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(Youth and Mini-Soccer)

Consultation Process

Blank sheet of paper began in November 2009 with a County FA Youth Leagues meeting in Lancashire...

- Seven out of eight County FA regions
- Over 300 Youth Clubs
- 100's of Grassroots Coaches
- 150+ Youth Leagues
- 42 groups of 8-12 year old Children
(grassroots and professional, urban and rural)
- Countless academic books and research articles



Consultation Process

Further meetings were then held with technical football experts to support programme development;

- FA National and Regional Coaches
- FA Player Development Advisors
- Sir Trevor Brooking and Stuart Pearce
- Premier League and Football League
- Academy Managers (Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Aston Villa, Middlesbrough plus others)
- County FA CEO's and FA Council Members



"The way progress happens is that new generations and new eras grow up and become better than the previous ones. It is the reason that we are not in the Dark Ages anymore. No matter your position or place in life, it is imperative to create opportunities for children so that we can grow up to blow you away."

Adora Svitak, age 12



Presentation content



Common discussion points around the country

“Win at all costs” philosophy v “Development” philosophy in coaches and teams - equal playing time for children.

Effect of “non-competitive leagues” on Under 7’s and Under 8’s and extension to older age groups.

Positive impact of RESPECT barriers and implementation of ethos at local level.

9 v 9 football as a playing option for U11-U14.

Summer football and indoor football.



Key challenges for the future

To devise a modern and *child-based* approach to youth football in England.

To develop formats of football that allow children to play in structures that give them the best opportunity to *reach their potential* and *stay within* football.

To develop pitch guidelines that are driven by what is *best for the child* and their technical development whilst being conscious of realistic delivery implications.

To offer a variety of approaches to dealing with the 'relative age effect' that age-banding for competition brings.





Research into young people

Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations) refers to ‘the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities *appropriate to the age of the child.*’

Applied to the world of organised sport, the Convention implicitly calls for a *child-sensitive* and *child-centred* approach to competitive sports and intensive training, in which the child’s developmental stages are recognised and respected (David 2005).



Research into young people

In 1994, the then Chairman of the Sports Council stated “Those of us in the adult world of sport administration and development must listen carefully to what these children have to say. In particular, we must listen to those children who tell us that they don’t enjoy sport and to the reasons why this is the case” (cited in Mason 1995).

Furthermore, De Martelaer et al. (2000) support this notion – “Children are concerned about all aspects of their sport engagement...therefore they should be consulted in each new or existing initiative to be sure what adults organise for children meets the wishes and expectations of the target group.”



Research into young people

MacPhail et al. (2003) then summarise these matters by suggesting “Young people typically claim that lack of enjoyment coupled with parental or coach pressure, lack of time, no friends attending the sport, few opportunities and the need for greater encouragement are the major reasons for non-participation or drop out”.

Martens (1978) suggests, “Joy and sadness are not synonymous with winning and losing in the minds of young athletes – at least not until adults teach them so.”



Research into young people

Research undertaken with 14-18 year olds across the concluded that “young people were not interested in over-zealous competition and placed the emphasis instead on participation. Young people are not satisfied with what they see as inappropriate adult concern for results and performance” (MacPhail et al. 2003).



Why do you play football?

“Something to do on a Sunday” (Bedfordshire U11)

“Because all my mates play” (East Riding U10)

“Because it’s a really fun game” (Worcestershire U9)

“Setting your mates up to score is as good as scoring as they say thanks and stuff” (Liverpool U10)

“We play to keep fit because its good to be healthy”
(Bedfordshire U10)

"I like playing the game, its fun, oh and tackling" (North Riding U11)



Dealing with defeat

“Losing is ok, its good to learn you don't have to win everything” (Beds U9)

“Normally forgotten by Saturday afternoon if you've lost” (Beds U9)

“I've got a cob on for ten minutes and that's it” (Liverpool U10)

“Not bothered about winning the league, the game is just for fun” (North Riding U9)

“I do worry if we've lost but not for too long as I want to go and find out the Villa score then” (Worcs U10)

“I don't like losing but once I've had a bath I've forgotten about it” (Worcs U11)



What is winning?

Would you rather have a close game or win by loads?

