



Select Events Technical Report



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8/25/2025

INTRODUCTION

Derek Willis—Technical Director Kentucky Youth Soccer

This project started due to a question that I would often ask coaches during the Challenge Cup, “what formation do you use for 9v9 and why?” Coaches would give a different formation and then follow it up with “because it is the best way to prepare the players for 11v11.”

That answer led to more questions about what teams are doing at not just the Challenge Cup, but all of our events.

A pre-tournament survey was sent out to all Head Coaches and Assistant Coaches registered for our tournaments. Survey asked about team primary shape and secondary shape, defensive set up, dedicated assistant coach, and training times per week.

The response rate was good, but we did not get responses from all the coaches. 321 coaches responded out of a total of 417 for a 76% response rate. Note that several coaches that had more than one team only sent in a response for one of their teams.

For the Coaching License data, all Head Coaches were checked through the US Soccer Learning Center. If a coach had earned a coaching license before the start of the learning center and have not created a profile in the Learning Center, they are reported as “none listed” in this report. The same goes for coaches who earned their diplomas from the National Soccer Coaches of America Association (now known as United Soccer Coaches) that meets our coaching requirements.





2025

11U-12U

May 10th and 11th Preliminary Round

May 31st and June 1st—Championship Rounds

BY THE NUMBERS

Challenge Cup 2025 saw 134 teams enter into the competition with up to three divisions per age group.

10 different clubs won a Challenge Cup Championship in 2025.

This year's event saw 1092 goals scored in 219 games.

Response rate for the pre-event survey was 119 teams out of 134





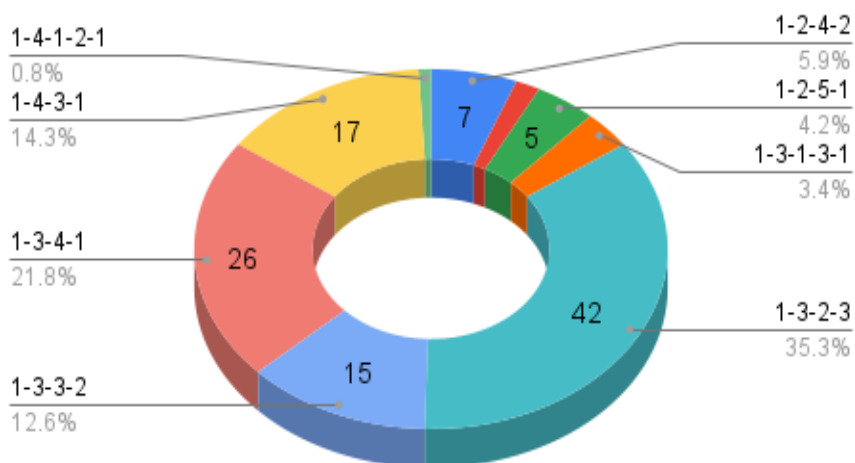
FORMATIONS

PRIMARY VS SECONDARY FORMATIONS CHALLENGE CUP

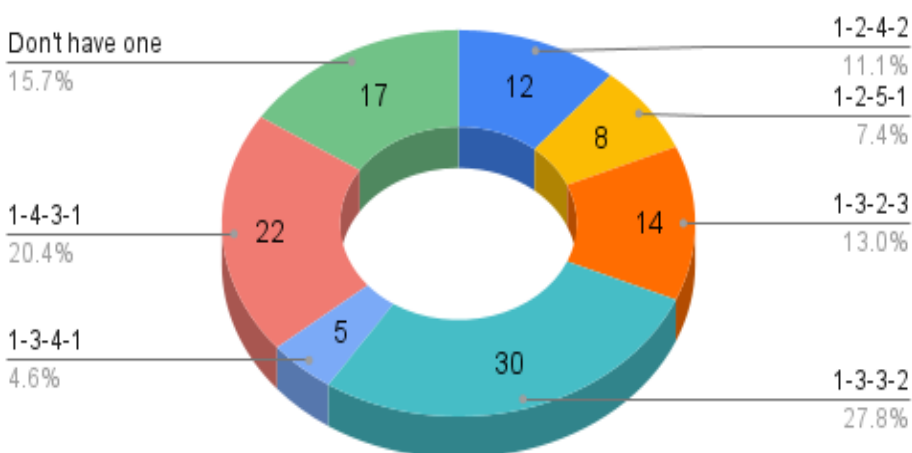
PRIMARY SHAPE

The most popular shape for teams in the Challenge Cup was the 1-3-2-3 followed by the 1-3-4-1 and then the 1-4-3-1.

