

Defending Penalty Kicks

How often have you seen a keeper guess which direction the penalty kick is going to go, dive in that direction, only to have it go to the other corner?

Even worse, how often have you seen a keeper guess which direction the penalty kick is going to go, dive in that direction, only to have the ball go straight down the middle (where the keeper was standing in the first place)?

I would much rather the keeper stay on his feet, read the shooter and react accordingly then to have the keeper guess and hope.

I realize many people will say that if the keeper doesn't guess, they won't have a chance of making the save but the reality is, if they guess and the ball is well struck, they most likely aren't going to make the save anyway. If they guess and the ball is poorly struck, they are only going to make the save if they happened to guess correctly. If the ball is poorly struck and they guessed incorrectly, they aren't going to make the save.

On the other hand, if they read the play and react and the ball is struck well, it's going to be a goal (just like if they guessed and were correct). If they wait to react and it's hit poorly, there is a good chance of making the save regardless of the direction the ball is hit.

If this is the case, why do most keepers guess? I believe the answer has to do with perception. If the ball is well struck and the keeper guesses (right or wrong) it's a goal but the keeper is flying through the air so it gives the impression of being a real good effort. If the ball is well struck and the keeper didn't guess, the keeper will barely have time to react and it won't look nearly as impressive. Either way, the result is the same but the keeper doesn't want to look lazy so would rather guess and look good than not guess and increase the likelihood of making the save.

Be willing to not look as good and make more saves by waiting a bit longer, reading the shot and reacting than to just guess and hope.

Any questions, comments or suggestions should be sent to Lawrence@finesoccer.com or they can be posted on the [FineSoccer Forum](#)

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