5 Goalkeeper

Background

A goalkeeper has the most specialised position on the pitch. Apart from the obvious fact that he’s the only player who can touch the ball with his hands, he often trains away from the main group of players and has his own coach.

We have said in the previous unit that strikers can often under-perform but steal the glory by scoring a goal at the right time. For goalkeepers, the opposite is the case. A good goalkeeper can make many good saves in a game and perform heroics for most of the 90 minutes, however a lapse in concentration or a misjudgement that leads to a goal from the opposition can result in the keeper being ridiculed and criticised by the media and fans.

An ex-professional goalkeeper once said that one of his club managers used to tell him at the start of every season: “I’ll give you three mistakes this season. More than three and you’re gone!” While the manager was quite blunt, teams get three points for winning a game in the league, and the manager’s belief was that he couldn’t afford to have a goalkeeper who cost his side more than nine points per season. In his mind, it was okay to concede goals but not okay if these goals resulted from goalkeeper error.

This illustrates the pressure facing modern goalkeepers and also highlights the mental strength and dedication that it takes to become a top goalkeeper.

Jargon buster

**block** *v* (also *n*) to prevent a goal, sometimes by using a part of the body other than the hands

**clean sheet** *n* when you finish a game without conceding a goal

**distribute** *v* to kick or throw the ball to team-mates around the pitch

**goal kick** *n* method of restarting play once the ball has come off an attacking player and crossed the byline; it is usually taken by the goalkeeper and is taken from inside the six-yard box.

**keeper** *n* goalkeeper
**kick-out** *n* method of restarting play, usually after the goalkeeper has made a save

**narrow the angles** *v* to come off your line in a one-on-one situation in order to limit the attacking player's view of the goal

**one-on-one** *n* situation in which a goalkeeper faces an attacking player who is closer to him than the last defender

**save** *v* to prevent a goal, often by diving to one side (also *n*)

**shot stopper** *n* goalkeeper who makes saves; some keepers are good shot stoppers, but are not seen as reliable goalkeepers if they have other weaknesses, such as an inability to deal with crosses

**stay on your line** *v* to remain on your goal-line rather than attempt to clear, or narrow the angles in a one-on-one situation

**switch on** *v* to concentrate, especially during set-pieces

**Activity assistant**

1) Ask the students if goalkeepers are braver than players in other positions. Ask them to explain their responses. This will be amusing if some of the students are, themselves, goalkeepers.

2) Speak to the students about nutrition. Ask them if they think professional footballers eat a lot of chocolates and fatty foods. Ask them to write down a normal meal plan for one day for themselves. Then ask them to write down what they think a professional goalkeeper eats over the course of a day. Discuss the results with the group.

3) Ask the students to write down, using the present perfect tense, sentences describing all of the positions they have played during the time they've played football.

4) Print out a list of all the previous winners of the World Cup. Practise questions and answers using the present perfect tense about countries that may or may not have won the World Cup. *Have England won the World Cup? Yes, they have won the World Cup.*

5) Develop the previous point and practise the distinction between past simple and present perfect tenses by asking the question *When?* after a student answers affirmatively that a particular country has won the World Cup.