

SOCCER BUYING GUIDE and Required Equipment List for the Serious Athlete

Please find information below regarding required and recommended equipment for the serious soccer athlete. To some, equipment in soccer is an afterthought, something you buy on the way to practice with as little thought as a grocery purchase. But, for the serious athlete who understands that gear is “where the rubber meets the road,” the proper equipment allows the athlete to focus on the game and not on the elements or the discomfort of the gear. So, here’s the list, please be sure to read the buying advice for each item at the bottom of the page. Thank you!!

At a minimum, to participate year round, one must have; at least, the Required Equipment purchased AND BROKEN IN prior to the start of training.

***** Required Equipment*****

- 1) Firm/Hard Ground Soccer Shoes
- 2) Indoor Soccer Shoes
- 3) Shinguards

**** Very Strongly Recommended Equipment ****

- 1) Superfeet Premium Insoles
- 2) Slide Sandals

*** Recommended Equipment to participate year-round ***

- 1) “Deep Woods” Bug Spray
- 2) 30+ spf, sweatproof, Sunscreen
- 3) 2 Quart Water Bottle
- 4) Size 5 Soccer Ball
- 5) Long-sleeve “moisture-wicking” shirt
- 6) Windbreaker
- 7) Earband
- 8) Heavy Hooded Sweatshirt
- 9) Sweatpants
- 10) Training Suit (Warm Ups)
- 11) Artificial Turf Shoes
- 12) Soccer on Television
- 13) Soccer Magazines
- 14) Soccer Camps, Technical Skills Camps.
- 15) Coerver® Coaching Mini Goal - WC-10M

Detailed Buying Advice from Coach Pierson

***** Required Equipment *****

1) FIRM/HARD GROUND SOCCER SHOES

A) Soccer Shoes (often called “boots”) should be snug without pinching the toes (ie soccer shoes should NOT be as “roomy” as school shoes) – please be sure to try any potential new boots on with both thin ankle socks as well as with thicker game socks over the ankle socks . Please have the player run around and cut on some carpet to check that the toes do not jam the ends of the shoes. How a soccer player feels in a pair of boots directly reflects how he performs on the field!

B) Please do not wait to purchase shoes! Inventories are always depleted immediately prior to the season of use (ie indoors are low in November, outdoors are low in late winter/summer), whether you're shopping locally (eg: The Soccer Shop in Fairfax) or online (eg: Eurosport). If you shop online [WHICH IS **MY RECOMMENDATION – PLEASE USE THIS LINK TO EUROSPORT FOR ALL YOUR PURCHASING**, as I use the proceeds to purchase equipment for training StrikePartner.com athletes!!], please be sure to order (3) sizes of the SAME shoe (that's the size you think you will need as well as ½ size up and down) and then just return the ones you don't want - - - Eurosport often sends a return shipping label, which if used will only cost another \$6 – well worth the trade off for inventory availability.

Click Here for shoe sizing charts (courtesy of PaylessShoes). Please note that there are three charts to choose from MENS, WOMENS, AND KIDS – please carefully print them out and tape them together per the instructions. Girls who are wearing women's size shoes should size their feet for women.

C) How much might you spend: The cheap stuff will not last the season, while the super expensive “kangaroo” leather is overkill. If you can afford it (ie >\$50), “real” leather is a wonderful thing. The new synthetics are a boon for durability, but they do not mold to the foot as easily (thus, more blistering), and they also tend to hold odor like a sealed Tupperware dish. However, the synthetics are less expensive than their real leather cousins. So, looking at Eurosport (www.soccer.com), you're in the neighborhood of \$30-\$80 for a new pair, depending on which type of leather you choose.

D) Soccer boots reflect the manufacturer's “foot-type bias.” For example, Adidas cleats typically fit thinner feet better, while Puma is far better for wide feet, and Nike is more to the middle with a lean towards slim. And, I would strongly urge you to purchase one of those three (Adidas, Nike, or Puma) as the others do not tend to last as long. Of the three, Puma will last the longest, then Adidas, followed a ways back by Nike.

E) Finally, please be sure to take into account the effect that the Superfeet insoles will have on the feel inside the shoe (buying advice on these below). Given the “tissue paper” thin insoles normally provided by the manufacturers, you'll want to be aware that the Superfeet will take up a little more room. Of course, it can be tough to try the Superfeet in the shoes before you buy because so many “cheap” inserts are glued into the soccer shoes.

2) INDOOR SOCCER SHOES

All of the same advice applies to these as for Firm/Hard Ground. A good quality pair of “indoors” can be had from Eurosport for between \$30-40.

3) SHINGUARDS

Please look for a high-quality (ideally NOCSAE approved) shinguard WITH ankle guards. You may want to spend somewhere between \$15-35 for a pair (they should last for years – please be sure to wash them occasionally). Please pay careful attention to the sizing chart found on the soccer.com website. My basic rule of thumb is that it is better to be a little short on the shin than too long. Most high quality guards have removable (ie they're attached with Velcro) ankle guards. I like the Nike T90 Protegga Shield II Shin Guard or the Adidas Aviero Plus Shin Guard.

Also, it is helpful to know that lighter is better. Pros often wear little more than tissue under their socks, as they seek not to be slowed by heavy pads. However, at the high school level, protecting the ankles is critical to performance.

