



# GOAL KICKING

By David Wheadon, Richmond Football Club

Goal kicking is one of the few skills in football that is virtually a “closed skill”, that is, the players have their own controlled time and space to execute the skill. It is similar to skills in golf, archery, conversion-kicking in rugby and free throws in basketball, all of which have very well rehearsed pre-set routines.

By Round 11 2004, the leading goal scorers in the AFL were:

Name	Goals	Behinds	%
Gehrig	50	26	66
Lloyd	44	17	72
Fevola	39	18	68
Neitz	37	23	62
Tredrea	36	19	65
Hall	36	22	62
Matera	34	13	72
Richardson	30	14	68

Average = 67%

That means they score 6-7 goals from every 10 shots.

## What are the key components of successful goal kicking?

### 1. Pre-set routines

They all have their own very strong pre-kick routines, including a set run-up that specifically suits each individual.

#### Importance of a pre-set routine

- it gives you comfort that this routine will produce on average a certain number of goals
- When experiencing temporary failure, you don't have to worry about this part of your goal kicking. It allows you to concentrate on the process, not the result, which to some people can cause a great deal of anxiety.

If you need to change the routine, do it at training, not during the game.

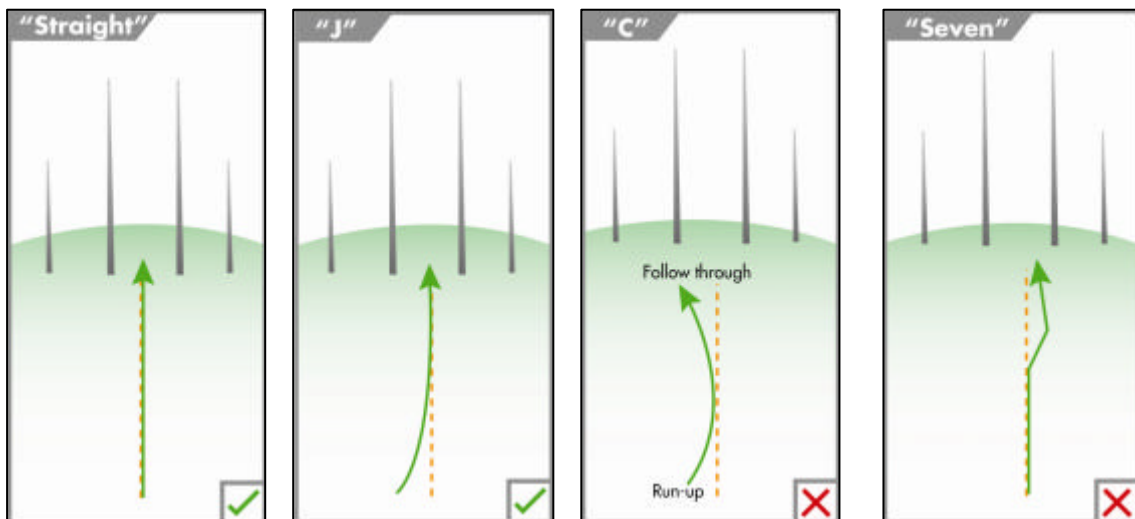
## 2. Finding your own run-up and rhythm.

The aim is to take your kick from about seven metres from the man on the mark. This will take that opponent out of the equation.

- Start your measurement seven metres from the mark.
- Turn your back to the mark and take a normal run-up away from the man on the mark. Have a mate mark the spot where your support foot landed on your last step. (i.e. your left foot for a right footer)
- Repeat the run back towards the man on the mark and see if your two run-ups match each other in distance. Repeat a couple of times and take the average if there is very little difference.
- Now go back to the seven metre mark and walk backwards counting the number of steps you take to reach the starting point for your run-up.
- Practice your measured run-up a number of times without kicking the ball until you are satisfied with the distance. Make sure you take the first step with the same leg every time.
- Finally you need to know your rhythm. Find out how long you will wait at the start of the run-up before you begin to move in. Have a mate count with a stop-watch or out loud in seconds the time from the moment you put your heels near each other until you take your first step. This is called finding your kicking rhythm.

