

BREAKAWAYS

By - Sam Snow US Youth Soccer Director of Coaching

A breakaway is when an attacker gets past all other field players while in possession or chasing down a penetrating pass. It is now a one versus one with the goalkeeper. Since the goalkeeper has no support it is a do or die situation for him. This requires courage, confidence, and great skill, as the slightest hesitation can result in either an injury or a goal. For the keeper to handle this situation well requires not only confidence and courage, but also a lot of rehearsal in training sessions. The essential factors are speed, agility and split-second timing in pouncing on the ball. No matter how well trained and talented the keeper may be, occasionally he will lose some of these one on one battles.

Successfully handling the breakaway requires the goalkeeper have good acceleration off the goal line, strength, courage and lots of practice at taking the ball from the feet of an opponent. The physical challenge needs to be courageous, not reckless. The intent is to win possession of the ball, not to harm the opponent. Clearly too the keeper wants to come out of the 1 vs. 1 confrontation without injury and without giving up penalty kicks or direct free kicks and without being booked.

To take the ball off the opponent's feet requires all of the talents above and excellent timing. Timing is learned through proper experience in training with good coaching. The keeper should learn the order for dealing with a breakaway.

1. Get to the ball before the shooter. This may be possible on a through ball that the attacker is still chasing down or off a bad touch by the attacker. Generally here the keeper is getting to the ball before the shooter.
2. Get the ball as the attacker shoots. Taking the ball off his feet. This is a fifty-fifty ball.
3. Get the ball after the attacker shoots. Here the shooter has gotten to the ball before the keeper.

A match related exercise has one attacker passing through passes to another attacker who challenges the keeper for the ball. The keeper starts each time in his goal area and the attackers start 30-40 yards out from the goal. The first few passes should be hit heavy so they are in favor of the goalkeeper. Then a few passes that will be fifty-fifty balls and then a few passes hit soft, so the attacker clearly gets to the ball first.

The coach acts as the kicker, so that the pace and force of the kicks are under control.

⊙ = ball

coach
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goalkeeper

The goalkeeper lies on the ground facing the balls with his hands behind the ball. The coach kicks the ball that the keeper is holding and then rapidly moves down the line of ten balls. The keeper must move along the ground working to get his hands behind each kicked ball. This is to build up the keeper's upper body strength and confidence to take a ball off the feet of an opponent. Execute ten repetitions in each direction.

When the opponents make a long pass forward into the goalkeeper's half and he sees that there is no defender to deal with it, he must act. The keeper should run forward quickly and kick the ball back into the opponent's half. If an opposing player is also racing after the ball and the goalkeeper has an advantage of some few yards only, it is unwise to make a forward clearance because the attacker's body may block the ball. On such occasions it is best to kick the ball towards the touchline. If the clearance has not been quite successful, the goalkeeper must immediately retreat to the goal keeping his eyes constantly on the ball.

The goalkeeper may be in an extremely difficult position if an opposing player has managed to gain possession of the ball behind the defenders and he is bearing down on goal quite unchallenged. The goalkeeper must make a split-second decision on whether or not any other defender has a chance of intervening in time. If not, the keeper must deal with the situation. Keeping in mind the principle of "narrowing the angle," the goalkeeper should exert every effort to meet the first attacker as far away from the goal as possible. If the goalkeeper advances, he can cover the whole goal provided he has time to get near enough to the attacker.

When coming out of his goal, the goalkeeper runs at top speed, but as he closes on the first attacker, he should reduce his pace. By slowing down, he will make it difficult for the attacker to use a successful body feint. (A feint is most likely to occur when a dribbler is approached at full speed.) It is also possible to dive more accurately from a relatively slow movement.

While advancing, the goalkeeper must concentrate on the ball and the movements of the first attacker at the same time. If he makes a desperate and hasty dash, he provides the opponent with an opportunity to lift the ball over his head and into the net. Try to approach the attacker when the ball is furthest ahead of him while he is dribbling forward, or when his eyes are on the ball or on another player. Almost any kind of movement will tend to confuse the opponent. Since he will be aiming at the goal, the keeper should make this target as difficult as possible to judge. He should never allow an opponent a free shot; he must disconcert him as much as he can.

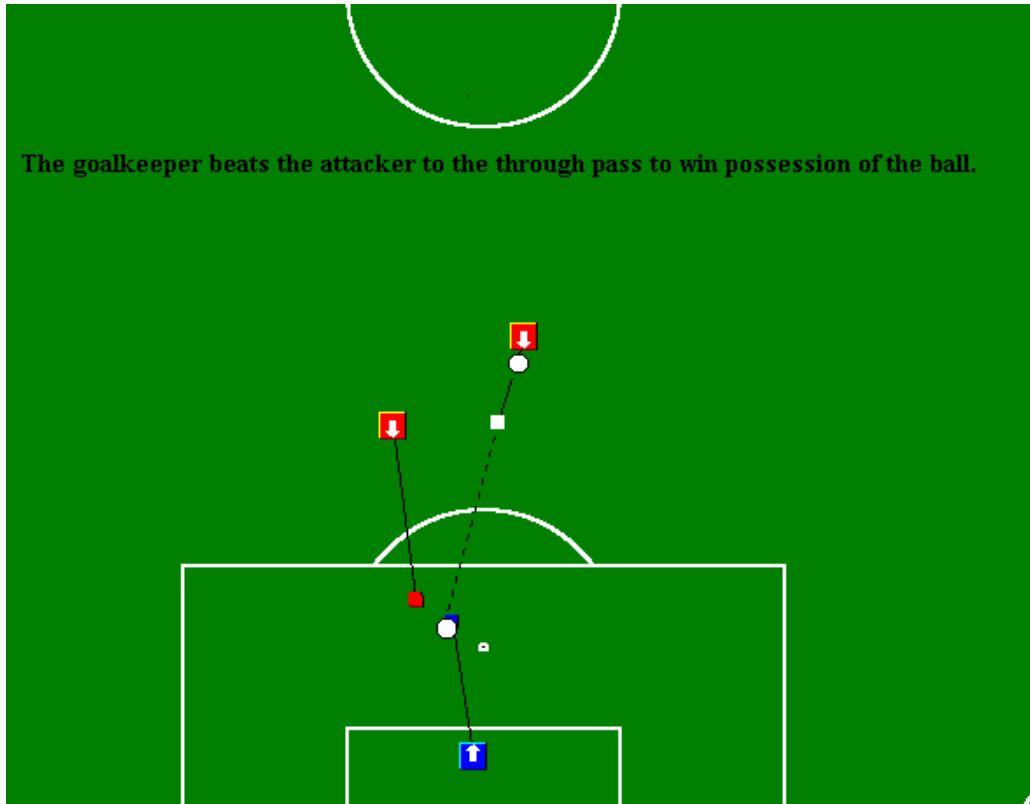
Coming out of goal cannot always avert immediate danger. The goalkeeper is often required to dive. The diving action must be performed quickly as possible and it is wisest to dive across the front of the opponent, thereby covering the largest possible area and at the same time preventing him from pushing the ball under the goalkeeper's body.

Fakes and feints can also be used in the keeper's highly specialized position. When taking the ball off an opponent's foot the keeper can use a feint to excellent advantage. By swaying in one direction, he may cause the



attacker to shoot or move in the other – and be ready and waiting for the opponent.

Inexperienced goalkeepers often make the mistake of timing the advance incorrectly. If a defender is chasing the attacker or another teammate is running to intercept, the goalkeeper is advised to stay in the goal area.



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