

### TAKING CARE OF YOUR SOCCER CLEATS

You have just bought a **new pair of soccer cleats**, and its time to break them in. So, what should you do to break them in the right way and ensure that you get a long life out of them? Let's look at some of the steps you can take to ensure you get the most from your cleats.

## Breaking Them In

It is important that new cleats are ready for their first 90 minutes. In order for them to be ready, you need to get them loose and comfortable on your feet. The 'shower technique' is one that many pro players use to get their leather cleats ready. Chris Loftus, Neil Jones, Andy Dorman and David McGill have all talked about this technique in their articles. The hot water helps the leather expand/loosen a little, giving you some breathing room for when you use them.

Another important step is to wear them jogging or during warm-up rather than wearing them for the first time in a game. The more you can do to loosen up your cleats and get them snug on your feet, the better they will be for that first game. I usually wear a pair for 2-3 jogging sessions and then into a training session. A lot of professional players have several pairs of cleats at one time so that they can break pairs in over time.

# **Avoiding Blisters**

Breaking cleats in properly will help reduce the possibility of blistering. You definitely want to avoid blisters! If you wear your boots and notice you are feeling the onset of blisters, it is very handy to have some Vaseline around. Just smear it on or around the areas you are feeling the blisters. The Vaseline will help your foot move a little more smoothly against you cleat reducing the friction that occurs.

#### After The Game

There are certain steps to follow when the game is finished. First, it is important to air dry your cleats. One of the worst things that about 60% of soccer players do is leave their cleats in their bag until the next practice! It is very important to take them out of your bag so they can dry naturally. One tip that the pros do to help dry out cleats is to stuff newspaper inside. This helps soak up any of the dampness that is inside. Where you leave the cleats to dry is also important. Don't leave them in direct sunlight or somewhere that is very hot. This will only dry them out and cause them to crack. In order to keep you cleats soft and supple, you need to 'moisturize' them.

# Keeping Them Soft

The best solution for this is leather food. A majority of professional soccer players use leather food. I know when I came to the US from Ireland, I would have to fight guys off after practice from using all of mine! My preferred brand is **Chelsea Leather Food**. It has nothing to do with the Premier league team, so it's ok to buy if you are a Man Utd fan!! In Danny Kennedy's review he talks about how he cleans and leather food's his cleats the day before any game.

## Using Polish

Polish is something I used on my boots all the time as a kid. I always had to have the shiniest boots! It never hurts to polish your boots. The most professional players will grab a brush and shine those bad boys up. It is important to make sure that you use a brush to clean off any excess dirt beforehand. Boots like Copas and Puma Kings are definitely shoes you will want to polish up. A few hours after polishing, use some leather food to keep them feeling soft.

It happens all the time; you finish your game, put your cleats in your bag, and the following week you take them out for the first time! Cleaning and drying your cleats is the ultimate way to ensure you get the best out of them. And it really does not take that long to keep them in top shape. Here is an important guide to help you keep your cleats in tip-top shape.

**After the game:** It is important that before you put your cleats in your bag, they should be cleaned off of any substance. If you are playing on a grass surface, bang the cleats together to remove any grass or dirt that may be lodged on the sole. Use a cloth to wipe off any scuffs. Similarly, if playing on turf wipe off any excess dirt.

**Bringing them home:** After you clean your cleats, it is important to have some sort of a cleat bag to put your cleats in. This will help keep them away from the rest of your gear. When I was younger I just used a plastic bag. Now I use a soccer bag that has plenty of room for my cleats to breath.

**When you get home:** As soon as you get the chance, it is important to get those cleats out of your bag and ready for the next training session or game. If you have white or light colored cleats this is a very important stage in guaranteeing the color stays sharp. Use a wet rag and wipe the cleat down really well, you only need to lightly wet the rag. An old toothbrush works really to clean off any dirt on your studs/blades.

**Drying:** After you have the cleats cleaned, roll up some old newspaper and stuff them inside the cleat nice and tight. The Newspaper helps dry the inside. Place the cleats outside, in a dry area away from sunlight. Sunlight will only dry the leather of the cleats and make them crack. It sometimes helps to have them in an area where there is a gust of wind. **Storing for the next time:** After you have washed and dried your cleats, use some Chelsea leather food to soften the leather. If you have black cleats, you can also use some black Shoe polish. You should now have a clean pair of cleats that are ready to go back into a shoe bag! **FACT:** Cleaning and drying your cleats can *DOUBLE* the time that they last! That means only having to buy one pair instead of two!