



DAVID CLARKE'S
ULTIMATE SOCCER
COACHING SESSIONS

Coaching plans you can take straight on to the field

GREAT GOALKEEPING

Soccer Coach
WEEKLY

FOREWORD

Welcome to Ultimate Soccer Coaching Sessions: *Great Goalkeeping*

Ultimate Soccer Coaching Sessions is a new way of bringing you, the coach, a concise set of coaching plans that will help you develop specific elements of your team's play.

Each book contains 10 specially chosen training sessions that will provide you with a great platform for developing and enhancing specialist soccer skills, such as crossing, tackling, heading, wing play and more.

The book is made up of two sections – Core sessions, which gives you plans for developing fundamental skills, and Advanced sessions, which shows how you can use drills to help your players move towards an elite level. Each session is broken down into easy to follow elements, making them simple to fit into your coaching plan.

In *Great Goalkeeping*, I focus on the keeper's art – an area of soccer coaching that often gets neglected by coaches, but one that requires as much, if not more, specialist attention as any other position on the pitch.



Yours in soccer
David Clarke
Editor

CORE SESSIONS

1. **Scoop save**
2. **Drop-kicks**
3. **Goalkeeper W-catch**
4. **Palming the ball over the bar**
5. **Reaction saves**

ADVANCED SESSIONS

6. **Footwork**
7. **Recovery saves**
8. **Back passes**
9. **The goalkeeper's circuit**
10. **Dealing with high balls**



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Scoop save

Any shot that is traveling towards a goalkeeper's legs at pace is difficult to deal with. Young goalkeepers in particular have problems with these and often opt for kicking the ball away, or end up with the ball hitting, or even worse, going through their legs into the goal.

| Activity | Outcome |
|---------------------------|--|
| Warm-up 10 mins | Basic shot stopping / handling drills to gain ball familiarity |
| The Session 20-30 mins | Gaining fundamental technique for dealing with low drilled centre shots |
| Development 10 mins | Making saves more game realistic and enabling GK to incorporate footwork into the save |
| Game 10-15 mins | Fully active game play, with GKs competing against each other |
| Warm-down 10 mins | Gentle jogging and stretching, de-brief Q&A with coach |



SET-UP

- 15 x 15 yard playing area.
- One goal each end.
- Goal approx 4-6 yards wide.
- One GK works, while the other serves.



WHAT YOU GET YOUR PLAYERS TO DO

- The server must initially just pass the ball straight to the GK's feet. As the GK warms up, the server begins to shoot at the GK's legs with force.
- Encourage GK to step "into line/down the line" of the shot.
- Bend knees to form a "k" shape with legs, leaning into the direction of ball .
- Scoop ball with both hands into chest.
- Drop on top of ball to cover the ball and prevent it spilling from the hands and creating rebounds.
- After each save, the GK becomes the server for the GK at the opposite end.



DEVELOPMENT

The GK starts at one post, and on toes moves laterally from post to post. When the GK gets into the centre of the goal, the server strikes the ball at the GKs feet, who then uses the correct technique to make the save.



GAME SITUATION

Using the same playing area the GKs play a competitive game, attempting to score against each other. Each GK has 5 serves before the other GK serves. The GK who concedes the fewest goals is the winner.



THINK ABOUT

- Make sure that your goalkeepers understand that using the hands is a more effective way to save a centred shot than using the feet.
- Encourage your goalkeepers to use their feet to get into line / down the line of the ball.
- Make sure they are "on their toes" and ready throughout the session.



CALL OUT

- "On toes"
- "Into line / down the line"
- "Cover ball"

direction of shot →

1



Front view – this is the stance your GK should adopt.

2



Make sure they adjust their feet to move into line with the ball.

3



Make sure they fall on top of the ball to prevent rebounds.

Drop-kicks

Drop-kicking is a great way for a goalkeeper to distribute the ball accurately, even into the wind if the trajectory is low.

| Activity | Outcome |
|------------------------|---|
| Warm-up 10 mins | Gentle jogging, dynamic stretching |
| The Session 15 mins | Learning drop kick technique |
| Development 15 mins | Developing accuracy over a greater distance |
| Game 15 mins | Practising skill under pressure |
| Warm-down 10 mins | Gentle jogging, static stretching, de-brief Q&A |



SET-UP

- 2 players.
- 1 ball.
- Cones – 1st and 2nd cones 10m apart with further cones at 5m intervals.



