone.
- 4.4 All other spectators must watch from behind the buffer zone lines.
- 4.5 NO spectators are allowed to stand on the goal line or behind the goal.

### **THE RULES OF MINI FOOTBALL**

The rules are simple and as near to real football as possible. A game leader, who is urged to be as flexible as possible with the players must supervise the game from the touchline.

Rules are explained as the game proceeds (for example hand ball). It may also be necessary to demonstrate in certain instances how to restart the game (e.g. throw in, corner kicks).

#### **1. Players Eligible**

- 1.1 Mini Football is for boys and girls in Academic Years one (1) to six (6).

1.2 An Area Association can extend in its area the scope and application of the Mini Football Regulations to cover Academic Year seven (7) (refer to Section H of the FAW Rules). For the format and rules for Academic Year 7 refer to clause 18. (9v9 Mini Football) in these regulations.

1.3 Mixed football (girls and boys playing together) is permitted for Academic Years one (1) to six (6).

## 2. Age Groups

2.1 Must be a minimum of a one academic year and a maximum of two academic years.

2.2 A mini player must participate in the age group relevant to their academic year as defined by these regulations and the structure of the league they play in.

2.3 For the purposes of age groupings, an academic year begins on the 1<sup>st</sup> September and ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> August of the following year. Academic year one is the year in which a player reaches his / her 6<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## 3. Team Size, Pitch Size and Ball Size

3.1 Must be implemented as below in the table:

Age Group	Number of Players (Maximum number of players per team)	Size of Pitch (length x width)	Size of Ball
Under 7	4v4 No Goalkeepers	30 x 20 yards	3
Under 8	5v5 Goalkeeper introduced	30 x 20 yards	3
Under 9	6v6	40 x 30 yards	3
Under 10	7v7	60 x 40 yards	4
Under 11	8v8	60 x 40 yards	4

## 4. Goal Size

4.1 The maximum goal size for all age groups is 12ft x 6ft.

4.2 It is highly recommended that at Under 7 and 8 a smaller goal is utilized. This can be achieved through using cones, placing a 12ft x 6ft Mini Goal face down or using specific smaller goals (such as pop up goals).

4.3 For the Under 10 and 11 age groups, a 12ft x 6ft Mini Goal must be used.

## 5. The Goal Area

5.1 Must be marked by conventional lines or cones on the touchline and a small number of marker discs on the playing area.

- 5.2 The goal area extends a set distance from the goal line and is also a specified width. See table below:

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Distance from Goal Line to Edge of Area (Length)</b>	<b>Width of Penalty Area</b>
Under 7	NO Goal Area	NO Goal Area
Under 8	5 yards	10 yards
Under 9	8 yards	15 yards
Under 10	10 yards	20 yards
Under 11	10 yards	20 yards

**6. Match Duration**

- 6.1 A Mini Player must only play a maximum of 60 minutes sanctioned match time in one 24-hour period.
- 6.2 For under 7 and under 8 players this must be broken down into a maximum of either 15-minute individual periods of play or games.

**7. Substitutes**

- 7.1 Any number of substitutes may be used at any time (Rolling substitutes).
- 7.2 Players may re-enter the game and all substitutes must have a period of play.
- 7.3 As far as possible there should be equal playing time for each player.

**8. Kick Off**

- 8.1 Is taken in the centre of the playing area to start the game and after a goal has been scored.
- 8.2 The opposition must be 3 yards away from where the ball is placed.

**9. Ball In and Out of Play and the Method of Scoring**

- 9.1 Laws 9 (Ball in and out of play) and 10 (The method of scoring) apply to Mini Football.

**10. Off-Side**

- 10.1 There is no off-side (Law 11) in Mini Football.

**11. Throw In**

- 11.1 Although Law 15 (The Throw In) applies and the throw in should be taken in the normal way, game leaders can show flexibility.

**12. Corner Kicks**

- 12.1 Law 17 (The Corner Kick) applies to corner kicks except the opposition must be at least three yards away.

**13. Free Kicks**

13.1 Law 12 (Fouls and Misconduct) applies to free kicks although they are all indirect and the opposition must be at least three yards away.

#### 14. Goalkeepers

14.1 Can handle the ball in their goal area and there are no restrictions on the number of steps they may take holding the ball.

14.2 The Goalkeeper can leave the goal area but cannot handle the ball outside the goal area.

14.3 When handling the ball in the goal area:-

14.3.1 Under 8's and 9's can either throw or kick the ball out of their hands.

14.3.2 Under 10's and 11's can throw the ball out of their hands or kick the ball on the ground but can then be challenged by opponents.

