

LWYSA

Training Program

Book 6

Goalkeeping Techniques and Tactics



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Lake Washington Youth Soccer Association
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WELCOME TO THE LAKE WASHINGTON YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION FAMILY OF PROGRAMS

In 1967, a group of individuals got together and formed an Association for our youth, centered around the game of soccer, which has endured and developed the following organizational philosophy.

VISION

To be recognized by our membership and soccer community as a world-class provider of youth soccer services.

MISSION

To promote the game of soccer and to provide opportunities for all youth under the age of nineteen who register with us, to play affiliated soccer at a level commensurate with ability and interest. We will emphasize the development of self-esteem, good sportsmanship, fitness, achievement, teamwork and skill through the playing of the game; and provide educational opportunities to further develop all players, coaches, referees and administrators.

The Vision and Mission statements above are our creed. Following in this thought, the Association takes great pride in its approach of teaching life's lessons to our youth. This environment is intended to create an enjoyable soccer experience as well as develop young athletes.

Many individuals have contributed to the success of the Association Programs over the years. To all those individuals, the Association is truly grateful for the contributions and sacrifices they made in behalf of our youth.

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Goalkeeping Techniques and Tactics

This booklet has been written for the sole purpose of providing basic instructional material for the many young goalkeepers who hope to develop their talents to the highest possible level.

I do not claim to be an expert on goalkeeping but I have on many occasions had the opportunity to play with and against some of the best goalkeepers in the World.

It has also been my good fortune to discuss goalkeeping coaching with famous older goalkeepers who earn a living coaching the top keepers in the English Premier League.

Believe me when I say that I'm not stressing these things to be boastful but rather to convince anyone who reads this booklet that I'm passing on knowledge acquired by some of soccer's best goalkeepers.

There are six areas of goal keeping that I would like to cover and they are

Gathering the ball

Collecting low and high balls in the penalty area.

Distributing the ball

Passing the ball by throwing or kicking it directly to a teammate or into selected areas of the field.

Saving shots and headers

Stopping shots or headers from scoring goals by diving to save them.

Collecting and punching crosses

Competing with the opposing forwards for cross balls by using your hands to collect the cross or your closed fist to punch the ball away.

Sweeping behind the line

Protecting the penetrating space behind the defensive back line by leaving the goal or penalty box to intercept penetration passes or breakaways.

Communicating to defenders

Giving clear instructions to your defensive colleagues about their positioning and marking responsibilities.

Summing up

All goalkeepers need to acquire a tactical and technical understanding of these six necessary goalkeeping skills otherwise their performances will not become as rounded or balanced as they need to be.

According to the great goalkeepers I have talked to these skills have become the cornerstone of modern day goalkeeping and knowing how, where and when to adapt them has been the passport to the top.

Gathering the ball

Get in line with the ball

Whenever possible, place your body between the ball and the goal to prevent any mishandled ball from rolling into the goal and this rule applies even when the ball is rolling slowly.

A ball can slip through even the safest of hands at any time so treat any balls rolling towards your goal with the same respect you would give to an opponents shot and use your body as a back up to your hands.

Bend down at the knee and waist

Each goalkeeper has a preferred technique for gathering up ground balls but most of the keepers I know prefer to bend one knee, place the other knee on the ground, then bend down from the waist to collect the ball safely into their hands.

When performing this type of pick up it is important to place both arms inside the bent leg so that the knee of that leg does not prevent a clean pick up.

By gathering the ball in this fashion goalkeepers also know that their body will stop any miss handling of the ball from rolling beyond them into the goal.

Have the hands properly positioned

The positioning of the hands and arms is of particular importance when collecting the ball.

When gathering a low ball the hands should be pointed downwards with the palms facing outwards and the small finger of each hand touching, also the arms and elbows are close together so that the ball, once gathered, cannot slip through them.

When collecting a high ball the hands should point upward with the palms facing outwards and the thumbs of each hand should be close enough that the ball cannot pass through them.

Also, always try to reach for the ball instead of letting the ball come to you. This action will give you more room to absorb a powerful shot.

