

Etnies Bledsoe Low review

Skateboarders tend to be reserved towards new technologies to say the least. We still use equipment that hasn't majorly changed during the last 25 years, all attempts to innovate, except for shapes and wheel sizes, more or less failed. Same applies to the footwear market. As soon as it smells like rocket science, it stays on the self.

But what about little, almost not noticeable innovations?

Etnies incorporated a simple but yet interesting new feature in Tyler Bledsoe's first pro model. An elastic string with a toggle enables the wearer to adjust the width of the shoe even when you like to wear your laces loose.

How the new lowtop-version for 2012 with the subtle attempt to innovate performed can be read in the following review. The Etnies Bledsoe low fits about half a size bigger than usual.

Durability

Unfortunately the Bledsoe low features a few flaws regarding longevity. The sidewall part of the sole is very worn down after the 10 hours of skating and parts of the bottom sole separated from the upper part of the shoe, because the vulcanized foxing tape is not attached to it anymore. Furthermore, the suede in the toebox area near the hidden stitching ripped through causing an 2 inch long slot, even though no contact with griptape happened in that region. Both are defaults that normally shouldn't happen and the broken suede is most probably a one time mistake of the tested sample.



This special colorway features a canvas sidewall, which is more prone to abrasion than suede. As a result the meeting point of the toebox- and the sidewall panel turned out to be a weak spot: There's a hole and the black inner material is visible.

The durability is not as bad as it seems though. The bottom sole turned out to be quite durable for a vulc model and the deep and roughly structured pattern provided long lasting grip during the whole duration of the test.

The hidden stitching of the one piece toebox and the flat silhouette makes the upper material resistant against wear and the suede upper doesn't show any areas of concentrated abrasion. Furthermore, the laces didn't rip through even once during the test period of 10 hours, a result that only very little models achieve.

Cushioning

The cushioning abilities of the Bledsoe low are due to the thin vulcanized sole construction, as you can see in the lateral cut, very limited. The only layer that can absorb forces resulting from hard landings or bails is the removable insole that features an average thickness compared to other models. Thereby the Bledsoe low is mostly suited for low or medium impact skating.

Shape

The toebox shape can be described as rather broad and flat with a clear peak, which explains the great flick and the durability of the upper material. Overall the model features a slim silhouette and fits very close to the foot.



Boardfeel

The small amount of material between the deck and the foot along the whole sole results in great boardfeel. Even though it is not necessarily needed in the heel area since it doesn't affect the boardfeel too much, the very thin construction offers the best connection to the board that is still bearable.



Grip

As expected from a thin and flexible vulcanized sole, the grip of the Bledsoe low is very good. Somehow it needed about half an hour to fully develop, but after this little break in period it featured the typical sticky grippiness only vulc soles can provide. Towards the end of the 10 hour test, the grip however decreased slightly due to wear.



Breathability

Regarding ventilation, the Bledsoe low is above average: it features 2 ventilation holes with metal eyelets on each shoe, facing towards the inwards side, mesh panels on the tongue and canvas sidepanels that are more breathable than suede. Furthermore, the overall thin construction and the almost unpadded tongue reduce the isolation effect of the upper material to a minimum, so the foot stays cool for a longer time compared to most other models.

Comfort

Overall the Etnies Bledsoe low is pleasant to wear. Due to the very direct contact between foot and deck and the thin padding, the comfortability is slightly reduced. The inner lining features a bulky area in the forefoot region that needs some time to get used to, but it didn't cause any hot spots or blisters. The



vulcanized sole turns out to be quite heavy, while being worn it doesn't affect the comfortability too much though. The new toggle system proved to work during the daily grind and assures that the shoe fits very close to the foot. It furthermore improves the heel lock, even when not laced to the top hole.

Support

Regarding the stability the Bledsoe low is above the average low top vulc model.

The heel area proved to be sturdier and the slightly broader shape seemed to improve the stability and prevent ankle rolls a bit better. It is still a very thin model though with a low cut around the ankle, which improves the freedom of movement but not the support. The Bledsoe low is not recommended for skateboarders that need a supportive shoe due to instable ankles or former injuries. If you are looking for a maximum of freedom and a boardfeel oriented shoe rather than support, the Bledsoe is a suitable model.

Summary

The Etnies Bledsoe low is a solid model with the usual flaws of thin vulcanized shoes and too little durability. Apart from that, it features a very good shape, grip, boardfeel and is surprisingly breathable.