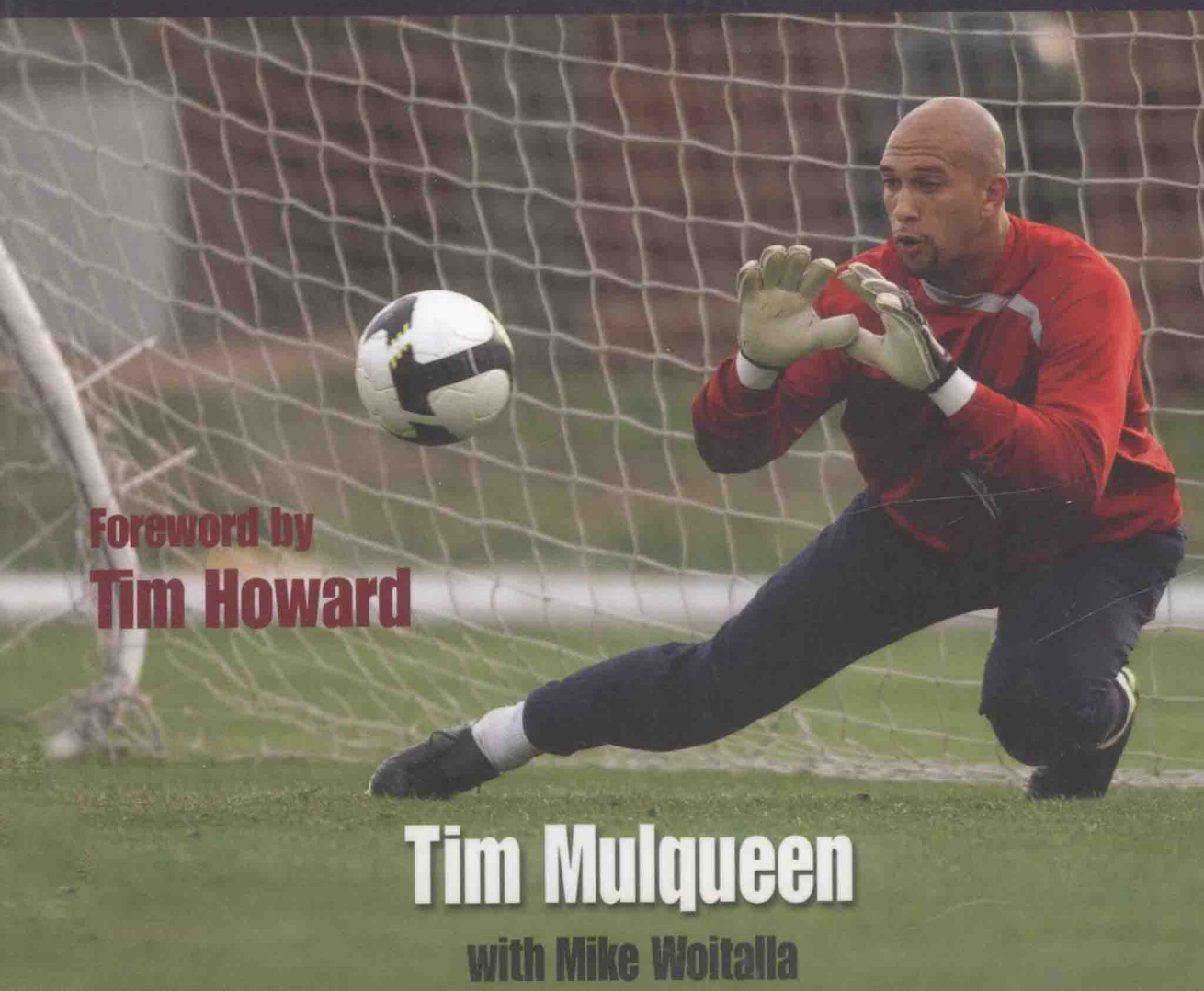


The Complete **SOCCER** **GOALKEEPER**

Techniques & tactics for stopping every shot



Foreword by
Tim Howard

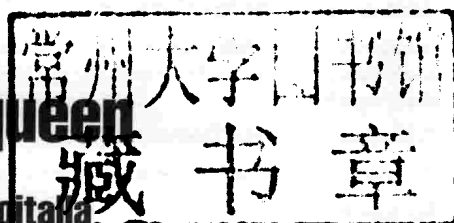
Tim Mulqueen

with Mike Woitalla

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To my loving and supportive wife, Kathleen,
and to my beloved children, Trevor and Cate.
Thank you for helping me follow my dreams. I love you.

