

## EVALUATING GOALKEEPER MISTAKES

I often suspected that the majority of questionable goals conceded by goalkeepers were attributed to mental breakdowns as opposed to physical mistakes.

Recently (February 9-April 2) I carefully analyzed 500 goals that were scored in some of the world's top professional leagues (Italy, Spain, Germany, France, Scotland, Holland and England) and, based on the types of goals that were being conceded, came away with some interesting insights as to what should be the main areas of concentration for keepers in training.

Very few of the goals surrendered were completely the fault of the goalkeeper. However, a surprisingly high number of goals were considered "gray area" or questionable goals.

By "gray area" I mean goals in which a better decision (or technique) would have definitely prevented the goal from being scored.

Coaches must realize that their team will concede less goals if keeper training involves more decision making plays.

An interpretation of the data may suggest that training to eliminate *questionable goals* (18.6% of the 500 scored) would make a serious impact on reducing the number of goals that a team surrenders. It may also suggest that training to eliminate 'questionable' goals is more important than training to make spectacular saves.

Incidentally, spectacular saves are made by keepers if they are dedicated to working on the correct details (feet set, positional play, starting points, etc.) and by recreating scoring situations and plays in training not by consistently having the keeper constantly working on 'goalie drills' and trying to improve reaction time.

### **STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN OF HOW THE QUESTIONABLE**

**GOALS WERE SCORED:** (the number of goals conceded in parenthesis)

Category 1-Goals where there is more thinking and decision making required

(26) **Misplayed Through Balls and Breakaways.** *The goalkeeper either did not come off their line properly, did not close down the opponent, started too deep on their line or, just through a better play, could have saved a goal*

(18) **Misplayed Crosses/high balls.** *The keeper either misjudged the cross, did not come out, started at an incorrect point or just misplayed the ball*

(11) **Poor Position or poor angle play** (2 of these goals were from free kicks)

(10) **Not getting their feet set or not getting into a correct set position**

(10) **Misplayed Corner Kicks.** *The keeper either did not come out or had trouble dealing with a crowded penalty area.*

75 Total

## **CATEGORY 2 –Goals that require more technique and technical work**

- (7) Mishandled Low Shots
  - (5) Poor deflection of a shot
  - (4) Poor diving technique
  - (3) Poor Footwork-The movement of the feet
  - (2) Kicking Mistakes
  - (2) Mishandled shot directly at keeper
- 23 Total

### ***Decision vs. Non Decision***

#### **Category 1**

Goals where there is more thinking and decision making required

#### **Category 2**

Goals that require technique and technical work

(Kicking and deflection of shot mistakes can be both Category 1 and 2)

## **HOW THIS RELATES TO TRAINING**

So much of goalkeeper training is based upon doing “keeper drills” that involve footwork exercises and a lot of diving.

Based on the statistics listed above 76.5% of ‘questionable’ goals are Category 1 goals (decision making). The data suggests that more decision making training combined with a steady diet of Category 2 training may be the most beneficial for the keeper’s development.

Let me say this, Category 2 drills (“keeper drills”) are absolutely necessary. They give the goalkeeper confidence, a sense of being sharp and the opportunity to perfect vital technique. Sometimes, however, too many of these drills can lead to injuries and in some cases the development of bad habits and burnout. (See Diving Saves)

## **GUIDELINES FOR TRAINING**

\*Whenever possible field players should be used to train the keepers. Using the “real” players is essential to goalkeeper development and gives the keeper a huge advantage because *everything* now becomes more challenging. Crosses, shots, headers all become more difficult. This type of training also gives the keeper an opportunity to pick up on the tendencies (body language, head up/head down, soccer IQ) that accomplished players demonstrate and possess.

\*The coach needs to prepare training so that either before, during or after the practice, field players are available to enhance and improve the goalkeeper session.

