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Question: *Drills and Warmup - What type of drills can I do with my goalie during practices besides the basic warm up and having guys take situational shots at him?*

Goalieman: We do two things in warm-up that are pretty different. First, we play a form of catch between two keepers that gets them stepping and concentrating on the ball (done before any shooting). This minimizes the need for much in the way of static shooting. The catch drill goes like this:

BALL TOSS - Have one goalie set up in his best stance WITHOUT a stick. Have the other goalie toss the ball overhand from about 3 yards away at the place where stick side high would be. The receiving goalie needs to:

- a) catch the ball with his thumb and forefinger
- b) needs to step to the ball (from ball of foot to ball of foot)

Then they reverse roles and the receiving goalie throws to the other goalie. They must get 10 in a row without dropping it once. If they drop the ball, then they start the count over. This is done a total of 8 times as follows:

1. 10 IN A ROW to stick side high
2. 10 to off stick side high
3. 10 to stick side hip
4. 10 to off stick side hip
5. 10 to stick side low (shoe lace level)
6. 10 to off stick side low (shoe lace level)
7. 6 off the short bounce just outside of and in front of the foot on stick side
8. 6 off the short bounce just outside of and in front of the foot on off stick side

If the keeper is stepping and watching the ball throughout the catch is easily learned. Don't let anyone catch in the palm and make them turn their wrists in the same rotation as must be used to guide the stick to the ball.

Step-Over-the-Rope - Many goalies try to make saves mostly with their hands and minimal stepping or stepping only laterally. This is too passive for the keeper and leads to misses that shouldn't be goals. The idea is to instill stepping TOWARD THE SHOT. This is another way of saying moving your hips to get your hands to the ball quicker. But, it is not an automatic action when one is shooting at you, so a drill may be needed. Mac Diange, Assistant Coach at Army uses a very effective pair of drills, one I call "Step-Over-Rope".. While the goalie is doing regular shooting, put a rope (I use one about 10 feet long) that parallels the goal line but is just in front of the goalies toes. Encourage the goalie to step over the rope on each shot. Then, after most shots encourage them to look and see if they did. They will begin to know when they took an aggressive step instead of a lateral or no step.

From-the-Side - Good goalies make saves, great goalies make them in all four corners of the goal, just as easily. This comes from driving the top hand and stepping simultaneously with the ball side foot (using the triple step technique) to move the hips and therefore the hands to ball quicker. A great drill to work on this is to setup to one side of the goal and have the shooter shoot the ball right down the middle. To get to this shot the goalie must step and drive the hands at the same time. Since the goalie knows where the ball is going, this drill really helps them work on technique and timing. If they are cheating early to that side make them switch sides every 5 shots and they will learn this even better. This is another great drill from Max Diange at Army

FEEDS - We use a lot of different types of feeds on every shot. We feed from behind, from the GLE, from the point to the crease, to cross crease, to same side etc. varying as we do the traditional warm-up. This make the keeper constantly aware of the ball and how to track it (with the top hand and the eye together). When done correctly, the setup is complete as the pass is caught.

OUTLETS - Then we add outlets to the keeper has to make the save, throw a good outlet pass to one player who throws to one of the feeders who then throws to the shooter who continues the warm-up with what ever shot sequence he is working on.

These things take time so you have to caution the passers to keep the ball moving and the shooter has to maintain the right pace for whatever stage of the warm-up they are in. All the early passes can be fast but the shots might not be while later the passes and the shots should be crisp and precise.

WALL BALL - We also use the wall to work on eye-hand coordination and reaction. My favorite drill is to use an attack stick and a wall. Throw the ball hard against the wall from 12 yards hi to hi setting up in your goalie stance while the ball is in flight and then make the save. Do 10 of these and step in one long stride and do it again. Keep throwing hard. Then step in again and do 10 more (if you drop the ball start over on that 10). Then step in again and do 10 more. Then step in and do 20 more. Then step in and do 20 more. Continue stepping in until you are two yards from the wall and can do 20 without dropping one. Then start again back at 12 yards and go hi to off side high and go through the sequence again. It will surprise you how much concentration on the ball and how much speed improvement you will gain.

Question: *REBOUNDS - I give up way too many rebounds. Any suggestions on how to cut them down? I've also seen you make reference to the thumb and index finger grip. Please explain.*

Goalieman: Rebounds come from bad stick position (where the ball hits the throat and bounces out or hits the frame and bounces out or hits the shooting strings and bounces out). So your stick position with the tip of the head closer to the goal line than the throat (tipped back a little) in all positions (up, down and sideways) will help lessen rebounds. Having the ball hit the sweet spot of your pocket helps lessen rebounds, too.

But, after you get through those points, rebounds usually mean that you are either a) punching out to the ball (basically pushing the stick away from you body or pushing up to the ball) or b) have what football players call STONE HANDS (rigid grip, etc.).

