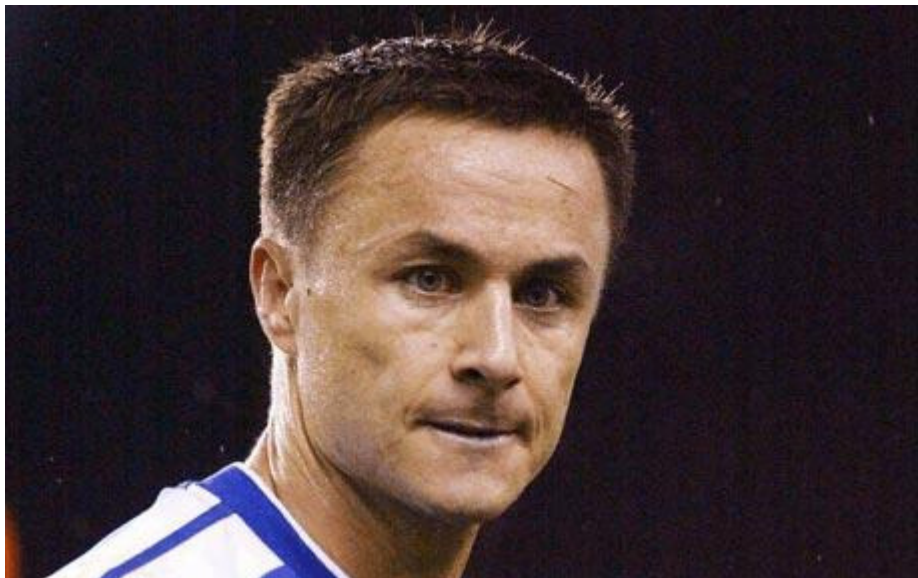


Tall footballers 'more likely to be penalised'

Tall footballers are more likely to be penalised than their shorter opponents, according to a new study.

By [Matthew Moore](#)

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The research confirms the popular suspicion that small, feisty players – such as the former Chelsea captain Dennis Wise – can get away with rougher tackles than their taller opponents. Photo: GETTY

Referees tend to give a foul against the larger man when two footballers of different heights clash – probably because tall people are assumed to be more aggressive.

Researchers from the Rotterdam school of management in the Netherlands analysed 100,000 fouls from a selection of domestic, European and international games.

They found a clear bias against taller players in referees' decisions. The larger the height difference between the two players involved, the more likely it was that the taller footballer would be penalised.

Where the difference was between 2.3in and 4in, 60 per cent of decisions went against the bigger player.

The research confirms the popular suspicion that small, feisty players – such as the former Chelsea captain Dennis Wise – can get away with rougher tackles than their taller opponents.

It was backed up by further data obtained from panels of football fans who were presented with still images of two players going in for a challenge and asked to predict the outcome. The majority picked out the taller player as the aggressor.

Steffen Giessner, who coauthored the study, told The Guardian: "You will always get moments in a game when the situation isn't very clear and you've got to make a fast decision. This is where assumptions could influence them."

The researchers acknowledged that some of the apparent bias may be down to the fact that taller footballers are more likely to play in defence, so are required to make more tackles. However, the greatest number of fouls in the 100,000 sample were carried out by small midfielders against fellow midfielders.