

**REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

**Seamus  
McDonagh**  
**The  
sweeper  
keeper**

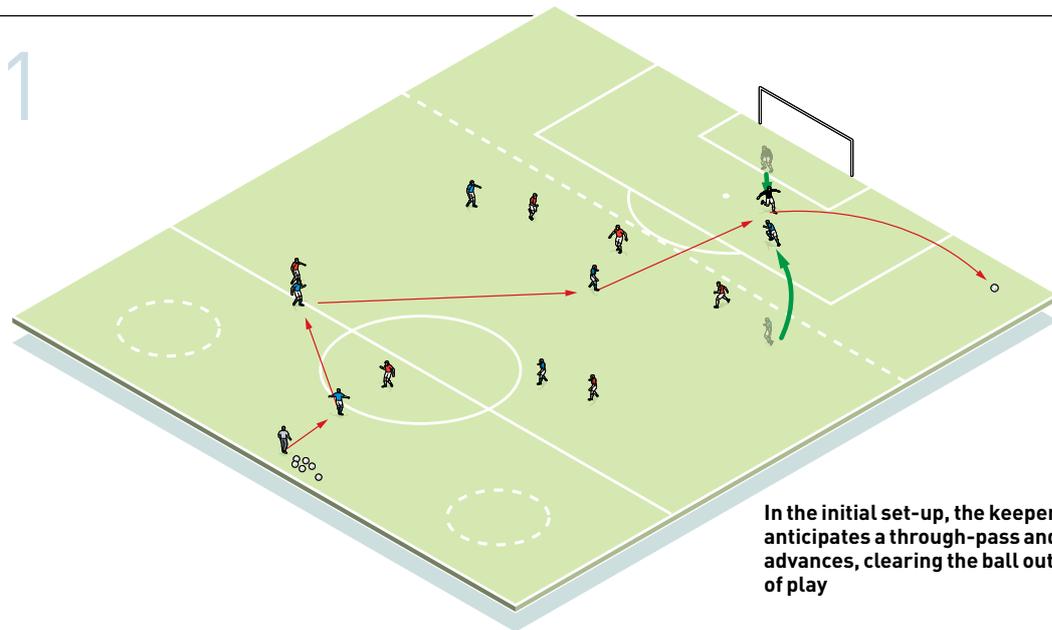
**Overview:**

This session improves goalkeepers' reading of the through-ball, and strengthens decision-making behind a back three or four.

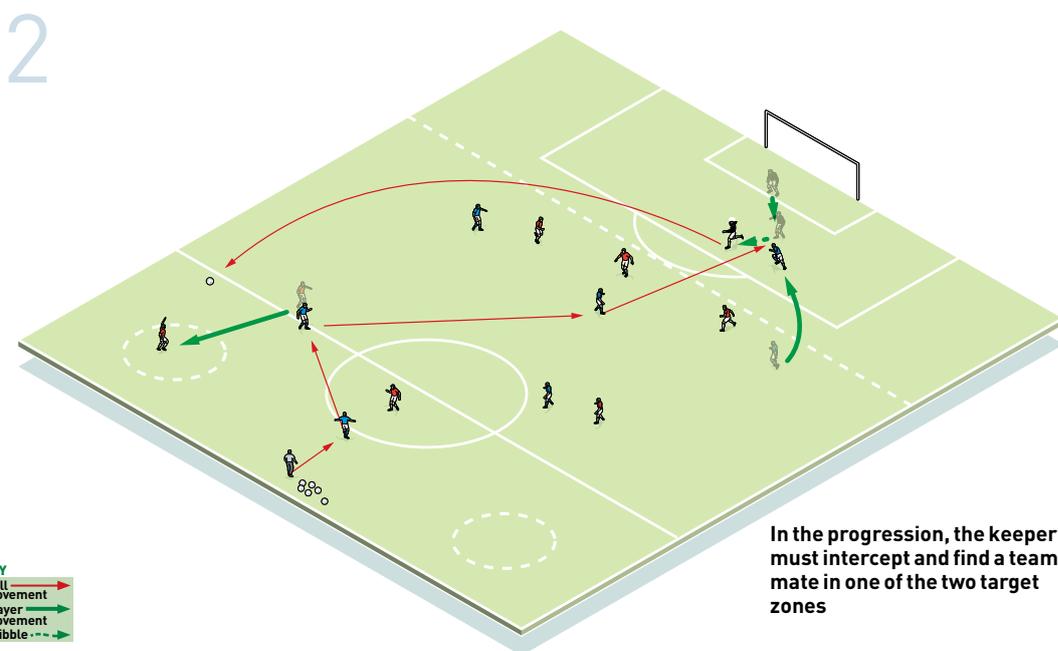
We run this practice because it's so important in today's game that keepers have a precise command of their area – after all, how often do we see keepers sent off for bringing an opponent down when through? Good goalkeeping should mean that penetration of the backline is anticipated and the threat dealt with.

