



Defending *the*

GOAL

Goalkeeping is one of the most important positions in soccer, but one of the most under-coached. Eric Wiberg hopes to fix that. *BY AMANDA COOK ARMENDARIZ*

AS THE ball flies through the air toward the net, the goalkeeper tenses up, alert to even the slightest movement. Knees slightly bent, eye on the ball, he waits for it to enter his territory. And once it does, he has just a hundredth of a second to react and prevent the other team from scoring.

This scenario isn't unusual; it happens during practically every soccer game, at any level. For those split seconds, the goalkeeper is the only one on his team who matters, the only one who can affect the score of the game. It makes the most sense, then, that goalkeeping would be the most-coached position in the game... right?

Wrong. "Goalkeeping is actually the most under-coached position in the sport," laughs Eric Wiberg, founder of the Wiberg Wisconsin Goalkeeper School, which provides annual goalkeeping camps during the summer, in addition to weekly training sessions year-round. "You can't blame coaches, though, because all throughout the club, high school and even college level, you don't have enough coaches.

In the US, we don't have a lot of interest in people becoming goalkeeper coaches, because that specializes in just one player, when there are 10 others on the field." But this lack of coaching can definitely have an impact, and those lucky goalkeepers who do receive specialized training are at a distinct advantage compared to those who don't. "Many times, we've all seen games where your team takes 10 shots on the other goalkeeper, and they take one shot on you, and they win 1-0, because their goalkeeper did a fantastic job."

So what are young soccer enthusiasts in Wisconsin—and, indeed, throughout the country—supposed to do? Just give up and hope for the best when it comes to goalkeeping? Not on your life.





>>> PALANI APUAKEHAU

PLANTING A SEED

The Wiberg Wisconsin Goalkeeper School, located in Stevens Point and founded just four years ago, has been a godsend for those looking to improve their skills at the net. The core of the program is the once-weekly (and sometimes even twice-weekly) training sessions that Wiberg runs, along with the goalkeeping camps during the summer, one of which is run by famed Marquette soccer coach Stan Anderson. Although most of the kids are from the Stevens Point and Waupaca area, the WWGS has begun to attract kids from Madison and all over the State.

But how did it all begin? Four years ago, Wiberg met a girl named Cassie Glodowski on his daughter's soccer team. During the course of their conversation, Cassie mentioned that she was a goalkeeper. "I said, 'Great! I want to start training goalkeepers,'" Wiberg recalls. "I worked with her, and she has become an extremely good goalkeeper. During the course of it all, I realized that I could have an impact on more kids than just Cassie. So I put together this program, word started to spread, and we started to grow and grow."

Two years ago, Wiberg realized no matter how good they make goalkeepers up there, they would essentially be lost in the shuffle or ignored by all the coaches in the nation. "I realized I needed to network with an extremely good, high-profile goalkeeper coach. Then I met Stan Anderson, an absolute gem of a guy. I heard so many good things about him when I was taking some of my licensing and training courses, and somehow I managed to convince him and his staff to come up to Stevens Point and run a three-day keeper camp."

>>> ATHLETICS AND ACADEMICS GO >>> **HAND IN HAND.**

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—ERIC WIBERG



Anderson, meanwhile, laughingly protests that it didn't take him long at all to agree to Wiberg's proposition. "Eric has a thirst for knowledge that is fantastic, and this is passed on to his keepers! I enjoy working with him. And it did not take me long to decide to head up the summer program; I am not a natural skeptic. I saw it as an opportunity to work with someone who has similar interests."

The camp had 37 participants, an outstanding number for its first year. This year, the number is already almost doubled, with some 60-plus keepers hoping to learn from Stan's experience and wisdom. "With Stan, they get great training," Wiberg emphasizes. "He's a very, very talented coach."

During both the camps and the weekly training sessions, Wiberg and his participants focus on the fundamentals of goalkeeping, over and over and over again. "It's all about quality repetitions. The more quality repetitions you get, all of a sudden, you develop good goalkeeper habits, and they become as natural to you as just breathing. And if you view techniques in any sport as a pyramid, there are a lot of very talented goalkeepers out there, but few of them have the opportunity to develop their technique, which is steady repetition. If you can do that year round, you really start to put all those bricks at the bottom of the pyramid in place, and then you have something you can really build on."