Primary Team Formations Challenge Cup



Secondary Team Formations Challenge Cup



SECONDARY SHAPE

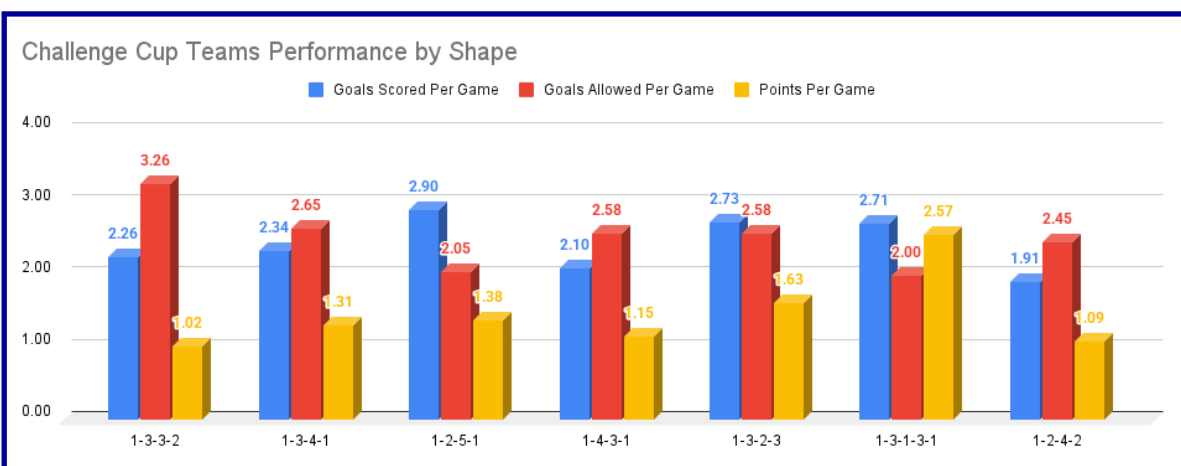
Teams that play a secondary shape most often would change to a 1-3-3-2 with 1-3-4-1 being the 2nd most popular option.

16% of teams did not have a secondary option.



FORMATIONS

RESULTS CHALLENGE CUP



FORMATION RESULTS

Formations were sorted by goals scored, goals allowed, and points per game (three points for a win, one for a draw, zero for a loss including knock out rounds).

The most popular formation in the pre-event survey, the 1-3-2-3 averaged 2.73 goals scored per game, 2.58 goals allowed, and earned 1.63 points per game. A similar shape, the 1-3-1-3-1 made similar numbers in goals scored, however had lower goals allowed with 2.0 per game, but had the highest points per game total of 2.57.

The second most popular shape, the 1-3-4-1 averaged 2.34 goals scored per game, the 4th highest of the shapes. This shape did concede 2.65 goals per game which was the 2nd highest in goals conceded. With 1.31 points per game, the 1-3-4-1 was the fourth highest.

The lowest performing shape was the 1-3-3-2 with 2.26 goals scored per game (5th highest), but conceded 3.26 goals per game (7th) along with 1.02 points per game (7th).



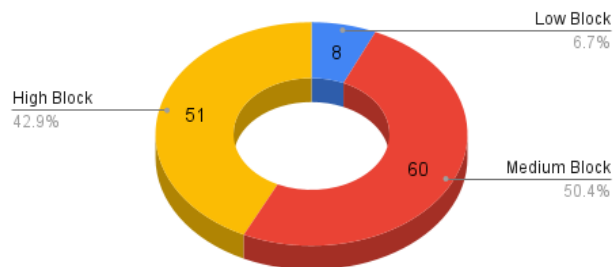
DEFENSIVE SET UP

HIGH BLOCK VS MID BLOCK VS LOW BLOCK CHALLENGE CUP

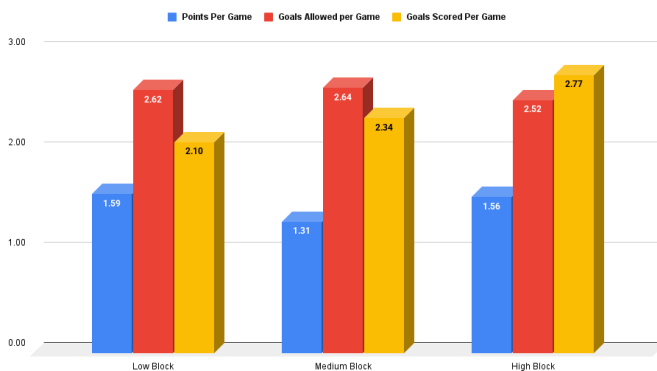
SET UP

Over 50% of the teams that responded deployed a mid-block. This is typically where teams will not start pressuring until around the center circle on the opponent's half. 43% of teams used a high block where teams pick up pressure as high as possible, and only 7% used a low

Defending Set Up Challenge Cup



Challenge Cup Performance by Defensive Set Up



RESULTS

Defensively, there was little difference between any of the blocks with low block allowing 2.62 goals per game, mid block 2.64, and high block 2.52.

However defending in a high block led to a lot more goals scored per game with 2.77 suggesting there is a benefit to trying to turn over the opponent closer to their goal.



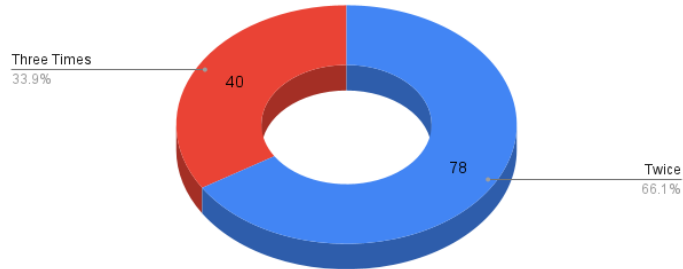
TRAININGS PER WEEK

TWO VS THREE TRAININGS A WEEK CHALLENGE CUP

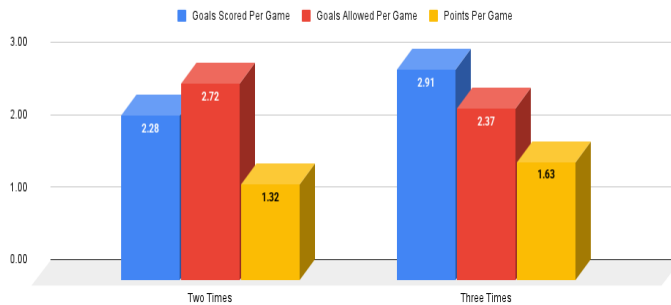
TRAINING

The majority of the teams that entered into the Challenge Cup trained twice a week (66%)

Training Times Per Week Challenge Cup



Training Two Times a Week vs Three Times a Week



THREE TIMES

In the Challenge Cup, teams that trained three times a week out performed teams that trained twice a week in all categories.



