

Building a stronger foundation

Lessons from a successful talent promotion program, part 10: Stopping and controlling ground balls in front of the goal

by Kathrin Peter, German association coach



All photos in this article: Axel Heimken

“Ground ball to the far corner!” Goalkeepers always seem to have trouble with this type of shot, so if you make it a regular part of your training program, both your keepers and your shooters will benefit.

The field players train the keepers, and the keepers train the field players—that’s the basic principle behind Kathrin Peter’s selection of exercises for this article. Together, those

exercises make up a systematic progression that teaches players how to stop and control ground balls in front of the goal. Comprehensive, realistic technique training and goalkeeper-specific positional play are the main features of these activities. You can do them all in one session, or pick and choose among them—the important thing is always to focus on one topic at a time.

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WARM-UP

Coordination



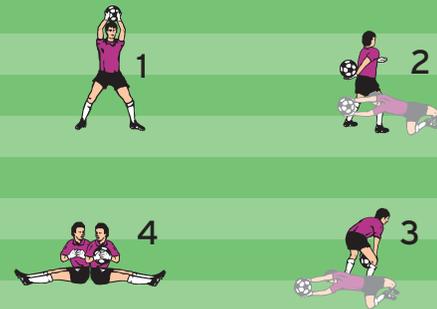
Setup and sequence

- Players (including keepers) line up in equal-sized groups at the starting cones. They run the obstacle courses in various ways: forwards, backwards, sideways (crossover step), taking multiple steps between objects, etc.
- After a few rounds, the field players start carrying balls and shooting at the keepers on the goal lines.

Tips and variations

- Players should run on the balls of their feet.
- They can also circle the ball around their hips while running.
- Options for keepers: catch the ball, pass or punch back, etc.

Solo ball training for keepers



Setup and sequence

Players do various ball-handling exercises:

- 1 Hold the ball overhead, bounce it between your legs from behind and catch it in front of you.
- 2 Drop the ball behind you, spin around and catch it on the first bounce; then switch arms and spin the other way.
- 3 Roll the ball between your feet, spin around and dive for it.
- 4 Partners sit back to back with legs extended, turning from side to side as they pass the ball back and forth.
- 5 Each partner throws one ball up on one side and catches another on the other (not shown above).

Training step by step: Stopping and controlling ground balls

1



While kneeling

- Scoop up the ball, fall on it and trap it against your body.

2



From basic position

- Take a diagonal step forward and scoop up the ball, keeping one leg behind it.

3



Stopping hard shots

- Fall on the ball and trap it against your body.

4

a



b



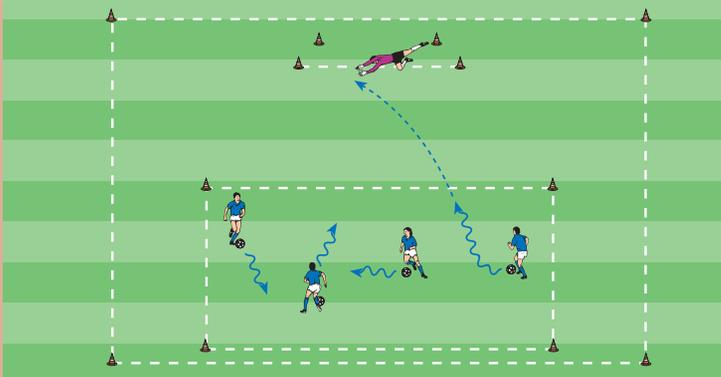
c



Complex sequence with positional training

- Move out from the goal as the shooter dribbles toward it.
- Get into the basic position (cones can be helpful for orientation) and stop the shot!

