

How to Handle Blow Outs in Recreational Soccer Games

It is the responsibility of the head coach of the team winning the game to manage blow outs...not the ref, not the parents, and not the opposing coach. If your team is blowing out an opponent (defined as bigger than a six goal advantage), give your team a new or different challenge in the game. Do not broadcast the challenge to your opponent...keep it your team's business. Take time to explain to your kids the concept of compassion and putting yourself in the other player's position. You may not be able to make your kids comply with the limitation, but just asking them makes them think about it. Also, it might give you an idea about whether you actually shape their style of play on the field or whether you're merely the guy/gal who makes the substitutions. Here are a few ideas on how to handle a blow out:

1. Look for blow situations prior to going up by six goals. Often times you can sense the skill level difference early in the game. Start managing the situation early by removing your best and most aggressive scorers from the front line or possibly removing them from the field temporarily.
2. Five (or other appropriate) consecutive passes before scoring. If the other team possesses the ball, then you start over. No counting out loud (that's rude). Works on ball possession – a tactic sorely missing in our youth soccer.
3. Ball can only enter the penalty area from the side. Promotes getting the ball wide and then crossing it. Too much of our youth soccer comes right down the middle of the field.
4. Solo runs. Allow only one offensive player at a time to play the ball in the opponents end. Others can be there but not play the ball. If the individual loses the ball, no one can play it again until it enters your defensive half. Promotes taking on and beating defenders with speed. Also works on low pressure defense (getting everyone behind the ball and organizing the defense).
5. If a player scores, he gets subbed out for the next five minutes. This is interesting to watch as kids make decisions on what they're going to do (possess, score, set team mate up to score).
6. Scores can only be made with a players non-dominant foot. This promotes coordination development and improves their ability to score under pressure.
7. No-one allowed in the other team's penalty area. This promotes shooting from the outside and will, by necessity, cause kids to reverse field and work the ball backwards.
8. Only allowed to score with the head. Self explanatory. Can be used in connection with the "entry from the side of the penalty area" if your team is skilled enough.
9. Discreetly start removing players from the field so that you're playing a man down. This is only recommended if other alternatives are not successful.

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