



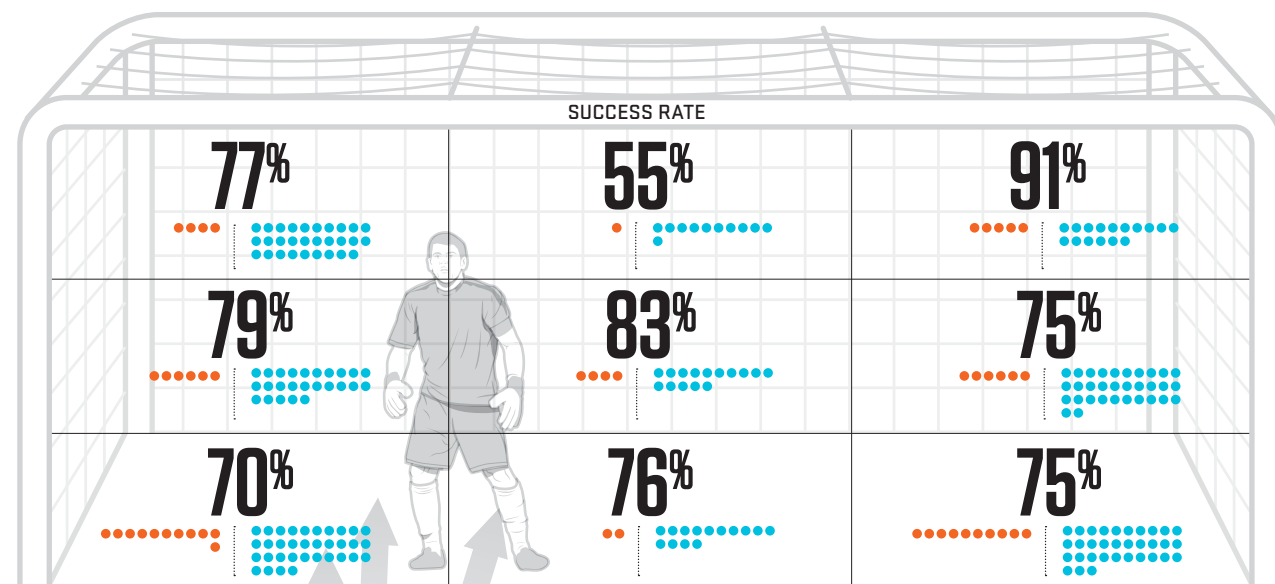
WORLD FOOTBALL

SECRETS OF A SHOOTOUT

In terms of sheer human drama, there isn't an event in sports that can rival a penalty shootout. It's soccer gone Russian roulette, with entire nations often hanging on every shot. Who knows. Euro 2012 might deliver the most agonizing one yet. So *The Mag* watched all 35 World Cup and Euro shootouts since the first tiebreaker in 1976—and plucked studies from across the pond—to learn the tricks of sneaking it past the keeper. —ROGER BENNETT

TRUST YOUR AIM ...

No offense to keepers, but when a shooter is staring down a 24-by-8 goal from just 12 yards out, no one expects to see a save. That expectation was backed up by our study: 258 of the 343 penalty kicks (75%) found the back of the net. The highest rates of success were kicks aimed to the top right (21 of 23) and straight down the middle (19 of 23).



● LEFT-FOOT GOAL
● RIGHT-FOOT GOAL

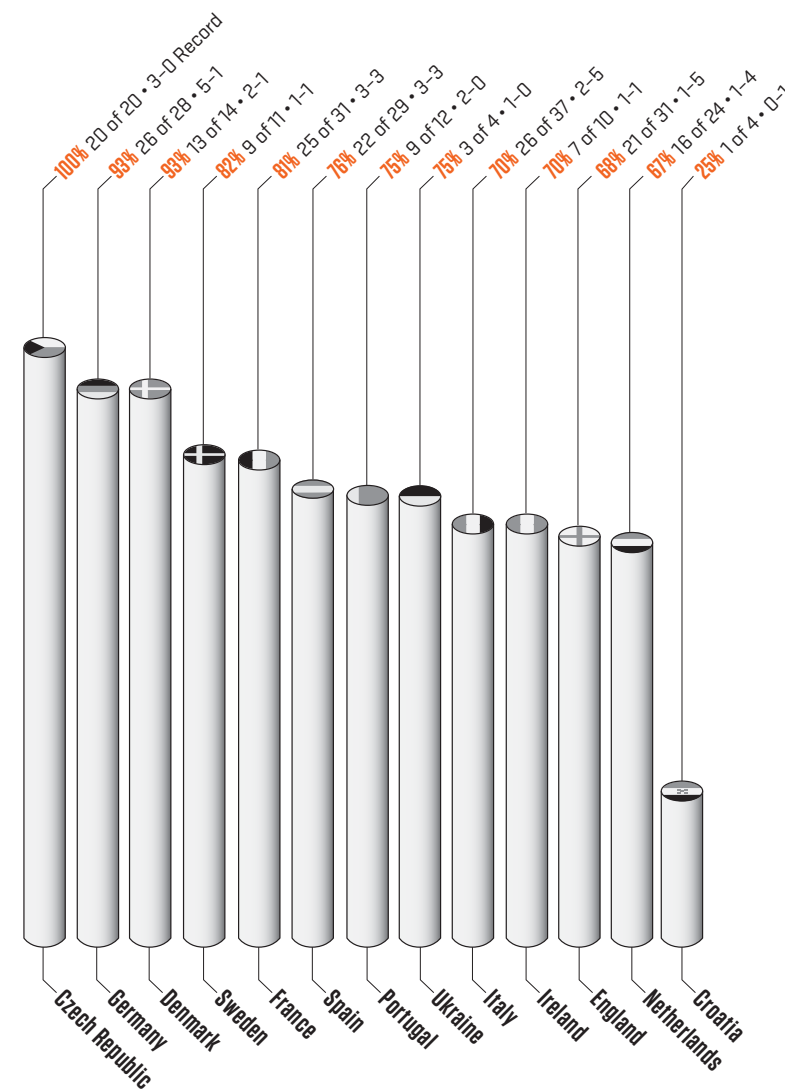
... BUT PICK YOUR SPOTS

Shooters aimed bottom left (18.7%) and bottom right (16.6%) most often, but converted just 73% of these kicks combined.

