Player Grassroots Futsal Pilot & Analysis Report

Ontario Soccer

May 2026

Play. Inspire. Unite.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Ontario Soccer would like to express its sincere gratitude to everyone who participated in and contributed to the successful completion of this pilot project. Our appreciation goes to all the participants, including the players, coaches, clubs, match officials, and parents/guardians, whose cooperation and time were essential in executing the event and gathering meaningful data.

Executive Summary

Ontario Soccer conducted a Grassroots Futsal Festival pilot to explore how futsal can be delivered in a grassroots festival environment and to identify variables relevant to the development of future Grassroots Futsal Standards. The pilot examined how modified futsal formats shape the match learning environment for grassroots players, with particular focus on the frequency and context of key game actions.

The pilot was delivered across six one-day festivals (three female and three male) at Cardinal Carter Catholic High School in Aurora, Ontario. While the pilot was initially designed to include Under 7, Under 9, Under 11, and Under 13, the Under 7 age group was removed due to insufficient registration. The pilot was therefore delivered for Under 9, Under 11, and Under 13 age groups. Under 9 players participated in 3v3 (no goalkeeper), 4v4 (with goalkeeper), and 5v5 (with goalkeeper) formats. Under 11 and Under 13 participated in 4v4 and 5v5 formats. Court sizes were scaled to align with the number of players on the court and adjusted to fit the facility space.

Data collection was limited to video analysis. No formal coach surveys, player feedback tools, or operational tracking measures were implemented as part of this pilot. A total of 48 matches were recorded across three festival dates (15 Under 9 matches, 15 Under 11 matches, and 18 Under 13 matches). Matches were coded using predefined action definitions and reported as average occurrences per minute to support comparison across formats with different match durations. Due to the gym-based video capture environment and occasional ball-tracking interruptions, there is potential for minor undercounting of some actions; however, these limitations are not expected to change the overall trends observed across formats and age groups.

Key Findings (Pilot Observations)

Across all age groups and formats, the festival environment consistently produced frequent exposures to key game situations aligned with grassroots learning priorities, including individual duels, pressured receiving moments, contested shooting, and transition events.

1. Match tempo remained high across all formats, with frequent restarts and regular shooting opportunities.
    - All age groups demonstrated frequent on-ball actions and repeated attacking moments. Ball-in-play time generally increased in larger formats, while reduced player formats often produced higher restart frequency and higher shot activity per minute.
2. Players were regularly exposed to 1v1 situations, with reduced formats producing more frequent individual duels.
    - Under 9 3v3 produced the highest frequency of 1v1 situations, and the 4v4 format consistently produced more frequent 1v1 exposure than 5v5 at Under 11 and Under 13.
3. Pressured receiving and shielding moments occurred consistently, supporting repeated small-space problem solving.
    - Across formats, players experienced frequent moments of receiving with pressure on the back and shielding. These situations were present across all ages and appeared most frequent in reduced player formats, particularly at Under 13.

4. Shooting context differed by format, with reduced player formats generating more frequent pressured shooting situations.
    - Shot attempts occurred regularly across all age groups. The smaller formats, particularly 4v4 at Under 11 and Under 13, produced higher rates of shots under pressure and blocked shots, indicating more frequent contested shooting moments.
5. Transition moments were frequent across all formats, reflected through turnovers and interceptions.
    - All age groups experienced frequent changes of possession. Reduced player formats, particularly 4v4, often produced higher frequencies of forced turnovers, suggesting more frequent pressure-related regains and transitional game states.

In addition to the coded results, pilot staff recorded observational notes to provide qualitative context on game flow, engagement, and format suitability.

Implications for Grassroots Futsal Standards

The pilot findings provide an evidence-informed foundation to begin drafting Grassroots Futsal Standards that emphasize developmentally appropriate environments, high involvement, and repeated exposure to key situational instances. Rather than prescribing a single "best" format for all ages, future standards can be shaped around principles that ensure consistent learning conditions, including: scaled courts, appropriate player numbers, frequent decision-making opportunities, and high repetition of meaningful game actions.
Based on the observed patterns across age groups and formats, the following format considerations may be used as a starting point for future standards development:

- Under 8–Under 9: 4v4 (with goalkeeper)
- Under 10–Under 11: 4v4 (with goalkeeper)
- Under 12–Under 13: 5v5 (with goalkeeper), delivered on a regulation futsal court scaled toward the smaller end of the allowable range

Additional work may be required to determine age-appropriate goal sizes and equipment options that are both developmentally suitable and realistically available across Ontario facilities.

Next Steps

This pilot provides sufficient evidence to support an initial draft version of Grassroots Futsal Standards in Ontario. Further piloting and stakeholder engagement would add value by improving implementation confidence and ensuring feasibility across different regions and facility conditions. Recommended next steps include:

- Expanding pilot delivery across multiple facilities and regional contexts
- Collecting structured coach and stakeholder feedback
- Validating format considerations across additional age groups
- Reviewing goal size and equipment feasibility across gym settings
- Developing practical implementation resources aligned to draft standards (court setup visuals, format summaries, and delivery guidance)

Purpose of the Pilot Project and Insights Report

The Grassroots Futsal Festival pilot was designed to explore how futsal can be delivered in a grassroots festival environment aligned with Ontario Soccer's Player Development philosophy, with a specific focus on identifying variables relevant to future standardization.

In addition to examining delivery models, the pilot responds to broader contextual factors influencing soccer participation in Ontario. The province's extended winter season presents ongoing challenges for year-round soccer programming, where access to indoor turf facilities and domes is often limited by cost and availability. In contrast, futsal can be delivered in gymnasium spaces that are widely available across communities and generally require lower facility costs than indoor turf environments. This creates potential for increased accessibility and participation during the winter months, particularly for grassroots players.

The pilot also aligns with Ontario Soccer's long-term strategic direction. The Ontario Soccer 20252036 Technical Development Plan emphasizes the importance of diversified, year-round programming and identifies futsal as a key priority within the organization's broader approach to Player Development and participation growth (Ontario Soccer, 2025, p. 48). Within this context, futsal is positioned not as a replacement for outdoor soccer, but as a complementary environment that can support player engagement, learning, and access across the province.

Report purpose

The purpose of this report is to translate observations and data collected during the Grassroots Futsal Festival pilot into evidence-informed insights that can support the future development of Grassroots Futsal Standards; like Canada Soccer's Grassroots Standards (Canada Soccer, 2025). Rather than evaluating success or failure of the Grassroots Futsal Festival pilot, the report focuses on identifying delivery considerations, trade-offs, and emerging principles that may inform standardized approaches to grassroots futsal programming in Ontario.

Context for Interpretation: What Is Futsal?

"Futsal is the FIFA-recognised form of small-sided indoor football… It is played between two teams who each have five players on the pitch at any one time, with rolling substitutes and a smaller ball than soccer that is harder and less bouncy.

The small amount of space means players must have great technique and skill, and as well as a professional sport in its own right with national and international championships, it is also considered a development tool for 11-a-side football" (UEFA, 2025).

For the purpose of this pilot and report, futsal is viewed not simply as an indoor alternative to outdoor soccer, but as a distinct game environment with implications for player load, learning opportunities, coaching behaviour, and event delivery. These characteristics are central to interpreting the observations and insights presented throughout this report and to inform future Grassroots Futsal Standards.

Section 2 - Pilot Design and Methodology

2.1 Participant Overview

Age Groups Involved

The pilot initially included four grassroots age groups (for both females and males): Under 7, Under 9, Under 11, and Under 13. Due to the lack of registrations for Under 7, it was removed from the Pilot and the three remaining age groups were delivered. These age groups were selected to align with Canada Soccer's grassroots development stages and to explore how futsal delivery may need to adapt across early and late childhood. Under 8, Under 10 and Under 12 were not hosted due to scheduling, staffing availability and the understanding that those ages could play a year up if interested and spots were available.

Number of Players

Across six festivals (three female and three male), 28 teams participated in a minimum three matches per event. Team sizes ranged from five to seven players depending on age group and format, resulting in a broad sample of grassroots participants experiencing futsal within the festival environment.

Club and District Participation

Participation was open to Ontario Soccer-affiliated member clubs. Teams represented a range of districts, providing insight into how futsal delivery functions across varied club contexts and levels of prior futsal exposure.

