

MERCY RULE

Applies to All Age groups

The Medford Youth Athletic Association and Medford Soccer Club has adopted mandatory sportsmanship guidelines to help avoid "running up the score" and to help control games involving teams of unequal skill or competitive levels. Pursuant to these guidelines, the club will enforce a **zero tolerance policy**.

Under **NO Circumstances** should the goal differential in a game become 6 or more goals. In order to minimize such un-sportsmanship like behavior, in games where the coach allows the goal differential to become 6 or more goals at some point during the first half of play, for example, 6-0, 7-1, 8-2, etc., the game will be allowed to continue to first allow the coaches an opportunity to remedy the situation. If the second half starts with the goal differential being 6 or more goals, or if at any time during the second half of play the goal differential reaches 6 or more goals, **the referee will immediately signal the end of the game and leave the field. At that point the game is over and play will not be allowed to continue. Whenever a game is terminated for a mercy rule violation, the referee is to report the game as a mercy rule termination on his/her report to the Medford Soccer Club Board.**

A resumption of the game is NOT permitted. Early termination of a game for a mercy rule violation is a sanctionable offense. The "winning" coach will be required to attend a sportsmanship seminar conducted by the MYAA, and could be subject to suspension. It is important for coaches, teams, and parents to understand that the MYAA will not tolerate these types of violations. The Medford Soccer Club has developed the in-house program in particular with the objective to have players enjoy the game and develop their skills. Extreme score differentials are not in keeping with this philosophy, regardless of the intent of the opposition. It is possible that there will be teams that are scheduled against each other that are not competitively matched. It is the responsibility of both coaches, regardless of which end of the score you are on, to manage the game within the rule. The critical concept here is communication. **The club expects both coaches to collaborate in managing the game so that a potentially embarrassing and disheartening event can become as much of a positive experience as possible.**

Coaches may wish to consider the following options for managing the game when it becomes obvious that the competition is unevenly matched so it does not reach the point where the Mercy Rule is applied:

- Restrict shooting to outside the penalty box area
- Require players to shoot with their non-dominant foot
- Designate a player who normally does not score as a player which the ball must go to
- Consider placing strong players in a defensive position
- “Quietly” remove a player from the field and play short-handed. It is important to remember that these or similar actions should be taken well BEFORE the goal differential reaches 6. Start thinking when the score reaches a four or five goal differential.
- A team may add players to the field of play as an acceptable solution

Please retain a copy of this document to clarify any confusion on the part of the referee or coaches in the application of the rule.

For the 1st and 2nd grade division, where there is no official score keeping. It will be the Coaches responsibility to monitor the goals. Any coach who has a complaint of a coach abusing the mercy rule should contact their appropriate commissioner for their age group.

