

## SCORING MORE GOALS EQUALS MORE FUN IN YOUTH SOCCER

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### Happier, Better Developed Players With Small-Sided Games

*FUNiño is a basic building block in the world of developing young soccer players, especially those under the age of 10 years old. First implemented by the famous Horst Wein, FUNiño mirrors the efforts of U.S. Soccer's initiative for small-sided games and is now even making a comeback in Germany's soccer federation, the world's largest sports federation with 25,000 clubs and an estimated seven million members.*

### Really Fun Small-Sided Games For Kids

**Funiño**, an idea from the German youth coaching icon **Horst Wein**, is a really fun version of traditional soccer that helps young soccer players develop great skills. Funiño refers to “FÚtbol and NIÑO” which is the word for child and roughly translates into soccer made for a child.

### FUNIÑO: SIMPLIFIED SMALL-SIDED AGE — APPROPRIATE GAMES (3V3, 4V4, 5V5, 7V7)

Some refer to this as “Mini-Fußball”, but regardless of what you call it, just like Futsal, kids love it. Playing small-sided games deepens a player’s passion for the game as they discover and learn new skills. Considered one of the great football minds, Horst died in 2016, and his highly respected player development concepts are still used today worldwide.



According to Wein who believed “soccer starts in the head and finishes with the feet,” it is important that:

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- The child becomes the main actor in simplified games in training and in competitions.
- Everybody has more touches of the ball, more passes, more goal-scoring opportunities
- Greater involvement for all players — smaller numbers of players in a game equals less time sitting on the bench.

Germany's Bundesliga is now looking at a program where two million kids will play Funiño all across Germany this summer. How can Funiño benefit American youth soccer players?

Read: [TRAINING IN GERMANY BENEFITS YOUTH AND PRO SOCCER PLAYERS](#)

**Eddie Loewen**, the CEO of **Global Soccer Development** (GSD), is an expert in German youth and player development on both sides of the Atlantic. Since he has been implementing Funiño at his youth soccer club in Florida with great results, we wanted to ask for his insights.



Eddie Loewen

## SoccerToday Interview with Eddie Loewen

*Diane Scavuzzo: Is Funiño new? Why is it becoming popular now?*

**Eddie Loewen:** No, it is not new, nor is the general idea of small-sided games, however, the benefits are huge. It is always important to re-evaluate and look at how the game is evolving and, based on that, adapt your methodology and philosophy. The professional game is now faster and more competitive than ever before — small-sided games help young players become technically proficient.

**PLAYING SMALL-SIDED ENABLES PLAYERS TO DEVELOP TECHNICAL SKILLS — THE BASICS THAT ARE NECESSARY TO BE SUCCESSFUL ON THE HIGHEST LEVEL WITH SOCCER.**

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Read: [17-YEAR-OLD AUGUSTUS 'AJ' SAM ON TRIAL IN GERMANY AT TWO CLUBS](#)

*Diane Scavuzzo: How is Funiño more fun for young kids than playing traditional soccer?*

**Eddie Loewen:** Everyone, at every age, likes to score goals. Obviously, in a game when you play 3v3 on a small field, you're going to have many more chances to be in goal scoring opportunities.

The game's training environment really forces the player to make good, quick decisions in tight areas in a one-on-one situation.

## **THIS MEANS THERE ARE GOING TO BE MORE GOALS.**

When you score so many goals, players don't even know what the score is. And, guess what's even better? The parents on the sideline don't know the score either — so there's no pressure of, "Hey, who's winning?"

Funiño creates one-on-one challenges and enables the player to develop technical skills and have fun.

*Diane Scavuzzo: How does this compare to what happens in Germany?*

**Eddie Loewen:** In Germany, many clubs use one-on-one, 2v2, 3v3 training, as these small-sided challenges help the player learn to make decisions by themselves than in a traditional youth soccer practice in America. With Funiño, players have to make decisions off the ball as well and players never have a chance to turn their minds off.

## **PLAYERS ARE ALWAYS ENGAGED AND THIS BUILDS A LOT OF AUTONOMY.**

In America, all too often training sessions and games will end in a 6v6, 7v7, 8v8 with obviously less time for each player on the ball.

## **WE HAVE KIDS SITTING IN CARS DRIVING LONG DISTANCES TO SOCCER PRACTICE AND THEN SITTING ON THE BENCH.**

Funiño is a simple solution — we can always adapt to the key points the coach wants to emphasize. For example, by adding big goals and a goalkeeper you now play a game with 4v4 on the field. Or you can make it 5v5 — but the philosophy is to keep kids having fun playing the game and learning.

At Bundesliga's youth club **Fortuna Dusseldorf**, 25% of all youth sessions for U11 are 1v1 or 3v3. At the U9 level, 50% of all the training and even competitive matches are also 3v3 or 1v1, and 25% are 4+1 (four field players with a goalkeeper.) Every competition at this age is a training session.

In America, we just need to focus on implementing the small-sided games and a methodology that will help technical development and keep kids in the game.