**\*The coach should also run drills, exercises, and games (small and full size) that involve the entire team utilizing goalkeepers.**

**It is wise to utilize the field players to address the most important areas of goalkeeping that require *thought and decision making* such as:**

- a) Making Saves,**
- b) Dealing with Crosses,**
- c) Dealing with Through Balls and Breakaways.**

**Important aspects of goalkeeping such as handling and kicking absolutely cannot be ignored. They need to be strategically addressed by the coaching staff so that you are not working on these skills while missing the opportunity to utilize quality field players when they are available.**

## **A) DIVING SAVES**

**Repetitive diving drills (depending on the drill) can increase the keeper's ability to improve leg drive and to save shots. However, once a goalkeeper is in midseason form and has done proper strength and agility training there is not much more they can do to increase their quickness and agility.**

**To become a great shot saver (only one of many aspects of goalkeeping) it is far more important to concentrate on two very essential fundamentals.**

**Those two fundamentals that most need to be addressed are:**

- 1. Proper Angle Play**
- 2. Correct Set Position (feet)**

**These fundamentals are best addressed:**

- 1) In realistic shooting situations**
- 2) With "real" soccer players shooting**

### **1. PROPER ANGLE PLAY**

**Poor angle play/positional play was responsible for 11.2% of the questionable goals conceded in the statistics listed at the top. The coach should stand behind the goal with the keeper during training and make corrections regarding their starting point and angle play.**

**It is essential for all sessions to be videotaped so the keepers get feedback on their positioning**

**\*\*\*See Wide angles (Through Balls and Breakaways #10)**

## **2. CORRECT SET POSITION**

**Not having the feet set accounted for 9.8% of all 'questionable' conceded goals.**

**In order to get maximum leg drive from a dive the feet must be set. Notice we didn't say still or stuck, but set. This means more than anything:**

- A) That the keeper is not moving forward and have their feet in the proper position.**
- B) The keeper must know when the shot is being taken and be ready to dive. Many times a keeper does not get a good jump on the ball because of deceptive shooting from the opponent.**

**\*If the keeper is still trying to move forward to steal an extra step or two to close down the angle of the shooter they are making a mistake. *The keeper cannot move forward and explode sideways at the same time.***

**Taking a comfortably higher position (See Section on Getting Higher) will allow the keeper to feel confident that they have closed down the shooter so they can get their feet set and avoid the temptation of moving forward as the shot is being taken. Good players can get shots off very quickly. Good keepers anticipate this, see potential shots and limit their forward movement.**

**\*The keeper should never take a big "hop" as their final step in order to get set. They should also avoid staying too low as this puts extra tension on the legs and makes them stiff and tight. The keeper always needs to feel light on their feet and ready to move and explode.**

**\*The keeper needs to have their feet shoulder width apart and on the balls of their feet. Again, the feet and legs need to feel light. The keeper needs to develop their own style with this skill (usually this involves the slightest bit of light movement without stepping forward) in order to get maximum explosion to go sideways.**

**\*First time shots and well placed shots with the side of the foot are tough for the goalkeeper because they catch them off guard. Encourage the shooters to be deceptive in training.**

**Also, keep in mind that good finishers have a 6<sup>th</sup> sense of when the keeper is moving their feet. This is usually when they shoot!**

**The better the level of soccer, the faster the game will become. The faster the game becomes, the quicker and more deceptive the shots will be. Any shooting exercise involving field players will help the keeper develop skill in the area of Proper Angle play and the Correct Set Position.**

**Listed below are some exercises that will help:**

- 1) The keeper stands about 4 yards off of their goal line at the near post. At the top of the penalty area around 18-20 yards from goal and to one side of the "D" is player A. Player A pushes a pass to Player B (a quality**

striker who is lined up square to player A and on the opposite side of the D). Player B takes one touch to control and a second touch to strike a shot on goal. The keeper must move across the goal line and DECIDE when to get set for the shot. *This exercise gives the keeper practice MOVING Laterally and DECIDING when to get set.*

**NOTE: IT IS BETTER TO BE IN A GOOD SET POSITION THAN TO KEEP MOVING TO GET A BETTER ANGLE BREAKDOWN.**

Player B must be able to control and get a shot off very quickly. After a few repetitions, Player B should occasionally attempt a first time shot.