Feel the ball into your hands

The keeper must work on the hand-feel technique so that there is little chance of the ball either rebounding off their hands or passing straight through them.

Handling practice should concentrate on gaining a feel for the ball by cushioning it with your fingers and palms as the ball is hit into the hands from a variety of differently powered shots.

Stiff hands cause the ball to rebound off the hands and that could present some eager forward with a second chance to shoot.

Handling the ball too softly will allow the ball to pass through them.

It is therefore important that the keeper practices extremely hard to establish the 'not too stiff' and 'not too soft' touch for a safe and reliable pair of hands.

One way to emphasize this in practice is to call every ball 'live' until it is in the keeper's hands or out of play so that any miss-controlled catch can lead to a goal conversion opportunity by an alert forward.

Gather up into protective basket

The goalkeeper's protective basket is in the midriff area.

Once the ball is gathered into this area it should be protected from any jarring challenges aimed at prizing it loose from the keepers grip.

Keepers cover the ball by wrapping their hands and arms tightly around it while holding it in their midriff area.

In the old days forwards were encouraged to barge or shoulder charge the keepers in an attempt to jar the ball loose but modern day referees protect the keepers more than they used to.

However it is still a good idea to cover up the ball.

Distributing the ball

Putting a ball into play using your feet

The keeper's responsibility in playing a ball with the feet is to look for safe ways to distribute the ball.

Any player can play a short pass to a loosely marked teammate but it takes lots of practice to deliver a long pass with the same degree of accuracy.

Goalkeepers are expected to hit their long kicks over the halfway line and into pre-planned target areas with some degree of consistency, so it would be wise of them to spend time practicing this difficult technical skill.

A helpful tip on gaining height in long ball kicking is to approach the ball as you normally would but just as you're about to kick it bend back from the waist up.

When practiced this method of striking the ball should provide height to the kick and will therefore cut out the danger of the keeper driving any type of low ball that can be easily intercepted by an opposing forward.

Goal kicks

Goal kicks are usually hit long enough and high enough to clear the midfield players and to drop into an area of challenge for the forwards and opposing defenders to compete for.

The kick needs height and distance to get the job done and that is provided by a powerful instep kick assisted in the height department by a slight lean back from the waist up.

Punting

Punting the ball simply means tossing the ball in the air and kicking it with your instep or laces before it hits the ground.

Of course to do it properly takes lots of practice but like all technical skills the main thing is to get the touch and timing right.

The punt should carry the ball over the players' heads and into a targeted area.

The ball should be struck with the instep or laces followed by a long follow-through to ensure height and distance.

It helps to develop a consistent toss to feet on every punt.
Make the toss short to create less room for error.

Drop volleys

To hit a drop volley simply means to hit the ball with the instep on the bounce or just as it hits the ground.

The benefit of hitting the drop volley as opposed to the punt is that, hit correctly, the kicker has more control on the height, (the ball can be kept lower), and direction of the kick.

This style of distribution also allows the receiver a chance to find a position in front of the defenders to receive the ball because the lower trajectory of the flight of the ball presents a clearer picture of where the ball will land.

Distributing the ball by throwing

The other way to distribute the ball is by throwing it to a teammate. These methods of distribution allow the keepers more accuracy but takes away some of the length provided by the various kicks.

Overhand throws

The overhand throw is the one the keeper uses to get height and distance.

This type of throw is very similar to a drop-volley kick in that it is served at a lower trajectory than a punt and is usually extremely accurate.

The method of throwing is best described as a sling-shot throw which allows the keeper to deliver the ball some forty or fifty yards with a high degree of accuracy making it easier for players to receive it with their feet.

The throw should have no sidespin in either direction however a little backspin means that you are using the proper technique for accuracy and distance.

Side arm pitch

This type of hand delivery gets its name from a similar type of delivery by pitchers in baseball.

The side arm pitch is used mainly to make a quick and accurate switch of play from one side of the field to the other.

The keeper gathers the ball on one side of the penalty area and by using the side arm pitch immediately transfers the ball directly to the winger or fullback on the other side.