The participating clubs include the following:

Under 9 - Female (four teams):

- Aurora FC
- Future Girls Soccer United (two teams)
- Islington Rangers

Under 9 - Male (two teams):

- First Touch FC
- Islington Rangers

Under 11 - Female (four teams):

- Erin Mills SC (two teams)
- Islington Rangers
- Newmarket SC

Under 11 - Male (six teams):

- First Touch FC
- Innisfil SC
- Islington Rangers
- Newmarket SC
- Richmond Hill SC
- Stouffville SC

Under 13 - Female (six teams):

- Kleinberg Nobleton SC
- LFC IA Mississauga SC (two teams)
- London Alliance FC
- Unionville Milliken SC (two teams)

Under 13 - Male (six teams):

- Barrie SC (two teams)
- Burlington SC
- Fergus-Elora District Soccer
- Guelph Soccer (two teams)

2.2 Festival Structure

Festival Model Used

All festivals were delivered using a one-day festival model. This approach was selected to reduce travel burden, minimize facility costs, and mirror common grassroots festival delivery models used across the province. Female and male festivals for the same age group were hosted on the same day.

Different to the common festival, teams played a variety of different formats. Under 9 played in three formats: 3v3 (no goalkeeper), 4v4 (incl. goalkeeper) and the traditional 5v5 (incl. goalkeeper). Under 11 and Under 13 both played in two formats 4v4 (incl. goalkeeper) and the traditional 5v5 (incl. goalkeeper).

All formats had modified court sizes which were determined based on the traditional 5v5 court but reduced to correlate with the number of players on the court.

Number of Courts

Each festival was hosted in the triple gymnasium of Cardinal Carter Catholic High School in Aurora, Ontario. Two courts were used for each of the 3v3 and 4v4 formats. For the 5v5 format, one full-size court was used due to space requirements. The 5v5 format was scheduled after the 4v4 format.

Rotation Model

Teams rotated through a fixed schedule, ensuring equitable rest periods and consistent intervals between matches. Age groups started the festival by playing the smallest format applicable to their age group and ended with playing the traditional 5v5 format.

Total Match Load Per Team

Match time varied for the different age groups:

Under 9 teams participated in five total matches. The teams were split into two to both play one 3v3 format and one 4v4 format before combining for the 5v5 format.

- Two 3v3 matches (20 min match)
- Two 4v4 matches (30 min match)
- One 5v5 match (40 min match)

Under 11 and Under 13 teams participated in three total matches. The teams were split into two to both play one 4v4 format before combining for the 5v5 format.

- Two 4v4 matches (30 min match)
- One 5v5 match (40 min match)

2.3 Game Formats Tested

Game Formats

- 3v3 (no goalkeeper) - 20 min match
- 4v4 (incl. goalkeeper) - 30 min match
- 5v5 (incl. goalkeeper) - 40 min match

Number of Players Per Team

For the 3v3 and 4v4 format teams were divided into two smaller teams to each play a game at each modified format before combining again to play as a full squad in the 5v5 format aligning with maximum match time allowed per day per the Canada Soccer Grassroots Standards (Canada Soccer, 2025).

- Under 9 - 12 players per team
- Under 11 and Under 13 - 14 players per team

Court Size

Court dimensions were adapted to fit within a triple gym setup while maintaining proportional scaling relative to the traditional 5v5 futsal court.

- Length (touchline): 20 metres
- Width (goal line): 12 metres

4v4 Format

- Length (touchline): 25 metres
- Width (goal line): 16 metres

5v5 Format - regulation sized format per FIFA Futsal Laws of the Game

- Length (touchline): 38-42 metres
- Width (goal line): 20 -25 metres

Due to the gymnasium at Cardinal Carter, modifications were required to fit the modified courts in the space at the same time. The actual court sizes were the following:

3v3 Format

- Length (touchline): 20 metres
- Width (goal line): 12 metres

4v4 Format

- Length (touchline): 22 metres
- Width (goal line): 13 metres

5v5 Format

- Length (touchline): 38 metres
- Width (goal line): 20 metres

Game Duration

Game length was selected to maximize ball contacts and engagement while allowing multiple matches per day team.

Durations were as followed:

- 3v3 (no goalkeeper) - 20 min match
- 4v4 (incl. goalkeeper) - 30 min match
- 5v5 (incl. goalkeeper) - 40 min match

Rule Adaptations

Rule adaptations were applied to support age-appropriate learning and promote continuous play in the 3v3 and 4v4 formats. These adaptations included modified court sizes, modified goal sizes, the removal of goalkeepers in the 3v3 format, and simplified procedures for foul counts, free kicks, and

penalty kicks. All adaptations were communicated to participating clubs and coaches in advance through the festival rules and information bulletin.

2.4 Data Collection Methods

Data collection for the Grassroots Futsal Festival pilot was limited to structured video analysis. No formal surveys, interviews, or operational tracking tools were implemented as part of this pilot. The methodology reflects the exploratory nature of the project and its primary aim of examining on-court behaviours and actions within modified futsal formats.

Video Capture

Matches were recorded using fixed camera systems positioned to capture the full court. Video files were organized and prepared for analysis following each festival day.

Video Capture Limitations

Video capture was conducted in a gymnasium environment using a fixed Veo camera system with automated ball tracking. In some instances, the tracking system briefly lost the ball for short periods (e.g., during movement in the spectator area, when a substitution on-the-fly was made, or when players/coaches obstructed the camera view). As a result, there is the potential for minor error in the coding set, including missed actions or slight underestimation of certain event frequencies. These limitations were considered during analysis and do not materially change the overall trends observed across formats and age groups.

Video Coding and Analysis

Selected matches were coded using performance analysis software to capture predefined technical and tactical actions relevant to grassroots futsal delivery. Coding focused on on-ball actions, player interactions, and game situations that could inform future Grassroots Futsal Standards. Example of Code Window can be seen in Appendix A. Only matches with sufficient video quality and full-court visibility were included in the analysis set.

Metric Definitions

All coded actions were defined in advance to ensure consistency and reliability of analysis. Definitions were designed to be practical and observable within a festival environment and are presented separately within this report and can be found in Appendix B.

Scope and Limitations

The pilot did not include formal coach surveys, structured feedback tools, player engagement scoring, or operational efficiency metrics. As a result, insights drawn from this analysis reflect observed in-game behaviours rather than stakeholder perceptions or off-court delivery

considerations. These limitations are acknowledged and inform recommendations for future pilot phases.

Data Sample Overview

A total of 48 matches were recorded across three festival dates. This included 15 Under 9 matches, 15 Under 11 matches, and 18 Under 13 matches. To ensure comparability across formats with different match lengths (20', 30', and 40'), results are presented as average actions per minute (AVG per MIN) by format within each age group. For additional clarity, per-minute rates are also translated into: "approximately one action every X minutes."

Section 3 - Key Observations

The metrics in Section 3 describe the *frequency of exposures* to key match actions and game situations (e.g., 1v1s, pressured receiving, shooting under pressure, turnovers, and transitions). Higher or lower values should not be interpreted as "better" or "worse" performance. Instead, they describe how each format may shape the learning environment by influencing the repetition and context of these actions.

3.1 Frequency and Nature of On-Ball Actions

This section provides baseline context to the frequency and nature of on-ball actions observed across age groups and futsal formats. The analysis focuses on indicators that reliably describe match tempo, including:

- Ball in play time (to get an understanding for flow and continuity)
- Restarts (sideline inbounds, goalkeeper restarts, and corners)
- Shooting activity (shot attempts and goals scored)
- Attacking numerical situations (attacking numbers advantage and disadvantage)

Under 9 (3v3, 4v4, 5v5)

Note: Under 9 was the only age group that included the 3v3 format

Table 3.1a - Under 9 Match Flow and Action Frequency per Minute by Format

Format	Ball in Play (per min)	Sideline Inbound (per min)	GK Restarts (per min)	Corners (per min)	Shot Attempts (per min)	Goals (per min)	Attacking #s Advantage (per min)	Attacking #s Disadvantage (per min)
3v3	0.41	1.68	0.79	0.27	1.32	0.53	0.40	0.39
4v4	0.50	1.88	0.78	0.37	1.36	0.49	0.49	0.44
5v5	0.55	1.32	0.54	0.41	1.41	0.35	0.48	0.39

Key Observation (U9):

Ball in play time increased as formats progressed from 3v3 to 5v5. The 5v5 format produced the highest ball-in-play rate (0.55 per minute), while 3v3 produced the lowest (0.41 per minute). This suggests more continuous play in the larger format within the festival environment.

