

Keys to encouraging young goalkeepers

By Tim Mulqueen

For the young age groups, keepers should be rotated frequently. If your league uses quarters, it's easy to use four different keepers in a game. At the U10 and U12 levels, coaches shouldn't make a player stay at goalkeeper for more than a half.

At the U14 level, goalkeepers are ready to go the distance if that's their desire. However, many talented keepers are also good field players, and giving them some time in the field will keep them happy, help them learn to read the game, and give the other keepers valuable experience.

Keeping a player in goal for long periods prevents her from being around the ball and getting the touches that a youngster needs in order to develop as a player. The keeper on a dominating team can get bored, and the keeper on a team that is conceding plenty of goals can get discouraged.

On some teams, it may be difficult to get kids to volunteer for the position of goalkeeper. What can you do to change this? Assure them that they should go out there and have fun -- and not worry about giving up goals.

To raise the confidence of players and to help encourage them to take stints in the goal, you should incorporate some throwing and catching games into the practice. This can be done by including a few minutes of throwing, catching, and moving to the ball in the warm-up.

When players are paired up for passing and trapping, have them switch over to some catching and throwing for a few minutes.

Team handball is a great game for encouraging would-be keepers. For a few minutes off and on during small-sided games and scrimmages, switch from soccer to team handball -- which is like basketball with soccer goals. The rules can vary. Players may be allowed three seconds and three steps whenever they get the ball. For older kids, the rule can be that if a player in possession is tagged, she must turn the ball over to the opponent.

Team handball is fun, and it helps youngsters gain confidence in catching and throwing. This game helps develop field players as well as goalkeepers. Team handball is great for introducing a passing game because it encourages players to become aware of their teammates' positioning and spacing as well as how to get open to receive passes.

*(Excerpted from "[The Complete Soccer Goalkeeper](#)" by **Tim Mulqueen** with **Mike Woitalla** courtesy of [Human Kinetics](#).)*

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