



A View From The Goal Box

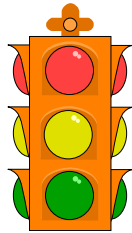
(By Gary Lubin)

Perspective

There is a lot more to being an effective Goalkeeper than waiting for next 'shot on goal' and taking shots in practice. Keepers play an important role in preventing opponents from creating dangerous scoring situations and in starting their team's offense.

"...An *average Keeper* will usually make the initial save; a *good Keeper* will make the save and control the rebound; a *great Keeper* will not only save and control the rebound, but limit their opponents' scoring opportunities."

The Keeper's Objectives and Top Priorities



Stop the shot or cross

Warn your teammates

Start the play

1. **Stop** the shot or cross

- Keepers *are* the last line of defense... **Stop the shot** -- it's a save or a goal.
- In youth soccer, half the goals scored result from the defending team's inability to clear the ball from in front of the goal -- **Control the rebound**.

2. **Warn** your teammates

- Keepers view the entire field.... They are in the unique position of seeing play develop and seeing where the defense is weak and where the offense has opportunity. Keepers must **communicate** this information to, **and position**, their **teammates**.

3. **Start** the play

- Keepers distribute the ball and transition play from defense to offense. Often teams are most vulnerable during a counter attack and the Keeper can **start their team's offensive** attack.



Key Success Factors to Being A Great Keeper

Awareness

The basics...

- Know where the ball is at all times
- Know where your defense is at all times
- Know where the opponents' players are at all times
- Know where you are at all times
- Know the environment (e.g., field conditions, wind, etc.)



The subtleties...

- Know the player with the ball.... Can they shoot/pass well with both feet? How well are they controlling the ball? Do they first look to shoot or pass? Etc.
- Know the players (opponents) without the ball.... Are they making a run? Can they “one time” or head the ball? Can you beat them on a cross?
- Know your strengths and weaknesses.... Can you cover the long side? Are you comfortable going “off the line” (out of the goal box)? Etc.

Everything you do is based upon your being aware of the situation....

Although the ball may be downfield, the Keeper's mindset is that *they are part of every play.*

Positioning

Being in the right position is the most important part of playing effective goal keeping. The Keeper needs to think in two dimensions: “angle” and “depth”

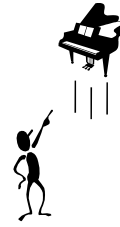
- Angle: By “play the angle,” the Keeper reduces the “width” of the goal from the perspective of the shooter. The smaller the angle, the better the chance the Keeper has to prevent a score.
- Depth: A) Some Keepers prefer to “go out on the ball,” having the effect of making the Keeper appear larger from the perspective of the shooter -- taking up more of the goal. Again the smaller the angle, the better the chance the Keeper has to prevent a score. B) Other Keepers prefer to stay “on the line.” The idea in this case is that greater the distance from the shooter, the more time to react to the shot.



Action and Attitude

“You own the box.”

- Keepers must identify their space -- the area they own. Then, spend the game defending it – any ball in this area is theirs, any player in this area will be challenged, etc.
- Decide on being a “line goalie” or a “roamer.” Both are effective; in either case, be aggressive and decisive.
- Always play the shot – make sure that you’re in position to react to shot on goal. Use the defense to contain play and cover the opponents that pose the most immediate danger (e.g., to receive a pass or control a rebound).



Communication

Never stop talking....

- Effective Keepers describe the play to their teammates. They make them aware of the situation, warn them of weaknesses in the defense and re-position them as needed.
- Effective Keepers tell their teammates what they are doing (coming out on the play, staying back, etc.)
- Effective Keepers decide on pre-set plays and positioning. Coaches establish defensive alignments during practice; the Keeper decides and communicates which set-up to use during the game (e.g., one or two players on the post during a corner kick, two or four player walls, etc).



Parting Shot

“What you do in practice is what’s done in the game.”

1. Design the Keepers’ approach and philosophy as to how they play the position
2. Develop the Keepers’ “individual” skills and techniques (e.g., proper mechanics in fielding, catching and throwing).
3. Develop the “integrated” defense’s skills and techniques.
4. Practice, practice, practice.... Work on position, plays, dead ball set-up, distribution, etc. -- Players don’t have time to discuss and strategize when the offensive is “numbers up” on a counter attack.