

The Effects of Running up the Score in Sport

A Synthesis of the Research Literature

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5-7</b>
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	
PURPOSE OF STUDY	
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS	
DELIMITATIONS	
<b>CHAPTER 2: METHODS</b>	<b>8-9</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF LITERATURE</b>	<b>10-19</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION/FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>20-21</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: ARTICLE GRID</b>	<b>22-27</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>28</b>

## **ABSTRACT**

This synthesis highlights the effects of running up the score in sport. To examine this matter to the fullest extent, there were seven peer-reviewed articles chosen that involved the ethics of running up the score and several arguments for and against the issue. Several topics included in the articles were the anti-blowout thesis, humiliation, sportsmanship and competition.

The review of literature provides information, and conclusions that support the idea that running up the score may be ethical or unethical depending on the circumstances of the game.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

In sports, athletes are often encouraged by their coaches to give their maximum effort in every game that they play. However, an interesting general question that arises in sport is the extent to which we should lower the central comparative goal of competitive sport by measuring the participants' athletic excellence to different moral considerations. We admire the athlete who stops to help an injured rival, even though doing so reduces his/her own chances on winning (Dixon, 2000). To the general population, it is the right thing to do. However, others may think that winning by a wide margin through the means of athletic excellence displays athletic superiority.

Ethics is a normative brand of inquiry: it goes beyond describing how human beings act toward one another, and asks and examines how they should act toward one another (Morgan & Meier, 1995.) Ethics is used to evaluate the normative value of moral beliefs, decision and actions of human agents. It also analyzes moral value through sound methods of moral reasoning. In ethics, we often run into different codes of conduct and beliefs from groups that may differ from other groups. Individuals & smaller groups such as social classes and families formulate moralities in developing personal or group codes of conduct (Frankena, 1973.) Moreover, in sport, teams, sporting communities and individual athletes, coaches and administrators develop moralities to guide their conduct on and off of the field.

Some individuals believe that sport is unethical because sport are zero-sum or negative-sum contests in which there is one winner and one or many losers. In addition, sport can become activities in which people develop win at all cost or no place for second place attitudes. (Simon, Torres, Hager, 2015) According to Simon et al, accepting these attitudes leads to an

overemphasis on winning that leads people to view the process of competition primarily or solely as a means to the end of winning, view opponents as enemies to be conquered and humiliated, and ignore sport's many other values such as sportsmanship and fair play. In contrast to the argument, Simon notes, a sport competition can be viewed as a mutually acceptable quest for excellence through challenge. The mutual quest for excellence is an ideal created by Robert L. Simon with guidelines that focus on the integrity of the sport. It states, "You will view competition as an opportunity to test yourself against worthy opponents, and that you will view opponents and officials not as enemies, but as fellow humans." (Simon, Torres, Hager, 2015, p.32).

In competitive sport, values essential to sportsmanship are respect, fairness, grace, and humility. If we accept Simon's ideal of sport as a mutually acceptable quest for excellence through challenge then we will avoid actions that will humiliate opponents, use sportsmanlike actions to help our opponents present us with the best possible challenge, and we will not do anything unsportsmanlike to impede the performance of our opponents. (Simon, Torres, Hager, 2015)

Fair play is also an essential factor to the ongoing debate about whether or not it is ethical to run up the score on your counterparts. Fair play has always been an applied concept, in addition, many treatments of fair play are motivated by the desire to use sport to teach a set of positive values, than by the goal of understanding the nature of the concept itself (Butcher & Schneider, 1998). Sport is not only used for entertainment, but also used to develop values. The concept of those values depend on the way in which sport has been practiced, taught and played.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There has been difficulty identifying whether it is ethical or not to run up the score on your counterparts. Proponents believe that the game should be played from start to finish and the score is a byproduct of the game. Whereas others believe that running up the score is detrimental to psyche of the athletes and may result in athletes quitting a sport.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the synthesis is to review the literature on the effects of running up the score in competitive athletics.

