

THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE GOALKEEPER AND THE DEFENDERS DURING DEFENCE



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We cannot talk about this subject without referring to the specific regulations governing the role and duties of the goalkeeper (GK), as they have evolved through successive amendments to the rules. The GK is:

- Restricted to operating only in 'his area'.
- Allowed to leave the goalkeeper area, provided he then abides by the same rules that apply to court players.
- Susceptible to be replaced by a court player, wearing a perforated bib, so that his shirt number is still just visible, to increase the chances of success in attack by playing with 7 court players.

We can see that the rulemakers have consistently sought to stretch the, initially very specific, role of the goalkeeper.

However, to consider the goalkeeper as a participant like any other player seems to me somewhat exaggerated.

In my opinion, the main characteristic of this post is that it has a very specific role, and its importance is clear to see when seeking the best result.

With this in mind, we are going to try to highlight the general objectives that need to be achieved to foster true collaboration between the GK and court players, with the aim of improving the defence.

When these have been established, we will study how these can be applied, depending on the playing level and in specific likely situations.

1) THE ROLES OF THE GOALKEEPER DURING DEFENCE ARE TO:

- Block opponent's shots;

- Control the ball in order to take possession of it quickly;
- Then, as quickly as possible, start the ATTACK...

2) THE ROLES OF THE COURT PLAYERS DURING DEFENCE ARE TO:

- Become a defender, as quickly as possible after losing possession.
- Act according to his position on court:
 - Close to the ball - harass, neutralise, slow down the attacker,
 - Away from the ball - fall back on his goal, control any possible long passes, position himself as a defensive screen in front of his goal.



3) ESSENTIAL COLLABORATION:

- Cover the court space as you fall back in defence. The GK can help by covering any potential long throws by the opposing goalkeeper.

- The court players must work together to slow down as much as possible the progress of the ball.
- As far as possible, the players must push their opponents into a less central position, where the angle for the shot is less favourable.
- The organised phase of defence in front of goal must be in place as soon as possible:
The GK must see an organised defence in place as quickly as possible, so that he can begin to work out the likely tactical intentions of his opponents.
- The GK and court players should have a common understanding of their opponent's tactical options, so that they can anticipate the outcome and position themselves accordingly.

4) POSSIBLE COLLABORATIONS:

- Two-person organisation: GK/court player to control the opponent's shooting opportunities.

The two team-mates must share the task of reducing their opponent's options, as much as possible, and usually adopt the following approach:

- The defender focuses his actions towards the potential shooter's arm.
- The GK places himself slightly to the opposite side.

The actions of the two defenders are therefore complementary.

From one wing to the other tasks are shared out as follows:

- When the ball is in the wing: The court player focuses on the shooting arm side, most often the inside court (towards the centre of court), while the GK covers the opposite side, the near-post.
- When the ball is with a left or right back player, the No. 2 defender must place himself on the shooting arm side, leaving the short trajectory to the nearside post to the GK.

When the ball comes to the centre attacker, the defensive positioning will depend on which hand the attacker uses to shoot with.

The same procedure is used on the other wing.

This traditional style of collaboration can be adapted depending on the characteristics of the attacking players, or the intentions of the defenders.

- Systematic organisation of the defensive BLOCK by two court players working with the GK.

It is common to see the division of the defensive task between groups of three players in order to limit the attackers' options, when countering jump shot attempts from the central position.

- An attacker shows his intention to shoot by taking a run-up which allows the defence time to organise itself and deploy more than the traditional two-player defence.
- The additional time used by the attacker to build-up some pace for the shot will allow time for the defence to mobilise at least one extra player to block the shot.
- Those players involved will include the defender immediately in front of the attacker, the central defender and the GK.

The rule usually applied in these situations is for the central defender to come to the aid of his team-mate by forming a two-player defensive block, focused on the shooting arm and the long ball trajectory to goal, leaving the GK to cover the short trajectory (inside post).

5) DEVELOPMENT PROJECT GOING FROM 'EASY TO DIFFICULT'

It is essential to provide guidance, specific to each level of play, which helps the player to understand how the collaboration between the GK and court player works and to make sure that it becomes an integral and systematic part of the player's general skills' development.

