



Guide For The Beginner Futsal Coach

Top Essential Tips To Succeed In Futsal

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*By Central Jersey Futsal's Executive Director
Niko Alexopoulos*

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Inside photos courtesy of Niko Alexopoulos and Central Jersey Futsal. Some images have been created by Niko Alexopoulos for presentation use only by picmonkey

About The Author

The following information is updated as of the publishing date of this book June 24th, 2020. It is an attempt to give you an idea of what the author is about, his past experience and what makes him an authority in the field of futsal. All views and opinions are Niko Alexopoulos' and only represent him. He does not speak for anyone else nor does he represent anyone else, individual or entity.

Niko Alexopoulos is the Director of Coaching for SOCCERSKILLZ SPORTS, Just4Keepers International Goalkeeper Academy In charge of New Jersey Operations, as well as the head coach of Jackson Soccer Club Elite Bayern U18 Boys and assistant coach at Widener University Women's Soccer program with responsibilities in coaching the goalkeepers and overseeing camps and clinics. He is the Director of Operations for the Central Jersey Futsal League, sanctioned by U.S. Youth Futsal - U.S. Youth Futsal is an affiliate of US Soccer. His duties also include being the executive director of the Futsal 365 Academy which is a member of the USYF National Futsal Development Academy Program. Coach Niko is a former pro player, and holds a USSF License, NSCAA Level 1 Goalkeeper Diploma, NSCAA Level 1 Futsal License, NSCAA Small Sided Games Diploma, NSCAA Special Topics Diploma - Top 10 Activities To Improve First Touch.

Coach Niko is someone who believes passionately that futsal should be intentionally used as a tool for developing soccer players year-round and come first in the developing process at the younger starter age groups of 3-12 years of age. He has a massive amount of experiences, observations, thoughts and ideas from being submerged in the futsal community as a player, coach and operations director waiting to be released that could truly benefit the futsal community as well as the soccer coach that is just getting into the futsal methodology as a soccer development tool as well as the futsal game itself.

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Following is a photo of coach Niko at age 15 playing for a Portuguese Futsal Club In New Jersey. Coach Niko is the fourth player in at the back row.



A lot of the information in this book is directly taken from those observations and conversations from other coaches, players and families that participate in the futsal events coach Niko is part of. It is an attempt to guide and help newbie and possibly coaches with limited experience in futsal, have a better understanding about what they may expect in a futsal event past the XXXs And OOOs.

Currently almost all of the available futsal books, manuals and guides are written or composed from a coaching and development prospective with many ideas about the development and benefits of futsal as well as tons of futsal specific training sessions.

For a complete copy of his resume please visit [Niko Alexopoulos resume](#)

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So, as a youth soccer coach you have heard great things about playing futsal and are ready to have your team give it a try, play some futsal tournaments and possibly a futsal league. However you have never coached a futsal game nor do you know what to expect or have limited experience and may not even know the futsal rules.

You do not want your team to have a negative experience by not knowing the basic futsal rules, basic formations, understand the flow of the game and losing every game because of lack of knowledge on how to play the game.

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My name is Niko Alexopoulos and as the director of Central Jersey Futsal I have watched over the years outdoor youth soccer coaches join our events with their teams not realizing that futsal although great for player development requires some futsal specific knowledge to have fun and succeed. Most soccer coaches think that futsal will be the same playing experience as an indoor 5v5 or 7v7 game played on turf.

This is absolutely not true and learning some key tips will help you as a coach understand the game, be able to coach a futsal game better and prepare your players for a fun, exciting futsal experience. Well, you've reading the right book. This list of futsal tips will make you a more knowledgeable futsal coach and help your players become better at a game which, frankly, doesn't come naturally to a lot of players at first, especially if your background is in outdoor soccer.

The number one thing that coaches must remember is that all players need is to have fun by playing, touching the ball, scoring goals and being successful at the game of futsal. To be successful at the game of futsal the coach must be able to communicate to his players how futsal is played and get them ready for the high tempo of a futsal game

Futsal is the only format of 5-a-side soccer that FIFA has sanctioned for international competition, and if you haven't experienced it already, you will find that it is entirely different in its playing style than a soccer game but has the same elements and techniques of a soccer game which makes it totally the number one development tool for outdoor 11v11 soccer. While it requires much of the same skill-set as the full 11v11 soccer game, you need to know some specific tips, tactics and strategies to really be good at it.

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What we are going to share with you is an essential list of futsal tips that you must have and need to know in order to be able to play the game of futsal with success. The tips we are going to share are not just general tips taken from a boring, stuffy coaching manual or some lame tips you pick up from a coaching course. These tips are quality inside first hand information as a result of our hands on experience of operating and running futsal leagues and tournaments over the years with exclusive observations and feedback directly from coaches and players that have participated in our events.

I can personally guarantee that if you follow these simple and easy tips and make sure you communicate them with your players your team will have an unfair advantage over other teams fubling their way into understanding why they can not master the game of futsal. As I said before this list has been put together in consultation with many past futsal coaches and players playing in our local leagues and tournaments. Following are the top tips that work for them, and some great pointers they wish they had known before entering a futsal event.

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Understanding The Futsal Specific Basics And Keeping Them Simple

The best place to start is that coaches and players understand the basics of futsal and how they are different than outdoor soccer or even turf 5v5 or 7v7. The biggest point here is that right off the start coaches understand that because of the limited space in a futsal court, much smaller than that of a turf 5v5 or 7v7 playing area game, advancing the ball by continuous long kicks and trying to outrun an opponent may not be the best strategy.

There are other simple to understand basics that not only give you an unfair advantage over teams that do not know of them, but will also help them massively with their outdoor soccer game when applied. Most involved with futsal that understand the game will describe the basics as:

Ball control (mastering of the ball, excessive use of the sole, bottom of foot)

Quality accurate passing (using all foot surfaces)

Continuous moving with and without the ball (finding ways to be involved in the game)

Feinting with and without the ball (a great skill to free yourself and beat an opponent)

Travelling, (moving and adjusting to situations while the ball is moving)

Shooting (finding open players, easy shots, angles)

Aside from technical basics which not only will benefit the players' futsal game but that of their outdoor soccer game as well, players should understand basic futsal tactical elements. This all starts with the coach understanding the difference between futsal and outdoor soccer or turf 7v7, 5v5 game tactics.

The biggest tactical tip that I can outline without getting into depth about futsal formation schemes is to be discipline and not run around like crazy. Remind players that just because the playing area is smaller this does not mean that every player needs to chase and close down every ball. When this happens teams become unbalanced and allow many transition goals.