### **Research Questions**

1. Under what conditions is it ethical to run up the score on an opponent?
2. Under what circumstances is it unethical to run up the score on an opponent?

### **Operational Definitions**

The following presents the operational definitions used:

**Running up the Score:** In the context of the synthesis, this refers to a team who continues to score additional points after the results of the game is no longer in question.

**Sportsmanship:** In the context of the synthesis, this refers to showing respect to your opponents, teammates, coaches, officials, fans and your sport in competitive athletics.

**Ethics:** In the context of the synthesis, this refers to the branch of philosophy that examines questions and issues concerning morality.

**Morality:** In the context of the synthesis, this refers to a system of norms, values and rules governing human relationships, interactions and dealings.

### **Delimitations**

The following delimitations were used in the synthesis:

1. Research on the effects of running up the score in competitive athletics.
2. Papers that discuss the “anti-blowout” paradigm.

## Chapter 2

### METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to review the methods and procedures used to synthesize the literature on running up the score in sport. The studies collected for the synthesis were located using the EBSCO database from the College at Brockport Drake Library. Within the EBSCO database from the following databases were searched: SPORTDiscus and Academic Search Complete. From these searches a total of seven articles met the criteria for inclusion in this literature review. Criteria for selection included full texts articles and scholarly/peer reviewed articles. In the search, a date range of the year 1992 to 2017 was used. Some of the articles have been published more than 10 years ago, however, they include relevant information that can be used today and were incorporated into this paper. All other articles or sources selected as part of the literature review provided content relevant to the topic, and background information to complete the review. All sources are cited in the reference section of this paper.

To provide articles that were relevant for this synthesis, keywords and phrases were used to narrow down the selection. The phrases “Morality + sport”, “Ethics + sport”, “Humiliation + sport”, “Sportsmanship + athletes + blowouts”, “Anti-Blowout Thesis”, “Running up the score”, and “Fair Play + sport” were used to search for and select articles. The phrase “Morality + sport” yielded 405 hits on the database. The phrase “Ethics + sport” yielded 5,639 hits on the database. The phrase “Humiliation + sport” yielded 73 hits. The phrase “Sportsmanship + blowout + athletes” yielded 3 hits on the database. The phrase “Anti-Blowout Thesis” yielded 4 hits. The phrase “Running up the score” yielded 131 hits on the database. It was essential to look through the article hits to make sure that each article utilized was relevant to running up the score in

competitive sport. It was important to ensure that each article included topics regarding running up the score in sport.

In order for an article to be used in the review of literature, it had to meet specific criteria. First, the articles had to include arguments for and or against running up the score in sport, in addition, articles that included variables to help an argument be stronger such as sportsmanship and fair play were included. Second, it is best to add all levels of competition and all different sports to ensure the best possible outcome. To add, the journals used for the synthesis were found in *The Journal of Philosophy of Sport*. Lastly, the critical masses used for this synthesis were 9 reputable sport philosophers who studied the ethics of sports.

## **Chapter 3**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on the impact of running up the score in competitive athletics. Specifically, this chapter will cover the following topics of the anti-blowout thesis, humiliation, sportsmanship, and competition.

#### **Anti-Blowout Thesis**

In the sporting world, the pursuit of lopsided victories is usually considered running up the score on your opponent and showing up the losing team. Dixon created a widely-held view concerning sportsmanship in which he argues against, called the anti-blowout thesis. The anti-blowout thesis states that, "It is intrinsically unsporting for players or teams to maximize the margin of victory after they have secured victory in a one-sided contest."(Dixon, 1992, p.1).