Keeper and dribblers 1



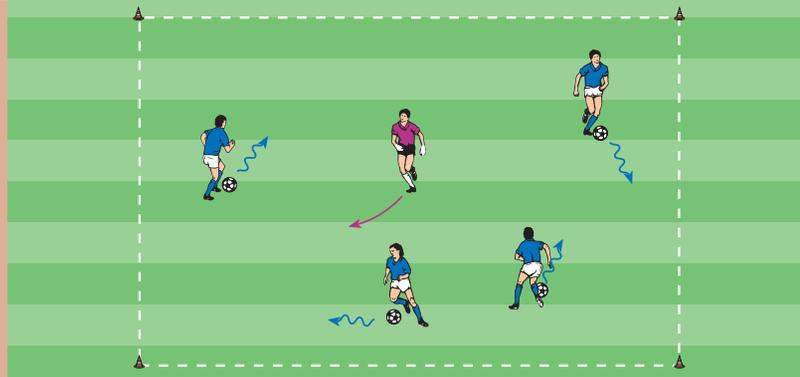
Setup and sequence

- For each goalkeeper, set up two starting cones (see diagram) and mark out one goal and one dribbling box.
- The keeper sits, kneels or stands (see sequences below) at the starting cones behind the goal.
- On command, players dribble forward and shoot on the ground; the keeper comes up to stop the ball on the goal line.

Tips and variations

- The goalkeeper can also receive and control the ball and play it back into the shooter's path.
- Shooters should vary the force and angle of their shots.

Keeper and dribblers 2



Setup and sequence

- Now the goalkeepers join the field players in the boxes.
- Using goalkeeper techniques, they try to take the dribblers' balls away and throw or kick them out of the box.
- Any player who loses her ball has to go get it and do two push-ups before coming back into the box.
- If the keeper manages to get all the balls out of the box at once, every field player has to do 10 push-ups.

Variations

- All the keepers and all the field players are in one field.
- The keepers compete against each other.

Training step by step: Diving to the side



While seated

- Bring your hands forward, with one hand behind the ball and the other above it.

While kneeling

- Push off from one knee, rolling diagonally forward over your thigh, hip and side.

From basic position

- Keeping your center of gravity high, push off and roll over your shin.



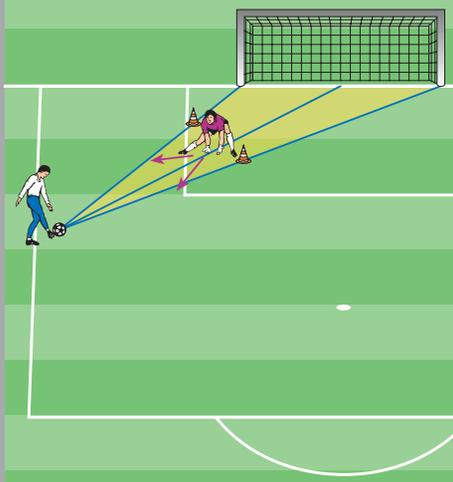
Complex sequence with positional training

- Move out from the goal as the shooter dribbles toward it.
- Get into the basic position (cones can be helpful for orientation) and stop the shot!

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MAIN ACTIVITY

The virtual goal



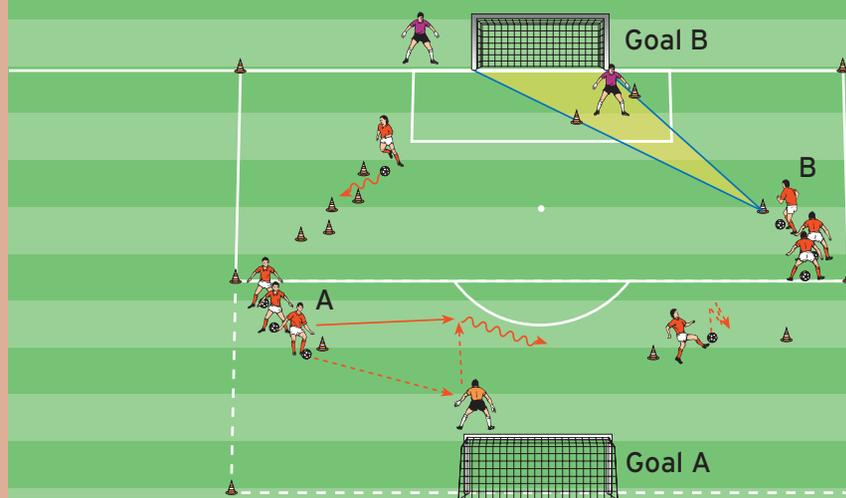
Proper positional play is one of the hardest parts of goalkeeper training. However, there is a very simple teaching tool you can use: a long elastic cord attached to both posts to represent the trajectory of an instep kick played without spin. To succeed with this type of shot, shooters have to aim the ball within the triangle marked by the cord; otherwise the shot will go out or hit the post.