If you are punching out, then convert to the rotate stick school of play and both get your hands UP and out from your chest. If you have STONE HANDS get the top hand shaft OFF YOUR PALM by gripping the stick with your thumb and forefinger (top hand) with some space between the Y of you thumb and forefinger and you palm. This will give you a very soft touch. When the ball hits you stick you will almost automatically have a little give and rebounds are lessened.

Another tip regarding rebounds. If the grip is good and the stick position has the tip of the stick a bit in back of the shaft, and you aren't punching, then usually one of your major joints is locked (fully extended) at the time of impact (ball to stick). A locked out elbow or knee is usually the culprit. The knees and elbows should be bent throughout the save and if they are dramatically fewer rebounds.

Question: *BREAK-AWAYS - What is the best way to handle breakaways and one-on-one dodges, stay back and wait or charge out and knock the shooter down?*

Goalie: Neither. The best move on breakaways or close in dodges is to move out almost to the crease line, playing the shooter stick-on-stick and make him change his shot to shoot around you. Make him change his mind and make another move beyond the move he was trying. Many times, the time he spends changing his shot is enough for the defense to recover. If not, by changing his shot he is more likely to miss. Charging out of the crease just gives him an empty goal. And standing pat on the goal line gives him too much goal to shoot at. By moving out some, playing on your toes moving your feet to stay in front of the goal and moving to keep your stick in front of his, you stand the best chance until help arrives. There is a trick here too. You must watch the ball, not the shooter. By lining up the ball, your upper hand thumb and your eyes, your body is in a position for it to follow the movement of your hand. This will provide you with better inside reaction saves, especially up high. So get your hands in that position on breakaways and close in plays (or any other save) and you will react better and quicker.

Question: *BEST STICK - What is the best goalie stick?*

Goalie: I hesitate to get into this one. But, four three sticks now are on the market and are excellent. I think that the Warrior BIG NASTY and deBeer Web have the edge in area followed by the STX Eclipse, Warrior Nemesis and the Brine Zone. I use the Eclipse and we sell the most of that with the Warrior Nemesis second. The Brine Xtreme and Warrior Abyss has shown that stiff sticks are great sticks and are very similar to the STX Goalmaster 3. Also, stick stringing is very important. Most of the factory strung sticks are hard to use. [E-lacrosse](#) has a very good basic column on stringing goalie sticks and Weston Lacrosse now provides the [NO REBOUND Pocket](#) stringing service.

Question: *CONCENTRATION - How do I avoid lapses in concentration during games?*

Goalie: WATCH THE BALL, all the time, even when it is at the other end of the field. This helps in general concentration. I point my top hand toward the ball, even when it is in flight as a pass, and let my body set up behind my hand. But, my best advice beyond that is to play 30 seconds at a time. Concentrate for that long on the ball and on being in a good stance and position to make a save and an opportunity will arise (a ground ball or whistle) to take a quick break and then set up again. Many keepers only concentrate up until the shot is begun and then take a break either as the ball is in flight or just after the initial save. These keepers give up rebounds and make bone headed plays after the initial stop. By working on stopping six in a row or working at a high level of intensity for 30 seconds at a time, concentration improves.

There is another "trick". Since lapses in concentration many times happen after the ball has been at the other end for a long time. Try "setting up" once as the ball passes the mid-line coming toward you and then "set up" as second time as it enters the box. Your body now has set up for shots twice in those few seconds. You will be more ready because of those trial setups than if you just try to setup when the shooter shoots.

Also, over thinking is a problem (worrying about how you are doing, counting your stats, thinking the shooter has an edge, etc.). So if you are doing something like that then concentrate on "GET THE NEXT ONE" and your focus can return. If you treat each shot as something to help you readjust your play, then adjust. If you weren't ready on the last one, get ready. If you dropped your hands on a high one, then raise them. If you watched the player instead of the ball, then watch the ball. Spend time between shots getting ready for the next one in both position and adjustments and your concentration will be better.

Question: *Ducking - In a recent game a shot was taken towards my head and out of pure reaction I ducked out of the way of the goal. Is there something I can do to prevent this, or is it just going to go away in time?*

Goalie: It may go away but there is a drill that will help it go away real fast. Just have someone throw the ball at your head, softly at first and then make the save. If you are in a good athletic stance (knees bent, elbows bent, hands out front and high, chest in front of hips), watch the ball (ONLY) and move your top hand to the ball, then you will begin to make very smooth saves. Then have the ball thrown a little harder and repeat making saves. Then have the ball thrown a little harder and repeat making saves. Keep this up. In almost no time, you will gain the confidence to make these saves. By the way, do this drill with your helmet on. A few will get through and hit the helmet. You will find that if you don't turn your head the ball will bounce harmlessly away. You might even find that helmet saves are fun too.

Question: *SLOW START - I do well in warm-ups but not well in the game -- what should I do?*

Goalie: Change your warm-up, change who is shooting, ask them to shoot more on the run, put screens into your warm-up, put feeds into your warm-up. Generally, if you are too familiar with your warm-up, it will be very good but you are not ready for the game. After initial shots to all corners, adjust the warm-up to game like conditions and your game performance will improve dramatically.

