

THE ART OF GOALKEEPING

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Abstract:

Being a Goalkeeper is fun, but with it comes responsibility. You have to be ready physically as well as mentally. It is the one position that stands out from the rest. You have the special right to use your hands on the field where no one else is allowed to touch the ball with their hands. They say goalkeepers are crazy. Well of course they are, as long as they do not concede goals. But if you want to go on to become a pro, then you've got to be ready to give it your all, 100%, day in and day out. It will only come to you with hard work and commitment. If you ask anyone or look at interviews of successful people, they would tell you only one thing "HARD WORK". Nothing worthy of keeping comes cheap in this world. You've got to be ready to give anything for your dream. That is the only way you can make it.

INTRODUCTION:

Football! The Beautiful Game, the Magnificent Goals, the Ridiculously-Awesome Saves, those Magical moments and disappointments. The life of a goalkeeper is simply more fun than working in a 9-5 job. It is an art that just happens. No one expects to be the one saving the goals. Everyone loves to knock in the goals. That is what makes us- the players from the goalkeeper's union- unique. That feeling when the striker turns away in embarrassment. Those are the moments we all live for.



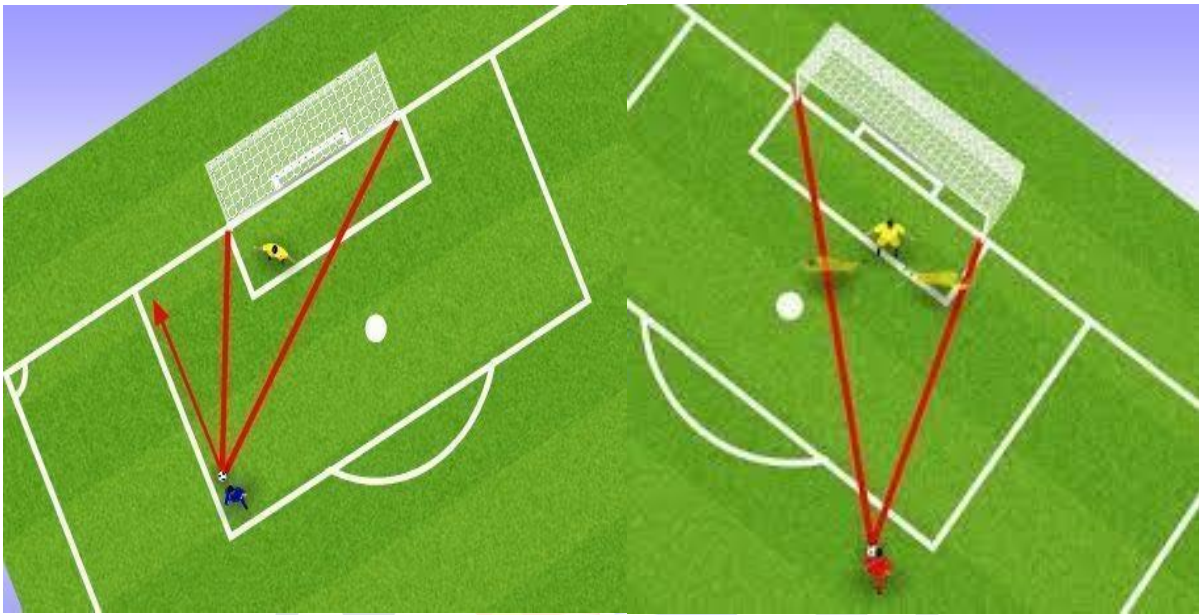
Here I will be discussing some important basic principles that you must have in your game in order to improve your overall performance and hopefully you can make your dreams come true.

The 5 main areas that need to be mastered are:

- **POSITIONING**
- **SHOT-STOPPING / HANDLING**
- **COMMAND YOUR AREA**
- **BALL DISTRIBUTION**
- **MENTAL STRENGTH**

1. POSTIONING:

While the opponent is attacking, it is extremely important that you get your position and get you angles covered. You should not let your goal gaping at any costs. Generally, if you have your angles covered you are most likely to save the shot. You will mostly not be able to jump from 8 metres across the goal line in a split second(Unless you are SUPERMAN). Another thing that you have to pay attention to is the movements of the striker and making decisions regarding what position you are going to take when the shot comes in. Usually, it has to be a split second decision. You must always try to cut the angles that the striker is most likely to use. It is up to you, based on the situation, whether you chose to charge at the opponent or stay on line. And remember to always be aware of what's going on and stay on your toes.