The anti-blowout thesis is supported primarily in competitive sport such as the intercollegiate and professional level. It is widely held in football, it is also applied to some extent in basketball and baseball. In his article, Dixon provides examples of how fans perceive the idea of running up the score. Dixon provides examples of multiple scenarios where running up the score occurred. In the early 1980s, a Big Ten football coach was outraged when in the games closing moments, the opposing team scored a touchdown after being up by several of them. After the game, the coach led the entire team to the field and drew the attention towards the scoreboard. The players stood there for a few seconds contemplating in disgrace and anxious for revenge for the following season because of the humiliation. According to Dixon, if the anti-blowout thesis is correct, the sporting thing to do for teams that are leading by a wide margin is to ease up on their opponents. They should substitute the starters with the second and third string

players and mercifully run out the clock with time consuming running plays, coasting to victory without adding on to the loser's suffering (1992).

Dixon objects the anti-blowout thesis because he feels that there is absolutely nothing wrong with pressing for a lopsided victory in a competitive game (1992). Dixon views lopsided victories as positive unsporting. A line of argument would be that winning is the only thing that matters in sport. In contrast, Dixon claims that if this were true, it would be gratuitous to continue to score points long after the game has been secured. Players who win blowouts can be proud of their display of athletic excellence, the records that they have set, and the excitement they have provided for their fans.

In addition, Dixon also states, "If one strips away the mistaken attitude that heavy defeats is a serious affront to one's humanity or to one's status as an athlete then there is no good reason to criticize teams for maximizing the margin of victory." (1992, p.5). To defend this statement, Dixon uses the opponents of the U.S. Dream Team in the 1992 Olympic basketball tournament as an example. The opponents knew they were outmatched. Regardless of the matter they played with enthusiasm and spirit, clearly enjoying every minute they shared the court with NBA legends. They understood that lopsided defeat in sport did not mean no more or less than a huge gap difference in ability (1992).

There are other philosophers who have different views towards the anti-blowout thesis. According to Feezell, running up the score on an opponent is bad form and somehow inappropriate because it violates the nature of what sport is truly about (2000). For instance, a coach who does whatever it takes to win and would willingly run up the score if it improved his team's rating and tournament seeding has a poor view of sport. Feezell believes that it is such views and attitudes that tend to generate the unsportsmanlike behavior in sport (2000).

However, Feezell attempts to revise the anti-blowout thesis. The revised anti-blowout thesis states that “It is prima facie unsporting for players or teams to maximize the margin of victory after they have secured victory in a one-sided contest.” (1999, p.70). The modification is intended to concede that in some cases winning by a wide margin is acceptable. To defend his modification, Feezell states that to lose is to fail to be as good as one wants to be, so losing badly normally carries with it the pain of realizing the wide gap between one’s desires and one’s actual level of talent (1999).

In addition, Feezell’s second line of argument to support the revised anti-blowout thesis is the notion that sport is very competitive by its nature. There is a weak sense and a strong sense to where a game might be competitive. In the weak sense, if you have an opponent who challenges you and makes it possible to have a competition, then the activity is competitive. In the strong sense, a game is competitive if both participants are of equal talent or skill level which makes the competition a good one. Therefore, if players or teams attempt to maximize the margin of victory after they have secured victory, then they fail to respect real competition. Feezell claims that good competition requires being challenged by worthy opponents (1999).

On the contrary, Dixon believes that there are some flaws within the revised anti-blowout thesis. He believes that the anti-blowout thesis is more persuasive in time based sports such as basketball and football where the play ends once the clock runs out of time. Dixon states that when a team has built a large lead, a moment arrives when the opposing team lacks to make up the deficit (2000). Baseball is different from football and basketball. There is no time frame, so that there is possibility for dramatic comebacks, even when facing a large deficit late in the game. Due to this reason, there is always doubt about whether or not victory has been captured in

baseball before the last out. Therefore, it isn't clear that any lopsided victory violates the revised anti-blowout thesis (2000).