COACHING EDUCATION

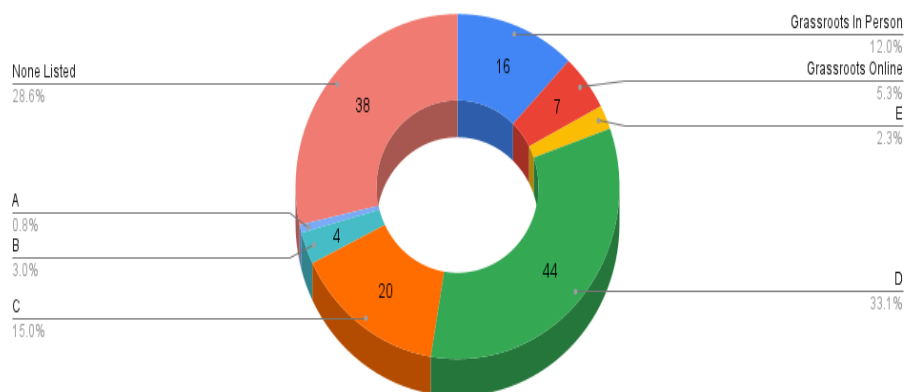
CHALLENGE CUP

REQUIREMENTS

Kentucky Youth Soccer has established minimum coaching education standards for all coaches in select. For a Head Coach in U11/U12 age groups they need to have or be in the pathway to obtaining two in person grassroots courses or the E License (from before 2015).

Coaches that do not have a license in the Learning Center will show up in the data as none listed and need to contact the Technical Director Derek Willis to get their license on their profile.

Coaching Licenses Challenge Cup



SNAPSHOT

The majority of the coaches in the Challenge Cup (71%) have begun their coaching education pathway.

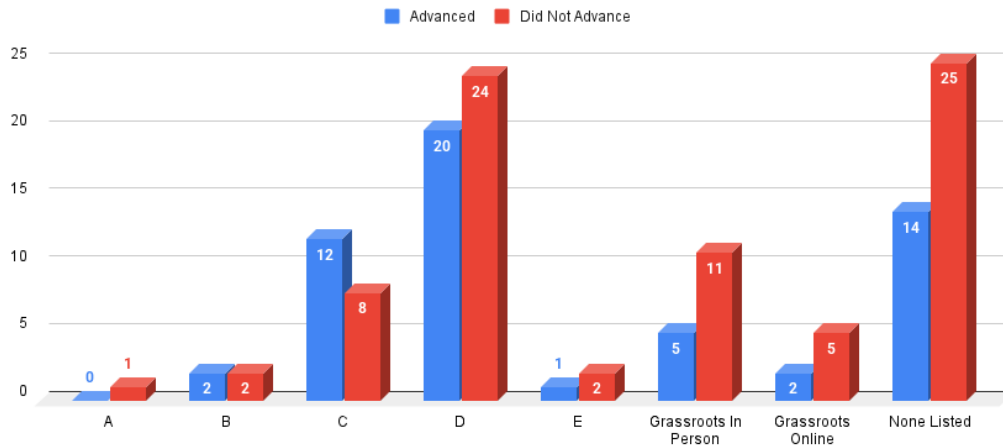
D License coaches were the most prevalent in the tournament with over 33% of coaches holding at least a D. The second most were coaches that had a C License with 15%.



COACHING EDUCATION

ADVANCEMENT CHALLENGE CUP

Challenge Cup Coaching Licenses Advanced vs Did Not Advance



COACHING EDUCATION RESULTS

Coaches that had taken more coaching education than what was required by Kentucky Youth Soccer had a much higher success rate of getting out of the opening rounds at the 2025 Kentucky Youth Soccer Challenge Cup. Coaches with a C License were the most successful with 60% advancing past the first round. B License coaches were next at 50% followed by D License coaches with 45%. D Licenses coaches had the most advancing with 20.



**COACHING
EDUCATION**



13U-19U

May 17th-May 18th Preliminary Weekend

May 24th-May 25th Championship Weekend

BY THE NUMBERS

President's Cup 2025 saw 152 teams enter into the competition. Nine different clubs won President's Cup in their age group and gender.

This year's event saw 1044 goals scored in 243 games.

Response rate for the pre-event survey was 111 teams out of 152.





