

Vaggelis Lappas • Vasilis Armatas • Dimitris Gkoumas

# SET PIECES in soccer



- Theory and practice
- Planning and training
- 60 routines for throw-ins, free-kicks and corner-kicks + animation for each routine

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**Title:**

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# PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

*It is a common secret that set pieces are the key to the success of a football team. Set pieces are a characteristic of almost every club, constitute a large proportion of goals scored throughout a season and, as a result, hold a significant role to a team's performance.*

*This is why we took the decision to form a group of coaches and analysts to proceed with the writing of a book about set pieces that would meet the needs of coaches.*

*The responsibility of the writing was undertaken by Vangelis Lappas, already a successful writer and coach, who immediately realized that the complexity of set pieces requires the assistance of other coaches-writers. Thus, Vassilis Armatas, head of the Analysis Department of the Olympiacos FC Academy, and Dimitris Gkoumas, head of analysis of the National Teams of the Greek Football Federation and opposition analyst of Ajax FC, were added to the writing team.*

*The writing team started with intensive research and analysis of set pieces for a period of 9 months. The writing and completion of this book took another 9 months.*

*The purpose of the book and the authors' aim is neither to simply present some examples of set pieces (throw-ins, free-kicks and corner-kicks) nor to write a superficial analysis.*

*The aim is to examine and interpret precisely and clearly the theoretical background that every football coach must possess with regard to set pieces. At the same time, the book offers a large number of routines (drills) that coaches can incorporate into their training sessions in order to effectively prepare their players in practice.*

*A very important element is that the book presents not only the offensive function but also the corresponding defensive function that a team must have in order to face the risk of conceding a goal from set pieces. It also gives importance to the preparation for the next phase, i.e. the offensive or defensive transition.*

*Personally, I believe the book you are holding in your hands is the best manual for the study of set pieces and at the same time it lists routines applied by great football teams for every coach to use. For a better understanding of these routines the book is accompanied by animations that can be viewed on the mobile/tablet by scanning the QR CODE.*

*Finally, I want to thank the authors for the endless hours spent on completing this book.*

*Happy reading and good practices!*

Elias Tsiptses  
Publisher - Sportbook Publications

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## CHAPTER 2: STATISTICAL DATA

*We consider set pieces as an important index in major tournaments...*

**Gareth Southgate (England National team)**

*We spend a lot of time on set pieces training, planning every little detail, designing movements and blocking*

**Ruben Loftus-Cheek (England National team)**

### What do numbers have to say?

It is obvious that set pieces is a decisive factor in terms of game and tournament end result. Off-course, despite their frequent occurrence within a game, they have low effectiveness, but in any case football is characterized by a low number of goals scored opposite to other team sports such as basketball or volleyball.

The author collected and analyzed all goals scored on club level during the 2018-2019 season in top-5 European leagues (England, Spain, Germany, Italy, France) as well as in 5 Champions League (CL) seasons (2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19). On a National team level the authors analyzed all goals scored in the last 6 tournaments for men (2002, 2006, 2010, 2014,

2018, 2022) and women (2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019) as well as the last U-20 and U-17 tournaments in males (2015, 2017, 2019) and females (2014, 2016, 2018). The authors concluded that the magnitude and diversity of the sample will lead to useful and substantiated conclusions.

A number of research studies have concluded that set pieces goal scoring represents 25-35% of total goals scored within any tournament. Off course the exact percentage varies depending on how a “set piece” is defined. As mentioned previously kick-off, goal-kick and dead-balls are typically considered set pieces but due to the fact that they (very) rarely lead to a goal being scored, most researchers tend to not include these situations in the tally of set pieces. In addition besides the definition itself, it is also important to define how many ball touches must be accounted for until a goal is scored.

The present work adopts the view of Ken Bray as this is depicted in his work “How to score a goal”, therefore the present work will examine set pieces either as “direct kicks/shots” or a “chances to score a goal with the least possible ball touches”.

### Set pieces in men’s game

The first analysis deals with men tournaments where the wealth and sources of data are larger compared to women or youth tournaments.

### Frequency

On international level there are 110 set pieces (1 every 45 seconds) on average within a game which represent 97% of time stoppages and 41% of total game time. More specifically as can be seen in Figure 5, a club may take 4 crosses per game on average, 9 goal-kicks, 20 throw-ins, 15 free-kicks, 10 side-kicks as well as 1 penalty-kick every 3 games. If we focus on the attacking half of the pitch, which is more crucial area for scoring a goal, the data show 20 set pieces on average per team per game.

### Effectiveness

Most clubs score 0.30 goals on average per game from set pieces, whilst top clubs can increase this figure up to 0.75-0.80. Therefore within a season, set pieces have the potential to “offer” 15-20 goals on club which can make the difference for avoiding relegation, winning a title or a trophy, etc.

