

What World Cup Penalty Shootouts Can Teach You About Performing Well Under Extreme Pressure? A Lot, Considerable Science Says

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If you think you're capable of diving deep into rabbit holes, consider psychologist Geir Jordet. He spent five years watching every penalty shootout of every major men's international soccer tournament (of which the World Cup is the most major) from the past fifty years. He also interviewed 25 of the players involved, and then validated his assumptions through practice sessions with 15 different teams.

Sound super niche-y? Absolutely, but the goal of his research is universal: to better understand how pressure — both external and internal — can affect your performance.

If you aren't familiar, penalty shootouts are used to settle tournament games that remained tied after playing extra time. (Hockey does something similar.) It's best of five, with each team alternating taking shots from the penalty spot. Eventually a shot gets saved, or misses, and one team wins the match.

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