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Too often I see teams having all four of their players deep into the opposition goal area without having any depth, no defensive player support in case of a transition counter attack. The defensive team gains control of the ball or just kicks the ball upcourt where one of their players is just hanging, and quickly there is a goal, all because all four players were just running upcourt on the attacking end.

Another quick tip is that although futsal has set primary positions, these positions are always being occupied by different players. What does that mean? Well, successful quality futsal demands constant movement with and without the ball. So if a player starts from the defensive spot, passes the ball and then moves his position will change. If all players do the same thing they all will be occupying different positions at different times.

Here is an example of practicing a square, 2,2 futsal specific rotation:

<https://youtu.be/osbE1PeWN5k>

It is simple and once your team understands these basics you will no longer have every player running all over the court and finding situations where all players are attacking, losing the ball and resulting into a transition easy goal with no player to defend.

To get a full understanding of all these basics as well as other topics like defending, attacking, goalkeeping with many training session plans, I recommend the "[Developing The Modern Footballer Through Futsal](#)" book by Michael Skubala and Seth Burkett

Knowing the names of futsal specific positions

Knowing the names of the futsal specific positions is very cool and it may give you an unfair advantage over an opponent. Imaging a coach giving directions and using the futsal position names. The opponent may feel a bit intimidated as they may feel they are facing an experienced futsal squad since most newbie or average teams do not know the futsal positions by name

Sometimes looks and sounds can be deceiving. Take an outdoor soccer game for example. As the other team is warming up you are watching them and notice that their players have good touches on the ball and their shots maybe quality on frame. The quick assessment is that they seem to be a good team and your team must be discipline and give a solid effort to be able to compete.

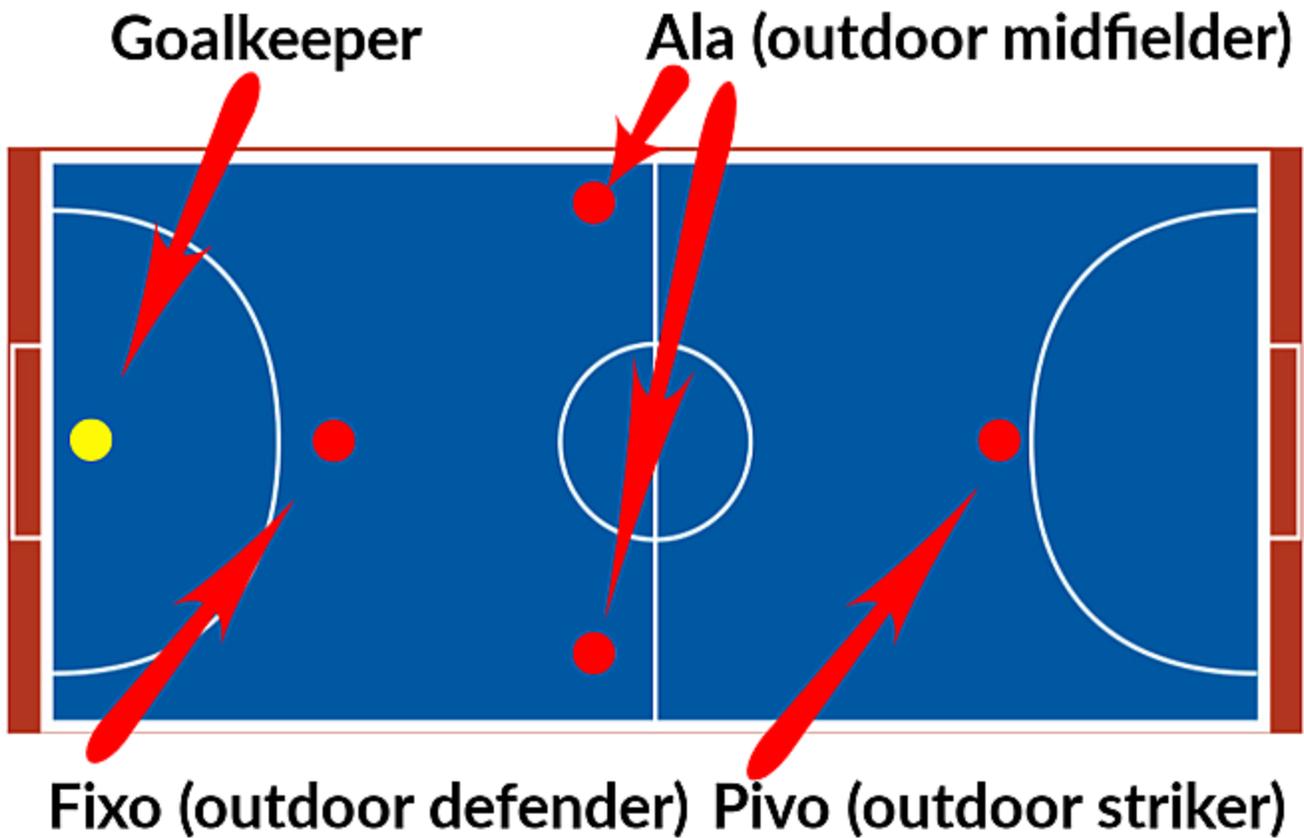
However once the game starts you realize that they are not good under pressure, they can not seem to play as a unit, their communication is lacking and their tactical presence is unorganized. Everytime they have possession of the ball they lose it after a couple of passes as their angles and support on the ball is not quality.

What seemed like an intimidating team at warm ups turned out to be an average opponent. The same could be seen on the futsal court by newbie team. Just because a team knows futsal positions or maybe having quality touches on the ball during warm ups it does not necessarily make them a quality team.

So, if your team is new to futsal they can be intimidated or you can teach them how to be intimidating. But make sure that your team can back up the initial point of intimidation with some quality futsal play.

FUTSAL SPECIFIC POSITIONS

USED BY FUTSAL TEAMS





Manage Parent Expectations

To start off, this is something that should be done at every level, every age group regardless if it is outdoor soccer, indoor turf 5v5, 7v7 play and yes very importantly futsal. Managing parent expectations is a great way for coaches to communicate the rules of the team, goals of the team, parent and player expectations and many other items a coach wants to set as an agenda. Establishing parent expectations saves coaches the trouble to constantly have to defend their actions with the team parents.

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When it comes to futsal the number of parents that do not understand the game is even higher than the number who do not understand soccer. Most parents view the game of soccer, as just putting the ball in the net and winning under any circumstances. As long as my kid is playing I am happy. As long as I like the game I am good. We must remind parents that it is not about them, it is not about what they like or dislike, it is about what is best for the kids.