Restarts occurred frequently across all formats. Sideline inbounds were most frequent in 4v4 (1.88 per minute), indicating a higher tempo of ball turnover across touchlines in this format. Goalkeeper restarts were present in all formats due to modified rules and restart patterns, though these decreased in frequency in 5v5 compared to the smaller formats.

Shot attempt rates were high and relatively consistent across formats, while goal rates decreased in 5v5 compared to 3v3 and 4v4. Attacking numerical advantage and disadvantage situations were present across all formats, suggesting frequent changes in player positioning and moments of temporary imbalance during match play.

Under 11 (4v4, 5v5)

Table 3.1b - Under 11 Match Flow and Action Frequency per Minute by Format

Format	Ball in Play (per min)	Sideline Inbound (per min)	GK Restarts (per min)	Corners (per min)	Shot Attempts (per min)	Goals (per min)	Attacking #s Advantage (per min)	Attacking #s Disadvantage (per min)
4v4	0.51	1.56	0.74	0.41	1.54	0.18	0.50	0.46
5v5	0.53	0.97	0.50	0.33	1.18	0.15	0.45	0.44

Key Observation (U11):

Under 11 ball-in play time was similar between formats, with a small increase in 5v5 compared to 4v4. A notable difference was the reduction in sideline inbounds in 5v5 (0.97 per minute) compared to 4v4 (1.56 per minute), suggesting fewer boundary stoppages or a different spacing effect in the larger format.

Shooting activity was higher in 4v4 than 5v5, with shot attempts occurring at a rate of 1.54 per minute in 4v4 compared to 1.18 per minute in 5v5. Attacking numbers advantage and disadvantage situations remained frequent across both formats, highlighting the transitional nature of play.

Under 13 (4v4, 5v5)

Table 3.1c - Under 13 Match Flow and Action Frequency per Minute by Format

Format	Ball in Play (per min)	Sideline Inbound (per min)	GK Restarts (per min)	Corners (per min)	Shot Attempts (per min)	Goals (per min)	Attacking #s Advantage (per min)	Attacking #s Disadvantage (per min)
4v4	0.57	1.79	0.84	0.23	1.68	0.19	0.54	0.45

5v5	0.63	0.76	0.77	0.27	1.19	0.14	0.49	0.31

Key Observation (U13):

Under 13 produced the highest overall ball-in-play rates across the pilot, with 5v5 reaching 0.63 per minute. Sideline inbounds dropped substantially from 4v4 (1.79 per minute) to 5v5 (0.76 per minute), suggesting more sustained phases of play or fewer boundary-triggered resets in the larger format.

Shot attempts were notably higher in 4v4 than 5v5, indicating more frequent shooting activity in the reduced player format. Attacking numerical advantage situations were frequent in both formats, though attacking numerical disadvantage situations were lower in 5v5 compared to 4v4 at this age group.

Summary Observation

Across all age groups, the festival environment produced high frequencies of on-ball actions, with regular restarts, frequent shooting activity, and repeated moments of numerical imbalance. Ball in play time generally increased in larger formats (particularly 5v5), while smaller formats (particularly 4v4) often produced higher restart frequency and higher shot activity per minute. The presence of repeated attacking numbers advantage and disadvantage situations across all age groups suggests that grassroots futsal formats consistently expose players to transitional and dynamic match conditions.

3.2 1v1 Situations

To better understand how frequently players were exposed to individual attacking and defending problems within match play, 1v1 situations were coded across all recorded matches. This action captures moments where a player was directly confronted by an opponent in a situation requiring an immediate individual solution, either to beat pressure, protect possession, or delay/deny progression.

Under 9 (3v3, 4v4, 5v5)

Note: Under 9 was the only age group that included the 3v3 format

Table 3.2a - Under 9 1v1 Situations per Minute by Format

Format	1v1s (per min)	Interpretation (approx.)
3v3	0.84	~1 1v1 every 1.2 min
4v4	0.60	~1 1v1 every 1.7 min
5v5	0.51	~1 1v1 every 2.0 min

Key Observation (U9):

Under 9 produced frequent 1v1 situations across all formats. The highest frequency occurred in the 3v3 format, where players were involved in approximately one 1v1 every 1.2 minutes. The frequency declined as formats increased in size, with 5v5 producing approximately one 1v1 every 2.0 minutes.

This implies that reduced player formats created more regular exposure to individual duels within match play at this age group.

Under 11 (4v4, 5v5)

Table 3.2b - Under 11 1v1 Situations per Minute by Format

Format	1v1s (per min)	Interpretation (approx.)
4v4	0.56	~1 1v1 every 1.8 min
5v5	0.49	~1 1v1 every 2.0 min

Key Observation (U11):

Under 11 maintained regular 1v1 exposure in both formats. The 4v4 format produced slightly more frequent 1v1 situations than 5v5, with players involved in approximately one 1v1 every 1.8 minutes, compared to one every 2.0 minutes in 5v5. While the difference between formats was smaller than at Under 9, reduced player formats still appeared to increase the frequency of direct individual encounters.

Under 13 (4v4, 5v5)

Table 3.2c - Under 13 1v1 Situations per Minute by Format

Format	1v1s (per min)	Interpretation (approx.)
4v4	0.68	~1 1v1 every 1.5 min
5v5	0.59	~1 1v1 every 1.7 min

Key Observation (U13):

Under 13 produced consistent 1v1 frequency in both formats. The 4v4 format again produced a higher frequency than 5v5, with approximately one 1v1 every 1.5 minutes, compared to one every 1.7 minutes in 5v5. This indicates that direct individual pressure moments remained common at this age group and continued to be slightly more frequent within the reduced player format.

Contextual Notes on Interpretation

Across all age groups, 1v1 situations occurred frequently in every format observed. Differences in 1v1 frequency should be interpreted within the context of format structure and available support. Reduced player formats often created more immediate pressure situations and fewer passing outlets, which may increase the likelihood that players must solve individual problems on the ball. Larger formats still produced regular 1v1 situations but may allow more opportunities for earlier support, combination play, or off-ball movement that changes the timing and location of individual duels. These findings represent observed 1v1 frequency and do not evaluate the success rate or quality of execution within the duel.

Summary Observation

Across all age groups, futsal festival formats consistently generated frequent 1v1 situations. The 3v3 format at Under 9 produced the highest rate of 1v1 exposure, and reduced player formats

(particularly 4v4) continued to produce slightly higher 1v1 frequencies than 5v5 at Under 11 and Under 13. These patterns provide baseline context for interpreting subsequent findings related to shielding, receiving under pressure, shooting context, and turnovers.

3.3 Playing with Pressure on the Back (Receiving + Shielding)

Examining how frequently players were required to manage defensive pressure from behind during match play, two actions were coded through video analysis: Receiving with Pressure on the Back and Shielding Moments. These actions were used to capture how often players were exposed to situations where they had to protect possession while under immediate opposition pressure.

Under 9 (3v3, 4v4, 5v5)

Note: Under 9 was the only age group that included the 3v3 format

Table 3.3a - Under 9 Pressure on Back Actions per Minute by Format

Format	Shielding (per min)	Receiving w/ Pressure on Back (per min)	Interpretation (approx.)
3v3	0.34	0.51	~1 shielding every 2.9 min; ~1 pressured receive every 2.0 min
4v4	0.32	0.52	~1 shielding every 3.2 min; ~1 pressured receive every 1.9 min
5v5	0.20	0.35	~1 shielding every 5.0 min; ~1 pressured receive every 2.9 min

Key Observation (U9):

Across Under 9 matches, the 3v3 and 4v4 formats produced similar rates of receiving with pressure on the back (≈ one every ~2 minutes), while 5v5 produced fewer back-pressure receiving moments and fewer shielding moments overall. Shielding moments were least frequent in 5v5, occurring approximately once every five minutes.

