

One Footed Players - Why do they still exist?

I have written articles before about players not being able to use both feet (*A Rare Breed – the two footed player* ~ March 2008). In that article I wrote about why, in my opinion, this situation develops and how you must understand the cause of the problem to fix it. If you would like a copy then please just email info@footballtricks.com

We have all heard former players lament that they wished they had spent more time developing their weaker foot. I was at a training session last week were a former player, who by the way made over 20 international appearances, said his only regret in football was not listening when his coaches told him he needed to work on his right foot. He said he knows now that his career could have been so much better if he had.

What I am going to do is share with you three things from my experience.

1 – Balance

One footed players often struggle to balance themselves on their stronger leg simply because the muscles needed to do this are rarely used so have not developed enough. This means the player cannot support their body in the right position consistently to use their weaker foot.

To test this you can ask the player to balance on their stronger foot and pass the ball with the other as many times as possible before they overbalance and then ask them to do it balancing on their weaker foot. It can be amazing the difference between the two and it really illustrates that the problem lies more with the ability of the stronger leg to hold the body in position than anything to do with technique.

I have had good success with players doing core exercises to strengthen the muscles. Once they have a strong core they are able to balance themselves consistently and so are able to refine their weaker foot technique.

2 – Time

In preparation for this article I watched a game of futsal that I filmed some months back. The game was a Girls U-12 side against a Boys U-10 side. I chose the three most two footed players on the court and analysed how they played. Here are the results for a 40 minute game

	Total Touches			Passes	Shots
Player 1	128	Right	104	32	15
		Left	24	0	0
Player 2	168	Right	150	42	7
		Left	18	4	1
Player 3	186	Right	152	45	9
		Left	34	5	2

From this it is easy to see that even though players appear two footed in reality there is still a huge difference in the number of touches and therefore amount of practice between each foot. On average each player touched the ball approx 15% of the time with their weaker foot

The point is for a player to be genuinely two footed both feet must have had a similar amount of practice. If you are coaching a 12 year old who is one footed then the difference in amount of touches between each foot since that player started playing could be in the tens of thousands. It takes lots of time and patience to even out the volume of practice and this cannot be done in a few training sessions.

3 – Mind Set

Making a player able to use their weaker foot is the first stage of the process. The second stage is to get them to use it in a game. It takes hours and hours of game time and plenty of patience. This is the hardest part trying to get the players to alter their mind set and be at ease using their weaker foot when in a competitive situation.

Just like with all coaching you have to start simply with encouraging use of the weaker foot in small sided games at training and gradually build up to the competitive games.

I read a study recently stating that after analysing footage of the World Cup in France in 1998 Norwegian scientists found there to be no difference in accuracy of passing or percentage of goals scored by players when they used their weaker foot. However it was noticed that players would still try to avoid using their weaker foot if they possibly could even at that level.

I spend plenty of time thinking about how to make players more two footed as I see it as a totally preventable problem that many young players have. If you have read any articles or studies or have anything to share on this problem then I would be very keen for you to contact me and I'll pass them on to the 35,000 coaches and parents around the world who read these articles.



'1 to 1 – Parent Player Coaching' DVD

A 2-Disc DVD with over 3 hours of tips to inspire you and games you can play to improve your child and make them the best player they can possibly be. Includes many tips that will make a player more two footed.

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