2) The keeper starts about 4 yards off of their line. Player A stands 22- 25 yards away from goal FACING GOAL. Player B stands close to Player A. Player A plays a pass forward to Player B who shoots FIRST TIME. *This exercise gives the keeper practice MOVING FORWARD and DECIDING when to get set.*

\*

3) Player A goes against Player B in a 1 vs. 1 situation. *This exercise creates unpredictable moments and forces the keeper to concentrate on the DECISIONS and TIMING of when to get their feet set.*

#### **CATCH OR DEFLECT?**

This skill is both technique and decision. There are certain criteria that need to be considered BEFORE the shot is taken as to whether to catch or deflect:

1. Distance from the shooter
2. Wet conditions
3. The keeper 's ability to catch

As the shot is taken the keeper has a split second to decide what to do. A rule of thumb should be that the decision should be made when the ball is halfway between the shooter and the keeper.

#### **IMPROPER DIVING TECHNIQUE**

The two most common improper diving techniques are:

1. Diving up-This happens on low balls where the keeper dives up too high instead of getting straight out.

This technique can be corrected by having the coach roll and kick balls to the side and emphasizing rolling down on to the hip. Keep in mind that low balls require the keeper to have their feet set and for their first movement to be down and then out.

2. Diving back-This happens on balls that are hip height or higher when the keeper gets fully extended but does not get out and does not really cover the goal.

Correcting this problem requires the keeper to step forward instead of back and to concentrate on getting the body out instead of back. Placing a cone ahead of the keeper (at the six yard box) and encouraging them to dive to the cone may help correct this problem.

## **B) GETTING HIGHER**

What are the advantages of staying up higher off the line for the goalkeeper?

1. They do not have to take a lot, if any, forward steps to cut down an angle. Whenever a keeper does not get off a good dive it is usually because they are still stepping forward.
2. They have a better chance of cutting out a through ball.
3. They make the goal appear smaller to the opponent and force a lot of shots to go wide or high.

We absolutely are not encouraging the keeper to play in a dangerously high off of their line! However, the cues of the game (players with their heads down, players dribbling a full speed, players being closed down or under pressure from defenders, the keeper reading and knowing the predictability of the next play) will give them the opportunity to step forward and gain a greater advantage.

### ***EXERCISES THAT WILL HELP THE KEEPER FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE PLAYING HIGHER OFF THEIR LINE***

A. From a seated position the coach tosses a ball over the head to the left or right side. The keeper uses the opposite hand (if the toss is to the right side, use the left hand) and pushes the ball up and back

B. From a standing position about 6 yards from goal the coach tosses a looping ball for the keeper to use backward crossover steps to push the ball up, back and over the crossbar. The closer the ball gets to the crossbar the more the keeper needs to be concerned with getting the ball UP so as not to push the ball in the goal.

C. Line up balls across the top of the penalty area. Have the keeper play a yard or so higher than they normally would. This helps create a situation more conducive to getting the keeper to saves chips. Have the players try to beat the keeper over the top with a chip. It is good to have the other keepers to chip balls as this gives them a good visual on the shooters perspective. Chipping another keeper of the same height gives the keeper a good idea of what type of presence they have and what type of starting point they can use. Presence is *essential* to good goalkeeping.

Continue to move the exercise back (and the keepers should keep moving forward taking a higher starting position) until you are doing the drill from midfield. This is a fun exercise for everyone...except the keepers!

*This is also the perfect lead in drill for working on through balls. SEE THROUGH BALL EXERCISES.*

\*The skill of practicing saving chips is one of the most difficult skills there is for a keeper. It is also one of the least practiced.

\*Although tall keepers are hard to chip a surprisingly high number of tall keepers do not get far enough off of their line

*It also should be noted that ZERO of the 500 goals analyzed were scored as a result of the keeper getting chipped because they had too high of a starting point.*

### **C) DEALING WITH CROSSES –**

If you look at the statistics you will see the number of questionable goals (18%) conceded from crosses is quite high.

