

Goalkeeper Warm Up Considerations for Coaches

The purpose of this document is to raise points for you to consider when optimizing your goalkeeper's pre-match warm up. The following questions are posed to spark your thoughts to see if you think your keeper's warm up routine is optimized or if improvements can be made. We all would agree that the goalkeeper is a critical position within the team. However, I think too often our warm up routine does not sufficiently prepare keepers to perform this critical role. The following are considerations for optimizing pre-match preparation and ultimately match performance.

- Does your goalkeeper have input into the activities used in their warm up routine? While it is ultimately your decision, it helps to have the keeper's input in order to best suit it to their needs and their specific personality. For example, some keepers prefer a predictable warm up in a controlled environment with just one server hitting balls which they can save. This keeper may depend on confidence to prepare and may not want many live (and unpredictable) shots from teammates. Others may prefer a more rigorous warm up with sporadic live shots which helps them to face the most difficult shots they may see in the game. Ultimately they need confidence from their warm up and it will help to understand your keeper's preferences.
- Does your GK perform a functional/dynamic warm up? Your team may already be performing functional warm up methods and the GK should be included. More and more, conclusive research is showing that static stretching has no value in preparing athletes for dynamic and explosive performance. The warm up should reflect the dynamic nature of the game. Also, from a mental standpoint, the active warm up will better prepare the GK as opposed to static stretching in which they have time to literally relax.
- Does your GK have the opportunity to face a variety of shots from various angles? Too often shots are taken only from the top of the box when in reality the majority of shots come from varying angles and very few are from the exact top of the box. The shots they face should vary in height and pace and should always be struck from the ground and should be rolling prior to being struck. Unless specifically working on restart situations, all shots should be relative to the kinds of shots they'll see during the run of play which means it should be struck off the dribble or bounce.
- Does the GK have the opportunity to move their feet prior to fielding shots? Seldom is a keeper going to be stationary in the moments leading up to a shot (except for restarts). Most often they are moving (shuffling) to follow the dribbler or passed ball which requires them to adjust and readjust their position in front of the goal. In preparing for this match reality, it does not make sense for them to stand still prior to shots in the warm up. If it's one server warming them up the GK can simply shuffle toward one post and then back in line with the ball before it's served. If it's the team that is shooting a switching pass can be made from one side of the box to the other so the keeper is

forced to move their feet and take up a good position prior to the shot. Mobility and realism is vital.

- Does your GK have the opportunity to make tactical decisions and interact with their team? In the match, keepers are expected to make critical decisions and display a connectedness to their team when communicating. Too often the warm up does not promote decision making and interconnectedness because the goalkeeper is isolated the entire time. It can be beneficial for the GK to be included in the warm up game that the team plays to give them ample opportunity to communicate and play under match-like conditions. If the team plays a possession game or to targets the GK can be easily integrated.
- Does the GK have the opportunity to distribute with their hands and feet? Too often the answer is no, even though we task them with initiating many of our attacking moves. By incorporating keepers into the match-related team activities they can perform the technical and tactical acts of distribution while under the pressure of time and space. Additionally, keepers can practice punts and goal kicks just prior to kick off. This is a good time for them to field crosses from one side and switch to the opposite side target with punts or throws. If time allows, goal kicks and back passes and clearances can be done as well.

A sample 40 minute Team/Goalkeeper warm up may look similar to this:

- 10 minutes: Team + GK dynamic/functional warm up routine
- 10 minutes: Team performs small group activities (ie, 4v2, passing sequences, etc.) while GK faces a handling routine from a coach, back up Gk, or reserve player.
- 5 minutes: Water break and referee check in
- 10 minutes: Team + GK plays possession or directional activity (or several minutes of both). Possession is played with even teams and GK acts as floating target for both teams. Five passes equals a point and teams must play through the GK during the passing sequence. Players on both teams should be assigned positions and not simply allowed to float aimlessly. This builds inter-positional relationships. Directional is played with two teams, each attacking one end of the field. Goalkeeper(s) should be placed at each end as targets. Teams score by finding the targets in the air and then the GK reinitiates the attack going the other way.
- 5 Minutes: Attacking players perform attacking moves which result in a shot on goal (live shots, mobility required from GK) while defensive players work on striking the ball, switching the play, and/or defensive headers. Upon making saves, the GK can distribute to a wide target by way of punt or throw (economical training).