



About Football: Played in just about every country, the sport's success is due to the fact that it can be played by boys, girls, men and women of just about any physical build and ability. Football requires little in the way of specialized equipment and is organized using simple, intuitive rules.

Established at Special Olympics: 1986

Differences of Special Olympics Football: Special Olympics Football during traditional 11-aside and Unified Football matches follow FIFA rules. However, the length of halves, substitution and overtime rules are defined by each Special Olympics Program organization. In 5-Aside and 7-Aside Football matches, some rule variations are: kick-ins from the touch line, throw-ins by the goalie, throw-ins by goalies cannot touch the other side of the half field until touched by a player first, and there are no off-sides.

By The Numbers:

- In 2011, 360,466 Special Olympics Athletes competed in Football events
- In 2011, 200 Special Olympics Programs hosted Football competitions
- In 2010, Special Olympics held its 1st Unity Cup in connection with the World Cup. This paired soccer professionals with Special Olympics Athletes on teams that competed against one another. Each team consisted of members with and without intellectual disabilities.
- In all seven Special Olympics regions across the globe, Football ranks as a top 5 sport.

Events for Competition:

- Individual Skills Competition
- 5-a-side Team
- 7-a-side Team
- 11-a-side Team Competition according to FIBA rules
- Futsal Competition according to FIBA rules
- Unified Sports 5-a-side Team Competition
- Unified Sports 7-a-side Team Competition
- Unified Sports 11-a-side Team Competition

Associations/Federations/Supporters:

Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)

Divisioning at Special Olympics:

Athletes in every sport and event are grouped by age, gender, and ability – giving everyone a reasonable chance to win. At Special Olympics there are no World Records because each athlete, whether in the fastest or the slowest division is valued and recognized equally. In every division, all athletes receive an award, from gold, silver, and bronze medals, to fourth through eighth place ribbons. This idea of equal ability groupings is the foundation for competition in Special Olympics and can be witnessed at all events, whether it's athletics, aquatics, table tennis, football, skiing, or gymnastics. All athletes are given an equal chance to participate, perform, and be recognized for doing their best by their teammates, family, friends, and fans."