Phil Giles, Brentford FC Director, stated that “we cannot overrun our competitors, so we must find different and innovative ways to make things happen”. One such innovative move was the hiring of free-kick coaching specialist Bartek Sylwestrzak and Italian set pieces coaching specialist Gianni Vio in 2015. Every set piece is an excellent opportunity for low-budget teams, since low level clubs can turn into set pieces experts.

Considering total goals scored, set pieces goals were on average 27.5% during 7 men’s tournaments. Regarding attacking actions, set pieces represent similar percentages in the five major Leagues investigated. Thus it can be concluded that set pieces represent 10.5%-11% of total attacking actions (Chart 1).

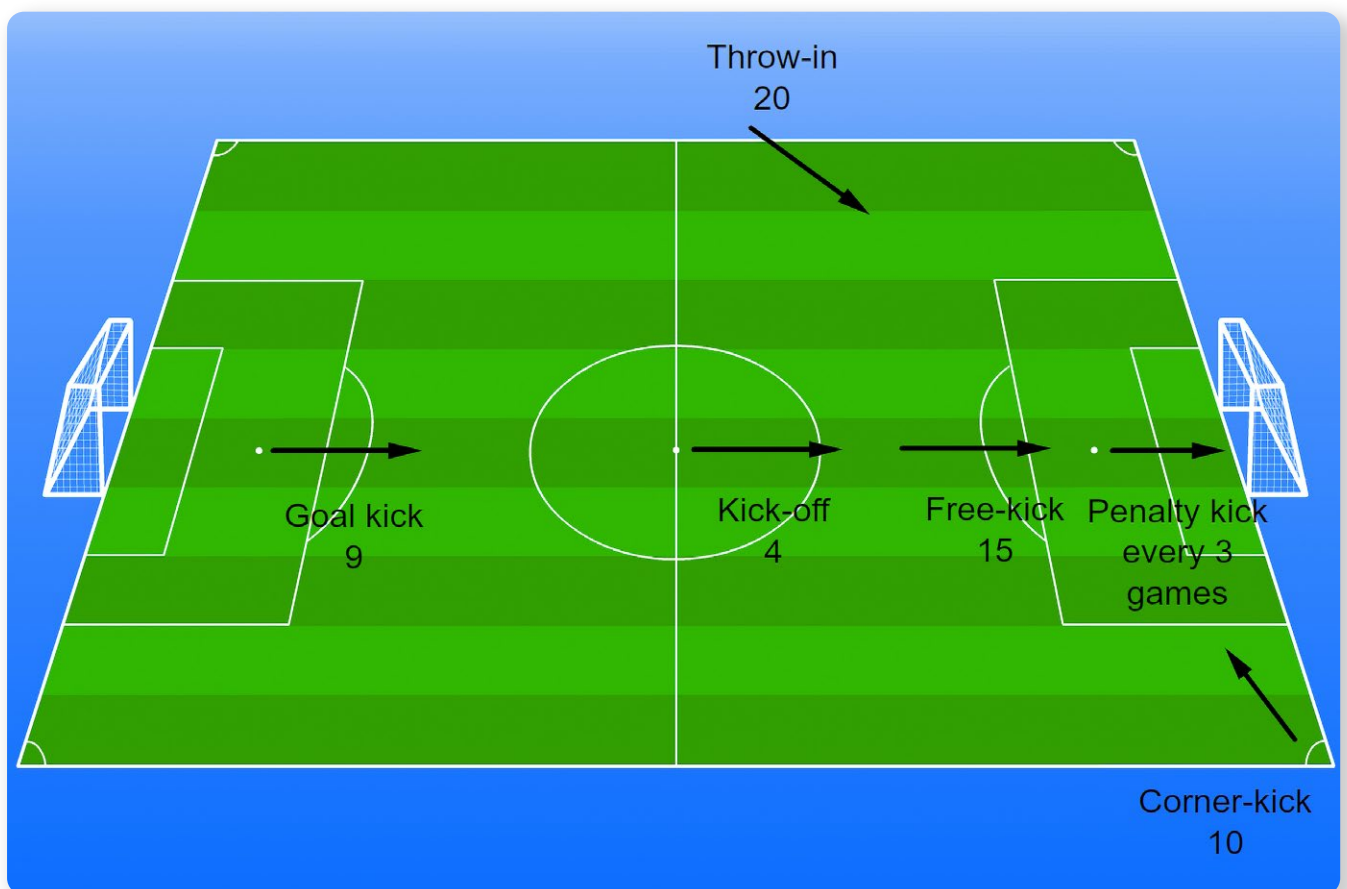


Figure 5: Set pieces appearance rate during a game (average rate per team per game).