Fraleigh, discusses what he calls the problem of right action in uneven contest. Instead of defending a position towards the anti-blowout thesis, he illustrates a method of dealing with conflicts in relation to running up the score. He provides an analysis where he shows many options that teams have when leading by a wide margin (1984). In this particular situation the team winning by a wide margin can allow the losing team to score a few consolation points, can aggressively pursue an even greater margin of victory, can substitute less competent players or try out new tactics and strategies. Because of his view, it is suggested that Fraleigh defend the view that even when a team has an invincible lead, all players are still obligated to play their hardest until the end of the game (1992).

### **Humiliation**

It is also argued in sports that running up the score on your counterpart does humiliate the loser. Not necessarily as a human being but as an athlete and it also may be the reason why it is unsporting to inflict such defeats (1992). Dixon believes that there are two types of humiliations, weak and strong humiliations. Dixon defines the weak sense as easing up on your opponents. Any defeat, not necessarily a blowout, is defined as humiliating towards the loser. Causing humiliation in this manner is the result of most competitive contests. Dixon (1992) believes that humiliation in the strong sense where you cause disgrace or shame is when it becomes a moral issue. There is no cause for shame in a heavy defeat. According to Dixon, the only cause for shame is that the athlete did not play to their best potential, or that they quit trying (1992).

Dixon claims that a loser's strong negative feelings are both a logical possibility and an empirical likelihood in lopsided victories (1996). One sided contest reveal non moral failings

such as the lack of persistence and poor performances. These may be the result to lack of skill, faulty coaching and insufficient preparation. However, Hardman et al (1996) object Dixon's claims by using a one sided tennis match as an example. For instance, there is a very one sided tennis match where it consists of nothing but aces by the dominant player when serving and winning returns when receiving. It is clear that the better player would have performed well and might have set records, but the accolades of the winner would be shaded by a contest that extended from its original service point. At the end of the contest, the focus will be on the lack of ability of the losing athlete. Instead of the admitting that the well-beaten player's abilities were lower than his or her opponent, we would likely think that their play displayed gross incompetence and nonmoral character faults (1996).

In addition, Hardman et al (1996) intent is to show that in one sided contests performances marked by nonmoral faults or gross incompetence can humiliate the opponent in a harmful way. They side with the anti-blowout thesis and feel that the anti-blowout thesis is a reasonable way to avoid any harmful actions that can be detrimental to the inept loser. In Dixon's thesis, it states that the primary purpose of competition is to pursue victory and other sporting goals. Therefore, all players must play to their full potential until the competition is over, even though the outcome of the game is not even in question.

According to Hardman et al (1996), Dixon's thesis is troubling because it does not let the opponent reevaluate the contest conditions. There is no pity for the loser in the thesis. If the winner plays his hardest, there appears to be nothing that the loser can do to make his performance appear least incompetent as possible. In addition, an approach that can be used to understand the moral psychology of one-sided games is to weight the cognitive evidence by the athletes who are competing (1996). It is credible that athletes who lose in a one-sided game feel

negative about their sporting experience because they have made a real connection between loss of self-esteem and inequality. This idea is defended with Nozick's (1974) position who points out that curious psychological emotion of envy can lead a person with a score or ability to wish another person had scored less and was less able to perform.

To counter the viewpoint above, Dixon claims that self-esteem and feelings of self-worth should not be strongly affected by another's capabilities or characteristics and should solely depend upon facts of one's self (1996). However, as human beings and athletes, we tend to evaluate how well we do something in comparison to others performances. Hardman uses a scenario where a man living in a village is able to sink 15 jump shots with a basketball out of 150 tries. Everyone else in the village has only been able to sink 1 out of every 150 tries. He and the others think that he is very good at it. He then expresses that Jerry West comes along to the village. His point here is that there is no standard of doing something well, independent of how it is or can be done by others. To finalize his standpoint, Hardman et al (1996) states that Dixon is right to claim that comparisons of athletic ability are unmorally sound, but he is wrong to believe that such contrast are free of ethical dangers.