This means that keepers can confidently focus on defending this “virtual goal,” moving up toward the shooter until they’re within arm’s length of any ball inside the triangle. However, to guard against chip shots, they must also stay within three steps of the goal line at all times.

To shrink the target area even further, keepers should always position themselves to dive diagonally for the ball. Bending balls (played with the inside or outside of the foot) will always be a wild card, but ideally, any attacker within range of the goal will be under too much pressure from defenders to set one up.

As an alternative to the elastic cord, you can also mark the field with cones (see diagram).

Positional play and stopping ground balls



Setup

- Mark out a field twice the size of the penalty box, with two goals with goalkeepers.
- Field players line up at the starting cones as shown.
- Set up two cones in front of Goal B (as shown in the Info box at left) to help the keeper find the right position.

Sequence

- Player A passes to her own goalkeeper, who receives the ball as instructed (see options below) and then passes it back into A’s path.
- Now A takes the ball across the field and lines up at Cone B.
- Meanwhile, B shoots at Goal B and then lines up at Cone A.

Tips

- Assign players various techniques for taking the ball to Cone B: juggling, dribbling through a slalom course, etc.
- Work with keepers on their positional play (see Info box).
- Make sure keepers are diving properly to stop and trap the ball.
- Rotate keepers and sides!

Variation

- Goalkeeper A throws high balls to help field players work on controlling balls in the air.

Options for Goalkeeper A

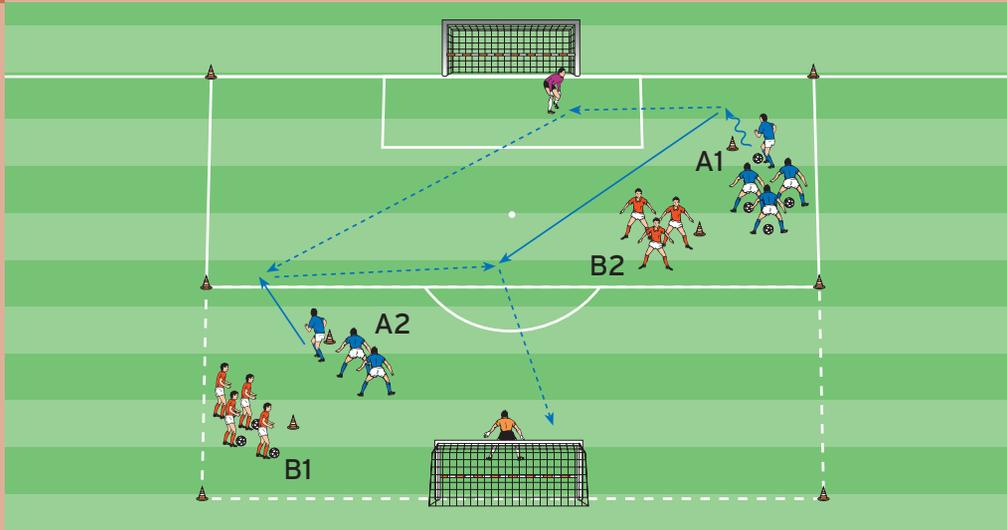
- Receive and control the ball (practice using both feet!) and then pass back into A’s path.
- Pick up the ball and roll it into A’s path.
- On hard shots aimed at or beside you, trap the ball and then roll it back into A’s path.

Options for Goalkeeper B

Goalkeeper B follows the training sequences described on pages 8–9:

- From a seated position beside the outside cone, dive in front of the inside cone to stop the ball and roll it back into the shooter’s path.
- Same as above, except start out kneeling, or in the basic position (shooters alternate between right and left sides).
- Same as above, except start out in the goal, come out and take the basic position between the cones. The shooter dribbles a short distance forward and then shoots on either side.

