

Article written by Ex-Scotland manager Craig Brown for the Football Trade Directory

The Other Foot



Despite a career in professional football, I am always keen to keep up to date with any new ideas in youth development. As a young man I was a teacher and then a lecturer in Primary Education and I suppose old teachers never die!

I became aware of a novel approach to developing two-footedness in young players recently and must admit to being quite taken by it. Ian McArthur is the football coach behind the idea and he is also a qualified teacher. Ian was struck by the number of young players who seemed unable to use both feet and designed his programme to combat that inefficiency in our young players.

The more he investigated the problem, the more examples he discovered of two-footed players *learning* to be that way. Like other skills in football and in life, learning to use the weaker foot (or "other" foot as Ian prefers to call it) comes down to repetition. That means practice!

The Programme

Famously Tom Finney, able to play well anywhere in the then five forward positions, was encouraged by his father to practice with the other foot and he became brilliant with both. Modern players like Robben and Nedved both went through rigorous training programmes on their weaker side to make them more two footed and the top class players they are today.

Ian gets his young players together for their additional *Other Foot* session once a week and it is important that this session is not the player's only session but part of a full football development programme. His young charges at Inverness Caledonian Thistle train three times a week, one of these being their *Other Foot* session.

The programme asks players to wear a yellow sock on their *Other Foot* and the sock that they wear on their favoured foot changes over time as the players become more proficient. The colours change in a similar way to different coloured belts are gained in Karate. At sessions the youngsters practice a full range of activities, many different challenges that really recognize success, and the improvement in the players is remarkable. Fun is key and with everyone using what initially is their weaker foot there is no embarrassment at lack of ability.

I have to say that a full weekly session might not be possible for every young team but where possible, it seems good sense to really push this approach.

At grassroots level with only one session a week I would still insist that the other foot is used by young players as much as possible. Some coaches allow players to always use only one foot but it is rigour and repetition that will bring success with both feet.

Next time you are taking a coaching session, ask yourself whether you have paid enough attention to the Other Foot!

For more information please check out **The Other Foot** web site: <http://www.theotherfootsoccerschool.com>