On the contrary, Dixon criticizes Hardman et al.'s (1996) claim that heavy defeats do strongly humiliate opponents. Dixon states that a massive defeat does not necessarily occur because of lack of skill. A farfetched blowout can be caused by an opponent completely neglecting preparation of the game, perhaps even showing up to the game after a sleepless night due to partying. If someone were to show up to a contest in such condition, they will be strongly humiliated not only as a player but as a human. Especially if the player is talented and is capable of far better performances. On the other hand, if the losing player has prepared enough, their defeat may be due because of lack of skill. According to Dixon (1996), lacking skill in a sport is

nothing to be ashamed about, but a sense of strong humiliation would develop if players lacking even basic competence present themselves for a competitive contest. Dixon agrees that Hardman et al. are right that the losing player may be strongly humiliated according to the criteria he has presented, displaying character flaws and gross incompetence.

### **Sportsmanship**

In the past, gentlemen participated to play in sports not for the purpose of winning, but rather for the intrinsic pleasure of playing. Immoderate preparation for a contest was considered bad form, amateurism was promoted, and a good game was expected to be valued by coaches and players. To add, they valued an equal contest over athletic superiority. The model opposes the pursuit of victory by a wide margin. (Keating, 1964)

However, Dixon argues that his view towards the model comports far better than the anti-blowout thesis will. To make his point, Dixon uses James Keating's account on sportsmanship. According to Keating, there is a distinction between recreational and competitive sport (1992). The purpose of each of these two activities provides a different conception of sportsmanship. Recreational sport's sole purpose is pleasant diversion, specifically, the joy obtained by the contest. In recreational sport, the essential virtue in sportsmanship is generosity (Dixon, 1992). Generosity does not require the adoption of the model above, but it demands for discipline of the person with the large lead in a friendly game. To add, such moderation helps avoid unhappiness and conflict. The little credibility that the model has is confined to recreational sport. On the contrary, the model lacks reasoning when applied to competitive sport. According to Dixon (1992) it cannot be used to argue against his view towards the anti-blowout thesis.

Competitive sport has a different purpose of the objective and athletes are encouraged to display superior performance and excellence. The concept of sportsmanship is fair play. In the

article Dixon uses Fraleigh's view of competitive sport to prove his point. It states, "To provide equitable opportunity for mutual contesting of the relative abilities of the participants to move mass in space and time within the confines prescribed by an agreed-upon set of rules." (Fraleigh, 1984, p.41). The statement above excludes cheating, but it does not claim that lopsided victories are unsporting. However, if the athlete running up the score eases up on their opponent toward the end of the game, the purpose of displaying athletic superiority is weakened. Moreover, the attempt to make comparisons between athletes and teams, and to maintain the integrity of sporting records would be wrecked if we were to ease up on opponents once the contest is no longer in question (1992). As long as respect is shown to the opponent, there is nothing unsporting about lopsided victories.

The mercy rule is also another variable towards sportsmanship that helps eliminate blowouts. Sailors (2010) argues that regardless of the moral status of blowouts, rules should be upheld and expanded. If blowouts are morally acceptable, then mercy rules are right to prevent them. Sailors introduces blowout examples such as Lisa Leslie who scored 101 points in the first half of a basketball game. At halftime, the score was 102-24 and it seemed that she will break the single game scoring record, but due to the huge gap in points, the opposing coach decided not to bring his team out for the second half. According to Sailors (2010), mercy rules attempt to rush the end of lopsided contests. To add, claims about blowouts are too broad, we fail to establish distinctions that may determine moral status. Sailors (2010) believes that a distinction between time limited and untimed events may determine moral status.