Under 11 (4v4, 5v5)

Table 3.3b - Under 11 Pressure on Back Actions per Minute by Format

Format	Shielding (per min)	Receiving w/ Pressure on Back (per min)	Interpretation (approx.)
4v4	0.29	0.45	~1 shielding every 3.5 min; ~1 pressured receive every 2.2 min
5v5	0.27	0.40	~1 shielding every 3.7 min; ~1 pressured receive every 2.5 min

Key Observation (U11):

In Under 11, both formats showed regular exposure to pressured receiving and shielding situations. The 4v4 format produced slightly more frequent pressured receiving moments than 5v5, while shielding rates were similar across both formats.

Under 13 (4v4, 5v5)

Table 3.3c - Under 13 Pressure on Back Actions per Minute by Format

Format	Shielding (per min)	Receiving w/ Pressure on Back (per min)	Interpretation (approx.)
4v4	0.40	0.58	~1 shielding every 2.5 min; ~1 pressured receive every 1.7 min
5v5	0.26	0.39	~1 shielding every 3.8 min; ~1 pressured receive every 2.6 min

Key Observation (U13):

Under 13 showed the clearest difference between formats. The 4v4 format produced more frequent pressured receiving moments and shielding moments than 5v5. In practical terms, players in 4v4 were exposed to receiving with pressure on the back approximately once every 1.7 minutes, compared to once every 2.6 minutes in 5v5.

Contextual Notes on Interpretation

The differences observed between formats should be interpreted as a reflection of the game environment created by each format (including court size, player density, and spacing). These values describe frequency of exposure to pressured receiving and shielding situations and do not indicate quality of execution or player success within those moments.

Summary Observation

Across all age groups, players were consistently exposed to situations requiring them to receive and protect the ball under pressure from behind. The frequency of these situations varied by age group and format. Reduced player formats (particularly 4v4) frequently created more regular exposure to pressured receiving and shielding moments, especially at Under 13, while 5v5 generally produced fewer shielding moments per minute and fewer pressured receiving situations.

3.4 Shooting Context and Shot Quality

To provide insight into shooting behaviours across futsal formats, three shooting-related actions were analyzed through video coding:

- Shot Attempts (overall volume of shooting)
- Blocked Shots (defensive pressure impacting shot execution)
- Shots Under Pressure (shots taken while actively challenged by a defender)

Under 9 (3v3, 4v4, 5v5)

Note: Under 9 was the only age group that included the 3v3 format

Table 3.4a - Under 9 Shooting Actions per Minute by Format

Format	Shot Attempts (per min)	Blocked Shots (per min)	Shots Under Pressure (per min)	Interpretation (approx.)
3v3	1.32	0.36	0.69	~1 shot every 0.8 min; ~1 blocked shot every 2.8 min; ~1 pressured shot every 1.4 min
4v4	1.36	0.37	0.70	~1 shot every 0.7min; ~1 blocked shot every 2.7 min; ~1 pressured shot every 1.4 min
5v5	1.41	0.38	0.45	~1 shot every 0.7 min; ~1 blocked shot every 2.7 min; ~1 pressured shot every 2.2 min

Key Observation (U9):

Across all formats, Under 9 matches produced a high frequency of shot attempts. However, the 5v5 format showed a lower rate of shots under pressure compared to 3v3 and 4v4. Practically, players in 3v3 and 4v4 were taking a pressured shot approximately once every 1.4 minutes, compared to once every 2.2 minutes in 5v5.

This indicates that while shooting volume remained relatively consistent across formats, the context of shooting (specifically defender pressure at the moment of shooting) differed more noticeably.

Under 11 (4v4, 5v5)

Table 3.4b - Under 11 Shooting Actions per Minute by Format

Format	Shot Attempts (per min)	Blocked Shots (per min)	Shots Under Pressure (per min)	Interpretation (approx.)
4v4	1.54	0.32	0.81	~1 shot every 0.6min; ~1 blocked shot every 3.2 min; ~1 pressured shot every 1.2 min
5v5	1.18	0.35	0.54	~1 shot every 0.9 min; ~1 blocked shot every 2.9 min; ~1 pressured shot every 1.9 min

Key Observation (U11):

The 4v4 format produced higher rates of overall shot attempts and shots under pressure compared to 5v5. Put simply, Under 11 players in 4v4 took a shot approximately once every 0.6 minutes, and a pressured shot once every 1.2 minutes. In the 5v5 format, shot attempts occurred closer to once every 0.9 minutes, and pressured shots once every 1.9 minutes.

Blocked shot rates were similar across formats, suggesting that while defensive pressure existed in both, the smaller format created more frequent shooting opportunities and more frequent pressured shooting moments.

Under 13 (4v4, 5v5)

Table 3.4c - Under 13 Shooting Actions per Minute by Format

Format	Shot Attempts (per min)	Blocked Shots (per min)	Shots Under Pressure (per min)	Interpretation (approx.)
4v4	1.68	0.56	0.77	~1 shot every 0.6min; ~1 blocked shot every 1.8 min; ~1 pressured shot every 1.3 min
5v5	1.19	0.38	0.50	~1 shot every 0.8 min; ~1 blocked shot every 2.6 min; ~1 pressured shot every 2.0 min

Key Observation (U13):

Under 13 showed a clear difference between formats. The 4v4 format produced higher rates of shot attempts, blocked shots, and shots under pressure compared to 5v5. Players in 4v4 were taking a pressured shot approximately once every 1.3 minutes, compared to once every 2.0 minutes in 5v5.

The higher blocked shot rate in 4v4 also suggests that more shots occurred in conditions where defenders were able to actively challenge or intercept attempts, reinforcing the idea that the format produced more frequent shooting interactions in tighter spaces.

Contextual Notes on Interpretation

Across all age groups, each format generated regular shooting opportunities. Differences between formats were observed less in the total frequency of shooting and more in the context of shooting, particularly in relation to defensive pressure.
The combination of shots under pressure and blocked shots provides a practical indicator of shot context and difficulty within the constraints of the current analysis.

Summary Observation

Across the festival environment, players were consistently exposed to frequent shooting moments. Reduced player formats (particularly 4v4) often produced higher rates of shooting under defensive pressure, especially at Under 11 and Under 13. This reflects that the structure of smaller formats may increase the frequency with which players are required to execute shooting actions in tighter, more contested situations, compared to the traditional 5v5 format.

3.5 Defensive Pressure + Turnovers / Transitions

To examine how the different futsal formats influence possession outcomes and transitions, the following defensive and transition-related actions were analyzed through video coding:

- Interceptions (reading and winning the ball in passing lanes)
- Forced Turnovers (regains caused by direct defensive pressure)
- Unforced Turnovers (possession losses not directly forced by a defender)

Under 9 (3v3, 4v4, 5v5)

Note: Under 9 was the only age group that included the 3v3 format

Table 3.5a - Under 9 Defensive/Transition Actions per Minute by Format

Format	Interceptions (per min)	Forced Turnovers (per min)	Unforced Turnovers (per min)	Interpretation (approx.)
3v3	0.50	0.99	0.74	~1 interception every 2.0 min; ~1 forced turnover every 1.0 min; ~1 unforced turnover every 1.3 min
4v4	0.62	0.92	0.72	~1 interception every 1.6 min; ~1 forced turnover every 1.1 min; ~1 unforced turnover every 1.4 min
5v5	0.53	0.75	0.59	~1 interception every 1.9 min; ~1 forced turnover every 1.3 min; ~1 unforced turnover every 1.7 min

Key Observation (U9):

All formats produced frequent turnover and interception activity, reflecting consistent transition moments throughout play. The 3v3 and 4v4 formats produced higher turnover frequency overall, particularly for forced turnovers, which occurred approximately once every 1.0–1.1 minutes. In comparison, forced turnovers in 5v5 occurred approximately once every 1.3 minutes.

Unforced turnovers were also frequent across formats, though the 5v5 format produced a slightly lower rate of unforced turnovers compared to 3v3 and 4v4.

