

Edition 19

Welcome to the Goalkeeping Newsletter. Today's issue edition will deal with the technique and decision-making involved in breakaways. Of all of the things I have written about, this is one of the most difficult to explain. In this case, a picture really is worth a thousand words (but since I can't include pictures, you'll have to settle for my 1000 words.

Now on to the issue of breakaways. The first thing to realize is that if you as a keeper are doing your job properly, you can avert most breakaway situations. If a player comes through unmarked, that is because you as a keeper did not do an adequate job of assigning marks and ensuring that there is proper coverage.

However, assuming that you are in a breakaway situation, the first objective is to try to beat the attacking player to the ball. Assuming you can't do that, the next objective is to meet the oncoming player at the top of the 18.

As the player is dribbling at you, you want to take advantage of some factors that you can always count upon. When players are dribbling on a breakaway, they do not dribble with the ball at their feet. Rather they push the ball out in front of them and run after it (some of you are going to say that some of their opponents are so good that they don't do this, trust me, I don't care what level you are referring to, this is the way people dribble on breakaways).

As soon as the ball is pushed far in front of the oncoming player, this is when you can afford to steal ground by charging at them as quickly as possible. When the ball gets closer to their feet, you have to slow down and prepare for the possible shot. As you get closer to the opponent, you will look for the opportunity to attack the ball.

One of the ideas I teach is to have a very slight bend on your run as you approach the opponent. The idea here is to encourage the opponent to think he has one side open. When you do this, you are able to take the decision away from the attacker and you are now in control. You want to force the attacker to the near post because that will take away as much of the angle as possible. Remember that this must be a very slight curve or else you will be giving up a very easy goal.

The next key is to attack immediately after the ball has left the opponent's foot on his last touch. The reason for this is if you attack when the ball is at the player's foot, he can very easily pull the ball back or cut it to the side. As soon as the ball is played away from his foot, you will take a step directly in the direction the ball is heading with your nearest foot (if you are forcing the player to your right, the last step will be with your right foot. Have your right hand in front of your right foot when you are taking this step and almost on the ground. You want to be very low when taking this step.

Next, while forcing your body forward, extend into a dive that will allow as much of your body to be covering the goalmouth as possible. Get your hands on the ball and then pull it in and cover it up as quickly as possible. Once you have possession, it is then recommended that you make yourself as small as possible in order to protect yourself.

If you have done properly, you will have had control of the situation from the very beginning by making the decision of when to meet the oncoming player, then you would have determined when they will shoot by attacking quickly and even where they will shoot by bending your run.

With experience, breakaways become easier and easier. The one thing I really want to emphasize is that you must not go out on a breakaway feet first. This is the best way to get injured as well as to injure someone else. The other thing to remember is lead with your body and not with your head. That is the best way as a keeper to get injured.

To reemphasize the important points on breakaways, control timing, determine which side you want to defend, lead with your hand and inside foot, cover the goal with your body and be in control at all times. Realize that once you make a save, your job is not done until the ball is safely in your hands. Just blocking the ball and thinking your job is done is not enough. Stay with the play until it's truly over.

Have a great day.

Lawrence

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