2.SHOT-STOPPING / HANDLING:

As a goalkeeper, your primary job is to stop the ball hitting the back of the net. It is up to you whether you can hold the ball or you parry it away into an area where there is a lesser threat (always away from the goal, towards the sides) of a goal being conceded. Your body must always be ready to make that sudden jump, so you must always have that spring in your step, for when you are called upon you must be ready to make that dive. So make sure your body is always in the best possible shape and be agile enough to dive properly and not injure yourself. While making a save, make sure you have your body behind the ball so that you are able to generate enough power to either hold on to the ball or push it away. While catching the ball make sure that you keep the 'W' shape or the 'Diamond' shape with your hand in order to make a clean catch and not giving any scraps for the attackers to feed on. Again, do not take too long to make a decision. If you make up your mind, that you are going to either catch it or parry it, just stick with it.



3. COMMAND YOUR AREA:

You are the only player on your team who is allowed to take the ball with your hands so make sure you take full advantage of it. Try to use your hands whenever required (But that doesn't mean you can keep the ball in your hands forever). You are the one who can see the whole length of the field, so make sure you keep your defenders updated on what's going on. You must constantly be speaking to your teammates in order to make sure that you kill any threats that come from the opponents. What this also does is that it keeps you concentrated and focused throughout the game. Make sure you come for long flighted balls coming into your area and you can chose to either hold on to it or punch it away. At times, You will be called upon suddenly into the game, so always be ready and keep your concentration levels high and always command your area.



4. BALL DISTRIBUTION:

Distribution is one of the most important factors of being a goalkeeper in today's game. Everyone wants a goalkeeper to have his accurate distribution. The most common way of distribution is through goal kicks. When we talk about goal kicks, players generally think it is about passing the ball to your teammate near you or booting it up field. They think it is about absolutely killing the ball. But no, it is not about killing the ball. It is just the technique that you need to master in order to have the perfect and accurate distribution. It is about getting into that rhythm. The same goes with the 'Side Winder'. It is all about practice. The more you practice your kicks, the better you will get at your art, the higher your rate of success every time you step out on that pitch. One of the common mistakes we make is that we do not train your weaker foot.

This does not help as it may give you success in the short term, it will still be one of your weaknesses in the long term. Thus, it is important to practice and practice and practice until you reach a point where you feel as comfortable with your stronger foot as with our weak foot. Distribution is not all about kicks; Throwing is also part of distributing the ball. Make sure you practice throwing as well in training.



5. MENTAL STRENGTH:

Training the mind mentally is as important as training body physically. As a goalkeeper, it is common to be criticized for your mistakes and you start to feel disappointed and unfit. That is part and parcel of the game. But it is important to move on after mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes. No human is perfect. Every successful man faced failure. Everyone falls. But it is the one with the courage, the determination, the desire, the heart, and the never-say-die attitude that stands back up. We need to be tough. Be tough on the haters; tough on others; but most importantly tough on ourselves. If you want to be successful as bad as you want to breathe, then you will be successful. My greatest competition is 'Me'. "I work harder and harder every day of the week in order to become the best. I never give up. I train as hard as I can every single day. I shall not accept anything less than the best. I am the best Goalkeeper". This is the attitude we all need to inherit into our minds and souls. This attitude would create 'Successful People' and separate the Winners from the losers. Moreover, it is required in all of us to succeed in today's world.



Conclusion:

At the end of the day, goalkeeping is an art and it is all about enjoying the moment. It takes a lot of practice to become a top-class goalkeeper and there is no substitute for hard work. Always remember to follow your dreams and fulfil them, no matter what. The perspective of many players is that the role of a goalkeeper is very complicated. Well, not really. As long as you do the basic stuff right you will not find any complications. Everyone has got natural abilities. The instincts to pull off that brilliant save that makes everyone say “WOW”. So, just remember to do the basics right and your natural abilities will do the rest. Always set goals, and work towards your goal. Work hard. And hopefully, one day, your dream of becoming a professional goalkeeper will come true.



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