Under 11 (4v4, 5v5)

Table 3.5b - Under 11 Defensive/Transition Actions per Minute by Format

Format	Interceptions (per min)	Forced Turnovers (per min)	Unforced Turnovers (per min)	Interpretation (approx.)
4v4	0.78	0.96	0.68	~1 interception every 1.3 min; ~1 forced turnover every 1.0 min; ~1 unforced turnover every 1.5 min
5v5	0.72	0.71	0.59	~1 interception every 1.4 min; ~1 forced turnover every 1.4 min; ~1 unforced turnover every 1.7 min

Key Observation (U11):

At Under 11, the 4v4 format produced a noticeably higher rate of forced turnovers than 5v5. Forced turnovers occurred about once every 1.0 minutes in 4v4, compared to once every 1.4 minutes in 5v5.

Interception rates remained high in both formats and were relatively similar. Unforced turnovers occurred frequently in both formats, though slightly more often in 4v4.

Under 13 (4v4, 5v5)

Table 3.5c - Under 13 Defensive/Transition Actions per Minute by Format

Format	Interceptions (per min)	Forced Turnovers (per min)	Unforced Turnovers (per min)	Interpretation (approx.)
4v4	0.90	0.68	0.56	~1 interception every 1.1 min; ~1 forced turnover every 1.5 min; ~1 unforced turnover every 1.8 min
5v5	0.78	0.63	0.40	~1 interception every 1.3 min; ~1 forced turnover every 1.6 min; ~1 unforced turnover every 2.5 min

Key Observation (U13):

Under 13 produced high rates of interceptions and turnover events across both formats. The 4v4 format generated more frequent interceptions and unforced turnovers than 5v5, while forced turnover rates were relatively similar between formats.

A notable difference at this age group was the reduction in unforced turnovers in the 5v5 format, which occurred approximately once every 2.5 minutes, compared to once every 1.8 minutes in 4v4.

Contextual Notes on Interpretation

Across all age groups, turnover-related actions occurred frequently, reflecting the naturally transitional nature of futsal play. In this report, forced turnovers are used as a practical indicator of situations where defensive pressure directly contributed to a regain, while unforced turnovers provide context regarding possession losses not directly caused by immediate defensive contact. These results describe the frequency of transition events within each game environment and are intended to describe the environment rather than evaluate performance or tactical quality.

Summary Observation

Across all age groups and formats, the festival environment produced frequent transition moments, reflected through high rates of interceptions and turnovers. Reduced player formats (particularly 4v4) consistently generated higher frequencies of forced turnover events compared to 5v5 at Under 9 and Under 11, suggesting more regular pressure-related regains in those environments. At Under 13, interception and turnover rates remained high across both formats, with 4v4 producing more frequent transition-related events overall.

3.6 Ball in Play Time (Match Flow Context)

Ball in play time was used as a high-level indicator of match continuity and overall game flow across age groups and formats. While restarts remain a meaningful part of futsal learning and repetition, differences in ball in play time help contextualize how each format influenced the rhythm of play within the festival environment.

Table 3.6 Average Ball in Play Time by Age Group and Format

Age Group	Format	Match Minutes	Ball In Play (per min)	Ball Out of Play (per min)	Ball In Play (%)
Under 9	3v3	20'	8.28	12.08	41%
	4v4	30'	15.04	15.79	49%
	5v5	40'	21.94	18.95	54%
Under 11	4v4	30'	15.17	15.09	50%
	5v5	40'	21.28	19.14	53%
Under 13	4v4	30'	17.18	13.56	56%
	5v5	40'	25.05	15.74	61%

Key Observation

Across all age groups, ball in play time increased with both age and format size. Under 9 demonstrated the lowest continuity in the 3v3 format (41% ball in play), with improved continuity in 4v4 (49%) and the highest continuity in 5v5 (54%). Under 11 showed similar continuity between formats (50-53%), while Under 13 produced the highest ball in play time overall, particularly in 5v5 (61%).

Context Note

At Under 9, the 3v3 format was the first format played during the festival day and may have represented many players' first exposure to futsal rules and restart expectations. The subsequent increase in ball in play time in 4v4 may reflect both format differences and increased player familiarity with the futsal environment as the festival progressed. Same could be said for the U11 and U13 formats when they started the festival day by playing the 4v4 format before the 5v5 format.

3.7 Age-Related Trends

This section combines key trends observed across Under 9, Under 11, and Under 13 within the Grassroots Futsal Festival pilot. Trends are presented as exploratory observations drawn from coded video analysis and should be interpreted as patterns emerging from the festival environment, formats tested, and age-related changes in match behaviours. This section does not evaluate performance quality or prescribe standards but provides context to support future interpretation and standardization planning.

3.7.1 Overall Match Flow and Continuity

Across the pilot, ball in play time increased with age, and within age groups was generally higher in the larger formats (particularly 5v5). This suggests that as players progressed through age groups, match play contained fewer extended breaks in continuity and more sustained sequences of play. At the Under 9 level, the 3v3 format produced the lowest ball in play time, with continuity increasing progressively in 4v4 and 5v5. Under 11 showed more stable continuity between 4v4 and 5v5. At Under 13, ball in play time reached its highest observed rates, particularly in 5v5.

Although match flow improved with age, restarts remained frequent at all age groups, reinforcing the naturally transitional structure of futsal and the regularity of boundary and restart situations in all formats.

3.7.2 Frequency of 1v1 Exposure Across Age Groups

1v1 situations remained a consistent feature across all age groups and formats, supporting the observation that festival futsal environments create regular individual problem-solving moments. At Under 9, the highest frequency of 1v1s occurred in the 3v3 format, with exposure decreasing across 4v4 and 5v5. At Under 11 and Under 13, 4v4 continued to produce slightly more frequent 1v1 exposure than 5v5. While differences between 4v4 and 5v5 were less pronounced than the Under 9 3v3–5v5 contrast, reduced player formats continued to slightly increase the likelihood of direct individual encounters.

Across ages, the consistent frequency of 1v1 actions supports the view that futsal formats regularly place players into situations requiring immediate individual solutions, either to progress play, retain possession, or delay opponents.

3.7.3 Receiving and Protecting the Ball Under Pressure

Across all age groups, players were consistently required to manage situations where pressure arrived from behind, including both receiving with pressure on the back and shielding moments. These actions were present across all formats, but their frequency and profile changed by age and format.

Under 9 produced relatively low rates of shielding and pressured receiving overall compared to older ages, with the 3v3 and 4v4 formats generating the highest rates within the age group. Under 11 displayed more consistent frequency across formats, with less separation between 4v4 and 5v5. Under 13 showed clearer format separation again, with 4v4 producing higher frequencies of both pressured receiving and shielding than 5v5.

Across age groups, these patterns suggest that reduced player formats often create frequent pressured receiving environments, while age progression may influence the length and stability of shielding moments, particularly in older groups where players were observed sustaining protection moments longer before resolving the situation.

3.7.4 Shooting Activity and Shooting Context by Age

Shooting volume was high across all age groups and formats, but meaningful differences were observed in shooting context, particularly regarding shots under pressure and blocked shots. At Under 9, shot attempt rates were relatively consistent across formats, but shots under pressure were noticeably higher in the 3v3 and 4v4 formats compared to 5v5. Under 11 showed stronger separation between formats, with 4v4 producing higher rates of shot attempts and pressured shots than 5v5. Under 13 demonstrated the clearest differences, with 4v4 producing higher rates of shot attempts, pressured shots, and blocked shots than 5v5.

Across ages, this signifies that reduced player formats often increase the frequency of shooting actions occurring in contested conditions, while larger formats may increase the opportunities for shots that occur with slightly more time or space.

This interpretation is grounded in observable shot-related coded actions and does not assess finishing quality or expected outcome but provides context regarding the environment and constraints in which shooting actions were executed.

3.7.5 Turnovers, Interceptions, and Transitional Game Demands

Across all formats, the futsal festival environment produced frequent transitional moments, reflected by high rates of turnovers and interceptions across age groups. These transition events occurred regularly regardless of format, reinforcing the consistent “change of possession” nature of futsal play in grassroots environments.

At Under 9 and Under 11, reduced player formats (particularly 4v4) consistently produced higher frequencies of forced turnovers than the 5v5 format. Under 13 showed high transition activity in both formats, with 4v4 producing more frequent interceptions and unforced turnovers than 5v5.