Handling crosses requires split second decision making skills. The goalkeeper should be involved in a session where they must deal with quality crosses in a competitive environment at least twice a week

#### **\*JUDGEMENT**

Probably the most difficult aspect of dealing with crosses is judging the flight of the ball. Phase 1 of this exercise addresses this potential problem. Unless you have played goalkeeper it is hard to understand how difficult this skill is. Let's refer to correctly judging the flight of the ball as "getting to the spot"

Getting to the spot could be further defined as being in the best place to make the correct play on the ball. Sometimes this means stepping in front of the opponent, sometimes this means going around teammates and opponents.

Getting to the spot is important because:

1. The body cannot be stretched out or fully extended when making a catch or punch because a bump or a knock from an opponent will cause the keeper to drop the ball or make a bad punch.
2. Getting to the spot where the body is "compact" allows to the keeper to explode with a lot of power when reaching for the ball.
3. When catching, the elbows should be slightly bent. If the elbows are not bent, the hands will be flat and there will be no 'bottom floor' to hold to the ball.

### **\*STANCE, STARTING POINT AND FOOTWORK**

When dealing with the two toughest decision plays for a keeper (Crosses and through balls), the difference between success and failure usually comes down to experience, alertness and making the correct decision quickly. It also comes down to proper footwork, stance and starting position.

Most steps that the keeper takes to get to the ball on crosses are sideways-crossover steps. The best way to get your feet in the correct position to make such steps is to have them in a 45 degree angle to the kicker. This stance will also help you steal a crucial extra step in getting to the ball.

### **\*PATH TO THE BALL**

Taking the correct path or route to the ball is relative to where the cross goes (getting to the spot), the speed and swerve of the cross and the amount of attackers and defenders that are in the box. Usually the keeper can gain an advantage and an extra step if they start to take small 'baby' steps to get their feet in motion just before the cross is hit.

The keeper must read the cues from the kicker (ex. Stride into the ball, their head goes down, etc.) to determine when the ball will be crossed.

### **\*STARTING POINT**

The cues that were just mentioned, if read properly, will allow the keeper to cheat a little and gain a huge advantage toward getting to spot. The biggest danger with cheating a little bit is that the opponents purposely may place a ball to the near post or beat the keeper to the near post by slicing the ball off the side of their foot. This should not happen if the keeper is reading the opponents correctly and their stance is correct.

*If you use cheating steps a 90 degree stance to the kicker makes it very difficult to save a ball played to the near post.*

As mentioned earlier, it is a good idea for the keeper to take a 45 degree stance. This position will allow the keeper to make the recovery steps that are necessary.

Also as discussed earlier, a higher starting point (cheating) is a very important skill. Starting higher (See Getting Higher) will give the keeper confidence in this area of positioning.

### **\*EARLY, AGGRESSIVE, CONFIDENT CALL**

An early call by the keeper helps avoid confusion from teammates and sends out a message to the attackers who are trying to compete for the

cross. The early, aggressive and confident 'keeper' call is very intimidating to opponents.

*At the end of each session it is always a good idea to have the attacking players give feedback to the goalkeepers. One statement that is always given by the forwards to the keepers is "we hate when you guys come out hard and we hate to hear you yell KEEPER!"*

#### **\*TEAMMATES AND OPPONENTS**

Getting to the spot becomes a lot more difficult when the penalty area becomes filled with teammates and opponents.

#### **\*CATCHING AND PUNCHING**

Goalkeepers can practice the skill of punching by having one keeper tossing the ball underhand (from seated, kneeling and standing positions) and having the keeper punch the ball for distance.

Keepers need to remember that the most important aspect of this skill is to make good solid contact with the ball. The ball already has speed coming towards the keeper so a good solid contact will keep the ball moving. It is a hard skill to practice because it is difficult to recreate realistic situations where the ball needs to be punched. Follow the exercises below (PROGRESSION FOR DEALING WITH CROSSES Phases 1-3.)

Every situation involving a cross/punch is different. While we use the general rule of punching the ball high, wide, and far the keeper must consider a lot of factors. The route of the keeper, the angle they are faced with, etc. will determine how and where they punch. The more things the keeper can keep track of the better they will be able to deal with situations in a crowded box. The only way to get better at this skill is to load the box with players and face realistic crosses. It may make sense to follow this thought...clear path to the ball-catch it. Not a clear path to the ball...punch it.