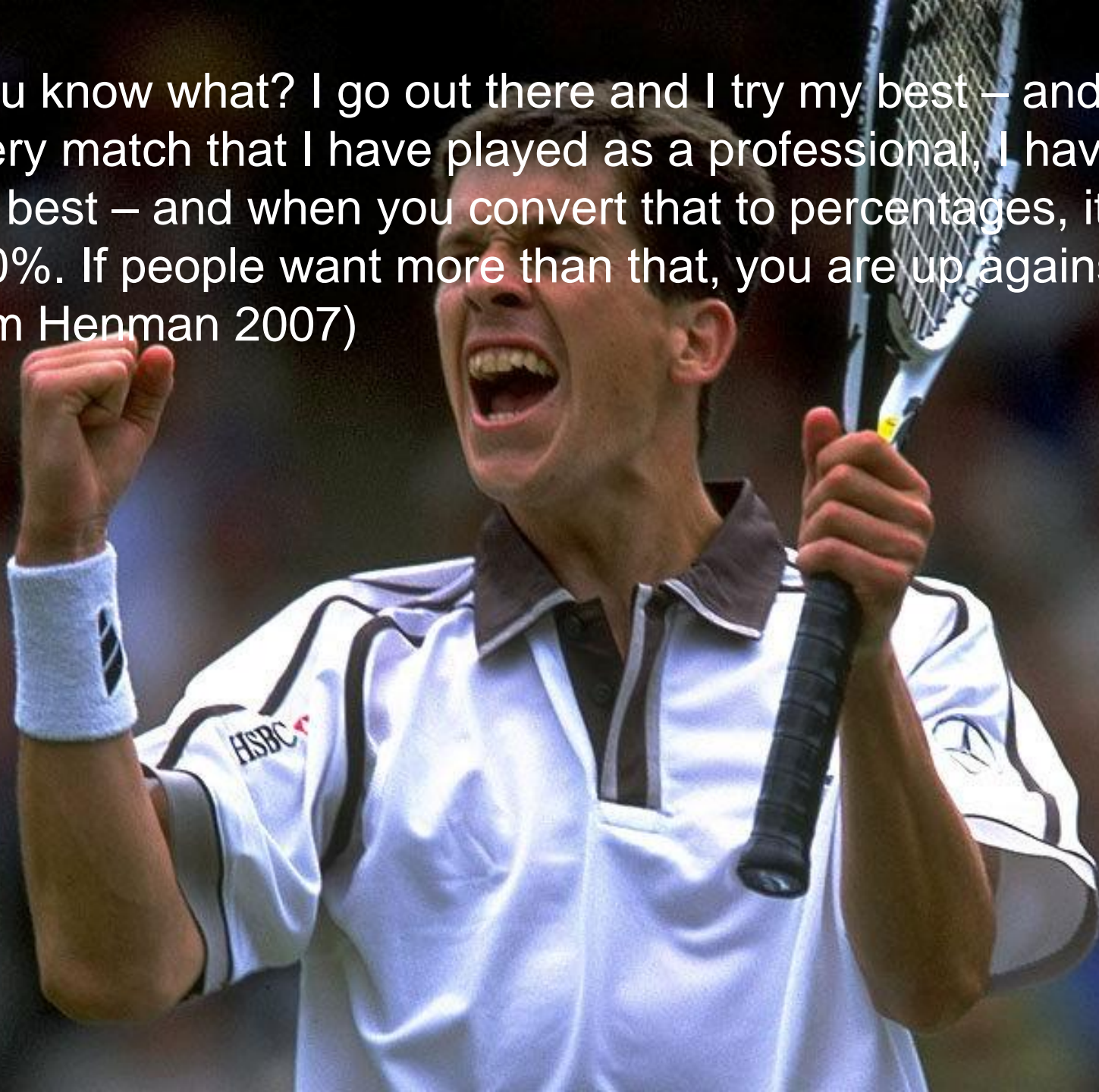
Children want to have an organised football match every week, that is evenly balanced between two teams. They recognise only two or three teams actually contest the league therefore the overwhelming majority play for fun.

“We need to move away from this win-at-all-costs culture and let children start to enjoy football” (Lineker 2010)

“The problem is, in England, you teach children to win the game, in Spain, we teach children to play the game”
(Jose Mourinho 2010)



“You know what? I go out there and I try my best – and in every match that I have played as a professional, I have tried my best – and when you convert that to percentages, it is 100%. If people want more than that, you are up against it.”
(Tim Henman 2007)



Parents and coaches

“Parents embarrass me when they shout and just confuse me” (West Riding U9)

“Its not about making parents happy, its about you and what you want to do” (West Riding U10)

“I don't like it when we try something new and it doesn't go right first time and the adults shout at me” (Worcs U10)

“I feel proud, confident and honoured to play for the team when people shout good things” (Worcs U9)

“Parents embarrass us when they shout, it's like it goes all quiet and it's a big spotlight on me” (Worcs U11)

“When people shout negative stuff it makes me just want to leave the pitch and go home” (Beds U10)



What children say is important to them

Trying my hardest is more important to me than winning	294
I love playing football because it's fun	270
It's a really good game and I love it!	242
It helps keep me fit and healthy	211
I like meeting new friends through football	211
I like playing with my friends	180
I like learning new skills	128
I like playing matches against other teams	104
I really like scoring or stopping goals	97
It's important to me I try to win matches	84
I play because it makes my parents happy	14
I like skilling people	11
It's important to me I win the league	3
I like to show off my skills	1
Winning is more important to me than trying my hardest	0
It's important to me I win trophies and medals	0





The need for competition





Evidence from overseas

Can't get too hung up on what other countries are doing but need to be aware.

Any recommendations and developments need to fit with the DNA and culture of English football.

Sir Clive Woodward offered counter-cultural solution to following the Southern Hemisphere nations for 2003 Rugby World Cup.



Evidence from overseas

	Start Playing 11 v 11?	Trophies and Medals?	Format for 6 – 8's	Format for 8 – 10's	Format for 10 – 12's	Format for 12 – 14's
England	U11	U9	7 v 7	7 v 7	11 v 11	11 v 11
Holland	Looking at 11 v 11 for U13	Recommend U12 but mixed	4 v 4	7 v 7	7 v 7	11 v 11
Germany	U15	National U15 and Regional U10's	7 v 7	7 v 7	7 v 7, 9 v 9	11 v 11 but also 7 v 7 and 9 v 9
Italy	12 – 14 years		5 v 5	7 v 7	9 v 9	11 v 11
France	U14	U12 and U13	5 v 5	7 v 7	9 v 9	11 v 11
Spain	U12	U7	7 v 7	7 v 7	9 v 9	11 v 11

