

Developing Sportsmanship

Every so often we as coaches find ourselves playing in a game where our team dominates the game. Instead of telling the kids to hold back and not try as hard, we should focus on developing other aspects of the game. Below are a few ideas on how to limit the amount of scoring while still focusing on building skills to make the team better players.

1.) **Focus on possession.**

- a. You can also require your players to complete a minimum number of consecutive passes (without losing possession) before they are permitted to score. Again, this will force your players to do more passing and off-ball movement to succeed, and will make scoring more difficult since your opponent will now have more time for players to recover defensively. From the viewpoint of tactical development, a possession-based restriction also teaches your players how to score using a “build-up” attack, as opposed to simply relying on quick counterattacks to score.

2.) **Impose shot restrictions.**

- a. Have the team shoot with their weak foot, this will develop your player’s weak side and make them all-around better players.

3.) **Impose touch restrictions.**

- a. In youth soccer, we often see goals scored simply as a result of the “bigger, faster athlete” dribbling the length of the field and scoring on his or her own. If the other team isn’t able to present a suitable defense against such a player, you can impose a two- or three-touch limit on this player (or all your players) so that they have to rely on passing and movement off the ball (instead of solo dribbling efforts) to score more goals

4.) **Limit your scoring methods.**

- a. Finally, you might consider specifying a particular (and challenging) method of scoring for additional goals. Requiring players to score from a volley, one-touch, or a header (on a large field only), then you also force players to practice attacking from the wings and delivering crosses in the air. You can require players to score shots from outside the penalty area, which encourages them to practice their long-range finishing. This is an ideal time to work on any areas of weakness that affect your team.