COLLEGEBOUND

Wiberg estimates that it takes an athlete about a year of steady and consistent training to become college material. He believes it takes about six months of steady work to get basic technique down, and after another six months, the real key is not just good technique, but learning to react to the various situations. "So many people freeze like deer in the headlights, and I've heard coaches say, 'Well, he or she doesn't have the instincts,'" Wiberg comments. "Garbage. There's no such thing as instincts. Our job as a coach is to make sure a goalkeeper has seen a situation 100 times during practice. Then when it comes to the game situation, they react like lightning. They need to develop decision making skills; that's the key part, and that takes about a year."

Of course, while skills—either innate or developed—are extremely important to the success of a goalkeeper, Wiberg recognizes that there are other factors that influence a coach's decision whether to sign an athlete, or not. "What coaches look for, aside from good athletes, is good coachability. Do they have a good attitude? Will they be open-minded and work hard? Plus, grades are every bit as important as being able to dive across the net. Athletics and academics go hand in hand. In high school, if you can juggle the demands of being an athlete, you have to have some discipline, and that is exactly what coaches are looking for. I tell my kids that time and time again."

So what happens when the goalkeepers have honed their skills and are ready to start playing on the next level—specifically college? Oftentimes, players' only options are reduced to sending out letters of interest and DVDs of themselves playing to coaches





»» UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 18-20, 2008

The second annual Camp Shutout Road Show will be held Wednesday-Friday, June 18-20, 2008, in Stevens Point. Stan Anderson of Marquette University and his outstanding staff have again accepted the invitation to lead the camp (the max keeper-to-coach ratio will be 10 to 1). There will be a morning and afternoon session on Wednesday and Thursday, and a morning session on Friday.

JULY 20-25, 2008

Stan Anderson of Marquette University will be hosting his 19th annual Camp Shutout Advanced Camp, to be held at the Marquette University's Valley Fields in Milwaukee. The camp will begin on Sunday, July 20 and run to Friday, July 25.

For more information on these camps or the weekly training sessions, please visit www.wibergwgs.com.



BOTTOM RIGHT: Stan Anderson (left) and Eric Wiberg, the forces behind the success of the Wiberg Wisconsin Goalkeeper School.

at their desired colleges. It's tedious, time-consuming work, and often, college coaches are bewildered by the amount of DVDs they receive from interested students. Hoping to streamline the process, Wiberg created a section on his website specifically for college prospects. This section lists the various goalkeepers who train with Wiberg, their stats as well as video clips of themselves goalkeeping. "About a year ago, I realized that for all our kids to be known by college coaches, I had to make a website and put video clips of the kids doing keeper specific techniques online. That has worked incredibly well. To my knowledge, we're the only website in the US and quite possibly the world that bothers to do this. It's becoming pretty common for keepers or field players to post videos of themselves on youtube, but I'm hearing great things from coaches—the majority of them from outside of Wisconsin—about our website, saying they love how we have multiple keepers together at one place on one site."

Anderson concurs. "Perhaps the greatest impact of this program is that his keepers get

quality training and actually get seen by the next level... not falsely promoted. He has filled a void and the keepers in his program should be thankful!"

And the results are pretty impressive. Glodowski received numerous scholarship offers from coaches who liked what they saw of her online, before finally settling on Division II UW-Parkside. Palani Apuakehau, another stellar goalkeeper whom Wiberg has worked with, will also be attending Parkside in the fall. "Having the website has been a tremendous boost for these kids," Wiberg shares. "As we turn out kids like them, it just makes us get a reputation, and it makes it easier for other kids coming up. It's really going to benefit the kids coming up in three or four years, when everyone knows where to find goalkeepers."

"My next hope is that somewhere, sometime soon, the next Cassie or Palani will find me at a game or tournament or call me up and say, 'I want to be a really good keeper; I want to be the next Cassie or Palani.' Then we'll know we've arrived." 📌