

Tips for taking care of soccer boots

from **Play On! News Services**

Soccer shoes are subjected to the constant rigors of kicking and running, often in muddy and watery conditions. Without proper care, they will have a much shorter life span than they should. Proper boot care will provide you with better support and increased comfort.

To care for your soccer shoes, apply a coating of leather conditioner with a soft cloth or with your fingers. Let the conditioner soak into the leather, then buff it lightly. Applying several coats will improve the flexibility of the leather and make the shoes water resistant.

Quality soccer shoes are made to be lightweight and give players a great feel for the ball. Therefore, they must be soft and supple. Since they must also be very durable, high-quality leather is used. In order to maintain the functionality of the leather, soccer shoes must be kept clean and well-conditioned. Also, the leather must remain soft and supple in order to experience the ultimate in comfort and feel for the ball.

The best way to increase the longevity of your shoes is to begin with a pretreatment of good wax-free leather conditioner. Before the first use of your soccer shoes, it is important to "feed" the leather. By "feeding" the leather, you are replacing some of the essential natural oils lost during the tanning process and during the manufacture of the shoes.

After play, soccer shoes should be cleaned and conditioned. Clean all mud and dirt off the leather with a soft rag. For grime and excessive dirt, use an aggressive leather cleaner specifically formulated for kangaroo and similar high-quality leathers. The cleaner should be pH balanced with the leather so there is no deterioration of the leather fibers. Do not use saddle soap or caustic chemicals for cleaning, as they can pull the colors as well as the natural oils from the leather. Use an old toothbrush to clean the cleats, soles and stitching between the leather and the sole.

If your soccer shoes are wet, remove the sock liner (if it is not glued into the boots) and stuff the shoes with dry paper, such as crumpled newspaper, so the shoes retain their shape while drying. Let them dry naturally. Do not apply artificial heat, which will harden the leather and cause the leather fibers to break down, leading to cracking and tearing.

Once cleaned and dried, soccer shoes should be reconditioned, feeding the leather and keeping the fibers flexible. Avoid using dubbins, greases or wax-based products. These products were formulated to seal the pores of work boots, not for use on the soft, supple leather of soccer shoes.
