

Tips on Penalty Shootouts

It's almost impossible in training to replicate the feeling of a player taking a kick. The level of anxiety cannot accurately be copied; however, there are some tips that can help players survive a penalty shootout:

1. At the halfway line, teammates on the field (those taking the kicks) connecting arms to shoulders can create a sense of camaraderie, security and support.
2. While waiting, visualize the ball hitting the net and the sound it makes. Positive visualization is a powerful tool in all sports.
3. Score or miss, congratulate the kickers. They have done their part by stepping up to the plate, and it is that unconditional encouragement that you ultimately want as well.
4. On the walk-up (arguably the hardest part), take deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth, and, again, visualize the ball hitting the net.
5. When at the penalty spot, place the ball so it is sitting nicely and clean on the spot. Be content with your placement before leaving the ball.
6. Take your steps back for your run up (far enough to give you the momentum you need to strike the ball with the desired power).
7. Take another deep breath, approach the ball, and kick!

You'll note we never spoke about the technicality of the strike itself. That's because the process – how players kick, what they see with the GK, and where they kick – is unique to each player.

Lastly, whether players score or kick the ball out of the park, remember two things: Stepping up to take the kick shows great character that your teammates appreciate; and, finally, keep it all in perspective – it's only a game!

