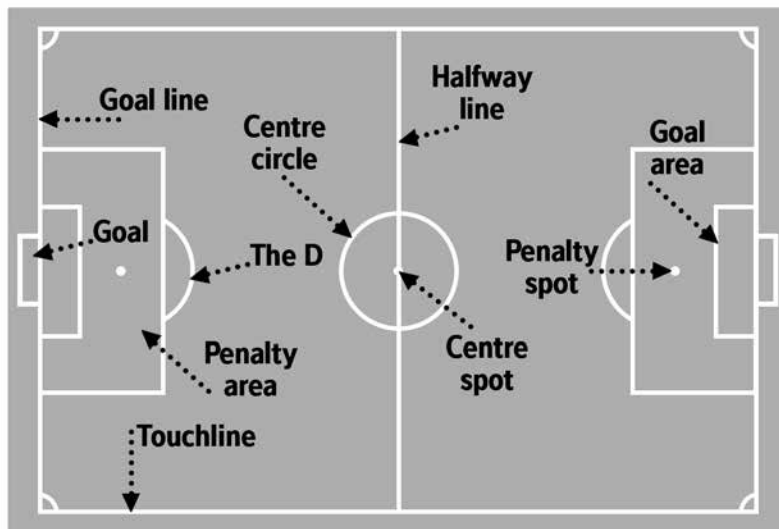


## PITCH MARKINGS

The laws of the game state that every pitch must be rectangular and, for professional matches, have the following pitch markings. Most goals are scored inside the penalty area and certain areas of the pitch, like the goal area, the penalty area and the penalty spot, are the same size and distance in every stadium.



**Let's start with a few questions.**

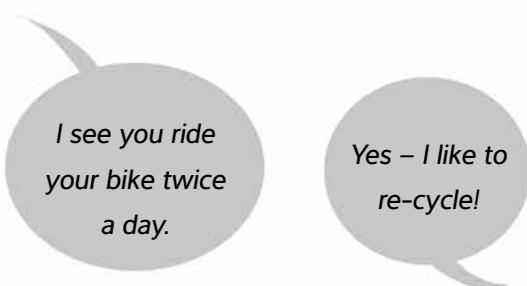
*Do you remember how wobbly you felt when you first tried to ride a bike?*

*What about when you first drew a picture of your parents and your mum's eyes were in the wrong place?*

*Or when you kept forgetting the number seven when you were learning to count in a new language?*

Some tasks are just tricky from the start. But with practice, you get better. When it goes well, it's incredible! There's no better feeling!

Now you can cruise through the park on your bike and it feels amazing!



*I see you ride  
your bike twice  
a day.*

*Yes - I like to  
re-cycle!*

And your mum's eyes are drawn perfectly on her face!  
And you can say seven in lots of languages!



*Sept!*

*Siete!*

*Yedi!*

*Sieben!*

*Zeven!*

(French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Turkish)

Footballers go through the same journey. They fell off their bikes as kids. They probably made weird drawings of their parents. They might have messed up their language tests. And they also missed chances to score goals. All the time!

Footballers understand that making mistakes is a great way to learn how to do things better in the future. And when it comes to goals, there is only one way to guarantee you will never score a goal: if you never shoot!

In this chapter, we are going to meet some of the best strikers in the world and learn their approach to shooting. We will reveal football's most accurate striker, discover the ancient cricketer whose impact is still felt in football today and learn about the footballer who can jump higher than a basketball player!

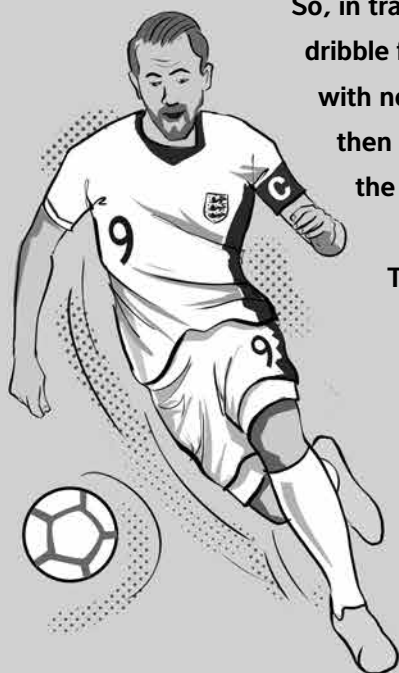
## LET'S GET REAL

England's Harry Kane was released by Arsenal aged twelve because a coach thought he was not good enough. Yet he went on to become England captain during their best run of results since the 1966 World Cup win. Kane scored 280 goals for Tottenham Hotspur, more than anyone else in their 140-year history. He has also scored more goals for England than any other player.

