

Edition 43

Welcome to the Goalkeeping Newsletter. The topic of today's newsletter is training young keepers.

First I would like to thank everyone who has written recently. All suggestions, questions and comments are welcome and truly appreciated.

I can't be specific concerning the age that I am writing about since each person grows and matures at a different point in their life. In writing this, I am doing so with people between the ages of 10-12 in mind.

Goalkeepers at this age should really concentrate on developing their catching skills as well as their foot skills and NOT spending much time on diving. I have some strong reservations about training keepers at this age at all with the exception of teaching them the fundamentals of catching and letting them spend most of their time as field players.

The reason for this is that the players who are selected to be keepers at the younger ages are not necessarily the same ones who will be keepers as they get older. Frequently, coaches pick the biggest player to stand in goal since they will cover the most space in goal. Too often, this player doesn't want to be a keeper or doesn't have the physical tools to be a keeper so forcing them into training will only make them more miserable. Then, as they get older and they are no longer the biggest kids on the team (since they frequently are the ones who simply grew at an earlier age) they aren't happy as keepers but can't play the field since they were "stuck" in goal when the others were developing their field skills.

Instead, I encourage everyone on young teams to be field players and a couple of times a season, the whole team should be given some keeper training so that each player gets to spend some time in goal as well as in the field. By exposing players to the skills of being a keeper, they will have a better appreciation of what it takes to be a keeper when they get older. The other reason to not put much emphasis on diving when working with very young keepers is the whole issue of just how much pounding a young keepers body should be exposed to before their is extensive damage.

Having explained my reluctance at spending a lot of time working with young keepers, I will now say that I do work with young keepers at camps and clinics for the simple reason that if I don't then someone else will and they might not understand that what a 10 year old keeper can do is not the same as what a 20 year old can do. Because of this, I do work with young keepers but don't treat them the same as the older keepers. Does this mean that young keepers (or field players) can't work just as hard or that older players can't have the same amount of fun? No, It simply means that you can have high expectations and demand hard work without injuring or burning out players.

The key to working with young keepers is to demand that they create good habits at an early age. Rather than expecting them to catch a regular sized ball properly, realize they have

smaller hands and because of this make sure they are using a size 4 or even a size 3 to allow them to use proper catching technique.

This is the time when you can check to see if they are keeping their eyes on the ball at all times and not shying away out of fear. Start off throwing a ball very softly at the keeper to allow him/her to get her body behind the ball and his/her hands in a proper catching position and then make sure he/she watches and pulls the ball in properly.

If there is any hesitancy in the way he/she is catching the ball, then take a step back and throw it even softer. Keep in mind that it is lot easier to develop good habits at this age then it is to try to break bad habits in the future. Go back to the first Goalkeeping Newsletter and reread the edition on the 5 P rule.

Proper practice at this age will really **prevent poor performance** in the future.

Do any of the catching and footwork drills that you normally do with older keepers and the only difference is that you might want to initially go a little slower to make sure things are being done properly.

Inevitably, young keepers will want to get right into diving (it has been my experience at camps that they want to dive right away while the older keepers are more patient and willing to wait till the proper time). There is nothing wrong with having them go into the sitting, kneeling and catchers position and maybe even collapse dives from a standing position but I usually end it there and never get around to any type of extension dives.

Do they ever get disappointed by this? Yes but I just tell them that if they master everything else then I will let them progress to extension dives (if I did this with the older keepers, I would NEVER get around to extension dives since in my opinion no one has ever mastered everything else).

After this, consider working with the keepers on distribution and crosses and then send them out and let them play. Always remember that playing soccer is fun and drills aren't so let them have fun.

Remember that the most important thing a young player who thinks they want to be a keeper can do is develop a love for the game and learn what soccer is all about. Let them have fun with the game now and when they get older you can work with them on the rest of goalkeeping.

Certainly not everyone will agree with these ideas but I believe this will allow youngsters who desire to be keepers the opportunities to learn both their position as well as the game.

To subscribe to the Goalkeeping Newsletter please go to www.finesoccer.com/subscribe.htm

Any comments, questions or suggestions should be sent to comments@finesoccer.com.
Check out the archives at <http://finesoccer.com>

Have a great day

Lawrence

Reprinted from FineSoccer.com