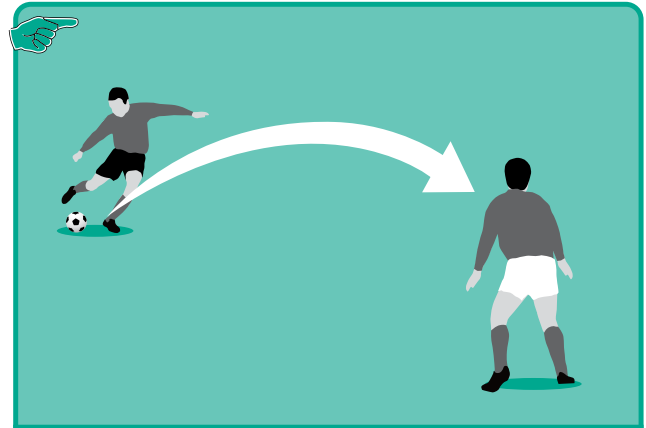
WHAT YOU GET YOUR PLAYERS TO DO

Working in pairs, the goalkeepers start approximately 10m apart and drop-kick the ball back and forth into each other's hands.

Gradually increase the distance between the goalkeepers by 5m.



serve drop kick



Begin the session by kicking back and forth over varying distances.



THINK ABOUT

- Hold the ball with both hands.
- Stand directly behind ball.
- Take a 2 or 3 step run-up.
- Aim standing foot at target.
- Allow ball to drop – don't throw it up.
- Strike the ball just after it bounces, on the half-volley.
- Follow straight through towards target.
- Land on kicking foot.

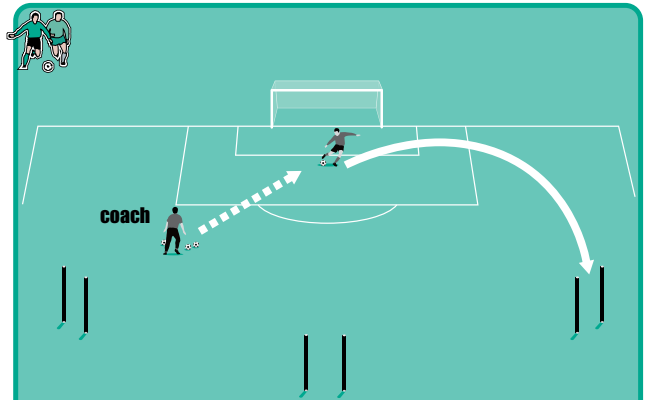


DEVELOPMENT

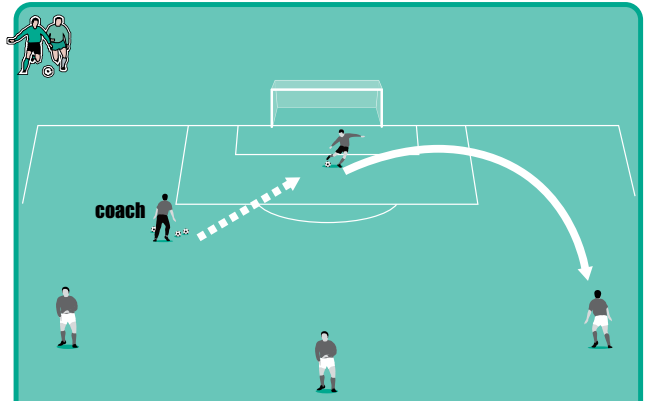
Using 3 pairs of poles 10m apart, set up 3 "targets" approx 30–40m away from goal. Set up target 1 at an angle to the left of the goal, target 2 straight ahead, and target 3 at an angle to the right of the goal.

Serve a ball high or low so the keeper has to make a save, then specify a target (1, 2 or 3) they have to kick into. Serve another ball immediately.

Replace the targets with 3 players. The keeper can choose who to kick to, but if a player has their back turned they can't receive the ball. If all three have their backs turned then the keeper must drop kick the ball as far as possible.



Setup targets to practice kicking to different parts of the pitch.



Players became active when they face the keeper introducing decision making.



CALL OUT

- "Focus on accuracy first, power can come later"
- "Take your time"
- "Keep your kicking action smooth"
- "Adjust for the wind"



GAME SITUATION

Condition a small-sided game so that when the keeper receives the ball they must attempt to pick out a teammate with a drop kick.

Goalkeeper W-catch

Catching the ball is a fundamental goalkeeping technique, and the best way to receive balls arriving at chest height or above is to set the hands in either a “W” or diamond shape.

| Activity | Outcome |
|---------------------------|--|
| Warm-up 10 mins | Jogging, static and dynamic stretches, ball-handling exercises |
| The Session 10–15 mins | Practising basic technique |
| Development 10–15 mins | Practising basic technique when receiving varied service |
| Game 10–15 mins | Making saves with the w-catch |
| Warm-down 10 mins | Gentle jogging, stretching, de-brief Q&A with coach |



SET-UP

- 1 ball per player.



WHAT YOU GET YOUR PLAYERS TO DO

Each player bounces the ball repeatedly from around chest high into the ground and catches it on the way back up.

Keeping feet planted, players now twist their torsos to the left and bounce the ball, twist back to the centre for a second bounce, then twist to the right for a third bounce. Players continue rotating back and forth.