I would suggest all keepers watch Tottenham Hotspur's Hugo Lloris who, in the modern game, is the best at coming off his line.

**THE SWEEPER KEEPER**



**In the initial set-up, the keeper anticipates a through-pass and advances, clearing the ball out of play**



**In the progression, the keeper must intercept and find a team mate in one of the two target zones**

**KEY**  
Ball movement →  
Player movement →  
Dribble - - - - -

**What do I get the players to do?**

**Main session**

We set up as shown, playing man-to-man, 7- or 8-a-side. There is no sweeper and nobody dropping off the defending team. That defending team must play in advance of the 22-yard line.

The attacking team tries to pick a pass through or over the top of the defence into the 22-yard area, sending

a player through to score on goal. This can only be one man going through by himself, and cannot be two strikers. However, attackers can score from anywhere in the box after a through-pass or long pass into the coned area.

**What are the key things to look for technically/tactically?**

Keepers must have a realistic starting position, similar to the one they would adopt in a match. Of course, this would be dependent on where play was on the pitch, but a keeper cannot stay around the 22-yard line as this would be unrealistic.

Keepers must look

to read the situations that develop in front of them. Communication between the keeper and his defenders is vital.

When the ball is sent towards goal, the keeper must assess the situation and make a decision to come or stay. If deciding to come, he must sprint to intercept the through-pass and either gather or clear (1).

<b>SET-UP</b>
<b>AREA</b>
Final third
<b>EQUIPMENT</b>
Balls, cones, goals, mannequins (optional)
<b>NUMBER OF PLAYERS</b>
Up to 12
<b>SESSION TIME</b>
Main session 15mins, Progression 15mins, Game 20mins



**Seamus  
McDonagh**

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Seamus McDonagh is a vastly experienced Irish goalkeeping coach who enjoyed a 24-year playing career, beginning at Rotherham United in 1970. He went on to protect goal for a number of sides including Bolton Wanderers, Everton, Notts County, Birmingham City and Sunderland, before winding down his career in the English lower leagues.

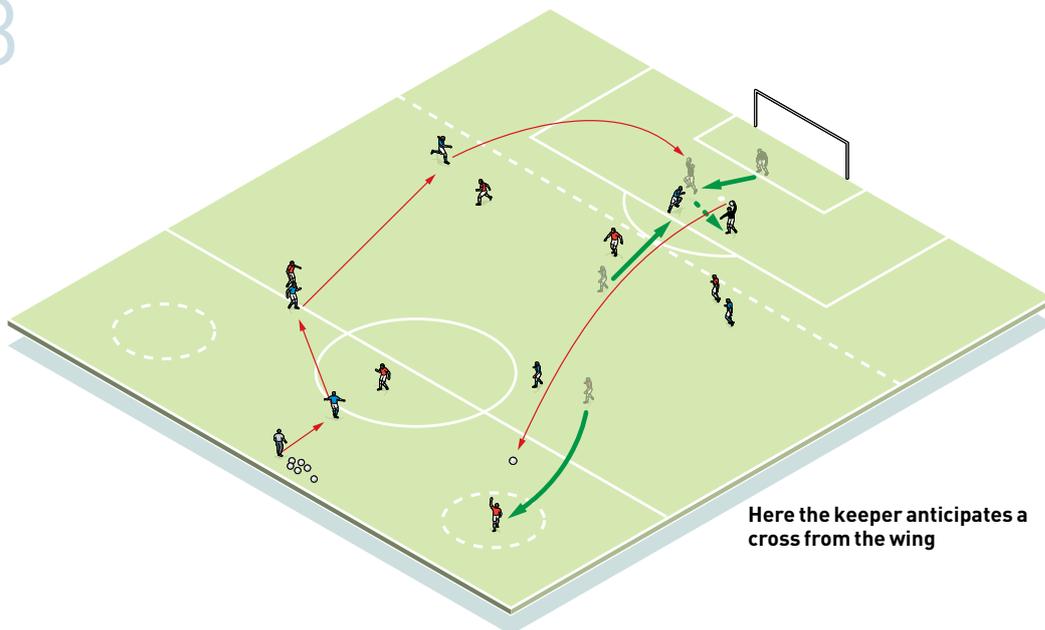
He also made 25 international appearances for the Republic of Ireland, and has managed Galway United.

