

The Penalty Kick

By UYSA State Technical Director Greg Maas

On May 25, 2005 the soccer world witnessed arguably one of the greatest soccer matches of all-time, when Liverpool battled back from a 0-3 deficit to Milan to even the match at 3-3 and eventually win the UEFA Champions League Final in a penalty kick shoot-out 3-2. The question remains, was Liverpool's goalkeeper Jerzy Dudek the Hero or was Milan's and European's Golden Boot winner Andrei Shevchenko the Goat? I trust the answer lies with which team you were supporting.

The penalty kick shoot-out is something of a misfit in a game that is free flowing between two teams – a necessary evil, if you will, to determine a winner. Statistics have remained consistent for many years – approximately 77% of all penalties taken are scored. By today's standards, are goalkeepers better now? Are strikers better now? How much time, thought and preparation have been put into taking or stopping penalty kicks?

Below are some factors to consider in your preparation to either score or stop that deciding last kick.

Shooter selection:

1. Temperament – calm, cool and collected.
2. Confident and composed under pressure.
3. Someone you can trust.

Establish a routine:

1. Body language – positive and confident.
2. Placement of the ball on the spot or next to it. If the referee asks you to replace the ball, will this upset your routine?
3. Pick your spot and don't change your mind.
4. Consistent timing and approach to the ball.
5. Strike the ball with pace and accuracy (i.e., low or upper corners).
6. Instruct your teammates to follow the shot, as any rebound from a save or post is live (note: not applicable in a penalty kick shoot-out. Also, the shooter cannot finish a ball that rebounds off of a post, only off of a goalkeeper save).

Practice:

1. The whole routine, this will help with concentration and consistency.
2. Remember, you have been there before – nothing new – be confident.

Goalkeeper:

1. Relax and understand the pressure is on the shooter.
2. What is the time of the game, score-line, etc., if there is a tremendous amount of pressure on the shooter to score, the shooter is very likely to strike the ball nearer to the middle allowing for a good chance at a reaction save.

3. Wait until the shooter is ready before you enter the goal – this will give the appearance that the goal has become smaller.
4. Evaluate the shooter – if they are a central midfielder or striker, placement is often the result; if they are an outside midfielder or defender, power is often the result.
5. Stay as big as possible while slightly moving along the line, and move your arms to create a possible distraction to the shooter.
6. Evaluate the approach – if the approach is fairly straight, the ball is often struck to the power side; if the approach is wide of the ball, the ball is often pushed to the opposite side.
7. Don't think, react. Give yourself every chance to make the save by reacting, and not guessing.
8. Be sure to get "set" prior to the strike of the ball (this will assure you an opportunity to react and make a successful save).
9. When reacting to the ball, be sure to attack the ball at an angle and lead with the hands (this will cut-down the angle and flight of the ball).
10. Instruct your teammates to follow the shot, as any rebound resulting from a save or post is live (note: not applicable in a penalty kick shoot-out).