Also the keeper should keep their eyes open and focused on the ball even though they are going to face contact. This will help them make a better punch on the ball.

### **D) Corner Kicks**

A high percentage of questionable goals (9.8%) are scored from corner kicks. However, they are not often practiced. One reason why they are not practiced is because it is difficult environment to set up. Still, this is not a good enough excuse to ignore working on them. The coach must set an environment that is competitive where corner kicks are practiced

in live situations. Assignments must be given out, well defined and practiced in training.

#### **FACTORS TO KEEP IN MIND FOR SUCCESS IN DEFENDING CORNERS**

1. Your team must get to the first ball
2. Your team must pressure the (clearance) 2<sup>nd</sup> ball
3. Organization. Everyone knows their assignment.

The biggest challenge for the keepers on corner kicks are inswinging driven balls in traffic.

\*When corner kicks cannot be practiced with a full compliment of players set up an exercise where you play 4 attackers vs. 4 defenders. All 8 players must be inside the 6 yard box.

Have the kicker move the ball about 10 yards in from the corner kick flag and drive inswingers into the 6 yard box. Also, practice this in the pre game warm up.

\*In addition to practicing corner kicks the keeper should train to take balls driven straight into the box from 30-45 yards away. The steps to get to the spot are easier (because they are forward) but if the ball is misplayed it may go directly into the goal.

### **E) PROGRESSION FOR DEALING WITH CROSSES**

#### **PHASE 1**

Start out with a quality player crossing a still ball from various angles on the flank. The crosses should make the keeper have to move their feet to get to the ball and should be above the level of the crossbar.

Sometimes it is good practice for the coach to stand at various spots in the penalty area with their hands up to serve as a target for the crosser to aim for.

*\*The coach probably should not be crossing because there are too many details for them to watch for*

The objective of this phase is for the keeper to move their feet and to be able to judge the flight of the ball. Judging the flight of the ball on a consistent basis is extremely difficult. The only way to become consistent is through practicing this skill over and over with good players.

#### **PHASE 2**

Add players in the box. Play 3 attackers vs. 1 defender.

#### **SITUATIONS THAT WILL DEVELOP IN THIS PHASE OF THE EXERCISE:**

- 1) Balls driven at "head height"

This is a difficult play (especially if the cross is an inswinger) because of the difficult angle that the ball usually comes from.

Most of the time in this situation, the keeper must step in front of the attacker to be first to the ball. They cannot take a path to go behind the attacker and wait for the cross.

2) Balls coming in when the keeper is late and can't make a clean catch or punch.

Whenever the attacker is free and not marked, and the keeper is close to the play but cannot make a clean catch or punch they must go in hard and aggressive and **BREAK UP** the play. This is not a reckless play that will result in injury or a penalty but a smart, well timed attempt to get the ball and a piece of the attacker. If the keeper is aggressive and makes an aggressive keeper call they will distract the attention of the opponent and disrupt the play.

The keeper must also learn how to protect themselves when going into contact with an opponent and which parts of their body are more susceptible to injury

They need to make sure that the opponent does not get a 'good look' at the goal. If the keeper is close enough to dive into the play (a dive's length away) this option will save a lot more goals. This method is much more effective than taking a step and standing up with the hands down at the side. This action by the keeper takes a little courage and is a vastly underrated play.

\*A common mistake that a keeper will make on a cross when the box becomes very crowded is to misjudge the ball by taking a forward step too soon or too early and overrunning the ball.

### **PHASE 3**

**Play 5 attackers vs. 3 defenders**

\*Make it a competitive session by demanding the attackers score 2 goals in 2 minutes.

## **F) THROUGH BALLS AND BREAKAWAYS**

If you look at the statistics at the top you will see the aspect of goalkeeping where there is the greatest amount of questionable goals (26.5%) conceded is through balls and breakaways.

The keeper that can consistently come off their line and get to the ball before an attacker is very valuable to their team because they are eliminating a lot of potential shots/goals during the course of the season. Dealing with through balls can, in one way, can be compared to driving through a crowded lane to the hoop in basketball. Even though an experienced player may have taken thousands of layups in their career, very few are ever the same.

