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The Goalkeeper and the Shooting Practice: Tips For Success

Recently, A goalkeeper I'm fond of was telling me about a training session that he was involved in that featured a shooting exercise that went on for what seemed like "forever." He said, "For the first few shots, I felt like I was doing all right. I made a couple of saves; there was a miss or two and a couple of good goals. I wanted to come out and the coach said, 'stay in, it's good for you.' "Clearly the level of performance for the goalkeeper did not get any better.

American coaches are constantly developing creative ways to bring positive shooting practices into their training sessions. As a burgeoning soccer nation, we realize the importance of quality shooting practices as one of the key benchmarks in our future success as a soccer playing nation. The days of the "10 players in a line" have come to an end (we hope.) So, as coaches come up with ways to involve players in quality technical and tactical situations (drills, exercises, competitions and games) the "other side of the coin" is how to make the goalkeeper experience some of the same "quality of life" moments as the field player gets.

Shooting Practice Keys

- The goalkeeper should have a proper warm-up that ends with activities that will be similar to the work he / she will be doing in the shooting portion of the practice.
- The goalkeeper should have access to water as he / she works--much of the work a goalkeeper does is anaerobic and water often helps in the physical recover and readiness of the goalkeeper between sets.
- The goalkeeper should be active for a short time period: 20-60 seconds (a little more for crosses). The higher the amount the energy that the goalkeeper needs to expend, the shorter the amount of time that the 'keeper should be in goal.
- The goalkeeper needs to be given clear direction as to "how" a ball is to be played in the shooting practice. In some exercises / drills / games, the ball is simply thrown into the back of the net, thrown back into a "pile" of soccer balls etc... The key point here is that the ball should be distributed in a way that is realistic to the game. Coaches would agree that throwing the ball into the back of the net is something they would not want to see in a game, so why do it in practice?
- The goalkeeper(s) being used in an exercise should be allowed to start in the right position for any given situation. When the purpose is to get a high number of repetitions for a shooter in a short amount of time, it doesn't make sense to

have goalkeepers presenting a picture that is not realistic to what would be seen in the game.

- The goalkeeper should be given the chance to finish a shooting practice as a player in the real game. Finishing up a practice where there has been a lot of pressure on the goalkeeper with some "free play" is a great way to "test" what the shooter and the goalkeeper can do.
- The goalkeeper should finish the practice with a few easy "technical" repetitions: some easy catching or diving will do. If the session has been particularly stressful (maybe there has been some technical breakdowns along the way) this tip is a good way to rebuild for the next day out.

The United States has developed many fine youth and senior level goalkeepers over the past few years. As our country moves from Project 2010 and Project Gold (programs that began a national movement to win the 2010 men's World Cup and continue to win women's World Cup and Olympic competitions) to new challenges here in the US and abroad, it is vital that we continue to develop players that can score goals as well as keep them out. Hopefully these tips can be useful to both ends of the national soccer spectrum.