

How to Manage Blowouts: Arlington Aces Soccer

Arlington Aces soccer is designed for kids to **learn** and **enjoy** the beautiful game, not to win at any cost. Our biggest goal is for all kids to have fun while improving their soccer skills. Blowouts—games where one team wins by 5 or more goals—diminish the experience for everyone involved. They discourage players, upset parents, and can ultimately lead to reduced participation in our program.

Why Blowouts Hurt Everyone

- Players get discouraged.
- Parents become frustrated.
- Coaches feel the pressure.
- Teams and families may leave the program, resulting in fewer teams.

Balanced games where players are challenged but still experience success are key to developing better soccer players. Blowouts are a loss for both teams: the "losing" team becomes disheartened, while the "winning" team misses out on learning opportunities and meaningful challenges.

The Coach's Role

Coaches are our first and most important defense against blowouts. It's your responsibility to recognize when a game is becoming unbalanced and to take steps to prevent it. This requires collaboration between coaches, with a special focus on the team that is ahead. Coaches should lead by example, promoting good sportsmanship and Arlington Aces' values. Players and parents will follow your lead.

If you see your team dominating early, or realize one team is significantly stronger, it's time to apply **blowout prevention strategies**. Ideally, these should be discussed and practiced in advance with your team, so they can be implemented seamlessly without embarrassing the other team.

Blowout Prevention Techniques

Here are several strategies to use when your team is leading by a significant margin:

Positioning

- Place stronger players in less comfortable positions (e.g., top scorers play defense or as goalkeeper).
- Play weaker players in forward or midfield positions to give them a chance to develop their skills.

Passing

- Require every player to touch the ball before a shot can be taken.
- Use a two-touch rule, where players can only touch the ball twice before passing.
- Mandate a set number of passes (5, 10, or more) before a shot can be taken.
- Encourage passing and shooting with the weaker (non-dominant) foot.

Shooting

- Players can only score one goal each; they must pass to a teammate who hasn't scored.
- Designate one player to take all shots until they score, then rotate to a new player.
- Only allow shots from outside the penalty area.
- Score only from a cross with a one-touch finish.
- Instead of trying to score have players try to hit a soccer ball or trash can that is placed behind the field of play.

Additional Techniques

- Remove the goalkeeper, or have them play as a field player.
- Reduce the number of players on the field for the stronger team while ensuring everyone plays at least 50% of the game.
- Increase the number of players on the field for the other team.

Sharing Players

- Loan one or more of your best players to the opposing team.
- Swap players to balance the teams.
- You can decide to mix up the players from both teams for a fun inter squad game.

Coach Guidance: Losing Side

As a coach, your attitude can turn a challenging game into a positive experience. If your team is losing:

- Keep morale high by staying positive. Focus on the fun and learning opportunities.
- Let the opposing coach know if you feel the game is out of reach, and work together to make adjustments.
- Use this opportunity to let players try new positions or practice skills in a less pressured environment.
- Manage frustration—help your players maintain a positive, sportsmanlike attitude.

Coach Guidance: Winning Side

As the coach of the stronger team:

- Discreetly instruct your players to back off, without shouting obvious directions like "Don't score!" or "No shooting."
- Give less experienced players a chance to score or participate more actively.
- Rotate stronger players to defense or the bench.
- Implement a "passing game" that requires multiple passes before shooting.
- Consider adding a player to the weaker team to balance the game.
- Really work to get the game balanced, it will be very much appreciated by the players coaches and families.

Managing the Sidelines

Blowouts can escalate emotions on both sides:

- Keep an eye on your sideline and ensure that fans are respectful. What may seem like encouragement can come across as taunting to the opposing team.
- If tensions rise, remind everyone—players, parents, and coaches—that the ultimate goal is for all kids to have a positive experience.

Plan Ahead

Discuss blowout prevention strategies with your players during practice. Have a discreet plan in place, using code words or signals, so that your team can adjust without drawing attention. Openly yelling instructions to “stop scoring” can embarrass the other team and should be avoided.

Who Is Affected?

Everyone is impacted by blowouts:

- **The Players:** They learn life lessons through soccer, and it’s important to model winning with humility and losing with dignity.
- **The Fans:** Spectators from both sides may know each other, and emotions can run high if the game becomes too one-sided.
- **The Coach:** Your legacy won’t be determined by big wins, but by the example you set for your players and parents. Show class and sound judgment, and you’ll always be a winner in their eyes.

Conclusion

By using these strategies, you’ll not only prevent blowouts but also help your team improve in areas like teamwork, passing, and positioning. Soccer is about learning, growing, and having fun. Let’s make sure that’s the focus of every game.