#### Why Practice Through Balls?

1. There are more through balls now because very few teams play with a sweeper
2. It is easier and safe for a keeper to stay on their line.

#### FACTORS TO CONSIDER

1. The speed of the goalkeeper (see movements that keepers use)
2. The speed of the opponent
3. The weight of the pass
4. The section of the goal or angle of shot
5. Presence of a defender

#### \*COVERING THE BALL

The keeper must learn to come out to cover the ball correctly. This means getting the body elongated and getting both hands cupped and wrapped around the other side of the ball. Flat hands will not work, they give up rebounds.

Another general rule when going for the ball is 'hands to the near post'. Put simply this means taking the fastest route or path to the ball. The keeper also must learn how to protect themselves. Getting the hands out to stretch for the ball puts the hands in a good position to protect the face and head.

#### \*LEAD UP EXERCISES

1) Place a square grid of cones 10 yards X 10 yards. Have a player dribble throughout the grid and the keeper must try to cover the ball with their hands.

The keeper should take the correct path to the ball (try not slide with the feet), protect the face by leading with the hands and be ready for a rebound.

2) Place two cones 8 yards apart. A field player standing 10 yards away from the keeper gets 6 touches total to *dribble through the cones, not shoot*. This exercise helps the keeper develop the skill of staying on their feet when an attacker is trying to dribble around them.

3) Do the same exercise with a wide channel. Give the field player 5 seconds to *dribble* through the cones.

## **THROUGH BALLS/BREAKAWAYS**

### **PHASE 1**

The coach should spread out balls about 25 yards away from goal. Two field players (if not available use the other keepers) should be on both sides (left and right) of the coach about 18-20 yards from goal.

The coach should play a through ball to one of the players who attempts to finish off the play. Most of these passes in the beginning of the session should be 50/50 balls. However, once the session is starting to move along occasionally, the coach should throw in plays that favor the opponent (Breakaways).

As mentioned above, the exercise where the keeper is exposed to chips is a perfect lead in drill to this exercise (See Getting Higher). After a few repetitions of this drill, occasionally try to chip the keeper to keep them honest and give them confidence in their starting point.

### **FACTORS TO CONSIDER**

#### **1) Starting Point (See Getting Higher)**

The more confident the keeper feels about taking side steps and going back to save the more confident they will feel about a slightly higher starting point.

#### **2) Anticipation/Reading the play.**

Many times when a keeper is late to the ball by a split second, foot speed is not the problem, lack of anticipation is. Putting the goalkeeper in exercises like the one described above and the Numbers Game (See below) will be a big help in developing this skill in the goalkeeper.

#### **3) Move When the Ball Moves**

This concept for keepers is true for every player and every aspect of soccer. The keeper should move forward *quickly* when the ball is played through. Moving when the ball moves is a skill that the goalkeeper develops by doing this and other exercises where they are exposed to through balls.

#### ***After deciding to come for the ball:***

When the ball is not close to an opponent's foot the keeper should not move slowly. They should try to cover as much ground as possible. Obviously, we do not want the keeper sprinting forward in an out of control manner when it is apparent that they will not get to the ball. They need to develop the sense of timing so that when the ball is close to being on the

opponent's foot they are capable of changing directions. (See Lead up Exercise listed above)

.When a good finisher is running on to the ball, the keeper must know that they should stop or slow down before the opponent gets to the ball. Good opponents can get off shots quickly. If the keeper is still moving forward quickly, a savvy opponent will see this and slip the ball right past them. Many times when the keeper is real close they may decide to keep going and lunge for the ball. The keeper's instincts and experience generally will tell them what to do in this situation. Most of the time if the keeper makes an athletic lunge the opponent will either kick the ball right into them because they are in an elongated position or they will break up or cause a disruption of the play.

The keeper must consistently be exposed to these situations to increase their decision making skills.

#### **4) Making the Adjustment**

An adjustment needs to be made when it is apparent that the opponent will get to the ball first.

Making the adjustment from moving at top speed to slowing down, getting set or moving sideways is a very difficult skill for the goalkeeper to master. By taking smaller steps as the play gets closer and doing the exercises listed in this section the keeper will soon start to develop this skill.