Increase number of bounces in each position then the speed.



Make sure the hands form a “W” when catching.



THINK ABOUT

- Get in line – light on toes, move feet, body behind ball.
- Form either a “W” or diamond shape behind ball with thumbs and forefingers.
- Spread fingers.
- Watch ball into hands.
- Lean slightly forward, catch ball in front of body.
- If jumping – jump off one leg, catch ball at highest point.



DEVELOPMENT

In pairs, players stand opposite each other about 3–5 metres apart and gently throw the ball to each other. Players should vary their throws (one-handed, two-handed, throw in etc.), while the ball should be directed straight at the goalkeeper as well as slightly to the left or right. Balls should also be thrown from chest height to above head height so goalkeepers have to jump.



Practice catching at various heights and speeds in pairs.



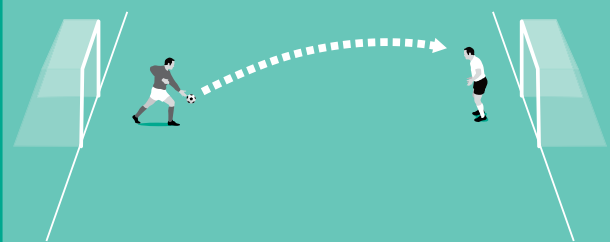
CALL OUT

- “Check your fingers are making a “W” or diamond shape after each catch.”
- “Make sure you serve the ball accurately.”
- “Use arms to absorb the pace of the ball.”



GAME SITUATION

Play 1v1 in a 10x15m grid with goals at opposite ends. Players take it in turn to attempt to score by using any goalkeeper kicking or throwing technique. If a goalkeeper saves the ball, they take their turn to score from the spot they collected it. Narrow the width of the goals using poles if each goalkeeper is spending more time practising deflecting rather than catching skills.



Goalkeepers score points by catching the ball in this game.

Palming the ball over the bar

A keeper needs a variety of techniques to cope with those times when they can't catch the ball. Palming the ball over the bar is one of those techniques, and is ideal for high crosses that could potentially drop behind the keeper and into the net.

| Activity | Outcome |
|---------------------------|--|
| Warm-up 10 mins | Basic ball-handling and footwork exercises to prepare for session. Dynamic stretches |
| The Session 10 mins | Combining palming technique with footwork |
| Development 10-15 mins | Combining palming technique with footwork |
| Game 15-20 mins | Practising skill in game situation and improving decision making |
| Warm-down 10 mins | Ball work, static stretching, de-brief Q&A with coach |



SET-UP

- One ball between three players.



WHAT YOU GET YOUR PLAYERS TO DO

Three players (A, B, C) line up about five yards apart in an "L" shape. The keeper in the middle (B) kneels facing A.

A throws the ball high above B's head, and B palms it to C. B turns to face C. C then serves the ball back to B, who palms it to A. Repeat several times then switch roles.

Repeat drill but with the keeper in the middle also standing. Servers now throw the ball high beyond the goalkeeper so he is forced to take a recovery drop step before palming the ball.



DEVELOPMENT

Using a goal, servers A and C now stand about 10 yards away from B, outside the posts and along the goal-line, so that all three players are in a line. Add more height to serve.

Have goalkeepers take several steps towards the server so they have to recover backwards before palming the ball.

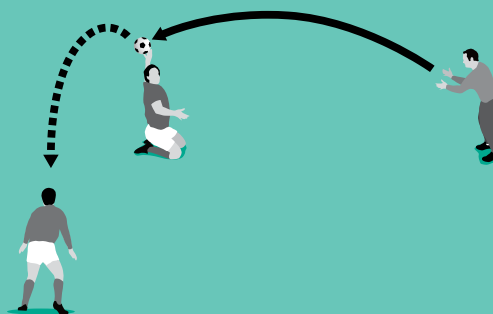


GAME SITUATION

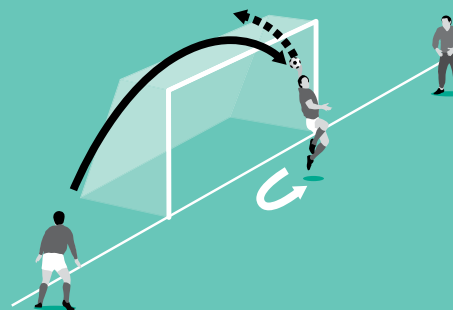
Play 4v4 with two goalkeepers in a pitch 30 x 20 yards, with two wide players, one outside each touchline, who play for the team with the ball and are conditioned to provide high crosses.

Wide players have three touches (control, dribble, cross/pass) while goalkeepers have to decide what to do – eg. catch, punch, allow defenders to head, tip the ball over the bar – for each cross.

