

General Goalkeeping Considerations for Team Coaches

Goalkeepers will be taught the following techniques and principles during their keeper specific training with IGA/Miles Glynn. To ensure continuity, it can help if you familiarize yourself with the information provided and reinforce these concepts during your training sessions and matches.

1. The “Set Position” is a mechanism used to optimally prepare the body for the many dynamic actions required of goalkeepers. “Setting” or “Getting Set” means hopping just before a shot is taken. As the goalkeeper lands the body must fall into place in a very specific way. Many goals are conceded due to improper setting or not setting at all. Conversely, many shots can be saved with proper setting, which includes the following details:
 - The goalkeeper must **hop** so as to land on the balls of their feet with the heels OFF the ground. To achieve balance, both feet must touch the ground simultaneously and should be about shoulder width apart. The hop doesn’t need to be higher than the grass, but needs to be a definite hop to lift the body and create tension (energy) in the knees with the landing. **Rule of thumb:** Hop as high as the grass is long without allowing the heels to touch the ground in the process. **Failure** to hop and land properly prevents the body from responding with explosiveness and can anchor it to the ground.
 - The **hands** may move freely while the goalkeeper is following the play and positioning him/her self. At the time of the landing however, the hands must be placed in front of the stomach, about 6-8 inches away from the body. The palms should face each other, as opposed to the finger tips or knuckles facing each other. The hands and arms should not be rigid but should be supple and relaxed. Failure to collect the hands in this position can lead to a multitude of saving complications. **Rule of thumb:** The elbows should be in front of the body so that the hands are certainly far enough from the body. **Failure** to set the hands leads to dropped balls, rebounds, and can be the difference between catching and tipping, saves and goals. THE PLACEMENT OF THE HANDS IS CRITICAL. (also watch for them to have their hands in place, only to draw them back behind their hips at the time of the shot. This “detour” can cause the hands to be late.)
 - The **posture** of the goalkeeper should be slouched over, so as to keep the weight of the goalkeeper forward on the balls of the feet and not on the ankles and heels. **Rule of thumb:** When slouching over, the shoulders should be above the toes, not the ankles. **Failure** to achieve proper posture prohibits dynamic and explosive movements and makes many low shots impossible to save.

- Goalkeepers should **time** their sets in relation to visual cues which indicate that the ball will be served into the goal area. When the possessing player lowers their head, plants a foot next to the ball, and pulls back the opposite foot, a shot or service is likely to ensue. The goalkeeper should take the hop just before the ball is struck so as to land collected just before the ball is struck. **Rule of thumb:** Keepers should time their sets just before every shot or service, including corners, free kicks, and services from the run of play. **Failure** to time the set prohibits the goalkeeper's ability to react in a timely manner. Setting too soon leads to a loss of energy in the legs which prohibits dynamic movement. Setting too late off balances the body at the time of the shot which also prohibits dynamic movement.
2. Goalkeepers should adhere to an imaginary line, called the "**Ball Line**," to properly position themselves in front of the goal. The ball line extends from the middle point of the goal line (between the goal posts) through the middle of the ball. Wherever the ball is located on the field, draw an imaginary line between it and the middle of the goal line to establish the Ball Line. Assuming an optimal position on the ball line allows goalkeepers to more easily save shots and cover posts and it can put them in a proper starting position to support their teammates. This is also known as "Angle Play."
 - Goalkeepers should straddle the ball line so that it runs between their feet. **Failure** to straddle the ball line leads to disorientation and can open up large parts of the goal to the shooter. Even standing with one foot on the line can open up too much of the goal to a savvy shooter. The Ball Line must bisect the goalkeeper.
 - Once on the ball line, goalkeepers should consider their distance from the ball. When the goalkeeper is near the goal the shooter has more goal to shoot at while the goalkeeper has more time to make a save, but also has a longer distance to travel to the far corners of the goal. When the goalkeeper is positioned nearer to the ball, the shooter appears to have less goal to shoot at while the keeper has less time to react, but a shorter distance to dive. **Rule of thumb:** Find a happy medium which lessens the shooter's angle and provides ample time to react for the goalkeeper. **Failure** to assume a proper position along the ball line can leave the goalkeeper exposed to chipped shots (if too far out) and easy goals (if too close to the goal line).
 3. Goalkeepers must constantly stay **connected to the game** through proactive thought, movement, and communication. The nature of the position is such that goalkeepers must be prepared to respond at several key moments through the game ("surges"). The nature of the mind and body is such that constant engagement and interaction is required through the duration of the match if the goalkeeper is to be fully prepared when called upon during surges in the match. Most goalkeepers disconnect from the game when the ball is away from their goal ("tranquilities"). High level goalkeepers are disciplined to remain engaged through all fazes of the match, during surges and tranquilities, regardless of the location of the ball. Oliver Kahn, Edwin Van der Sar, and Marcus Haneman epitomize this standard of engagement.

- Regardless of who has possession of the ball and regardless of the position of the ball, goalkeepers should constantly adjust their position to align themselves on the ball line. When the ball is in the defensive third this will prepare them to save shots or intercept passes that can lead to shots. When the ball is in the middle third this will prepare them to win through balls and flighted balls. When the ball is in the attacking third this will prepare them to win 50/50 balls or clearances which are over their defenders' heads. Each time the keeper adjusts their positioning they also further enhance their innate sense of positioning and thus improve their ability to read the game, make saves, and ultimately help their team WIN. **Rule of thumb:** Simply standing at the "top of the D" is no longer acceptable. Keepers must constantly move in pursuit of the optimal position in relation to their goal and the ball. **Failure** to stay aligned with the ball line is often the difference between gaining possession and *allowing* oppositional possession.
- Goalkeepers must exhibit a sense of **urgency** when the ball is within 30-40yards of their goal, instead of waiting until the opposition approaches the penalty box. This is known as being "Ever Ready." This urgency includes straddling the ball line, scanning the entire width of the field, communicating effectively, and setting before ensuing shots and services. The body posture should also demonstrate a sense of urgency and readiness with weight on the balls of the feet, bent knees, and shoulders positioned over the toes. Too many goalkeepers can be seen standing rigid, upright, and complacent when the ball is within 30-40 yards of their goal. Such goalkeepers are unprepared for action and risk underperforming for their team. As coaches we must teach this ever ready mentality to resist complacency and prepare for action.
- Goalkeepers are responsible for **effective communication** with their teammates. Ideally a goalkeeper's verbal command spans his or her team's defensive half of the field and possibly further. When the ball is within 30-40 yards of the goal the keeper should be aware of the entire width of the field and should verbally assist his or her team in an effort to win the ball back (when not in possession) or possess and advance the ball (when in possession). Because the goalkeeper often has a greater view of the field he or she is responsible for helping their team make proper decisions. Too often goalkeepers disconnect after distributing the ball and this is unacceptable. Their position on the field affords keepers an excellent perspective and they are obligated to share their insight at all times, regardless of which team is in possession. The goalkeeper should be loud, concise, and authoritative. Too often keepers' instructions sound like requests rather than demands. **Rule of thumb:** keepers are responsible for staying connected to the game and communicating during all phases (in possession, not in possession, during change of possession). **Failure** to communicate can result in more scoring opportunities for the opposition and less scoring opportunities for the goalkeeper's team.