

Coach Your Goalkeeper How to Read Penalties

Seventy per cent of the penalty kicks at the last World Cup went to the opposite side of the foot the kicker took the penalty with. If the professionals make that choice then how much more likely is it that young soccer players will do the same? Make sure your goalkeeper is ready to face a penalty, says David Clarke.

Key coaching tip: right-footed kickers shoot to their left, the keeper's right, and vice versa.

1. Get your goalkeeper to read the shot

- Tell your players to watch the penalty taker's eyes and body shape. Before young players shoot they often look at the corner they are going to hit the ball.
- They must also watch the player's approach. A very wide approach often indicates the shooter is going towards the opposite corner. A straight-on approach gives fewer clues.
- Get your players to watch the plant foot. The ball often goes where the plant foot points.
- And then the hips. The ball goes where the hips point. A "push pass" shot will require the hips to open up in the direction the ball is going.
- Even the head. If junior penalty takers often drop their heads low and have a big pull-back of the leg — expect a cross-body shot. If the head stays up he's going for the opposite corner.

Key coaching tip: don't react too soon. Use the clues to predict where the ball might go but wait a split second to be sure it really is going there.

2. Junior penalties are often poorly hit

Many penalties, especially at the youth level, are poorly taken, either weakly hit or right down the middle. Often the goalkeeper can easily make the save if they just wait and simply react to the shot.