Foreword

If you ask me when I really knew I wanted to be a goalkeeper, I trace it to when Tim Mulqueen started training me at a New Jersey soccer camp when I was 12 years old. He made me feel like I was doing something special.

Before that camp, I was a kid on the team with enough skill to score goals while on the field and prevent them when I took my turn in the goal. Then came the camp. Coach Mulqueen took aside the kids who volunteered for keeper training. That in itself was intriguing. We would be doing something unique, something the rest of the campers weren't doing. And Tim was enthusiastic in a way that made us feel like we were on a special mission.

When he trained us, I soon became aware that goalkeeping wasn't just about getting your body in front of the ball to block shots and catch balls. As Tim showed us the fundamental techniques and revealed that making a save required a precisely executed series of movements, the position took on a whole new meaning and became even more enjoyable.

Coach Mulqueen showed us how much skill and thought go into goalkeeping. Because of that, it became a fascinating challenge. I realized that there is an art to goalkeeping, and I was improving dramatically. It's a long road to mastering the position. But I was a better goalkeeper after each session with Coach Mulqueen.

After that first camp, I started going to Coach Mulqueen's weekly goalkeeper sessions and played for his club team. When I was selected to Olympic development program teams, there he was, ready to train the keepers. Amazingly, he would also coach me when I became a pro with Major League Soccer's MetroStars (now known as the New York Red Bulls) and on occasions with the U.S. national team.

Coach Mulqueen has coached keepers of all ages, from youngsters to seasoned pros. And it's remarkable how similar his methods are at each level. Of course, at the younger ages, the training isn't as vigorous. His demeanor adjusts accordingly to children, who need more patience and inspiration than pros. He knows when players are physically and mentally prepared to move on to new challenges. But goalkeeper fundamentals are the same for all ages.

Tim was more than a coach to me. He helped me mature both as a player and as a person. He showed me how to respect others and how to earn respect. He even nagged me about my studies. And now that I've spent years playing in the English Premier League, I see how his influence helped me attain that success—and how his approach provides an excellent example for other goalkeeper coaches.

So much about good goalkeeper training is the ability to teach proper technique and to run fun and productive practice sessions. But there's much more to it than setting up drills. Exceptional goalkeeper coaches build confidence, critique effectively, and help players learn how to read the game. That's why

this book is more than a series of exercises: It delves into all the aspects of the position and the coach–player relationship.

However crucial good coaching is, the responsibility does ultimately rest on the player. And that’s what makes this book so valuable to the future of goalkeepers—it speaks to both the player and the coach.

Tim Howard

Everton goalkeeper in English Premier League
and U.S. National Team member

Preface

You've made a brave decision to become a goalkeeper or to coach a keeper. You don't have to be the best defender, the top midfielder, or the most prolific striker on the team to get on the field. But only one keeper gets the call. You can be the second-best goalkeeper in the league, but if you're not the top keeper on your team, you stay on the bench.

The goalkeeper is at times the most celebrated player on the field and at other times the loneliest. A series of spectacular saves is quickly forgotten when the ball hits the net behind the keeper. A field player can cough up the ball, misplay a pass, or botch a tackle, and usually the mistake will create no severe consequence. But a keeper errs, and his team gives up a goal, perhaps the championship.