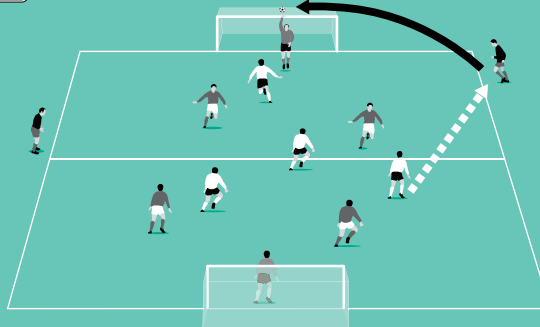
player movement ⇨ pass ⇨⇨
cross/serve ⇨⇨⇨ palm ⇨⇨⇨



A and B face each other. A serves the ball over the head of B, who palms it to C.



Practice recovery steps by moving underneath the ball.



Play a game with dedicated crossers.



THINK ABOUT

- Side-on, face server.
- Use the arm furthest from the goal or target to palm ball across body.
- Guide ball over the bar with open palm – hit the lower half to deflect it up.
- Palm slightly cupped – don't "slap" the ball.
- Footwork – e.g. use of recovery drop step.
- Quality of serve.



CALL OUT

- "The quality of the service must be good"
- "Head steady, eyes on the ball"
- "Don't slap at the ball"

Reaction saves

Increasing a goalkeeper's reaction time by even a fraction of a second will improve their chances of making vital saves. This session encourages your goalkeeper to be more mobile, turn sharply and return to his feet quickly to block a rebound.



SET-UP

- Position two balls three yards apart.



THINK ABOUT

- Goalkeepers must be in the "ready" position.
- Dive diagonally forward into the line of ball – The body should hit the floor in the following order: ankle, outside of knee, hip, side of upper torso and shoulder.
- Does your goalkeeper gather the ball using both hands?
- Do they return to their feet immediately, prepared to make the next save?



CALL OUT

- "On your toes"
- "Move your feet - don't just dive - get as close to the shot as possible"
- "Attack the ball"
- "Up! Up!"



WHAT YOU GET YOUR PLAYERS TO DO

On your command, the goalkeeper reacts as quickly as possible by diving either to the left or right, and grasps the ball.

They then quickly return to their starting position for your next instruction.



DEVELOPMENT

Using cones, make the goal wider.

The goalkeeper faces away from a server positioned five yards away.

On your call the goalkeeper must turn and react to save a ball rolled to either side.

Develop further by varying the height and speed of service.



GAME SITUATION

Play 4v4 plus two goalkeepers, with no offsides, on a 30 yards by 20 yards playing area. Place the goals on the longer touch lines, making the pitch wide.

Both sides take a maximum of three touches before shooting, see the bottom picture.

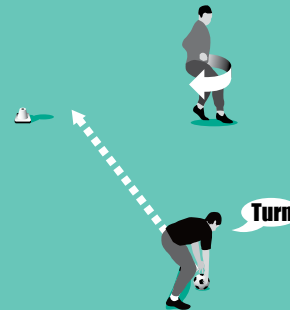
If the goalkeeper makes a save and the ball leaves the pitch, you immediately serve another ball to an attacking player so they can shoot straight at goal rather than take a corner.

| Activity | Outcome |
|------------------------|--|
| Warm-up 10 mins | Dynamic stretching, handling and reaction drills |
| The Session 10 mins | Improving reaction time |
| Development 15 mins | Combining improving reactions with saving a moving ball |
| Game 15 mins | Transferring techniques learned to a match situation |
| Warm-down 10 mins | Ball handling drills, gentle jogging and static stretching |

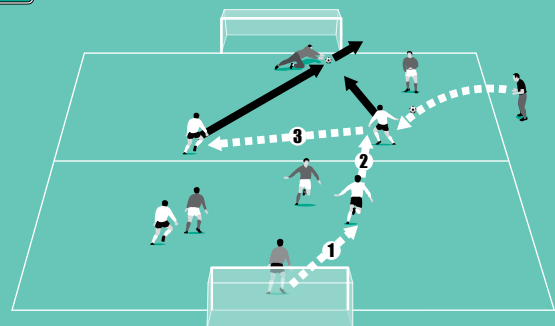
pass/serve ◀▶▶▶ shot →



The goalkeeper must react quickly to dive and grab the ball called.



On your shout, the goalkeeper turns and has to move quickly to react to the moving ball.



In a game, if the goalkeeper makes a save, immediately serve another ball for the attacking team to shoot.

Footwork

For goalkeepers, footwork is essential. Using their hands to make a save is obviously the first thought anybody has about shot stopping. However, if the goalkeeper is not in position they'll never get the chance to use their hands.



SET-UP

- 1 Goal. 6 cones 3 yards from the goal line.
- Coach stands approximately 10 yards from goal line.