Underhand throw

The technical aspect of this throw is best described as rolling a bowling ball that does not have any holes to stick your fingers into so the ball has to be balanced on the palm of your hand.

This underhand throw is rolled out to a defensive teammate who is positioned in a reasonably large area of space.

Keepers should take care not to be overly casual when delivering this throw even though the position of the intended receiver may look open, a casual delivery combined with an alert opponent can put the defender in all sorts of trouble.

Emergency clearances

Emergency clearances are situations that put the keeper in a position out side of the penalty area where hands cannot be used to gather the ball.

Emergency clearances should be kicked immediately with “safety first” in mind.

This safety aspect demands that the clearance be delivered long and high out of the danger area.

The keeper should not feel badly if the safest option is to clear the ball out of bounds because it will give teammates time to reorganize their defensive positioning.

However, if the keeper feels that there is a strong possibility of the clearance rebounding against any fast closing forward a fake to kick the ball and then control it to one side of the forward before clearing it should do the trick.

Saving shots and headers

Narrowing the shooting angle

Goalkeepers should be aware that coming off the goal line early to narrow the angle of the goal to the shooter might present that shooter with the opportunity to chip or bend the ball into the goal.

Also the closer the keeper gets to the shooter the less reaction time there will be to save the power shot.

However done correctly the angling technique will reduce the size of the shooters target especially if the shot is driven directly towards goal. Drills to incorporate angling should follow specific instruction on the subject by the coach. This would include a demonstration of the angling methods in order to provide the goalkeeper with a clear picture of the correct positioning. The keeper should start on the center of the goal line and advance towards the ball, if the ball is moved laterally one way or another the keeper must move to keep the body between the center of the goal line and the ball. Angling the shot in this manner ensures that either side of the goal will not be exposed more than the other.

Taking up the correct stance

The keeper must adopt the proper stance to be ready to dive or leap to catch the ball.

This requires placing the hands with the palms facing outwards and fingers pointing upwards some six inches in front of the midriff.

Being on the balls of the feet with the knees bent so that the legs can be used like coiled springs to propel the body forward, sideways or upwards is also a vital part of the preparation needed to make a save.

Correct diving shape

The shape of the keeper when making a save is most important.

Being able to see the ball from the shooting player's boot all the way into the hands is of the utmost importance.

The keeper deals with this problem by fronting the play so that the ball is always in view.

Another trick of the trade is to dive with arms open so that the ball is in full view through the arms from the moment it leaves the shooters foot until the keeper makes the save.

Of course there is always the need to make a decision whether to catch or push the shot to safety but by being in a position to see the ball the keeper is also in position to make that decision.

Reacting to the shot or header

It is an important part of the shot stopping routine that in normal shooting circumstances the keeper does not anticipate the angle of the shot or header and begin the dive before the shooter has struck the ball. The exception to this rule would be when a keeper is exposed to a shot from point blank range or an attacking player is about to redirect a cross with a shot or header from close range.

In those circumstances the early reaction may allow the keeper to save a shot that would otherwise be impossible to save when following normal procedure.

However if this early diving action is repeated in normal shooting circumstances (not close range shots) the early decision making would expose the keeper to any delayed or miss-hit shot.

Keepers will have more success by taking up the correct position, seeing the angle and power of the shot then trusting their natural instinctive reactions to make the save.

The keeper's motto is "see it-save it" and not "guess it-save it".

Holding the shot

Whenever possible the keeper should try to collect the shot in the hands before pulling the ball into the safety of the midriff area.

However, should the keeper feel that there is some risk involved in doing this a course of action that involves the least amount of risk should be taken and the shot should be redirected away by punching, tipping or deflecting the ball clear of the goal area.

Deflecting the shot

If the keeper cannot collect the ball safely then deflecting the shot off the open palms of the hands and away from the goal is the best solution. It would be most helpful to defending teammates if the shot could be deflected away from the dangerous area in front of goal but the first task for the keeper is to stop the shot from scoring.

Tipping the shot

Fingertip saves are usually the result of saving the ball by diving full length with arms outstretched and hands fully extended to redirect the ball over the crossbar or around the goal post.