What we know about learning

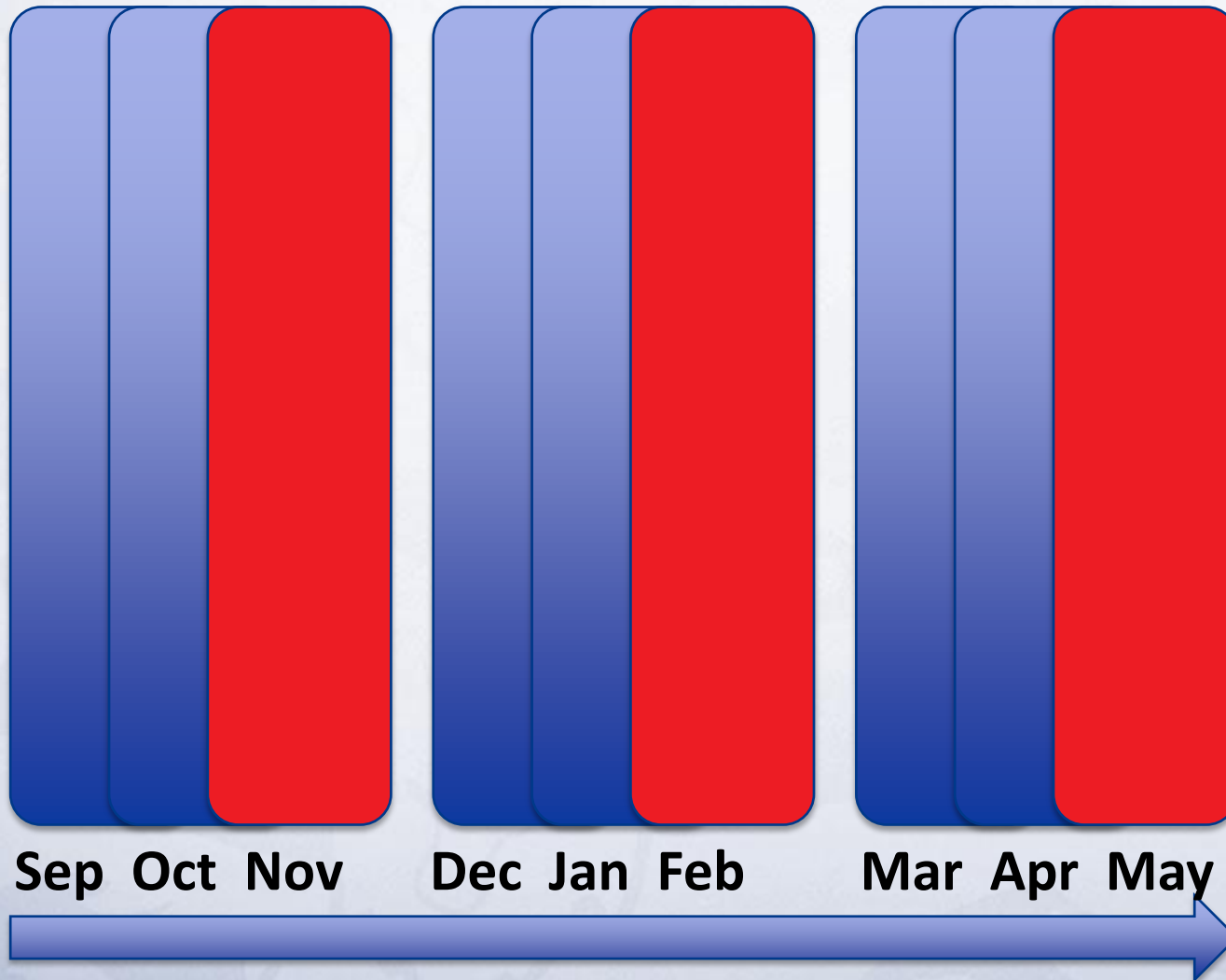
An effective learning environment for young people requires variety of experiences. For example, they need to practice in many different situations and one structure might not suit every child.

How well do children get this today or do we have to try and artificially create this variety? Role of training?

Therefore, how do we get flexibility into the grassroots game for children to allow them to become the best they can?



Alternative approach to competition



Including variety (U8's - an example)

September – November:

5 v 5 games at “Mini-Soccer Centres” with teams coming together to play at a central venue or club ground. Mixed up teams, everybody plays, children referee matches themselves – ethos on fun and participation and learning the game.

December - January:

Indoor football for six weeks with teams playing 4v4 / 5v5 matches.

February – April:

Team A travels to Team B – joint training session in the morning delivered by home team for one hour followed by match between two teams of 5v5.



Including variety (U12's - an example)

March – June:

9 v 9 matches, across half of a full-size pitch, in a Champions League format with teams organised in groups of four to allow seeding for next round of competition. All seeded “1” teams then together in Group of six, 2's together etc. for round robin games

July - August:

7 v 7 festivals and tournaments to allow for schools holidays, children being away etc.

September - October:

9 v 9 matches against other teams in small groups with clusters of teams coming together for several games in one day.





Pitch sizes

Awareness and recognition that younger children should be playing smaller formats of the game than currently.

The transition from 7v7 to 11v11 is a massive jump that proves difficult for some children and adults.

Therefore, the size of the pitch has implications for children in many ways including who gets picked to play and the type of football that is played.



A children's view

“Why do I have to defend the same size goal as Petr Cech?”
(Josh, U11, Huddersfield)

“Why is the pitch so much bigger than last year? We're only a little bit bigger” (DJ, U11, Huddersfield)

“25 minutes still to go ref! You must be joking. I'm absolutely knackered!” (U14 during a game on adult pitch)

“Why can't we take one step at a time? It's really unfair for the goalkeepers” (Alex, U11, Worcestershire)

“How am I expected to save shots in a goal that's so big, when the adults come to take the nets down they use a step ladder?” (Adam, U11, Bedfordshire)



