

Women's Sailing Shoe Redux

Harken HydroFlux



Columbia Outpost Hybrid



Helly Hansen Hydro Moc



Helly Hansen Hydro Power 3



Three years after PS's last test of sailing shoes, we take a look at the improvements made with this year's offerings.

Design and high-tech materials offer more than protection and traction.

Since we last tested women's sailing shoes in July 2007, dozens of new styles have been released. While we can't test all of them, we used July 2010's report on sailing sandals as an opportunity to also re-visit sailing shoes, taking a look at some of the newest kicks from the makers of our past top picks. This report focuses on those results.

WHAT WE TESTED

Top performers in the July 2007 test included shoes from Harken and Helly Hansen, so for this report, we checked out the Helly Hydro Power 3, Helly Hydro Moc, and the Harken HydroFlux. We also tested the Outpost Hybrid from Columbia Sportswear, which was not represented in the 2007 test but is the maker of one of our highly rated sailing sandals. All have non-marking soles.

Columbia is a quality American sports-apparel manufacturer, while Norway-based Helly Hansen started in the sailing gear market 133 years ago. Harken Inc., headquartered in Wisconsin, made its name as a marine hardware maker in the 1960s but has since added apparel to its product lineup.

HOW WE TESTED

For this test update, we followed a similar protocol and ratings systems as we

did for the men's and women's boat shoe tests (June and July 2007) and the recent women's sailing sandals test (July 2010). We evaluated comfort, construction, foot protection, grip, weight, water retention, and odor resistance.

To assess comfort, a group of testers wore each pair of shoes for an extended period and rated them. The ratings were averaged and noted in the Value Guide. (See page 30.) All of the test shoes in this update are well made, so testers noted the pros and cons of the designs, rather than rating construction quality.

Grip ratings were based on each shoe's performance on an adjustable-incline testing device, which has interchangeable teak and nonskid fiberglass panels. Donning each pair of test shoes, testers stood atop the device while increasing the incline until the tester no longer had good footing. The tests began at 20 degrees of heel and maxed out at 45 degrees, as anything beyond that steep of an incline was deemed unsafe for testers. We repeated the process with water streaming down the teak and nonskid (via a hose) to simulate a wet deck.

Three of the four test shoes performed the same in all four grip categories—wet and dry teak and wet and dry nonskid. The Hydro Power 3, Harken HydroFlux, and the Columbia Outpost Hybrid all rated Excellent overall. The

Hydro Moc rated Good.



Finally, we dunked the shoes in salt water and put them in a black plastic bag for a week to rate their resistance to bacterial growth and odor. The stinkiest of the bunch were the Columbia and the Hydro Power 3, but they showed no signs of mildew. The Harken Hydroflux had a mild odor but it also showed a few black spots of mildew on the inside of the heel.


We compared the shoes' performances to the top picks of the July 2007 test and December 2007 test update. Out of the 13-shoe test field, the Best Choice picks in the 2007 review were the Helly Hansen Hydro Power (for teak decks) and the Teva Atrato (for nonskid fiberglass decks). The Teva Sunkosi, reviewed in the test update, was highly recommended, out-performing the 13 others. None of these are still being made, but the Hydro Power and Sunkosi have been updated and are available as the Hydro Power 3 and Sunkosi 2.

To see how some 2007 picks were faring after their time on the water, we re-tested their grip and inspected them for signs of wear. (See "Long-term Test Followup" on page 31.)

The Harken HydroFlux's lacing system includes a neoprene 'pocket' for the excess cord.



PS VALUE GUIDE		WOMEN'S SAILING SHOES UPDATE							
MAKER / MODEL	PRICE	RATINGS				GRIP TEST*			
		COMFORT	ODOR PROTECTION	FOOT PROTECTION	GRIP	DRY TEAK	WET TEAK	DRY NONSKID	WET NONSKID
HARKEN HYDROFLUX 	\$80	Good	Good	Good	Excellent	35	45	35	40
COLUMBIA OUTPOST HYBRID 	\$75	Excellent	Fair	Good	Excellent	35	45	35	40
HELLY HANSEN HYDRO POWER 3 	\$100	Good	Fair	Excellent	Excellent	35	45	35	40
HELLY HANSEN HYDRO MOC	\$70	Good	Excellent	Fair	Good	35	45	35	35
2007 TOP PICKS									
HELLY HANSEN HYDRO POWER **	NA	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	35 / 35	45 / 45	35 / 35	35 / 35
TEVA SUNKOSI **	NA	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	45 / 35	45 / 40	45 / 35	45 / 35

 Best Choice  Recommended * Highest angle at which the shoe was able to maintain traction. ** 2007 / 2010 grip test results.



