



# DAVIS LEGACY SOCCER CLUB



## The Goalkeeper

From Lev Yashin to Gordon Banks to Peter Schmeichel to Marc Ter Stegen, the role of the goalkeeper has, arguably, changed the most out of any position on the soccer field. But, one thing remains: As the first line of the attack and the last line of the defense the goalkeeper holds a special place. It's influential. The French Algerian author, Albert Camus, is credited with saying "what I know most surely in the long run of morality and obligations, I owe to football." Camus was a goalkeeper.

If you haven't played goalkeeper it may be difficult to appreciate the demands of the position. The goalkeeper is a footballer first and foremost. With the great responsibility, however, that falls to this one player who may use their hands, we all too often label them hero or villain. This isn't the right approach. Sure, great saves bring ecstasy, but then, after the game, there's still the laundry. This piece will lay out some of the roles and attributes of the goalkeeping position and provide some resources for the goalkeeper to utilize as they continue to hone their craft in this most incredible and respectable position.

1) Reading the game - Being able to anticipate the next actions in a soccer game and then to be able to communicate that effectively can prevent opposition chances before they start. Additionally, recognizing moments when and how to create space and reduce space allows the



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goalkeeper to be in a good support position for a back pass or to cut out a through ball from an opposition counter-attack, respectively.

2) Managing the game - An ability to manage the game allows the goalkeeper to significantly affect the flow and tempo of a match. As an example, this can happen in the run of play when the goalkeeper decides to sprint to the top of their box and trigger a fast attack, or hold on to the ball and allow their team to move up the field. In dead-ball situations a goalkeeper can influence how quickly a variety of restarts are taken (e.g. goalkicks).

3) Working with and managing your emotions - Goalkeeping is a mentally demanding job. For the majority of the match you may not be asked to make a save but then you are called upon to perform late-game heroics. You often stand alone when your team scores and may feel alone when your team concedes. Emotions are just energy passing through you. If you can learn to let that energy pass, and not attach to it in any significant way, you can build emotional resilience.

4) Distribution - Throughout the course of a game goalkeepers touch the ball approximately seven times more with their feet than they do with their hands! Being capable to support and facilitate the team's buildup is an ever increasing priority for goalkeepers. Working on one's first touch and passing ability with both feet over a variety of distances is key. Distribution also includes being able to roll, throw, and kick decisively from your hands.

5) Shot stopping - Goalkeepers will have to deal with a variety of different shooting situations: from distance, an acute angle, in close, 1v1, etc. Being able to make the routine save consistently and occasionally pull off the 'big' save to keep your team in the game is part of the positional profile. When it comes to shot stopping, closing down the angle, getting set, footwork, handling, diving, parrying (when you can't catch it) are all part of the goalkeeper's technical toolkit.

6) Dealing with crosses - Cutting out and dealing with crosses, either in the air or on the ground, is an important task for the goalkeeper. Being able to attend to the incoming cross, organizing the box, all while taking the correct angle to attack the ball are part of the complex crossing situation. A goalkeeper's ability to perform these roles effectively leads to the commanding presence we all look for in a goalkeeper.

7) Set-Pieces - The commanding presence mentioned above is especially what's needed in set-piece situations where often the responsibility of setting the wall, organizing on a defensive



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corner-kick, or setting the line on a defensive free-kick falls to the goalkeeper. Once the organization is set the scripts for dealing with crosses and shot stopping can come into play.

And, of course, there is always a high degree of randomness - of things you can't account for. As Camus commented on how he felt soccer prepared him for life "I learned....that a ball never arrives from the direction you expected it."

Below are Resources for those interested in Goalkeeping:

[Goalkeeper training videos:](#) This link provides access to multiple years of small group goalkeeper training at the NCAA Division 1 level. The benefit to this resource is that the activities can be adapted for at-home training and the videos are labeled and searchable by topic (e.g. "Handling and Shot Stopping").

[Evolution of the goalkeeper:](#) This video provides a detailed discussion about the evolution of the role of the goalkeeper by goalkeeper coach and manager, Juan Carlos Unzué. The video is 15 mins long and is in Spanish with English subtitles.

[The Outsider: A History of the Goalkeeper:](#) This book is by one of the best soccer authors, Jonathan Wilson. It's an in-depth look at this unique position. It's targeted to the adult reader. The reading of it can help one better understand goalkeeping and goalkeepers.

[How Manuel Neuer Changed a Generation's Perception....:](#) This brief article takes a look at how Manuel Neuer's approach to goalkeeping has changed how a generation views the position.

[Ajax Goalkeeper Supporting Build Up Play:](#) This brief video shows how Ajax Goalkeeper, Andre Onana, becomes an extra outfield player in build up play in order to create overloads and facilitate ball circulation.

[The Future of Goalkeeping?:](#) This brief entertaining video by Tifo Football dispels the myths associated with Thiago Motta's seemingly bizarre 2-7-2 formation, and gives more detail about some developing trends in the role of the goalkeeper.