Kane said that he wanted to prove a point to the Arsenal youth coach who did not think he was good enough. We can all agree that he definitely did that! He

explains that he always had an instinct for where the ball would end up. And this proved to be very useful. When he was around, the ball usually ended up in the back of the net!

He puts his success down to continually practising his shooting. He did this from when he was an under-15 player at the start of his career and continues to do exactly the same today. He likes to practise what he calls 'realistic scenarios'.



So, in training, he doesn't dribble from the half-way line with no one tackling him and then backheel the ball into the goal.

That never happens in a game!

He doesn't do keepy-uppies from the corner flag to the penalty area before bicycle-kicking it into the net. I've also never seen that happen!

He doesn't balance the ball on his forehead, run three times around the pitch, reach the penalty spot, flick the ball up and head it into the goal. That would be absolutely amazing if it happened, but it doesn't!

Nope.

Kane practises shooting with his first touch from the edge of the penalty area. He practises getting into key positions in the area and shooting from different angles. And he practises shooting quickly – just after he receives the ball – with his left foot. Because these are realistic things that happen in a game.

When he first started playing regularly for Spurs, there was some surprise that he kept scoring so often. He scored twenty-one league goals in his first full season in the first team, and was nicknamed a 'one-season wonder' because no

one expected him to score more than this in future seasons. But he ended up doing so five more times! The one-season wonder became a club hero and an England legend.

Kane's biggest strength is his shooting. His technique in striking the ball so cleanly is perfect, and he usually finds the corner of the net. All of his 'realistic scenario' practice has paid off. Kane is able to score many different types of goals: from close-range, from distance, penalties, instinct, first time and set pieces.

He is also a brilliant and selfless passer, always able to recognize and find a teammate in a better position than him. In one season, he finished as the Premier League top scorer and the top assist-provider.

Kane loves scoring goals, but what has really made him so successful is that he also loves practising scoring goals. He calls the training pitch where he practises his 'happy place'. And when he scores, everyone else is happy too!

## **THE APT METHOD**

### **So how can we practise shooting?**

For that, we need to know what we are practising.

There are three main elements for strikers to focus on when it comes to shooting: accuracy, power and timing.

Let's call them APT, a word that can also mean appropriate – and if you combine these three things, it's appropriate that you will score **loads of goals**.

### **ACCURACY**

Accuracy is the ability to direct the ball towards a specific part of the goal where the goalkeeper cannot reach it. Accurate shooting increases the chances of scoring. It sounds simple: the objective is to get the ball on target and away from the goalkeeper. One Manchester United coach told his players to always look at the goalkeeper's position before taking a shot, and then aim for the corner that would be hardest for the goalkeeper to reach. The more accurate you are, the more goals you will score!

# SUPER SINCY

If you look up the term 'leading international goalscorer' online, the name of Portugal striker Cristiano Ronaldo will come up. Fair enough – Ronaldo has scored more than 135 goals in international matches. But the internet has made a mistake (yes, it can happen). The online algorithm has not counted female players. That's rude! And wrong!

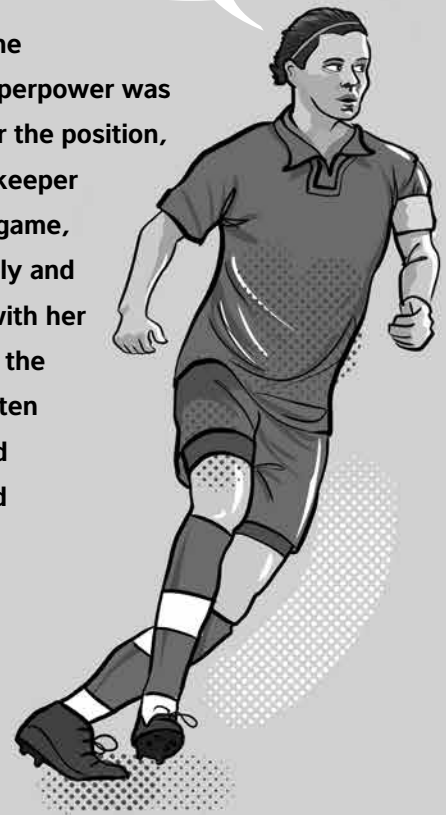
In fact, the leading international goalscorer is Christine Sinclair. She scored 190 goals for Canada, a record that even Ronaldo is unlikely to break. Sinclair has scored more goals for her country than any other player in history. The reason? Accuracy.