## 3. Running straight or a curve?

- Both can work. It is normal for the hips to rotate as the kicking leg swings back then through. For a right-footer they will rotate anti-clockwise. And vice-versa.
- Some players prefer to run directly on a straight line and stay there, whilst others prefer to run in an arc.
- However if you run a curve once you are on the line directly towards goal **STAY ON THE LINE**. That is, run a "J" or straight, not a "C" or a "7". (See diagrams below)



- One of the problems associated with running a curve is that you create a new angle. For example, a right foot kicker who runs off the line to the right just before kicking will have to kick back towards the right to aim at the middle of the goals. The greater the curved run-up the greater the angle the body has to compensate to draw the ball back to the target.

#### 4. What to look at:

Some players look mostly at the goals, others a target behind the goals. Some look at the ball throughout their run-up. It depends on what suits you. However, at the point when they are about to make contact with the ball, players concentrate solely on the ball.

#### 5. Visualisation



- a) Visualisation is thinking in pictures – making a movie of the skill in your head of the shot on goal before it is actually performed. This is a standard practice used by athletes who perform closed skills.
- b) Mentally rehearsing the shot at goal allows you to already “experience” the situation.
- c) “See” your run-up, contact, ball flight and the ball passing through the goals.
- d) Visualisation will not guarantee a successful result every time, but at least it will help minimize any negative thoughts you might have during your routine

#### 6. There is no one way

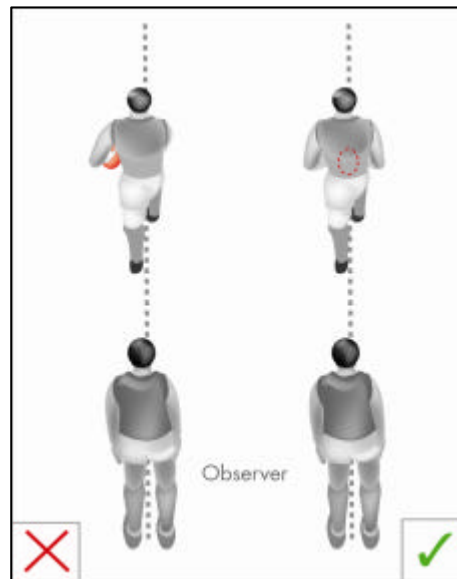
This is mainly because different players have different leg, body and arm lengths. Idiosyncrasies (individual differences are tolerated, however, extremes are rarely right).

#### 7. Common Errors

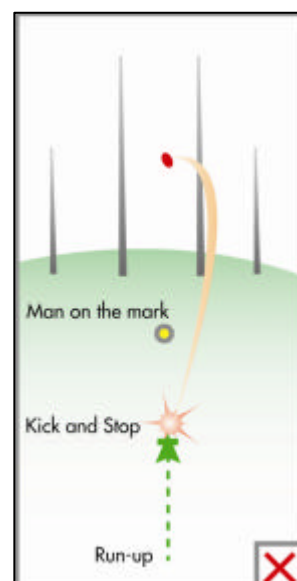
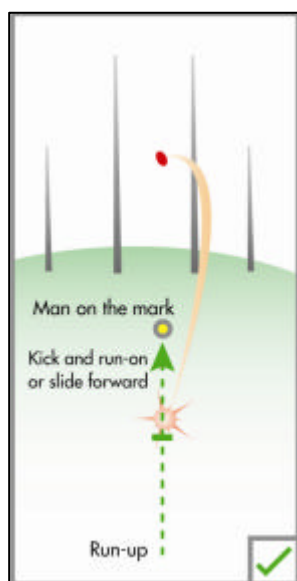
- a) Moving the ball too far outside the line of the kicking leg. It is very difficult to keep the ball perfectly still during your run-up, but the better kicks tend to minimise sideways movement. If you throw the ball outside your kicking leg then it will force your kicking leg to chase the ball and then have to swing back across your body during the follow through. The ball dominates the foot.
- b) Stuttering in your run-up. This disrupts the flow of your steps and is often a sign of a very nervous player who may not be very positive about the result.
- c) Dwelling on past misses. Stick to your process and do not worry about the result of the next shot. Visualisation can be very helpful to handle a series of missed shots. Think about one of your past successful efforts in your pre-kick routine.
- d) Running off the line in the last couple of steps in your run-up. This is usually when your eyes go back to the ball in preparation for the impact.
- e) Slowing down in the final steps and rocking on the supporting leg. This creates excessive hip rotation and the follow through is across the body. The foot then either slices under the ball and the ball will fly to the right (of a right-footer) or the foot makes good contact and drags the ball to the left in flight.
- f) Looking up as soon as contact is made can lead to players having an incorrect follow through without them even knowing it.

