Is There a *Secret* to becoming a good goalkeeper?

This is a question that I have been asked many times over the years, and my answer is;

It seems not, Some goalkeepers say that they have to work hard to become successful, others have great belief in themselves and their ability, and others will say that confidence is their thing.

We as people are all different, with differing personalities; different likes and dislikes, what motivates one won't affect others. Below are the attributes that I believe anyone playing in goal requires to become a good goalkeeper.

**Confidence...............**

*Confidence* is vital for a keeper, they need to be positive in every thing they do, they must show confidence in their ability to deal with challenging situations. If a keeper is confident they will take pressure of their teammates and this confidence will spread throughout the team.

**Passion and Desire.............**

These two elements are great for a keeper to have. You need a passion to play the position, and hate letting in goals. You also need a Desire to be the best you can possibly be, and to always be looking to improve your game.
Self - Belief.................

Always believe in yourself and in your ability, and always believe that you can and will improve.

Commitment..............

A keeper must be committed to playing the position. You must strive to be the best you can be, you must work hard in training as well as in games. You must motivate yourself when things are not going well.

Mental Strength.............

The goalkeeper needs to have mental strength to overcome mistakes they may make. They must have the ability to remain focused and not let anything affect their performance.

Courage..................

A goalkeeper must have physical courage to be able to handle situations such as, one-on-one's, dealing with crosse's and diving at feet, without worrying about injury. Courage is something that will grow as the keeper grows.
Goalkeeping Basics

The goalkeeper is the most specialised position on the pitch but they are often neglected in training sessions, most keepers just train with the outfield players and receive no specialist coaching at all.

It is vital for goalkeepers to work to improve their skills, reactions and techniques; they need to be competent in all aspects of goalkeeping to enable them to play at their best.

Here are some guidelines to help your goalkeepers.

The Set [or Ready] Position

1; The feet should be about shoulder width apart.

2; The goalkeepers weight should be on the balls of his/her feet, with the bodyweight forward.

3; The knees are to be slightly flexed, with the hips square to the ball.

4; The head should be forward and fixed, with the nose in front of the toe's.
5; **Elbows** need to be tucked in, with the chest facing the ball.

6; **Hands** are to be in front of the body and approximately a ball width apart.

Please note that this is a general guide, the goalkeeper will hold the hands in a position that he/she feels comfortable with. If their handling is good and consistent the hand position should not be a problem.

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**The "W" Technique**

This catching technique is used for balls at **chest and head height**, and for catching **crosses and corners**.

From the set position the **hands** need to be brought up into line of the trajectory of the ball, the **chest** should be square to the ball.

The hands should be placed with the **palms** facing the ball, the **fingers** spread and the **thumbs** forming the W shape [as in the picture]

Slightly flex the **elbow** to absorb the shock when the ball makes contact with the hands.

Keep the **eyes** looking at the back of the ball and use the **soft hands - strong wrists** technique.

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**The "M" Technique**

This catching technique is used when the ball is played below **waist height**.
From the set position, the **hands** lower infront of the body, with the **elbows** tucked into the side.

The hands should be placed with the **palms** facing up and the **fingers** spread. The little fingers of each hand come together to form the **M shape**.

Keep the **eyes** looking at the ball and use the **soft hands - strong wrists** technique. As the ball hits the hands, scoop the ball into the body.

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**The Scoop Technique**

Shots traveling towards the goalkeepers legs with pace are difficult to deal with, young keepers often end up kicking the ball away, the scoop technique is a reliable way to save this type of shot.

The goalkeeper has to **step into line** and down the line of the shot, Collapsing at the **knees** into the **K position**.

The **palms** of the hand should be open to face the ball with the **fingers** spread, leading with the hands, which will bring the **bodyweight** forward.

Keep the **head** still and the **eyes** focused on the ball, bringing the **shoulders** forward over the hands.

The **elbows** have to be slightly flexed to cushion the impact of the ball, **soft hands - strong wrists** are needed with this technique.

As the **hands** make contact with the ball, scoop the ball into the **chest** while bringing the bodyweight forward to complete the save.
It is often said that you have to be mad to be a goalkeeper! The goalkeeper is arguably the most important position on the pitch; he can win a game with one brilliant save or become the villain with a mistimed dive. To be a good goalkeeper you require confidence, agility, speed, athleticism, bravery and good communication skills.

Finally, as a goalkeeper you will make some great saves, but remember you are only human and you will at some point make a mistake, all keepers do, but it’s how you recover from that mistake, be mentally strong, be positive, believe in yourself and your ability and work hard to improve your game.

Communication

Communication is important for every player on the pitch, but for a goalkeeper it is vital. Communication between the goalkeeper and defenders is the key to making the defence function as a unit.

The goalkeeper has the best view of what is happening on the pitch, and they have to be able to communicate with their team mates to organise and marshall the defence around them. The goalkeeper must know when to call - what to call - and how to call.
**WHEN** to call: This should be as early as possible to give defenders time to react.