Stopping ground balls and launching counterattacks



Setup

- Field is the same as in the previous exercise.
- Strips of tape across the goals mark the maximum height for shots.

Sequence

- Player A1 dribbles a short distance forward and then shoots on the ground.
- The goalkeeper stops the shot and rolls the ball to A2, who runs forward to receive it.
- Meanwhile, A1 runs to the middle of the field, where a direct pass from A2 sets her up for her second shot.
- Players rotate with their teammates.
- After A1 and A2 finish, Team B starts from the other side.

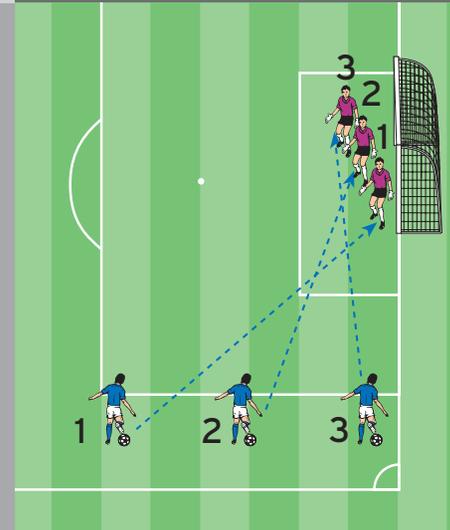
Tips

- Make sure everyone practices on both sides!
- Set up cones to help the keepers orient themselves if necessary.
- If you only have one goalkeeper at practice, you can replace the second goal with a goal line for players to dribble or pass across. This works for any two-goal exercise.

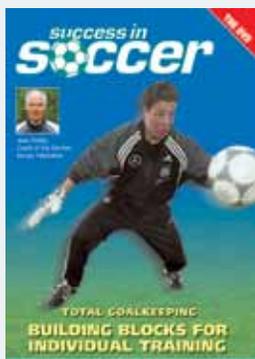
Variations

- Goalkeepers throw high balls for field players to receive and control.
- Teams compete against each other.

Positioning on crosses



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, your knees slightly bent and your weight on the balls of your feet. Stay loose!
- Stick your elbows out and keep your eye on the ball.
- Your position should vary depending on where the cross is coming from (see diagram):
 - Position 1: The keeper stands one yard from the near post, almost on the goal line, and covers the near corner.
 - Position 2: The keeper drops back to the middle of the goal and steps out from the line.
 - Position 3: The keeper stands farther back and farther away from the goal line.



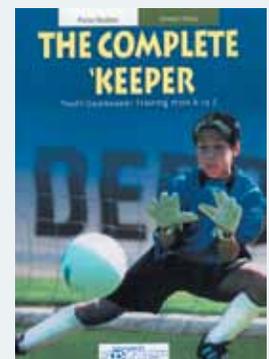
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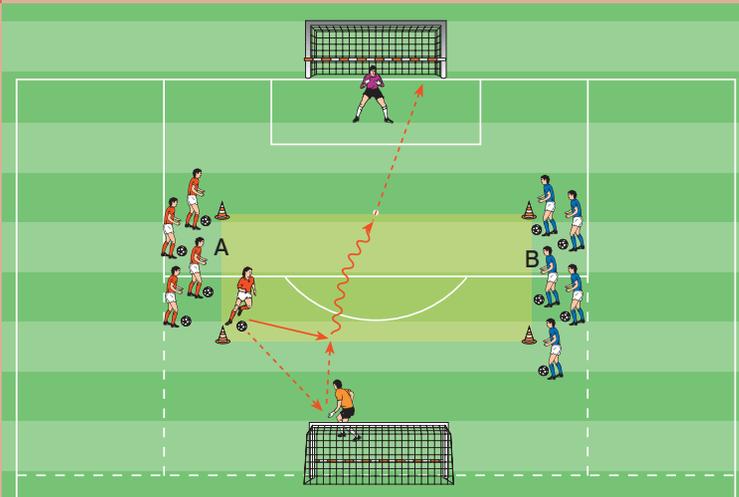
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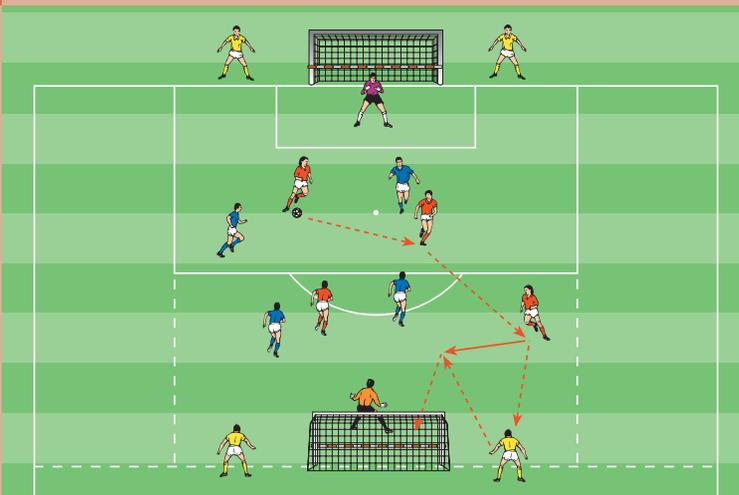
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MAIN ACTIVITY

