

Should Goalkeepers Punch or Catch?

The position of goalkeeper is always the hardest to fill. When I first started out as a coach one parent asked me not to play her son in goal because SHE couldn't stand the pressure. Things need to change, says David Clarke.

When goalkeepers are in the news it's usually for the wrong reasons - for fumbles or mistakes. No wonder kids don't want to be goalie. But once you have found a good one make sure you keep him happy with good training sessions.

Should goalkeepers punch or catch?

In my experience goalkeepers were always taught to catch the ball, it was the fancy ones that punched it. If you can get your goalkeeper to catch the ball he will relieve the pressure on a hard working defence.

Use a 15m x 15m square. Put your goalkeeper and two attackers in the square. Put a player at each corner with a ball. The coach calls out a number (1 to 4) and that player kicks a high ball to the keeper. The keeper has to attack the ball and win it in the air under pressure from two attackers in the box.

The last position kids want to fill

Young players are always asking if they can play in goal during training. They love putting on the gloves and diving around. But ask them if they want to play in goal during matches and it's a different story. It is still the last position kids want to fill, and the last position parents want their kids to play. We need kids diving around at home with goalkeepers as their heroes, but to create that environment requires goalkeepers to be treated like strikers.

Make the art of goalkeeping more desirable

David James, the stand-in England goalkeeper, has suggested that goalkeepers should be praised more on the TV by having a 'save of the month' competition much like the 'goal of the month' competition. I agree with him. What you can do to get the message across is praise your goalkeeper first every match and pick out one good thing they have done in each half, so you praise them at half time as well. If you have a man of the match trophy DON'T NEGLECT YOUR GOALKEEPER WHEN IT COMES TO AWARDING IT.