

Running Up Scores

WASA endeavors to teach soccer skills to young players and instill good sportsmanship. All players should have fun playing the game. One of the most unsporting things a team can do is run up the score against another team. In a rec. level game there is no justification for winning by a score that could be described as “way too many” or “not even close”.

Running up the score deflates the players on the other team. At this age there is no reason to do that. The winning team doesn't learn anything constructive and it only makes the weaker team's players not want to play soccer.

Some divisions have a mercy rule which can help solve the dilemma, however, that is sometimes not enough. When a team is ahead by a lopsided score (4 or more), the league expects the coach to make changes to reduce the likelihood that the team will continue to score.

Some ideas include:

- Move players to different positions. Put weaker players at forward and put the stronger players on defense. The next idea on this list can be added if the strong players start dribbling the length of the field to score.
 - Keep mid-fielders at the mid-line and defenders in their own end of the field. Allow only the forwards to go into the opponents' end.
 - Tell players to shoot on goal with their opposite foot. If they are right handed, have them shoot on goal only with their left foot, and vice versa.
 - Tell players that they can only shoot on goal from outside the penalty area (the big box).
 - Tell players that in the opponent's end of the field they must pass the ball three times before they can shoot to score.
- ❖ My all time favorite and one that is very effective....
Tell players that before they may shoot on goal they must pass the ball until every attacking player on the field has touched the ball and that if at any time a defender gains possession, they must start over.
- And my least favorite, but an option none the less...
Pull a player from the field and play short handed. Only use this if it can be done without reducing any player's playing time below 2/3 of the game.

Sometimes, in spite of everything a coach tries, the score can become more lopsided. If this happens, the coach should have tried all of the ideas above. If someone has other ideas, the coach should have tried them too. After the game, the winning coach should have a private conversation with the opposing coach. The coach should express regrets for the score and ask if there is anything else that could have been done. Good coaches may not be happy, but they will respect that you tried.