THINK ABOUT

- Fast feet – cover ground as fast as possible to make save.
- Handling – priority should always be to catch the ball, but if catching is not possible, where can the ball be safely deflected to?



CALL OUT

- “On toes”
- “Fast feet”
- “Move into line with the ball”
- “Get back on your feet”



WHAT YOU GET YOUR PLAYERS TO DO

Goalkeeper must be “on toes” at starting position.

- Server calls “Go” for goalkeeper to start.
- The goalkeeper moves quickly between the cones.
- Ball is served as goalkeeper gets to last cone.
- Encourage goalkeeper to step “into line / down the line” of the ball.
- Recovery saves: if goalkeeper doesn't catch shot, they must quickly get back up and cover the rebound.



DEVELOPMENT

Progress by getting the goalkeeper to complete the footwork facing the goal, then spinning when they reach the last cone. This reduces the amount of reaction time they have.

Add a server at the other end. As soon as a save is made the keeper repeats the drill in the opposite direction.

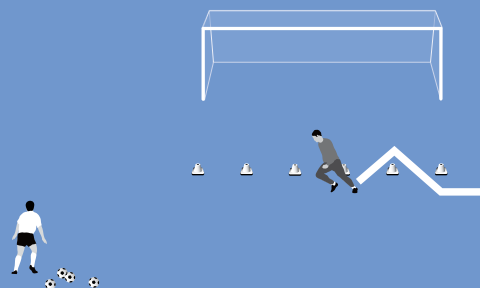


GAME SITUATION

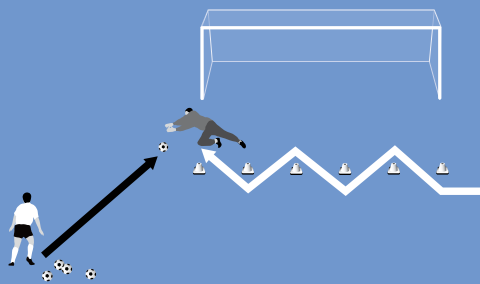
Get two goalkeepers taking turns to complete the drill. Award two points for a caught save and one for a deflected save. Give each goalkeeper the same amount of time to make as many saves as they can. This will encourage them to move between the cones and recover to their feet quicker.

| Activity | Outcome |
|---------------------------|---|
| Warm-up 10 mins | Basic handling and fast feet exercises to prepare for session |
| The Session 20–30 mins | Gaining fundamental technique for dealing with fast feet requirements and shot stopping |
| Development 10–15 mins | GK does fast feet movement facing his goal, then spins to make diving save at end of exercise |
| Game 10–15 mins | Award 2 points for caught save, 1 point for deflected save. Highest scoring goalkeeper wins |
| Warm-down 10 mins | Gentle jogging and stretching |

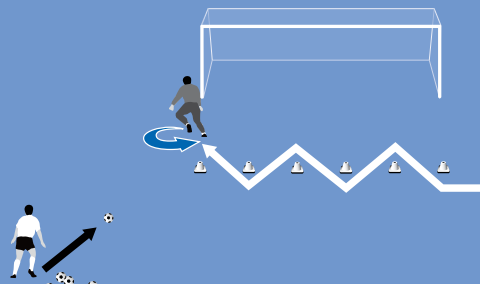
direction of run ⇨ shot →



The goalkeeper should move quickly between the cones.



Upon reach the final cone a ball is served for the keeper to save.



To increase the difficulty, the goalkeeper should complete the footwork facing goal before spinning to make a save.

Recovery saves

There are situations in games where goalkeepers are required to make several saves within a short space of time, just a few seconds. This session encourages your goalkeeper to react quickly and adjust their position to make the next save.



SET-UP

- Using 6 yard area, 1 goal and a supply of balls.



THINK ABOUT

- Fast feet – cover ground as fast as possible to get to make save.
- Get into line with the ball – getting in line with the shot makes it easier to read and reduce the size of the target.
- Handling – priority should always be to catch ball, but if not, where do you deflect the ball to?
- Reactions – get back on your feet and react to next save immediately.



CALL OUT

- “On toes”
- “Fast feet”
- “Get into line with the ball”
- “Get up quickly”



WHAT YOU GET YOUR PLAYERS TO DO

Server 1 calls and shoots low at goal. The goalkeeper reacts to the call and narrows the angle before making the save (A).

As the save is made, server 2 calls and the goalkeeper must react to deal with a high ball from the opposite side (B).

The goalkeeper returns the ball to server 2 and gets back into the centre of the goal to save a driven shot from server 3 (C).

Repeat the drill from both sides.



DEVELOPMENT

Vary the angle and pace of delivery and switch the order so that the goalkeeper must react to different scenarios.