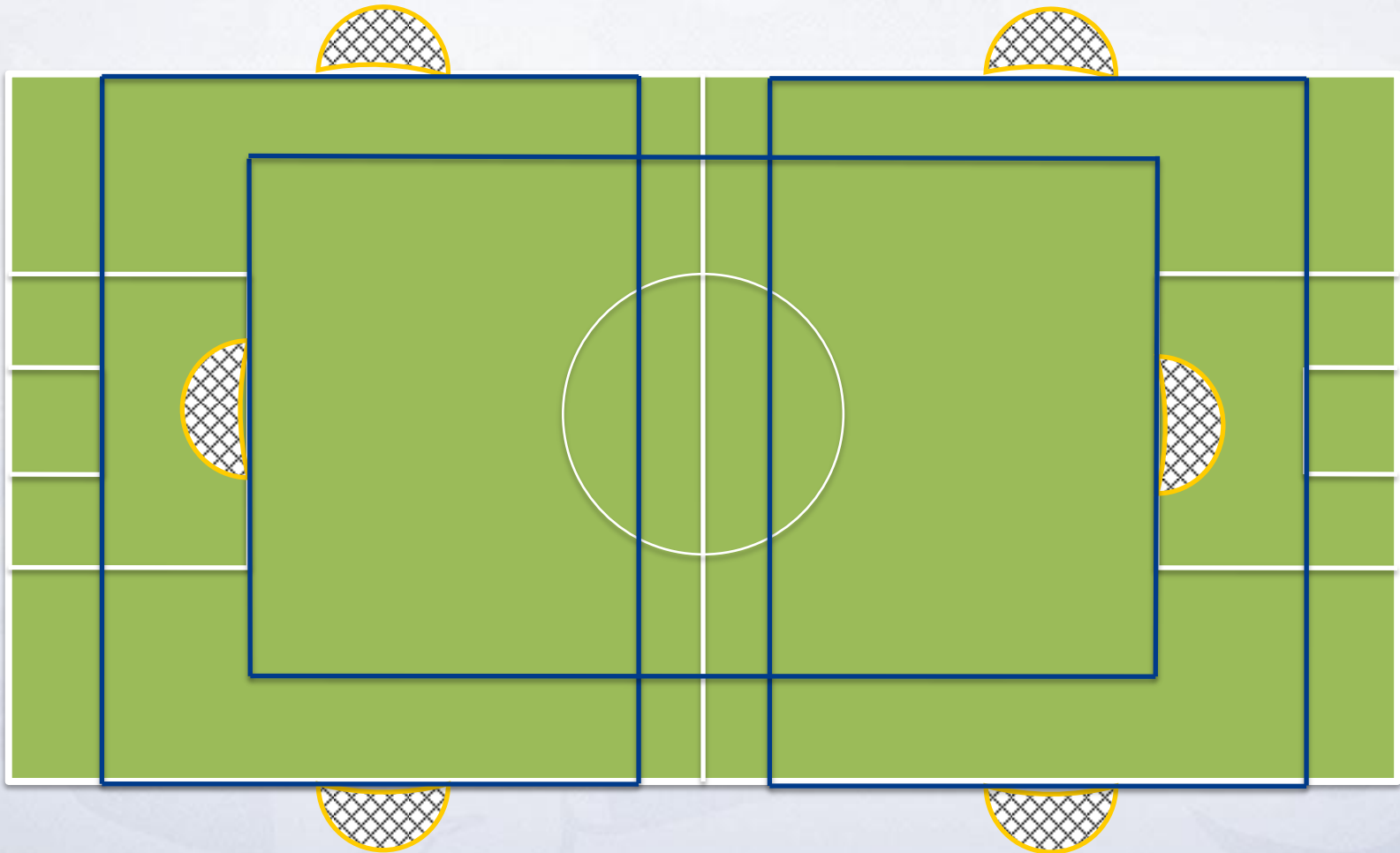
Microsoft Excel ribbon showing:

- Clipboard: Paste, Copy, Format Painter
- Font: Calibri, 11, Bold, Italic, Underline, Text Color, Background Color
- Alignment: Merge & Center, Text Alignment, Orientation
- Number: General, Percentage, Decimals (0, .00)
- Styles: Conditional Formatting, Format as Table

F15 fx

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	ParentCounty	(All) ▼				
2	Gender	(All) ▼				
3				Number of leagues		196
4	Row Labels	Number of 9v9 teams				
5	Accrington & District Training 2000 J.F.L.	2		click on number for a team listing		
6	Ashford And District Youth League	4				
7	Barrow & District Junior League	1				
8	Bedfordshire Mini Soccer Football League	2				
9	Berkshire Youth Development League	19	1			
10	Bexley & District Junior (and Mini-Soccer) League	1				
11	Blackwater & Dengie Youth & Mini Soccer League	2				
12	Bolton, Bury & District Junior Football League	81	1			
13	Bowlee Mini Soccer League	7				
14	Bristol Girls League	1				
15	BSC "NATIONAL COLLEGES FOOTBALL LEAGUE" - MENS AND WOMENS	1				
16	Bucks Girls League	17	1			
17	Burton Junior Girls Football League	24	1			
18	Burton Junior League	22	1			
19	Burton Mini Soccer League	7	1			
20	Calderdale Junior Football League	1				
21	Cambridge & District Colts League	3				
22	Cambridgeshire 9V9	20	1			
23	Cambridgeshire Mini Soccer League	8	1			
24	Central Lancashire Junior League	26	1			
25	Central Warwickshire Girls League	6	1			
26	Central Warwickshire Youth League	4				
27	Charles Rice Junior & Minor League	1				

9 v 9 Pitches – sharing good practice



Pitch markings of the Future?





Trends of Modern Football

In a FIFA report entitled they highlight eight keys to success in order for teams to be successful:

- Technique adapted to a game with little time and space: quality and diversity
- Combination of technique and physical strength
- Range and quality of ball control while moving
- Ball control / passing
- Quality and range of shooting (shooting and long passing)
- Tricks / dribbling / versatility / position-specific skills
- Strength in one-on-one situations (on the ground and the air)
- Ability to keep possession of the ball when under pressure



Small-sided games research

Research has been conducted in a number of different academic institutions upon the value of small-sided games and the benefits they bring to player development.

For example, Manchester Metropolitan University (2002/03 season), found that when compared to 8v8 they found that 4v4 had;

Number of passes – increase of 135%

Scoring attempts – increase of 260%

Number of goals scored – increase of 500%

Number of 1v1 encounters – increase of 225%

Number of dribbling skills (tricks) – increase of 280%



Small-sided games research

This is supported by a number of other academic institutions research (Sports University of Cologne 1996; University of Abertay Dundee 1996, Irish FA 2009) of which the former study above is quoted as stating

“4v4 and 5v5 (with goalkeeper) training and tournament games are a must for technical and basic tactical development” and “7v7 in half field and 11v11 are totally inappropriate for players under 12 years of age as they encourage kick and chase soccer”.



