

## Communication and Respect

One of the most common themes I see in emails from keepers and coaches is about field players not listening to their keepers. An example would be the keeper who wrote in and said "I tell my field players where to stand but they don't listen to me".

There are a few possibilities in this type of situation.

1. The field players aren't hearing the keeper.
2. The field players are hearing the keeper but aren't understanding them.
3. The field players aren't respecting the keeper.

The first possibility is the easiest to fix. There might be two reasons the field players aren't hearing the keeper. First would be the keeper is speaking too softly. If I'm coaching a team and I don't hear the keeper from the sideline when he is shouting to a teammate, it's too soft. Many keepers think they are making calls much louder than they really are. The simple solution is to be louder.

The second issue involving the first option is the keeper is loud enough but being tuned out. In the same way that when a coach is screaming constantly from the sideline and the team finally just tunes the coaches voice out (and coaches, don't kid yourselves, this is done MUCH more frequently than you would like to imagine), if the keeper takes on the role of "cheerleader" and is talking constantly, the field players don't know when to listen and when to ignore so they tend to simply ignore the keeper altogether. The keeper should speak when it's important and not all the time.

The solution for the second option is to make sure all of the players are on the same page. This is why I want to make sure all players are using the same terminology when on the field. When the keeper calls for a two man wall, this is NOT the time to discuss who should be in the wall or how to set it up. These types of communications must be addressed in advance. When the keeper calls for a player to mark a specific player, this is not the time to make sure both the keeper and field player are using the term "mark" in the same way. When the keeper calls for players on the posts for defending a corner kick, this is not the time to discuss who should be there, how they should stand and when they should leave. This solution is something that needs to be worked out in training and before games, NOT during the game.

The third option is the biggest concern. If a keeper tells me his players aren't paying attention to him, my first thought is if I can't fix this quickly, I need to get rid of either the keeper or the field players. It's simply not going to work if the team doesn't respect the keeper. This is why I believe a lot of keepers are making a big mistake by training apart from the team. Even if the keeper is working hard in training, the team doesn't see this. To many keepers don't understand how important it is for their teammates to respect them. They are more caught up in the image of being a keeper. They dress the part, they talk the part but if they don't work hard and earn their teammates respect, it's all for naught. A keeper (and all players) must earn their teammates respect every day. If a player sees a keeper letting balls go in during training because they aren't working hard, it's difficult for that player to respect the keeper during the game. This is yet another reason I have never bought into it when I'm told that someone "is a gamer" and doesn't practice well. If they don't practice well (which frequently means they don't practice hard) they aren't going to win their teammates respect.

As a coach, you can help with this third option. One of the things I have told teams I coached, over the years, is when the keeper tells them something, they are to take it the same way as if I told them directly. In other words, the keeper is speaking for me. So, if they choose to ignore the keeper, it's the same as if they are ignoring me. While this will work short term, long term, it's up to the keeper to earn their teammates respect. Remember, respect is not given, it's earned.

Communication between the keeper and field players is a vital part of the game. If a keeper can't communicate effectively, it's similar to a keeper who can't catch or can't dive. Deep down, they are not a complete keeper.

You should work on communicating as much, if not more, than any other part of the game. The keeper who can read the game and communicate it effectively, will be much more successful than the keeper who might be a better diver but can't read the game or communicate it effectively.

Any questions, comments or suggestions should be sent to [Lawrence@finesoccer.com](mailto:Lawrence@finesoccer.com) or they can be posted on the [FineSoccer Forum](#)

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