But keepers win championships. We see it so often—the dominating team loses the game to the opponent with the better goalkeeper. Diving saves make the highlight reels. A keeper stops a penalty kick or stifles a breakaway, and the momentum swings his team's way. The glory of goalkeeping is the reward for the risk and the hard work required for excelling in the high-pressure position. A pat on the back from a coach, a high-five from a teammate, and the roar of the crowd after tipping away the shot that was headed into the upper corner make it all worthwhile.

In the optimal youth soccer environment, players are allowed to explore all the various positions on the field. Some will be drawn to the unique role of goalkeeper. When a young player falls in love with the position and is ready to accept the rigorous physical and mental demands, he'll train as no other player in soccer does.

Preparing to handle every possible goal-scoring opportunity not only means mastering the technique of shot stopping or cutting off the cross, but it also requires gaining the tactical acumen that enables the keeper to predict the unfolding of a foray. Reading the game, communicating with teammates, and organizing the defense are traits that come from proper training.

The keeper spends part of practice training individually to hone technical skills and to reach optimal fitness and agility. Then the keeper trains with the team, which depends on the keeper not only to lead from the back but to inspire confidence and give direction. So the keeper and coach have a relationship unlike that of the field players and coach.

Many teams, even at the youth level, have goalkeeper coaches charged with getting the best out of the players who take on this crucial role. When a keeper coach is not available, the head coach or assistant needs to know how to provide the unique training a goalie requires. This book adds to the repertoire of advanced goalkeeper coaches while offering tips and methods for coaches without goalkeeping backgrounds to ensure that they can meet the needs of their keepers at practice and at game time.

Goalkeeping requires a strong partnership between keeper and coach; that's why this book is directed at both individuals. The goalkeeper coach's role is that of trainer, teacher, critic, psychologist, and friend. Methods that inspire some keepers may not work with others, which is why we explore the myriad approaches that keepers and their coaches have embraced.

Many exercises are included in this book—not because you need to incorporate them all in one day or one week of practice! You will find that certain exercises will become staples of your practices, some will add variety to the usual routine, and some will be appropriate when particular areas need work. Other exercises build confidence and will become the go-to drills that get you ready for game time. This book will enlighten you on the many facets of goalkeeping and guide you continually on the quest to master the position. Whether you find yourself struggling to handle crosses or battling a dip in confidence, you can turn to this resource for exercises and advice.

The diagrams and photos make it easy to set up the exercises, which can be adapted to suit keepers' ages and skill levels. But there is much more to becoming a great keeper than doing drills. That's why it's so important to share the on-field and off-field experiences and perspectives of top-level players—from today's best American keepers to international heroes of the past.

I have coached keepers on youth recreation teams and travel teams and at the college level. I have enjoyed training some of the nation's top keepers at U17 and U20 world championships and at the Olympic Games. I have coached veterans in Major League Soccer with the aim of keeping them sharp year-round, and I have also trained keepers during the short period of preparation for major tournaments. I have seen excellent athletes whose competition results didn't match their actual physical talent because they didn't conquer the mental aspects of the position. I have seen keepers with athletic deficiencies who, thanks to their smarts and fortitude, have reached great heights.

Goalkeepers, regardless of inevitable setbacks, must quickly regain a sense of invincibility. Such confidence is created by the on-field and off-field preparation. Taking the right approach at the right time is a talent that both the coach and the keeper must master. My aim has been to get the best out of all the keepers whom I have spent hours with, but they have also taught me so very much. These lessons have made me better at training and guiding the next keeper, and they can help you become the best you can be, whether you are the coach or the keeper.

Acknowledgments

This book would not be possible without the help of Tim Howard, Jason Riley, John Dorton, Tom Heine, and Carla Zych.

I would also like to acknowledge the many players and coaches who have taught me so much about the game, especially my mentor, Bob Gansler.

Key to Diagrams

GK	Goalkeeper
S	Server
CO	Coach
X	Defending player
O	Attacking player
- - ->	Path of ball
—>	Path of player
•	Soccer ball
△	Cone

Metric Equivalencies

Throughout the text, distance measurements are given in yards. One yard is roughly equivalent to (slightly less than) one meter. Approximate equivalencies for distances regularly referred to within the text are provided here:

1 yd ~ 1 m
6 yd ~ 5.5 m
12 yd ~ 11 m
18 yd ~ 16.5 m
50 yd ~ 45 m
100 yd ~ 90 m
130 yd ~ 120 m

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Is That a Keeper?

