

LCSC Coaches,

If you've played or coached soccer before, you've most likely experienced a blowout loss by more than 4 goals. It's not much fun to lose in general, but it's especially difficult when an opponent runs up the score. The player's confidence is diminished by being brought to face their shortcomings. The winning team suffers in a blowout too. Players feel bad for friends they have on the losing team. Some players get less playing time or don't get challenged as much as they would like.

After the blowout, the losing coaches have the difficult job of taking care of players' hurt feelings and their self-esteem issues. A lot of times, those hurt feelings are those of the parents of the losing team. That compounds the difficulty. Coaches have their own feelings and frustrations, but have to find a way to make a bad experience into something positive. When learning, success breeds improvement. Still, it's very hard for players and their families to see a one-sided loss in a good light.

Most winning coaches dislike blowouts, too. However; some coaches seem to enjoy in running up the score on an overmatched team. When faced with a weaker opponent, strong teams fall into bad habits that may bite them back when facing a more evenly matched team. Coaches on the winning side of a blowout can sometimes have to face attitudes of arrogance, laziness, or poor sportsmanship from their players.

Ironically, many coaches and their players who would describe themselves as "competitive" would really rather win at all costs than truly compete. True competition involves evenly matched opponents in contests where real uncertainty exists about who will earn the victory. Those are the hotly contested games - the hard-fought wins AND losses. When blowout wins are glorified by coaches, parents and fans, they do nothing to promote a player's understanding or perception of what a real struggle is - a real competition.

So, what can coaches and players do to avoid blowouts and minimize their negative effects? Frequently, coaches of stronger teams will impose restrictions on their own players in an effort to hold down the score. The trick is succeeding in doing so by imposing restrictions in a non-condescending way that isn't insulting to the weaker team. If you are the weaker team taking a beating, as coach and advocate for your players, you may suggest to the opposing coach that restrictions or conditions should be imposed to increase competition. If this is suggested to the opponent and you are denied, report it to your Coaching Coordinator. We will follow up.

Here is a list of possible conditions and restrictions that coaches and players can accept to help balance the competitive situation on the field and still play hard. The list is by no means comprehensive, but is arranged from easiest restriction to most difficult:

- Change positions, moving/removing players, including keeper.
- Shoot only with weaker foot.
- Make 5 to 10 consecutive passes before attacking the goal.
- Score only after successfully executing a wall pass or specific dribbling fake in the offensive third of the field.
- No one may score until a designated player scores.
- Enforce three-touch or two-touch passing limitations.
- Allow two-touch passing in defensive end, one-touch in offensive end.
- Score by heading only.
- Following restarts (including throw-ins), all 11 players must touch the ball before attacking the goal.
- Attack to the end line, stop it on the end line, leave the ball, and retreat to half line.

When the winning team's coach stops imposing restrictions after simply changing positions, they should not expect to be congratulated for such a minimal effort. LCSC Coaching Coordinators recognize when a blowout was handled appropriately or inappropriately. Applying only one restriction while playing a high-pressure, full-court press, does not qualify as appropriate. Bear in mind that when LCSC follows up on a blowout game with our coaches and we hear, "We did everything we could.....," or "We are competitive....." we fully understand what competition truly is, and keep in mind the list above and many other possible restrictions that could have been imposed. Since, blowouts can have a negative effect on our players, LCSC fully expects our coaches to be strong advocates for our children when we are the weaker team and to look much further down this short list for a way to balance the game than just item one when we are the stronger team.

Truly, blowouts continue to occur. We are not likely to eliminate them entirely from our sport of soccer, but for the benefit of our children, LCSC teams can definitely minimize blowouts given some of the strategies above.

Sincerely,

Anthony Perry
LCSC President

