

# P-003: Optimising Goalkeeping Development in Academies: An Action Research Approach Implementing the Constraints-Led Framework

**Mr Daniel Hill**<sup>1,2</sup>, Dr Andre Roca<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Centre for Applied Performance Sciences, Faculty of Sport, Allied Health and Performance Science, St Mary's University, Twickenham, United Kingdom, <sup>2</sup>West Ham United Football Club, , UK

## BACKGROUND/AIM

Traditional goalkeeper environments often rely on limited random or variable practice, non-specific movement patterns, and repetitive technical drills that do not align with real-game contexts (1). There is a growing need to create training environments that support athletes in becoming more skilled by enhancing the coupling between the information present in the performance context and their actions (2). The aim of the study was to explore goalkeepers' perceptions of the implementation of a Constraints-Led Approach (CLA) and the use of Action Research (AR) through coach-researcher reflections to enhance coaching pedagogy.

## METHODS

The AR was conducted at a Category 1 Football Academy in East London, involving five goalkeepers (aged 15-18) over a four-month period. AR cycles included the use of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and a Coach-Researcher reflective diary, written after each session. The reflective diary was used to identify themes that influenced the design and interactions of subsequent training sessions.

## RESULTS

Goalkeepers identified several benefits of the CLA, including improved perceived performance and confidence leading into games, enhanced collaboration in practice design between athletes and coach, and increased realism through use of match and training footage. The CLA approach also provided opportunities for problem-solving, tactical understanding, and repetition through exaggeration. Some negative perceptions included concerns about the number of participants, the individuality of practice design, number of repetitions, and the use of defenders and attackers to replicate realism and game pressures. The Coach-Researcher's reflective diary revealed emerging themes that contributed to the development of pedagogy, including game realism, practice design, the use of exaggeration, wayfinding, functional movement variability, and use of video feedback.

## CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that goalkeepers responded positively to the CLA. However, the study also revealed negative implications, emphasising the need for further understanding of their desire for repetition in training. Identifying best practices for integrating goalkeepers into team training environments and examining the impact of practice design on goalkeeper actions could support further advancements in training methodologies.

## REFERENCES

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