

**Breaking In Your New Cleats** – Every year, we experience issues with players wanting to wear their new cleats on the trip to Holland. What ends up happening is that before the training session is over, these players end up with blisters for the rest of the week. We have compiled two sets of recommendations on how best to break in new cleats appropriately to avoid players' dealing with this sort of thing. Soccer players **MUST** learn to take care of their feet, and one of the major ways to avoiding problems is breaking their new cleats in well before traveling. Given the amount of time that players will be spending in their cleats, even the best fitted cleats can cause problems. Here are a few of my suggestions outside the guides below for breaking your cleat in:

- **Only wear cleats for training sessions** – Make sure to wear comfortable shoes going to and from training sessions/games. We highly recommend bring flip flops for post-training and games to allow your feet to “air out.” Wearing flip flops before training can cause players to get their feet dirty beforehand, so I would only recommend them wearing them after playing.
- **Wear clean socks** – Do not use wet or dirty socks for training/games. This will require players bringing enough socks for all training sessions or making sure that they have detergent to hand-wash socks and finding a good place to dry them after washing.
- **Keep your feet clean** – Taking showers after training/games can be a problem. Players do have easy access to shower facilities either at training or matches, but players tend to not take many showers for various personal/private reasons. At the very least, players need to wash their feet.
- **Deal with “Hot Spots” immediately** – When players are training/playing, undoubtedly they will end up feeling what people call “hot spots,” which is your body telling you that the skin on your feet are beginning to blister. If a player starts to feel “hot spots,” then they need to take their shoes off immediately. All players should bring an ample supply of “blister bandaids” to deal with this issue. Duct tape is also very good at blister prevention.
- **Bring your old pair of soccer cleats** – If you buy new cleats, you need to bring your old cleats in case you have issues. You must make sure that you have a “back-up” plan in case of problems. Your feet are **VERY** important, and it is better to plan for the worst and hope for the best.
- **Deal with full or open blisters immediately and with care** – I have included suggestions on how to handle full-blown blisters at the end of this document.

### **Instructions of Breaking in Soccer Cleats**

1. Before you buy new soccer cleats, lace them up in the store and walk around. Your steps should feel natural. If you can't wiggle your toes or your heel is rubbing, try on a different pair.
2. Once you get your cleats home, fill a large bucket or bathtub with warm water. Put the cleats on and lace them how you would for competition. Make sure you are wearing socks. With cleats on, soak your feet in the warm water for 20 minutes.
3. Let your cleats dry while you are wearing them. This could take several hours, so make sure you have the rest of the day free.
4. Once your cleats are dry, rub a small amount of shaving cream, petroleum jelly or leather softener on them. Use just enough to lightly cover the leather. In this case, less is more.
5. Take your new cleats to your next practice, but wear them only for the last half of the training session. Then wear them for an entire practice if your feet and shins tolerate the half-session.
6. Once you've completed at least two full training sessions without problems, your cleats are ready for game play.

**Dealing with Blisters** – Blisters should be treated seriously. They can easily become infected if not treated properly. Often blisters are caused by poorly fitted shoes that rub on the same spot on your foot with every step. The usual remedy is to get a needle and “pop” the blister. If you don't deal with blisters carefully, then it can lead to infection problems. Blisters should be treated with care. By dealing with blisters properly, they will heal promptly and the chances of infection will be reduced. The following method might appear to be over-cautious, but it is not. I ended up with an infection

once from a blister and lost three weeks of training time while it healed. This is the safest method I have ever found for dealing with foot blisters.

- Be sure to wash your hands well with a disinfectant soap when treating a blister.
- Be sure the area around the blister is properly cleaned. Use a disinfectant soap for this as well.
- If you do decide to use a needle, be sure to sterilize it. You can do that by boiling it or heating it.
- Be sure you do not make an incision on the top of the blister as the skin will act as natural protection in the healing process. Make the incision at the base of the wound. Use your finger to carefully ease the fluid out.
- The best way to cover the blister is either 'moleskin' or blister bandaid. Both are available in any pharmacy foot-care section.
- The blister should heal quickly if you give it a few days and change the dressing when necessary.
- Be sure to check for signs of infection. Pain and/or swelling are two of the more obvious signs.
- While you are waiting for your blister to heal, try and determine what caused it in the first place. It may be as simple as changing the socks you are wearing, or you may have to use old shoes that you know fit your feet or buy a pair of better fitting shoes.