After concluding his playing career, he coached at Coventry City, Nottingham Forest, Leicester City, Aston Villa and Sunderland, amongst others, and joined the Republic's coaching set-up in November 2013.

“Keepers must look to read the situations that develop in front of them.”

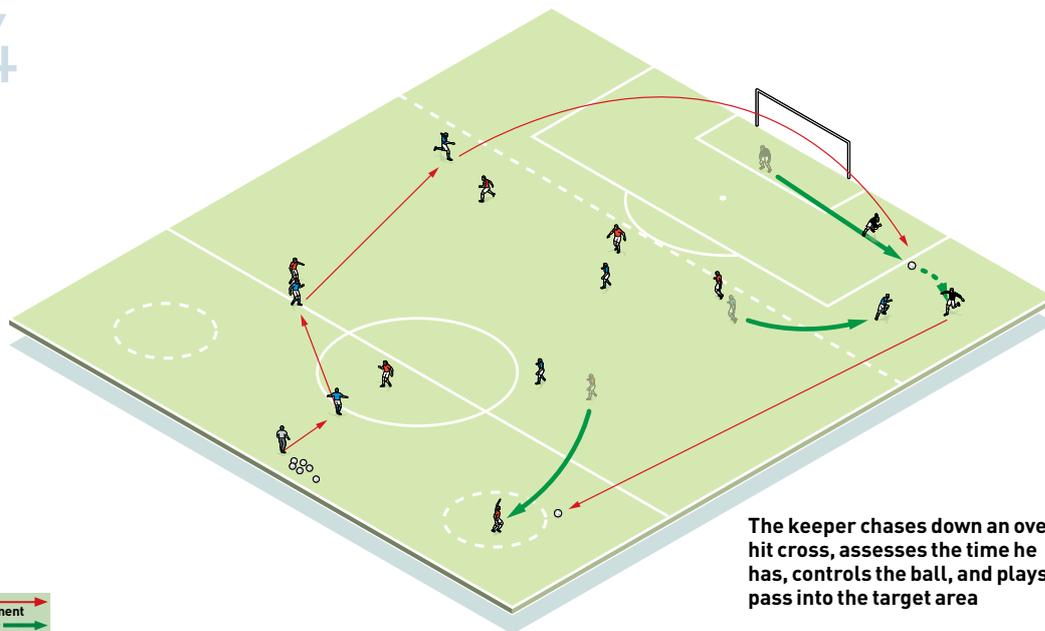
**THE SWEEPER KEEPER**

**3**



Here the keeper anticipates a cross from the wing

**4**



The keeper chases down an over-hit cross, assesses the time he has, controls the ball, and plays a pass into the target area

**How do I progress this game?**

As a progression, we will tell the keeper to kick to one of the coned target areas when he intercepts the initial ball. Making a realistic transition from defence to attack is important, so we would also position two team mates on the

pitch who can receive the keeper's long pass in the target area (2).

It's also important the attacking team varies the types of deliveries, with testing balls arriving both from the flanks and through the middle (3).

The keeper can also be encouraged to pursue other elements of

being 'the sweeper' – for instance, if he intercepts the ball outside his area and is not under immediate pressure from an attacker, he can work on his long passes to a target player (4).

**How would I put this into a game situation?**

We would move this into a full-size 11-a-side game and instruct keepers to apply the principles outlined. ■