



Goal Keeping For More Experienced Keepers

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Introduction

As Goal Keepers become more experienced and once they have reached a certain level of physical maturity, they begin to question the techniques that beginning keepers are taught. As well as those questions, they place greater demands upon themselves physically and mentally.

This booklet is the second in the MJSC Goal Keeping series and it explores techniques and tactics for the Junior keeper. Once again, it is not an exhaustive text on all facets of goal keeping, but it is a guide on some of the more advanced skills you will need to continue to develop. I hope that you find the booklet informative and useful as a guide to improving your keeping skills.

Paul Whittingham
MJSC Director of Coaching



Mark Schwarzer, Australia's Number 1

Securing the Ball

Catching the Ball

- ⚽ Watch the ball in flight so you can judge where it is traveling. Be aware of the wind and what effects it is having on the ball and try to stay chest on to the ball.
- ⚽ Make a decision early about coming to the ball or letting the ball come to you. Your decision will be based upon your position in the penalty box as well as the position of any attacking players. Don't let them beat you to the ball.
- ⚽ Do not let the ball bounce if at all possible. This brings other variables (such as the condition of the ground) into play
- ⚽ When preparing to catch a ball, the keeper must decide whether it is a below shoulder height catch or a shoulder height and above catch. This will determine whether they catch the ball with fingers pointing up or fingers pointing down.
- ⚽ If the ball is below shoulder height, it should be caught in the hands and then clutched to the body. Fingers point slightly down and away from the body.



Ricardo of Portugal shows us how to catch a below the shoulder ball

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- If the ball is shoulder height or above, it should be caught in the palms with your fingers pointing up, then brought down to your chest. The spread of the fingers, with thumbs behind the ball give this grip – the ‘W’ grip – its name. You should catch the ball in front of you with a slight bend in the elbows rather than above your head. This gives you a margin for error and you can keep your eyes on the ball more easily



Cristian Mora of Ecuador shows the 'W' grip to Wayne Rooney of England

- Ball security is the most important part of catching the ball. Don't snatch at the ball, rather accept it and then secure it.
- Soft hands are important when catching the ball. Strength comes into it when you are securing and holding the ball.
- If you are leaping to catch the ball, push off on one foot rather than both feet because you'll get more height in your jump.

Securing a Rolling Ball

- ⚽ Get to the ball as quickly as you can so you can secure it as early as possible.
- ⚽ If you are not under pressure, you should kneel on one knee to pick the ball up. Make sure that you kneel at about 90 degrees to the direction of the ball and have the heel of your leading foot close to the knee of the trailing foot. Twist your upper body so you present your chest to the ball, place your fingers on the ground in the scoop position and keep your eye on the ball. When the ball gets to you, allow its momentum to help you in scooping it to your chest and holding the ball in two arms. Even if you should fall forward, keep the ball secure in two arms.
- ⚽ If you are under pressure, but you can get to the ball before an opponent, you should attack the ball quickly and get it into your hands as soon as possible. To do this, you need to stay upright until the last possible moment and then slide your feet away from the ball, bringing your body down to the ground.
- ⚽ Make sure that you get your hands on the ball as your body hits the ground, your bottom hand should be behind the ball and your top hand should be on top of the ball. The ball should be in front of you when you get your hands on it, around shoulder level when you are lying on the ground. Get a good grip on the ball in your hands and then secure it to your chest. You need to make sure that your body stays sideways and you don't roll onto your stomach or your back.



*Petr Čech of the Czech Republic showing good technique.
Notice that his back hand is in position before his top hand.*

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- If you are under pressure and you will get to the ball around the same time as your opponent (or even a little after), you need to attack the ball quickly with your body. This technique is called 'the shrimp.' As with attacking the ball in front, you need to stay on your feet to get to the ball as soon as possible and then slide to bring your body to the ground. Instead of hands out in front, you try to get your chest to the ball and clutch it to your body with your arms, curling protectively around the ball. Note, do not tuck your chin onto your chest because you don't want your head too close to the ball.
- Speed to get to the ball is essential. Practice sharp sprints of ten to twenty metres and try to make your first step a forward one rather than a rock back.

Positioning Yourself

- The centre of your goal, the goal posts and the goal line are the determining points for your positioning as a keeper. Know where they are at all times.
- You can use other pitch markings to gauge your position as well. The penalty spot is a great position marker for the centre of the goal. The penalty spot and the front of the goal area will give you an idea of how far off the goal line you are.
- Always remember that chest on to the ball presents the maximum area of your body to stop the ball from going into the back of the net.