## 8. Hints

- a) Keep the ball inside your body line. Have someone stand behind you as you run in to kick. If they can't see the ball appear outside your body then you are keeping it still enough. It doesn't matter too much if the ball moves up and down as long as it stays within inside your body line.



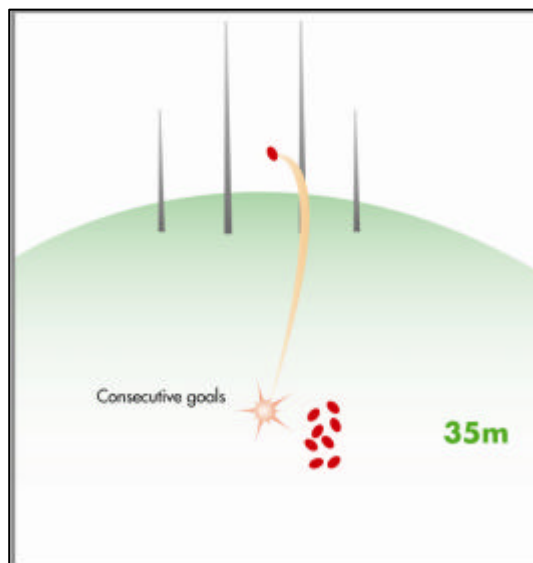
- b) Kick higher rather than lower. The higher the kick, the faster you will make the ball spin. The area around the lace on the ball acts as a bias and a spinning ball will hold its path longer in flight.
- c) Have a longer rather than shorter run-up. A longer one allows you to have a more "normal" type technique as if you were kicking on the run to a team-mate. It will also create a more free-flowing run-up and help you relax.
- d) Keep the ankle of your kicking leg pointing straight at the target. Don't rotate it inwards. If your ankle keeps your foot pointing straight ahead, then your leg has to follow through straight. If your ankle is rotated inwards then your leg must swing across your body after contact.
- e) After making contact a few more steps forward and run directly at the man on the mark to ensure you stay on the straight line. Or make sure you slide forward (up to a metre) on your support leg (see diagram). By not moving over your support leg, the body will immediately twist to absorb the speed of the run-up.



- f) As soon as the ball leaves your foot, keep your eyes on your foot and count to 3, then look up. This will allow you to check out the direction of your foot and follow-through

## 9. Practice

- a) Lots of success e.g. shoot from close in then work your way back to rehearse the shots that are normally taken in a game. For example, 30 – 50 metres out directly in front of goals. Don't spend too much time rehearsing kicks that you don't take too often in a match – the low percentage shots that usually don't go through. Practice the odds! However, it doesn't hurt to spend time now and again to practise the "freak" goals. It helps you understand how to make the ball bend and roll in different ways and its great fun.
- b) Be hard on yourself. Practise perfect practice – the middle of the middle. Try placing 2 portable goal posts 1m apart in the middle of the goals. Develop a scoring system and a competition e.g. how many balls can be kicked exactly through the middle or have a points system from the centre of the goals out.
- c) Play "golf" i.e. set markers down at various spots in or near the corridor no more than 50 metres out. See how many kicks it takes to play the course. You cannot move on until you score a goal from each marker (or 2 goals).
- d) One game which teaches goal kicking under pressure is to kick as many successive goals from the one spot (e.g. 35 metres out in front). Your score is the number of successive goals scored. When you miss you have to start again. Watch how the tension increases as you get close to breaking your previous best score. (You will need as many balls as possible to save time gathering them between shots).



### SUMMARY:

**ANALYSE** your routine

**VISUALISE** each shot

**TRUST** your technique