Well, in futsal we have a setting where the rules are slightly different and also the way the game is played is different. The parents all of a sudden are in an unfamiliar territory and unless they are quickly educated it will make their experience unpleasant resulting in making the coach's job more difficult and the kids not having fun.

Here is an example; Parents are not knowledgeable of the futsal laws of the game, therefore they do not know that shoulder to shoulder contact is not allowed. Their child gets called for a foul which in the outdoor game is allowed but not in futsal. They react and start to scream at the referee. Because of the limited space of a futsal court the yelling is amplified tenfold. The referee may try and explain the rule or he may not. If the parent keeps yelling at the referee he may be ejected from the area and then the drama starts. The parent claims either the referee does not know what they are doing or that they hate this game or possibly both.

The parent's rant can spread across to the other team parents and pretty soon a coach may have a situation where some or all team parents claim that they hate futsal. They put pressure on the coach not to enter any more futsal events as they do not like it. They are basically putting their likes or dislikes or lack of understanding the game and its benefits over what is best for the kids.

Having all the parents take the time to understand the rules and what to expect can have a great impact on their futsal experience being a positive one. Remember, most parents will follow other parents that are better educated in the game and they feel it is a great positive experience for their child.

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Please remember that depending on which futsal event your team is playing the rules maybe modified from the official FIFA Futsal laws of the game. Every event has their rules posted on their website. Team coaches, managers and all parents as well as players must read them, know them and be prepared.

For a copy of the official FIFA Futsal laws of the game please [click here](#)

One would be surprised at how often a conflict arises between coaches, parents, players and referees because they do not know the particular event's rules.

Three Things To Look For When Searching For A Futsal League

Two of the highest sought features team coaches and managers look for are [consistent and preferred scheduling](#). Let me explain. Coaches, managers and parents love to have all of their games at a consistent manner. For example every weekend the games are within a certain time frame at the same venue. U14 teams play every weekend between 8am-10am at the same venue. U13 teams play every weekend between 10am -12pm at the same venue, and you get the idea.

If a coach coaches multiple teams, as long as they are close in age his games can be scheduled either back to back or one game on, one game off, one game on, all at the same venue.

Teams do not like like to play one weekend at 8am at x venue and the next weekend 8pm at y venue. It makes the coach's and parents' scheduling dreadful to a point where some teams may elect not to participate as their daily scheduling lives will be greatly be impacted.

So having a consistent schedule, preferred for coaches with multiple teams, and all games at the same venue makes it more appealing for the team's families therefore easier to get them to participate and off course benefiting the players.

Be On The Court On Time

Futsal court rentals are the biggest cost of a futsal league or tournament, and every year they seem to rise as the demand for court space increases. Every futsal league or tournament game will start on time. All event organizers pressure the referees to start the games on time and stay on schedule. Event organizers do not like to run behind schedule because they must fit all games in a specific time frame or be penalized with overages.

As you understand because of this, it is very important that all of your players are at the venue on time to warm up and be on the court on time for the start the game. Games usually start and the time starts counting regardless if you are on the court or not. This is different from an outdoor game where the home and away team have a certain amount of time to get on the field pass the kick off time.

Check For Game Updates And Be Courteous

This tip can save any futsal team a massive amount of inconvenience. Futsal leagues and tournaments usually accept late registrations and may allow game conflicts to accommodate coaches with multiple teams. This means that most likely there will be game schedule changes throughout the event. Making it a habit to constantly check for schedule updates and advising your parents will be greatly appreciated by them as well as make the coach's time and schedule easier to manage.

In the event that your team can not make a scheduled game the best and courteous thing to do is to notify the event organizer ASAP. Remember, your team not being able to play a game affects the opposing team as well who has to travel to the venue. If you notify the organizing event there maybe a possibility of making the game up as opposed to not notifying the organizer.

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The court that sits vacant because your team did not show up cost the organizer money and they will not be willing to make the game up as they have already paid for that court usage. However if notified in time, the organizer maybe able to schedule another game in your time slot or even notify the venue management so that they are not charged.



Coaches Have Too Large Team Rosters

Futsal is a game that requires 5 players at a time on the court. A goalkeeper and four field players. Most youth futsal league or tournament games can be between 25 minutes and 40 minutes in total duration. One of the biggest mistakes outdoor soccer coaches make is trying to be frugal with their team budget and try and squeeze 14 to 18 players on a futsal rostered team. Although most futsal events cap their teams at 10 or 12 players coaches will still complain and try to get the event organizers to allow all their players onto one team instead of breaking it into two separate teams for the sake of saving money.

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This will present the following problems. Players will not be able to get enough playing time and if a team is new to playing futsal it will hinder the players' ability to quickly understand how to play the game as they must have playing time and rotations to become proficient. Having too many subs on the bench will either force the coach to make too many substitutions, which maybe untimely, in order to give playing time to all of his players, or play a few key players and give minimal, if any, playing time to the rest of the team.

We have coaches every year tell us after one game that they made a mistake registering a 14 player roster and can we do them a favor and register another team so they can break their team roster into two teams so their players have more playing time and less complains from the parents.

Plain and simple any futsal team does not need more than 8 to 10 players, depending on conditioning and number of games to be played in any give time span,

A good way to maintain a low budget and still be able to give all your players plenty of playing time by breaking your outdoor soccer team into two futsal teams is doing your homework and finding [quality futsal events at a fair price](#).



Coaches Have Too Small Team Rosters

On the opposite side of the previous tip lies the fact that some coaches show up with only 5 or 6 player rosters and expect to compete in a futsal game. Although I realize that sometimes coaches are forced to only field a 5-6 man roster because some of the players may not be available registering a team and expect to play the entire season with only 5-6 player roster is most likely recipe for failure.

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The game of futsal is an incredibly fast-paced game and after a few of sprints up and down the futsal court players will find themselves gasping for air and having tightness in their legs if their fitness isn't there. Please remember that futsal conditioning is different than 11v11 outdoor soccer as the space is much smaller and requires quicker starts and stops and a higher level of explosive acceleration speedy starts. In futsal there is no rest time, no time to catch your breath. There is constant movement and readjustment of one's position. The flow of play continues to move on, with or without the player's participation. Even at stoppages where the ball goes out of bounce, the futsal rule requires the ball to come into play again within four seconds.

Off course the obvious solution to futsal game shape fitness is to train in a futsal environment prior to any futsal event and to make sure a team has enough subs so that the coach can make his rotations. The futsal rules allow for unlimited substitutions at any given time of the game without having to let the referee know as long as the substitute enters the game through the designated substitution areas of the sideline.

