

Lopsided Games – Ways to Keep it Fun and Fair Recreational Program

We in the Greenhaven Soccer Club believe that it is important to maintain good sportsmanship during games that turn out to be unevenly matched or lopsided. Despite the efforts at seeding teams fairly in appropriate divisions, there are always instances where one team is far superior to another. Despite the valuable life lessons inherent in losing, and losing gracefully, there is a difference between losing a close fought contest and being blown out by a far better team. In the latter types of losses, the hurt feelings tend to hinder the ability to absorb the life lessons involved in losing.

In order to promote respect and good sportsmanship, as well as to keep the atmosphere fun and friendly, GHSC and our recreational playing partners have determined that the **acceptable winning margin is a goal differential of 6**. All teams that win by a margin of 7 or more will get a warning from their AGC or club manager. The second time the team wins by a goal differential of 7 or more in the same half of the season, both games in which the team exceeded the goal differential of 6 will be converted to a loss in the standings. All lopsided scores will be reported to the PAD Committee who may take further disciplinary action.

GHSC expects their coaches to set an example, even if coaches from other clubs appear to teach their kids differently. Take care to avoid confrontations with the opposing coaches and referees. Report all lopsided games to your AGC. The AGC will follow up in accordance with the sportsmanship rule's guidelines.

Coaches of stronger teams are expected to impose restrictions on their own players in an effort to hold down the score. The key to success is to impose restrictions in a respectful way that is not insulting to the weaker team. As a rule of thumb, if Team A is up 3 goals on Team B, please make the following adjustments to keep the winning goal differential at 6 or less. Often you will know within a few minutes that the game is not evenly matched. **Start making adjustments sooner rather than later**. A common mistake is for coaches to be in the second half up by 5-0. By then it is too late.

Discuss and practice this scenario in your practices. It is important to be respectful. Do not shout "Don't score" or "We can't win by more". Be sensitive. Have code words to communicate to your players which scenario you will utilize in an effort to keep the score down.

1. On the team that is winning, have the players change positions; moving the stronger players into defensive positions or into the goal.
2. Discourage long kicks up the field from the defensive end. Make the defenders pass at least 3 (or more) consecutive times (to different players) before sending the ball up. The key word is consecutive; if an opponent touches the ball or the ball goes out of bounds, the count begins again. Do not count out loud.

3. Make a rule that there must be 3 to 7 (or more) consecutive passes to different players before attacking the goal. Again; the key words are different and consecutive. Two teammates cannot pass back and forth and if an opponent touches the ball, or the ball goes out of bounds, the count begins again. Do not count out loud. Successful, multiple consecutive passes is very hard to do for most younger recreational teams.
4. Allow scoring attempts from outside the penalty box only. No breakaways into the box.
5. Designate one player who may score, but place a restriction on them. As in he or she can only shoot with their off foot or from a specific place on the field.
6. Discreetly place a pinnie on the ground behind the goal line, relatively near the goal. Have your players try and kick the ball over the pinnie instead of score a goal. Again, be as discreet and respectful as possible.
7. Remove all of your strong players from the field.
8. Ask the referee to allow the opposing coach to add a player
9. Remove players from the field and play shorthanded. If you do this, please continue to utilize the other strategies outlined above.

While this is not a comprehensive list, and GHSC encourages coaches to be creative in coming up with their own ideas, these are all strategies that have been successfully utilized in the past. There is no reason for lopsided games. All that is required is that the coach needs to be committed to managing the game properly.