#### **5) Standing up**

The benefit of standing up is that it forces the shooter to make a decision and allows the keepers feet to be set.

There are two ways to stand up

- 1. Passively**
- 2. Aggressively**

Standing up aggressively is much more effective. This means that the keeper has not committed to going down to the ground and they are taking advantage of continuing to close down the space of the opponent from a standing position. This can be done by taking steps when the ball is being dribbled or is moving.

Standing up and giving the opponent a lot of space in a position with the hands down at the side is not as effective.

Every post training interview session that we have with the forwards, the feedback is always "we hate when the keepers are aggressive and close us down. We love when they stand with hands at the side and give us enough room to pick our head up and shoot".

#### **6) Kick Saves**

Kick saves are difficult to practice and should not be something that is looked upon as a regular repertoire for the keeper. They are, however,

**important and anything that keeps the ball out of the net should never be discounted.**

#### **7) Why Move When the Ball Moves?**

**With almost every ball that is played forward in the direction of the penalty area, regardless if there is a defender present or not, the keeper should step forward. This allows them to get closer to the play. Being closer to the play give the opponent less goal to shoot at and puts the keeper in position to scoop up loose balls.**

**\* A possible exception to moving when the ball moves is when that ball played forward is a bouncing ball and the next touch by the opponent could be a shot lobbed over the keeper's head.**

#### **8) Play the Bad Touch**

**If the opponent runs on to a through ball and gets a bad first touch or their dribble gets away from them, the keeper should be all over the play, smothering the ball.**

#### **9) Every Play is Different**

**When dealing with through balls (and crosses) the keeper must realize that every play is different. There are so many factors (SEE OTHER SITUATIONS) that go into deciding what to do on through balls and breakaways.**

**While every play is never going to look exactly the same, by practicing these situations over and over the plays eventually start to look like replays.**

#### **Other Situations**

**\* When the opponent is running slightly away from goal (diagonal run) on to a ball and is not looking at goal the keeper can be more aggressive**

**\*When the opponent has their head down you may be more aggressive.**

**Conversely, the attacker that has their head up is the most dangerous player on the field**

**\*The type of opponent will often dictate the keeper's level of aggressiveness. Some players are very predictable as to what they will do on a through ball/breakaway situation. Practicing with real field players will increase the keeper's ability to read the game**

**\*Presence of a Defender**

**When a defender is present and closing the play down the keeper should still step forward and get closer to the play in the event that a ball becomes loose and needs to be scooped up.**

## **10) Wider Balls**

**\*When a ball is played to a wide position the keeper has less of a responsibility to leave the goal to go out and get the ball especially if there is a defender present. When a ball is played forward to a high percentage shooting angle the keeper should be moving forward to gain better positioning.**

**\*However, if the keeper thinks that they are not 100% sure that they can reach a wide ball then they should stay tucked on the near post. Being tucked in at the near post gives the opponent a very poor look for a shooting angle and puts the keeper in a good position to cut off a pass across the goal mouth.**

**\*When tucking in on the near post the keeper should be a half a body's length in front of the post in case a hard shot causes a bad deflection.**

**\*Staying tight on the near post is uncomfortable for the keeper. It is a natural tendency to step out from this position to close down the shooter. However, most of the time when an opponent has little or no angle, they want the keeper to move. Getting used to being patient and staying in a set position on the near post projects a feeling of confidence and is intimidating to the attacking player.**

**Keepers should practice taking shots from poor shooting angles in order for them to see that if they stay in a set position and don't move it is very hard to score against them.**

## **11) Feedback from Training**

**So much of what the keeper learns in a training session is reinforced though the feedback they receive from the field players. Some common feedback tells us that opponents notice things like the keeper's body language, determined facial expression and overall level of intensity. A reputation for being aggressive never hurts a keeper either.**

## **\*12) Keeper call**

**Call it out loud, aggressively and early. Intimidate the opponent.**

## **13) Learn from Mistakes**

**The keeper should be aggressive in this training exercise. They should be realistic about what balls they can get to but they should always be aggressive. This exercise is very beneficial and should expose the keeper to making mistakes. Making mistakes is the only way that a keeper will learn. *If the keeper is going to make a mistake, it should be an aggressive one.***

#### **14) Sprinting Speed**

A keeper should never underestimate how important it is for them to be able to sprint quickly over 5, 8, 12 and 15 yards. It is a very important component of their physical training that they should work on.