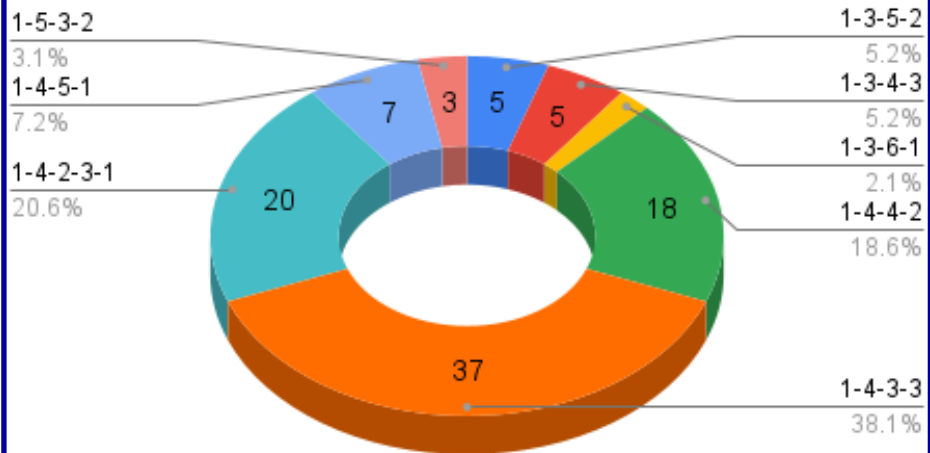
FORMATIONS

PRIMARY VS SECONDARY FORMATIONS PRESIDENT'S CUP

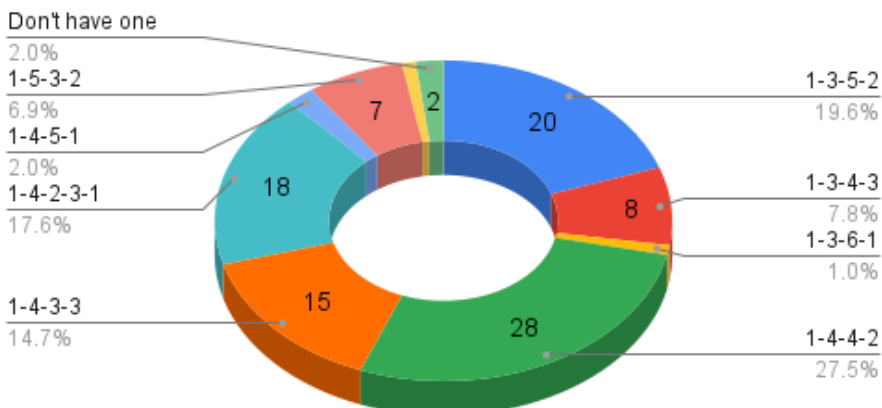
PRIMARY SHAPE

The most popular shape for teams in the President's Cup was the 1-4-3-3 or a variant of (1-4-2-3-1 and 1-4-5-1) with over 57%.

Primary Team Formations President's Cup



Secondary Team Formations President's Cup



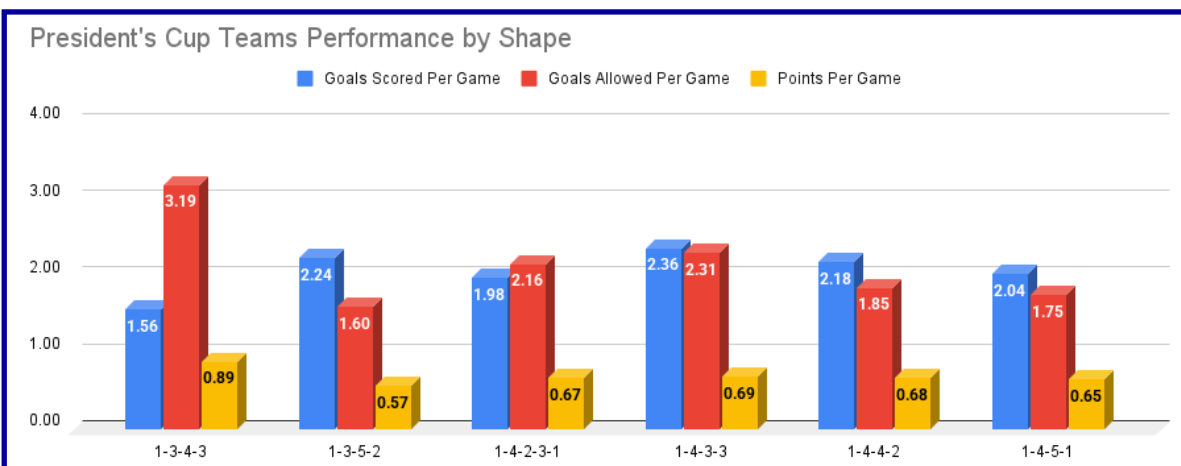
SECONDARY SHAPE

The two most popular secondary shapes for President's Cup included a two striker front with 1-4-4-2 with 28% and 1-3-5-2 with 20%.



FORMATIONS

RESULTS PRESIDENT'S CUP



FORMATION RESULTS

Formations were sorted by goals scored, goals allowed, and points per game (three points for a win, one for a draw, zero for a loss including knock out rounds).

The data is interesting across the board as no shape was clearly dominant in any of the three categories. The outlier was the 1-3-4-3 that had the most points per game with .89 but had the highest goals against by some distance with 3.19 and the lowest goals scored per game with 1.56.

The single most popular shape, the 1-4-3-3 led with the most goals per game at 2.36, but also gave up the 2nd most goals per game with 2.31. It did lead with the 2nd most points per game with .69

The 1-3-5-2 had the lowest points per game with .57, but the 2nd highest goals scored per game with 2.24. Coming in with only 1.6 goals scored per game, it was the most successful defensive shape.



