



3 November 2023

In creating FootballSSG, in 2007, we had the express intent of providing football players an opportunity to play for more weeks of the year and with rules that improve players' footballing abilities, simply by playing, by encouraging technical aspects of the game and discouraging physical aspects of the game. From the very beginning, we have always promoted competitions for both boys/men and girls/ladies equally.

We're comfortable that, on balance, we've got an excellent set of rules that are enjoyed by, on balance, an equally excellent group of players. That we've got players and teams that have played for, in some cases, as much as fourteen and fifteen years, we feel, speaks volumes. That we have an almost exactly 50/50 split of boys/men and girls/ladies (across all the age groups) playing, a girl's/ladies' participation rate that we understand is significantly higher than any other football club in the area and something that we've worked very hard to achieve, we feel, also speaks volumes.

We offer Mixed Gender competitions for Under 6, Under 7, Under 8 and Under 9 and Adult age groups. We offer Boy's competitions in Under 10, Under 12, Under 14, Under 17 and Adult age groups. We offer Girl's competitions in Under 7, Under 9, Under 10, Under 12, Under 14, Under 17 and Adult age groups. Boys are not permitted to play in Girl's competitions. Girls are permitted to play in Boy's competitions.

In respect of goal keeping there are no restrictions for Under 6, Under 7, Under 8 and Under 9 age groups. From age Under 10 and older, a girl/lady cannot play as goal keeper when playing in a Boy's competition or in a Mixed Gender Under 17 or Mixed Gender Adult competition. This rule has been in place for many years.

This rule exists because we acknowledge that, generally (meaning in the vast majority of cases where two players are of a similar age, of similar skill set, having had similar experience of physical activity, etc etc) science says: a boy/man is bigger than a girl/lady; a boy/man is stronger than a girl/lady; a boy/man has greater muscle density than a girl/lady; a boy/man has greater bone density than a girl/lady; and a boy/man has greater competitive intent/enthusiasm than a girl/lady. In terms of football (and in sports generally) this all translates into: boys/men running faster than girls/ladies; boys/men tackling with more physicality than girls/ladies; boys/men kicking the ball harder than girls/ladies.

This rule exists because we acknowledge that if a male and female player of roughly equal skills come together and both are playing with their highest levels of intensity, the female is far more likely to come off second best. Specifically in respect of goal keeping, this rule exists to protect girls/ladies against injury (fingers and wrists in particular) and it was created as a result of our observation of far too great a number of such injuries being sustained by females when playing in that position.

Over the years we've had a small number of ladies (all adults) playing in Mixed Gender competitions who have firmly stated their disagreement with the rule and demanded the right to play in the goal keeper position, however, none who have accepted our offer for them to release/indemnify the competition and its insurers and waive their right to make any claim arising from injury sustained in favour of being permitted to play in the position. That offer will be given to any future player who enquires on the topic, once we are satisfied that they are understanding our concerns about the risks they would be exposing themselves to.

Stuart Cole