

DON'T GET TRIPPED UP BY YOUR OWN FEET!

One of the first things I notice when I am scouting or evaluating a keeper is how they move in the goal area. Do they shuffle or turn sideways to move for a shot to their right or left? Do they sprint out of control to get to a loose ball in the box or move quickly staying balanced and keeping the proper body shape to make the save? When retreating back to the goal line do they turn and run facing the goal or do they back-pedal? There is a right way and a wrong way for a keeper to move around in the goal area, and more often than not I see them moving around the wrong way.

A keeper needs to learn that their stance is important to the way they move around in the goal. A keeper's stance should be balanced. Standing on the balls of their feet, legs should be about shoulder width apart with their knees slightly bent, and their trunk bent slightly forward. This balanced position gives the keeper the correct starting point for moving their feet correctly.

Now that the keeper has been shown the basic stance it's time to learn the correct way to move to set up for and make saves in the goal. A keeper should never turn their hips and shoulders sideways to run towards a ball that is shot to their right or left. Instead they should shuffle their feet, keeping their hips and shoulders square to the field. Their shuffle should be smooth and balanced, with their feet never crossing over each other, nor should the sides of their feet bang into each other. The stride of the slide should be controlled and comfortable for the keeper, not over extended and awkward.

Now how do we break this bad habit? I have not yet trained a young keeper who doesn't believe they are faster and better off running to a ball shot towards the corners of the goal. Give them a small taste of humility. Have them stand on the goal line, and you stand four yards wide of the penalty spot with a ball in your hand. Tell the keeper to sprint as fast as they can and make a save on a ball you will serve them waist high. After the keeper has made their save, more than likely alligator arming the catch, have them return to the goal line. Now tell the keeper they are to do the same thing, but this time you will force them to dive to make the save. After Superman gets up off the ground and you retrieve the ball that they spilled, have the keeper return to the goal line. The keeper is to now shuffle instead of running and perform the same two saves. The keeper now learns on the first save that they can make a simple basket catch on the ball that you serve them waist high, and on the second ball they can perform a basic collapsed dive to catch and control the ball.

Now that they have experienced the difference in performing a save their way and the correct way, you will have no problem in getting them to shuffle instead of running to make a lateral save.