Across age groups, these patterns suggest that smaller formats tend to create more frequent immediate pressure regains and quicker changes of possession, while larger formats may slightly reduce the frequency of certain turnover types, particularly unforced turnover frequency.

3.7.6 Summary of Key Age-Related Patterns

When viewed collectively, several trends emerged consistently across the pilot:

- Continuity increased with age, with Under 13 generally producing higher ball-in-play rates than Under 9, and larger formats (5v5) typically supporting more continuous play.
- 1v1 exposure remained frequent at all ages, with the greatest format-based difference occurring at Under 9 due to the inclusion of 3v3, and smaller but consistent 4v4 > 5v5 differences at Under 11 and Under 13.
- Pressured receiving and shielding moments increased with age, with Under 13 showing the highest rates overall and stronger separation between formats.
- Shooting context differed more than shooting volume, with reduced player formats producing more frequent pressured shots and blocked shots, particularly at Under 11 and Under 13.

- Transition events were frequent across all ages and formats, with forced turnovers occurring more regularly in smaller formats at Under 9 and Under 11 and continued high interception/turnover activity at Under 13.

These exploratory trends provide a foundation for identifying format considerations and delivery principles that may inform future Grassroots Futsal Standards.

3.8 Pilot Observational Context

While the primary findings in Section 3 are based on structured video analysis and per-minute action rates, additional observational notes were recorded by pilot staff to provide qualitative context around match flow, player engagement, and practical format suitability. These notes are intended to support interpretation of the coded trends and to highlight observable format behaviours that may be relevant in the development of Grassroots Futsal Standards.

3.8.1 Under 9 - Format Behaviour Notes

3v3 (no goalkeeper)

Under 9 3v3 produced the lowest ball-in-play continuity among the three formats, with frequent sideline restarts and rapid turnover sequences. Attacks often ended quickly through direct dribble attempts or early shots, resulting in short, fragmented passages rather than sustained play. From a player experience perspective, the format created frequent touches, repeated 1v1 encounters, and consistent transition moments. However, decision-making was often rushed due to constant defensive pressure and limited available space.

4v4 (with goalkeeper)

The 4v4 format appeared to create a more balanced match environment than 3v3, with improved rhythm and a clearer structure to play. The presence of a goalkeeper introduced additional decision-making opportunities, including the option to use the goalkeeper as an outlet under pressure. The court size supported a fast tempo and frequent involvement for all players while providing slightly more space for problem solving compared to 3v3. Players demonstrated a more balanced mix of individual actions (1v1s and dribbling) and small group play (simple combinations), with repeated attacking and defending transition opportunities.

5v5 (with goalkeeper)

The 5v5 format produced the highest ball-in-play continuity at Under 9, largely due to the increased space on the court and players' ability to recover and keep the ball in play before it exited the playing area. Although play sequences were often longer, much of the available space was not consistently used at this age. Attacks frequently became spread out with longer carries into open space and fewer quick turnover sequences. While goalkeepers were consistently involved in restarts and supporting possession, outfield player engagement was occasionally uneven, with players remaining deeper while play developed at the other end of the court.

Pilot-informed observation (U9)

Overall, the Under 9 4v4 format appeared to strike the strongest balance between individual involvement, goalkeeper participation, and manageable spacing to support both individual and collective play.

3.8.2 Under 11 - Format Behaviour Notes

4v4 (with goalkeeper)

Under 11 4v4 produced a consistently high-tempo environment with balanced ball-in-play continuity and frequent restarts. Despite the smaller-than-intended court size, matches remained lively with frequent shooting opportunities, repeated transition moments, and fast decision-making demands. Goalkeepers were highly engaged, frequently involved not only in shot-stopping but also in restarts and occasional pressure release moments in tight areas. From a developmental perspective, the tight playing area supported constant involvement and immediate decision-making but appeared slightly restrictive for this age group's physical growth and emerging tactical awareness. A larger court size may preserve intensity while enabling more meaningful off-ball movement and longer carrying actions.

5v5 (with goalkeeper)

The 5v5 format at Under 11 produced smoother sequences and slightly more continuous play, with fewer sideline restarts compared to 4v4. Match behaviours appeared more deliberate, with longer build-up phases and fewer rushed shooting actions. While the larger court supported composure and teamwork, overall player involvement appeared less consistent at times, with some players spending longer periods off the ball in support positions. This created a more possession-oriented environment but slightly reduced the "constant involvement" effect observed in 4v4.

Pilot-informed observation (U11)

The 4v4 format appeared most suitable for maximizing involvement and intensity at Under 11, with the pilot suggesting that a larger 4v4 court size than what was tested may better support physical and tactical development while maintaining the benefits of the reduced player format.

3.8.3 Under 13 - Format Behaviour Notes

4v4 (with goalkeeper)

Under 13 recorded strong ball-in-play continuity in the 4v4 format, even within a restricted court size. Players demonstrated higher levels of control and awareness than younger age groups and were able to sustain short passing sequences and repeated pressure moments. However, the tight space created congestion that limited the variety of attacking patterns and reduced off-ball movement opportunities. Match flow often became reaction-based, requiring near-instant decisions upon receiving the ball. Sequences frequently ended through forced turnovers or blocked attempts due to limited spacing. Goalkeeper involvement remained high but was primarily reactive, focused on shot-stopping and short restarts, with limited opportunity to support build-up play or longer distributions.

5v5 (with goalkeeper)

The 5v5 format at Under 13 supported sustained play and more structured build-up while maintaining a high tempo. The additional player and expanded court space allowed clearer team shape to emerge, with greater balance between width, depth, and central penetration. Attacks were more likely to involve multiple players, and transitions remained present throughout the game. Player roles became more distinct, with goalkeepers connecting as outlets, defenders supporting build-out behaviours, and attackers finding space higher up the court. 1v1 situations occurred with more space for execution rather than being consistently constrained by immediate pressure.

Pilot-informed observation (U13)

Overall, the 5v5 environment appeared more age appropriate for Under 13, supporting realistic tactical contexts while maintaining high engagement and repeated technical actions. Delivering 5v5 on a court scaled toward the smaller end of regulation ranges may support accessibility and preserve tempo without removing key decision-making space.

3.8.4 Summary: Observational support for preliminary format considerations

The observational notes recorded during the pilot reinforce the coded trends presented in Sections 3.1–3.5. Reduced player formats consistently created frequent involvement and repeated decision-making opportunities through transition moments, pressured receiving situations, and contested shooting behaviours.
As players progressed in age, larger formats provided greater opportunity for structured team shape, purposeful possession, and more varied attacking behaviours.

These observational insights support the preliminary format considerations outlined in Section 4 and provide practical context for how different futsal formats may influence the grassroots learning environment across age groups.

The observations in Section 3 describe the match environments created by each format. Section 4 translates these insights into pilot-informed considerations that can support early Grassroots Futsal Standards drafting.

Section 4 - Implications for Grassroots Futsal Standards

The Grassroots Futsal Festival pilot provides evidence-informed insight into how different futsal formats influence the learning environment for grassroots players. While this pilot does not establish a finalized standards model, the findings support the development of Grassroots Futsal Standards that prioritize player involvement, frequent decision-making opportunities, and developmentally appropriate delivery within an indoor environment.

4.1 Guiding Purpose of Grassroots Futsal Standards

Grassroots futsal standards should support an environment that is:

- Developmentally appropriate by age and stage

- High involvement (players are consistently engaged on and off the ball)
- High repetition (frequent exposure to key game problems)
- Inclusive and accessible, enabling participation across regions and communities
- Aligned to long-term development, where match outcomes are secondary to learning and experience

This pilot reinforces that futsal provides a match environment where players are repeatedly required to solve small-space problems under time pressure, including 1v1 situations, receiving under pressure, shielding, and shooting under pressure.

4.2 Match Environment Standards (Format, Court, and Equipment)

The pilot demonstrated that format and court scaling materially influence the frequency and context of key actions. Grassroots futsal standards should provide clear age-appropriate guidance that includes:

- Recommended game formats by age group
- Recommended court size ranges
- Goal and ball guidelines
- Clear adaptation principles when full regulation futsal is not feasible in a gym environment

Rather than prescribing a single “best” format across all ages, the standards should define what the match environment must consistently provide: frequent engagement, meaningful repetition, and safe, developmentally appropriate demands.