In sport-timed segments, the clock will run out at some point no matter what the score is, however, sports that are divided into innings or other untimed segments can go on forever if there were no mercy rule. To avoid this from happening, they use the "run rule" where the

contest comes to a stop once secures a huge lead in a certain amount of innings. In NCAA Softball, a university coach stated that she wanted the run rule in effect, whether she was coaching the winning or losing team during an 8-run lead after 5 innings of play. Usually, softball teams play double-headers, so it is desired to not risk any injuries and wear your players down once the opposing team has secured victory. The purpose of sports is to strive for athletic excellence, but in a blowout there isn't much opportunity to do so since the losing team is not putting up a challenge. According to Sailors (2010), there is no point in continuing a game that isn't benefitting either team by lack of opportunity to display skills against your counterpart or an opportunity to enhance your skills by challenging a superior opponent.

### **Competition**

According to Taylor et al (2014), what it means to be competitive can vary from sport to sport, Dixon fails to recognize this, therefore, he misses much that it is significant for the ethics of lopsided victories. Taylor et al (2014) uses the distinction between parallel and interactive sports to illustrate their point. The goal of activity in parallel sports such as golf, bowling and darts is pursued independently of other competitors. However, in interactive sports such as football, basketball and hockey, the goal of activity is pursued by opponents responding to each other's actions.

For Dixon, the primary purpose of competition is to display athletic excellence or superiority. Taylor et al (2014) state, "In parallel sports the pursuit of this end is insular. How I perform does not directly affect the way you perform to any significant extent. (2014, P.251) This is because the athlete can continue striving for excellence whether or not they are being blown out. They can try to overcome mental barriers that result from having an off day or they can attempt to beat their personal records.

On the other hand, in interactive sports it is much different. An athlete or team's action influences or restricts the opposition's ability to do certain things in pursuit of victory. As Hardman et al (1996) point out, in interactive sports, athletes are test takers and makers. They create challenges for each other in which they have to meet or conquer, however, athletic superiority prevents the opposition from attaining victory. Taylor et al (2014) believe that one cannot design the pursuit of excellence to be identical in every sport. In parallel sport, regardless of one's opponent excellence can still be achieved. In interactive sport, the quest for excellence cannot be attained independently, it must be mutual.

### **Summary**

When winning by a wide margin even after the contest is no longer in question provides a platform for philosophers to discuss their viewpoints on the issue. It is clear that some believe that there is nothing wrong with running up the score on your counterpart, however, others believe that it is morally wrong.

## Chapter 4

### DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this chapter is to present the conclusions of running up the score in sport. In addition, the chapter will present recommendations for future research in relation to running up the score in sport. Commonalities in the literature review were in topics of the anti-blowout thesis, humiliation, sportsmanship, and competition.

Several philosophers believe that there is an extent to which you can run up the score on your opponent. Others believe that the idea of displaying athletic excellence can vary from sport to sport, so the idea of running up the score is defined differently depending on the sport.

It may be objected that there is inadequacy of current models of sportsmanship, and that a new model should be created that condemns the pursuit of lopsided victories. In relation to the anti-blowout thesis, Dixon's goal is to show that there are no arguments including those of the models of sportsmanship that give good reasoning for condemning the pursuit of lopsided victories by a wide margin as naturally unsporting (1992).

There are other variables that may help as far as sportsmanship in sport goes. Another result found in the literature is that although mercy rules will not eliminate victories that are not in question, they will be able to eliminate harms that come along with blowouts. In addition, Sailors concludes that it may be a better response to blowouts rather than having the winning team use strategies such as easing up on their opponent (2010)

In addition, Hardman et al (1996) argue in defense of the anti-blowout thesis, therefore, criticizing Dixon's view. In the review of literature, Dixon claims that there is overemphasis on winning in modern sport; on the contrary, Hardman et al (1996) believe that the idea does not arise from anything in the realm of athletics. In fact, the dominant view in sport that winning is

the only thing that matters, is best defined as a product of our culture rather than a cause of sport's own predicament.

