

PREVENTING and MANAGING Blow-outs

OBJECTIVE

To increase the level of fun and enjoyment of the game. To reduce the frustration associated with blow-outs in soccer games

BACKGROUND

In the younger age groups (where we play 4 v 4 or 6 v 6), it is all too easy for one or two good players (early developers) on one team to dominate a game. During the game, it is challenging for coaches, especially those with little or no experience, to formulate ways to manage a game that is becoming a blow-out.

In fact, lopsided games or blow-outs are as much a part of the game as the ball and goals, especially at the younger ages of the games. We have to recognize that even with great effort to create balanced leagues, there will be a couple of teams that will win all or almost all of the games and there will be a couple of teams at the opposite end of the spectrum with the remainder grouped in between with similar win and loss counts.

In an effort to overcome this predictable outcome many clubs and/or leagues impose maximum goal differential on their games...imposing penalties against teams that score more than the maximum goal differential. It is counterproductive to tell your players not to score goals because we train them all year – to score more goals.

HOW TO PREVENT AND MANAGE BLOW-OUT

As a coach, so you aren't telling your players to stop scoring goals, these steps below should be followed in order, and care must be taken not to embarrass the opponent by yelling out these instructions across the field. One of the objectives is to not demean the opponent.

- 1. Read the game early** – Generally you can sense early on in the game if your team is dominating the opponent. You should start making necessary plans to avoid blow-out.
- 2. Rotate player positions** – Simply move players around to positions on the field that they are not comfortable or not as effective. For example, your top striker becomes the goalie. Please remember, simply moving your best players to the back will likely result in them simply dribbling through everyone to still score a goal if you don't give them specific instruction to work on distributing the ball from the back.



3. Rotate player tasks – Ask players to try new skills or to work on using their weaker feet, playing one or two touch (no holding the ball or dribbling), long range shots, playing out of the back each time the opponent touches the ball, are examples of options. Another great option is asking your players to try to help a teammate score their first goal. With each of these options please do them discreetly.

4. Mix Teams At Halftime – Once a game reaches halftime, the game can be recorded as complete. Use the remaining time to pick new teams to create more balanced and challenging match. Kids are inherently fair and also want competitive matches. This allows the second half to provide just those things. Check with the kids...check with the opposing team...if all agree then alert the referees.

5. Winning Team Remove Key Player(s) – In extreme case consider removing key players; that could mean removing one or two players depending on the goal differential. Sub two players on, while calling off three players so the subtraction is less noticeable.

6. Losing Team Add Extra Player(s) – Again, in extreme case you can discuss with the referee and the other coach - work out a plan for him/her to add an extra player or two. *(Please Note: this option is only available for inhouse play. It is never appropriate to add more than the allowed number of players in a travel game.)*

Keep in mind, the goal is to prevent embarrassing the opposing team so discretion with any of these steps, except of #4, is important so it doesn't appear you're trying to "show up" the losing team.

Lastly, Piaget teaches us it's not until children are in their Formal Operational Stage of Development (12 and up) that they typically begin to understand the concept of winning and losing. In the previous two stages of early childhood development (ages 3 – 11) they are concrete thinkers who are ego-centric. As concrete thinkers many adult concepts do not make sense to them including winning and losing. So while lopsided scores might be devastating to the adult; it's the post-game snack that's most important for the kids.