Sinclair could read the game well, which meant she would watch closely and predict what might happen next. So when the ball came to her from a pass, or from a rebound (when the ball bounces back into play after striking the goalkeeper or

a post) or ricochet (when it bounces back off another player), it was no accident. She was able to be in the right place at the right time – and was ready to strike.

Sinclair never panicked in front of the goal. She always stayed cool and aimed for the corners of the net. But her real superpower was accuracy. No matter the position, the angle, the goalkeeper or the score in the game, Sinclair would simply and effectively get on with her job. She would find the target and, more often than not, she would score. One-hundred and ninety times!

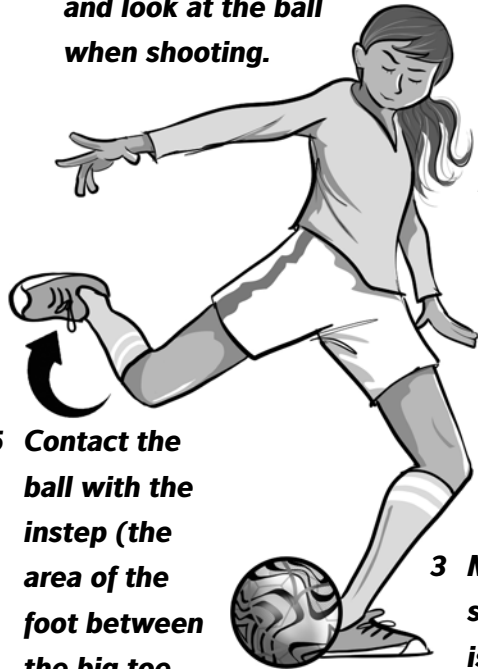
If you give me a chance, I'm going to put it in the back of the net.



## TIP

### HOW TO KICK ACCURATELY

- 1** Keep your head down and look at the ball when shooting.



- 5** Contact the ball with the instep (the area of the foot between the big toe and heel).

- 4** Aim to strike the middle of the ball.

- 2** Plant your standing foot next to the ball, pointing towards the target.

- 3** Make sure your shooting foot is almost at a right angle to your standing foot.

### ACCURACY DRILL

- 1** Set up a goal (if you don't have one, use two cones or even place two jumpers on the ground).

- 2** Put the ball at a distance from the goal that you are comfortable kicking from.

- 3** Select a corner of the goal or a specific target to aim for.

- 4** Kick the ball in that corner three times in a row. Then five times. Then ten times.

- 5** Move the ball farther back – or at a different angle from the goal – and try again.

- 6** Now try with your other foot.

- 7** Switch corners and repeat.

## POWER

Power is the ability to strike the ball with maximum force. This makes the ball travel quickly towards the goal and makes it hard for goalkeepers to react in time, even if they are in the right position. It allows you to score from farther away from the goal, giving defenders and the goalkeeper another problem to worry about, as often a long shot can catch a goalkeeper off guard.

## ICE AND FIRE

England striker Chloe Kelly was confident. She was about to take a penalty kick against Nigeria in the 2023 World Cup. Score and England win. Kelly had no doubts. 'I'm going to score,' she thought to herself. She was right.

Kelly blasted the ball into the top-left corner of the goal. The goalkeeper went the right way but was not even close to saving it. In fact, she was closer to having her wrist snapped off! England were through to the next round. Kelly's kick was clocked at travelling 111 kph (69 mph). Serious power! That's about the same top speed that

a cheetah, the world's fastest land animal, can reach. It's just below the maximum speed limit on a motorway. And it's faster than the hardest-hit goal in the Premier League that season.

Scientists examined how Kelly generated so much power to strike the ball. They calculated that Kelly's penalty created the following equation:

**Speed of ball = Hard contact + speed of kicking foot + hip and knee motion + speed of approach + upper body rotation + follow-through**

They marvelled at the power and speed of her goal – and so did everyone who saw it!

Kelly's confidence also helped her out: because she had that additional belief in herself, she approached the ball with extra speed and purpose.

One of her old coaches said that Kelly was always cool under pressure and willing to take risks. 'She has ice in her veins and plays with a lot of fire.'