“I personally feel the 9v9 format works really well as an additional (and natural) step towards 11v11 for players at the U11/U12 age (as opposed to going straight from 7v7 at Under 10, to a full size 11-a-side pitch and 11-a side goals at Under 11). It begins to introduce some of the important concepts of 11v11 such as keeping a team shape, improving kids’ understanding on the basic positions (and the importance of these roles in a team), how to adopt ‘patterns of play’ in your team’s football and, of course, developing an understanding of the offside rule!! And all this on a $\frac{3}{4}$ size pitch with $\frac{3}{4}$ size goals, which I feel is perfect from a development perspective for kids at the age of 10 to 12 - the kids have enough space to get time on the ball which helps to develop their skills and confidence as players, but it’s not too big a pitch that they get shattered playing on it.”



9 v 9

Furthermore, one of the biggest drop out 'moments' in youth football occurs at the jump from 7v7 to 11v11. Research from the FA Full-Time software demonstrates this very clearly.

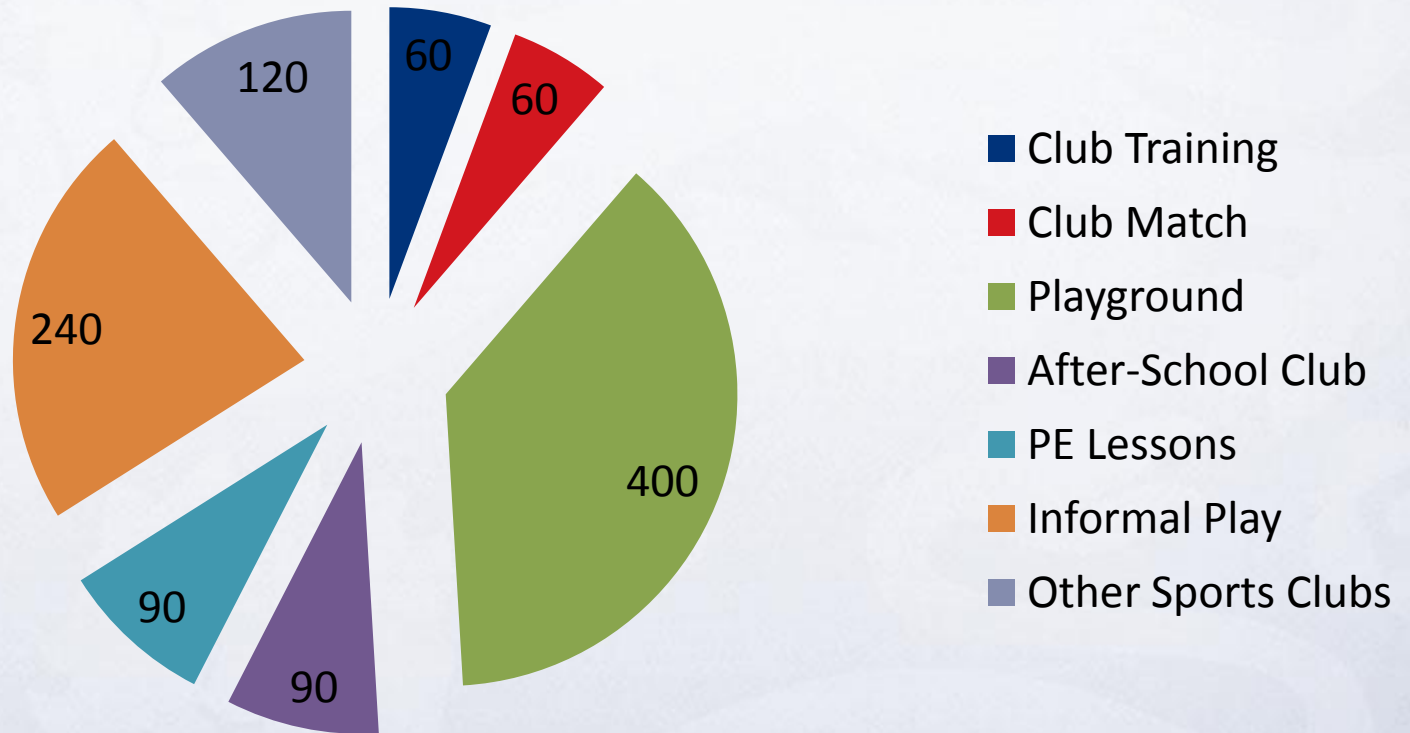
North Wiltshire Youth and Minor League - 43 teams at U10's and 32 teams at U11.

Royston Crow League – 78 teams at U10's and 46 teams at U11.

Therefore, taking the Royston Crow League as an example, with 78 teams at U10, this has approximately 936 players at this age group. When it goes to 11v11 the following year, the League has 46 teams and approximately 736 players, which suggests that even at this point; this particular League is losing 200 children from football.



