

How to Take a Penalty

Footage captured by the Sky Sports high definition cameras some years ago installed at the back of football nets, enabled Director of Sport & Exercise Sciences at Liverpool John Moores University, Professor Tim Cable, to study UEFA Champions League and Premier League penalties, to pinpoint the optimum technique for taking winning spot-kicks. Professor Cable's perfect penalty tips come following one of Arsenal's dramatic penalty shoot-out wins and are as follows:

- * The ball needs to cross the goal line at exactly 0.5m below crossbar and 0.5m inside the post.
- * The ball needs to be kicked at a speed greater than 65mph.
- * This requires a run up of 5/6 steps.
- * The striker needs to commence his run up from the edge of [b18 yard[/b] line with an angle of approach of 20-30 degrees to the ball.

A penalty strike following these guidelines - requiring extreme accuracy and speed - is, according to Professor Cable, a 'high-risk strategy' but 'virtually unstoppable' by a goalkeeper. With dedicated practice, it would ensure a 100% scoring rate. Professor Cable said: "Technological advancement is bringing new levels of insight into the nuances of sport. "Because high-definition footage is so much more detailed and clearer than standard transmissions, every move of a player taking a penalty can be scrutinized. Many factors make up a 'perfect penalty' but we believe we've finally nailed the key elements." Sky Sports football expert, former Southampton midfielder and legendary penalty-taker Matt Le Tissier, who himself scored 47 out of 48 penalties, explains: "Throughout my career, my team-mates, my coaches and I were always debating the best way to take a penalty." "I'd always done well with mine but had high-definition footage been around to study, perhaps I would have scored that elusive 48th penalty!"

Professor Cable offers further insight into what makes a good penalty. For an 80% success rate, strikers should bear in mind the following:

- * The ball needs to cross the goal-line approximately 0.7m inside either goal post and at ground, or just above ground level.
 - * This is more of a "placement" type penalty rather than powerful, and needs to reach a speed of between 45-55mph.
 - * The penalty taker routinely approaches this with five steps, although the angle of approach to the ball may be greater, reaching up to 45°.
 - * "Body Deception" - this requires a player to approach the ball as if to hit into one corner but direct it into the other and to place his support (non-kicking foot) slightly further forward (by a couple of inches) than when placing ball into left corner. A perfect example of this was Carlos Tevez's penalty during a Wigan v Manchester City game - it is almost impossible to tell where the penalty is going until ball has been contacted.
 - * To turn this penalty into an unstoppable one, optimum deception is required.
- Sky broadcasts more football than ever in high definition, and has introduced HD cameras into the back of nets to give the complete on-the-ground viewing experience.

The worst penalty

- * Hit, either at speed or slower crossing the line greater than 0.8m inside either post (i.e. middle of goal). This dramatically increases risk by goalkeeper - potentially even if dived wrong way.
- * Any penalty hit straight is more likely to fail and suggests lack of practice and confidence in ability of player.