

# \*\* KEEPER EQUIPMENT \*\*

---

## CONTENTS

- Gloves - What to Look For
- Gloves – Care
- Jerseys
- Shorts and Pants
- Hats
- What *Not* to Wear
- Where to Purchase



The special demands of goalkeeping call for special equipment. Exactly what a keeper uses is personal preference, but here are some notes on goalkeeping equipment.

## Gloves



Goalkeeping gloves are designed to protect the goalkeeper's hands as well as provide a better grip on the soccer ball. They range in price from \$10 to over ten times that! The gloves a keeper buys will depend on budget and needs, but here are some things to look for when purchasing gloves.

- **Grip.** How well does the glove surface (usually latex foam) stick to the ball? In general more smooth foam grips better than dimpled foam. ⚠️ Gloves with rubber "ping-pong paddle" grip or rubberized grids are NOT recommended - they just do not grip well enough. Gloves having the entire palm surface made of foam are far better than those with just a few spots here and there. More expensive gloves have specialized foams (and better marketing!), but that doesn't necessarily mean they always grip better.
- **Durability.** It would be nice if those expensive gloves lasted for a long time. Unfortunately, great grip sometimes comes at the expense of durability. Thicker foam will usually last longer, since the grip goes throughout the foam itself and is not just at the surface. Some soccer gear catalogs (Eurosport, for example at soccer.com) have durability as well as grip ratings for the gloves they sell. Durability applies to more than just the foam, too. Poorly made gloves can start coming apart at the seams before the grip is worn out.

- **Cushioning.** Gloves provide cushioning to take the sting off a hard hit ball. Thicker foam and glove material help against hard shots, but make sure they are not so thick as to hinder the grip.
- **Wrist Support.** Decent gloves will provide some support for the wrist which can help prevent injury on very hard shots. Look for a wide wrist strap that can be tightened securely.
- **Comfort.** What glove feels comfortable will vary from keeper to keeper. Some gloves are made with vents or breathable materials to prevent sweaty hands.
- **Size.** Goalkeeper gloves should naturally be a bit large-looking on the hands; they should not fit tightly like many other types of gloves. On the other hand (so to speak), resist the temptation to buy gloves that are too large, especially for young, growing keepers. The gloves should not be so big that the hand moves around inside them.
- **Other features.** Manufacturers have come up with all kinds of ways to get you to spend more on goalkeeping gloves. The "Finger Save" or "Ortho Tec" finger spines are one such feature - the glove's fingers have plastic inserts that allow the fingers to flex forward normally but not bend backwards. The intent is to prevent finger injury, at the expense of some feel and flexibility. Some of these gloves can be quite rigid and can interfere with catching. Other gloves have special foams for certain conditions, differently sewn seams, etc. The choice of any of these should be dictated by keeper preference, tendency of the fingers, hands or wrists to suffer sprains, and wallet size.

## Glove Care

Once you've gone out and spent all that money on a pair of gloves, you want them to last as long as possible. For gloves, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Here are some basic tips for prolonging the life of keeper gloves:

-  The biggest thing a keeper can do to make their gloves last longer is to use proper technique! Catch the ball and use it to cushion a fall instead of slapping it away and falling on the hands, and don't use hands to get up if possible. Practice, practice, practice.
- Keep two sets of gloves, one for practice and one for games only. When match gloves start to lose it, relegate them to the practice pile. Only use the \$100 gloves for games.
-  Wash the gloves after *every* use. This has two benefits - it removes dirt and grime from the latex, and it keeps them from smelling! (The latter is a major benefit when gloves are being shared.) Hand wash them in mild dish soap (I have never had a problem with this damaging the foam - however,

don't use dishwasher detergent) and rinse them *thoroughly* with clean water. Let them air dry out of the sun.

- Store them in a plastic bag in a cool, dry place (not the trunk of the car). Make sure the gloves are dry first so they won't mildew. The plastic bag will keep the foam from losing its resiliency and tackiness.
- Most latex foam gloves will grip best if slightly dampened before use. The keeper should have a water bottle in goal not only for drinking, but for moistening gloves on dry days. A little water can make old gloves usable for just a little while longer.

A final note on gloves: 🧤 even expensive, sticky gloves are no substitute for proper catching technique. A good goalkeeper should be able to perform well without any gloves at all; gloves merely add a measure of safety and comfort.

## Goalkeeping Jerseys

Goalkeeping jerseys are traditionally long-sleeved to protect the elbows against the occasional scrape on a dive (note that any elbow padding on a jersey is not significantly thick). A number of goalkeepers, though, favor short sleeves.

The only stipulation in the Laws is that the goalkeeper wears "colors which distinguish him from the other players, the referee and the assistant referees". So the 🧤 goalkeeper should have at least two jerseys that differ from their team's uniform, and possibly a third to avoid conflict with referees.

Any other goalkeeping jersey feature, like sticky dots on the chest, is mere marketing. You can't catch a soccer ball with your chest!

