

# Goal Keeper Coaching

Goal Keeping is a unique position that requires a specialized skill set taught through specialized training. Specific keeper training is essential to develop consistency, good habits, proficient skills and confidence all of which improve performance outcomes and prevent injuries. If poor habits are developed they are very hard to change and the player is at risk of injury.

Field players may touch the ball 50x during a training session (20 – 40 during a game) therefore their foot skill development is advanced. Keepers who train with the team, then put in goal for a game may only touch the ball 10x with their hands for the whole training session. This is not enough hand / ball contact to master their keeping skills and ultimately hinders their keeper development. This is not to say keepers should not work on their foot skills / team play at all.

Goal keeping can at times be a thankless job which tests athlete's resilience. Picking the ball out of the back of the net, especially for kids, can be demoralizing and affect their confidence and willingness to play that position. Positive reinforcement is essential to encouraging kids to be keepers and ensuring they continue to want to stay in that position.

Goal keeping is very individualized, what works for one keeper may not for another. For example; A shorter keeper will need to come off their line further in order to close the angle down. A taller keeper may start further off their line for corners as their reach is longer therefore they can cover the goal better if they need to move backwards. Each keeper needs to work out what works best for them however the not negotiables are the **fundamentals**.

The aim is to make easy saves look boring and hard saves look easy, if the fundamentals are taught this will be achieved.

## Fundamentals

At a minimum Hand Positioning, Footwork, Positioning, Goal Keeper Ready Position need to be practiced at **every** training session. The desire is to achieve **Quality over Quantity** and always have the keeper finish a drill displaying good technique.

### Hand / Arm Positioning

Hands / thumbs in a **'W'** shape behind the ball, elbows bent. This prevents ball from slipping through the gap if the thumbs are apart and the arms act as a shock absorber being able to give as the ball hits the hands.

**'W'**



**Elbows Bent**



**Three surfaces** on the ball; 1 hand **on top**, 1 hand **behind** and use of the **ground**. This ensures the maximum contact on the ball to ensure it doesn't slip through. Arm closest to the ground needs to be flat to avoid elbow and shoulder injuries, again a slight bend in the elbow to act as a shock absorber.



### Footwork



Fast feet, lateral / forward / backwards movement. Use cones or player mannequins as obstacles. Good footwork can mean the difference between making a save or conceding a goal.

### Positioning



In general, there should be a straight line between the centre of the goal, the keeper and the ball with the attacking player.

### “Goal keeper Ready Position”



## WARM UP

There is a common misconception that more is better or that smashing shots at a keeper before a game will adequately 'warm them up'. In my opinion, this does nothing but diminish a keepers confidence. You would not put a field player on the penalty spot, belt balls in quick succession to them expecting them to be able to score off each shot before a game, so don't do it to a keeper. At the end of a keeper warm up you want the keeper to feel **ten feet tall** and **bullet proof**. So do exercises that build confidence and always **finish on a good technique**. If you are unable to conduct a keeper specific warm up separate from the playing group ensure the keeper is using their hands as much as possible within the playing group warm up.

### **Time:**

A Goal Keeper warm up generally takes longer than field players owing to the volume and diversity in skills, desire for a controlled environment and **quality over quantity**.

### **Repetition and Consistency:**

With each drill / technique being warmed up the aim should be approximately 10 repetitions of the exercise with good technique to build confidence. This includes good service delivery from the coach. **ALWAYS HAVE THE KEEPER FINISH WITH A GOOD DEMONSTRATION OF THE TECHNIQUE.**

If a keeper is having an uncoordinated warm up, keep it simple, revert to some simple skills to build their confidence. If the last thing they remember from the warm up is being nut megged whilst banging their head on the post their game performance wont be much better.

### **Running / Dribbling:**

Dribble the ball across the box (left to right, back and forward) – not only does the keeper warm their legs up but they are familiarizing themselves with the dimensions of the box, quality of surface and getting comfortable having the ball at their feet.

### **Stretching**

Complete necessary dynamic stretches + arm exercises

- Rolling arms over with ball bouncing on ground
- Rotation of arms left & right like a helicopter with ball in hands

### Ground Balls:

Start on Baseline – run forwards, coaches passes an average speed ball along the ground for keeper to jog forward to meet the ball, pick up and secure it. Extend this to running forwards, picking the ball up and diving forwards.



