

Choosing the right football boots

Choosing footwear of any kind is a challenging process. There are lots of brands vying for your attention. Further, there are so many shoes to choose from just within one brand, that choosing a shoe becomes sifting through a minefield.

Football boots generally are designed for soccer and are considerably different to running shoes. They generally provide no cushioning with studs and molded outsoles instead and are often cut narrower providing a different feel and fit. These changes can create about 35% increase load underneath the foot when compared to running shoes. Which is part of why choosing the right boot can have a significant impact on injury reduction. Given most injuries are overuse and Australian rules football players can cover between 12-20km a game they are at significant risk.

So, how do you choose the right boots?

- **FIT**
- **FUNCTION**
- **FEEL**

If you have any concerns or queries about football boots, runners or any other concerns with your leg/ankle/foot, I am always happy to discuss all things lower limb and footwear. I consult at both Bounce Health Group Ringwood and Blackburn and can be contacted on 1300 855 442 or johnosborne@bouncehealth.com.au.

FIT

There are two parts of fitting a shoe correctly:

Length – half a thumb width at the end, you can afford to have a little less as it is a football boot.

Width – bunching, needing the laces exceptionally tight are signs it is too wide. Feet hanging over the edge of the sole of the boot is a sign they are too narrow. The boot should fit snug and controlled, not overly tight or loose. Beware of buying shorter or longer sizes to accommodate width of your foot.

Other considerations – take your orthotics with you (if you wear them for football). Is the heel counter deep enough you don't slip out the back?

FUNCTION

A few things to think about. Do you have a lower limb injury history/wear orthotics? Is it a training boot or a game day boot? Does it suit wet/dry conditions?

Choosing a boot to suit this idea is the most confusing. So, look for this... 1 pair for wet weather – longer studs. 1 pair for training which has more structure to it (some ideas below). 1 pair for game day – lighter weight, very familiar and comfortable.

FEEL

This is the MOST important of the three. It has been shown that the most comfortable shoes will likely be the best shoe for you and ultimately lead to less injuries. It is not a guarantee, but if you want to focus on one thing only – focus on comfort and feel.

Do they feel good? Not do they look good, but do they FEEL good. Wear the boots around the shop. Hop in them. Hop in a 5 pointed star shape in them. Jump in them. Jog in them. Really test them out. Feel every possible divot in the boot as these are the divots that will frustrate you on game day. Is something poking you where it shouldn't? Do they feel comfortable enough to wear for 5 hours? How do your legs and feet feel in the shoe?

The easiest place to start is the last pair of shoes you had. If they were comfortable chances are the next model will be too. They do change some parts of all shoes every year, so sometimes you might try the same shoe on again and it not feel the same as last time. Probably because it isn't. Speak to the store person if they have a good understanding of the shoes and what it is like to wear them they should be able to provide some detail about the shoe.

However, if it is not comfortable in the shop don't buy it!

Boot suggestions

These are just suggestions or starting places when looking for specific boots. This list is by no means exhaustive, Asics alone has over 60 football boots available to choose from. Nike and Adidas a few less and New Balance a few too. The below boots are for those looking for wider (wide fitting) or more cushioned shoes (for those with injury history).

Width options

- Asics Club Series (fits wider than most)
- New Balance Visaro (has additional widths)
- New Balance Furon (has a wider fit option)

More cushioned options (training boot)

- Asics Lethal Ultimate
- Asics Testimonial