

MADE FOR SKATE

SHOE REVIEW



THE NEW "ONE": NIKE SB Eric Koston 1

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After Eric Koston's sponsor switch from Lakai to Nike SB, the speculation began instantly: Will there be a Nike SB Koston? After initial rumors that Nike wasn't planning to give the 36-year-old Girl pro an own model turned out to be false, the main unanswered question was in which direction it would go design-wise. Given the number of pro models Koston had with other companies, and his well-documented love of sneakers, the excitement regarding his Nike model was more than justified. After contributing his knowledge and opinion to the recent redesign of the Dunk and newest tech-shoe from Nike, the Zoom FP, he revealed his ideas for the direction skate shoes should be heading in in a video interview last year. Basic, simple designs with state-of-the-art, technical features, which Nike definitely is capable of implementing, hidden inside, rather than thrown in your face. Whether that goal was achieved in what could be the most anticipated model of 2011, the Nike SB Koston 1, and if it also stands up to the tests of, literally, the daily grind, are revealed in the following review.

DURABILITY

The Nike SB Koston 1 is a long-lasting shoe. This is for several reasons. First of all, it features a one-piece toe-box that does not have any supporting stitching, so no overlapping materials

have to be kept together. This time, though Nike went one step further, and introduced a complete one-piece upper, not just the toebox. Apart from a small piece at the heel, the complete upper consists of just a single piece of suede, which makes supporting stitching completely unnecessary and thereby extends the durability a lot. Another reason is the use of TPU-reinforced suede as the upper material. This is, in a nutshell, where plastic is fused onto the inside of the suede, which further enhances the abrasion resistance. A side effect of the reinforcement is the reduced lengthening of the suede layer, which helps the shoe stay in shape longer than conventional models. The Swoosh has been attached to the upper in a similar way. Because it is fused on, the unwanted separation of the swoosh caused by ripped-through stitching isn't an issue any longer. A weak spot of the Koston 1 is the limited durability of the laces, which were worn through several times during the test period, especially in the upper area. Since Nike SB, like pretty much every brand, provides an extra pair of laces with every model, this fairly annoying problem is at least compensated for a bit. Another flaw is the neoprene collar in the heel area. The sensitive material gets destroyed very quickly by the griptape, and the same goes for the top part of the mesh tongue, which isn't hidden under the laces. Neither of these affect the overall performance of the shoe, but they do make it look untidy and worn out quickly. The sole turned out to be very durable as well, if you keep in mind how thin and boardfeel-oriented it is. This is accomplished by the deep and rough sole pattern. Towards the end of the lifespan of the Koston 1, there where only minor areas that had worn completely flat.

CUSHIONING

For the Koston 1, Nike used a Lunarlon insole for the first time in a skate shoe, a technology that has mainly featured in running footwear. As you can see in the lateral cut, the bottom part of the sole consists of just the profile and a few extra millimeters, with the common difference in height between forefoot and heel area being created entirely by the shape of the drop in insole. Based on that special construction, it is possible to achieve both excellent boardfeel and cushioning abilities in one sole construction. The Koston I can cushion relatively tough landings and, especially, bails, which noticeably reduces the danger of heel bruises. If you look very closely at the green insole foam, you will notice that the thickness in the heel area was reduced due to the constant pressure peaks caused by landings, so some kind of aging process definitely took place. However, since the shoe was already close to the end of its usability when the pictures where taken, this is negligible.

BREATHABILITY

The breathability of the Nike SB Koston 1 leaves something to be desired. The shoe features a very thin and breathable mesh tongue, and the reduced padding and thin sidewalls keep the isolation effect to a minimum, but beyond that there're no other features, such as ventilation holes or additional mesh panels, to enable hot and moist air to leave the shoe. Furthermore, the TPU reinforced suede disables any kind of heat or moist transfer. All in all, as with many other models, durability has been given priority over breathability.

FORM

The silhouette of the Koston 1 closely resembles that of the Nike SB Bruin. The model features an arrow-shaped toebox with a clear peak, and has an overall slim cut. It is very thin and fits close to the foot – both the sidewalls and the collar have only subtle padding, which aid the board control.

BOARDFEEL

The contact between foot and board when wearing the Koston 1 can be described as virtually perfect. Due to the previously described sole construction, there's direct contact in the forefoot area, because, as seen in the lateral cut, only the essential thickness of the sole materials separate the foot from the deck. Based on that design, the Koston 1 can easily compete with every vulkanised model, with the risk of injuries being heavily reduced by the thicker heel cushioning. The impression given by the insole of the Koston 1 is of one that provides excellent cushioning and great boardfeel, which not many other models can offer simultaneously.

GRIP

The Koston 1 features a very grippy sole unit, which is – as with the boardfeel – definitely comparable with vulcanized soles. The main reason for that is the extreme flexibility of the cup sole, which adopts perfectly to the concave of the board. The roughly structured and deep herringbone profile, placed in circles around the bale, helps with durability, and even towards the end of the lifespan of the shoe, still offers good grip.

COMFORT

Concerning comfort, the Koston 1 introduces more innovative features. For example, the tongue-centering straps have been replaced by sewing the tongue to the inner-facing sidewall. With this smart idea, the straps that can bother some people aren't necessary anymore but the tongue remains centered at all times. Furthermore, stitching inside the shoe has been reduced to a minimum. Overlapping layers have been glued rather than sewed together, so hot spots that could cause sore points or blisters have been eliminated. Beyond that, reduction of the shoe's weight has been prioritised,



so, both while holding it and while being worn, it feels surprisingly light. With the use of neoprene in the collar area and the heel lining, the comfort has been further improved and reminds of the sock-like feel of the Zoom FP.

STABILITY

Unfortunately, the Nike SB Koston 1 only offers a limited amount of stability in the heel area. It features a solid plastic reinforcement of the normal size for skate shoes, but due to the low cut and soft neoprene collar, the support it offers around the ankle and foot has been reduced majorly. Similarly, the heel lock, which isn't as good as expected due to the minimal padding, could be improved. The lightweight and thin construction also feels unstable and seems to offer a lack of support, but you get used to it with time, and the subjective impression that the shoe can't stabilize the foot enough partly diminishes.

SUMMARY

The Nike SB Koston 1 is, as it should be in 2011, a modern cupssole shoe that utilizes many useful Nike technologies for the first time in a slim, subtle skate shoe design. Boardfeel, grip, durability and comfort leave almost nothing to be desired. Its only flaws are the bad breathability and the somewhat reduced support it offers, though both are more than compensated by the advantages.

