

Soccer

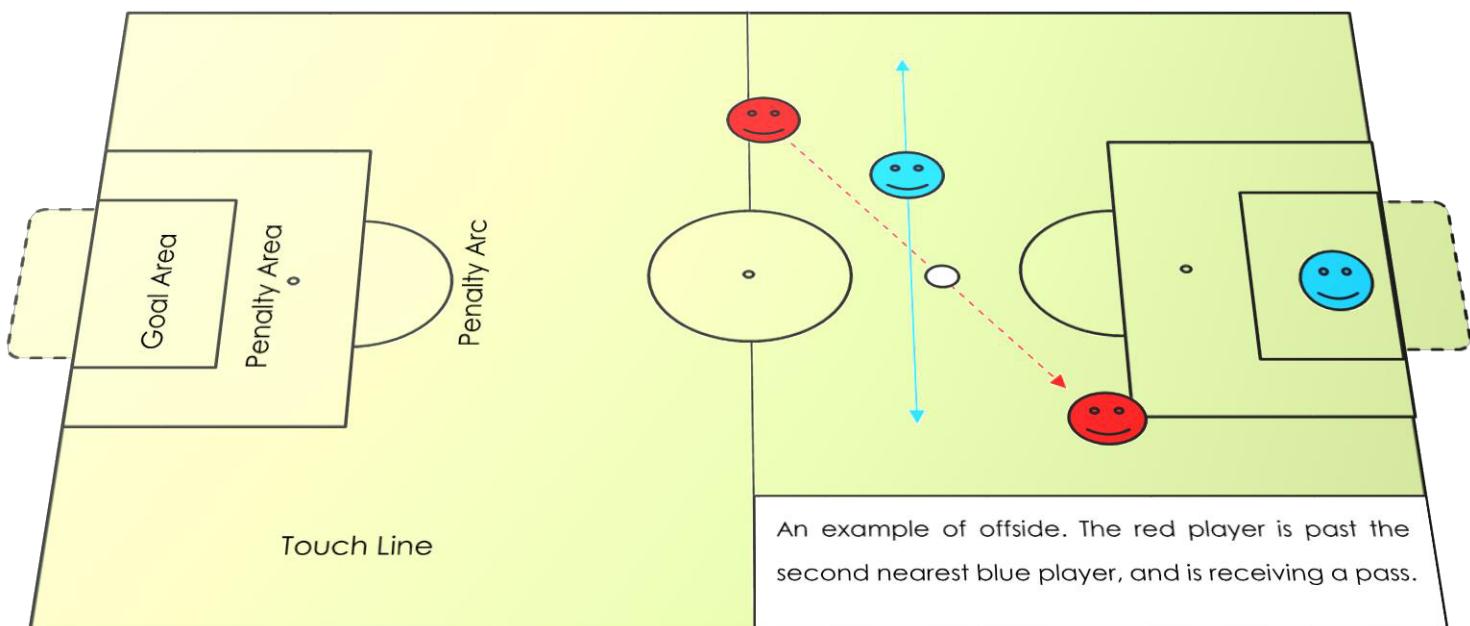
Hello everyone! My name is Stephen Cannell, I'm a Coordinator for International Relations in Toyohashi. Today I would like to look at the history and basics of the most popular team sport in the world, soccer.



The game of soccer was invented hundreds of years ago in England. The basic goal of the game has always been to kick the ball into the goal, and throughout the development of its rules and its spread throughout the world, that basic goal has not changed. Soccer made its Olympic debut in 1900, and has been an official event at every Olympics since 1932. Women's soccer was added as an official event in 1996.

A soccer match consists of two 45 minute halves, and the team with the most points at the end of the match is the winner. Depending on the league, a tie may or may not result in overtime. Teams consist of 11 players each, and a minimum of 7 are required to hold a match. The positions in soccer are: goalkeeper, defender, midfielder, and forward.

Soccer is played on a field called a "pitch," which varies between 100 and 150 yards in length, and 50 and 100 yards in width. A match begins at the mark in the center of the pitch. There is a goal on each end of the field. A rectangular penalty area extends across the front of the goal, and inside the penalty area is a smaller area called the goal area. The goalkeeper is only allowed to touch the ball with their hands within the penalty area. The goal area is the area from which the goalkeeper can perform a goal kick, which is awarded to the defending team when the offense kicks the ball out of bounds. In front of the penalty area is the penalty arc, which



combined with the penalty area, encloses the area that only the goalkeeper and kicker are allowed to enter during a penalty kick.

The main rules in soccer are: no use of arms or hands to control the ball (aside from the goalkeeper,) and offside. Offside occurs when an offensive player is in the defensive area, and is closer to the goal than the second-nearest defender (the goalkeeper is usually the nearest.) It is illegal for an offside player to receive a pass from an onside player. Intentionally colliding with or injuring an opponent will of course result in a penalty. Poor sportsmanship, such as bad-mouthing the opponent, will result in a yellow card, and two yellow cards will result in a red card. If a player receives a red card, they are removed from the game. Particularly poor sportsmanship can lead directly to a red card.

Many countries around the world have soccer leagues. Three of the most popular leagues are England's Premier League, Spain's La Liga, and Germany's Bundesliga. To name a few well known teams, Premier League is home to Manchester United and Liverpool, La Liga is home to Real Madrid and Barcelona, and Bundesliga is home to Bayern Munich. Aside from domestic leagues, there is also the FIFA World Cup, which is held once every 4 years. The nation with the most wins at the men's World Cup is Brazil, followed by Germany, and Italy, while America, Germany, and Japan are amongst the strongest at the women's World Cup. These countries also have strong records at the Olympics, with host Brazil taking gold in the men's tournament at the 2016 Olympics, and Germany taking silver in the men's and gold in the women's tournaments. Japan had success in the women's tournament in 2012, taking silver.

Men's Olympic soccer has an age restriction of 23 years old, however teams are allowed up to 3 players who exceed this limitation. Due to this rule, every Olympics features a fresh group of athletes from around the world, and results in dramatic headlines and exciting play. Toyohashi native and Gamba Osaka defender Genta Miura, currently 25, looks to secure one of the 3 spots on the Japan team reserved for over-23 players.

Host nation Japan will be looking to take its first gold medal in both the men's and women's tournaments. Toyohashi's Host Town partner Germany has also secured its Olympic qualification. Let's give Genta Miura and the Japanese and German teams all our support!