5.1) Initial formation:

Allowing beginners to practise successively at each position, without any initial restrictions, can help instil a systematic understanding. Making the players regularly alternate between playing on court and in goal can help develop a better understanding of the essential integrity of the respective roles.

Getting back into defence as quickly as possible, slowing down the progress of the ball towards the goal, forcing the ball away from the centre sector when in front of goal, positioning the player on the side of the ball when defending against an attacker, these are all basic behaviours that will be integrated all the more easily, when the player has experienced this from the GK's perspective.

5.2) Improvement:

The progressive and shared understanding of the successive options open to the GK will lead to a better understanding of the individual roles.

Allowing shots to be taken from closed angles, trusting the GK in situations that are advantageous to him, doing all you can to put the opponent immediately in front of you in a disadvantageous position, limiting the attacker's options by reducing his possible courses of action, these are actions that will need to be regularly practised by the players in all positions.



5.3) Advanced practices:

This is characterised by the search for the best possible outcome, while at the same time developing improved systems, both individually and as a team.

At this level it becomes important to synchronise the respective actions of the court players and GK, by using the general principals developed in earlier training. As we have already said when talking about possible actions, it is important to make sure that the players understand the fundamental differences between:

**WHAT SHOULD BE DONE
WHAT COULD BE DONE
AND WHAT SHOULD NEVER BE DONE!**

In the area of collaboration only the PROBABLE, the ANTICIPATED and the REPEATED can be lead to success.



If that is the objective, it is critical to teach each of the players, through repeated practice, how to automatically react in a given situation, so that all the players in a team can understand and foresee the tactical intentions of their team-mates.

It seems to me to be more important to agree on 'shared' objectives.

We often see verbal exchanges between the GK and court players about the best way to work together to counter an attacker. When these exchanges take place ahead of the attacking action, they show a common will to work together to anticipate the attackers' intentions, they allow the defenders to create a situation where they have maximised numerical superiority: One attacker/shooter against two (or three) defenders, but only if, beforehand, they have efficiently divided up the tasks.

When the verbal exchanges take place after the action, they are usually to assess what went wrong!

Therefore, more important than the creative tactical preferences of the coach who favours one or other formation, the key remains the 'agreements' made between players.

The phase called 'automation' will be fundamental to develop EFFICIENCY...

All the defensive projects of this type, based on the sharing of tasks, can only be successful if they are undertaken with perfect 'timing'!

However, reacting in a stereotypical way, will inevitably hand the advantage back to the attacker.

6) CONCLUSION

The specificity of the GK's role must stress, from the beginning of the player's development, the importance of the critical synergies to achieve true cooperation.

Because the GK's role is so specific, it is important that from the beginning of his development, he is made to understand the importance of the critical synergies needed to achieve true cooperation with the court players.

The reciprocal actions will need to be clearly defined, analysed and learned with a clear understanding of how they impact each other.

This development stage is not obvious because we usually put the emphasis on the chronological aspect of the likely actions.



- The mission of the GK, having to intervene only later, is not simultaneously analysed.

Therefore the problem is to put the defensive actions back into the right order.

- As soon as the ball is lost, the GK's possibilities for intervention must be combined with those of the court players, to limit the attackers' options.
- As soon as an attacker moves into a shooting position, there must be a coordination of the duties of the GK and court players that should lead to a better defensive position.
- As soon as an opponent starts to position himself to take a run-up for a jump shot, he should be opposed by two or three players, including the GK, with the aim of reducing his chances of success.

If it is accepted that the priority must be to immediately develop reciprocal actions, each player will eventually be able to decide for himself the form of action to take, all the time never forgetting that the most efficient options are those chosen by the players themselves.

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Note: 'His' and 'he' have been used here by default and are meant to denote 'his' or 'hers' and 'he' or 'she'.

- The court player is the first to intervene, so we focus on specifically improving the way he defends against the attacker with the ball, only later considering how he interacts with the other defenders around him.