#### 15. Goal-Kicks

15.1 Under 7 - are taken anywhere on the goal line from the ground.

15.2 Under 8, 9, 10 and 11 – are taken from the edge of the goal area.

15.3 Under 8, 9, 10 and 11 – the ball must be kicked out of the goal area before another player touches it.

15.4 Under 8 and 9 - Goalkeepers may take the goal-kick from their hands.

15.5 In all age groups the opposition players must be a minimum of 5 yards away from the point the goal-kick is taken.

#### 16. Players in the Goal Area

16.1. There are no restrictions regarding the number of players allowed in the goal area during open play.

#### 17. Pass Back to Goalkeeper

17.1. Players **can** pass the ball to their own goalkeeper, for the goalkeeper to handle the ball.

#### 18. 9v9 Mini Football

18.1 **Team Size, Pitch Size and Ball Size**

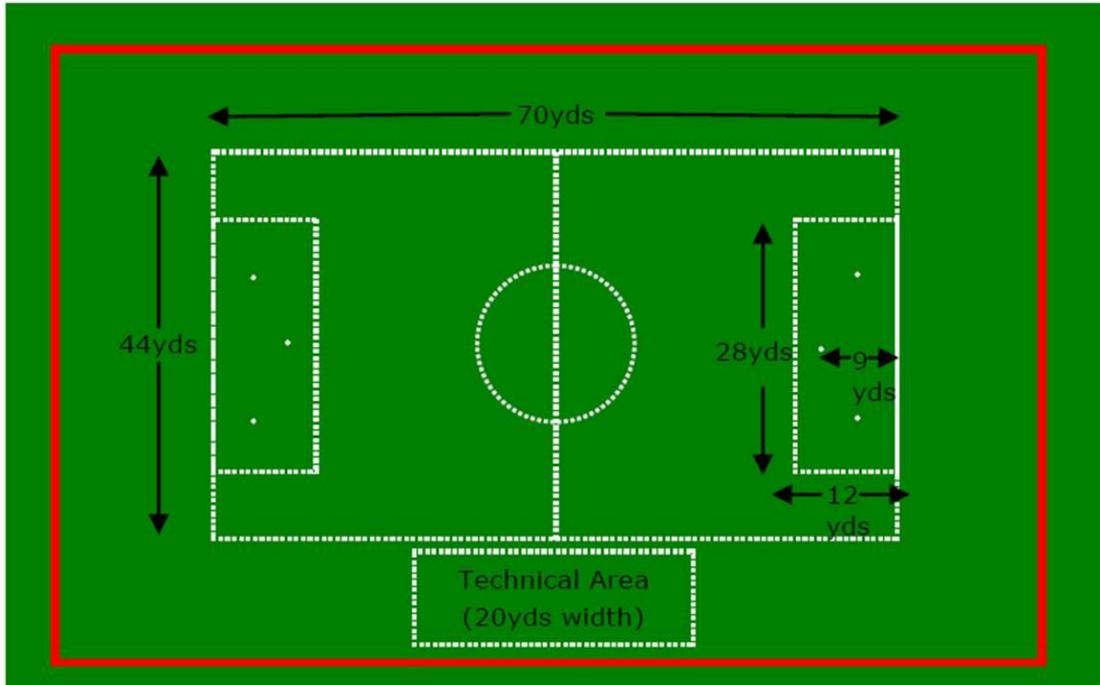
18.1.1 Must be implemented as below in the table:-

Age Group	Number of Players (Maximum number of players per team)	Size of Pitch (length x width)	Size of Ball
Under 12	9v9	70 x 44 yards	4

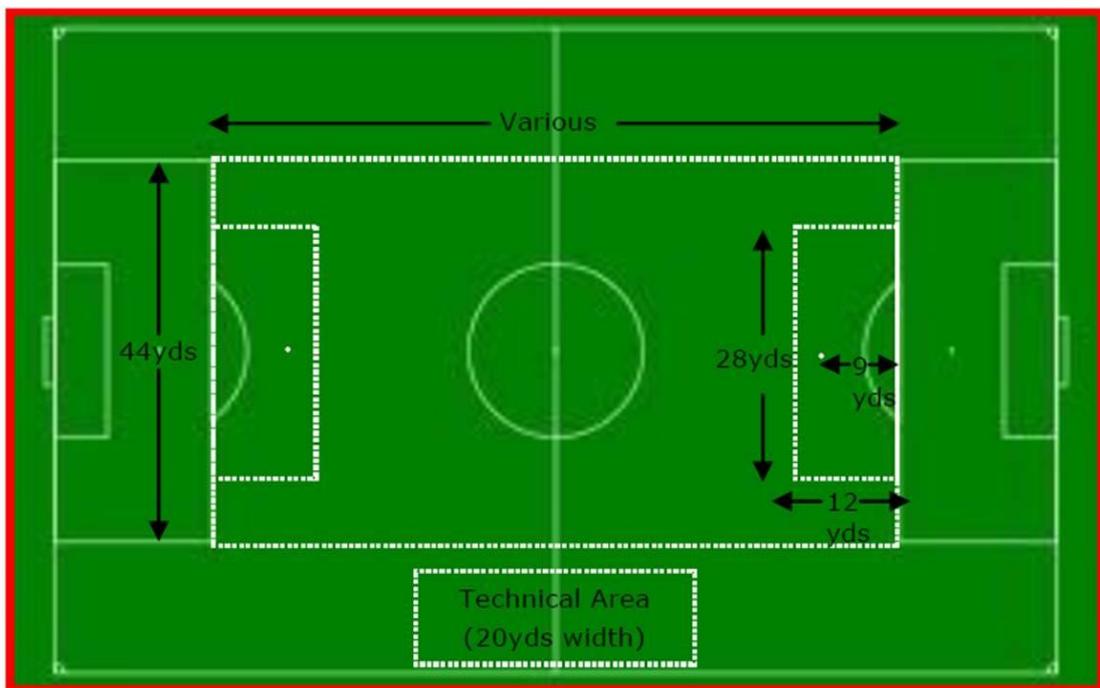
18.1.2 An 11v11 pitch can be adapted for the 9v9 format, utilizing the width of the penalty area (44 yards) for the 9v9 pitch width and the distance from

