

# England bans trophies in leagues for youngsters

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LONDON (AP) - England has banned young children from playing for league and cup trophies in soccer in a bid to remove pressure from parents and coaches.

The ruling issued Friday by the Football Association affects under eight-year-olds and is intended to develop their skills on the field.

"It's widely accepted that we need to improve the skills and technique of players in this country," said Trevor Brooking, the former England and West Ham midfielder who is now the FA's director of football development. "At the moment we are not at the same level as other countries.

"In the youngest age groups, there's too much emphasis on winning leagues, often to satisfy parents and coaches. That's what we're looking to change. We need better, more skillful players coming through."

England fans have been waiting since the 1966 World Cup for another trophy. The dearth of talent has alarmed Fabio Capello, who replaced Steve McClaren as England coach in January.

But while Capello embarks on World Cup qualifying in September, the future generation of players will have to play a less intense version of the game.

"Every game played is competitive, but undoubtedly having league tables (standings) at this age is not helping their development," Brooking said. "It is the league tables being stopped rather than matches."