MRYSL Game Blowout Guidance for Coaches

Mad River Youth Soccer League is a community driven recreational soccer league aimed at developing essential soccer skills and growing the love for the game. A win at all costs mentality is not compatible with the core value of MRYSL and is not acceptable.
When a recreational game is a blowout or highly unbalanced, the game ceases to be fun for both teams and often the spectators. Poor sportsmanship is more likely to be exhibited by players on both teams, the parents and the coaches. Kids maximize their learning potential when they are challenged, have fun, and experience both success and failures. In the spirit of recreational soccer we want to reduce the occurrence of blowout games by requesting that all coaches work together to modify the game to reduce the gap in goals or to stop a growing gap in goals from getting wider. This will provide opportunities for growth on both teams and for individual players.

How to handle a blowout

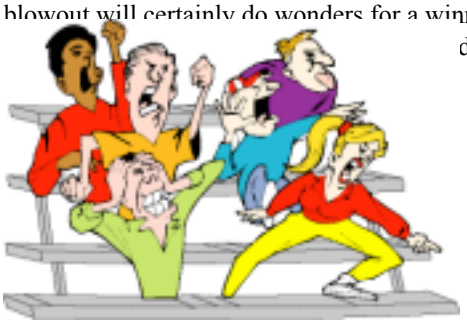
In a perfect world, every game would be a true "contest," but that's not the case. And no matter which side of a blowout you're on, you should be prepared to handle the situation with class and dignity. Here are some simple guidelines and useful tips you can use on the field.



Who is affected? EVERYONE

The players: Whether you are coaching teens or children, the kids learn life lessons through soccer and you are a role model. Kids need to win with humility and lose with dignity. A 12-0 blowout will certainly do wonders for a winning's team psyche, d?





The fans: Remember that the people on your sidelines as well as the opposing sidelines could be neighbors with kids attending the same schools and parents interacting through business relationships. And grandparents, aunts, uncles and more join parents at the game to support the team. But it's natural for our protective instincts kick in when we see our little ones being embarrassed to the point that they quit on the field. That's when things can, and oft among the spectators.



The coach: Unless your name is Lombardi, or they call you "Bear," your coaching legacy will not be measured by margin of victory and championship rings. What kids will respond to, and parents will appreciate, is the outstanding example you set by showing class and sound judgment regardless of the score. Do that and you'll always leave the field a winner. To that end, remember there's absolutely no room on the sidelines for personal vendettas. When you run up the score, the kids are the real victims in your quest for revenge.

When is a lead big enough?

In the past, frustrations have boiled over when coaches wait until the score is grossly lopsided before putting kids who had never scored on offense. By that point, the opposing sideline is dejected and any cheering by the winning team, however well intended, seems like rubbing it in. As we said, there is no easy answer for when to pull back, but…

- **A THREE-GOAL lead is time to start thinking about pulling back.**
- **A 5-0 lead is definitely a blowout in progress**

- If the game is in hand, think about sitting your star(s) in the final quarter. (remember they still must play 3/4 of the game even in a blowout, so this requires you managing your rotation).
- If you are going to pull back, consider discretely letting the opposing coach know during a break in play. It can dispel any misperceptions that you are pouring it on.
- Don't wait until after your entire front line each has scored a hat trick to make lineup changes. That is a sure recipe for trouble.

How to handle a blowout: strategies and tips

For the winning coach:

- Be discrete when instructing your players to back off. It doesn't help an opponent's confidence when you yell, "No shooting" or "Don't score."
- Give less experienced kids a chance to score. Even better, designate one or two as the only kids who can shoot, thus forcing your other players to work on passing.
- Move your top players to defense or even the bench.
- Play a "Passing Game." Make your players connect on a set number of 3 to 5 passes (depending on age) before they can shoot. If a pass gets intercepted, the count starts over. You can increase the degree of difficulty as needed.
- Have kids only shoot with their opposite foot. This will encourage skill development. • Go to a "Pack-it-in defense with each defender player having at least one foot in the penalty area at all times, thus allowing your opponent to penetrate deeper into the attacking third of the field and challenging your kids to clear the ball effectively.
- For non-competitive divisions, get an agreement with the opposing coach to add a player to the team that is losing to make the game more competitive. No one is keeping score, right? If the game is out of hand both teams can benefit from a more competitive game.
- Remind players of positive sportsmanship and encourage empathy. Explicitly forbid poor sportsmanship

For the losing coach

- There is no better time to be 100 percent positive, during AND after the game. Don't let your kids get their heads down
- If you consider the game out of reach, you may want to discretely let the opposing coach know, so he can make adjustments and pull back.
- If the winning coach has pulled back, or sat his key players, you may want to reciprocate. What better time to let players learn and enjoy positions they might not otherwise get to play in a more competitive contest?
- Watch your kids for growing frustration and hard play. Don't let them adopt an attitude of "We may lose the game, but we're going to win the war."
- Let the game end on time. Don't ask for injury time.

For both coaches – final thoughts

Manage your sidelines — Fans on the winning side may think they are just "cheering their kids on" but to the opposite sideline it can appear to be taunting. Conversely, parents on the losing side may let their frustrations get the better of them and have a slip of the tongue. You need to be mindful and manage your sidelines accordingly all the way through the handshake and leaving the field — regardless of what side of the score you are on.

If a coach is not cooperating to help reduce an in-progress blowout game after being asked to do so, coaches may seek help from the league at the MRYSL tent. Coaches may also contact the league after a blowout game if they wish to report the game to the MRYSL board for possible follow up.

The bottom line is a positive experience for the kids — win or lose!