4.3 Learning Priorities Supported by the Pilot Findings

The pilot data highlights that grassroots futsal environments consistently expose players to:

- Frequent 1v1 situations
- Regular moments of receiving with pressure on the back
- Frequent shielding and protection moments
- High rates of shooting, including shots under defensive pressure
- Regular turnovers and interceptions, contributing to a transition-heavy environment
- Frequent numerical advantages and disadvantages, supporting repeated attacking and defending decision-making

These observed patterns provide clear direction for the types of behaviours and in-game problems that grassroots futsal standards can intentionally support through format design, court scaling, and match duration.

4.4 Preliminary Format Considerations (Pilot-Informed)

Based on the observed patterns across age groups and the data collected through video analysis, the following formats are recommended as a preliminary foundation for future Grassroots Futsal Standards:

U8–U9: 4v4 (with goalkeeper)

- The 4v4 format had more ball in play time and brought out more structured play with the introduction of a goalkeeper while still encouraging frequent exposure to 1v1 situations and transitional actions.

U10–U11: 4v4 (with goalkeeper)

- This format consistently produced frequent exposure to 1v1 situations, pressured receiving moments and transitional actions, supporting a high involvement learning environment.

U12–U13: 5v5 (with goalkeeper) on a regulation futsal court delivered at the smaller end of the allowable court size range.

- 5v5 supported continuity of play while maintaining consistent exposure to key match actions and game problems.

Ball in play trends across formats further support these preliminary considerations by highlighting the balance between continuity and repetition within each age group. While the pilot directly reflects Under 9, Under 11, and Under 13 environments, Under 8, Under 10 and Under 12 are included within preliminary considerations as practical pairings based on developmental proximity and the Canada Soccer Grassroots Standards age grouping (Canada Soccer, 2025). Further analysis may be required to determine the most appropriate goal sizes and feasible equipment options across Ontario facilities to best support consistent and age-appropriate delivery.

Section 5 - Limitations and Next Steps

5.1 Limitations

This pilot was designed as an exploratory project intended to provide initial evidence-informed insight into how modified futsal formats influence the grassroots learning environment. As a result, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and applying implications to future Grassroots Futsal Standards.

Data Source and Scope

Data collection was limited to structured video analysis of recorded festival matches. The findings presented in this report reflect only what was observable on video and do not include additional sources of information such as athlete feedback, formal coach surveys, interviews, or operational tracking tools.

Stakeholder Perspectives Not Captured

Coaches, players, and caregivers were not surveyed as part of this pilot, and no structured feedback tools were used. While informal comments were occasionally received in passing, these were not collected or analyzed systematically. As such, this report does not represent stakeholder perceptions related to format suitability, player enjoyment, or practical delivery challenges.

Operational and Delivery Variables Not Evaluated

This pilot did not formally evaluate operational elements such as staffing requirements, officiating models, roster sizes, rotation strategies, or event logistics beyond basic scheduling and format delivery. These factors may influence the feasibility and scalability of grassroots futsal programming across Ontario and should be explored further in future phases.

Pilot-Specific Facility Context

All festivals were hosted at a single facility, and court dimensions were modified to fit the available gym space. Although court scaling was consistent with the intent of the pilot, facility variability across Ontario may require additional adaptation considerations and implementation guidance within future standards.

Interpretation of “Quality” vs “Frequency”

The coded actions in this pilot quantify the frequency of exposures to key game situations (e.g., 1v1s, pressured receiving, shielding, shooting under pressure, turnovers, and transitions). The pilot does not evaluate the technical quality, success rates, or decision-making effectiveness within these moments. Findings should therefore be interpreted as environmental exposure indicators rather than performance outcomes.

Comparisons Across Formats

While actions were normalized using per-minute averages to support comparison across match lengths, each format creates a distinct match environment. Differences observed between formats should not be interpreted as outcomes of a single variable, but as the combined influence of player numbers, court space, and format-specific game demands.

5.2 Next Steps Toward Grassroots Futsal Standards

The findings from this pilot provide sufficient evidence to support the development of an initial draft version of Grassroots Futsal Standards in Ontario, including age-appropriate format guidance and delivery principles informed by the observed patterns in match play.
At the same time, additional work would add meaningful value by strengthening implementation confidence, improving province-wide feasibility, and supporting consistency across diverse club environments. The following next steps are recommended:

- Expand the pilot across more facilities and contexts
    - Future phases should explore delivery across multiple gym settings and regions to better understand how futsal standards can be applied consistently despite facility constraints.

- To complement video analysis, future pilots should incorporate formal feedback collection from coaches and other stakeholders. This could include short surveys or structured prompts focused on:
    i. clarity and suitability of format rules
    ii. perceived player enjoyment and engagement
    iii. practical delivery barriers and supports
    iv. coach confidence and comfort in the futsal environment

- Given variation in gym spaces and equipment availability across Ontario, additional research and pilot testing may be required to determine the most appropriate and feasible goal size options for different age groups.

- Alongside standards development, supporting resources may be required to assist clubs and districts with practical delivery. This may include:
    v. court setup guidance and diagrams
    vi. format-specific rules summaries
    vii. coaching and game leader support tools iv. festival scheduling templates

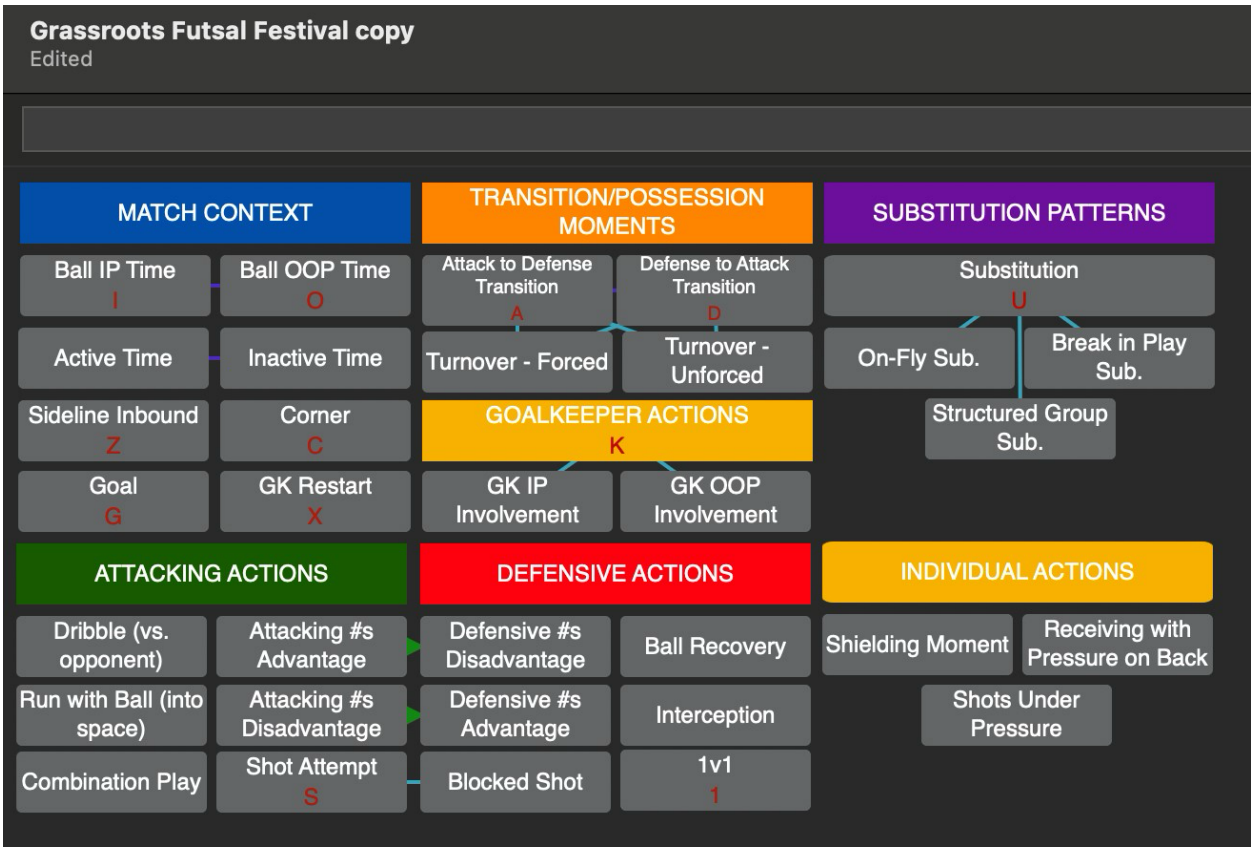
5.3 Summary

The findings from this pilot support moving forward with an initial draft of Grassroots Futsal Standards in Ontario. The observed match behaviours provide clear insight into how different futsal formats shape player exposure to key learning situations such as 1v1s, pressured receiving, shielding, shooting under pressure, and transition moments. While future phases should expand the evidence base and improve implementation guidance, this pilot offers a strong starting point for standardization that can be refined over time to ensure futsal delivery is consistent, developmentally appropriate, and accessible across the province.

