

The Secrets of Andrey Mazunov part IV: the footwear



Needless to say that footwear is no less important element of player's outfit than anything else. That is why I always carry two pairs of sports shoes. And I never put on new shoes for the match even if the size is right and the make is same. Furthermore, some professional players (my own brother being one of them) always try adapting each pair so that the shoes fit comfortably. For example, they put inside the individually selected orthopedic inner soles because with intensive footwork it is crucial to be steady on the legs and prevent ankles from twisting. Otherwise it may result in serious injury.

Nowadays many manufacturers produce shoes for table tennis with thicker and softer soles. It is believed that this is better for the joints and spine. But I cannot play in such shoes because I do not have good feeling for the floor in this case. Perhaps it is just a matter of habit, but it is too late for me to start anew. Few years ago I was wearing light shoes with very thin soles, but now I prefer more rigid shoes with thicker soles. When choosing the shoes for the match you should think not only about how they fit. For some players the type and quality of the floor in the competition hall is also important. I, however, have two pairs of shoes with different thickness and rigidity of the soles, but this is not for different floors. I simply play first matches wearing thicker shoes and later I put on thinner ones. And I cannot explain exactly why I do this. Maybe it is just a muscular feeling which changes gradually with physical load, maybe something else. I really do not know.

If the floor in the playing hall is somewhat slippery, for example it is parquet or painted concrete, I recommend taking a wet rag with you. Place it on the floor before the game and step on it once in a while between rallies. The shoes then become less slippery. Besides, I recommend taking shoes of slightly bigger size than you would normally wear. The point is that the player's intensive footwork leads to violent accelerations and decelerations of the legs and the big toe hits the toecap all the time. As a result the toenail may exfoliate and this may lead to infection. I would not elaborate on that, but there is nothing pleasant here. For the leg to stay firm in the bigger shoe – wear two socks. At least that is what I do myself.

Finally, I can say that it is much easier experimenting with the footwear than doing same with the racket blades or rubber. You must feel comfortable in your shoes in the first place. That is the most important thing. Make sure the shoes do not to rub sore – and you may try and adapt different brands and models until fully satisfied.