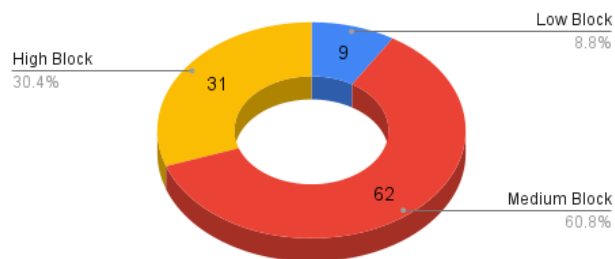
DEFENSIVE SET UP

HIGH BLOCK VS MID BLOCK VS LOW BLOCK PRESIDENT'S CUP

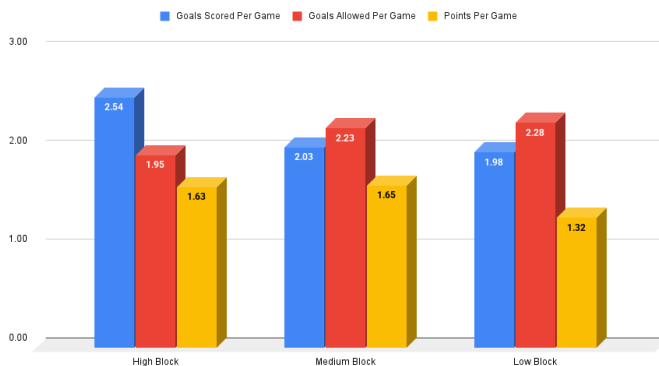
SET UP

Over 60% of the teams that responded deployed a mid-block. This is typically where teams will not start pressuring until around the center circle on the opponent's half. 30% of teams used a high block where teams pick up pressure as high as possible, and only 9% used a low block.

Defending Set Up President's Cup



President's Cup Performance by Defensive Set Up



RESULTS

The Mid Block set up achieved in getting the most points per game with 1.65, however it did not lead in either goals allowed or goals scored.

The High Block had over 2.5 goals per game, which was the most. It had 1.95 goals allowed, which was the least of all the set ups. It just underperformed the Mid Block with 1.63 points per game.



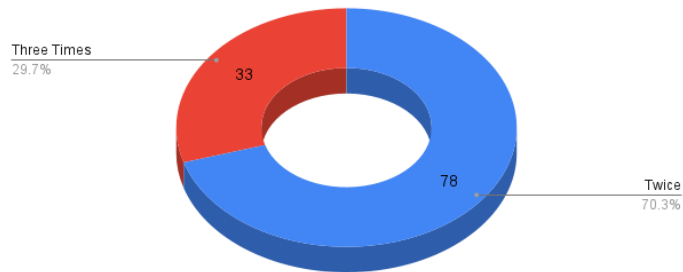
TRAININGS PER WEEK

TWO VS THREE TRAININGS A WEEK PRESIDENT'S CUP

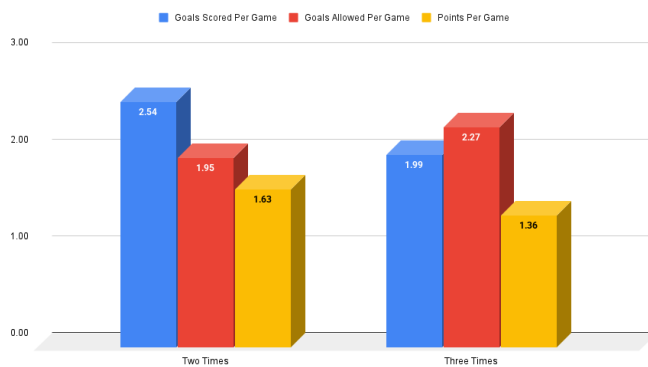
TRAINING

The majority of the teams that entered into President's Cup trained twice a week with 70%.

Training Times Per Week President's Cup



President's Cup Performance Based on Training Per Week



TWO TIMES

In President's Cup, teams that trained twice a week outperformed teams that trained three times a week in all three categories.



COACHING EDUCATION

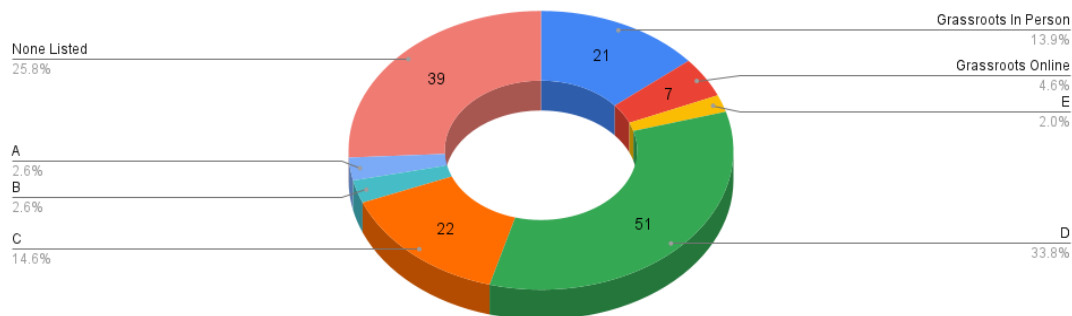
PRESIDENT'S CUP

REQUIREMENTS

Kentucky Youth Soccer has established minimum coaching education standards for all coaches in select. A D License or on the path to obtaining the D License is required for both Head Coaches and Assistant Coaches.

Coaches that do not have a license in the Learning Center will show up in the data as none listed and need to contact the Technical Director Derek Willis to get their license on their profile.

