



PERFORMANCE GOALKEEPING

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PGK Newsletter September 2011

Issue 8: Dealing with the 2nd & 3rd choice keepers, written by Paul Rogers

A few coaches have asked us to put together a newsletter covering our thoughts on dealing with your 2nd/3rd choice goalkeepers. We at PGK think this is a very important subject and one that is often ignored. So USWNT GK Coach Paul Rogers will share with you his thoughts on the subject.

I have broken down dealing with the #2 and #3 into three topics, Day in day out training, Game day, psychological. Obviously the level that you coach/play at will determine how much you can control. At the youth level you are often limited with time with a GK coach, in the US college system you are limited with hours per week, the pro game you have the most control, and at the International level it can be a little of everything depending on the games/break/time together. Another big aspect is the individual GK you are working with and how there relationships are with the other GK's and you/the Coach. In my opinion the relationship between the Coach and GK's, is one of, if not the most important aspect when dealing with each of your Gk's and structuring their work.

I am looking at this from my own standpoint of working at the Pro and International level. I am big on treating all the GK's the same in regard to giving them the best opportunity to improve and challenge for the #1 job. I am a huge believer of being honest and up front with all the GK's, where I see them in the pecking order #1, #2, or #3, etc. The more feedback I can give them the better, I want the #1 to know they are a #1, but also there are times when form has dropped or increased, I will continually keep all the GK's informed of what I think or see.

Day in, day out

In a week where there is one game at the

weekend I have a little more time to cover all the needs of the GK's. If it is a week with a midweek game and a weekend game, time becomes a little tight.

In general most of what we will do on the field in regular team trainings will be geared towards the first choice GK, we will however go out extra with all of them or individually to cover anything we feel is specific to there needs. In training with just the GK's I will treat all the GK's the same (the session might be based of the #1, but that will not be the feeling on the field), working on their technical and physical work. When it becomes really specific to the #1 is when we get with the team and start looking at tactical work. When we are working as a team and looking at the GK's involvement with the back line/positioning/controlling space/communication I will usually split the time two-thirds to one-third in favor of the #1. I am a big believer that the #2 has to get time in behind the back line to feel comfortable with the tactical work as you never know when they might be needed and I want to see if they are improving and challenging the #1. If we have more time between games or pre-season, then I will split the time equally between the GK's. After all this is the time they are fighting to be the 1st choice. One way I do try to make up the gap in training from #1 to #2 and #3 is the use of video, not only from games but training as well (we might not have much game footage of #2 and #3). This is a good way to give more information and cover small details you might have



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missed on the field or with your time commitment to the 1st choice. Needless to say we do training/game/scout video with #1, #2, and #3 throughout the week.

Game day

Game day is all about the individual GK, each have a slightly different preparation, warm up, and manner in how they approach a game. It is important to learn each of there routines from morning all the way up to and through the game, and then on to dealing with the game performance. I have had a mix of GK's who do different things, some like to get out and do some handling the morning of a game (if it is a night KO), some that like to do nothing but relax, and a couple who have liked to go over small details or the scouting report. I can tell you with the US Women that Barnie and Jill like to go out and do a little bit on game day if it is an evening KO and Hope is starting.

Now the Pre-Game warm up is an important part for the #2, and I hear lots of different views on it. For me the #2 needs to be ready to play, chances are if they are called upon they will have no time to prepare and maybe not even time to get a physical warm up in. For this reason they need to feel prepared physically and more important psychologically ready to play. You can face different scenarios here, and I will share a few situations with you and how I decided to work with them.

At the pro level we have had more flexibility in warm up times, so I could work on getting both GK's ready. Of course the #1 is most important and there warm up will not be disrupted to fit in the #2. So depending on the #1 warm up routine, I would work with the #2 to devise a warm up that suits them in the time we had, we could go out a

little earlier to make it work, or stay out a little longer. It would all depend on what the #2 felt comfortable with and what I felt they needed to get in.

At the Olympics you only have 2 GK's available to you game day and you are limited to 30mins (you can leave the tunnel exactly 30mins before you have to clear the pitch). 30 mins can be a long time or not long enough depending on what you GK likes to do in a warm up, for some it is almost a training sessions, for others it is time to just get physically warm and tune in (this is my preference). So from a coaches stand point now you have to work in the #2 in the down moments of the #1, it is easy enough to do as long as you know your GK's and have a good routine.

At the World Cup you have 3 Gk's available to you with the same 30min warm up time. In this situation for us in Germany we all did the physical aspect of the warm up together and then I worked solely with Hope through the technical part, and Jill warmed up Barnie. We had a routine that Barnie wanted, and I went over all of it with both of them before hand. They where of course in ear shot so I would have a handle on how Barnie was felling and looking. Once Hope went in I stayed out to make sure Barnie was ready. I would talk to Jill after to see how it all went; on a side note Jill would jump in whenever she could to get a feel on the ball!

As with all pre-game warm ups, it is all about preparation and routine. Talk to your GK's to know what they like and what makes them feel sharp.

Psychological Aspect

As with any GK the psychological aspect is the biggest area when you get to the highest level. You wouldn't be at the pro and international level if you didn't have some



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talent/technical/tactical/physical ability. With regard to your #2 and #3 this is no different, they may not have the pressure on game day that the 1st choice has but they still need to be confident and feel prepared. I make sure that any information that is given to the 1st choice in regard to opponents is also covered with the #2/3. We will do a lot of our meetings as a group of GK's, including video sessions. However we will also do individual video work as well. As a coach for me one way to give the confidence to your #2/3 is to spend as much time with them as you do the #1, put as much detail into there training, analysis, and progression. I make sure I communicate with all my GK's and build a

relationship with each of them not just the 1st choice. After all you are a GK group, not just a #1 that plays on game day, without the constant pressure from the #2/3 how will the 1st choice improve? Communication about the games, trainings, and results with all your GK's will improve their confidence. It may seem simple but it is down to the coach to make the #2/3 feel part of them team weather you win or lose.

As any GK coach knows, you have your own little GK union at your Team or Club and you all have to lean on each other from time to time, for support when mistakes happen, for praise when you do well, and so you don't ever feel alone on the pitch.