The power or velocity of the shot allows the slightest of touches to deflect the ball wide of the goal however continual practices involving fingertip saving will increase the strength in the keepers fingers enough to turn the less powerful shots away also.

Punching the shot

To punch the shot the keeper should have both fists together between chest and waist height and punch them outward to hit the ball away with maximum force.

The fists must make contact just below the center of the ball to gain height and distance otherwise the ball can rebound anywhere and at any height which can cause serious problems for defending teammates.

Although a partially sighted keeper could be excused of reacting to the shot by punching it away, I've always believed that if the ball can be punched with two fists then it can also be caught.

However, as soccer balls are being made lighter than ever before, shots tend to move around in flight more than they used to so some keepers might feel more comfortable punching these types of shots away.

In these instances the keeper might feel that to catch the ball presents too great a risk of miss handling it and by so doing present the attackers a second scoring opportunity.

Punching the shot away is a difficult technique to master and younger keepers, under 13 years old, should be encouraged to catch the ball rather than punch it.

Being alert for rebounds

If a goalkeeper can only partially save the shot then a quick re-adjustment must be made to prepare for any follow-up shots.

The re-adjustment might take the form of a scramble along the ground to gather up the loose ball or a quick leap back onto the feet to prepare for any follow-up shot.

This rule also applies to shots that rebound off a post or crossbar.

The coach must insist on this type of alertness in all games and also in all practices.

Saving deflected shots

Shots that have been deflected normally wrong foot the keeper and that means that the keeper is moving one way while the ball is moving in the opposite direction.

Somehow the keeper must reverse direction to attempt to save the shot. This would require the keeper to twist around to attempt to save the deflected shot and this twist and dive involves a high degree of difficulty.

Practices involving this type of shot stopping require the coach to duplicate the difficult body movement required by the keeper to stop the shot.

- Having the keeper move in one direction and then serve the ball in the opposite direction is a simple way to do this.

Another way is to place players or objects in between a shooter and the keeper to present the dual problem of having to save a straight shot or a deflected one.

Blocking the ball with the body, legs and feet

Most goals are scored from ten yards out or less and the vast majority of them cross the goal line below knee height.

If we study these statistics and put ourselves in the keepers position we would try to figure out ways to block some of these shots with our body, legs and feet rather than trying to save them all by diving.

The reason for this is that the shooter is often so close to the goalkeeper when firing the shot that the keeper hasn't the time needed to dive and save it.

As a result many of the goal scoring shots hit from close range are hit low and under the keeper's dive.

To stop this the keeper could move quickly towards the advancing shooter, present a bigger target by spreading the arms and legs just as the attacking player releases the shot and attempt to block the shot with the outstretched body, arms or legs.

The keeper could also counteract the shot by going to ground early and spreading the body topside to the ball with legs and feet spread sideways.

Both of these methods give the keeper a good chance to block the low shot especially when the shooter is moving directly towards goal with the ball.

This is not the normal procedure for stopping shots because it promotes blocking the shot rather than diving to save it.

However the most important thing is to stop the shot, not to make a magnificent looking dive as the ball passes you by on the way into the goal.

Collecting and punching crosses

Deciding whether to stay or go

The most important decision a keeper has to make when dealing with crosses is whether to stay on the goal line or to go out and collect the cross.

The decision to stay on the line will be made if there is has any doubt about being able to get into position to compete for the cross ball.

The decision to go will be made if the keeper feels that getting to the ball before the opponent is a strong possibility.

The correct way to deal with a cross is to get yourself positioned properly, see the cross, then decide whether to leave the goal area to collect the ball or to stay in the goal area to deal with any attacking header or shot that may follow the cross.

Correct body position

Like most of the good positioning in soccer the goalkeeper's position on crosses must allow a check on two areas of the field at once.

That body position should allow the keeper to see the player who is about to cross the ball while also allowing a check on the attacking players movement in the potentially dangerous finishing areas.

This means that being positioned with one foot towards the goal line and the other foot towards the six-yard line so that a slight flick of the head will allow a check on either area.

