



# MADE FOR SKATE

## SHOE REVIEW

## TESTING THE 3 STRIPES: THE adidas RONAN

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When adidas Skateboarding introduced its first pro model, the Busenitz Pro, in 2009, they demonstrated a large amount of courage and confidence in the team rider. The model is heavily soccer inspired, features an extra-long, foldable tongue and a sole construction that was borrowed from a handball shoe. Anyhow, or maybe even therefore, the Busenitz became a huge success and one of the backbones of the whole collection. Those who couldn't pull off the soccer-tongue even had the option to cut it off along a dotted line. The result, though, was not very aesthetically pleasing. With the introduction in Spring 2011 of the new adidas Ronan, which should be available in every better skateshop, this becomes a thing of the past. The design is heavily Busenitz-inspired, but still has its own character and look. The Ronan features a subtle suede tongue instead of the soccer version and the sole construction was designed with the help of the adidas innovation team (a.i.t.) who normally concentrate on the brand's performance pieces. How the younger sibling of the Busenitz performed on the board will be revealed in the following review.

## DURABILITY

Altrenth of the design is the one-piece toe cap. This "less-is-more" concept is one of the main reasons for its longevity. Due to the consistent surface, points of attack are reduced to a minimum. Since a big part of the toetox comes into contact with the griptape at most times, pressure, which in combination with movement, causes holes, gets distributed evenly and thereby

the abrasion can't take place at just one point. Only the tip of the shoe is slightly prone to abrasion, as you can see in the pictures. The concern that the durability would be drastically reduced due to the amount of ventilation holes in the front area did not turn out to be warranted. The first three lace holes of the Ronan are recessed, which extends the durability of the laces in a major way. It is a subtle yet very effective way to protect the laces. The lace holes in the area of the collar aren't recessed and the laces ripped through at this point several times, which is the only small weakness of the model regarding lace protection. As you can see in the pictures, the stitching above the stripes was destroyed after a few sessions causing the panels to come apart, which gave the shoe a very worn-out appearance, but did not affect the overall performance. Another positive fact is that the inner lining in the collar area doesn't reach too far towards the outside and thus doesn't come into much contact with the griptape. The sidewalls are made completely from suede, and this also helped the collar area to stay as good as new for almost the complete lifespan of the shoe.

## CUSHION

The Ronan's sole profile is clearly thicker in the heel area, providing enough padding to dampen the impact of harder landings, which normally isn't the case with most vulcanized models. As you can see in the lateral cut, the sole isn't massive, but features a honeycomb pattern in the heel area, which has

been arranged in a circular pattern below the heel with the goal of evenly distributing forces occurring during pressure peaks. However, despite the bright blue circle on the bottom of the sole, the Ronan does not feature a classic cushion element made out of gel, for example. All in all, the adidas Ronan features solid cushioning that is able to handle medium-to-hard landings.

## FORM

The toebox area of the Ronan closely resembles that of the Busenitz Pro. The arrow shape offers great flick and allows plenty of control while doing flip tricks. Unfortunately, this shape is also slightly more prone to abrasion, since the contact zone between shoe and griptape is smaller. A good indication of this can be seen in the pictures. Towards the heel, the slim front widens drastically due to the thick, padded heel and collar area. This makes it look slightly out of shape from the top, but doesn't affect the performance in any way.

## BREATHABILITY

One of the most neglected areas in skate-shoe design is breathability. In the case of the Ronan, adidas has obviously tried to change that. The model features several ventilation holes, located all over the upper, for example between the stripes and on the toebox. Furthermore, the perforated suede tongue is made from a thin layer of foam, which keeps the isolation effect to a minimum. A breathable tongue is one of the best ways to enable ventilation and air exchange without compromising durability, and this is implemented very well in the design of the Ronan.

## BOARDFEEL

As can be seen in the lateral cut, the Ronan features a very thin sole construction in the forefoot area, comparable to vulcanized models, such as the Nike SB Janoski or the Cons CTS. This leads to outstanding boardfeel that many cup sole shoes can't offer. Another advantage of the Ronan is the thicker, and thereby more comfortable, heel area that enables it to offer better cushioning than the aforementioned vulc models.

## GRIP

As with many recent cup-sole models, the adidas Ronan features a solid grip that isn't unlike that of a vulcanized sole when it is fresh out of the box. However, the medium-deep sole pattern causes the grip to decrease with wear because the lines of the herringbone pattern get shorter and thereby less flexible, especially towards the end of the shoe's lifespan. Unfortunately, the sole was worn down completely in certain areas by the end of the test, but on average, the Ronan offers solid traction between shoe and board.

## COMFORT

Although the Ronan is a cup-sole model, there's no need to wear it in, it is ready out of the box. The reason for this is the previously mentioned thin front area of the sole. Although the model doesn't have tongue-centering straps, the tongue stays in the intended position when using the lace loop, so the annoying task of rearranging it by hand isn't necessary. The Ronan features an ergonomically shaped insole that supports the foot while skating. Due to a slight wedge under the arch, it ensures the foot doesn't get pressed flat during hard landings. The pressure applied to the foot by the insole shape takes a little time to get fully used to, but then feels very pleasant and supportive. The inner lining has been kept very simple and therefore comfortable. The construction is completely seamless, with overlapping panels of inner material glued together rather than stitched, so no hot spots or pressure points where noticeable during the test. All in all, it seems as if the designers of the Ronan put quite a lot of thought into the Ronan's construction, and the result is a comfortable skate shoe.



## STABILITY

One of the most important properties of a skate shoe is the support it offers. While flexibility is needed in the front area, a certain sturdiness and stability to keep the foot in place and prevent injuries is needed in the heel and collar area. Unfortunately, the Ronan isn't completely convincing in this field. Its low-cut, open collar allows a lot freedom of movement, but doesn't offer enough heel lock and stability. The adidas "Geofit Technology", which consists of two pillows of cushioning material positioned below the ankle bone, is supposed to stabilize and fix the foot within the shoe. However, this effect is diminished by the wide collar and thereby doesn't work as well as in the Busenitz Pro, for example. Although the model features a solid and relatively large plastic reinforcement in the heel to try and stabilize the whole area, the rapidly widening sidepanels, which get softer with wear, can't stop horizontal movement of the foot within the shoe. Altogether the Ronan lacks in the stability and support it can offer to the foot. It is comparable with most thinner vulcanized models but can't compete with most cup-sole skate shoes in this field.

## SUMMARY

Apart from the lack in support for the foot, the Ronan satisfies in most areas. The boardfeel, breathability and durability are above average and the great arrow-shaped silhouette gives great control when doing flip tricks, making the Ronan a decent choice.