Helly Hansen Hydro Power 3

HELLY HANSEN HYDRO POWER 3

Helly Hansen's Hydro Power 3 sailing shoes have an open-mesh construction from heel to toe that provides excellent breathability. Removable insoles with anti-bacterial technology allow sailors to take them out

for faster drying. This definitely speeds up dry time, but testers found that removable insoles tend to slide around inside shoes. The Hydro Power 3 shoes stayed a little soggy once they were dunked, and testers found them to be the slowest to drain the squish out. Unlike the other shoes tested, the tongue's sides are not attached to the shoe, allowing water to flow through freely.

The Hydro Power 3 is an upgrade to the original Hydro Power (July 2007). It has a sturdier frame (made of flexible plastic) and sole, neoprene along the back inside of the shoe and under the tongue, and a looped pull tab on the heel for fast donning.

The Hydro Power 3 also has an improved shoe-lacing design, trading the lace eyelets that were on the original for fabric loops. This is an attractive and easy to use system, but testers prefer a cord and toggle lacing system for sail-

ing shoes. Once shoestring laces are wet, they become difficult to manipulate.

The overlay on the toes and heels offer added protection from toe-stumping cleats. These could be worn just as easily off the boat as onboard.

The shoe's outsole is "Ultra Storm Grip" rubber compound, which features multi-directional siping. In grip tests, the Hydro Power 3 rated Excellent overall, doing best on wet surfaces and out-performing the original Hydro Power in the wet nonskid test.

Strong, sturdy construction and a supportive frame make the Hydro Power 3 an excellent choice for those who have begrudgingly given up the barefoot lifestyle due to foot-support issues.

The Hydro Power comes in three multi-color designs and sells for \$100.

Bottom line: Well-made, comfortable, and stylish shoes, the Hydro Power 3 scored high in grip tests but tended to drain slower than the others. *PS* recommends these for sailors seeking a lot of foot support.

HELLY HANSEN HYDRO MOC

Helly Hansen's Hydro Moc is a lightweight water moccasin designed for activities on and around the water. The shoe fits like a low-cut water bootie, and its Velcro fastener strap wraps across the foot for a comfortable,

snug fit. The Hydro Moc's open-mesh construction allows it to breathe and dry quickly. It has an elastic collar for easy-on, easy-off wear but no pull-on tab. A comfortable neoprene lining runs on the back of the shoe, and removable EVA insoles allow for faster drying times.

As the Columbias have a trail-runner look, we'd say the mocs have more of a futuristic Euro-styling. Helly does make a shoe that resembles a trail-runner, the Trail Moc, but the company did not send it for testing.

The shoes have the same Ultra Storm Grip rubberized outsole as the Hydro Power 3, but its grip-test performance wasn't as good, perhaps because the style lacks the support of the plastic frame.

The mocs are comfortable and well-constructed. They come in four colors and retail for \$70.

Bottom line: These lightweight water moccasins performed well, but they wouldn't be our first choice for a boat shoe as they lack the toe protection and support other test shoes feature.

HARKEN HYDROFLUX

When we wrapped up the 2007 shoe test, we were disappointed to learn that the Harken Trimmer, which outperformed other shoes in that test, had been discontinued. So we were eager to check out Harken's latest footwear for women sailors, the HydroFlux.





Teva
Sunkosi

Teva and Helly Still Standing After 3 Years



Helly Hansen
Hydro Power 3

Along with the new shoes, testers looked at two pairs from the 2007 tests to see how they are holding up to our long-term testing: the Helly Hansen Hydro Power (predecessor of the Hydro Power 3) and the Teva Sunkosi, which has been upgraded since our tests and is now the Sunkosi 2. After three years of regular use, the Tevas slipped slightly in grip ratings but the

Helly performed just as well as it did in 2007. (See Value Guide.)