## Goalkeeping Shorts and Pants

Goalkeeping shorts and pants are traditionally padded at the hip to protect the keeper on dives. Full pants are particularly useful if the soccer field has little grass or lots of rocks. Special shorts or pants are not a necessity although some keepers prefer them. The padding in the shorts and pants varies from dense foam (almost like football padding) to less dense thin soft foam. As long as the foam does not restrict your movement, you can wear what ever you prefer.



If the keeper plays wearing shorts, 🖐️ a pair of compression or bicycling-type under shorts (which must be the same color as the main short, according to the Laws) will not hike up on a slide, helping to prevent "strawberry" scrapes on the hip and upper leg.

Additionally, it might be a good idea for a keeper to 🖐️ have an inexpensive pair of pants or sweats in their bag for protection on days when the training topic will be breakaways and there will be lots of sliding.

## Hats

If the sun is low at game time, goalkeepers will often be allowed by a referee to wear a hat to shade their eyes. The hat should be soft-billed with a bill that is not too long. I like to use a bicycling cap - the bill is short, it can be easily flipped up out of the way, and they are usually elastic-lined so they will stay securely on the head. Make sure you clear any non-standard equipment like a hat with the center referee before the game.

## Equipment That Should *Not* Be Part of a Keeper's Uniform

Goalkeepers sometimes wear a couple of items that should not be necessary.

- **Knee Pads.** ⚠️ Goalkeepers do not need knee pads. You never see the pros wear them, and you will not find a single technique that requires a keeper to land on their knees (although a few training progressions will have steps where they start from their knees). 🖐️ If a keeper regularly skins their knees, analyze his/her play to find out why they are doing so and fix the technique! Particularly watch dives and ground or rolling ball pick-ups, as these are techniques that often result in bloody knees when done incorrectly.
- **Elbow Pads.** Although not as bad as knee pads, elbow pads also should not be used for similar reasons. Landing on the elbows can certainly be dangerous, but rather than putting elbow pads there, the keeper's technique should be fixed so they are not falling on their elbows in the first place. A long-sleeve jersey should be enough to protect against the occasional elbow scrape.

## Purchasing Keeper Equipment - Gloves

Entry level gloves may be purchased at Dick's Sporting Goods, Sports Authority or any soccer specialty store. A good pair of cheap gloves goes a long way. Ebay is a tremendous

source for goalkeeping gloves of all makes and models, but research prices first before purchasing on Ebay and be patient. Know what size glove you are looking for.

For more expensive gloves, go to Eurosport.com and check on the sale section. Eurosport usually has anywhere from 2-10 types of keeper gloves on clearance. In some cases, the reduction is well over 50%. Again, Ebay is a good place to get expensive gloves cheap, especially if you accept used. Again, be patient. The gloves are designed to protect the goalkeeper's hands as well as provide a better grip on the soccer ball. They range in price from \$10 to over ten times that!

## **Purchasing Keeper Equipment – Shirts**

If you're interested in a new padded keeper shirt, be prepared to pay. They are usually only found at soccer specialty stores or on the web, however, the racks of Ross and/or TJ Maxx have occasionally had some adidas keeper shirts for \$10.00. You cannot beat that. The forearm padding on keeper shirts is over-rated. Most young keepers will rarely ever use it, and most young keepers are not going to notice it when they perform e.g. a front smother save where the padding might provide some cushion.

Ebay is a decent source for new and used goalkeeping shirts of all makes and models, but again, research prices first before purchasing on Ebay and be patient. Know what the shirt you are bidding on costs normally. It is not uncommon for a shirt that you could buy for say \$24.00 new to go for \$30.00+ on Ebay.

For the best variety, go to Eurosport.com and check on the sale section. Eurosport usually has anywhere from 2-10 types of keeper shirts (long and short sleeves) on clearance. In some cases, the reduction is well over 50%. A good keeper shirt is one the keeper likes to wear. Buy any stylish soccer shirt and turn your keeper loose!

## **Purchasing Keeper Equipment – Shorts - Pants**

If you're interested in new padded keeper shorts or pants, be prepared to pay big! These are also usually only found at soccer specialty stores or on the web and they are way overpriced. Shorts typically will cost you anywhere from about \$18.00 for High 5 to \$100.00 for top of the line Sells. Pants can be had for less than \$25.00 and are essential for an indoor keeper. It isn't usually the padding that protects keepers, it's just the fact that bare skin isn't scraping on the turf or ground. Spandex shorts are a worthwhile investment. Some come with padding that can be used instead of padded shorts. However, good spandex sliding shorts are very hard to find (I am referring to something much better than the baseball sliders found at e.g., Wal\*Mart).

Ebay is a spotty source for new and used goalkeeping shorts and pants. Because they're fairly hard to find, make sure you research prices first before bidding on Ebay. I have yet to see padded keeper shorts or pants on sale at Eurosport.com.