

WELL AND TRULY TESTED



NIGEL WADE

DRYSUIT SCUBAPRO EVERTEC LT

LAST CENTURY I PURCHASED a trilaminate drysuit from the other side of the Atlantic. It was state of the art for that era, with innovative features that made the design unique.

The American manufacturer had built a suit with a telescoping torso, diagonal front-entry zip and crushed neoprene sock-ends that took the company's own hard-wearing rock-boots.

That suit was made by San Diego-based Diving Unlimited International (DUI) and was the most comfortable, easy-to-use trilaminate suit on the market at that time.

It also looked very smart, resembling a separate jacket and trousers.

The patent for that design was first registered 30 years ago, in August 1984, and as far as I am aware has expired. Certainly other suit-makers have since been able to incorporate those distinctive elements in their own products.

Scubapro's Evertec drysuit was very similar to the original DUI design and has now been made even lighter with the recently released LT model.

The Design

The Evertec LT is built using a lightweight rip-stop trilaminate fabric. Said to be 25% lighter than its predecessor, the material has a slight stretch to improve flexibility and allow more freedom of movement.





Left: The telescoping torso and diagonal front zip makes this a self-donning suit.



Middle: An elasticated crotch-strap keeps the top section in place.



Right: Red braces are easy to find, and they're attached with trident clips.

A long diagonal front "Tizip MasterSeal" waterproof zip extends from the left shoulder to behind the right hip and is protected by a Velcro-fastened flap. This plastic zip represents a leap forward in waterproof zip design and should require a lot less maintenance than traditional brass and rubber models.

The torso is lengthened and folds at the waist. It is held in place using an elasticated crotch-strap and extends as the wearer raises his or her arms, leaving the bottom portion of the suit staying in place.

Soft neoprene socks without seams are incorporated. They need the addition of separate drysuit or rock-boots, though oversized wetsuit boots could also be used.

The neck- and wrist-seals are latex, with a Neoprene neck-collar fitted for warmth and comfort. There are two pockets on the upper leg with drainage holes, and large Velcro-fastened flaps to keep safe and secure essentials such as a spare mask, DSMB or slates.

The suit also has "I-safe" keepers on the inside of the forearms for the secure fixing of wrist-mounted instruments. Swivel Si-Tech valves fitted at the sternum and left shoulder allow for easy inflation and dumping of air.

Removable red braces, full-length soft Kevlar kneepads and double-stitched seams complete this "feature-rich" exposure suit.

In Use

I took the suit for a few pool sessions to get accustomed to its buoyancy characteristics before using it to keep me dry and warm at an inland site.

I was hoping to take the Evertec LT to the Canary Islands, diving in the temperate waters of the Atlantic. Unfortunately, the first suit to arrive was so small that I couldn't get it past my thighs, and the replacement suit arrived too late for that trip – which brings me to the sizing of Scubapro products.

In my experience the manufacturer tends to err on the small size compared to others. I know I'm short and rotund, but I'm definitely not unique in shape and size. All my wet- or drysuits are size L/short and fit really well, but this suit in size L was a little more snug than I'm used to.

It allowed only for a medium-thickness thermal top and leggings to fit underneath – something to bear in mind if you're considering ordering one electronically.

The replacement suit did its job superbly. It was comfortable and flexible, and the telescoping torso worked exactly as I had expected it to do, so lifting my arms above my head didn't result in an increase of an octave or two in my voice.

The wrist-seals were an exact fit, but the neck-seal was a little tight. If it were my own suit I would have carefully set about it with a pair of sharp scissors, cutting away a bit at a time until it was the perfect fit.

Getting in and out of the LT was easily accomplished without any need for assistance.

The bright red removable braces, which are held in place with trident clips, were easy to locate inside the suit (black ones tend to be

invisible). The long diagonal zip left plenty of room for this exercise, although it ended up being closed behind my hip, on my blind side, and for security and peace of mind I asked my buddy to check that it was in fact fully closed.

I found the sock-ends to be the most comfortable I've ever used. Short and stretchy without seams, they slid easily into my own rock-boots. There was no loose material to scrunch up at the toes and they felt spongy, cushioning my feet as I walked topside or finned under water.

They didn't feel as robust as you'd expect, so don't walk around on sharp gravel without the protection of boots.

The real advantage of wearing rock-boots is that it's difficult to get a substantial amount of air trapped where you don't want it, which can easily cause buoyancy and trim problems.

The swivel inflation valve was positioned in the right place for me at my sternum and was easy to use, as was the shoulder dump-valve, which is adjustable and automatically dumps air if it's at the high point of the wearer. A neoprene flap inside the suit covers the valve, protecting it from being restricted by loose undergarments.

The instrument strap-keepers at the wrists securely placed my Galileo Sol computer in the perfect position, and I liked the extra security and additional stability this offered.

SPECS

PRICE ▶ £1049

TYPE ▶ Self-donning, front-entry

MATERIAL ▶ Ripstop trilaminate

SIZES ▶ S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL, 4XL

VALVES ▶ Si-Tech, swivel

COLOURS ▶ Black with silver livery

KNEEPADS ▶ Kevlar, full-length

POCKETS ▶ Two

INCLUDED ▶ 6.5mm Neoprene hood, lp inflation hose, zipped drysuit carry-all, silicon zip lube.

EXCLUDED ▶ Drysuit boots

CONTACT ▶ www.scubapro.com

DIVER GUIDE - ★★★★★☆☆☆

Conclusion

Scubapro has done an excellent job with the Evertec LT, taking what many consider to be the best design characteristics ever seen in a trilaminate drysuit and bringing them bang up to date by virtue of hi-tech materials.

It has even added a few of its own unique features as icing on the cake.

The sizing issue needs to be noted, unless of course you're built like a whippet and are more than 6ft tall – a shape that, as far as I can see, is on the wane. ■