

# The economics of soccer penalty kicks

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I'm fascinated by economics, specifically the application of economic theories to things you wouldn't normally consider as economics. Back during the World Cup, Slate's undercover economist column took a look at [the economics of penalty kicks](#). Steven D. Levitt, co-author of another paper on the subject, [writes in more detail on the unusually low percentage of penalty kicks taken straight ahead](#). I wasn't aware of the "straight ahead" strategy, but the more I read about it (and watched a video of a successful execution) the more fascinated I was by this rarely-used strategy.

Levitt highlighted the "anti-straight-ahead bias" of the press, pointing out that the second Swiss shooter hit the crossbar and was not lambasted. But isn't that worse than shooting straight ahead and being stopped? I mean, if you hit the crossbar, it means that the opposing goalie *didn't even have to be there*. He could've been playing Nintendo or picking his nose. You'd think the cardinal rule of taking a penalty kick is *at least make it a shot on goal*.

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