

## Let The Players Decide!

*Hey, have you heard the news:* Major League Baseball has decided to follow the world of competitive soccer in regards to games tied after regulation play. Yes, indeed. Now, if there is a tie score after nine innings, the two teams will play an additional two innings. If the game is still tied the two teams will each select one pitcher, one catcher and five batters. The five batters will then engage in a home run derby to decide the winner of the contest.

After watching half a gazillion soccer games decided by two overtime periods and then a penalty kick shootout, baseball officials thought this would be a great way to halt the endless extra innings format to get a winner.

Hopefully, basketball will soon follow and add a 3-point shooting shootout and football with a field-goal shootout.

After all, what better way is there to decide a game than with...

...wait a minute, this was all a dream, er, nightmare!

Baseball officials aren't that stupid. Nor basketball. Nor football. Yeah, I know, hockey has a shootout but you can fit a whole bunch of hockey goals into one soccer goal so it does become somewhat of a challenge.

Soccer? Yeah, we decide tied soccer games with 2 15-minute overtimes, which are played out. And if the score is still tied, the teams go to a penalty kick shootout.

Exciting? Yes, if you are a fan. Absolutely not if you are one of the five players picked to kick. Forget the goalkeepers. No offense to any 'Keeper out there, but, there is no pressure on you with a PK. I used to tell my 'Keepers, if you block the kick, God bless you. If you don't...well, give it a good try. Make it look good. Dive. Get dirty. It looks good.

My point? Deciding soccer matches with 2 overtime periods and then possibly a penalty kick shootout is just wrong. It's been debated forever but never seriously enough to warrant a change.

Here's my suggestion:

- The first overtime period will be 15 minutes in length but with a Golden Goal format -- the first team to score wins! Period.
- If neither team scores in the first overtime period, another 15-minute period is played, with the teams switching sides of the field. Again, Golden Goal format, BUT, prior to playing the 15 minutes, each team removes one player so it becomes 9 field players and a Goalkeeper.
- Still no score: 10-minute periods, all at Golden Goal, and each time a new OT period is played, the teams have to remove a field player.

Let's let the players, as a team, dictate the outcome of games. No more penalty kicks as the decider of the match.

(Note: I do like watching the home run derby, by the way!)