Shooting contest

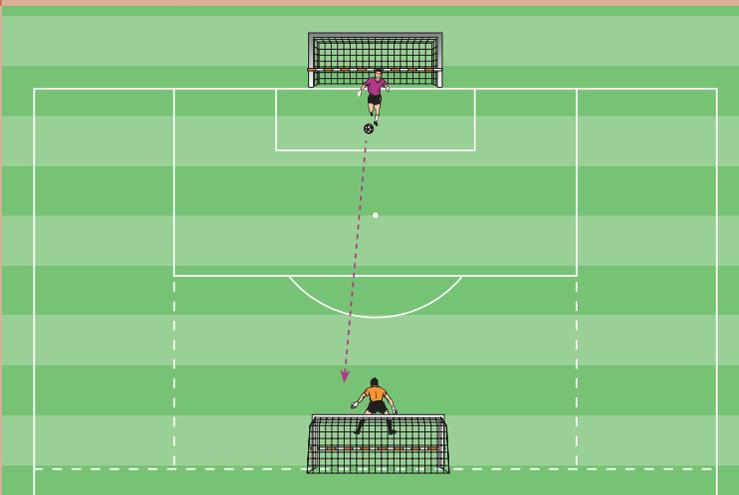


4 + 2 v. 4 + 2



CONCLUSION

Goalkeeper duel



Setup and sequence

- Mark out a field twice the size of the penalty box, with a 10 x 20-yard shooting zone in the middle and two goals with goalkeepers.
- Strips of tape across the goals mark the maximum height for shots.
- Two teams face each other across the shooting zone as shown.
- Player A passes to her own goalkeeper. The keeper passes back to A, who dribbles into the shooting zone and finishes with a ground ball. Then Player B takes a turn.
- Which team is the first to score 10 goals?

Variations

- Field players play 1 v. 1 against goalkeepers to score.
- Goalkeepers have to execute another move before passing back.
- Defenders run onto the field after the first pass.

Setup and sequence

- Mark out a field twice the size of the penalty box, with two goals with goalkeepers.
- Strips of tape across the goals mark the maximum height for shots.
- Divide players into three teams of four. Two teams take the field; the third team's players take positions flanking the goals.
- The attacking team tries to score with the help of the two players by its opponents' goal.

Tips and variations

- Teams should switch roles after four minutes.
- You can limit the outside players' touches.
- If a player scores, her team can also keep the ball and build a new attack (either on the same goal or on the other one).

Setup and sequence

- Field is the same as above.
- The goalkeepers take turns shooting ground balls at each other's goals. Each keeper gets two touches per round (one to stop and one to shoot). If a shot bounces back across the centerline, the shooter gets to shoot again.
- Which keeper is the first to score 10 goals?

Tips and variations

- Keep plenty of extra balls on hand.
- This is a very intense exercise, so limit playing time.
- Adjust the distance between goals to fit players' ability level.
- Try using lightweight balls.
- The field players do a cool-down run during this activity.