12.5%	6.4%	6.7%
11.4%	6.7%	14.9%
18.7%	6.1%	16.6%

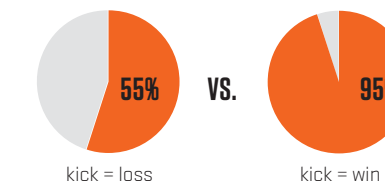
KNOW YOUR HISTORY

If you're going to bet on one of the 16 teams to win a shootout in Euro 2012, pick the Czech Republic. The club has never lost or missed a kick in the Euro or World Cup (Greece, Poland and Russia have never been in a shootout).



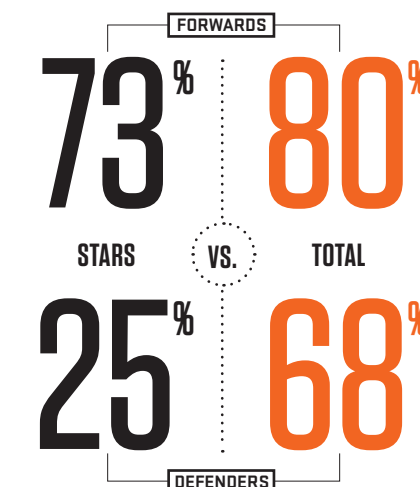
AVOID PRESSURE POINTS

A recent Norwegian study of shootouts found that when a missed kick would result in a loss, players converted 55% of the time. But if a make would result in a win, the success rate rose to 95%.



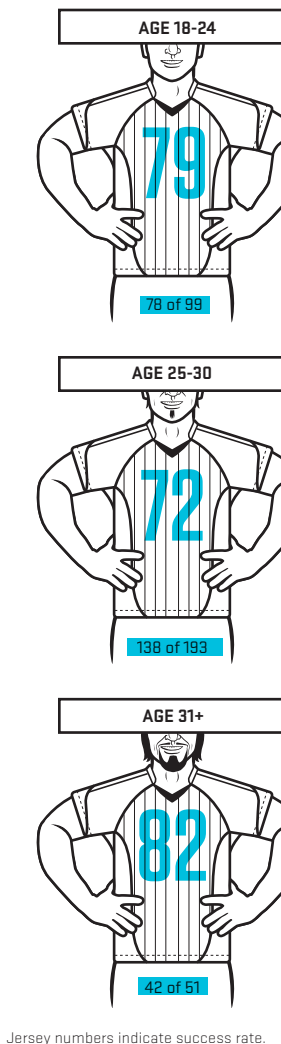
DON'T COUNT ON STARS

The same Norwegian study found that forwards scored on 80% of attempts and defenders converted on 68%. But that success rate dropped to 73% for star forwards (those who had won a prestigious individual award) and fell to 25% for star defenders.



RESPECT YOUR ELDERLY

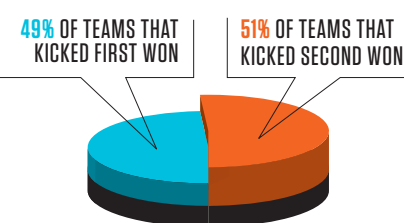
Vets 31-plus were the steeliest shooters of any age group in our study (82%), while 28-year-olds had the worst success rate (62%) of players with at least 20 kicks.



Jersey numbers indicate success rate.

DON'T SWEAT THE COIN

As with OT in American football, winning the coin toss is a perceived advantage in a shootout. But only 17 of our 35 teams kicked first and laughed last.

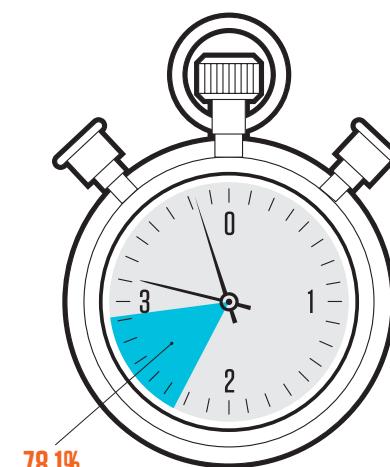


STICK WITH STRIKERS

In a shootout, each coach selects five players to take a kick. (In the case of a tie, new shooters are picked until the game is decided.) Strikers and midfielders occupied the first four spots 77% of the time; defenders took just 26% of the 343 total kicks. Across all positions, the success rate dropped 17% from the first shot to the fourth. Pressure knows no positions.



TAKE YOUR TIME



In the Norwegian study, the shooters who took 1.1 seconds or less to make contact after the ball was placed had the lowest success rate (58.5%). But those who took 2.3 to 2.9 seconds made 78.1%.

WATCH YOUR SPEED

Penalty kicks can travel up to 125 mph, but a 2010 study by the Football Exchange at Liverpool's John Moore University found that shots struck less than 50 mph have the highest success rate (73%).

