

Three Phases of Shooting a Soccer Ball

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Mia Hamm plants her foot and sweeps back her kicking leg to take a penalty kick. Photo Credit Ezra Shaw/Getty Images Sport/Getty Images

Shooting a soccer ball is essentially no different than passing it. You need to aim the ball between the goalposts and under the crossbar, and to a spot where the goalkeeper cannot snag it. If you think of the shot as more like a pass, you are more likely to put it "on frame," as soccer television announcers like to call it. The three phases of shooting a soccer ball are thus the same as the phases involved in kicking or passing the ball. The best shooters, such as Mia Hamm, the leading goal scorer in international play, demonstrate flawless technique throughout the shot.

Preparation

In this phase, you work on the movements leading up to shooting the ball, explains Sam Snow, director of coaching education for US Youth Soccer. You focus on your feet first, as you must align your plant foot and your kicking leg in the direction you want the ball to travel. As you prepare to shoot, you distribute your body weight and adjust your posture. Your eyes are on the ball as you run up to it, ideally at a 45-degree angle of approach, notes the online site Sports Injury Bulletin. You plant your foot about 6 inches to the side of the ball and swing back the leg that strikes the ball for the shot.

Contact

In the contact phase, you whip your kicking leg forward and move your body weight forward as well to create a powerful impact with the ball. Your hip and shoulder positions, your plant leg position and your contact point with the ball must be addressed with solid technique, Snow writes. At the point of striking the ball, you lean back slightly if you want the ball to rise toward the goal, or you curl your body over the ball to keep the ball low or on the ground. After glancing up to see where the goalkeeper is, your eyes

return to the ball. The actual foot contact with the ball lasts for six to 16 milliseconds, according to Sports Injury Bulletin.

Follow-through

This phase refers to the movement that occurs after contact with the ball, as your kicking leg continues to swing rapidly forward and slightly across the front of your body as the shot carries toward the goal. Good technique involves not halting your follow-through too soon and continuing to keep your eye on the ball.

Coaching Focus

The entire shot lasts for no more than five seconds, depending on the length of the approach, Sports Injury Bulletin reports. A child begins to learn the phases of shooting between ages 4 and 6, and by age 9, her pattern of shooting a ball matures. If you are coaching a young team, focus on the preparation phase, especially what Snow calls "the position of readiness" just before contact with the ball. The player's body midline should be balanced over the ball, the arms out for balance, head bowed down to see the ball, knee of the plant leg gently bent and the lower leg of the kicking foot curled back to create power during the swing forward.