Assessing and Selecting Goalkeepers

“Some people say goalkeepers are crazy, but to me they’re not crazy, they’re different”—this is how young Ronnie Blake put it in Brian Glanville’s insightful novel *Goalkeepers Are Different* (London: Virgin, 1971). Ronnie was a 12-year-old winger when his team’s goalkeeper got hurt in the middle of a game and Ronnie ended up between the posts. “Nothing happened for a while. . . . I just stood and shivered and felt sorry for myself, till suddenly the other side came away and there was this forward coming through on his own.” Ronnie made the save and enjoyed the praise of teammates. He went on to make a couple more stops. “From that moment, I was a goalkeeper,” says Ronnie.

Ronnie recalls that nobody proclaimed that he was a goalkeeper or even asked him about a position change. “They just naturally assumed it.” They saw that Ronnie had the qualities it takes for the high-pressure job. And Ronnie thought they might be right. The forward whom Ronnie thwarted was a “pretty big bloke,” but Ronnie hadn’t been afraid. With that realization and with the thrill he felt when he was hugging the ball after his diving save, Ronnie was hooked.

Indeed, goalkeeping is infectious. And it attracts the most competitive of individuals. That’s not to say that field players aren’t highly competitive—of course they are. But a young player who is drawn to the keeper position will display a special kind of confidence.

Players who want to be keepers don’t mind being different. In fact, they relish it. They think of themselves as unique. Sometimes they even consider themselves as being in an elite group. You’ll notice this when you observe keepers with each other. They look out for each other. They understand that what they do is their thing—unlike what any of their other teammates do. And their position *is* unique, requiring its own uniform, a special set of rules that apply only to the goalkeepers, and a straightforward responsibility: Keep the ball out of the goal!

I've seen plenty of players like Ronnie—kids who catch the keeper bug. But how does a coach figure out whether a player actually has the potential to be a great keeper? It would be unreasonable to expect young boys or girls to resemble a polished, mature goalkeeper; however, they do reveal signs of their budding ability. Look for the youngster who makes an effort to get a hand or foot on even the unsavable shots. Notice how quickly the player moves to the ball. An observant coach who is familiar with all the key attributes of a great goalkeeper will be able to spot the players with the most potential.

COURAGE AND CONFIDENCE

Above all else, goalkeepers must be brave. They must be willing to put themselves in harm's way. They must be willing to slide at a forward's feet to snatch the ball away without fear of getting hurt. And if they show any hesitation in courage—if they shy away from confrontation or contact—they're not suited for the position of goalkeeper.

Goalkeeper is a very confrontational position. A keeper must be able to challenge the shooter. But keepers must also be able to take charge of their own team. They cannot hesitate to give direction to their defenders. Sometimes the keeper needs to move defenders to spots where she wants them even if they don't like it.

Courage, confidence, and assertiveness—without these qualities, even the players with the strongest athletic tools will not be successful in the position of goalkeeper.

NERVOUS NELLIES NEED NOT APPLY

To spot the players who have the psychological tools to play goalkeeper, a coach must closely observe them in practice and game situations and must study how they interact with teammates. Body language speaks volumes. Of course, you can't expect young goalkeepers not to show some signs of disappointment right after the ball hits the net, but you should keep your eye on them a little longer and read their expressions once the game has restarted. Are they focused and ready for the next challenge, scanning the field and positioning themselves? Or do they reveal anxiety about the next shot, remaining timidly glued to the line with a slumped posture and fear in their eyes? Good keepers can't wait for the next shot so they can prove themselves.

When players take a turn in the goal, notice what they say to their coaches and teammates before and after the experience. Do they focus on what the other players are thinking? Do they voice concerns about giving up goals? Do they indicate that they are worried about their performance? Worry cannot be in the goalkeeper's psyche. Watch and listen for evidence of inner stability as well as a calm outward demeanor.

