

## Goalkeeping Edition 145

Welcome to the Goalkeeping Newsletter. Today's subject will deal with using your feet to take advantage of space.

When a keeper makes a save, in most circumstances, the first thing she should do is look for a player to release the ball to quickly. This player might be far down field and the way to get it to her would be via a punt to drop kick, or, the player might be much closer at which a throw or a roll would be the proper means of distribution.

If the early distribution isn't available, the next thing that many keepers choose to do is hold the ball for their teams to clear out and get down field and then a long punt or drop kick is done. The problem with this is that at best, it's a 50/50 ball but in reality, it's even less because with a long kick the defending team will almost always have more players back than the attacking team will have forward.

My suggestion is that when both teams have gone down field and the keeper would normally punt or drop kick, the keeper should put the ball down at her feet and start dribbling the ball forward. By doing this, she accomplishes a number of things.

First, instead of kicking from 18 yards out, she will be able to kick from 25,30 even 35 yards out so this if the decision is made to hit the long ball, she can get the ball even further down the field (with practice).

Secondly, at some point, the opponent will have to send someone to prevent her from dribbling all the way down the field and this means that if she decides to kick it long, it's one less opponent who can win the ball (the key here is that she just draw the player to her and NOT let the opponent get anywhere close enough to actually win the ball). Plus, if she kicks it and the opponent wins it and knocks it forward, this one player she drew to her will frequently be in an offside position.

The third option is for the keepers backs to show when this opponent starts to go toward the keeper and this will allow the keeper to play the ball to a back who is now open and beyond one of the opponents.

When a keeper is given the opportunity to dribble the ball forward and takes this opportunity, while using her head, her team will benefit greatly. One thing that will increase the probability of success when this happens is for the team to know what she is doing and what they should do in the various situations (for example, when the opponent first sends a player to pressure the keeper, the backs need to know to show out wide at that point).

When the keeper has done this a few times in a game, the opponent will start to keep a player downfield further to prevent her from dribbling out of the back and this opens up many other opportunities.

In order for this to be effective, keepers must be proficient with the ball at their feet. The key here is they must be able to pass a ball with either foot in order to avoid any precarious situation (this is true whether a keeper chooses to dribble out of the back or not).

Also, the keepers must understand that safety first is still the rule when dribbling out of the back. As soon as the first sign of pressure shows, she **MUST** get rid of the ball. This is not the time for the keeper to take on an opponent or try to shield the ball. She must know her options early and make the early decision **EVERY TIME** for this to be an effective tool.

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Have a great day

Lawrence

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