**WHAT** to call: Be specific and to the point.

**HOW** to call: Loud, clear and calm.

## Diving Saves

The diving save is the most spectacular save a goalkeeper can make, and yes, it is an important part of goalkeeping - but diving should only be done as a last resort, good footwork and positioning should eliminate the need to dive too often.

Always use good **footwork** to get into position to dive, use small shuffle steps, or even a crossover step to get into range to complete the save.

Move forward at an **angle** into the dive. The first step into the dive should be **sideways** and **forward** towards the ball at roughly a 30 degree angle. This gives the keeper the proper angle to deflect the ball away from goal.

Stay **square** to the ball while diving. Why? because this will give the keeper the best catching position, it will get the largest part of the **body** behind the ball and the keeper will land on their hip and side, which is the **safest** landing position.
The Collapsing Save

This technique is used when the ball is played down the side of the body and close to the feet, when the goalkeeper doesn't have time to move into the line of the ball.

The goalkeeper has to collapse at the knees and he/she must ensure that the nearest or leading hand goes behind the line of the ball.

The other hand now follows and the bodyweight comes forward ready for contact with the ball. The leading hand goes behind the ball, with the other hand on the top, the pitch is now a third contact point to enable the ball to be secured.

The keepers bodyweight will follow behind the ball to form a second barrier. Contact with the ball is made in front of the body, with the elbows tucked in.

The head will be behind the ball with the eyes fixed on the back of the ball, and the leg is brought up to offer protection from oncoming forwards.

Soft Hands - Strong Wrists are required for this save.

The Low Diving Save

This Technique is used when the ball is struck wide of the keeper, and he/she doesn't have time to move into line of the ball.
Use good **footwork** to get into position to make the save. Step towards the line of the ball with the **nearest foot**, this step will bring the **bodyweight** slightly forward in readiness to make the save.

The **leg** should be slightly flexed and the **bodyweight** transferred onto it, this will give the keeper the power to dive to the side while bringing the bodyweight forward.

The **hands** should be about a ball width apart, with the **fingers** spread. Move the hands together to the line of the ball, as the ball arrives along the ground the **leading hand** has to go behind the ball with the other hand securing it on the top. Ensure the **elbows** are tucked in to secure the ball safely and to avoid injury.

The **head** will follow behind the hands with the **eyes** fixed onto the ball. Should you have to deflect the ball away then you need to use **Strong Wrists and Big Palms**

**The High Diving Save**

This technique is used when the ball is struck high and wide of the keeper, and he/she doesn’t have time to move into the line of the ball.

Once again the keeper needs to use good
footwork to get into position to make the save. Step towards the line of the ball with the nearest foot, by doing this it brings the bodyweight forward onto the ball of the foot ready to make the save.

The leg should be flexed, with the bodyweight on it. The keeper will now be able to generate the power to dive high and to the side.

The hands should be about a ball width apart, with the fingers spread in the W shape and the elbows should be flexed, with the eyes focused on the ball. The ball is secured as the body hits the floor.

If the goalkeeper cannot catch the ball, it should be parried or deflected to a safe area using Strong Wrists and Big Palms.
Dealing with Crosses

A goalkeeper being able to deal with crosses into the penalty area is crucial, if he/she is good on crosses this will take pressure off the defence, and spread confidence throughout the team.

The starting position, footwork, timing and catching are all important components in dealing with a cross into the box.

We must not forget that the keeper also has to decide should they go for the ball or should they stay, this must be communicated to the defenders. If the keeper is coming for the ball he must shout out loud **KEEPER** - or if they decide not to come, they must shout **AWAY**. The keeper has to let the defenders know what is going to happen in a loud and confident way.

The start position of the goalkeeper depends where the ball is coming from, is it from a corner to the near post? - is it from a cross to the far post? - is it from a deep free kick? A general rule is that if the ball is out wide, the keeper should be positioned near the back post.

Of course the goalkeepers physical build also comes into the equation, if they are big and tall, they will have a slightly different position to one who is of smaller build. The keeper has to decide where the best starting position is for them.

The keeper must have an **open body position**, this will allow him/her to move in any direction to the ball, they should be
continually adjusting their position in line with the position of the ball.

**Timing** of the run to the ball has to be practiced, going to early will mean that the keeper gets under the ball and can't make a catch. While moving to late means that he/she won't get near the ball because other players will get there first.

**Short steps** are more effective than long strides when getting into position to jump. When jumping for the ball, the keeper should take off on the leg nearest the goal line, and drive the other leg up, this will help give lift and to **protect** the body from oncoming attackers.

The catch is made at the front of the **head**, and the ball should be caught at the highest point of the jump, with both **hands** behind the ball and **eyes** fixed on the ball. Once the ball is secured in the hands the keeper can bring the ball into the body.

All photos by Claire Perry, clairepez@aol.com

**Punching & Parrying**

One of the decisions a goalkeeper has to make is whether to catch, punch or parry the ball. There will be times when a keeper cannot catch the ball and they will have to deflect it away from goal.

**Punching the Ball**

If a goalkeeper cannot safely catch a high cross, the ball must be punched away to safety.