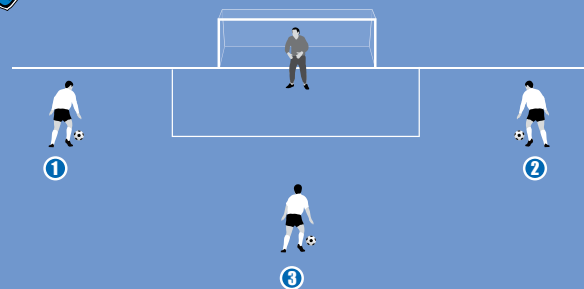


GAME SITUATION

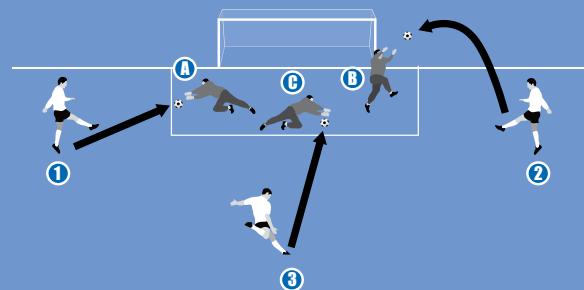
Play a small sided game with a supply of balls ready. If the goalkeeper makes a save and the ball leaves the pitch, immediately serve a ball to an attacking player so that they can shoot straight at goal rather than taking a corner.

| Activity | Outcome |
|---------------------------|---|
| Warm-up 10 mins | Basic handling and fast feet exercises to prepare for session |
| The Session 20–30 mins | Technique for dealing with fast feet, shot stopping, handling high balls and recovery saves |
| Development 10 mins | Practice from both sides. No other development as this is a physically demanding exercise |
| Game 10–15 mins | Award 2 points for caught save, 1 point for deflected save. Highest score is winning GK |
| Warm-down 5–10 mins | Gentle jogging, stretching |

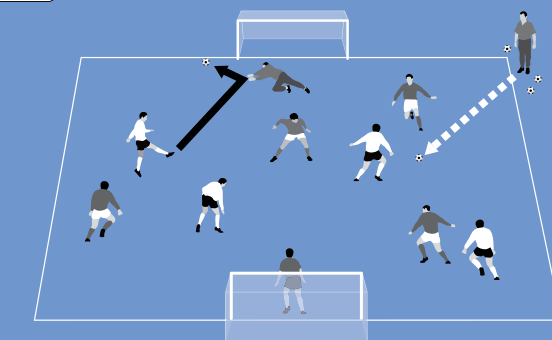
pass shot



Set up with three serving stations around the 6 yard area.



The goalkeeper must deal with 3 balls in a short space of time.



Encourage more shots by replacing corners with quick delivery from the coach.

Back passes

In modern day soccer all goalkeepers need to be comfortable when dealing with back passes.



SET-UP

- 30 x 30yd area for the session expanding to a 40 x 30yd area for the development and game.



THINK ABOUT

- Goalkeepers need to work with the outfield players often to develop their receiving and passing techniques.
- It is important that team mates make themselves available to receive a pass from the goalkeeper.
- Full backs can do this by going wide to give the goalkeeper an angle to pass to. Goalkeepers should always kick through the line of the ball not across it.



CALL OUT

- "Go to meet the ball"
- "Concentrate on your first touch"
- "Find your target"



WHAT YOU GET YOUR PLAYERS TO DO

The coach calls out the server to play first. Immediately the server passes a ball towards the goalkeeper and runs to put the keeper under pressure.

The goalkeeper must quickly take a touch and then look to pass the ball into one of the target goals.

Vary the delivery from positions A, B and C.



DEVELOPMENT

The attacker passes the ball into the goalkeeper and runs to pressure them.

The two defenders must move quickly into a position to receive a pass from the keeper.

The keeper must now play a pass to one of the defenders who try to go forward and score in one of the mini goals.



GAME SITUATION

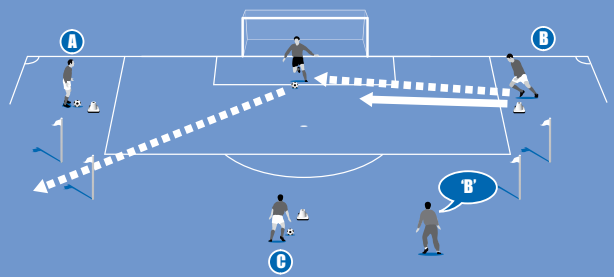
The attacking team's goalkeeper starts the practice by passing the ball to the defending team's goalkeeper.

The attacking team has two forwards who must go to pressure the three defenders and goalkeeper.

