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## Communication

It is possible to play a complete game in goal without touching the ball and still have a great game. One of the goalkeeper's responsibilities is to organize the team defensively during the course of the game. If this is done effectively the opposing offense can be stopped from penetrating the defense and getting any scoring opportunities.

The simplest form of communication is for the goalkeeper to call "keeper" when you want the ball. This in itself is very helpful but it is only the tip of the iceberg. For a goalkeeper to communicate at the highest level you must have a very good understanding of the game. Here are some things you should be able to recognize and understand.

- 1) Tendencies of strikers.
- 2) Systems of play.
- 3) Defensive principles.
- 4) Defensive mismatches.
- 5) Strengths and weaknesses of your teammates.
- 6) Responsibilities of defenders.

In essence the goalkeeper needs to be a coach of sorts in the goal. Once the goalkeeper has that knowledge you must figure out how you can apply it to the benefit of the team. When instructing your team it is not always necessary to use complete sentences. In fact, one word will often suffice. For example if the ball is loose in the box and the keeper wants a defender to quickly kick the ball upfield to safety the word "CLEAR" should get the message across. Other one word examples could be "CONTAIN," "TIME," "OUT," or "MAN-ON." Often there is not enough time for more than a one word instruction.

***CLEAR  
MAN - ON  
CONTAIN  
PRESSURE  
STEP  
GET OUT***

The tone of voice is also important. As a keeper you want to appear to be calm, poised and in control. Your speech should be authoritative, clear and confident. If your teammates sense panic in your voice they will lose confidence in you. If your voice is too passive they may not process your message immediately and certainly will not act with any sense of urgency. Experience alone will dictate to you what tone of voice works best. Your tone will also differ when talking to your defense after a play. In time you learn which style works best with each individual defender. For example, if you criticize defender "A" aggressively for letting a forward turn in the box it might be the kick in the rear they needed not to let it happen again. Defender "B" may be insulted or embarrassed by the same approach and end up sulking for the rest of the game. Each defender has his own personality and the goalkeeper needs to know which approach will work best.

Whereas communication is obviously a good thing, too much of a good thing is bad. If you talk continuously throughout the game your own players will tune you out. They will hear you but they are no longer listening to you. Therefore you should only give instructions when it is important.

One way of making sure a defender hears you is by using his name. This works for the three reasons:

- 1) Most people like to be called by their name;
- 2) The sound of your own name immediately attracts your attention;
- 3) If the keeper says "John, get tight to #9" then John knows that everybody else knows that he should be tighter to #9. It's basic accountability.

As with all aspects of team play you must practice first. Everybody on the team must know exactly what each instruction means. Different teams use different words. To close a forward down who is threatening to shoot, a goalkeeper may shout "CLOSE," "PRESSURE," or "STEP." It really doesn't matter what you say as long as the player knows what you mean. These issues should be sorted out with your teammates and coach on the practice field.

The number of scoring opportunities presented to opponents is greatly affected by the goalkeeper's ability to communicate. Good communication may not improve your save percentage but it will improve your goals against average.