# WHAT'S MY SITUATION?

The role of the goalkeeper in Gaelic football has vastly increased over the last twenty-five years. The skillset of the modern-day goalkeeper has expanded exponentially as well as the levels of performance they are expected to complete their roles to. Even so, the fundamental skills and abilities that a goalkeeper is expected to possess is very much the same.

Hand-eye co-ordination, reflexes, agility, reactions, accuracy, suppleness, intelligence, good handling, consistency and many more have always been key components of any goalkeeper. Another ability that goalkeepers in Gaelic football are said to contain is 'shot stopping,' and it is a concept that has been taken from a similar team sport, soccer.

In soccer, the nature of how teams set up and attack the goal is far different to the way teams attack opposition goal in Gaelic football. Firstly, soccer has only one method of scoring which means there is more focus on aiming shots below the bar that above it whereas in Gaelic players can opt to score points instead of having to go for goal on every attack.

Secondly, in soccer the goalkeeper is more prone to dealing with shots from anywhere instead 30m on a regular basis, defining a shot as an attempt on goal that has no other circumstance for the keeper to deal with. With this in mind, shots in Gaelic football are far less common than in soccer and it is because of this that I lay claim to the fact that there is virtually no shot stopping in Gaelic football.

What the goalkeeper must deal with in Gaelic football is numerous variations of 'Situations' throughout a game, with a situation being defined as 'a set of circumstances that someone finds themselves in.' It is very rare that a goalkeeper in Gaelic football must be alert for a direct attempt on their goal once the ball enters the same 30m zone like in soccer. The GAA goalkeeper finds themselves in a set of circumstances that can have multiple outcomes due to the variety of decisions that can be made within that situation.

A goalkeeper in Gaelic football could have one to three actual shots whereby the only circumstance is a direct shot on goal, whereas they will find themselves in ten plus situations in every game. This is why it is vital that a goalkeeper creates a more situation-based training scheduled so as to prepare correctly for games. It is always important to train as you would play as well as ensuring that the intensity levels that you train at are much higher than that of a game also.

Here are some of the Situations that Gaelic football goalkeeper will find themselves in:

## DUELS (1v1; 1v2; 2v1; 2v2)

These are the most common types of situations for a goalkeeper during a game. Every attack will be eventually broken down to a numerical duel once it works its way closer to the goal. It is the goalkeeper's responsibility to make good decisions and communicate very well with his defence to thwart any goal chances before they develop. If this fails and an attacker breaks through the goalkeeper must rush the attacker and close them down as quickly as possible and force them into a more unfavourable situation allowing the goalkeeper to have the upper hand and hopefully make the save.

## HIGH BALLS

Another common situation for goalkeepers and one that requires a lot of concentration, timing and nerve. The 'keeper must hold their run out to claim the ball until it is in its downward trajectory, the they must attack the ball aggressively while also disregarding any other players that may be challenging for the ball. If the 'keeper moves their focus away from securing the high ball in any capacity it will inevitably end with a mistake or an uncomfortable situation developing.

## FLAT FOOTED

At some point during every game a goalkeeper will find themselves caught out of position. It could be from a mishit restart, a deflected shot, are bound off the post/crossbar or a pass over your head. Whatever the circumstance that has caused this unfavourable position, it is important for the goalkeeper to realise what they need to do to get back into position. This may mean moving their feet to get across the goal or back 'In the Line' of the ball carrier. It may mean recovering back to the 'Set' position as quickly as possible to be ready for any follow up shots or it may mean anticipating what will happen next and getting into the optimal position before it happens.

## PENALTIES

Still part of the game and still part of a goalkeeper's repertoire that is regularly overlooked. As with any technique or goalkeeping ability, penalties must be trained on a regular basis. When you practice your penalty training always ensure to get a variety of shooters both left and right footed so as to supply a good range of different penalty takers each with their own styles, techniques and of course tells that you must keep an eye out for.

## IN POSSESSION

Becoming more and more common, especially in the modern game era, the goalkeeper must now be fully confident and competent when in possession of the ball. Whether it is through helping out the defence when in trouble or from collecting a loose ball, forward pass or shot dropping short, when the goalkeeper is in possession of the football they are expected to be able to carry the ball just as competently as one of the outfield players. It is also important that they practice being in possession of the ball and become accustom to the decision-making surrounding being in possession of the ball while being hunted down by the opposition.

There are many more situations that a goalkeeper may find themselves in during a game and the five aforementioned situations are the most common. As a goalkeeper it is important for you to tailor your training sessions with a variety of situations in mind. It is also important for the goalkeeper to understand which situations they are less able in or feel less comfortable in and then replicate these situations in their training sessions until they feel improvements have been made. Therefore, the question every 'keeper needs to ask themselves is **'What's My Situation?'**