

ALBERNI ATHLETICS SOCCER CLUB (AASC)

MANAGING SCORE IMBALANCES GUIDELINES

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1. PURPOSE

- To uphold the AASC “One Club” philosophy - prioritizing fair play, respect, and fun for everyone.
- To provide coaches with strategies to manage games where one team has a significant lead, while ensuring a respectful, inclusive, developmental, and enjoyable experience for all players.

2. WHY IT MATTERS

- **Player development:** Lopsided games can hinder learning and enjoyment for both teams.
- **Sportsmanship:** Demonstrating respect for opponents fosters a positive soccer culture.
- **Retention:** Balanced competition helps keep players engaged and motivated.

3. WHEN TO APPLY

- If your team is dominating play (i.e., leading by five or more goals), consider implementing one or more of the following recommended strategies to maintain a respectful and developmental environment.
- Before implementing strategies, consider age and skill level of players on the field, and ensure coordination with other coaches on the opposing team, as needed.

4. RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

1. Rotate player positions

- a. Move defenders to forward positions and vice versa.
- b. Allow players to experience different roles on the field.

2. Use weaker foot or specific skills

- a. Ask players to use their non-dominant foot for passing or shooting.
- b. Focus on skill development rather than scoring.

3. Reduce number of players

- a. Consider playing with fewer players (e.g., 7v6) if the imbalance is significant and safe to do so.

4. Encourage player sharing

- a. If one team has significantly more substitutes, consider lending players to the opposing team. This promotes fairness, ensures balanced game time, and fosters camaraderie.

5. Introduce passing requirements

- a. Require a minimum number of passes before attempting a shot.
- b. Encourage creative play and teamwork.

5. WHAT TO AVOID

- **Running up the score:** Discouraged in youth soccer.
- **Publicly calling out the score:** Keep the focus on effort and learning.
- **Making opponents feel inferior:** Always promote respect and encouragement.

6. COMMUNICATION TIPS

- **Before the game:** Discuss expectations with your team about sportsmanship.
- **During the game:** Use positive reinforcement to guide behavior.
- **After the game:** Celebrate effort, teamwork, and improvement - not just the score.

7. COACH'S ROLE

- Lead by example in demonstrating humility and respect.
- Use lopsided games as teaching moments.
- Ensure all players leave the field feeling valued and motivated.

8. PARENT AND SPECTATOR CONDUCT

- Cheer for effort and teamwork.
- Avoid celebrating excessive scoring.
- Support all players, regardless of the score.

9. CONCLUSION

Managing score imbalances is part of creating a healthy soccer environment. Coaches play a key role in ensuring games remain fun, fair, and focused on development.