### Middle Balls:

Keeper starts in the ‘**Ready Position**’ - Volley the ball to their stomach / chest area. Ensure the keeper is balanced, square on to you, feet should be shoulder width apart, arms in the ready but relaxed position. Keeper catches the balls ending up ‘**cuddling it**’. It is important to ensure that the keeper finishes in the **cuddle position** in case they get bumped or fall over during the game, chances are they’ll still have hold of the ball. Don’t allow them to rush the throw back to you, remember its quality not quantity.



“Cuddling the ball”

### High Balls:

Stand on the 6 yard box, throw the ball up into the space between you and the keeper (not 15ft in the air, just high enough they need to jump to catch it). The keeper should move forward (attack the ball), jump off one leg, using the other leg to drive upwards but also as a protective barrier and catch the ball above their head, at their highest point, forward of their eyes. Once caught, land balanced (feet shoulder width apart) and **'cuddle the ball'** again in case they get shoved or fall over during the game. Make sure they alternate jumping off the left and right leg. The leg closest to the field of play / attacker is raised for added protection.



### Sit Ups:

Have the keeper sit on the ground a few feet from you. Deliver the ball with 2 hands underarm at about their eye level. Keeper catches the ball in front of their face, ball remains in front of their eyes, keeper rocks back raising one leg with a bent knee whilst keeping the ball in front of their face, throw back and repeat (alternate leg / knee up). Raising & alternating the leg assists keepers in their technique for getting up off the ground quicker for double saves as they're using the momentum of their leg to propel them up.

### Foot Skills / Goal Kicks:

Pass the ball to the keeper, have them move the ball from left to right foot (vice versa) and pass back. Increase the distance of the kicks.

Place the ball inside the 6 yard box, have them practice 5 – 10 kicks into the back of the net. Finish on a good goal kick.

Have the keeper pick the ball up and punt / drop kick the ball 5 – 10 times into the net. The debate whether to punt, roundhouse or drop kick a ball is contentious. In my Opinion; Punts inevitably go too high and take too long to get to the desired destination. Roundhouse or Brazilian kicks are difficult therefore there is more room for error.

**Brazilian**



**Drop Punt**



**Punt**



## Other Skills & Drills

### Corners / crossing:

Stand on the side line of the 18 yard box. Have the keeper stand just off their line slightly behind centre of the goal. The keeper should be on a 45 degree angle so they can see the ball but also players approaching from behind them. Coach 'bowl's' the ball in the air between the penalty spot and 6 yard box. Keeper comes off their line and catches the ball at their highest point, brings the ball into the 'cuddling' position. **"Come Late, But Come Quick"** many younger keepers fall into the trap of moving forward as soon as the ball is kicked. Often this leads to them getting caught under the ball or the ball floating over their head. Teach your keepers to watch the ball in the air for as long as possible, then when they know where the ball is going to fall, they **"Come Late, But Come Quick"** to catch the ball at the highest point they can jump (or punch if their pathway to the ball is congested with players).



### Positioning:

The general rule is the Keepers should be in a straight line between the centre of the goal and the ball and the closer a player with the ball gets to the goal, the further out the keeper should be. Practise having the keeper move within the goal area to be in the correct position. Coming forward off the line reduces the available angle a striker has to shoot at.



### Diving:

Start in the **sitting position**, throw the ball with 2 hands under arm to the left of the keep (far enough that they need to reach out to secure the ball) about 3 inches off the ground. Keeper 'falls' to the left, secures the ball (good hand technique), securing the ball on the ground (Hands top & Back with the ground being the 3<sup>rd</sup> surface on the ball). Alternate left and right.

Keeper stands up and is in goal keeper ready position. Throw the ball about waste height to their left a couple of feet from their body. Keeper catches the ball and lands on the ground. Ensure their hand position is good and the ball is secure. Alternate left and right dives. Take time between repetitions, its not a race, **quality not quantity**.



### **Punching:**

Punching the ball is an effective way of clearing the ball from the 18 yard box when the keeper is under physical pressure.



### **Throwing:**

Keepers need to be able to distribute the ball by foot and hand. There are 3 types of delivery by hand that can be used depending on the circumstances:

**'Ten Pin Bowling'** – Short distance distribution of the ball to player's feet. Receiving player should be facing forward when receiving the ball.



