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UNIQUE FITNESS REQUIREMENTS FOR GOALKEEPERS

It is safe to say that in the majority of cases the unique fitness needs of goalkeepers are neglected and often forgotten within a practice session. How many times do we see goalkeepers running laps around a soccer field with the rest of the outfield players? How often do we see goalkeepers running 50 – 60 yard sprints with the rest of the team?

The answer to both these questions is – Too many times!

The goalkeepers fitness needs differ greatly from those of his/her teammates. Unlike an outfield player a goalkeeper is not required to run for 5, 6 or 7 miles during a match or make repetitive 40 – 60 yard sprints. The movement patterns and metabolic demands placed on a goalkeeper during a game should be replicated, as best as possible, in a training environment. This relates to the principle of specificity whereby 'we are what we train to be.' What does this mean for a soccer goalkeeper? An example would be – If you want to be more explosive off the line you must incorporate explosive type movements into your training regimen.

That being said, what kinds of movements and metabolic demands are placed on a goalkeeper during a match? Areas that must be emphasized are:

- ?? Powerful lateral movements
- ?? Acceleration (5-20 yards)
- ?? Agility/Reactive ability
- ?? Change-of-Direction mechanics
- ?? Explosive single & double leg jumps

It is possible to incorporate several of the above list into technical training activities, with a ball present, with the result being a more economical training session.

The need for explosive/powerful type movements are paramount for a goalkeepers success. The ability to quickly decelerate, change direction and accelerate as well as achieve high speeds over short distances is determined by

an athlete's explosive strength. Certain plyometric type activities have proven to be beneficial in helping develop explosive strength. A preparatory period of resistance (weight) training will aid in injury prevention prior to slowly introducing any type of explosive or reactive (plyometric) type movements.

A useful and inexpensive piece of equipment that goalkeepers should consider utilizing is the medicine ball. These balls (depending on weight) can be used for explosive type movements such as;

?? Overhead throws

?? Squat & throw

?? Squat & throw/sprint

As well as being used for explosive type movements the Med. Ball is the perfect tool for various forms of torso training, which is key to success in any athletic endeavor.

The specific conditioning required to perform with technical proficiency with competitive game-like effort has been referred to as special endurance.

This refers back to the original question posed-
Should a goalkeeper be running laps with the rest of the team?

In my opinion, a goalkeeper must have a sound level of aerobic base training which may take the form of long distance running. This base training will better prepare the cardiovascular and respiratory systems for the next step in training however once the base level of fitness has been achieved any type of aerobic/endurance type training should be used very sparingly. Short bursts of high intensity activity is what a goalkeeper experiences most frequently in a game therefore this is what we must train for. The emphasis must be on performing quality movements with technical proficiency – NOT quantity of movement to exhaustion. After a period of high intensity activity a sound level of base training will aid in how quickly a goalkeeper can recover and perform again.

To end, I am not advocating that a goalkeeper does not need to train with the rest of the team but they must be given time within a training session to concentrate on the specifics they need to excel at their position.

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