



220 TRIATHLON BEST ON TEST

## HUUB VARMAN

**£474.99** The clever folk at Huub rarely rest on their laurels and, with the Varman, they believe they've launched a revolution in wetsuit development. With their trademark +43 system, Huub claim to have a material that offers 43% more buoyancy than standard neoprene. Testing certainly backs up the theory with plenty of uplift around the hips. The thinner panels, especially around the arms, meant there was no real restriction of the stroke. Huub's team have created an 'Arms Neutral' design that delivers on its promise to allow freedom and rotational movement. The only criticism is that the neck was a little tight out of the water, but less of an issue once swimming. An interesting suit with the potential to shake up the market. [huubdesign.com](http://huubdesign.com)

**90%** **VERDICT** NEW TECH HAS PRODUCED A GOOD WETSUIT BUT WITH A BIG MID-RANGE PRICE TAG



## ORCA 3.8

**£449** Buoyancy is the name of the game here. It's no coincidence that the titular 3.8 marries perfectly with the 3.8km distance of an Ironman swim leg, as this wetsuit is aimed at long-course athletes who need a little extra assistance to hold their body position during an extended period in the water. Orca claim the suit has the most advanced buoyancy technologies on the market and it certainly helps to keep a streamlined body position in the water. A simple zip operation and decent shoulder flexibility are the other highlights. The rest of it feels more in the simple and straightforward bracket rather than luxury, which probably means it isn't one for a more advanced swimmer (see their winning Alpha suit for that). But for a long-course novice? There's plenty on offer here. [orca.com](http://orca.com)

**82%** **VERDICT** IDEAL FOR THOSE NEEDING A BUOYANCY BOOST, BUT LESS SUITED TO STRONGER SWIMMERS



220 TRIATHLON CUTTING EDGE

## QUINTANA ROO HYDROFIVE

**£479.95** Triathlon wetsuit pioneers Quintana Roo are pretty blunt about what they're offering with the HydroFive. It's basically similar technology as their fancier HydroSix (see p14), minus a few frills to keep the quality high but bring the price point down. It's hard to argue with the results. This was probably the most unique suit on test, with some very interesting panel cuts and stretch materials that delivered superb flexibility in the water. The thick legs helped with buoyancy and the unique fit – boasting a very different style of collar via a comfort seal neck design and extremely long sleeves – somehow all worked. This is certainly a quirky suit and very different to everything else, but it was a high performer and proves that different can also be good. [windwave.co.uk](http://windwave.co.uk)

**88%** **VERDICT** UNIQUE FEATURES DELIVER A WETSUIT THAT PERFORMS EXTREMELY WELL FOR THE PRICE



220 TRIATHLON BEST VALUE

## ZOOT KONA

**£310** Zoot have tried to pack as many features of their high-end wetsuits as they can into the Kona and reduce the cost, and it's fairly successful. The most notable feature is the GLIDEflex grooved panel in the chest. Zoot have developed the feature to allow full expansion of the lungs while swimming, particularly important when getting going in those anxious moments at the start of a triathlon. That proved true on test, but it's arguable whether it felt that much different from the other suits here. The AQUALift buoyancy tech worked effectively, with the suit providing significant uplift in the hips. The Kona wetsuit had a more conventional fit, possibly due to the price tag, and there was a little more water ingress than some others on test (but not so much it was a cause for concern). [zootsports.co.uk](http://zootsports.co.uk)

**85%** **VERDICT** NOT THE MOST PREMIUM SUIT HERE BUT DELIVERS HIGHLY ON VALUE FOR MONEY



## YONDA SPIRIT II

**£399** Anybody who struggles with wrestling off a wetsuit in transition should give serious consideration to Yonda's Spirit II. The first thing you notice about the suit is the unique materials used in the lining. This is the Y-Kick System that allows the most incredibly quick transitions imaginable thanks to the remarkably soft and smooth fabrics. The rest of the wetsuit is no slouch, either. There was decent buoyancy on offer in the thick Yamamoto 39-Cell neoprene and, as we've come to expect from the British brand, it was an eye-catching design as well. The '10k collar' is comfortable, providing a good seal and no rubbing at all. However, shoulder flexibility just didn't feel as good as some of the other wetsuits on test, which is something to be considered. [yondasports.com](http://yondasports.com)

**84%** **VERDICT** SILKY SMOOTH TO GET ON AND OFF; A DECENT ALL-ROUNDER; IMPERFECT SHOULDER FLEXIBILITY

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## MEN'S VERDICT

The men's suits here show that there's is a pretty obvious pay-off between price and features, even within the mid-range wetsuit market. The Huub Varman is a very high-end product, yet comes with a higher-end price tag. Yet it's outstanding for its speed in the water and the pure number of features and fully warrants the Best on Test award.

In contrast to its Alpha or Predator suits, the Orca 3:8 here goes down the line of targeting those in need of buoyancy, and will have appeal for newcomers to Ironman especially.