Because of futsal's high pace game environment making timely substitutions is crucial. For example avoid making substitutions when you are in a defending shape. Having a player run off the court when your team is in your own half of the court and well organized in a defensive shape the worst thing would be to have a player run off. This would create momentarily numbers down scenario and possibly disrupt the rest of the team's shape resulting in an easy goal. Giving your subs specific directions prior to coming in the game will avoid any uncertainty on his part.



A Futsal Goalkeeper Is Absolutely Essential

Having a quality goalkeeper during a soccer game is great, but having a quality futsal specific goalkeeper during a futsal game is essential. This maybe the single biggest mistake beginner futsal coaches make. Not thinking of the goalkeeper position first. Every year I see new teams enter our events with either goalkeepers that do not have any futsal experience or coaches that are just placing any player into the goal.

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To start off, the mentality and technique of a futsal goalkeeper is different than a soccer goalkeeper. Although a soccer goalkeeper can greatly improve his outdoor soccer game through futsal playing, there are differences in the mindset and the technique. Futsal is light years faster than soccer and is also played on a hard surface.

The shots come in at a shorter distance with faster velocity with a harder ball by sharper shot angles. A futsal goalkeeper has to react faster, use his feet more, make more kick saves, use block and kay saves, stay upright instead of sliding to make saves and be much more fearless rather than soccer as he will be sacrificing his body a lot more.

As an outdoor soccer goalkeeper you have the mentality of securing the ball as much as possible. Goalkeeping coaches praise goalkeepers who have good hands as they are able to catch shots, secure balls and avoid giving up rebounds. A futsal goalkeeper the mindset is not to secure balls as they are much harder to control but deflect them or kick them away more like a hockey goaltender.

A goalkeeper will be also called on to be the second defender or third defender in certain situations. Instead of having the defender(s) shift over the goalkeeper will be called on to fill that second or third defender spot. That is something that usually does not happen in soccer as defender shift to cover attackers. Getting the mentality, technique and timing to do this is something that will only happen with futsal specific goalkeeper training.

The movement in the goal area, the angle cutting as well as approach to a player taking a shot are different and require more specialized foot movement than that of an outdoor soccer game. All and all it is very difficult to just stick a goalkeeper or a player with no prior futsal specific goalkeeper training in the goal.

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Another small but important detail that I see every year is goalkeepers that come to play with thick outdoor soccer gloves. Those gloves are way to thick and bulky to be able to handle futsal specific balls which are smaller and harder. Futsal goalkeepers should wear either futsal specific gloves with cut out fingers or no gloves and tape their knuckles. It may sound strange but the goalkeepers need to have access to bear fingertips as they can grab the smaller ball much easier either when they are making saves or distributing the ball.

Another key problem that newbie futsal keepers face is not knowing the futsal rules for goalkeepers. It's not that they are complicated but they're different from soccer rules and can confuse players, coaches and people.

Here are three main rules that all goalkeepers, coaches and fans should know:

1. **No goal kicks.** When the ball goes behind the goal line, the keeper restarts the play by rolling or throwing the ball out with his hands rather than taking a goalkick as in an outdoor soccer game.. All throws must be to a player standing outside the goalkeeper's area.
2. **There is only one ball playback to keeper.** After the keeper has played the ball to his teammates they can only play the ball back to him once unless it has touched the opposition or the keeper is receiving the ball on the other team's half court. It is not unusual for a keeper to go past the mid court line and become the fifth attacker. Lastly it is allowed to pass the ball back to the keeper from a kick-in.

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3. **The keeper has four seconds to control the ball** In futsal the goalkeeper must control the ball with his hands or feet in his own half of the court for no more than four seconds.
4. **The keeper can come out of the area** In futsal keepers are encouraged to not only start the attack but when the situation allows it join the attack by coming out of their goalkeeper area and become a 5th outfield player. If the goalkeeper decides to put the ball at his feet and distribute it to his teammates from a goal in position (after ball goes beyond the goal line), he's still only has four seconds to play it. It is very common for experienced futsal goalkeepers to end up scoring goals, especially if they've got a good long-range shot.
5. **No Drop Kicks Allowed** In futsal keepers may not drop-kick the ball at any time.
6. **The keeper can not throw the ball over the half line** In futsal keepers are not allowed to throw the ball over the 1/2 line once the keeper uses his hands to handle the ball. However some events will allow the ball to go over half line as long as it does not land in the opposition goal area. If a player from the goalkeeper's side touches the ball inside the opposition goal area before it hits the ground then it is a live ball.

For a downloadable copy of all FIFA futsal laws of the game please visit [FIFA Laws Of The Game](#)

Central Jersey Futsal League Play



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Have A Futsal Specific System

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Most newbie teams that come to play futsal for the first time, approach the game with an outdoor soccer mindset and formation. However there are some simple futsal specific shapes, (systems), that can be very easily applied and make a world of difference in a teams futsal play.

The most important thing in my opinion is for the team to train with the particular shape they choose before entering a tournament or a league. Having the players become comfortable with the system allows the players to experience success immediately. As with any outdoor soccer game, same in futsal, players will be pulled out of position at times, and their teammates will have to adjust and rotate.

Futsal is a very fast game so having the ability to reorganize when players are pulled out of their shape is very important. I see many teams get quickly disorganized and find themselves attacking with all four players or defending with all four players, which may sound like a good thing but in actuality it is not. When you have four players on the opponent's side of the court leaving the opponent's attacker unmarked on your own side of the court, can present a huge problem in transition if your team loses the ball.

Newbie teams should train in multiple systems and find the one that best suits their team. Finding the one that best suits the team and making it its core system gives the players a familiarity and confidence when they play their games. Off course the ideal situation would be if a team can master more than one playing system and being able to change between system on the fly during any given game.

As teams become more proficient in their shapes and they must add movement into their shapes so every player moves after they pass or rotate the ball, initially in a scripted manner and eventually in an unscripted creative way. Do not forget that one of the many futsal benefits is the ability a player develops to move quickly with and without the ball.

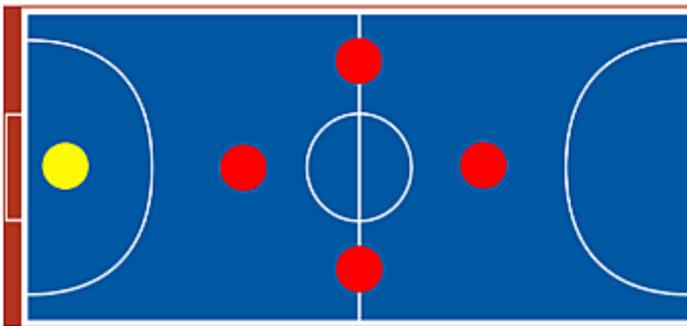
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Following are some basic formations, shapes that most futsal teams use.

