



The Set Position

The "Set Position" is an act of optimally preparing the body for the many dynamic actions performed by goalkeepers. "Setting" or "Getting Set" is fundamentally one of the most critical aspects of goalkeeper education as the quality of the set position can affect virtually every save or movement a goalkeeper may be required to make. A proper set can make common saves seem routine and difficult saves can become attainable. Conversely, an improper set can turn common saves into adventures while difficult saves can become nearly impossible. Because of its importance, the set position, and all its details, must be learned, adopted, and applied consistently in order for goalkeepers to perform to the best of their ability.

It is amazing to see, at all levels of play, how poor setting of the body can create a multitude of complications in front of the goal. Most positions in most sports have an optimal starting position. Tennis players, baseball/softball players, volleyball players, football players, table tennis players, basketball players, wrestlers, and runners all have optimal ways of preparing the body for performance and goalkeepers are no different. Once players buy into the value of setting their body, and the effort becomes habitual, their play in goal will become much more fluent, consistent, and technically proficient.

- While following the game and tracking the ball the goalkeeper's body should exhibit a sense of urgency and readiness. As the ball moves in front of the goal, so should the keeper with light steps on the balls of the feet and with knees bent. This urgent state should be kept throughout the game to prepare the body and mind for action.
- The setting of the body should take place at each moment in the game when the keeper anticipates the need to react to a threatening situation. Some of these moments may include shots on goal, free kicks, crosses from the run of play, corner kicks, and long balls or through balls. The act of setting should occur in relation to *visual cues* which indicate the goalkeeper may be called upon to move. For instance, when the opponent with the ball plants one foot next to the



ball, puts his head down, and draws back the other foot, a shot or service is likely to follow. Based on the visual cues offered by the shooter the goalkeeper should begin setting the body by hopping just before the ball is struck so that his feet have landed by the time the ball is struck.

- The goalkeeper must **hop** so as to land with the body weight on the balls of the feet with the heels OFF the ground. To achieve dynamic balance, both feet must touch the ground simultaneously and should be about shoulder width apart. The hop doesn't need to be higher than the grass, but needs to be a definite hop to lift the body and create tension (energy) in the knees, which should be slightly bent when landing. **Rule of thumb:** Hop as high as the grass is long without allowing the heels to touch the ground in the process. **Failure** to hop and land properly prevents the body from responding with explosiveness and anchors it to the ground.
- The **hands** may move freely while the goalkeeper is following the play and positioning himself. At the time of the landing however, the hands must be collected in front of the stomach, about 6-8 inches away from the body. The hands should be somewhere within the width of the hips and should not be wider than the hips. The palms should face each other, as opposed to the finger tips or knuckles facing each other. The hands and arms should not be rigid but should be supple and relaxed. Failure to collect the hands in this manner can lead to a multitude of saving complications. **Rule of thumb:** The elbows should be in front of the body so that the hands are clearly far enough from the body. **Failure** to set the hands leads to dropped balls, rebounds, and can be the difference between catching and tipping, saves and goals. THE PLACEMENT OF THE HANDS IS CRITICAL.
- The **posture** of the goalkeeper should be slouched over, so as to keep the weight of the goalkeeper forward on the balls of the feet and not on the ankles and heels. **Rule of thumb:** When slouching over, the shoulders should be above the toes, not the ankles. **Failure** to achieve proper posture prohibits dynamic and explosive movements and makes many low shots impossible to save.

