Coaching Tips - Preventing Lop-Sided Scores
Notice, the title of this tip is not about 'pulling back', but coaching to prevent running up the score. There are many things you can do as a coach to motivate your players other than putting the ball in the net.

The score in itself does not tell the whole story if a game was lop-sided. A 8-0 game where several different players score may be OK, while a $5-0$ game where one kid dominated and the coach kept up the pressure may indicate a problem.

Losing teams get upset when a team is up and the coach is still going 100\%. As a coach, you should make sure you are first dialing yourself back in.

At a 4-point lead, you should start to think about shifting focus away from scoring, and definitely at 5 points. Once you are up by a few, and the other team gives up, the extra goals are garbage and do absolutely zero to develop your team.

A couple things you can do to keep your players challenged yet not run up the score once you are up by a few:

1) Make sure you are sitting your best players. They deserve a break, and it is good get lower skilled kids a chance to play more. If you have a couple of players dominating the game/ball, sub them out at different times to push them to work more with the rest of the team.
2) Tell players they should aim just right or left of the goal. Everybody will know they could have scored.
3) Tell them to work on keeping possession between your penalty area and the attacking side of the center circle. While many players have attacking skills, very few teams at this age have good possession skills.
4) Tell your players that nobody can score until a player you designate scores (and you pick the worst kid on the team). This gets kids to start thinking about creativity in their passing.
5) If you have a kid who is good with his dominant foot, but weak with his other, tell him he has to use his off-foot.
6) Offer to allow the other team to play with an additional player. Or if they are shorthanded, you may consider pulling one of your players.
7) Play the strong player(s) in the goalie position for a quarter.

Also, trying to communicate this once the game is out of hand does not work. You need to explain these strategies to your team at practice or before the game.

Some coaches have a code phrase, such as "Focus on Possession" or "Plan P", and the players will understand they need to change their game plan.