Coaching Licenses President's Cup



SNAPSHOT

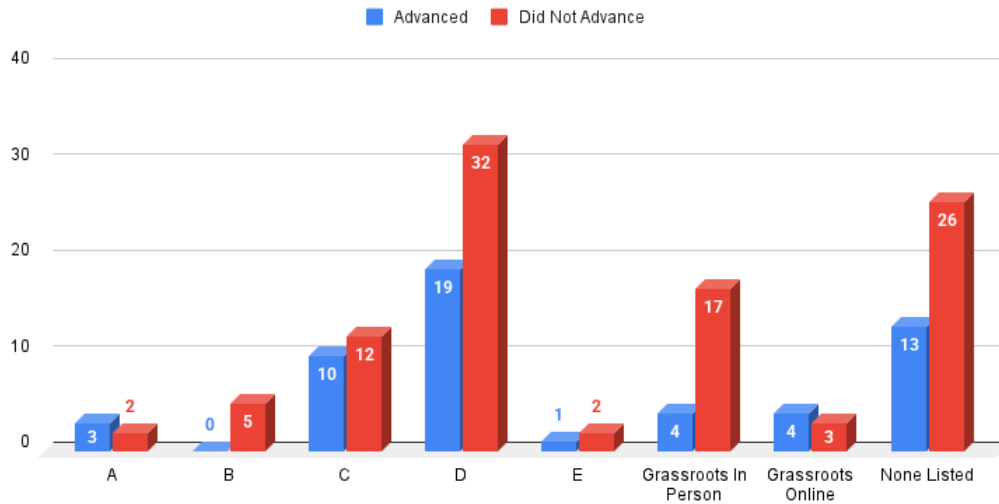
The majority of the coaches in the President's Cup (74%) have begun their coaching education pathway. However at the time of the event, 72 coaches had not obtained their D License. Compared to 81 who have their D License or higher

Most coaches in the tournament had their D License with 51.



COACHING EDUCATION

ADVANCEMENT PRESIDENT'S CUP



COACHING EDUCATION RESULTS

Coaches with their D License advanced out of the group at a 37% rate. C License coaches had the most success with a 45% rate.

Teams with a USSF Licensed Coach (not taking into consideration any that have a license that is not in the system) advanced at a 36% rate vs the unlisted coaches at a 33% rate.



**COACHING
EDUCATION**



USYS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

13U-19U

May 24th-May 26th Preliminary Weekend

May 31st-June 1st Championship Weekend

BY THE NUMBERS

State Open Cup had 131 teams enter into the competition. Six different clubs were crowned State Champions.

This year's event saw 844 goals scored in 218 games.

Response rate for the pre-event survey was 91 teams out of 131.





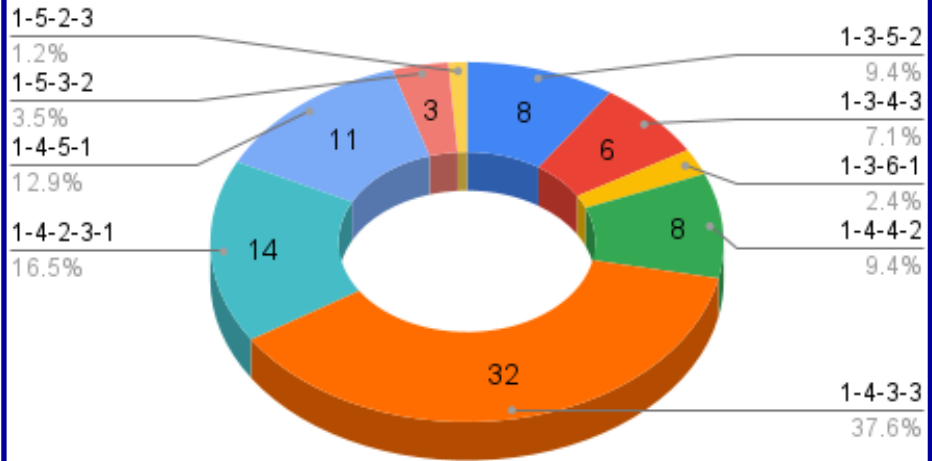
FORMATIONS

PRIMARY VS SECONDARY FORMATIONS STATE OPEN CUP

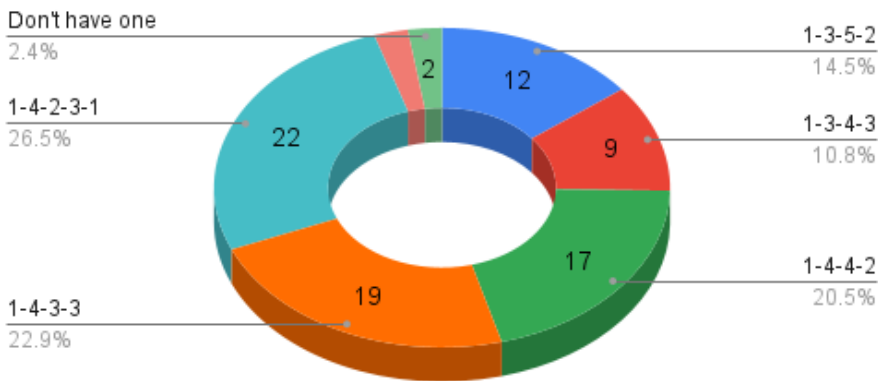
PRIMARY SHAPE

Like in President's Cup, State Open Cup's most popular formation was the 1-4-3-3 or a variant of (1-4-2-3-1 and 1-4-5-1) with over 67%.

