

Creative Handling of High Balls

Sue Kelly, Head Women's Coach, University of South Carolina

- ❖ Began with statement that we need to spend more time training keepers with the rest of the team. She then proceeded with a session that was designed for a single coach working with a full team. At the beginning of her session she alternated between starting activities for a small group of keepers (4) and a group of about 15 field players.
- ❖ Field player warm-up - 3 players inter-passing, follow your pass, each group in a restricted area
- ❖ Keeper warm-up - keeper seated and a partner keeper knocking ball towards keeper face to catch
- ❖ Keeper warm-up - keeper catching a served high ball starting from one knee coming through ball from behind ball, call for ball with "keeper"
- ❖ Field player warm-up - combined groups so all groups are working in a single large area, however they still were using the 3 person groups
- ❖ Keeper warm-up - 2 keepers challenging each other for a high ball
- ❖ Field player warm-up - same groups of 3 rotating through different sized areas – the different sized areas cause players to adjust what they are doing to make the drill succeed
- ❖ Keeper warm-up - Keeper in goal, collapsed on their side with hands close to near post with ball in hand, throw their ball to partner/coach get up and catch high ball, she used pairs of keepers on each post
- ❖ Asked field players to pause warm-up to stretch
- ❖ Field player warm-up – continued the 3 person groups, allowed unrestricted movement and added the restriction of 1 touch
- ❖ Coaching point - its all about timing to catch a ball high
- ❖ Keeper warm-up – one keeper at a time shuffles from post to post while partner tosses high balls to either side, do 5 catches as you cross face of goal
- ❖ Field player warm-up - 3v1 in the different sized grids, defender held a penny in hand so they could switch defender quickly from time to time in warm-up, as she was working with the keepers she paused from time to time and rotated the field players from grid to grid
- ❖ Coach Kelly placed two goals in a "v" shape with the opening about 18 yards wide, long high balls were driven in from a distance, one keeper at a time in the opening, get behind ball, get high, distribute with throw to ball collector for person sending balls in, an assistant coach was using punts to deliver ball in
- ❖ Good goal keepers have great kinesiestic sense (know where their body parts are)
- ❖ End of warm-up phase
- ❖ Set up 2 facing goals 15 yd apart, 4v4 in front of goals, keepers in each goal, Field players can score on either goal. The balls were delivered in from wing areas as deep crosses would be. The keepers were asked to go through the field players to get the ball. She set up an extra 4 player group and switched groups when a score was made removing the group that did not score. She said this was to develop a warrior mentality
- ❖ Opened the space between the two goals to 36 yards, added markers along sidelines to form a 30 yard wide playing area, set up 3v3 with keepers in this zone, added 1 winger on each side who stayed outside the playing area and where free from any pressure, the ball starts with keeper who distributes to a free wing who moves to opposite goal, staying wide (outside of markers) and plays a flighted ball into 6 yd. box, to simplify the drill early on Coach Kelly restricted the 3's in middle only to go on offense
- ❖ Coach Kelly got in their faces to raise the level of play. Some commented that she was being unreasonable and didn't clearly explain what she wanted the plays to do. I thought she might have been making an effort to indicate the kind of coaching she would give to challenge the players to work at a higher level.
- ❖ Coach Kelly then opened goals farther apart and allowed the keepers to distribute to anybody with a 6v6 grouping of field players (still had the free wingers). Added the restriction of only allowing players to create scoring opportunities when a ball is played to the free wing, who then plays the ball into the box. The wing can play the ball in to feet of players or flight it in

- ❖ She wanted the keeper to first move to back side $\frac{1}{4}$ when ball is flighted in before any other movement to the ball.
- ❖ Next she moved to a large field game with no free wings, asked the field players to create a situation where the ball is driven in from outside
- ❖ She was not getting as many shots on goal as she wanted so she added the restriction of the first person in the wing with the ball was to free (unmarked) to improve chances at balls played in to goal