

GOALKEEPER DEVELOPMENT

A Guide for Coaches by Age Group

This document is intended to offer an overview to assist you with planning for the season.

When reviewing the overview, the following questions should be answered

- How many keepers should my team have?
- How much time should each keeper get during games?
- Who from my team should be attending Goalkeeper Clinics?
- What kind of training for keepers should I do in my team practices?



U9/10 GOALKEEPERS

WHO ARE MY KEEPERS?

At this age every player should be exploring every position. This includes the goalkeeper position. Your training program for the season should include preparing every player as a potential future goalkeeper.

GAME TIME

This is a slightly more difficult question than you would first think. A player that does not have the confidence to play keeper is likely going to fail in a game further damaging their confidence. If a player does not appear ready to play keeper, don't make them do it. But it should be your goal during the season to get every player ready to play keeper in a game.

While you may not use every player in goal during games, you need to use enough players that you don't start developing "dedicated" keepers. Just as every player should be exploring the goalkeeper position, every "keeper" must be playing in the field. At U9-U10 any player spending even half of their game time in goal over the course of the season is spending too much time in goal.

As best you can, make sure each your keeper gets a chance to be a part of the game. While you can't make the other team shoot, having a keeper play 10 minutes and then pulling them, does not give them a chance to get into the flow of the game. Each keeper when scheduled should play a complete half of that game.

GOALKEEPER CLINICS

With every player a potential future keeper, any U9-U10 player will benefit from the Goalkeeper Clinics. At the same time, we should be offering goalkeeper training as part of their standard team training. At the U9-U10 level, attending Goalkeeping Clinics should be purely optional. You as a coach can recommend the training to any player showing a strong interest in the position, above average confidence and aggressiveness, or simply seeks any time with a soccer ball they can get their feet on.

PRACTICE

Every player should be exploring and developing their skills as a goalkeeper. We conduct entire sessions dedicated to our defenders and entire sessions dedicated to finishing. With every player needing work as a goalkeeper, you should be conducting an entire session dedicated to the goalkeeper position.

During any other session where goalkeepers are included, ensure that all players are rotating through as goalkeeper in those practice sessions.



U11/U12 GOALKEEPERS

WHO ARE MY KEEPERS?

Players are now starting to demonstrate strengths and weaknesses that are likely to hold throughout their soccer career. These strengths and weaknesses will make them more successful at various positions. While we are still very focused on development, we are starting to play for points and table positions. We want to have players in positions during games where each player, and the team, has a chance to be successful.

This holds true for goalkeepers as well. Several players will start to show promise as a keeper and a desire to play the position. While we want to foster this interest, we do not want to label them as a dedicated keeper at the expense of playing in the field. Every player should still be spending most of their time in the field.

To achieve this, your teams' goal should be to have two (2) to three (3) keepers on your team.

GAME TIME

It is important that whenever a player is placed in goal, they are given a substantial amount of time in goal. Playing a keeper in goal for 10-15 minutes does not allow them to get involved in the flow of the game. Each keeper should play at least a full half once they are placed in goal.

With 2-3 keepers in your rotation, this may mean your keepers only play in goal every other game. Remember, this is desired as they will get plenty of field time this way.

GOALKEEPER CLINICS

While not exclusively keepers, all your keepers should see themselves as keepers and work on developing their skills at the position. Each of your 2-3 keepers should be attending the Goalkeeper Clinics when available throughout the year.

PRACTICE

Your goalkeepers will be getting instruction and repetition on all the skills needed for a strong foundation at the Goalkeeper Clinics. However, there are aspects of the game that cannot be developed away from their team. Your keepers need to learn to work with their team, and the team needs to learn to work with their keepers.

If you do not have 2-3 keepers lined up, a dedicated keeper session can help you identify additional keepers. However, there are many exercises that incorporate a goalkeeper or two into your traditional practice plans. In these instances, all your keepers should rotate in that role.



U13+ GOALKEEPERS

WHO ARE MY KEEPERS?

By U13 most teams have a dedicated keeper who predominately, or even exclusively, play in the goal. It is easy for a coach to simply slot that player as their keeper and check that off their to-do list.

Your team **MUST** have a backup keeper! You should have a player on your team that can step into the goal and play as a keeper if needed.

One of the problems for a backup keeper is that they can end up sitting on the bench waiting for the starter to get hurt or miss a game. Our goal is to not have a backup keeper that is exclusively a backup keeper, you can have two starting keepers that rotate, or have a backup keeper that is also primarily a field player.

GAME TIME

If you only have one primary keeper, this is an easy question. Play them, every game. If you have two primary keepers be careful playing each for a half of each game. The keeper needs the experience of playing from start to finish. Also, as field players, they need to develop the stamina required to play in the field for an entire game. If you are running with two keepers, rotating them from game to game is preferable to half-time keeper changes.

GOALKEEPER CLINICS

As with all players in these age groups they need to be attending clinics. That said, it is just as important that your backup is attending clinics also. With limited time in goal during practice, your backup needs the training provided at the clinics to ensure they are prepared to step in if needed.

PRACTICE

Your goalkeepers will be getting instruction and repetition on all the skills needed for a strong foundation at the Goalkeeper Clinics. However, there are aspects of the game that cannot be developed away from their team. Your keepers need to learn to work with their team, and the team needs to learn to work with their keepers.

If you do not have a backup keeper lined up, a dedicated keeper session can help you identify any additional keepers. However, there are many exercises that incorporate a goalkeeper or two into your traditional practice plans. In these instances, all your keepers should rotate in that role.

