

Goalkeeper Fitness

Training for improved agility and body control

Often times at practices goalkeeper fitness is clearly not top priority. A good goalkeeper needs to be quick and agile as well as have good body control and footwork. Yet at practices, shooting drills and scrimmages are usually where these aspects are expected to be improved upon. Although goalkeepers are typically hard working, driven players and tend to come up with drills on their own, they sometimes lack the direction to optimize their practice time and improvement.

A number of different articles have been written on various aspects of goalkeeper fitness and I probably will in the future, but for this article I will focus on agility and kinesthetic awareness. Agility is basically your ability to be quick on your feet, to move around obstacles and to change direction rapidly. As a goalkeeper, one can easily see the importance of having good agility. Kinesthetic awareness, also referred to as spatial awareness, is the ability to sense where one's body is in space. Kinesthetic awareness is what gives us the ability to know exactly where our hands are in relation to the ball when we dive to make a save or to know when our feet or bodies are going to hit the ground when coming down from a jump. Agility and kinesthetic awareness are two very important factors in having good body control and balance and can both be drastically improved through training.

First we will discuss how to train for improved kinesthetic awareness. By practicing to get to the feet and into a "ready" position from various body positions we can improve this. First, try getting to your feet and into the ready position from your knees without

using your hands. Next, try getting into the ready position quickly from all fours (hands and knees). Now try getting into the ready position from a push up position. Finally, try getting into the ready position without using your hands from your back and then from side lying one the right then the left. To take these drills to the next level work with a partner. Have the partner bounce the ball on the ground while you try to get up, catch and protect the ball as quickly as possible. Get the ball on the first bounce and try it starting from each of the positions described previously. Challenge yourself by bouncing the ball lower and lower. The lower the bounce, the quicker you will have to be to succeed in getting the ball on the first bounce. Try each of these positions 5 times each for 1-3 sets with little or no rest and you will quickly see how this can also greatly improve your goalkeeper specific fitness level.

Now to improve your agility. For this drill you will need 4 -6 cones. Place the cones across the 6 yard line with each cone 2 feet apart. Try stepping back and forth over the cones as quickly as possible while facing forward in the ready position. Next try weaving in and out of the cones as quickly as possible, running forward and backward, but always facing forward in the ready position. After this, try bounding over the cones to the right and two the left with two feet. Remember to always face forward so you can see the field and be ready to make a save. Now place the cones 2 feet apart starting at the goal line and moving out towards the penalty stripe. Perform each of the previously mentioned drills with the cones in this sequence. To increase the specificity of the drill, have a partner take a shot on goal just as the keeper is passing the last goal. By doing each of these drills 5 times each for 1-3 sets with minimal rest you will also see gains in your goalkeeper specific fitness.