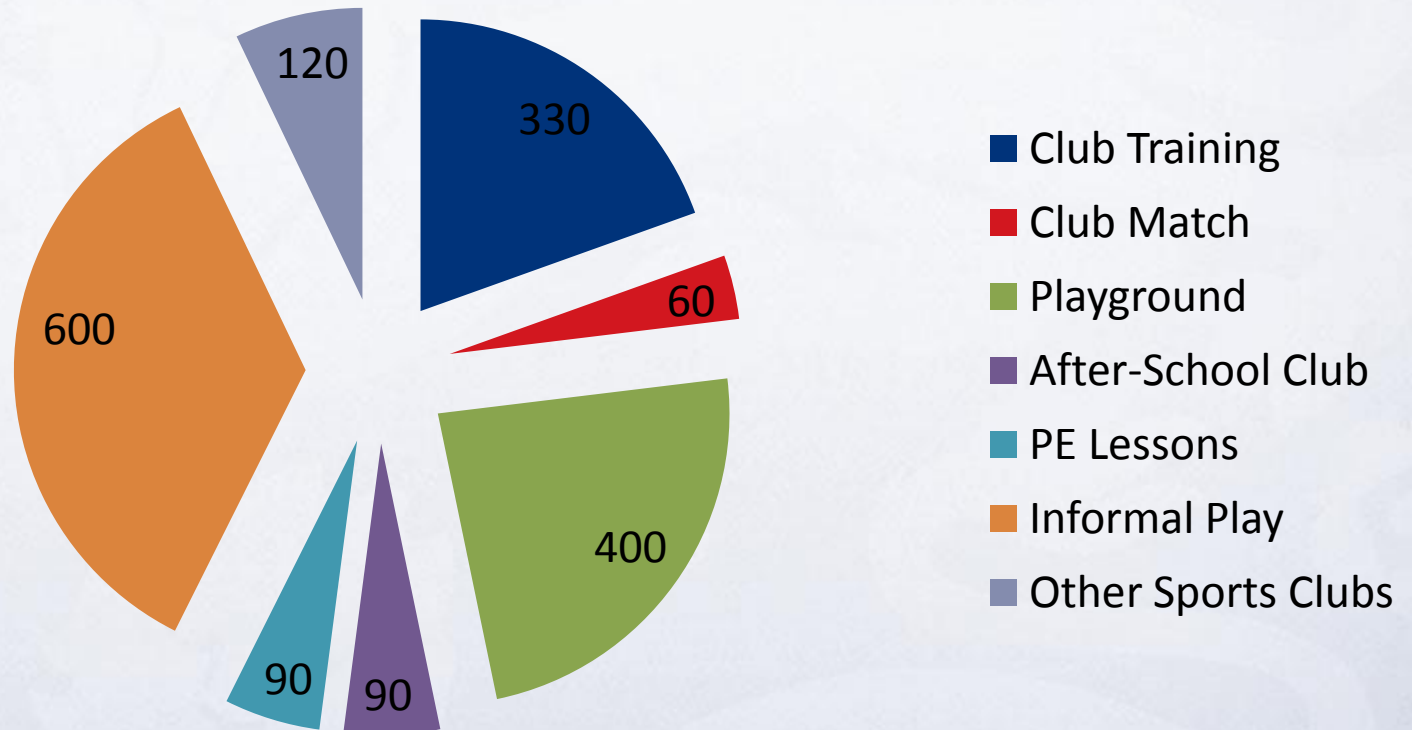
Grassroots child 10 years old Minutes per week



Total per week = 1060 minutes



Academy child 10 years old Minutes per week



Total per week = 1690 minutes





Relative age effect across sport

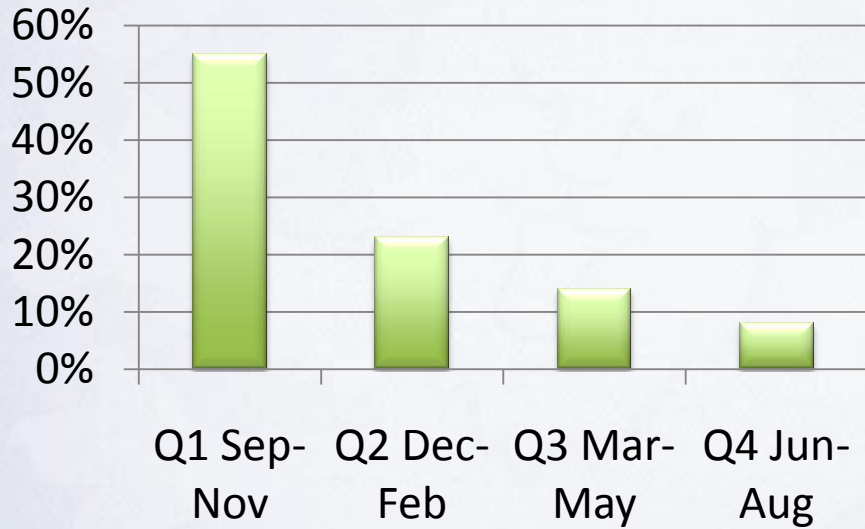
The relative age effect describes how people born later in the selection year, the youngest children in their class or peer group, are much less likely to go on to achieve high-level sporting performance.

There can be almost 12 months difference between the youngest and oldest children in the school year.

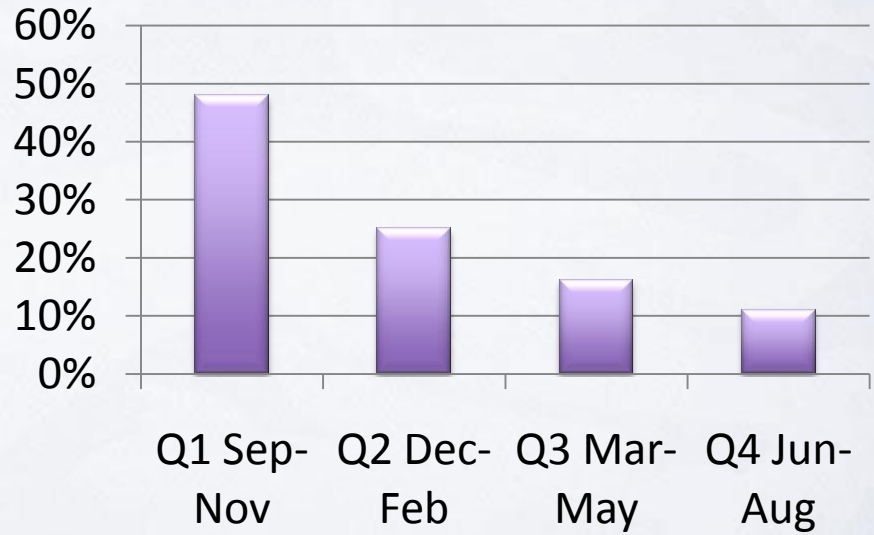
Put very simply, teachers and coaches are favouring the oldest children and ignoring the youngest – as soon as adults get involved in selection there becomes a bias!