The Hydro Power's stitching and glue have suffered some from sunlight and salt water exposure, but it is noticeable only on close inspection. The Sunkosis are holding up well, with no obvious signs of wear. Both shoes still have quite a few regattas in them.

The HydroFlux's features include toe protection bonded to the shoe body, an antibacterial silver-woven footbed that fights odor-causing bacteria, and a pull-on heel tab.

Made of double-layered, quick-dry mesh, the shoe has nine drainage ports, allowing for quick draining. The screened ports also prevent debris from getting into the shoe. Testers found that the HydroFlux drained quickly and completely, without holding in that last bit of water that tends to squish around.

The HydroFlux is manufactured like a podiatrist's dream: It has full-length compression-molded EVA midsoles for shock absorption and neutral pronation; a stability track that controls ankle and foot rotation; metatarsal forefoot support in a wider toe box for improved balance; active arch support that reduces strain and aligns knees; and a molded heel cup for shock absorption and reduced fatigue. Testers found them to be lightweight and comfortable with excellent support and foot protection.

The lacing system uses webbing and a cord-and-toggle system, but the cord is much longer than it needs to be, in our opinion. The excess can be tucked into a neoprene "pocket" at the top of the tongue, but we'd prefer the cord to be shorter so that it doesn't pose the risk of snagging a cleat.

The HydroFlux has radial traction zone soles with a 360-degree siping pattern, which gives each of the foot's three pressure zones an independent area of traction. In grip tests, the HydroFlux rated Excellent overall.

The women's Hy-

droFlux is available in one color and retails for \$82.

Bottom line: The HydroFlux is very well made and provides excellent stability and support. Grip ratings were at the top of the pack. We recommend it for those working a foredeck that's often awash and for those with wide feet.

COLUMBIA

The Columbia Outpost Hybrid performs like a no-nonsense athletic shoe, but looks stylish and feminine. Its speed-lacing system uses a cinch cord and toggle. The Outpost's wide-gauge, breathable mesh body with water-resistant overlays allowed the shoes to drain quickly in tests; they retained no water after a few minutes of squishing about. The removable insoles are thinner than the other shoes, but a tighter fit inside the shoe keeps them from sliding around. The shoe's snug fit makes them a good candidate for sailors with narrow feet.

The footbed, treated with AgION anti-odor treatment, is contoured and constructed from high-density EVA for cushioning comfort and support. The Outpost's support is so good that one tester found the shoes alleviated painful plantar fasciitis. To test the support a little further, one tester wore them for a jog and found them quite comfortable for a couple of miles, but she noted that she wouldn't run a marathon in them.

The shoe bottom features a non-marking omni grip rubber sole that provides traction in wet or dry



Columbia
Outpost Hybrid



conditions. The Outpost scored at the same level with the Hydro Power 3 and the HydroFlux: Excellent overall.

It is available in four colors and sells for \$75.

Bottom line: The Outpost Hybrid offers excellent support, drainage, grip, and style for one of the lowest prices in the group. They get the Best Choice nod.

CONCLUSION

All four of the sailing shoe styles we tested for this update are well-made shoes that would serve well for onboard wear. The Helly Hansen Hydro Power 3 offers good support and excellent grip, while the Harken would be a good fit for those with wide feet or those whose feet are frequently soaked. But considering all of our test criteria, the comfortable Columbia Outpost Hybrid gets the top pick in this test field.

In comparison to our past faves, the Columbia performed slightly better in grip tests than the Helly Hydro Power original but was behind the Teva Sunkosi, which still has the best ratings.

While we only tested women's shoes, men's versions of these same shoes are available in the Outpost, Hydro Power 3, HydroFlux, and Sunkosi 2. ▲



Harken
HydroFlux



CONTACTS

COLUMBIA, 800/622-6953
www.columbia.com

HARKEN, 262/691-3008
www.harken.com

HELLY HANSEN, 877/435-5998
www.hellyhansen.com

TEVA, 800/367-8382, www.teva.com