Appendices

Appendix A - Example Hudl SportsCode Window

An example code window from Hudl Sportscode used to collect data from the recorded matches.



Appendix B - Metric Definitions

Grassroots Futsal Festival Metric Definitions for Analysis.

Theme	Term	Definition
Match Context	Ball In Play Time	The duration of the time the ball is within the playing area and able to be played by at least one player within the field of play.
	Ball Out of Play Time	Total duration of time the ball left the court of play.
	Active Time	Total duration of time the ball was in play to all players within the court of play.
	Inactive Time	Total duration of time the ball was not in play to all players within the court of play (e.g., when the ball went out of play, halts in play made by the match official).
	Total Match Time	Total duration of the match (calculated by Active Time + Inactive Time = Total Match Time).
	Sideline Inbound	Total number of times a sideline inbound occurs during a match. A kick-in is awarded to the opponents of the player who last touches the ball when the whole of the ball crosses the touch line, either on the ground or in the air, or touches the ceiling of the hall.
	Corner	Total number of times a corner kick occurs during a match. A corner kick is awarded when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, having last touched a player of the defending team, and a goal is not scored.
	Goalkeeper Restart	Total number of times a goalkeeper restarts the match through a goal clearance. A goal clearance occurs after the ball crosses the goal line after last being touched by a member of the attacking team, and a goal is not scored.
Individual Actions	Shielding Moment	When a player in possession uses their body to protect the ball from an opponent who is applying immediate pressure, while the ball remains within playing distance and the player's primary intention is retaining possession rather than progressing quickly.
	Receiving with Pressure on Back	When a player receives a pass while a defender is positioned behind them (or directly on their back shoulder) and is close enough that the receiver is immediately under physical or spatial pressure upon first touch.
	Shots Under Pressure	A player takes a shot while being actively pressured by an opponent, meaning the defender is close enough to realistically affect the shot through blocking, tackling, physical contact, or forcing a rushed release.
Attacking Actions	Dribble (vs. opponent)	A deliberate attempt by a player to beat an opponent using close control, deception, or skill under direct pressure. This typically occurs in a 1v1 situation where the attacker initiates an action to bypass the defender. using close control, skills, or deception.
	Run with Ball (into space)	A sequence where a player carries the ball forward or sideways into open space with no immediate pressure. The movement must be intentional and involve multiple touches while the player remains unchallenged.
	Shot Attempt	Any action clearly intended to score. Include: • On-target shots (saved or scored) • Off-target shots • Blocked shots (tag additionally under "Blocked Shot")

	Combination Play	Two or more intentional, consecutive passes between players aimed at bypassing pressure, breaking lines, or opening space. Often includes overlaps, give-and-go, or third-man runs.

	1v1 Offensive	Player in possession intentionally isolates a defender and engages them 1v1, attempting to beat them, draw a foul, or create space for a shot/pass.
	Numerical Advantage (Attack)	Any attacking situation where the team has more players involved in the play than defenders (e.g., 3v2, 2v1), particularly in the final third or during counterattacks.
	Numerical Disadvantage (Attack)	Attacking players are outnumbered by defenders (e.g., 2v3, 1v2), yet still attempt to progress or create a scoring opportunity.
Defensive Actions	1v1 Defensive	A defender directly engages an attacker in a 1v1 scenario, using delay, containment, or tackle techniques in an attempt to win the ball or force a mistake.
	Interception	A defender successfully reads and cuts off a pass before it reaches its intended target. Must be deliberate and not a deflection.
	Blocked Shot	A defender prevents a shot from reaching the goal using their body, legs, or sliding. Must influence the trajectory of the shot before it reaches the keeper or goes out.
	Ball Recovery	A team regains clear possession of the ball following any phase of play (loose ball, interception, clearance). The player must take at least one controlled touch or pass.
	Defensive Numerical Advantage	Defensive team has more defenders behind the ball or in the area of action than attackers, allowing for easier containment and control.
	Defensive Numerical Disadvantage	Fewer defenders than attacking players in an immediate area (e.g., defending a 2v1).
Goalkeeper Involvement	In Possession GK Involvement	Any instance where the goalkeeper is actively involved in their team's possession phase, including receiving, distributing, or supporting play. Include: • Receives a pass and plays a controlled return or progression. • Initiates build-up with throw, roll, or pass. ○ Label Opportunity: ▪ Organized – Opponent is behind the ball and in a defensive shape (even partial). ▪ Transition – Opponent is disorganized, recovering, or spread out (e.g., after losing possession or a restart). • Holds possession while scanning and delaying for options.
	Out of Possession GK Involvement	Any instance where the goalkeeper impacts the match during their team's defensive phase. Include: • Saves (any body part). • Interceptions or clearances while acting as a sweeper. • Pressure application.
Transition Moments	Attack to Defense	Moment when the team loses possession and must react defensively. Start immediately when the ball is lost; label reactions like pressing, delaying, or retreating.

	Defense to Attack	Moment when the team gains control of the ball and begins countering or building up. Tag at the exact point of possession regain.
	Transition to Organized Attack	Occurs after a defensive team regains the ball and progresses into a structured attack.
Possession Changes	Turnover – Forced	Possession lost due to defensive pressure, including tackles, interceptions, forced bad touches, or physical duels.
	Turnover – Unforced	Possession lost without any real pressure—examples include poor passes, unforced errors, or over-dribbling.
Coaching & Substitution Behaviours	Substitution	Start when a player steps off the court, and finish when the replacement fully enters. Include multiple substitutions individually or in a group if done simultaneously.
	On-Fly Substitution	A substitution made during live play without a referee stoppage.
	Break in Play Substitution	A substitution made during a dead-ball situation (e.g., after a goal, ball out of play, or timeout).
	Structured Group Substitution	A planned substitution of multiple players at once, typically organized in fixed time intervals or predetermined shifts. Include: • Substitutions of 3 or more players. • May happen on-the-fly or at breaks in play.

References

Canada Soccer. (2025, February 20). *Canada Soccer Grassroots Standards*. Canada Soccer News. https://canadasoccer.com/wp-content/uploads/resources/grassroots/2024-CSGrassrootsStandards-EN.pdf

UEFA.com. (2025). *What is futsal? A beginner's guide*. https://www.uefa.com/uefafutsalchampionsleague/news/0262-1083b0377aa6-a225624d90ad1000--what-is-futsal-a-beginner-s-guide/

Ontario Soccer. (2025, May 14). *Phase 01.2 Launch Diverse Soccer Programs*. 2025-2036 Technical Development Plan. Technical Development Plan. https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/a48d-3401018/Ontario_Soccer_Technical_Development_Plan.pdf?_gl=1*93j3wm*_ga*NzEyMjQzODY0LjE3MTAyMDk4NzI.*_ga_PQ25JN9PJ8*czE3Njg3OTE2OTckbzI2JGcxJHQxNzY4NzkyOTk0JGoxJGwwJGgw#_ga=2.41997282.63147891.1768767182-712243864.1710209872

ONTARIO SOCCER
7601 Martin Grove Road, Vaughan ON, L4L 9E4
905.264.9390 ontariosoccer.net
Proud Member of CANADA

Play.
Inspire.
Unite.

ONTARIO SOCCER

EST. 1901