

MEMORANDUM

To: Coaches
From: GSA Board of Directors
Re: Sportsmanship
Date: August 28, 2006

The season is underway and games have started. In the past few weeks the board has received a number of high-sided scores (scores over 8 goal differential or shutouts). At this time we once again (it was said previously at the coaches meeting) wanted to remind coaches to use restraint in games where you are clearly able to dominate the other team. While it is fun for your players and their parents to see scoring occur, lop-sided scores or “blow outs” can cause a great deal of heartbreak and hard feelings on the part of the opponents as well as ourselves. These hard feelings can last for years!

One of the major objectives for the youth soccer program is to teach sportsmanship and fair play. One definition of sportsmanship is: *sportsmanlike conduct, as fairness, courtesy, being a cheerful loser, etc.* It is fair to say that being a “good winner” would also be included in this definition. We, as an association, think this is a very important component of youth soccer and pledge that our association, coaches, parents, and players must also follow the philosophy of good sportsmanship.

It is suggested to discuss this information with your players at practice before a game - that in the future you may have some games that you may have to use some restraint on goal scoring to make sure the other team has more fun. Tell them that you may need to use this time as more of a practice and elaborate on what may be done and why. Tell them they will be better soccer players at in the end both physically and mentally.

Toward the above goals we would like to provide some suggestions that other coaches have implemented in the past during such games:

- Allow more skilled players time off the field. Often these players get few breaks during tougher games. Allow the less-skilled players to play the whole game for a change.
- Use younger and less skilled players at forward and other scoring positions.
- Once you have scored one goal, your job is to “set up” or assist another player that has not scored a goal. Work on your passing skills and develop the other players.
- Make it a requirement that there must be at least three, four or even five passes between teammates prior to taking a shot on goal. If the other team touches the ball, start over.
- You can only shoot from outside of the box on either the left or right side, not the middle.
- That heading the ball can be the only way to score a goal.
- Require players to use their less dominant kicking foot to play. In this way they are less likely to score, but it also helps them develop their skills in game time situations.
- Don't start holding back after the score is 6-0. Start after first couple goals when you can see you are out matched. Or make adjustments before the game if you know that this team is very weak. Ask them how they are doing before the game.

Groton has developed a strong Recreational and High School soccer programs over the past years by developing the skills of ALL our youth by keeping teams sizes small and assuring that all players get ample playing time. In the past year our Rec. program claimed 5 state Rec. champs and two runner-ups. This is due in no small part to the hard work of the coaches and the association.