If the keeper moved the foot nearest the six-yard line some eighteen inches further back than the other foot then this open body position would be about right.

Correct goal line position

The keeper's goal line position is relative to the position of the player crossing the ball.

If the attacking players position allows the option to cross or shoot, then the keeper must be positioned in a way that deals with either option.

This would mean covering the near post for the shot while also being alert enough to pick off any miss-hit cross. The keeper should be positioned nearer to the front post than normal which would make any

near post shot an unlikely scoring opportunity but would also limit the keepers ability to deal effectively with the cross.

If on the other hand the crossing players position eliminates the possibility of a shot then the keeper could concentrate solely on dealing with the cross by being positioned closer to the center of the six-yard box. That position would place the keeper two or three yards out from the goal line and five yards back from the near post. This would provide a starting position from which any adjustments could be made according to the continued movement of the player crossing the ball, before settling on a final position that would allow the keeper an opportunity to gather in the cross.

Getting a picture

The goalkeeper must continually be twisting the head around in order to become familiarized with the ever-changing picture so that an accumulation of the information needed to allow proper positioning can be made.

The crossing area

The decision starts with knowing which area the cross is coming from so that a judgment on the angle of the cross can be made.

The area the cross is coming from will give the keeper some idea of the most accessible target areas open to the player crossing the ball.

The keeper's area of challenge begins with all of the six-yard box area and ends at the back of the defensive back-line. Obviously the more advanced the attack the more the back-line will drop and the less space the keeper has to cover.

The opposing forwards

The keeper must constantly be aware of the number and movement of attacking players waiting for the cross to arrive. This will allow recognition of the most dangerous areas that the cross can be placed in. The information gathered on the congestion of players in the penalty area will also help to determine when to gather the ball cleanly and when to punch the ball away.

Get protection from your defenders

The keeper needs help when dealing with crosses and should talk to the defenders on ways that they can assist in this matter.

The keeper does not want an opposing forward crashing into an exposed rib cage while stretching to gather a cross, so instructing defenders to position themselves so that they block that frontal space is a good idea.

The defender should show a strong side to the forward and a relaxed side to the keeper. This would protect the keeper from having to take any unnecessary knocks or intentional cheap shots from the attackers.

Take the ball as high as you can

Keepers must be encouraged to take the cross as high as they can without stretching their physical limitations too far.

The reason for the high take is simply to take advantage of being able to use the length of the arms and hands to get higher than the opposing strikers.

The keeper can gather the ball by feeling it into soft hands when holding on to it, punch it away by using a closed fist to project the ball clear or tip it away using fingertips to redirect the flight of the ball upwards and away from the goal.

Gather into protective basket as soon as possible

As soon as possible the keeper should protect the ball by gathering it into the chest where it can be covered up with hands and arms.

From that point the attacking play should be dead and the keeper can concentrate on distribution.

Sweeping behind the back-line

Asking a goalkeeper to sweep behind the back line is putting the keeper in charge of protecting the penetration space sought after by the opponents.

Some goalkeepers are never asked to sweep because their defensive system calls for the defenders to drop back quickly to stop any quick counter-attacks from their opponents. However many modern systems of play call for defensive pressure being applied much further up the field which leaves large areas of penetration space behind the last line of defenders and in front of the goalkeeper.

If the team applying the pressure is to do so with any confidence then they need to know that their goalkeeper will sweep up any long forward passes.

To do this properly the keeper must be alert both mentally and physically at all times to anticipate through balls that can be intercepted and to deal with them by applying these sweeping principles.

Keep a reasonable distance behind the back-line

According to where the ball is on the field, the keeper should be positioned behind the back-line so that any long forward pass can be swept up before the opposing strikers can get to the ball yet still be able to save any speculative shot from long range.

This positioning must allow for either of these two jobs to be done.

Don't leave your penalty area unless you can get to the ball first

The keeper must make a judgment call on whether it is possible to get to the ball first before deciding to leave the penalty area.

