



RETURN TO ACTIVITY

PLANNING IN A COVID WORLD

Fall 2020: Returning to Play in Phase II

Q: What is the difference between Phase 3 and Phase 2 in the U.S. Soccer / State of Ohio “Return to Play” protocols?

A: In Phase 3, competition against outside competition is permitted, providing COVID safety protocols are followed. In Phase 2, only INTRA-club competition in a COVID-safe training environment is permitted.

Q: What if we don’t move to Phase 3 this fall?

A: It is possible, if not highly likely, that Ohio will remain in (or return to) Phase 2 during the fall of 2020. In that eventuality, planning to provide players with a meaningful alternative soccer experience will be both necessary and welcomed.

The “Play Day” model offers the ideal solution to managing the logistics of fluid player-numbers, field spaces, and equipment; while still providing players with the thrill of playing and the motivation of competition.

Q: What is the Play Day model and how can this approach be structured to provide a meaningful soccer experience this fall?

A: The Play Day model divides an existing group of players into small-sided teams and creates meaningful competition by periodically rotating either intact teams or individual players and recording the points earned from each round of play. The team(s) or the player(s) with the most points at the end of the day’s competition is declared the winner.

Q: How is the Play Day different from the regular training sessions?

A: In the COVID world, the Play Day becomes the alternative to regular league games and should be considered as the players’ opportunity to manage their own environment and freely express themselves on the field. Play Days are scheduled at the end of each training week, typically on a Saturday or Sunday. Unlike training activities, there are no in-game coaching stoppages during Play Day competitions.

Q: What are the basic logistical considerations for a Play Day set-up?

A: The starting points for determining the daily set-up include: the maximum number of potential participants; the game format (i.e., 3v3, 4v4, 5v5); the availability of goals, or equipment, such as posts or corner flags, available to create makeshift goals; the number of fields that can be created in the space available; and the availability of scrimmage vests or distinguishing shirts.

Q: What is the basic format of a Play Day?

A: The most basic Play Day organization randomly creates and then rotates teams.

For example, with 12 players, the suggested game form would be 3v3. Two 30x20 yard fields should be prepared with cones

before the players arrive. With no goalkeepers in the teams, the goals would be approximately 6 ft wide.

As the players arrive, they are randomly assigned to fields to create the four teams. Checking and managing the teams for ability-balance is recommended. The four teams would play each other once, with each game lasting 5-6 minutes, based on weather conditions and the motivation / experience of the players.

Wherever possible, every player competes for 100% of the scheduled time, formal referees are not necessary, and water breaks should follow each game. All restarts are indirect. With only four teams, the “schedule” would be...

Round 1	A vs B C vs D
Round 2	A vs C B vs D
Round 3	A vs D B vs C

Each team earns 3 pts for a win, a point for a tie, and a point for each goal scored. Shutouts can also earn a point. Goal points count for both teams, regardless of the final score. While older players will be able to keep track of their own points, younger players will need some help with the math! An example of a scoring chart is shown here...

Four-Team Competition							
Team	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3	Game 4	Game 5	Game 6	TOTAL
A							
B							
C							
D							

After each team has played each other once, the players can decide to maintain the same teams or form new teams for the second round of play. Generally, 60-75 minutes of competition is the recommended guideline, but player-enthusiasm should always be taken into consideration.

U8 and older players should be encouraged to determine their own rules for starting and restarting play; and, whenever possible, “refereeing” their own games. Striving for “organized informality” is a good Play Day mindset for everyone.

Typical start/restart decisions involve: kick-ins versus throw-ins for sideline restarts; dribble-ins versus kick-ins for end-line restarts; dribble-ins versus kick-offs following goals; and corner kicks versus no corner kicks where corner kicks (not taken) earn half a goal.

Q: How is the Play Day organized as an individual competition?

A: The Play Day can be organized as an individual competition by simply assigning the earned points from each game to every member of a team.. and then re-shuffling the players into new teams for the start of the next round. After playing a pre-determined number of rounds, the player(s) with the most points wins the competition.

An example of a scoring chart for an individual competition is shown below.

Single Field Individual Competition							
Player	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3	Game 4	Game 5	Game 6	TOTAL
Jada							
Jene							
Jeff							
Jillian							
Joe							
Jenny							
Jacob							
James							

Q: How many players can be accommodated on an 11v11 field?

A: An 11v11 field can accommodate between four and six 4v4 fields, meaning between 32 and 48 players can compete at one time. Again, the goal is to provide for 100% participation. Any field should be big enough to provide the players with adequate time and space to control the ball and decide what to do next. The table below provides examples of how an 11v11 field can be effectively utilized for the Play Day model.

	Length (yards)	Width (yards)	# Players (11v11 Field @ 100x50)	# Players (11v11 Field @ 120x70)
2v2 no GK's	18-20	14-16	40 (10x4)	72 (18x4)
3v3 no GK's	25-30	18-20	36 (6x6)	72 (12x6)
4v4 no GK's	35-40	25-30	32 (4x8)	48 (6x8)
5v5 with GK's	45-50	30-35	20 (2x10)	40 (4x10)

Q: How can the Play Day model be modified to provide variety over time?

A: The Play Day organization can be structured in a variety of ways and, while larger player-pools create more possibilities for creating and managing competition, the basic structural options are presented here...

- As shown above, the Play Day competition can be structured by rotating the participating teams on one large field; or by rotating the individual players within a single game.
- On a large field with multiple games, the individual players can be randomly assigned to a new team after each round.
- Two teams can continue to compete against each other, but with a different scoring methods for each round of games. For example, one field can have a small goal at each end, while another has an end zone to dribble into, while another has a goal and a goalkeeper at each end, while another has the goals placed on the long line creating a field that is wide, but shallow. Even with as few as 6 or 8 players (2 teams), three or four fields with different scoring methods, can provide different tactical challenges. Unless there was reason to change a player for competitive balance, the teams would stay intact as they moved from field to field after each round.

- Adult “goalkeepers” in 6-8 yard wide goals can be added to each team.
- Ability-dependent fields.... where there is a significant discrepancy in ability in a larger pool, games can be structured to tier players by ability.
- Coach as Player... when there is an uneven number of players, or an unbalanced game, a coach or parent can actively participate. This is particularly helpful when the coach or parent has a soccer background and can serve as a role-model for the players.
- With a larger number of teams on a full field, a ladder competition can be created, whereby the winning teams after each round move in one direction (i.e., north), while the losing teams after each round, move in the opposite direction. After a pre-determined number of rounds, the two top teams should be competing on the “North” field, while the two weakest teams should have arrived at the “South” field.
- Regardless of format, on-going league tables can be created, with either individual players or intact teams competing against the rest of the squad over a set number of weeks.

For more information, or for a local demonstration, please contact Dr. Tom Turner by phone at 216-496-4683; or by e-mail at coaching@ohionorthsoccer.org.



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