Primary Team Formations State Open Cup



Secondary Team Formations State Open Cup



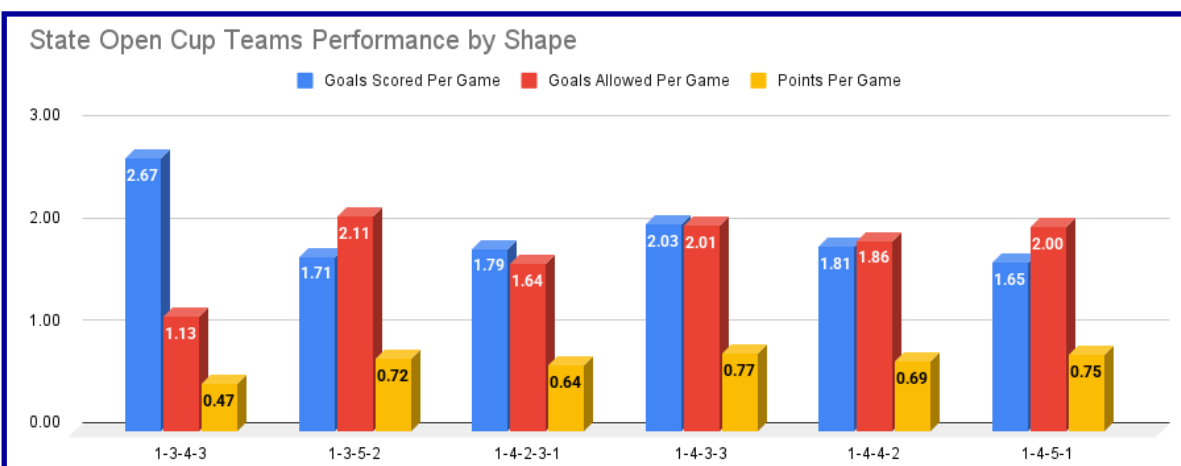
SECONDARY SHAPE

Unlike President's Cup, teams in the State Open Cup most popular back up shapes were the 1-4-2-3-1 at 26% and the 1-4-3-3 at 23%. The 1-4-4-2 was just behind with 21%.



FORMATIONS

RESULTS STATE OPEN CUP



FORMATION RESULTS

Formations were sorted by goals scored, goals allowed, and points per game (three points for a win, one for a draw, zero for a loss including knock out rounds).

The 1-4-3-3, the most popular shape in the survey, had the highest points per game with .77, the 2nd most goals scored per game at 2.03, but was the 2nd highest in goals conceded at 2.01.

Like President's Cup, the 1-3-4-3 was an outlier. Had the highest goals scored per game at 2.67, the lowest goals scored per game at 1.13, but had the lowest points per game at .47. The data suggests that these teams either blew out their opponents or they lost in close contests.

Two of the more surprising results were the 1-3-5-2 and 1-4-5-1 that are both seen as more defensive shapes, yet they were two of the highest conceding shapes with 2.11 goals per game and 2.0 goals per game.



DEFENSIVE SET UP

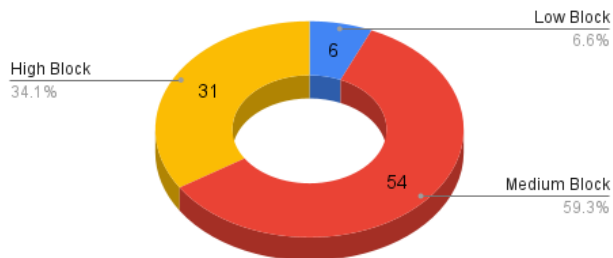
HIGH BLOCK VS MID BLOCK VS LOW BLOCK STATE OPEN CUP

SET UP

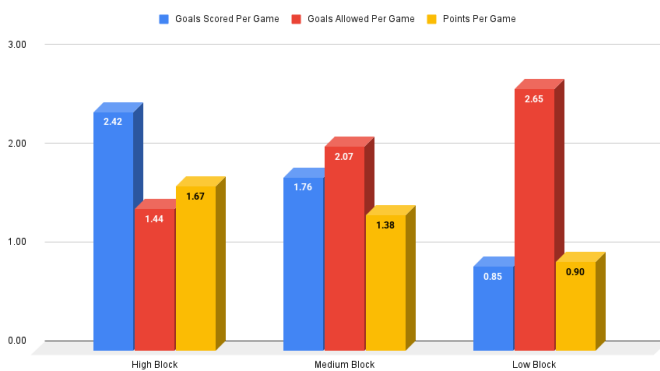
State Open Cup mirrored very closely to what President's Cup did for defending set up.

Close to 60% of the teams that responded deployed a mid-block. 34% of teams used a high block where teams pick up pressure as high as possible, and only 7% used a low block.

Defending Set Up State Open Cup



State Open Cup Performance by Defensive Set Up



RESULTS

The High Block was the most productive of the defensive set ups in all categories at State Open Cup. Teams in a high block scored 2.42 goals per game, conceded 1.44, and got 1.67 points per game.

The Low Block was the most underperforming set up. These teams only scored .85 goals per game, conceded a large amount of goals with 2.65, and only got .9 points per game.



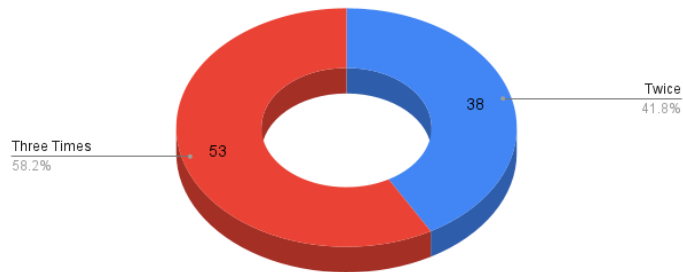
TRAININGS PER WEEK

TWO VS THREE TRAININGS A WEEK STATE OPEN CUP

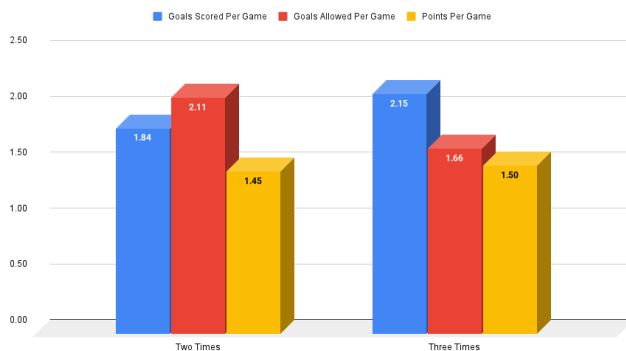
TRAINING

A majority of teams entering into the State Open Cup trained three times a week.