A good sign is when a keeper is still eager to play the position after he's given up a goal, even if the ball went between the keeper's legs because he lost focus for a second. Goalkeepers must have the ability to bounce back from setbacks, and even young players who are new to the position can show signs of resilience. Does the keeper quickly grab the ball out of the net and throw it out for the

kickoff, clapping his hands to signal to teammates that one goal doesn't mean a disaster? Or does the keeper mope and hide his face?

Players who aren't calm and self-reliant won't be able to handle the position. Nervous Nellies simply won't excel between the posts. For coaches, determining which players have the necessary fortitude is a matter of knowing your players. Indeed, coaching goalkeepers, as with coaching other positions, isn't just a matter of instructing and training; it's about recognizing players' strengths and weaknesses—and judging their potential.

WHEN THEY'RE YOUNG

For the young age groups, keepers should be rotated frequently. If your league uses quarters, it's easy to use four different keepers in a game. At the U10 and U12 levels, coaches shouldn't make a player stay at goalkeeper for more than a half. At the U14 level, goalkeepers are ready to go the distance if that's their desire. However, many talented keepers are also good field players, and giving them some time in the field will keep them happy, help them learn to read the game, and give the other keepers valuable experience.

Keeping a player in goal for long periods prevents her from being around the ball and getting the touches that a youngster needs in order to develop as a player. The keeper on a dominating team can get bored, and the keeper on a team that is conceding plenty of goals can get discouraged.

On some teams, it may be difficult to get kids to volunteer for the position of goalkeeper. What can you do to change this? Assure them that they should go out there and have fun—and not worry about giving up goals. To raise the confidence of players and to help encourage them to take stints in the goal, you should incorporate some throwing and catching games into the practice. This can be done by including a few minutes of throwing, catching, and moving to the ball in the warm-up. When players are paired up for passing and trapping, have them switch over to some catching and throwing for a few minutes.

Team handball is a great game for encouraging would-be keepers. For a few minutes off and on during small-sided games and scrimmages, switch from soccer to team handball—which is like basketball with soccer goals. The rules can vary. Players may be allowed three seconds and three steps whenever they get the ball. For older kids, the rule can be that if a player in possession is tagged, she must turn the ball over to the opponent.

Team handball is fun, and it helps youngsters gain confidence in catching and throwing. This game helps develop field players as well as goalkeepers. Team handball is great for introducing a passing game because it encourages players to become aware of their teammates' positioning and spacing as well as how to get open to receive passes.

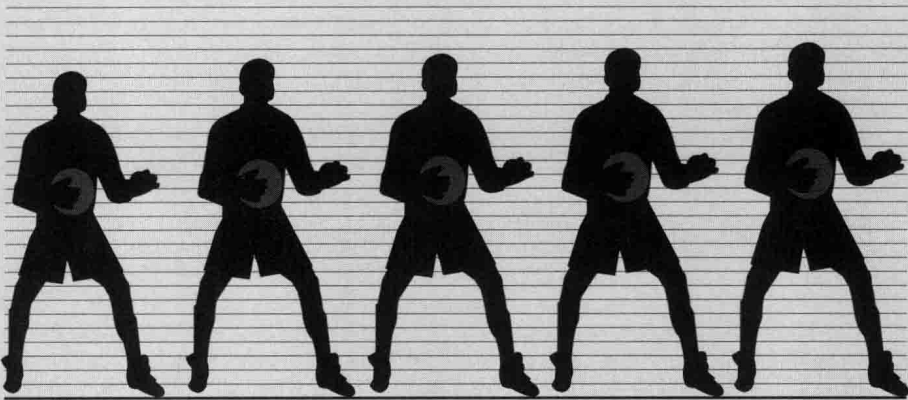
THE SIZE FACTOR

In general, the U14 or U15 level is when coaches seriously evaluate whether a keeper has the tools to truly excel at the position. Of course, one of the main factors for high-level play is size. In the younger age groups, a lot of coaches will peg a smaller kid as a prime keeper candidate. At this age, smaller players are

TOO SHORT?