penalty box to penalty box for the 9v9 pitch length. See diagrams below for guidance:

### Specific 9v9 pitch



### 9v9 pitch on a 11v11 pitch



- 18.2 **Goal Size**  
18.2.1 The goal size is 16-foot (width) x 7 feet (height).
- 18.3 **Penalty and Goal Areas**  
18.3.1 The Penalty area must be 28 yards wide and 12 yards from the goal line. A penalty spot should be marked 9 yards from the goal line.  
18.3.2 A Goal Area is not necessary, but goal kicks are to be taken approximately 4 yards from the goal line. A painted marker 4 yards from each post is sufficient for guidance.  
18.3.3 For dedicated 9v9 pitches a goal area can be marked out. This is to be 4 yards from the goal line and 4 yards from each goal post towards the corner.
- 18.4 **Match Duration**  
18.4.1 A game must be a maximum of 70 minutes, split into two halves of 35 minutes. The duration of half time should not exceed 15 minutes.
- 18.5 **Substitutes**  
18.5.1 Any number of substitutes may be used at appropriate breaks in play with the permission of the referee, a player who has been replaced may re-enter the game (rolling substitutes).  
18.5.2 All players should have a period of play.
- 18.6 **Kick off**  
18.6.1 Is taken in the centre of the playing area to start the game and after a goal has been scored.  
18.6.2 The opposition must be a minimum of 7 yards away from where the ball is placed.
- 18.7 **Ball In and Out of Play and the Method of Scoring**  
18.7.1 As per the 'FIFA Laws of the Game' - Law 9 (Ball in and out of play) and 10 (The method of scoring) apply to 9v9 Mini Football.
- 18.8 **Off-Side**  
18.8.1 As per the 'FIFA Laws of the Game' - Law 11 'Off-Side' applies to 9v9 Mini Football.
- 18.9 **Throw In**  
18.9.1 As per the 'FIFA Laws of the Game' - Law 15 'The Throw in' applies to 9v9 Mini Football.
- 18.10 **Corner Kicks**  
18.10.1 As per the 'FIFA Laws of the Game' - Law 17 'The Corner Kick' applies to 9v9 Mini Football.
- 18.11 **Free Kicks**

- 18.11.1 As per the 'FIFA Laws of the Game' - Law 12 'Fouls and Misconduct' applies to 9v9 Mini Football.
- 18.12 **Goalkeepers**
  - 18.12.1 Can handle the ball in their penalty area and there are no restrictions on the number of steps they may take holding the ball.
  - 18.12.2 The Goalkeeper can leave the penalty area but cannot handle the ball outside the penalty area.
  - 18.12.3 The Goalkeeper can throw or kick the ball out of their hands; the Goalkeeper can also kick the ball on the ground but can then be challenged by opponents.
  - 18.12.4 Pass Back to Goalkeeper - Players cannot pass the ball to their own goalkeeper, for the goalkeeper to handle the ball.
- 18.13 **Goal Kicks**
  - 18.13.1 All goal kicks must be taken from the ground (refer to 18.3.2 for location).
  - 18.13.2 The ball must be kicked out of the penalty area before another player touches it.
- 18.14 **Players in the Goal Area**
  - 18.14.1 There are no restrictions regarding the number of players allowed in the goal area during open play.
- 18.15 **The Referee**
  - 18.15.1 Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the rules of 9v9 Mini Football and the FIFA 'Laws of the Game'.

*For further info on the laws of the game please refer to the 'FIFA Laws of the Game document'.*