Training Times Per Week State Open Cup



State Open Cup Performance Based on Training Per Week



THREE TIMES

For State Open Cup, teams that trained three times a week on average had a higher success rate with goals scored and goals against.

As for points per game, there was not a large disparity between the two.



COACHING EDUCATION

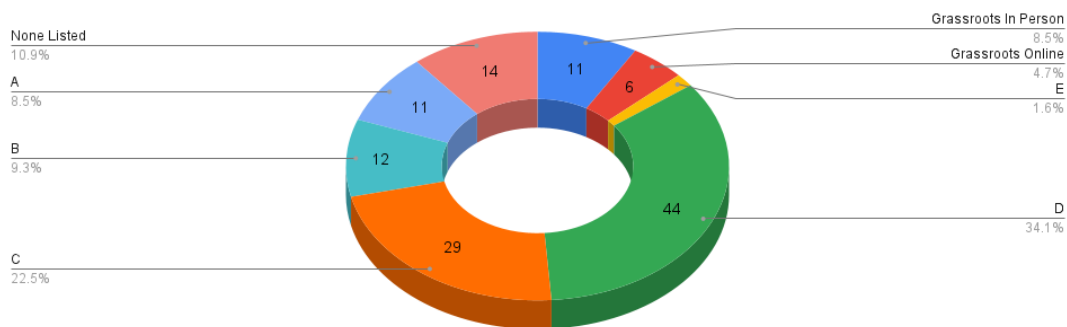
STATE OPEN CUP

REQUIREMENTS

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Coaches that do not have a license in the Learning Center will show up in the data as none listed and need to contact the Technical Director Derek Willis to get their license on their profile.

Coaching Licenses State Open Cup



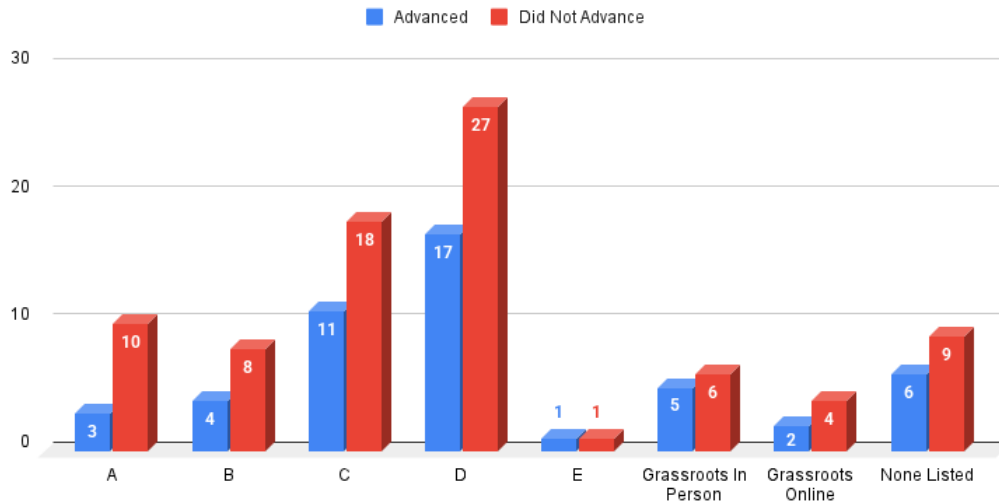
SNAPSHOT

The majority of coaches in the State Open Cup have the appropriate coaching license or are on their way to being compliant. The D License with 44 coaches currently holding was the largest, the second largest was the C with 29. A total of 52 teams were coached by coaches who have higher than the mandated D License.



COACHING EDUCATION

ADVANCEMENT STATE OPEN CUP



COACHING EDUCATION RESULTS

The majority of the teams that advanced were coached by coaches that had their D License or higher. 35 teams advanced with coaches with a D or higher.



**COACHING
EDUCATION**

8/25/2025

END NOTES

Derek Willis—Technical Director Kentucky Youth Soccer

Comparing the three events can be difficult, particularly with two of the three events being in the 11v11 format. There were a few pieces of information that stood out amongst all the events.

1-4-3-3, or variant of, was by and far the most popular shape used at the President's Cup and State Open Cup. Looking at the most popular formations in the Challenge Cup, it appears that teams at the 9v9 format are using shapes that can help players prepare for the 11v11 format. The 1-3-2-3, 1-4-3-1, and 1-4-3-1 can all be shapes to help prepare players for this next step.

For defensive set up, there were a few interesting trends throughout the events. In both 11v11 events (President's Cup and State Open Cup), teams that played in a high block were most likely to score more goals than the other defensive set ups. This could be because the ball is won much higher up the field making less distance and actions to be able to create chances vs having to build the ball up through more than one 1/3 of the field. In all the tournaments, the low block set up tended to concede the most or 2nd most amount of goals. This could be due to the opposition having the ball closer to the goal and able to create more chances.

In the Challenge Cup and State Open Cup, the data suggests that training three times a week was connected to advancing out of the group vs in President's Cup where teams that trained twice a week was more successful? Why is that? Is it because teams that trained three times a week in President's Cup had players more frequently miss one or more of those training sessions vs in the other two events? What the data does not show is the improvement with teams that train three times a week vs twice a week.