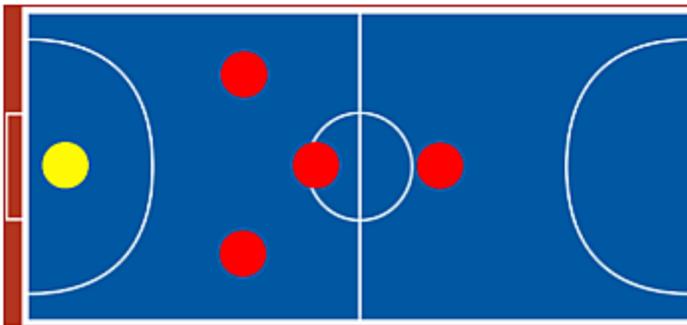
BASIC, COMMON USED FUTSAL FORMATIONS

USED BY MOST FUTSAL TEAMS

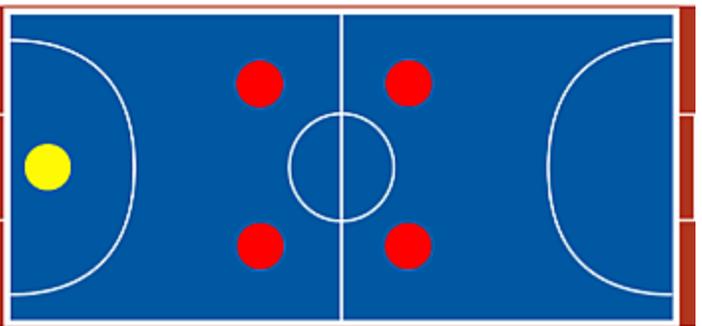
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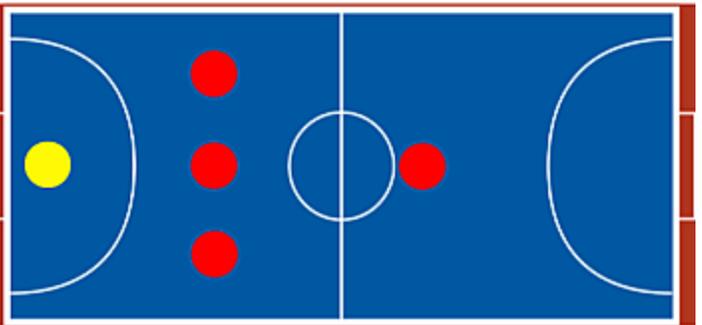
2-1-1



SQUARE



3-0-1



Knowing How To Quickly Transition

It is very common that most newbie teams either do not understand or have ever been taught how to transition from defense to offense and vice versa. I believe the biggest reason why this happens is because in an outside soccer game if a defensive player gets beat there is enough space and time for another defensive player to assist. Furthermore a lot of players are guilty of when they get beat they do not immediately turn to try and win the ball back.

In the fast paced game of futsal players do not have the luxury of being slow to try and win the ball back when it is lost or the space to wait for a teammate to close the attacker down. Remember a futsal player with a good strong shot has an opportunity to take a shot pretty much from anywhere in the court, so losing the ball to that player and not trying to immediately win it back could result in a goal scoring opportunity.

Not transitioning quickly in a game of futsal allows the opponent to have numbers up quickly and penetrate the goal. Numbers up combined with quality passing and finishing is a great way to play futsal. Once transitioning becomes second nature to your team it will be a massive weapon in your futsal game but also an incredible tool in your outdoor soccer game.

Defend And Attack As A Unit (Team)

Futsal is a combination of soccer and basketball. You must learn to attack and defend as a unit, (team), without having space gaps. This is also a great asset when playing outdoor soccer. It becomes much easier to move the ball up and down the field when all players move together as a unit without leaving big space gaps. In futsal space is very limited but players must be able to quickly move without gaps and being able to quickly track players when losing the ball.

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Because futsal is a fast paced game it forces all players to always work and support each other. If a team can not accomplish this task, chances are that team will be in disarray and always chasing the ball. Quality defending is a team effort and it needs great communication to accomplish it. Players must want to defend as hard as they want to attack. Take pride in the art of defending. Every player should think of themselves as a defender as well as an attacker.

There are three principles that I teach everyone of my players, regardless if they are playing futsal or outdoor soccer:

Defend: First priority is to slow the attacker down and give teammates a chance to get back and organize themselves. The first priority of defending is not to steal the ball.

Destroy: After the defending player has slowed the attacker down, not diving into the tackle, and waiting for the attacker to make a mistake, he steps in at the right time of when the attacker makes the mistake to win the ball back.

Distribute: Once the defending player has won the ball back now he must make sure he makes the right decision to keep possession and advance the ball for this team.

Lastly the coach should determine what type of defensive style his team should play. A good way to decide this is by analyzing the type of players a team has and how high their futsal IQ is. There two things to consider:

Type of defensive style: Man to Man or Zone. In a man to man scenario every player is tracking a specified opponent. In a zone defensive scheme the defenders stick to their shape and share in the marking duties as attackers come to their zone.

Half court or full court press: In a half court game plan the defensive team retreats to their defensive side of the court and start to defend once the attacking team crosses the ball into their defensive side. In a full court press the entire team steps up to their opponent's side and closes down the other team's players on their side of the court.

In either game plan all players must be in sync and know which game plan they are executing. The plan must be executed consistently by the entire team so to prevent some players staying back while others are pressing.

Do Not Shout Directions From The Bench

To begin with let me start this tip by saying that coaches should not be shouting non stop directions all game long from the bench, either in a futsal or a soccer game. Choosing specific moments to help your players is one thing but barking non stop directions is counter productive. For one thing it does not allow players to think on their own and they become robotic.

In a futsal game the action and pace is so fast, by the time a coach shouts a specific direction the moment has passed. The continuous change of pace and possession of a futsal game is a great teacher for the players to become creative, quick thinkers that can solve situational conflicts within the game.

As difficult as you may find it restrain from shouting constant directions during the game, allow your players to play and help them by offering advise when they come to the bench or during stoppages. You will be surprised at the results you will see carrying to the outdoor soccer game.