Also, as you change your warm-up, you or your coach may find that you were making saves based upon watching the shooter's motion, instead of watching the ball. When the warm-up changes, you might get worse for a while until either you learn the new motion (that's not the objective) or until you quit trying to figure out where the ball is going from the motion and start to WATCH THE BALL itself.

Question: *BOUNCERS - I have a problem judging bounce and screened shots -- do you have any advise for my problem?*

Goalie: The key to bounce and screen shots is to watch the ball throughout its flight and step aggressively to the ball, driving both hands forward away from you chest as you rotate the stick down to the ground. This sounds trite, but if you step, then your whole body is involved with the save . This approach helps the keeper adjust better than if he/she just uses theirs eyes and stabs at the ball. Keep your hands out and off your chest. This combined with stepping (from a knees bent stance) helps you drive to the ball. As you drive to the ball, the effect of the bounce is minimized. If you miss the ball it will usually hit the chest protector (if you step). Do the same on screens. Look around the screen when you can then ATTACK the ball (by stepping, etc.) and you will have a better chance at getting a stick on this ball too (even though it appears to you later).

Question: *OFF SEASON TRAINING - During the off season what kind of exercises (weight training, running, etc.) do you recommend for a goalie?*

Goalie: Running for 30 or more minutes 3-5 times a week definitely is good. For weight training any workout that stresses endurance is good. Then add significant repetitions of relatively light weight for military presses (I use 45 lbs in 4 sets of 20 reps with 30 second rests in between sets), quad muscles (I use 100 lbs in 4 sets of 20 reps) and hamstring muscles (I use 40 lbs in 4 sets of 20 reps). If this is too easy to finish then up the weight. These muscles atrophy fast and you need great upper shoulder and arm strength to keep the stick up and moving and leg strength to step on each shot, even late in a long game.

Next, jump rope on the balls of the feet (preferably a little pigeon toed).

Lots of Jumping - Since listening to Jim Beardmore on agility and conditioning, I have been doing (yes doing) and encouraging keepers to do a lot of jumping over your stick. 100 times a day (side to side) and then once you have mastered that 100 times today with you stick higher off the ground (put your gloves under each end). This is an amazing thing in that it builds great leg strength and quick fire muscle action and you can do it every day (once you build up to 100). No excuses, do a hundred and become a better player. Although jumping rope is good, this is better since it develops the muscles used in goalkeeping (pushing off from side to side or side to

forward). So don't get fooled that jumping rope produces the same results. Jumping rope is good, jumping stick is vital.

For hand speed and coordination I use Ball Toss and like to lie on my back and throw a tennis ball up with one hand and catch it with the other. And, I play ping pong a lot (on the balls of the feet).

I like to handle the ball a lot with my goalie stick so I spend time on a wall just like an attackman. My favorite drill for clears is to get 40 yards from a wall and throw to it on the fly. The ball usually bounce back to me and I throw it again. I do this right and left handed. Then I move into 30 yards and throw a flatter, harder pass to the same wall until I can accurately hit a group of 5 bricks (or some other spot) on that wall.

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Goalie Tips from the Best: Billy Daye

Former North Carolina All-ACC Goaltender and USCLA Player of the Year

(from a recent interview by [Great Atlantic Lacrosse](#))

Fundamentals

Your feet should be shoulder width apart and your hands should be way from your body to prevent being handcuffed on offside shots. Your hands should be 12-18" apart. Most importantly, you need to find a comfort zone where you are ready to attack the ball and make the save. Practice your outlets just as much as you practice making saves. There is nothing worse than making a great save and then giving the ball back to the other team because of a bad pass.

Communication/Leadership

Talk to your defense and let them know where the ball is on the field. As the quarterback of the defense, you must recognize situations such as fast breaks and direct your defensemen to the correct positions. The tone of your voice says a lot; if you are not a vocal person, you better start being one. Stay positive even after a goal is scored. A goalie who has control of his defense will have the respect of the team.

Attitude

If you give up a goal do not get down on yourself or your defense. You can't take the goal off the scoreboard but you can recognize what you did wrong, practice that step or specific movement, AND GET THE NEXT ONE. Have confidence in your abilities to stop the ball. If you lose your confidence, your defense will soon follow. Always believe you can save every shot.

Drills

Your warm-up should be a warm-up, not target practice for the best shooters on your team. Find someone you trust to give you a proper warm-up. Tell the shooter what you want. I recommend:

- * 8-10 shots stickside high
- * 8-10 shots off-stick high
- * 8-10 shots stickside hip
- * 8-10 shots offstick hip
- * 8-10 stickside bounce
- * 8-10 off-stickside bounce
- * 10-15 shots "mix it up"

In Conclusion

Watch and listen to the great goaltenders and notice their different styles. Take what works best for them and adapt it to your specific style of play. Good luck this season!