

'Never take a gamble with a penalty kick' urges leading football researcher

June 13 2014



In the new research video, Senior Visiting Fellow Dr Ken Bray highlights how to take the perfect penalty.

As players warm up for the first games of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, leading football researcher and writer Dr Ken Bray has issued clear advice that could mean the difference between success and failure for teams that meet penalty shoot-outs in the knock-out stages.

In a new video launched today by the University, Senior Visiting Fellow and author of the book 'How to Score: Science & the Beautiful Game', Ken Bray highlights the problems England face if they get through the Group stages and reach a shoot-out.

He explains: "Success in [penalty](#) shoot-outs is certainly an area where England must improve. About one-third of World Cup games are resolved by penalties in the knock-out stages, but whereas teams like Germany have won about 80 per cent of their encounters, England have

been successful on only 17 per cent of theirs."

To help teams better prepare for 'the dreaded penalties', Ken highlights three main areas to focus on:

"Through research I've shown that there are really three key steps to taking the perfect penalty. Firstly, selecting the best available players for the shoot-out; secondly, ensuring players use good placement technique; and thirdly, preparing so that anyone taking a penalty is focussed mentally."

In the research video, Ken explores why it is important for coaches to be the ones in charge of selecting players for the shoot-out, not waiting for players to volunteer to take a penalty as has happened on previous occasions for England. Research suggests that there could also be an advantage if you play less experienced players first in the shoot-out, and save more experienced until last.

He also expands on his research into the 'diving envelope' – the reach of the goalkeeper when attempting a save – and what this can teach players in terms of positioning penalties into an 'unsaveable zone'. Ken's research at Bath shows that just over 80 per cent of shots played into this area succeed.

Finally, Ken explains why mental focus is integral to it all. He suggests that positive mental imaging can be used as an effective technique for players preparing for the ultimate decider. This year, Roy Hodgson enlisted the help of sports psychologist Steve Peters to help players mentally prepare.

All combined, he warns: "Any team that fails to prepare, mentally and physically, risk a speedy exit from this summer's World Cup. Never take a gamble with a penalty kick."

Provided by University of Bath

Citation: 'Never take a gamble with a penalty kick' urges leading football researcher (2014, June 13) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-06-gamble-penalty-urges-football.html>

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