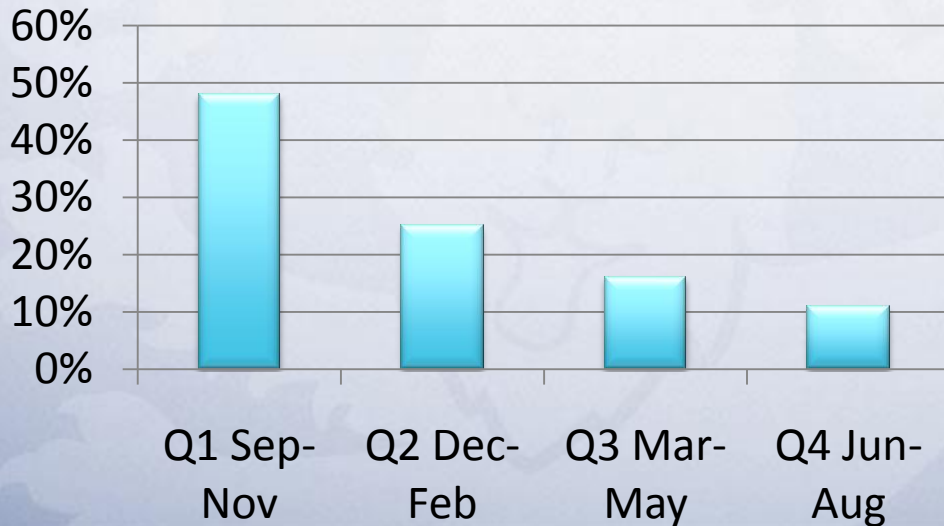
U15 Finalists English Schools Athletics 2002 (male)



English Academy Footballers 2002/04 (male)



ASA Age Championship Swimmers 11-14yrs 2004 (male)

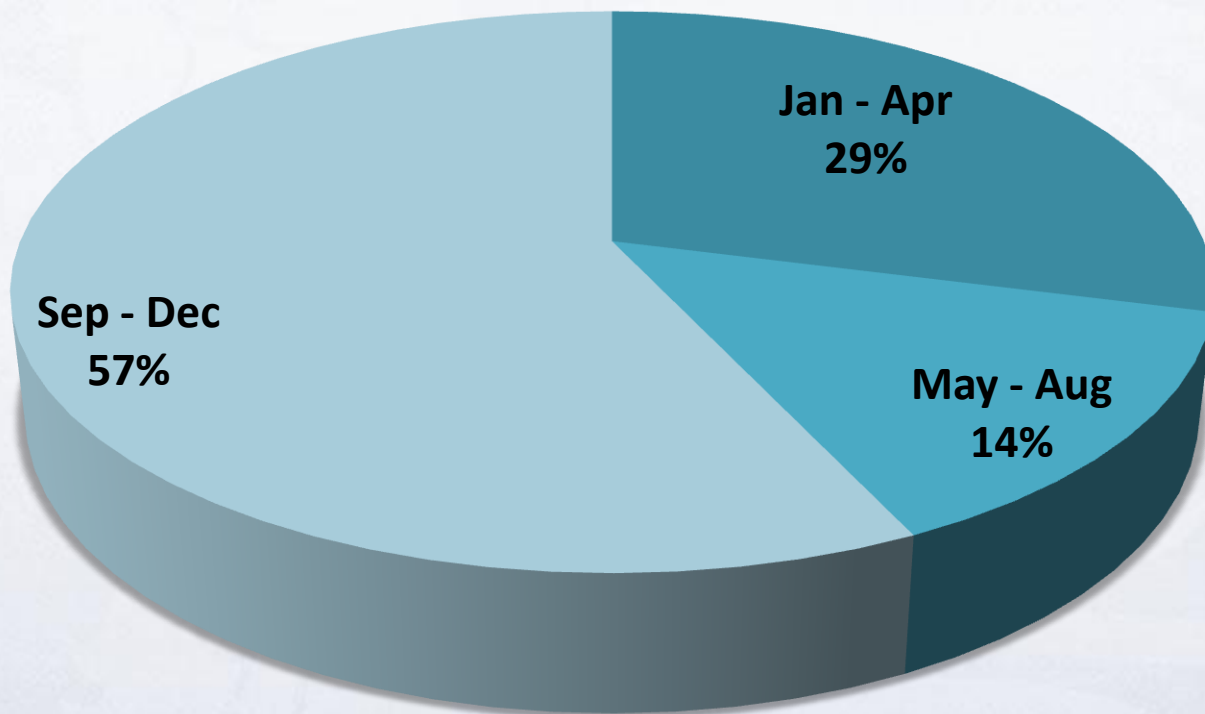


Elite Junior Tennis Players 2003 (male)



May 2009 Data from the Premier League Academies

Student Summary (sample size: n=2484)



Season 2009/10 Data from the Midland Football League

Age	January - April		May - August		Sept - Dec		Grand Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
U12	33	32%	21	21%	48	47%	102
U13	79	30%	56	22%	123	48%	258
U14	98	28%	61	17%	193	55%	352
U15	95	31%	63	21%	145	48%	303
U16	99	33%	66	22%	136	45%	301
U18	57	28%	55	27%	91	45%	203
Grand Total	461	30%	322	22%	736	48%	1519



Season 2009/10 Data from a North West Football League

Age	Sept - Nov		Dec - Feb		March - May		June - August		Grand Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
U7	88	26%	111	33%	63	19%	76	22%	338
U8	121	31%	107	28%	81	21%	80	21%	389
U13	62	41%	33	22%	37	25%	17	11%	149
U14	45	28%	39	24%	44	28%	32	20%	160
U15	43	34%	34	27%	37	29%	14	11%	128
Grand Total	359	24%	324	21%	262	17%	219	14%	1519



World Cup Squad 2010

Month	Number	Percentage
Sep-Dec	9	39%
Jan-Apr	9	39%
May-Aug	5	22%



FA Skills Programme 2010

Month	Number	Percentage
Sep-Dec	1095	37%
Jan-Apr	1002	33%
May-Aug	903	30%



Solutions NOT research!