I would encourage you to also have a conversation with your team's parents and ask them to refrain from shouting directions. In a futsal game one may find parents situated around the court. Imagine having people yelling directions from all sides as you try to play the game. Furthermore parents may not know or understand the futsal rules and their comments maybe more confusing than helpful.



Futsal Shoes Over Indoor Soccer Shoes

A very common occurrence during futsal games is witnessing players slip and slide on the hardwood floor. Most futsal courts used are basketball courts and no matter how well they may be swept there is always dust residue. The hardwood floor playing surface is one of the hardest adjustments soccer players are forced to make.

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Players that are used to playing outdoor soccer or indoor soccer on turf will need some time to adjust to the hardwood floor surface. Wearing indoor turf shoes will not help them get comfortable and find the grip they need to make those quick and sharp cuts, stops and starts on the hardwood floor.

To remedy this, players should have futsal specific shoes, not indoor turf shoes, not the same thing. Futsal specific shoes are made for the hard futsal surfaces. Make sure the shoes' soles are clean and go as far as washing them before each game so that they're clean.



Futsal Rotation - Pass And Move - No Rest

Teams that know how to rotate the ball and their players have an unfair advantage. Instead of just running around the court, teams can learn to use futsal specific rotations to move and follow the ball. This makes it difficult for the opposition to defend, unless they they know how to specifically defend in a futsal style shape. It also allows the team possessing the ball to find gaps or movement mistakes by the opposition in order for the possessing team to penetrate.

However in order to accomplish this all players on the court must continuously move. Futsal is a tiring game, and the temptation to take a breather after a player passes the ball does exist but it can not happen.

Players must understand that the only time for a rest is when they have been substituted off. They must know that if they are not constantly moving they will be substituted. They must remember that futsal is mostly made up by one and two touch passes, a constant pass-move-pass-move task.

If a player can not pass and move and tries to dribble his way chances are he will be quickly marked down and displaced off the ball. Because of the limited space and speed of play dribbling must be reserved for certain situations. It is much easier to get past an opponent by passing around him.

In a professional futsal game players usually sub out every 3-5 minutes or so. The game is very quick and the do not stop moving for those three minutes. They move at a very high pace with very explosive starts, cuts, feints and stops.



The Sole Of The Foot Is A Player's Best Tool

As we have established by now the futsal court playing space is limited so kicking and running or trying to outrun opponents will not happen. Futsal is a control kind of game. It is all about foot skills and being able to control the ball in tight spaces. Using the sole of the foot is the most efficient way to manipulate the ball in those tight spaces.

Using the sole of the foot allows a player to move the ball in any direction close to your body with efficiency and speed when other parts of your foot fail. Once again great tool to develop for the outdoor soccer game.

Toe Poke Is Encouraged

This particular tip goes against all the soccer experts who say do not use your toes to kick the ball. And they are right. Kicking the ball with your toes in outside soccer is not beneficial as it can not accurately direct the ball. However it could be a hard direct strike on goal if inside the eighteen yard box.

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In futsal, because of the smaller space the toe poke, as it is called, could be a great technique. Particularly when you're shooting at the goal.

What the disadvantage of the toe poke is in outdoor soccer is that it lacks accuracy. But when it comes to futsal what it lacks in precision it makes up in potency and sheer power. A player can get a shot off incredibly quickly with very little leg back-lift, yet it generates massive power. It is a shot that can be used very quickly, off the dribble or a stand still point and it is very unexpected which can present major problems for the goalkeepers in reaction time.

Learn To Find Easy Shots

Every year I see newbie futsal teams that come to play and because of their outdoor soccer background, when they see the limited space a futsal court offers, they take it as license to shoot from everywhere. This is most often seen in older boys teams as they try to put a hole in the net by shooting as hard as possible thinking that shot velocity will get them a goal.

Well, here are couple of things to consider. Yes, there maybe shorter distance to the futsal goal than in outdoor soccer or a turf 5v5, 7v7 game but the futsal goal is also smaller, and there maybe more players in front of it as well as the angle may not be ideal.

I see players making the decision to just shoot when there is not a good scoring opportunity available instead of making the decision to be patient find a better solution and work with teammates to find the easy, open shot with the highest percentage of scoring. The worst part is that many of those shots fly way high over the goal or get bounced off a defender with no chance at all to find the back of the net.

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I personally believe that lack of futsal skill awareness, individual ball skills and even soccer IQ limits a player's confidence to make the right decision. Shooting the ball seems to be the easiest choice, they will not get blamed for losing the ball or possibly making a bad pass and most likely avoid a coach's harassment since a shot is considered a personal choice by most coaches. However an experienced coach or a coach recruiting will notice the above and likely develop a negative opinion about that player. Does it make sense?

Central Jersey Futsal Tournament Play



Learn To Stretch The Court

One of the most common things I see when newbie teams start to play futsal is when the player with the ball is trying to find options and all of his teammates thinking they're helping him, rush close to him to offer an option for a pass.

While this initially looks good as players are moving to support their teammate it turns out that because of the limited space a futsal court offers, now all of a sudden we have all four players within a few feet of each other making the space very small and crowded as the teammates bring with them the opposition players that are marking them.

