



U.S. WNT Goalkeeping Network

This edition is devoted to one of the most difficult areas of goalkeeping: The breakaway. While the breakaway can be taught with little difficulty in a technical environment, it can be incredibly difficult to master in match situations as the goalkeeper has to recognize the situation and time her approach to the ball based upon the many variables that are occurring. These variables include: pressure on the ball, the touch of the opposing player, the angle of approach of the opposing player and the pace of the ball, if it is a through ball behind the defense. The following information comes to us from **Brian Borde**, Region II's Girls Goalkeeping Coach.

The Breakaway

The breakaway can be the most intimidating game situation for a goalkeeper. There are fears of injury, failure, not to mention embarrassment associated with this situation. Most young goalkeepers prepare for dealing with breakaways with a stationary player dribbling in with a ball on cue. This is the least realistic of the conditions that create a breakaway. While this may help with the technique of going down for the ball, it does little for the tactical end of reading and anticipating where or when the breakaway may evolve. The goalkeeper should be put into a simulated game situation where there are players playing the game of soccer in front of them. From this game the coach should set restrictions of touches, passes, players, or channels that elicit a breakaway opportunity. This then forces the goalkeeper to pay attention to the visual cues that can result from these situations. Here are a few examples of both lead up and training ideas.

1. Goalkeeper starts from the goal line and simulates the approach and collapse to the ball and feet of a player. Options: just a ball, player and a ball, ball at coach's feet. The Coach can evaluate keeper's head position, hands, body shape, and confidence.
2. Coach serves the ball in to a player 20 yards from goal who receives and attacks the oncoming goalkeeper. Options: attacker has pressuring or recovering defender, balls are played between the goalkeeper and the attacker, vary serves and angles of approach to goal. Coach can evaluate timing, footwork, foot-speed, confidence, composure, and communication.
3. 5 v 5 game is played outside the 18 yd box up field from the goal in a 20 x 30 yd grid. Options: restrictions on touches or passes before a breakaway can occur, designate defensive restrictions, and use a restraining line to manipulate the last

point of resistance. The Coach can evaluate keeper's timing, starting position, angle of approach, commitment, confidence, communication, and ability to read the game.

These are a few simple ideas to allow the coach to make some comments. It is important that the coach sees the problem and challenges from the goalkeeper's perspective, therefore it is necessary that the coach stand either behind or next to the goal.

Visual cues: a. Keeper should read the thru pass, the player receiving a pass unmarked, or a player receiving a pass unchallenged with a path to goal. b. Keeper should look at the switch field opportunities for the attackers. c. Keepers should look for balls played over the top to attackers that are even with defenders. d. Players should look at defenders that are 1 v 1 with attackers without defensive support or cover.

Coaching points:

- a. Keepers should stay on their feet for as long as they can.
- b. Keepers should make themselves as large a barrier as possible when they commit to go down to attacker's feet.
- c. When collapsing, the keeper's head should be angled to the near post as the hands go to the ball...if possible. This allows the feet to take care of the far post.
- d. The ball is out of control right after it is touched by the attacker, therefore the keeper should use this timed moment this as the cue for collapsing at feet.

Practice and confidence can go a long way to being successful with this difficult skill. Goalkeepers and coaches should simulate these situations with the team training the keeper as often as possible.

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