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## How to lose on penalties but still win

TOM DART

If an Englishman's radical idea to hold shoot-outs before extra time is ever adopted, Yuichi Komano, who missed the decisive penalty on Tuesday as Paraguay beat Japan in a shoot-out, and others might be spared such profound trauma.

Struck by a sense of injustice as Liverpool beat West Ham United on penalties in the 2006 FA Cup Final, Henry Birtles came up with "The Advantage". With scores level after 90 minutes, a sudden-death shoot-out takes place. Extra time is then played and if the scores are level, the side that won the shoot-out win the match.

"Penalty-taking is a skill that shouldn't be abolished and the scorers are still rewarded for holding their nerve," Birtles, who runs a sports media consultancy, said.

He does not believe that winning the shoot-out would place undue pressure on the victors, who would arguably be tempted to defend while facing an onslaught from opponents who know they must score. "Right now, both teams could play negative football in extra time," he said. "With this, they can't."

In 2008, Birtles made a presentation to Fifa, which has yet to act. After five losses from six shoot-outs in big tournaments, the scheme might be in England's interests as well as Komano's.



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