

Footwork 101 for Keepers

Footwork is probably more important than catching for a good keeper. The following simple drills are aimed at developing good footwork habits. The key is to make sure that the keeper faces the field in all phases of the drills. Work on developing good speed and quickness. These two drills should be used every practice.

Drill 1.



Lay out a box using four cones as shown in the figure.

Have the keeper start at the bottom right. Then move left, then straight up, then right, then down. Do this 5 times and then reverse directions (allow 30 seconds rest before changing direction).

Have the keeper concentrate on facing the field at all times. Also have the keeper keep her hands up in a good catching position. Work on developing good habits in all parts of practice.

Do these drills 5 times in each direction. Allow one minute between repetitions.

A note on movement technique. The keeper should NOT move left to right by shuffling her feet. The fastest technique is more of a sideways runs with her hips square to the field (i.e., if she is going left she will step left with her left foot and point it in the direction she is going. Then cross over with the right foot.) Make sure she is square and looking downfield at all times during lateral movement.

Remember she is working on developing good habits to react to a possible shot threat.

For backwards movement, the technique is similar. She should cross her feet with the power step above and have her hips square to the nearest sideline. This technique will put her in position to dive back if she has to tip a ball over the goal.

After she has mastered the movement above, add diagonal movement to the drill. Again concentrate on positioning looking down field as if reacting to a shot threat. Once a week time her in the basic drill. Work on getting the time down.

Although this is a good drill for warming up, you should also use it near the end of practice when the keeper is tired. This will help develop good habits even when the keeper is fatigued in the last minute of the game

Footwork 101 - Part 2

This drill will help the keeper's vertical.

Drill #2

Place 5 cones (disc cones), balls, gloves, shirts (or whatever you have) in a line about 18 inches apart. The keeper starts at one end and hops on one foot over the objects forward and back. Repeat 5 times in each direction. Rest 30 seconds. Then repeat with both feet.

Repeat drill five times.

You can replace the disc cones with higher cones as she becomes proficient.

Time keeper to get a baseline. Check keeper time once a week.

Footwork for Getting Back

Joe DeMay (GK Coach for the Youngstown State University women's program and for Mahoning Valley Premier FC) offers some comments on keeper footwork for getting back towards the goal. Note that this discussion proves the importance that Neil places on footwork. See footwork drills for additional information.

Joe's discussion comes from a point made by Gary Rue that " I like to teach the GK to get sideways on to the ball, immediately after it gets airborne, move back to the goal mouth and square up to catch the ball. "

Joe comments:

I agree with the point made about back pedaling, not only does it severely inhibit jumping ability, it feels plain awkward. However, I think there is a key point on the cross over step. The first step in retreating backwards should NEVER be the cross over step, that step is reserved strictly for the second step. The first step the GK should make is called a drop step. To use Gary's example, the GK is turning to his/her right so the first step will a big stride backwards with the right leg while the left leg stays fairly stationary (save for a little pivot of the foot to allow the right leg to move backwards). The left leg should then cross over the right leg. After the cross over step the GK should be able to run straight back with their torso facing more to the touch line then the byline.

What's the difference you may ask? Well, there are two main reasons we do this. First of all, if you stand up from you chair and use the drop step as I just explained and then resume the starting position and try using the cross over as the first step, you're going to find that the drop step allows you to get deeper, or further back toward where your goal would be, in a faster period of time (tenths of seconds, to be sure, but that time saving could be the difference between a save and a goal). Using the drop step and the cross over together, in that order, allows you to cover 4-7 yds (depending on height, stride, etc) in two measly steps. Now, if you're standing at the top of the six, these two steps have put you inside of the goal (or nearly so if you're a short GK like me:)). To use a field player phrase you probably never thought of applying to a GK, the drop step give the GK time and space in order to make a play on the ball.

The second reason we use this technique is even more simple than the first. The drop step better allows you to keep your eye--focus--on the ball. The GK should never take his/her eye off the ball--EVER--NO EXCUSES. Now if you would stand up again and try keeping your head looking toward the center of the field for a ball up in the air while doing both techniques you'll find (unless you have great neck rotation) that it is much easier to keep you head and eyes centered while doing the drop step. There is much less tendency for the head to pull using the drop step because you're moving backwards in a fairly straight line (although there is a definite angle to that initial drop step--the dropped foot should be in no closer then the right shoulder) which allows you to keep your head more centered, thus making it easier to keep your eye on the ball.