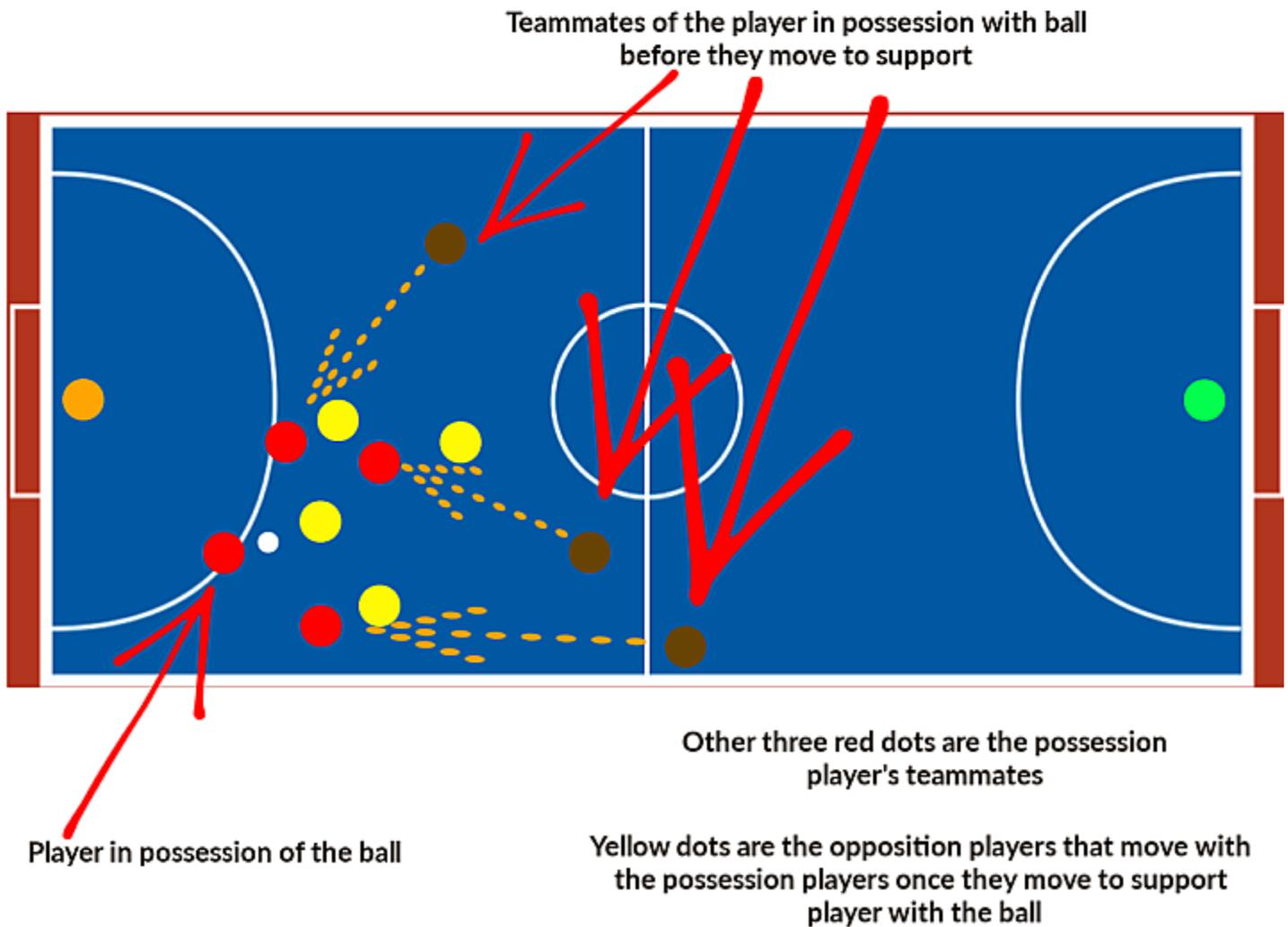
This situation makes it very difficult for the team to keep possession and very easy for the opposition to displace the ball. By having the possession players very close together it allows the opposition players to be able to pressure the possessing players with the ball very quickly and not allow them any long options to get out of trouble.

By having all four possessing players within a few feet of each other there is no width or depth to the play. By teaching the players to stretch the court long way and wide, it creates more space for the player with the ball to control the ball. At the right time the players that have stretched the court can move to the empty space asking for the ball and advancing it up the court. Off course this must be repeated continuously making the movement of the ball easier.

Following are two image. First showing what happens when players make the court small. Second shows how much space can be created when players stretch the court.

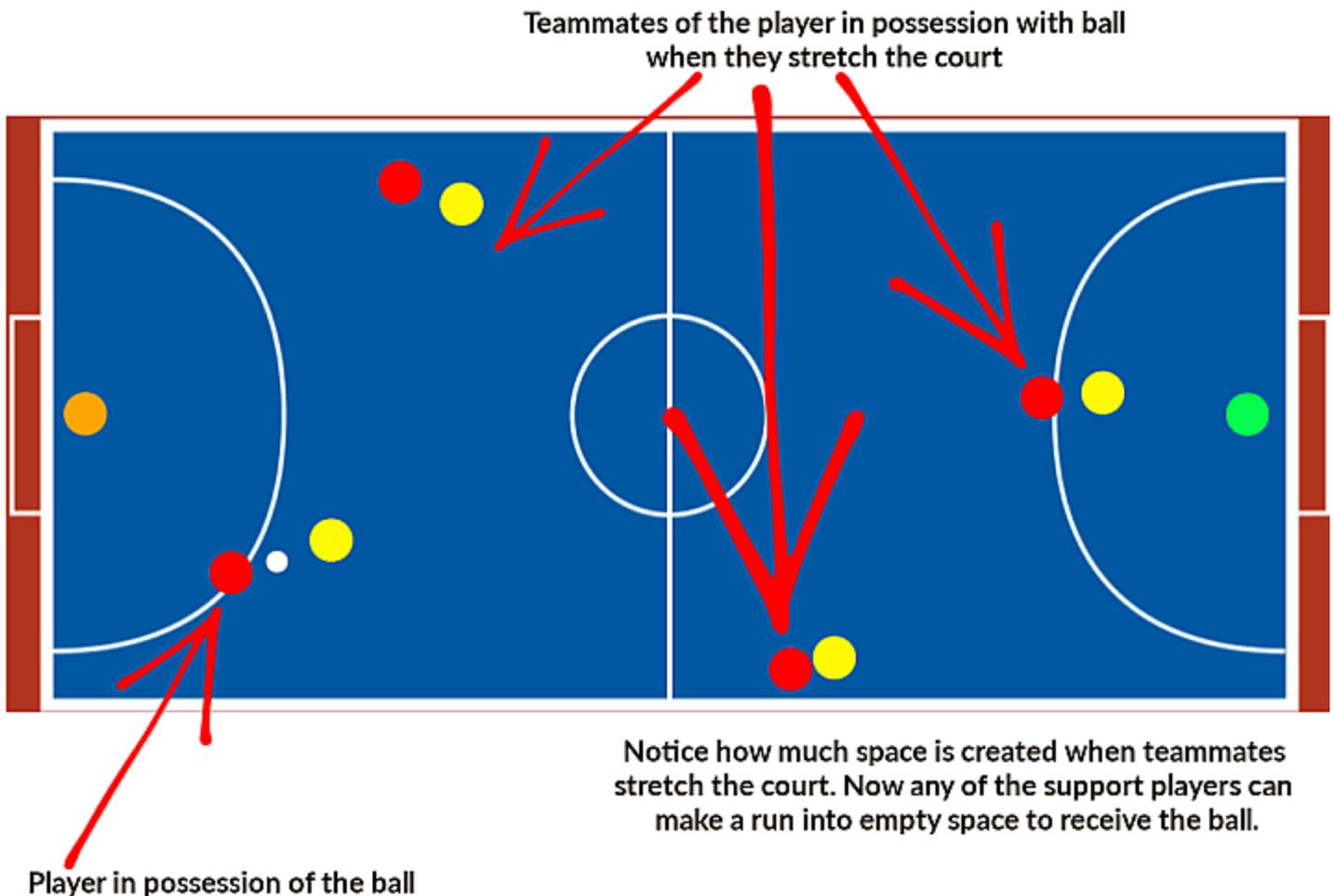
When Players Are Making The Court Small By Moving Towards The Player With The Ball

They Also Bring The Opposition Players With Them Makes I



Players without the ball stretch the court and create space.