This synthesis project impacts coaches because it gives different points of views of running up the score in sport. In the NCAA, defeating a ranked team gives a team a huge edge over others. In addition, in professional soccer there is a point system that is taken into consideration at the end of the season. Coaches also develop a pride within their team, so when they crush opponents it builds confidence and makes them feel good. However, professional sports promotes good sportsmanship, as long as they show respect to their opponents after a lopsided victory then there should not be an issue with running up the score.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Throughout extensive reading and sifting through previously conducted research, several recommendations for future research on this topic came to mind. One recommendation for future research would be to further research on whether it is ethical or not to run up the score in sport. The studies in the literature review touched on the topic, but it failed to give the audience a clear-cut answer, instead, there were modifications and they insisted that there are circumstances that allow running up the score to not be an ethical issue.

Another recommendation for future research would be to look deeper into specific sports and interview coaches to get their viewpoints on lopsided victories. In addition, athletes from the intercollegiate and professional level should be surveyed in regards to running up the score. If this is done, the research may give a better understanding to why teams and athletes continue to score after they have captured the victory.

**APPENDIX A:**  
**ARTICLE GRID**

Author	Title	Source	Purpose	Findings	Discussion/ Recommendations Research Notes –  Commonalities/Differences
Dixon (1992)	On Sportsmanship and “Running Up the Score”	Journal Of The Philosophy Of Sport	The purpose is to argue against a widely held view concerning sportsmanship. (The Anti-Blowout Thesis.)	Dixon comes to a conclusion that there are no sound arguments that give any good reason for condemning the pursuit of victory by a wide margin as intrinsically unsporting.	The anti-blowout thesis is most plausible in precisely such situations in time-based sports. In score based sports such as tennis continues until a certain score has been reached regardless of the time elapsed. Dramatic comebacks are possible to do until the final point has been played and we are unlikely to criticize the behavior of a player who pads his/her lead in order to reduce the likelihood of such a comeback.
Dixon (1998)	Why Losing by a Wide Margin is Not in Itself a Disgrace: Response to Hardman, Fox, McLaughlin and Zimmerman	Journal Of The Philosophy Of Sport	Dixon responds to Alun Hardman’s defense of the Anti-Blowout Thesis. Dixon argues that losing by a wide margin is not a disgrace.	Dixon concludes that heavy defeats are not in themselves any cause for shame or disgrace. Strong humiliation may arise from narrow defeats and even victories and not only from heavy defeats.	Dixon claims that strong humiliation can also result from such moral flaws as cheating and poor sportsmanship. He has confined his attention to two other sources of strong humiliation that are more likely to be revealed by heavy defeats which are non-moral character flaws and gross incompetence.
Dixon (2000)	The Inevitability of Disappoi	Journal Of The Philosophy Of Sport	Dixon replies to Randolph Feezell’s thoughtful and	In sum, Dixon disagrees with Feezell’s defense of the	Dixon’s argument against the anti-blowout thesis and the revised anti-blowout thesis is confined

	ntment: Reply to Feezell		well-argued defense of a modified Anti- Blowout Thesis.	revised anti- blowout thesis for similar reasons to those of the anti-blowout thesis. Dixon believes that victories by a wide margin are not gratuitous inflictions of suffering. He uses low scoring sports like soccer where athletic excellence can be impressive to back up his argument.	strictly to competitive sport. Dixon claims that in baseball it isn't clear that the revised anti-blowout thesis comes into effect because late-inning comebacks are always possible, in contrast to "time-based" sports in which a large lead becomes unassailable when only a small amount of playing time remains.
Feezell (1999)	Sportsm anship and Blowout s: Baseball and Beyond	Journal Of The Philosophy Of Sport	Feezell argues that good judgments about sportsmanship often require an insider's understanding and appreciation of the particularities of a sport and its relevant customs and traditions. He creates a revised anti- blowout thesis view that states, "It is prima facie	In sum, like Dixon, Feezell believes that winning is not the only thing that matters in sport. He also believes that losing need not humiliate a person since the outcome of relatively trivial activities like sporting contests is not as important as many persons seem to believe. A deep concern for the value of	Feezell does not deny that there are situations in which pursuing blowouts might be justified. Blowouts might have some strategic significance for future games played in a series. In professional basketball or baseball, a blowout in the first game of a playoff series might shake the opponent's confidence. On the other hand, trashing an opponent and then easing up, in a strategic sense can also have the same effect on their confidence.