Common sense tells us that taller goalkeepers (if they have the agility to handle low balls and possess all the other crucial traits) have an advantage over shorter keepers. But that doesn't mean shorter keepers can't have great success. The 5-foot-10 Nick Rimando helped Real Salt Lake upset the Los Angeles Galaxy—the star-studded team with David Beckham and Landon Donovan—in the 2009 MLS Cup. In fact, he made key saves in the penalty-kick shootouts that decided both the final and Salt Lake's semifinal win over Chicago. Major League Soccer's 2008 Goalkeeper of the Year was the Chicago Fire's Jon Busch, who also stands 5-foot-10.

Rimando and Busch may not have the size, but they possess very good athleticism and are able to read the game in a way that puts them in position to make saves. They're very explosive, incredibly quick, and extremely intelligent. They know that they are not going to come out for certain balls in the air, so they organize their team to take that into consideration. Rimando and Busch are among the keepers who have gone on to achieve great success at the game's highest levels despite being below the average height for the position.



Jon Busch
5-10

Kevin Hartman
6-1

Troy Perkins
6-2

Tim Howard
6-3

Brad Guzan
6-4

Each of these goalkeepers won MLS Goalkeeper of the Year Awards.



Val Henderson
5-7

Jenni Branam
5-8

Hope Solo
5-9

Caroline Jonsson
5-10

Karen Bardsley
5-11

Each of these goalkeepers played in the inaugural season (2009) of the Women's Professional Soccer league.

often more coordinated because of their more well-proportioned stature. Taller players may struggle with coordination because of their growth rate.

The tall lanky kids who sometimes move awkwardly—those who have the right ideas but might not be able to execute them because they have not settled into their body yet—might be the ones with the best chance of becoming great keepers. The smaller kids can fly around a little and look the part, but unless they are late bloomers, their chances of going far in the position may be limited. Sooner or later their lack of size is going to be a disadvantage—at least at the highest level.

Coaches shouldn't be impatient with the bigger players who struggle with coordination when they're young. The bigger keepers often take more time to develop their skills, especially footwork skills and the ability to save low and hip-height balls. The taller children tend to require more coaching—which is why youth keeper coaches must be patient and diligent.

At the U14 or U15 level, you might see shorter players who are technically gifted; however, unless there's an indication that these players have lots of growing left to do (e.g., the players' parents are tall), they probably don't have a strong chance of being top-flight keepers. That's not to say that shorter keepers can't be good high school or even collegiate keepers, but unless they hit a growth spurt, they're *less likely* than taller players to enjoy success at the pro level. Coaches should give players of all sizes a chance to develop physically and athletically before ruling them out as potential keepers.

LEAPS AND BOUNDS: EXPLOSIVE POWER AND ATHLETICISM

One of the key attributes for goalkeepers is explosive power. Especially in the case of close-range shots, keepers must be able to spring toward the ball from a standing position—without the luxury of the extra step. The easiest and most common way to test explosive power is the vertical jump test. In this test, the player leaps from a stationary position and slaps her hand on the wall. Before the jump, the player stretches one hand as high as possible, and that spot is marked. After the jump, the distance between the prejump mark and the point reached on the jump is measured. (Chalk or water on the athlete's fingers will help mark the jump spot.)

But be wary of putting too much value into an isolated analysis. The assessment should be based on players' overall athleticism—including explosive power, fitness, agility, and speed—as well as soccer-specific abilities. Skills must be considered together when evaluating young goalkeepers.

Kids' vertical jumps will increase as they mature. It's the same with other facets of the game. For this reason, strength is not of great importance in evaluating the play of young keepers. Coaches often ask, "When am I going to get my goalkeepers to kick the ball farther?" Well, when the goalkeepers get older, they will kick the ball farther. As long as keepers use proper technique, they will get stronger in time.