When Players Stretch The Court And Creat space



Avoid Switching Players And Have A Consistent Team As Much As Possible

Most Futsal Events will allow to switch players as long as all players are registered with the event. I understand that it may be difficult to have the same players every game playing, even more so, having the same starters, on account that families may have other commitments.

It is very common for coaches to ask guest players to step in when the regular team players cannot attend an event. Although relying on guest appearances from stand-ins may seem like a good, quick fix it isn't a great strategy it . The guest players will not understand the team system, if they never played futsal before they will not be able to get used to the futsal format immediately, and then if you need guest players the following week again and the same players can not attend, resulting in someone else new coming along in their place, repeating the process will be a playing nightmare.

The solution is easy and simple. Try to get all your outdoor soccer players or at least a good number of them, (at least 8), to commit for the entire futsal event that you want to attend and ask them before hand if they can commit to attend all games. If you are a player you should want to play every time. If not you are not doing yourself or the team any favors.

If you are putting together a team specifically for an event ask them to commit for every game and if they can not you maybe better not including them and find someone who will, even if they are not as high skilled.

Unlike Soccer, Fouls Count In Futsal

In an outdoor soccer game or even an indoor 5v5 or 7v7 game a team can foul away as much as they want and unless they are hard fouls or professional fouls a player and a team will not get penalized unless the foul is in a dangerous spot where the foul taking team can score a goal. Of course a serious hard foul may warrant a yellow or even a direct red card from the referee. However silly soft fouls to sort of stop play maybe let go regardless the number.

However in futsal there is a rule where, if after a team has committed 5 fouls in any half (the count resets at half time), the next foul is awarded as a penalty kick. (The spot for the foul penalty kick is a bit further back than a normal penalty). It's a great rule to prevent teams from fouling the entire game.

Another key point when it comes to fouls in futsal that coaches have to make their players and parents aware of is that where an outdoor foul may not be called in futsal it will be called. For example shoulder to shoulder challenges are not called in soccer or 5v5 or 7v7 as they are not fouls but they are called in futsal because they are.

Silly Fouls Have Consequences

Futsal requires constant discipline and focus as the speed of play is very high and the probability of committing a silly, unnecessary foul exist with every play. Even if a player is not playing dirty committing a couple of silly fouls can put a team into the 5 foul penalty zone. At that moment some players seem to lose their concentration, lose their mindset and completely fall apart mentally.

Their fear of committing a foul becomes their biggest handicap and they go on to commit silly fouls. Sometimes one after the other. All of a sudden a game that seem to be under control gives the other team the opportunity to get back into it as every foul after five is a penalty kick. The opposition scores off a couple of those penalty kicks and they are challenging a game that was well under control.

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Ball must be completely stopped in kick ins

A very common infraction that referees will call every time is the ball rolling at the time of a kick in restart. In futsal there are no throw ins. All restarts from the sidelines are kick ins. The ball must be on the outside part of the line and it must not be rolling. It absolutely, 100% must be stationery. The players must understand that the referee will call this infraction every time.

The more experienced will place their hands on top of the ball, preventing it from rolling while kicking the ball into play. Teach your players to do this instead of just placing the ball down and trying to kick it in.

Lopsided scores are ok when learning from them

In futsal it is very common to have periods where it rains goals. Yes there are moments that multiple goals can happen very fast in periods of seconds putting a game out of reach or closing a large lead. That is another element of futsal that make the game unique and exciting. Players and teams must be discipline and focus through the entire game. I have seen teams take the game lightly and goals will just pile up.

Remember, the futsal playing area is small and it punishes mistakes very quickly. A second after a player loses the ball the opposition team can score a goal from practically anywhere in the court either with a pass or two or a direct shot. Once again as mentioned earlier the ability to transition to defense once a player loses the ball quickly and getting into a defensive shape will prevent transition goals.

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Because goals can come at quick spurts, newbie teams may not have the mindset to deal with it. In outdoor soccer rarely do we see a lot of goals in a quick time frame. Mostly because of the larger playing area. However it is not the case with futsal. The smaller space is key to quick goals if a team is not focused. Having the right mindset to battle those moments and not fall apart is key to a team bouncing back.

A newbie team must adopt futsal strong mindset. If goals happen keep the composure, stay discipline, get the team shape back quick and keep playing. Don't worry about the goals, just keep playing. Passing that kind of mindset to the players will help prevent lopsided games but will also help with building a strong mindset for the outdoor game.

Most coaches and parents view a lopsided game as a bad thing. However we need to start looking at the overall performance and not just focus on the result. For example if a newbie team plays a game with a field player in the goal or a goalkeeper that is not experienced. Although the team's performance was pretty good almost every shot at goal went in. Is the problem the entire team, or perhaps the goalkeeper position was inadequate. Looking at the final score and ignoring the problemed area will keep the lopsided scores coming.

Even in lopsided goal games there are positives to be found and the ability to be able to recognize problemed areas and fix them will make a team strong.

Conclusion

In closing I would like to point out that futsal is a great all around development tool for outdoor soccer. However the tool by itself is not enough. Coaches, parents and players must understand how this great tool will take their outdoor game to the next level. Everyone must be open to a complete mindshift in the way we develop soccer players in the USA. We must catch up with what the rest of the world already knows.

Futsal develops top level soccer players. That is the bottom line. You can take it to the bank.

Is it my mission that everyone understands how important it is to abandon the status quo training practices and adopt habits that US Soccer is mandating and following FIFA's world initiative on making futsal the key development tool in soccer.

The purpose of this book is to bring value to all involved with futsal. I hope for this book to serve as a guide for a positive, fun, futsal experience. I aim to keep adding content and address various futsal benefits and challenges for the new coaches that enter the wonderful, fast, high scoring world of futsal.

This book is dedicated to all the coaches, parents and players that have attended, are attending and will attend any futsal events. Thank you for all your feedback, your dedication to developing your players into top soccer players and your foresight in understanding ***WHY FUTSAL***.

To always stay up to date with what is going on in futsal, get tons of free futsal content and know what local events are happening in your area, please visit our website and get on our update list. www.centraljerseyfutsalleague.com