

Don't tell the other team: Is this the ultimate guide to scoring and saving penalties?

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As the world once again draws its attention to the FIFA World Cup, fans watch in fervour to see their country take on all-comers, in hopes that they will become the world champion. Surely, no part of the event is more tense, dramatic and exhilarating than the penalty shootout- a situation that often determines who goes through to the next round, and who heads home.

It is therefore no surprise that penalty kicks and shoot outs have become a prevalent research topic in the field of sport psychology, offering a suitable setting to study how numerous psychological variables influence sporting success.

In recent years, a great deal of knowledge has accumulated on the subject, with research focussing upon the perspectives of both the penalty taker and the goalkeeper. This wealth of research has been collated in an article in International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology, in order to create what could be the ultimate guide to penalties in football.

The aim of the article in question, 'Duelling in the penalty box: evidence-based recommendations on how both shooters and goalkeepers can win/save [penalty shootouts](#)' was to list the possible ways in which both striker and goalkeeper can influence their performance, and includes a table which summarizes promising behaviors from the view of both the penalty taker and the goalkeeper. The list is structured according to the temporal course of a penalty: the selection of players, the run-up, the shot, and behavior after the shot.

Among other caveats, the authors are keen to point out that many of the collated findings were as a result of laboratory-based testings and therefore the results would be more accurate were they to take place in a real-world setting – a possible avenue for future research.

Still, it can't hurt to take a look before the big game, can it?

Summary of Findings:

Penalty Taker Phase Recommendations

Selection of players

- preferable for the player to have a chronic prevention focus
- should be left-footed
- should have tried and tested pre-performance routines at his/her disposal
- wear a red jersey

Run-up

- choose the straightest or most oblique run-up angle
- choose the target of the shot in advance
- look at the goalkeeper directly and walk backward facing the goalkeeper when preparing for the run-up
- take enough time for the shot

Shot

- if technically possible, kick the ball close to but still below the crossbar
- focus gaze on the target when performing the shot
- avoid clear pointing of the non-kicking foot toward horizontal kicking direction

After the shot

- in [penalty](#) shootouts, celebrate a goal as theatrically as possible

Goalkeeper Phase Recommendations

Run-up

- extend the temporal sequence as long as possible so that the referee does not permit an immediate shot
- draw attention to self (gesticulation, jersey color)
- make deceptive moves
- offer a corner to the shooter by not standing exactly in the middle of the goal
- exploit advance cues to anticipate the direction of the shot such as position of non-kicking leg, angle of hips/torso
- start a defensive reaction shortly before ball contact
- move during the aiming phase instead of remaining stationary

Shot

- sometimes remain in the middle of the goal
- move to the left-hand corner (from the shooter's perspective) for a right-footed player and to the right-hand corner for a left-footed player
- focus on the foot–ball contact region during the shot
- a slow-moving [goalkeeper](#) should react earlier than a fast-moving one
- assume a certain posture to 'look small'

After the shot

- celebratory behavior can be expected to be useful after a save

More information: "Dueling in the penalty box: evidence-based recommendations on how shooters and goalkeepers can win penalty shootouts in soccer." Daniel Memmert, Stefanie Hüttermann, Norbert Hagemann, Florian Loffing & Bernd Strauss. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. Volume 6, Issue 1, 2013

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