Being unable to reach the ball before the opposing forward does forces the keeper to stay inside the penalty area otherwise there could be all sorts of trouble.

That trouble could arise from an instinctive reaction to any shot that can be saved by handling the ball outside of the penalty area which would lead to instant dismissal, leaving the team short handed for the remainder of the game.

It could also arise from a competitive nature, causing a late unsuccessful lunge for the ball resulting in fouling the opposing forward which would mean an automatic sending off.

The other less serious problem would be being left stranded by the forward who would be presented with an easy chance to score.

Either way the keeper would be better placed to help the team by deciding to stay inside the penalty area.

Make the back-line aware of your positioning

The keeper should continually inform the back-line about any new sweeping position taken up so that they can make the necessary adjustments to their positioning.

It is always encouraging for the defenders to know that they are being covered.

If your defensive team-mate is going to reach the ball before the opposing forward, stay back to make room for the pass back

Most of the goalkeeper/defender disasters occur when the keeper and the defender get too close to each other when running down a long through pass while under pressure from an opposing forward.

The results of these situations are usually as follows,

1. The keeper and the defender leave the ball to each other and the forward nips in to score a goal.
2. The keeper and the defender collide leaving the forward an unrestricted path to goal.
3. The defender passes the ball beyond the keeper leaving the on rushing forward the opportunity to shoot into an empty net.

All of these disasters can be avoided if the keeper, realizing that the defender is going to reach the ball first, stops and takes a couple of steps backwards to give the team-mate space to pass the ball safely back.

Communicating to Defenders

Unlike the outfield players the goalkeeper has an unrestricted view of the playing field and communicating that information to defensive teammates benefits them greatly.

How this is done will often be the difference between success and failure and is therefore extremely important to the team.

In all instances, the earlier the keeper communicates the easier it will be for the defenders to resolve the problems.

Be in charge of all dead-ball situations by demanding good marking habits

The keeper should orchestrate all dead-ball situations against.

To do this the keeper must demand that the players follow instructions and by so doing provide the keeper the best opportunity to make the play and ultimately save the day.

Being a commanding figure in all of these tense situations means being in charge.

A crowded penalty area is no place for wall flowers, its a place where the strong overcome the weak and the keeper, who holds most of the advantages in this area, needs to be the strongest.

Encourage players to keep alert during free-play action

Defenders often become spectators when the play is some forty yards away in the attacking half of the field and this can lead to quick successful counter-attacks by the opposing forwards who may take advantage of such situations by drifting cleverly into unmarked attacking spaces.

The keeper is in an ideal position to keep these defenders alert by continually informing them of the attackers movement.

Some defenders may become a bit upset at these constant reminders but all that means is that they are not asleep.

Let your defenders know if you are coming for the ball

If the keeper decides to leave the goal line to gather a cross or a through-pass, defensive colleagues must be informed; otherwise the

chances of a mid-air or some other type of collision becomes very real indeed.

Most of the really scary soccer injuries are the result of mid-air collisions therefore any way we can reduce the chances of them happening should be encouraged.

Fortunately a clear call of “Keeper” will warn the defenders of the keepers intention to come off the line for the ball and provided the call is early enough the defenders should have time to take up the protective position discussed in a previous chapter.

Don’t show up your defensive colleagues by remonstrating with them on the pitch

Some goalkeepers become so incensed at losing a goal that they immediately round on their defensive colleagues.

This is their way of showing that they do not feel that they were at fault for the goal being scored and by so doing are clearly laying the blame at the feet of their teammates.

This sort of action on the part of the keeper is totally uncalled for and furthermore shows everyone in a bad light.

Players should take their criticisms into the dressing room to be discussed after the game allowing team spirit to survive and prosper on the field of play.

Shout directions in a clear voice

When directing a defender, it is helpful to say the player’s name first to get attention [and to pass on responsibility] then the instructions.

All directions should be easy to understand and easy to pick up.

The key to this is two-fold, keep it simple and say it in a clear voice.

Drill on giving direction

Every practice session should include instruction and advice to the keeper by the coach to ensure that the keeper knows the value of forming a communication link with the outfield players.