**** Very Strongly Recommended Equipment ****

1) SUPERFEET PREMIUM INSOLES

You may purchase these inserts locally at “The Running Store” in Gainesville. And, if you mention that you are with Wakefield School, we have arranged for you to get 20% off. Here’s a link to their website:

<http://www.therunningstoreteam.com/>

For approximately \$35, you will be doing your child a great service! These inserts offer a higher level of safety to the athlete’s knees and ankles!!

My Testimonial: For the last decade or so, I have been wearing “Superfeet” insoles, and they have completely changed the way I feel during and after playing. During play, I have significantly more stamina because my feet, ankles, knees, and lower back are properly aligned and supported. And, after play, the amount of soreness is virtually non-existent, shortening my recovery time between significant exertions by half. All that being said, it is a matter of safety! Please see the pdf on the website regarding potential knee injuries, here’s a link – and while these insoles do not prevent knee injuries, I believe they will reduce the risk.

Suffice to say, these things WORK! However, buying a lesser product will not achieve the same results (ie don’t bother with a pair of Dr. Scholl’s from the grocery store). As you will see, if you decide to invest in a pair of these, they are virtually indestructible. With all of the wear and tear I put on mine, I find that one pair will last for years. I strongly encourage you to do your own research, here’s a link to their website:

<http://www.superfeet.com/>

Now, just a few thoughts about logistics:

First, please be sure to purchase the correct color for use, that’s usually blue, green, orange, or berry. If you visit The Running Store, they’ll be able to suggest the proper color or you can learn the proper color for your use on their website. The good news is that one pair of these will do for all of their soccer shoes –i.e. if you go through the “arduous” process of removing the old insoles!

Right, so where do you find them? Most high quality running stores stock them, or just call the The Running Store! Or, you can look online to look online – please be sure to CAREFULLY read the sizing chart on the Superfeet website listed above.

So, in sum, my personal opinion is that these inserts are MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE SHOE, as they will ensure that the shoe performs properly and that your child’s leg aligns properly. I should also note that, because these inserts fix pronation/supination, the soles of your child’s shoes will last much longer, as they will wear more evenly. Finally, please consider how many hours your son will spend in a pair of soccer shoes in the next year..

2) SLIDE SANDALS

Slides are a modern name for “flip-flops,” and it is very important to both rest and ventilate the feet off the field.

*** Recommended Equipment ***

- 1) “Deep Woods” Bug Spray
- 2) 30 spf minimum, sweatproof, Sunscreen
- 3) 2 Quart Water Bottle – critical to have higher volume.
- 4) Size 5 Soccer Ball – Please look for a high-quality adidas or nike ball, typically above \$30.
- 5) Long-sleeve “moisture-wicking” shirt – I like the Under Armour Men's ColdGear® Longsleeve Mock.
- 6) Windbreaker – ideally it will be very lightweight (less than 5 oz.), breathable, waterproof, and black. The best I’ve found is Patagonia Houdini Full Zip, usually expensive, but ideal if found on sale.
- 7) Earband – I prefer The North Face EarGear
- 8) Heavy Hooded Sweatshirt

9) Sweatpants – The best training suit pants fit snugly to the calf!

10) Training Suit (Warm Ups)

11) Artificial Turf Shoes

For those wishing to play indoor soccer in the winter at locations such as Sports Network in Manassas, turfs are required (the facility will not allow outdoor “cleats” as they destroy the artificial turf and indoor shoes tend to slip on the surface).

In addition to being required for indoor turf, turfs have a “special benefit,” in that in the late summer, when Virginia’s fields turn to hard-pan and running in cleats can feel like running on concrete, turfs provide critical relief with their forgiving soft rubber soles. In other words, this will make the player’s preseason experience much more enjoyable. With regard to fit, all of the same advice applies to these as for Firm/Hard Ground, found above. A good quality pair of “turfs” can be had from Eurosport for between \$30-40.

12) Soccer on Television

Watching high-quality soccer on television is the best method for developing “field vision” outside of match play. Field vision is the ability to survey the field at match speed and make good, creative decisions with the ball. In addition to the sporadic coverage that ESPN gives to soccer, there are now no less than THREE soccer specific TV channels. Here are their websites: <http://msn.foxsports.com/foxsoccer>, http://www.goltv.tv/en_index.php, and <http://www.setanta.com/us/>. FoxSoccer and GolTV are available with many sports packages on cable/satellite. Setanta is purchased separately (at around \$16/month, it’s a stout investment) but well worth it if you’re child watches a lot of soccer.

13) Soccer Magazines

There are many to choose from. Soccer America is the bible here in the US.

14) Soccer Camps, Technical Skills Camps

Everyone has one of these, including me. If interested, please ask me for a current recommendation suited to your child.

15) Coerver® Coaching Mini Goal - WC-10M

At \$315, this is a steep investment for learning to strike a ball. However, there is simply no better method for training a player – whether it’s the repetitions or the distance of the bounceback! Please be sure to order this product through the Eurosport link on this website, found here. Oh, and while there are other similar “knock-off” products – only KwikGoal warranties their products for LIFE!

So that’s it, for any other equipment, please just ask, I’m sure to have an opinion!