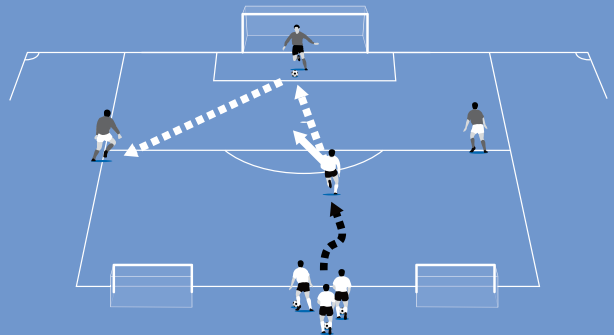
The goalkeeper and defending team try to pass out of defence and score a goal.

| Activity | Outcome |
|------------------------|--|
| Warm-up 10 mins | Improved receiving and passing skills |
| The Session 15 mins | The keeper is now more confident when receiving a back pass |
| Development 15 mins | The defenders move to support the keeper in order to play out of defence |
| Game 15 mins | The team successfully play out from defence to score a goal |
| Warm-down 5 mins | Players rotate from slowly dribbling to stretching exercises in order to warm down |

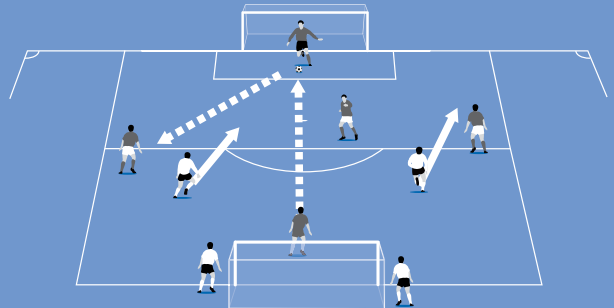
direction of run → pass □□□→
dribble ■■■→



Player B passes to the goalkeeper and pressures.



The goalkeeper must deal with the pass and then play out to one of the defenders.



The team try to play out from the goalkeeper and score a goal.

The goalkeeper's circuit

This goalkeeping circuit improves your goalkeeper's all-round handling skills. From catching under pressure to getting rid of the ball quickly and making reaction saves, this session will improve their technique and decision making.



SET-UP

- Create a 40 yards by 30 yards area with a goal at either end. Divide the area in half with a line down the middle.
- Have several balls in each half.



THINK ABOUT

- Quick distribution from a goalkeeper can lead to your team creating a chance to score on the counter attack. Therefore, having a goalkeeper who is comfortable when advancing to catch crosses is vital to the team.
- Goalkeepers who get to the edge of their box quickly after catching the ball have more space and time to pick the correct pass.



CALL OUT

- "Come and claim the ball"
- "React and get to the edge of the box"
- "Throw with power and direction"



WHAT YOU GET YOUR PLAYERS TO DO

Each end of the pitch has three goalkeepers. One goalkeeper works as the server (GK1), one as the catcher and distributor (GK2), and one as the forward and then the saving goalkeeper (GK3).

The practice starts at the same time at both ends. GK1 throws a ball for GK2 to catch under pressure from GK3.

On catching the ball, GK2 immediately runs to the edge of his box and throws the ball with power towards the opposite goal. Both GK3s must react from being a forward in order to get back into position and save the throws.

Swap roles so GK1 becomes GK2, GK2 becomes GK3 and GK3 becomes GK1.



DEVELOPMENT

Now play a normal game. However, rather than taking place kicks or throw ins, the game is re-started with balls being played into the penalty box. The goalkeepers then have plenty of opportunity to react and claim crosses before trying to distribute the ball quickly to start attacks.

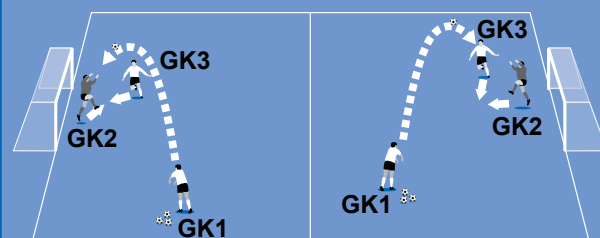


GAME SITUATION

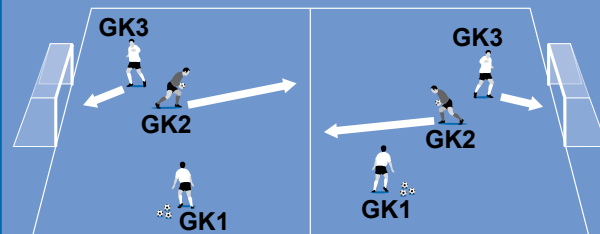
Play a normal game. In possession, consider whether your goalkeepers make good decisions on when to speed up an attack or when to hold on to the ball and slow the game down?

| Activity | Outcome |
|------------------------|--|
| Warm-up 10 mins | Players' reaction skills are tested. From The Ultimate Warm-Ups Manual, exercise 5 |
| The Session 15 mins | The goalkeeper is looking confident during all exercises |
| Development 15 mins | The goalkeepers are reacting quickly to distribute the ball |
| Game 15 mins | Normal game |
| Warm-down 5 mins | Gentle jogging and stretching exercises |

