



PERFORMANCE GOALKEEPING

GOALKEEPING SIMPLIFIED

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Issue 6: Dealing with crosses, written by Paul Rogers.

In this issue I want to discuss crosses, not just flighted balls in the air but also from the goal line and inside the 18 and from higher up the field.

Dealing with crosses is a huge part of goalkeeping that separates good goalkeepers from the great ones. Dealing with crosses, service into the box, and balls pulled back from the end line takes more than just technique. A goalkeeper must be able to read the situation, flight of the ball, and positioning of the attacking and defending players, as well as be able to make a split second decision whether to come for the ball or not.

I will break down each situation and give my opinion on it and what/how I deal with the keepers I work with. It is important to make sure you understand the goalkeepers you work with, their level of understanding of the game, and their ability to come for crosses. The worst quote I hear through out the goalkeeping world is "you should be able to come for everything in the 6 yard box". That quote can put too much pressure on a keeper and is unrealistic as there are so many factors that come into play.

As I talk through the different types of crosses I am assuming the keeper has the ability/technique to take a ball that is crossed in. Obviously there are many factors that go into positioning and even cheating with the goalkeepers positioning, so I want to just touch on the basics and try to challenge some of the things that are taught and coached. There are a few things that are needed in all crossed ball situations, positioning (which is below), decision-making, and communication. The main point I want to get across when it comes to dealing with crosses is repetition. The more reps a goalkeeper can be put through, the more confident they will become. Replicating a game situation with goalkeepers and crosses is hard, although getting the reps of different types of services is easy as goalkeeping coaches we need to make sure the goalkeeper is working in game situation as often as possible. A small-sided game with wide channels is a good way to get plenty of reps and having to deal with traffic, communication and decision-making.

Wide crosses, goal line to 18 (During run of play, in air)

1. Starting position is 1-3 yards from goal line and within the middle 2 yards of the goal.
2. Hips facing to the ball or slightly opened.
3. Feet shoulder width apart; hands relaxed and in front of the body, head steady, and relaxed as a whole.

Common mistakes

1. I find many goalkeepers want to step towards the ball as soon as it is served. If this happens, work on them taking a little bounce/set as the ball is struck. This pause should give them a better chance of reading the flight of the ball and not getting caught moving forward.
2. The other issue I find with young goalkeepers is that they open their body up to the field so their hips are facing towards the other goal. Goalkeepers do have different starting positions, but if you open up too much to the field it makes it hard to judge the distance you can cover vertically. I have found that hips facing the ball have made the goalkeepers read the flight of the ball better and feel more comfortable covering the ground.



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Ball pulled back from goal line and inside the 18

1. Starting position is butt level with the near post and half a yard to 2 yards vertically from the post depending on level and situation with the server. A lot of coaches talk about being in front of the near post by a yard to 2 yards. For me chances are the ball will be pulled back into or beyond the 6 yard box, if you are past the near post you will have to take multiple steps to get back in and cover/have a chance at the shot from an attacking player running in. If your butt is level with the near post with one step back you are already inside the post and have a better chance at covering more goal.
2. The closer the attacking player comes with the ball towards the goal the lower the goalkeepers set shape needs to be.
3. The goalkeeper has to be prepared for the shot to the near post first, the ball pulled back into or past the 6 yard box which would usually result in a first time shot, and the ball lifted in the air to the back post.
4. Once in the low set shape at the near post you can work with your goalkeepers on cheating off the post depending on the situation/shape of the player with the ball.
5. Bear in mind, if the goalkeeper gets beat in the near post it is hard to point the blame anywhere else but at the goalkeeper.
6. The goalkeeper has to also be fairly sure they will get something on the ball if they try to win it as it is pulled back, because if they don't, the attacking players have the full goal to hit.

Crosses/High balls into the box from higher up the field

This is an area of goalkeeping I feel isn't worked on enough, not just with high balls into the box from the middle third of the field but also the distances and connection of the goalkeeper to the back line.

1. When talking about starting positioning with goalkeepers in this situation you have to take in to consideration how high you're back line play and the comfort level of the keeper covering distance.
2. Obviously you don't want your goalkeeper beaten over the top but working on them starting between 6 and 12 yards off the line is a good start.
3. Hips should be facing the ball and weight can be on the front foot ready to cover ground.
4. If your back line sit deeper then the goalkeepers positioning needs to be adjusted to accordingly to keep enough space between the back line and them self

Corners

This is an area that the higher the level you are at the more time is spent preparing for corners and all set pieces. How your team sets up to defend corners can dictate the goalkeepers positioning somewhat, whether the team defends in a full zone, full man to man, or a mix of both (which is most common). The goalkeeper's ability will come into to play when the coach is deciding how to defend corners, and at the highest levels an experienced goalkeeper will have some input.

1. A good way to teach younger goalkeepers the starting position is to tell them to imagine a line going from the middle of their goal to the penalty spot.



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2. Their hips should be very slightly open to the field enough for the heel of the front foot and the toe of the back foot would be just either side of the imaginary line.
3. Depending on the type of approach the taker has, in swinging, out swinger, the goalkeeper should have one foot on that imaginary line. In swinger slightly forward so the back foot is on the line, out swinging either front foot on it or one foot either side of the line.
4. How high off the line the goalkeeper starts is down to comfort and ability, however no goalkeeper should be on the goal line. Most goalkeepers work between 1 to 3 yards off their goal line.
5. This is another situation were the goalkeeper needs to take a little set/bounce to stop them from moving forward before the flight of the ball is assessed.

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