

## David De Gea vs. André Onana: Who is the Better Sweeper Goalkeeper in the Premier League?

In modern football, goalkeepers are expected to save shots and be proficient in ball handling and distribution. This has developed into the Sweeper Keeper role, where goalkeepers are expected to pass the ball more effectively and play outside the box, like an extra defender on the field, while saving shots. [A more detailed description of a Sweeper Keeper.](#)

Manchester United changed their goalkeeper this past offseason, replacing 12-year veteran David De Gea with André Onana. The club wanted a keeper that was more comfortable with the ball. Despite De Gea winning Goalkeeper of the Year in the Premier League last season, he struggled to adapt to the sweeper-keeper role throughout last season.

Onana fits the sweeper-keeper role better and is an upgrade to the style Manchester United wants to play.

The data will show that Onana is a better sweeper keeper than De Gea. Let's compare De Gea's last season as Manchester United's goalkeeper and Onana's current season (15 matches played) between the sticks.

### Sweeping:

	David De Gea (2022-23)	André Onana (2023-24)
Defensive Actions Outside Pen. Area	32	17
Defensive Actions Outside Pen. Area per 90 mins	0.84	1.13
Avg. Distance of Defensive Actions	14.8 yds	16.3 yds
Recoveries of Loose Balls	25	21
Clearances	15	2

The most crucial aspect of a sweeper goalkeeper is how well the goalkeeper can play outside the box and their ability to defend (i.e., sweep) outside the penalty area. Although De Gea leads in some of these categories, this is due to him playing more games. With only 15 games under his belt, Onana will eventually surpass De Gea's total amount of defensive actions outside the box. Onana is the better defender compared to De Gea. Onana plays further up the field and is more comfortable outside the penalty area.

### Distribution of the Ball:

	David De Gea (2022-23)	André Onana (2023-24)
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Total Pass Completion %	71.1%	74.5%
Long Passing Completion % (Longer than 30 yds)	43.6%	39.9%
Touches per Game	34.3	40.8
Touches in the Middle Third	5	19
Passes into Final Third	7	10

Goalkeepers in the modern era must be capable of playing out from the back, meaning they need to be proficient in short and long passes. Onana has a higher pass completion percentage and has played up to the middle of the field much more often than De Gea. Despite De Gea's long-passing percentage being much better, Onana fills the role of a sweeper keeper better due to his willingness to receive more ball touches and more passes outside the penalty box.

#### Command in the Box:

	David De Gea (2022-23)	André Onana (2023-24)
Crosses Stopped	15	9
% of Crosses Stopped	2.9%	4.7%
% of Aerials Won	83.3%	87.5%
Clean Sheet %	44.7%	33.3%

Sweeper goalkeepers should be assertive in the 18-yard box and are expected to win aerial duels from crosses and corner kicks. From the data above, Onana has a more prominent presence in the air when playing inside the box but does struggle much more often than De Gea when it comes to keeping a clean sheet (no goals scored against them per game). Onana has a higher presence when facing crosses and corners and tends to be more dominant in the air when compared to De Gea.

#### Save Percentage:

	David De Gea (2022-23)	André Onana (2023-24)
Total Saves	99	56
Goals Conceded	43	18
Save %	71.1%	78.1%
Post-Shot Expected Goals +/-	-0.7	+3.5

Sweeper Keepers are expected to be efficient in stopping shots against them. Post-shot expected goals +/- (PSxG+/-) are expected goals based on how likely the goalkeeper is to save the shot; a positive number suggests that the goalkeeper has an above-average ability to stop shots. Throughout De Gea's career, he has been known to be one of the best shot-stoppers in the world, but Onana has outperformed him in this category. Onana has a higher save percentage and PSxG+/- than De Gea, making him a better goalkeeper for Manchester United.

### Data Used