

COACHES...

Catching.. "The Most Important Skill"

Catching the ball is the most important skill and a goalkeeping privilege not to be abused. You must catch and hold every ball that is within your ability to catch. Before playing a ball, you must make a decision as to the height and speed of the ball, as well as the spin, distance, strength of shot and weather conditions. These factors determine whether you should attempt to catch the ball instead of safely boxing it away. If a ball is mishandled, the wrong decision was probably made.

As your catching skills develop, you find yourself catching and holding balls which in the past had to be boxed. And, soon you will be catching balls which you used to be retrieving from the back of the net.

Basic Rules for Catching

1. Place the hands in the "W" or "window" catching position with the thumbs behind the ball.
2. Get the body behind the ball if possible.
3. Use the hands to guide the ball to a safe position, clutched against the body.
4. Make sure the ball is safely caught before attempting further movement, such as getting up or distributing the ball.
5. Meet the ball, and catch it on the fly, rather than waiting to play it on a bounce.

Types of Catching Skills

CATCHING BALL AT CHEST HEIGHT. The hands are held with palms downward, with the elbows slightly in front of the chest. This forms a deep cavity with which to absorb the shock of the ball as it strikes the chest area.

CATCHING BALLS ABOVE HEAD HEIGHT. As there can be no body surface to back up the hands, there is little allowance for a mistake. You must have absolute confidence in the strength of your hands. Keep the forearms as parallel as possible, and concentrate on the safety aspect of the catch, bringing the ball down to the caressing trap of the body, once the ball is secured.

CATCHING CROSSES AND OTHER AIR BALL SITUATIONS. The advantage of using your hands can often be negated by the running jump of an attacking player. You may have a standing start. Be alert to play the ball at its highest possible point. Time your short run with the

"basketball layup" one foot takeoff the maximum height. Be careful to hold the ball above head height a little longer if opponents are near, so it will not be jarred loose as you bring it down around the heads of teammates and opponents.

CATCHING BALL AT WAIST HEIGHT. You can set a trap for the ball by slightly bending the trunk forward with the arms pressed tightly against the rib cage. This time, however, palms are held upward. Although the hands make first contact with the ball, there are almost simultaneous sounds: hands and body, 1-2. Your position should allow you to absorb the shock of the shot by taking a slight backward jump upon impact. This is one reason you should not be standing on your line during play. Leave some room for the strong shot or a slight misjudgment.

CATCHING GROUND BALLS. The standing position will allow for greatest flexibility in handling the unexpected. Stand with feet together and palms upward. Bend at the waist to receive the ball, so it may run up the arms into the trap. When fielding ground balls to either side, it is important to bend the trail knee, keeping it parallel to the goal line. This movement should be practiced without the ball. The space between the heel of the lead foot and the trail knee should be small enough not to allow the ball to pass through. Repetition is the key to all catching skills. These skills should be trained to absolute perfection. The following exercises will help bring you toward that perfection.

*To purchase the Machnik tapes and/or books on goalkeeping skills, please call 1-800-MACHNIK