#### **PHASE 2**

Using the same concept of a through ball, now add a defender who stands a few yards behind the attacking player. This adds another dimension of realistic plays. Many times if a defender is closing down the attacker there is less urgency for the keeper to come out and get the ball.

#### **PHASE 3**

Using the same concept of a through ball now put the defender just slightly ahead to the attacker and play balls that force the keeper to either come out or call for the defender to clear. This is a very realistic play that occurs in a game very often where there are a lot of mistakes made and a lot of soft goals given up.

Just as in Phase 1 continue to move the play back further away from goal.

#### **The Numbers Game**

Line up attacking players at midfield and defending players (off to the side) at the 18 yard line. The coach will call out a number combination like 2, 1. This means 2 attackers vs. 1 defender. This exercise creates a lot of potential through ball/ breakaway plays for the goalkeeper

### **G) HANDLING**

The importance of handling cannot be underestimated. Handling shots in a confident manner always sends out an intimidating message to the opponents.

#### **1. Low shots**

Based on the statistics listed above, handling low shots caused a lot of problems for goalkeepers. The problems occurred more with the keepers giving up rebounds. Some factors that contribute to this are:

- \*The keeper being too stretched out and trying to hold shots that they cannot catch.
- \*The keeper not making a good choice as to whether to catch it or deflect it.

Exercises:

\*Have the keeper in a kneeling position. The coach should roll the ball to the side and the keeper should roll down on to their hip, their side and control the ball.

Gradually pick up the speed of the rolls so that the keeper must DECIDE if they should catch it or deflect it. If the keeper uses the heel of the hand save they must practice it and master it so that it is a habit before using it in a game

\*Have the keeper lay down on their side completely stretched out. Roll and/or kick the ball quickly to the side of the keeper so they must either catch or deflect it away.

## **2. HANDS**

\*Two goalkeepers throwing back and forth in a throw-in motion, throwing the ball above the chest directly at the other keeper's face. This action forces the keeper to make a clean save with the hands. The catch should be a soft one with the elbows out.

\*Two partners volleying or half volleying to each other's hands

\*Have a quality player striking hard shots directly at the keeper both above and below the waist

\*Do these exercises when the field is wet or it is raining so that the keeper will have to make a choice to catch or deflect.

\*Note: Only one goal was scored from a dropped shot hit directly at the keeper. This is not to diminish the importance of spending time on handling but to evaluate each keeper's strength and plan the training accordingly.

## **H) KICKING**

Kicking skills often are often the difference when a coach must make a decision between two keepers that are very close in ability.

### **Goal Kicks**

Goal kicks must be driven to the right or left of the circle and well beyond the midfield stripe. Keepers must spend time working on this skill if they are deficient.

### **Side swipe and kick**

Goalkeeper A passes to Goalkeeper B. Keeper B sweeps the ball with the side or outside of their foot and then hits a long ball to a target.

### **Pass and pressure**

GK A passes a ball to GK B then pressures them so that GK B must either hit the ball first time or take a touch before kicking the ball away.

### **Pass and pressure pass to a target**

Same exercise as above except now the keeper must aim for a target.

### **Playing out in field**

There is no better way for the keeper to become proficient with their feet

## **I) ADDRESSING THE TYPE OF MOVEMENTS THAT A KEEPER USES**

- a. sideways movement (needed to make a save)**
- b. sideways crossover movements (needed to get to crosses)**
- c. backward crossover movements (needed to tip balls over the bar)**
- d. sprinting forward ( 5, 8, 12, 15 yards, to get to through balls)**
- e. vertical leap**

## **COMMUNICATION/LEADERSHIP**

**To get more information on this very important aspect of goalkeeping go to [www.championsoccercamp.net](http://www.championsoccercamp.net) and click on goalkeeper information**