# THROW-IN ATTACKING ROUTINES





# THROW-IN

## ROUTINE 1

### Initial positioning

The throw-in is located in zone 3. Two players are positioned behind the opponent's defending player that covers the area. All other attacking player move away from the area and of course some of them are positioned inside the box.

### Movements & key-players

Attacking players move on the same time towards opposite directions in order to create conditions to receive the ball. On the same time they open up the center because their marking player will follow them up. The throw-in taker sends the ball to player 1, forcing the defending player in the area to move towards the ball. Right after that he moves towards the open center area that has been created. The teammate that received the ball from the throw-in now moves the ball with one touch back to him (the throw-in taker). He is now crossing inside the box.

### Important details

- The quality of the throw-in pass is the first step for a successful routine.
- The player crossing the ball, can always keep in mind the option of driving the ball inside the box if there is no direct pressure by the defending players.
- The pass toward the player that takes the crossing must be in front of him so as not to stall him with additional ball touches.



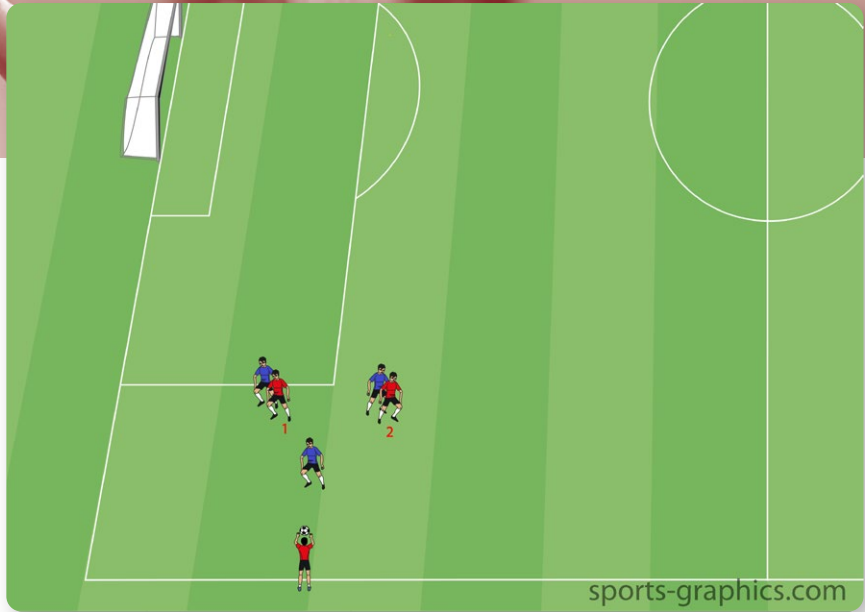
### WATCH AN ANIMATED VIDEO OF THE ROUTINE

You can watch an animation of this particular routine by scanning the QR CODE via the camera of your mobile or tablet.

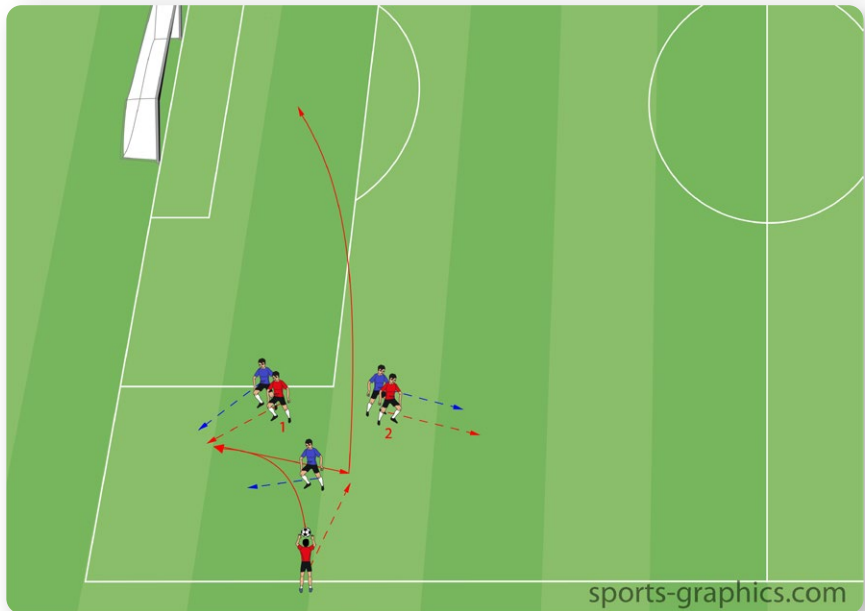




**1<sup>st</sup>**  
stage



**2<sup>nd</sup>**  
stage



**3<sup>rd</sup>**  
stage

