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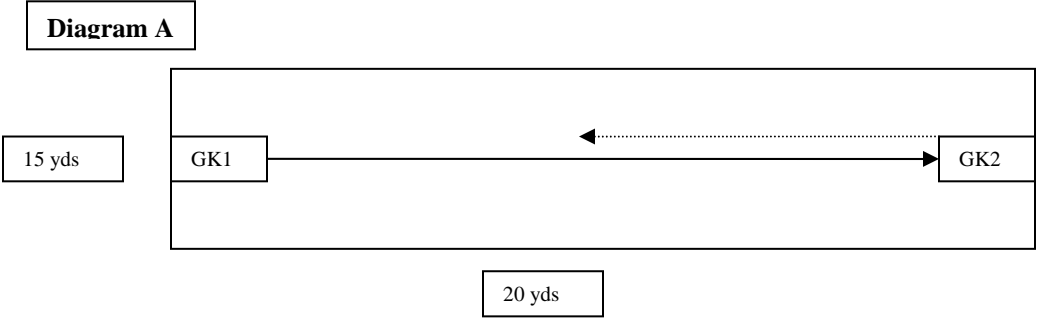
### **Training Breakaways: Making Saves and Assessing Situations**

As a goalkeeper coach at the state, regional, and collegiate level, I get the opportunity to see a lot of goalkeepers in various situations. One specific area that always comes to my attention is breakaway situations. Many times youth goalkeepers tend to be over aggressive, which puts them at a tremendous disadvantage. Too often you see goalkeepers flying off their line with no intent to actually assess the situation, but rather they are focused on how fast they can get off their line. The result of this response usually ends with the goalkeeper at the mercy of the attacking player. It is extremely important for goalkeeper coaches to train their goalkeepers how to assess situations and respond properly. It goes without saying that goalkeepers must be BIG and BRAVE when dealing with breakaways, but they also must think along the lines of a first defender. By this, I mean that goalkeepers must be patient as they move off their line and close the attacking player. It's imperative for the goalkeeper to be in a position that minimizes the distance between themselves and the attacking player, which puts them into a position to win the ball out right, smother the ball, or make the point blank save.

Training the technical aspect of breakaway saves is vital but so is when and where to use that knowledge. Goalkeepers cannot always look to win the ball outright since this will cause them to commit to the ground too early and allow the attacker to easily beat them. The goalkeeper's speed off his/her line will be the biggest factor in dealing with these situations. Too often when a ball is played into space, we see the goalkeeper adopt a stalking stance which involves short choppy steps that minimize the goalkeeper's speed off his/her line. In these situations, it's important that the goalkeeper adopts a sprinter's stance, which will increase his/her speed off the line and also keep his center of gravity low in order to respond properly to the situation. Only when the attacker is in possession of the ball, should the goalkeeper adopt the stalker stance. This will allow the goalkeeper to prepare themselves to get set at the proper time and be able to respond to the situation.

Two drills I use often, that combine technical ability with decision making, when training goalkeepers in breakaway situations are:

Drill 1 (see Diagram A): The setup includes an area 15 yards wide by 20 yards long and an even amount of goalkeepers at each end. The drill begins with GK1 distributing the ball to GK2 at the other end of the area. GK2 becomes an attacker when they receive the ball and attacks GK1. GK1 must respond to GK2 and prevent them from reaching the opposite end line. These conditions force the goalkeeper to respond to different situations that may not always result in winning the ball out right.



Drill 2 (See Diagram B): The set up includes an 18 yard box with a goalkeeper in goal, a target player 10 yards off the goal line, and a server 10 yards away from the target player. The drill begins with the target player checking for the ball and the server playing the ball into the target player's feet. As soon as this occurs the ball is live and the goalkeeper can respond. The target player must turn and go to goal. This will force the goalkeeper to respond to various breakaway situations and force them to make tactical decisions. Goalkeepers can rotate after each save. After 6-8 repetitions each, the target player and server change their angle (e.g left, central, and right side of 18 yard area).

Diagram B