The other suits did a good job in delivering broader results, with the Zoot and Yonda at lower prices. Quintana Roo was the best of this trio and worthy of very serious consideration, actually delivering something fun and different. Yet you wouldn't feel shortchanged with any of these suits, whatever your ability or budget choice. *Adam Leitch* **220**



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## 2XU PROPEL P:2

**£380** The Propel claims to be 2XU's most buoyant thanks to its 39-cell 5mm front panel. With female hips and thighs, high buoyancy isn't something this tester would normally prioritise but they've got their ratios spot on. The 'Rollbar' provides extra core control, supporting swimming without feeling unbalanced even as fatigue set in. The blend of 1.5mm in the shoulders and added stretch zone panels allows a natural stroke and full range of motion. The SCS coating cuts drag, regulates body temperature and decreases body fatigue. This, in sync with the forearm water entrapment zone, which seemed to improve the catch dynamics, made this the fastest here. The only negative is significant water entered through the back of the neck and flowed to the arms, which could be an issue in colder waters especially. [2xu.com](http://2xu.com)

**89%** **VERDICT** HIGHLY FLEXIBLE AND SUPPORTIVE WETSUIT; A LITTLE WATER INTAKE BUT STILL FAST



## BLUSEVENTY REACTION

**£435** With reactive stretch technology and 1.5mm around the arms, the Reaction offers great shoulder flexibility, comfort and full range of motion throughout the stroke. The 5mm core and hip neoprene provided excellent support and, combined with 4mm on the legs, a good body position could be obtained with minimal effort. The split chest panels allow extra stretch and easier breathing yet, despite claims of a low neckline, it actually felt too tight and a touch uncomfortable around the throat. The four-way Aquaseal technology on the cuffs prevents any influx of water but seemed to make the suit harder to remove in T1. If transition speed is of concern, the arms and legs are designed to be cut up to six inches shorter without impact to the suit's overall performance. [blueseventy.co.uk](http://blueseventy.co.uk)

**82%** **VERDICT** SUPPORT AND FLEXIBILITY WHERE YOU WANT IT, BUT LET DOWN BY THE NECKLINE



220 TRIATHLON BEST VALUE

## DHB AERON LAB

**£250** It may be the budget option of the mid-range wetsuits on test here, yet the Aeron Lab still packs in many of the features seen in those almost twice the price, such as the drag-minimising Super Composite Skin (SCS) coating and the 39-cell Yamamoto neoprene grading throughout. The low-profile neckline is the most comfortable here and also keeps water at bay. While the overall fit is good, it was slightly let down by what felt like a thicker and less flexible 1.5mm shoulder area than some of the others on test. Despite this, the suit proved fast both in the water and on land in our mock transition one tests. The 3D-ribbed panels along the torso are claimed to channel the water and certainly seem to improve propulsion, and T1 is a breeze thanks to the M-flex lining and the quick-release cuffs. It's also currently £200. [wiggle.co.uk](http://wiggle.co.uk)

**83%** **VERDICT** NOT THE MOST COMFORTABLE HERE, BUT PERFORMS WELL FOR THE PRICE



## RACESKIN SUMMA

**£460** Aimed at top-level athletes, putting on this suit required the skill of an Olympian to navigate the YKK reverse zip. Not ideal if you're swimming solo or not comfortable asking for help before a race start or at training days. Once zipped in, the neck appears to come up very high at the front, but this did ease once in the water. High-quality 1.5mm panels around the shoulder enabled a full range of motion and flexibility in the upper body that, combined with a generous body length, allowed for a restriction-free stroke. Aerodome panels in the hips and lower body provide plenty of buoyancy and the SCS coating allowed us to slip through the water with ease. Thankfully, the zip is easy to operate for the removal phase and the suit was the fastest to remove in our T1 simulation. [raceskin.co.uk](http://raceskin.co.uk)

**85%** **VERDICT** FAST IN THE SWIM AND TRANSITION ONE, AND WITH IMPRESSIVE FLEX IN THE SHOULDERS



## ZONE3 ASPIRE

**£375** With neoprene derived from limestone rather than oil, the Aspire claims to be the environmentally-friendly option. The Aerodome materials provide a reported 30% extra buoyancy than standard neoprene, and the added leg and hip panels meant no kicking was required to stay afloat in our sea-swim tests. While it boasts superior flexibility, movement didn't feel as free around the shoulders as others on test and the forearms felt unnecessarily tight. The arms and legs came up a bit short and, when at the catch phase of the stroke, there was a pulling feeling at the front of the body – those above average height may struggle here. Despite this, the Pro Speed cuffs made for a quick transition and, despite feeling restricted, thanks to the drag-reducing SCS coating it gives the feeling of gliding along with minimal effort. [zone3.com](http://zone3.com)

**79%** **VERDICT** POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL MESSAGE; GOOD BUOYANCY AND SPEED; LET DOWN BY COMFORT AND FIT

220 TRIATHLON

## WOMEN'S VERDICT

While all of the women's wetsuits did a good job of keeping us warm in the early summer waters, they were also all substantially quicker than swimming without a suit and for far less effort.

For those wanting performance on a budget, the DHB Aeron Lab is a great choice. With fit of high priority, the Blueseventy Reaction is the only suit to come in nine sizes, while both the Aeron Lab and the Reaction are designed for the limbs to be custom cut to suit personal preferences.

The 2XU Propel, Zone3 Aspire and Raceskin Summa all provide a balanced and supportive level of buoyancy, while the Summa and Reaction excel with their impressive shoulder flexibility.

Yet it's 2XU's Propel that takes the Best on Test gong due to its impressive 'Roll-bar' core control, all-round comfort, support and supreme suppleness. *Kelly Stokes* **220**