Jevric Dragoslav of Serbia and Montenegro stands ready.

- Coming off your line towards an advancing player gives them less of a target to shoot at directly. This is called narrowing the angle.
- When you come off your line, you should be in a position where a straight line drawn from the centre of the goal to the ball passes right through you.
- It is important that you learn to judge when to come off your line and when to stay on it. If you are off your line, you narrow the angle but you become vulnerable to being chipped. Unfortunately, this is a skill you'll develop only through experience.

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- When you decide to go at the ball, don't hesitate. If you do, you might be caught in 'no-man's land' – too far out to cover the chip and too far away from the player to effectively control them.
- Patrolling the edge of the penalty box when your team is in the opposition half is another good habit to get into. A goal keeper can snuff out an attack by playing as a second sweeper. You do not have to stay in the penalty area all the time.

Effective Use of the Ball

- Once you have secured the ball, disposing of it effectively is of prime importance.
- You can kick or throw the ball back into play and the method you choose will depend upon how far you want the ball to go, how much pressure you and your team are under and where your players are positioned.

Throwing the Ball

- There are 3 ways to throw the ball back into play, rolling, bowling and the javelin throw.
- Bowling the ball gives control over greater distances, as long as your technique is right.
- Make sure the ball is cupped in your throwing hand with most of your hand behind the ball.
- The ball starts around hip height and slightly behind you.
- Step and whip your arm up over your shoulder, leaning slightly away from the arm in motion.
- Your release will depend upon how far you want the ball to go – the longer you hold the release, the shorter your throw. Make sure that you don't release the ball before it reaches shoulder height because it may end up dropping behind you.



Oliver Kahn of Germany bowls the ball into play.

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- Rolling the ball is an easier technique and is mainly used over shorter distances.
- Make sure the ball is cupped securely in your hand and draw your arm back to around hip height.
- Keep your head down and bend your back to retain good control and accuracy.
- Whip your arm through, past your hip and release the ball. If you hold onto the ball too long, it will just lolly up in the air and come down too close to you. This will also slow down the release and let attackers in.
- The closer to the ground you release the ball, the more it will roll and the easier it will be for your players.



Fabien Barthez of France rolls the ball to one of his players.

- The Javelin throw is one of the least used releases into play.
- Standing upright, you hold the ball cupped in your hand close by your ear.
- Step forward and hurl the ball as though you are throwing a javelin (hence the name).
- The quicker you whip your arm through, the quicker the ball will get to your player. It will keep the ball a lot flatter (ie less bounce) than bowling the ball and it is particularly useful in the wet, if your technique is good.

Kicking the Ball

- ⚽ There are two ways the goal keeper can kick the ball into play – from their hands or from the ground.
- ⚽ With the ball in hand, the drop of the ball to the foot is all important and of course, practice makes perfect!
- ⚽ Make sure that you drop the ball in front of you and in a position where you can easily swing through a full arc of your leg.
- ⚽ Connect with the ball when it is around knee height or below – it will mean more distance in your kick.
- ⚽ Hit the lower third of the ball with the laces part of your boot for maximum power and distance.
- ⚽ Follow right through the ball with your foot and up to your hip height. Keep your toes pointed in the direction you want the ball to go.



Jose Torres of Costa Rica kicks the ball into play from his hands

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- ⚽ A goal keeper kicking the ball into play from the ground happens from free kicks, goal kicks and in general play.
- ⚽ Make your run up reasonably straight and not too long.
- ⚽ Make your last stride a long one and place your non kicking foot next to the ball. Your toes should not be in front of the ball or behind it or you will lose power.
- ⚽ Connect through the centre or lower third of the ball with the laces part of your boot. Your toes should be pointed at the ground (a slightly angled foot is OK with this technique).
- ⚽ Follow right through the ball with your foot and up to your hip height. Keep your toes pointed in the direction you want the ball to go.
- ⚽ Use you arms and your body for power. Your last stride should put you a side on to the direction of your kick so your arms can help to swing your whole body through the kick.
- ⚽ Where you actually strike the ball determines whether it will stay on the ground, go in the air, curl or dip. If you want to get the ball high in the air, kick at the bottom of the ball. If you want it to stay on the ground kick through the top third of the ball. For real power, hit through the centre of the ball.



Jens Lehman of Germany kicks the ball into play from the ground