

Goalkeeping Edition 103

Welcome to the Goalkeeping Newsletter. Today's subject will deal with pulling the ball in properly.

Too many goalkeepers don't seem to understand the importance of pulling the ball in after they have caught the ball. While this seems like a small detail, it actually is something that can make a difference in a keeper and also in a team's success.

I will start by describing the proper way to pull a ball into the body. When pulling the ball into the body, the ball should end up against the chest, with the hands over the ball and the forearms in front of the ball. Basically, the ball ends up in an area surrounded by the chest, on one side, forearms on the other side, hands above the ball and the biceps under the ball. When the ball is in this position, if the keeper gets knocked into, she will still be able to hold onto the ball (even if she is knocked back on her butt).

By holding the ball securely like this immediately after catching the ball, it will allow you to absorb the type of contact that goalkeepers encounter over the course of a soccer game.

Some of the other things that happen when a keeper regularly pull a ball in properly is that it's a visual cue to the opponent that the keeper is fundamentally sound and that she has complete possession of the ball so they don't bother following up shots quite as closely. For example, I will watch an opposing keeper during the warm up for a game and if I see her bobbling balls upon the ball making contact with, I will point this out to my team and tell them to shoot often and follow all shots.

On the other hand, if I see the opposing keeper catching balls properly and pulling them in every time during the warm up, I will not make that comment to my team. So, by simply doing things properly during the warm up period, will actually affect how my team will approach a game (not that we won't look to shoot often and follow our shots but if I see a weakness, I will certainly look to exploit it).

Another thing that pulling a ball in properly will do is act as a visual cue to the keeper's teammates that they can make the transition from defense to offense. Until the players see the ball pulled in properly, I expect my players to continue back in case of a bobbled ball or some other type of mistake. However, as soon as the ball is pulled in properly, they know to make this transition to the attack which is extremely important since I want to always look for a quick counter attack whenever possible.

There are three times when I do NOT want the keeper pulling the ball in right away. First, the ball should not be pulled in when the keeper goes up for a high ball and catches the ball with a player directly under the ball. If the keeper tries to pull the ball in at that point, the ball will most likely hit the player's head and bounce away. So, in this situation, the keeper should wait till she clears the players who are underneath her and than pull the ball in.

The second time to not pull the ball in right away is when the keeper is standing right on the goal line or even in the goal. In this case, the keeper should wait till she steps off of her line and than pull the ball in.

The third time when a ball doesn't need to be pulled in is on a dive. I do not feel it is necessary to pull the ball all the way when a ball is caught during a dive (and in fact it is almost impossible especially if you land with the ground being the third hand on the ball).

Other then these three times, a keeper should always pull a ball in when she catches the ball

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Have a great day

Lawrence

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