

## Goals at World Cup are Down Again

### *It Must be the Shoes*

Another World Cup has come to an end and the number of goals scored in the competition is down again. Since 1998, when they allowed 32 teams in the finals, the number of goals scored has dropped steadily. In 1998 there were 171 goals scored in 64 games. In 2002, it went down to 161 goals and in 2006 it dropped even further to 147. And just when we figured that the new Adidas Jabulani ball was going to give the keepers nightmares and result in more goals being scored, the opposite happened. In the 2010 World Cup, total goals scored dropped down to only 145. What has gone wrong?

Those who have been to any of my "Psychology of Goal Scoring" or "Secrets to Goal Scoring" lectures or courses would be looking for me to explain the drop in goal scoring, but they also know that I would probably come up with a most unique and thought provoking explanation. So, not to disappoint, let me give you something to ponder on the subject of why goals were down at this year's World Cup.

First of all, let me state some of the obvious reasons as to why goals are down. To start with, athletes today are fitter than ever. Players are able to run at top speeds longer and faster than before. Advances in physiology, nutrition, and training methodology have allowed players to get fitter meaning that coaches can demand players to get back to defend in numbers more often and faster than ever before. No doubt this will have an affect on the number of goals teams give up over time. For example, trying to get past 7 players to get an attempt at goal is a lot easier than trying to get past 10 players to get a chance to score. The math is simple.

Another reason may be that soccer's third-world soccer countries are no longer easy to beat. For example, who would have thought that New Zealand would be the only team not to lose a game at the World Cup? When teams are fit, organized, and can defend well, they can upset any of the top nations or reduce the number of goals that they give up so that they do not have to go home feeling embarrassed. These two factors are probably the main reason why goals are down.

But on the other hand, one would assume that the new ball would have increased the number of goals scored at the World Cup. Goalkeepers have complained about the ball and in this World Cup I saw an unusual amount of goalkeeping errors that resulted in goals. Had those errors not occurred there would have been even less goals scored. Having said all that, I want to look at one other factor that may be affecting goals scored and that is the new shoes that the players are wearing today. Yes, the shoes! I think, they add to the equation a little bit.

I think that they are too flashy, colourful, and noticeable. The bright oranges and yellows that we see in a lot of the shoes that the players are wearing are easy to spot on the pitch. The eye can locate these colours quickly when there is motion involved. That can be motion of the player wearing the shoes or by motion by the defending player looking to find attackers to cover. In fact, yellow as has been shown to be one of the most noticeable colours in the colour spectrum when motion is involved. Bright orange is not far behind. This is simple to test. Next time you are in a vehicle, notice how quickly the eye can spot a yellow car, van, or truck. Also notice that the construction pylons are usually orange. This is not done by accident. When a car is moving, the driver can spot the bright orange pylons very quickly. These colours are picked so that drivers in motion avoid running over construction workers.

I believe that defenders are quick to find players that they need to cover when their opponents wear bright orange or yellow shoes. It's harder for an attacking player to disappear from the field of vision of a marking player because they can quickly pick out where they are in their peripheral vision because of their shoes!

Coaches talk to their strikers about getting on the "blind side" of defenders so that they can elude them. Getting on the "blind side" of a defender means getting to a position where they can't be seen. Coaches ask players to make "blind side runs" all the time meaning that they want their players to run behind defenders so that they can't be spotted until it's too late. Well that's all fine and dandy, but when players show up with bright colored shoes that can be spotted a mile away, what's the point of this whole coaching point? Wearing bright coloured shoes will make it even easier for the defender to find his man.

At the highest levels, a fraction of a second can be the difference between scoring and not scoring, winning and losing. Why would a striker in particular, want to give away any possible advantage?

So there you have it, my theory on why goal scoring was down at the 2010 World Cup but I expect goal scoring to be up at the next World Cup because this article will make its way to coaches around the World and they will ban their strikers from wearing bright coloured shoes. Oh, and the fact that these new shoes are so lightweight, well, that's a whole other topic.

Thanks for reading,

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