**'Javelin'** – Medium distance distribution, is more powerful and delivers the ball quickly.



**'Bowling'** – Used to throw over players heads further up the field, long distance distribution.



## Communication

Goal keeping is much like being the Traffic Cop directing traffic. The better it is the less chaos there will be. Teach your kids these common but basic calls. A lot of kids, especially girls, worry about being perceived as 'bossy' and so they are reluctant to speak up. Teach your field players to understand why keepers say what they do and that it is not a personal attack on them.

- Be assertive
- Be loud
- Command the box

### **“Keeper”**

The keeper wants the ball and is coming to get it. The sooner field players learn that if a keeper says “keeper” it means they’re coming to get it and will knock anyone in their way over the better! Teach field players to protect the keeper (blue player) by shielding attackers from the keeper.



### **“Play Keeper”**

The keeper can see someone is under pressure and wants them to play the ball back to the keeper.

### **“Timmy, on your left (or right or number 10... whatever)”**

The keeper has seen a spare opposition player with no one marking them.

### **“Mia, get Goal Side”**

The keeper has seen one of their defenders standing on the wrong side of a player.

### **“AWAY”**

The keeper wants their team to get the ball as far away from their goal as possible.

### **“Watch the ball”**

The keeper wants the defender to watch the ball, stay on their feet and not to dive in.

### **“No turn”**

The keeper wants the defender to keep the attacker facing away and not allow them to turn and face the goal.

### **“Four” or 2 or 3 whatever the case may be**

The keeper is setting a wall and wants 4 players in it.

### **“Hold”**

A free kick has been awarded outside the box and the keeper wants the defensive line to 'hold' their position (Generally on the 18 yard line (ie) they don't want the defence to drop any further back into the box)

### **“Step up”**

The keeper wants the defensive line to move up and quickly, the keeper has seen an opportunity to catch someone off side.

### **“Push up”**

The ball has been cleared out of the defensive 3<sup>rd</sup>, the keeper wants the defence to move up and closer to the half way line.

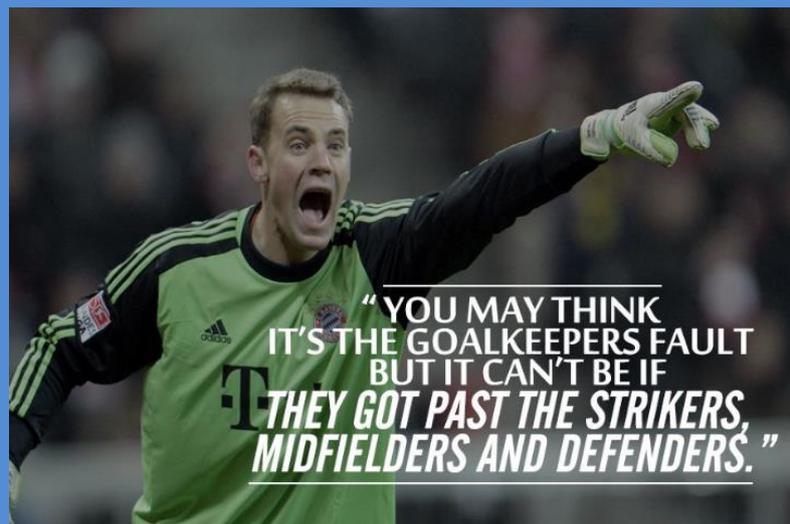
## **Positive Reinforcement**

Give your keeper loads of praise to build their confidence. Good kick, great save, good talking, great attitude etc. If a field player makes a mistake generally they will get several other opportunities during the game to make up for it, goal keepers don't have this luxury, one mistake may be the difference between a win and a loss.

## **Goal setting**

Dependent on your opposition as we don't want to set keepers up for failure, things like: Let's not concede in the first 5 minutes, first half, whole game. If you're getting smashed at half time, set the keeper a goal of not getting upset at the score, making 3 saves, catching the ball above their head... whatever to keep them engaged and not disheartened. It can be a lonely place in goals when things aren't going your way.

# **“Keep on Keeping on”**



**Compiled by: Leanne Trimboli, Matilda's Goal Keeper 1999 - 2001**