Relative age effect across football

1. Review of the competition structure by our sport.
We might need a de-coupling of school and competition dates to create an uneven distribution of dates and selection periods so the RAE is minimised.
2. A re-think of game formats to widen opportunities.
We need a close look at our pitch recommendations to equalise opportunities of those demonstrating physical size and strength with those who display skills, technique and coordination.
3. Education and guidance.
Make more people aware of the issue so the selection field doesn't have a bias from the start. Are teachers and coaches missing those that need more time?



What if youth football looked like this in 2013/14?

Age	Format	League Rules	Tournament Competition	Pitch Size
7	5 v 5	Development Football	Regulated by CFA	30x20 to 40x30
8	5 v 5	Development Football	Regulated by CFA	30x20 to 40x30
9	7 v 7	Development Football	Regulated by CFA	50x30 to 60x40
10	7 v 7	Development Football	Regulated by CFA	50x30 to 60x40
11	9 v 9	Development Football	Regulated by CFA	70x40 to 80x50
12	9 v 9	Development League	Open Access	70x40 to 80x50
13	11 v 11	Development League	Open Access	90x50 to 110x70
14	11 v 11	Development League	Open Access	90x50 to 110x70
15	11 v 11	Development League	Open Access	90x50 to 110x70
16	11 v 11	Development League	Open Access	90x50 to 110x70

...if they could only organise one format

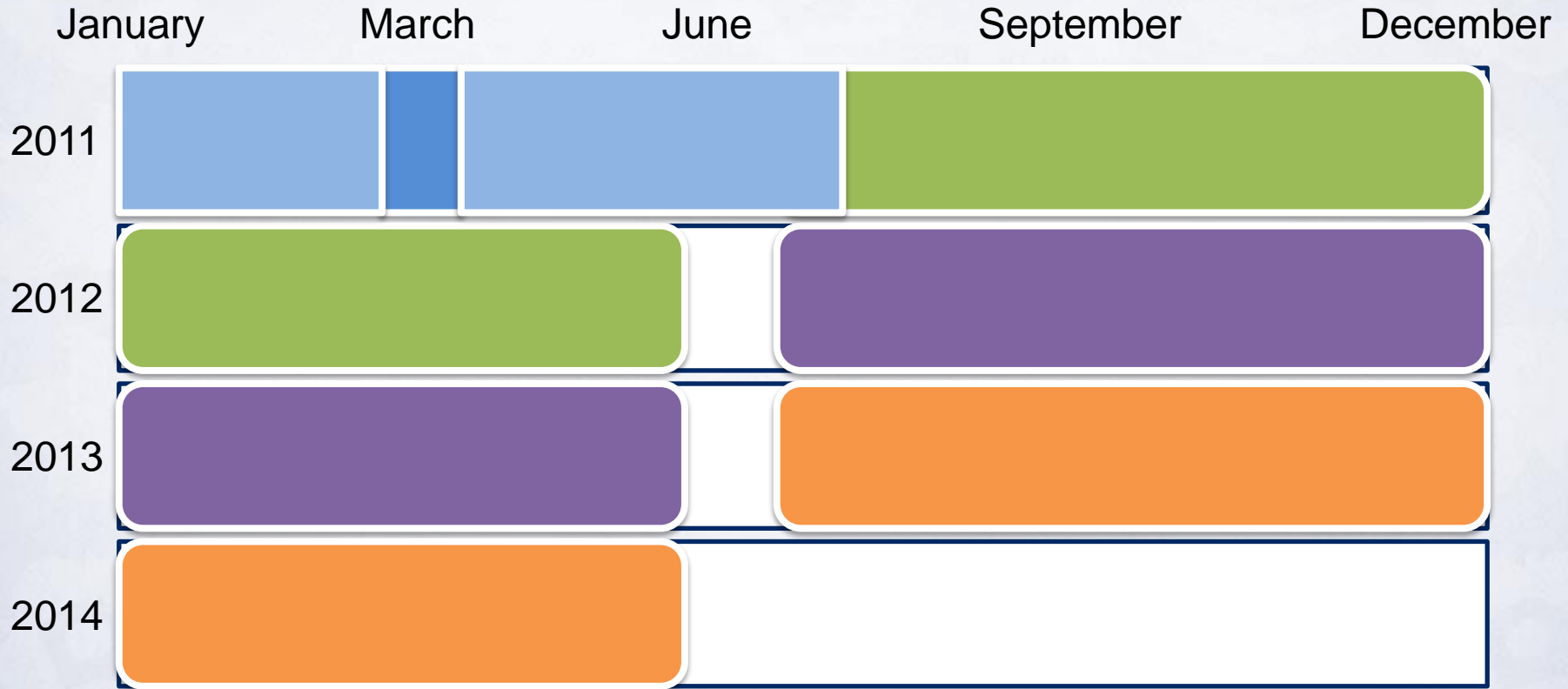



Next steps

- Consequences
- FA to lead and govern
- Youth Development Review



Youth Development Review Time Plan for Implementation



 Ongoing Consultation
Jan - June

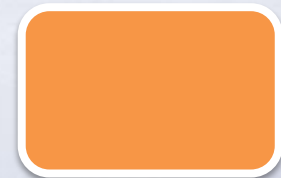
 Council
24th March



2011/2012
Season
No Changes



2012/2013
Season
Optional



2013/2014
Season
Mandatory