			unsporting for players or teams to maximize the margin of victory after they have secured the victory in a one sided contest.	sportsmanship supports the tradition in holding that it's usually unsporting to "run up the score."	
Hardman, Fox, McLaughlin, & Zimmerman (1996)	On Sportsmanship and "Running Up the Score": Issues of Incompetence and Humiliation	Journal Of The Philosophy Of Sport	The authors in the article argue in defense of the Anti-Blowout thesis. They argue that downgrading the importance of winning to the extent that running up the score becomes a meaningless matter is objectionable because it is an outlook that could only be countenanced by a culture that nurtures bland indifference and dispassionate detachment toward sport.	The authors agree that Dixon is correct to say there is an overemphasis on winning in modern sport, but he fails to see that this state of affairs does not arise from anything that is particular to athletics. The dominant view in sport that winning is the only thing that matter is best, therefore, considered a symptom of our culture rather than a cause of sport's own predicament.	Though they accept the basic conceptual differences of Dixon's arguments on the anti-blowout thesis, they are not so sure why the concept of humiliation best describes the emotional experience of sporting losers. Shame, disgrace, disappointment, discouragement, regret, guilt, and embarrassment are but few other conceivable emotions that a loser may experience.
Sailors (2010)	Mercy Killing: Sportsmanship and	Journal Of The Philosophy Of Sport	Sailors examines various mercy rules used in different	Sailors believes that mercy rules will not eliminate victories by	Dixon suggests that an additional reason to allow blowouts is so that fans can delight in the show of great athleticism offered

	Blowouts		<p>sporting contexts to attempt to avoid prolonging athletic contests when they have become blowouts. Sailors argues that such rules should be upheld and perhaps expanded.</p>	<p>wide margins, but they will go some way toward eliminating the harms that come along with blowouts. Sailors concludes that while blowouts may not be intrinsically morally wrong, there are good reasons to encourage the use of mercy rules.</p>	<p>by superior athletes. Sailors objects the claim by stating that fans quickly become bored at best and unruly at worst during lopsided contests. One might suggest that the reason not to have mercy rules for professionals is that they would be perceived as demeaning because the level of competition takes place between more mature elite athletes. If this is what underlies the absence of mercy rules for professionals then it could be argued that mercy rules should also be eliminated once athletes and the level of competition reach the elite level.</p>
Taylor & Johnson (2014)	Virtuous Victory: Running Up The Score and The Anti-Blowout Thesis	Journal Of The Philosophy Of Sport	<p>Taylor &amp; Johnson provide distinctions and draw on Aristotelian resources to explore a framework by which to understand competing claims found within the literature.</p>	<p>The authors agree with Dixon about impermissibility of running up the score in fully recreational activities, and about the permissibility of running up the score in parallel competitions and in interactive competitions between equals. They agree that</p>	<p>Sports can be further categorized. For instance, interactive sports those which are timed and untimed and those with and without point thresholds. Sports can also cut across these distinctions, and so we have timed and untimed point-threshold sports. There are also those timed sports which can end prematurely if an opponent quits or submits and sports with no time limits but which end if the margin in points scored becomes too wide. The particular dynamics of the ethics of running up the</p>

				running up the score is permissible when the losing party is guilty of hubris, but think is impermissible when there is no such hubris. They feel that the reasons for the conclusion should be stronger.	score might differ in each of these categories. There hope is that the pattern they provide can apply in each case.
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