

## LEVEL ONE: LEARN THE SKILL, PERFORM THE SKILL

In 2019, I wrote an article about my 'Levelled Progression' model. This model is a framework for both goalkeepers and coaches to use during development as a way of signposting progression/regression. The framework is in no way to be used as a rigid system of attainable levels but more of a set of guidelines for the goalkeeper to assess each of the skills that they possess to ensure that they are being performed at the best of the goalkeeper's ability.

This system allows the goalkeeper or coach to assess a skill and assign it to a level. Once the skill has been honestly assigned, then the 'Progressional Pathway' can be created to ensure that the skill is developed or maintained. Please note that the inclusion of an age range is not to be applied rigidly but gives the 'keeper/coach a rough estimation to follow about when to progress their goalkeeper as well as using it as a starting point for initial assessment.

In the previous article, written over two editions, I briefly explained each of the Seven Levels of Progression. For the next seven weeks I will be dedicating my articles to fully explain each of the seven levels in full to give both coaches and goalkeepers alike a in depth insight to how exactly this model works.

### Level 1 – Learn the Skill & Perform the Skill Very Well [AGE: 6-10yrs]

At this level the goalkeeper gets their introduction to the skill they are trying to learn. This will be their 'first touch' of the skill and from here, they will want to progress it from a 'Textbook Skill' that they complete in the form of the skill's basic components into a 'Performance Skill' whereby they will have developed new variations of performing the skill (mastery).

It is human nature to be competitive, so it will be important for the goalkeeper, and the coach especially, to ensure they fully understand that 'life happens' meaning things will not always go as planned. Learning to accept failure is important BUT, learning the value of perseverance is so much more important, especially in regard to learning new skills.

Both the goalkeeper and the coach need to be patient and understand that learning new skills does take many agonising and pain staking hours of repetition until the mind and body of the goalkeeper begin to work in unison and the skill is learned. From here the skill can be progressed into the Performance skill.

To learn any skill, there are five different stages that the goalkeeper must complete before it is learned:

### **1) ABSORB THE WHOLE SKILL (TEXTBOOK SKILL)**

At this stage the goalkeeper learns the complete skill as a whole without it being broken down into smaller parts. The 'keeper and coach repeat the whole skill over and over again to allow the body's 'muscle memory' system to begin to get a FEEL for the skill. The human body has a fantastic proprioception system that gives the brain feedback to where exactly we are in space. This system allows us to develop balance, agility, manoeuvrability and adaptability. It will be essential for the goalkeeper when learning such skills like catching, diving, kicking, SET position as well as the basic play elements of running jumping, throwing, crawling, falling, weight transfer, balance and counterbalance.

### **2) COLLAPSE THE SKILL**

By collapsing the skill, we segregate it into its various smaller components. Collapsing the skill therefore allows the goalkeeper to focus on the different micro-skills housed within the whole skill. Again, by breaking the whole skill down into smaller parts, the goalkeeper improves each of these micro-skills individually while also improving the whole skill as well. It also allows the goalkeeper to work on imperfections of any skill they have learned already. They may have an issue with a certain part of their technique and focusing on this one micro-skill allows them to improve the global skill as a whole.

### **3) MASTERY OF THE MOVEMENT**

Once the skill has been collapsed and learned in full, allow the goalkeeper to develop the skill by themselves. If they are kids just let them play especially if you think they are completing the skill incorrectly. Children will intuitively begin to experiment with new skills they have learned to and this is the process of turning a 'textbook' skill into a 'performance' skill e.g. -learning to kick the ball is a textbook skill but learning to kick the ball on the turn is a performance skill. As the coach, allow the goalkeeper time to experiment with their abilities and encourage them to do so. Watch what they are trying to do and see if you can assist them in achieving their goal.

### **4) PERFORM THE PROCESS (PERFORMANCE SKILL)**

Whatever variations or 'Performance Skills' your goalkeeper has evolved from their textbook skills, encourage their use but always be vigilant for imperfections and look for ways that you the coach/goalkeeper can improve these newly formed skills further. By again collapsing these newly formed performance skills down into their various components, it will allow the goalkeeper to focus on the micro-skills and progress the skill as a whole. Create/provide situations for the goalkeeper to use these performance skills so that they can develop them in the correct game related setting.

### 5) LEARN TO 'FEEL' THE SKILL

Teach (coach or learn ('keeper) how to 'FEEL' what the skill feels like whenever it has been performed optimally. Whenever you perform the skill very well it is a necessity that you (coach and goalkeeper) supply praise to reinforce that the skill has been performed optimally. Teach/Learn how to feel on both sides and remember that all skills should be taught ambidextrously meaning that left and right should be of equal/similar ability. Starting this from a younger age will ensure a more fluid, natural movement in adulthood.

The most important element of this stage is COMMUNICATION. Mainly, the communication of feedback. Remember to be the 'Guide on the Side' and not the 'Sage on the Stage' because you will find that the goalkeeper will progress much quicker if they feel they are both in control and incorporated into their development as opposed to being instructed how to do things.

When giving feedback I use the 'Three Feels' method. (How do you feel that went? Why do you feel it went like that? What do you feel we should do now?) Ask the goalkeeper those three questions and each time allow them time to think and answer. Do not supply your feedback until the 'keeper has answered all three questions. Offer your feedback and then formulate a combined plan about how to move forward together. But first you must '**Learn the Skill, Perform the Skill.**'