**WHEN IN DOUBT - PUNCH IT OUT**

There are three key elements to remember when punching the ball.

1 - **WIDTH**, get the ball away from the goal area out towards the touchline.
2 - **HEIGHT**, hit the ball as high as possible over the attacking players.

3 - **DISTANCE**, get the ball as far away from goal as possible.

It is important to use the correct hand position when punching the ball, for control and to avoid any hand injury.

The **hands** should form a **fist**, with the **fingers** forming a flat surface, the **thumbs** should be tucked in below the fingers. The flat surface of the fingers allow more control of the ball.

To punch the ball back into the direction it has come from, use the **two handed** punch. This begins with the two **fists** placed together which will form the largest possible surface, The **hands** should start close to the **body** with the **elbows** at the side, the **arms** and hands then explode through the bottom of the ball in an upward motion, which will drive the ball wide, high and far from the goal.

To punch the ball in the same direction that it is traveling in, use the **one handed** punch. As **fist** is made with the **hand** to provide a flat surface, again the **arm** should start close to the **body** with **elbows** at the side, use the **arm** on the same side that the ball is coming from, ie; if the ball is coming from the right - use the right arm. Once again explode the arm upwards to drive the ball in the direction you want.

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**Parrying the Ball**

Sometimes when the goalkeeper can't catch or punch the ball, just a finger tip can be enough to divert it high or wide. A parry is usually made with shots that are wide of the keeper, with the ball coming in at speed, and there is not much time to react.
The technique for parrying the ball around the posts is the same for diving saves, except only **one hand** is used, the one **closest** to the ball. For **low** balls the **hand** used will be the one on the **ball** side, or the bottom hand. For **high** balls the **hand** on the **far** side is used because this will be the top hand once the keeper dives horizontally.

The **body** should also be in the proper position to make the save. The use of good **footwork** will help point the **hips** in the correct direction, to turn **left** if going back to the left, or turning right if going back to the right. To do this the keeper simply takes one **step** backwards with the foot on that particular side.

When parrying the ball the **open hand** [ palm ] with the **fingers** extended is used, **BIG PALM - STRONG WRISTS** are required. The heel of the **palm** provides the most solid contact to the ball, while still retaining some control, this with the momentum of the ball, will deflect the ball away from goal.
Goalkeeping drills:

**Football Goalkeeping Drills**

Benny Tierney, Former Armagh Goalkeeper, taking drills for improving your Goalkeepers.

There is a series of 16 drills listed in this video player, each designed to help improve your Goalkeeper's technique, fitness, awareness and kick outs.

The Goalkeeper is a key position, which can often be overlooked when coaches are devising training drills. By focusing on your goalkeepers using these easy to follow drills you can improve the performance of your team.


I have found a good Website for Goalkeeping drills. It contains loads of ideas for drills that will help you when training your Goalkeeper. I have a few sample drill from this site below. Also I have listed a few drills that keepers can work at themselves which will improve their own skill and these drills will help their footwork, diving and reaction skills which are 3 vital skills for a keeper.

Website: [http://askthegoalkeeper.com/](http://askthegoalkeeper.com/)

Or

**U tube** Enter “Armagh GAA Goalkeeping”

Individual Goalkeeper Drill: Highball Up-downs

Goalkeeper Drill Description: This drill is designed for a goalkeeper to be able to do on their own. This drill incorporates diving for low balls, extending and timing for high balls, as well as goalkeeper fitness.

DRILL SETUP:

Start with three balls
One ball will be in the goalkeeper's hands
The other two balls will be placed on the ground 6 yards apart, slightly in front of the
GOALKEEPER:

Start with one ball in your hands

Throw the ball up high into the air

While the ball is in the air, dive to the ball on your right

After diving, leave the ball on the ground and get up quickly to your feet, jump and catch the ball that you threw in the air.

Continue this drill to both sides

Individual Goalkeeper Diving Drill

Goalkeeper Drill Description: This drill is designed for goalkeeper to do when they don't have anyone to help serve them balls. It is made to help incorporate movement as well as working on diving for low balls.
**DRILL SETUP:**

Set four cones 5 yards apart at a 45° angle with a soccer ball set between the cones.

**GOALKEEPER:**

The goalkeeper begins the drill by shuffling around the outside of the cone to return to the middle for a low dive. After the dive the goalkeeper returns to their feet to shuffle around the outside of the next cone and dives back to the center for the second ball. Continue going around the outside cones until the final ball is collected.
Individual Hurdle Goalkeeper Drill

Goalkeeper Drill Description: This drill that can be done by a goalkeeper on their own. This drill is designed to incorporate a bit of goalkeeper fitness as well as working on coming forward on low dives.

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DRILL SETUP:

Set one hurdle between two balls.
Set the balls at a 45° angle 4 yards from the hurdle.

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GOALKEEPER:

The goalkeeper will jump over the hurdle 5 times then dive toward the ball.
After diving to the ball, return to the hurdle and continue your 5 jumps and dive to the other side.