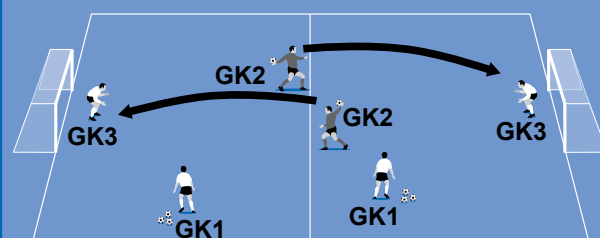
player movement ⇨ serve ⇨⇨
thrown shot →



The servers (GK1) throw the ball in the air for the goalkeepers (GK2) to catch whilst under pressure from the resting goalkeepers (GK3).



GK2 has now caught the ball and must run to the edge of their box in order to make a thrown shot at the opposite goal.



GK3 must quickly react in order to save the thrown shot.

Dealing with high balls

This session works on improving a keeper's ability to deal with a high ball over their head. This can happen when caught off their line or if a cross catches on the wind. It will also test general footwork and handling.

| Activity | Outcome |
|---------------------------|--|
| Warm-up 10 mins | Basic handling and fast feet exercises to prepare for session |
| The Session 10-15 mins | Gaining fundamental technique for dealing with a high overhead ball |
| Development 10-15 mins | Keeper must now recover from an initial save in order to reach the high ball |
| Game 10-15 mins | Normal game |
| Warm-down 10 mins | Gentle jogging and stretching |



SET-UP

- Penalty area. One cone 10-12 yards from goal.
- Server stands approximately 18 yards from goal.



WHAT YOU GET YOUR PLAYERS TO DO

Keeper must be "on toes" at starting position and throughout drill.

On the server's call the keeper runs off their line to the cone in front of goal.

When the keeper reaches the cone the server throws the ball over the keeper's head, trying to get it to drop underneath the crossbar.

The keeper runs backwards from the cone and tries to catch the ball or deflect it over the crossbar.



DEVELOPMENT

As before, the keeper starts on the server's call.

This time, when they reach the cone the keeper must save a shot from the server before recovering to save a ball served overhead.



GAME SITUATION

Play a small-sided game and encourage the keepers to find a position that enables them to sweep behind the defence whilst also being able to save any shots over their head.



THINK ABOUT

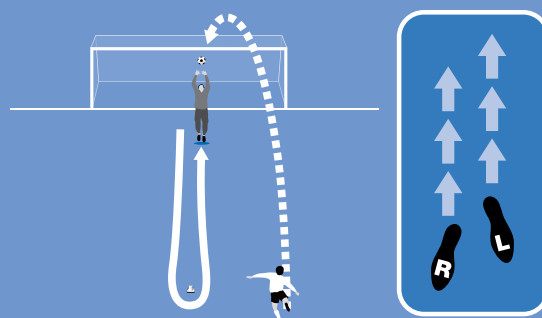
- Fast feet – short steps will enable the keeper to cover ground as fast as possible to get to make save without losing balance.
- When to catch / when to deflect ball away – sometimes it is better to deflect the ball over the crossbar rather than catching it, particularly as the keeper's momentum could take him and the ball into the back of the net!



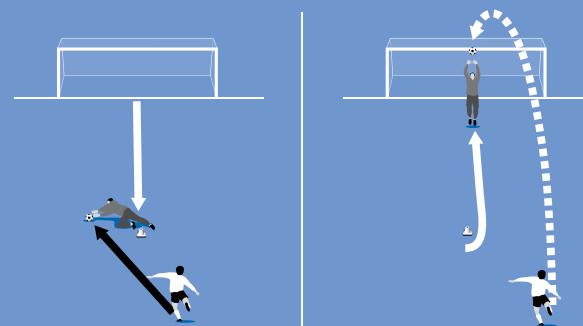
CALL OUT

- "On toes"
- "Fast feet"
- "Keep your eyes on the ball"

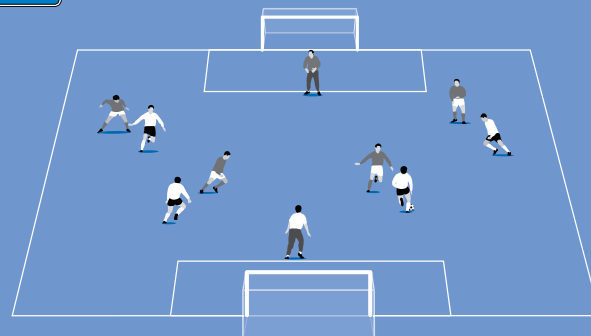
direction of run → serve □□□→
shot →



Serve a ball when the keeper reaches the cone.



Now the keeper must recover from making an initial save to reach the high ball.



Keepers should be aware of their positioning in a match to ensure that they do not get caught out by a high ball.