

MADE FOR SKATE

SHOE REVIEW

By Clemens Dyckmans

CONVERSE CTS - CHUCK TAYLOR SKATE

The Converse Chuck Taylor is one of the most iconic sneaker designs ever. The model played a part in skateboarding history since day one and, even today, despite the evolution and development of skateboarding footwear (is that what you meant?), skateboarders like Kenny Anderson, Marc Johnson and Alex Olson have been spotted wearing them, although more off than on the board. All in all, it was just obvious for Converse, or “Cons”, to make the Chuck Taylor the flagship of their new skateboard shoe range.

The secret dream shoe for many has been adapted to meet the needs of modern skateboarding: memory foam in the heel area and the tongue are intended to add comfort; suede and specially developed laces to improve the durability. The tested model features a suede toe cap, which misses the classic look of the white rubber toe, but should improve the flick of the shoes. All in all, there are enough reasons to put the Cons CTS to the test of the daily grind of skateboarding. The Chuck Taylor Skate runs a half size bigger than most models of other brands. As always, it is recommended to buy these in your local shop where you can try on different sizes.

DURABILITY

Unfortunately, the toebox cap is not sewn to a separate layer of suede, so it doesn't add an extra layer of upper material, which would have doubled the durability in that area. Instead, there's a layer of white woven material under it. This strengthens the toe but doesn't extend its lifespan. The durability of the laces is pretty good. However, this is only partly because of the special laces. The main reason is down to the tight lacing method of the slim-cut model – the laces are kept away from the edge of the shoe where most contact with the griptape takes place. The simple sidewalls of the CTS, without any overlapping material edges or stitching, basically offers no points of attack. This causes the abrasion to take place on a main surface of the shoe, rather than on just a few “hot spots”, which extends the longevity. The suede used is thicker than on most other models on the market right now, and therefore more resistant. The cross stitching on the eyestay successfully avoids separation of the layers. The flat silhouette minimises the abrasion of the weaker upper material since the main contact between shoe and board takes place at the sole. An additional layer of vulcanised rubber in the forefoot area, the so-called toe bumper, adds additional durability to the sole. However, since the rubber used is rather soft, the longevity of the sole is merely average, which is a disadvantage of the whole shoe. As you can see in the pics, the sole is more worn out than the rest of the toebox.



CUSHION

The Converse Chuck Taylor Skate offers average cushioning. The thicker heel area of the insole makes sure that the shoe can absorb landings to a certain degree, so you don't get heel bruises or similar injuries right away. However, you have to keep in mind that the CTS is a very thin model, especially in the forefoot area, and is therefore only partly recommended for tough landings. Unfortunately, the model doesn't feature any additional damping elements in the heel.

BREATHABILITY

The breathability of the CTS is below average. There are two big metal-lined ventilation holes on the inner site of the model, but these aren't sufficient to ventilate the whole shoe. Additionally, the tongue features a top layer of suede that prevents the moist air that develops over the instep of the foot from escaping. A tongue made out of a mesh material, at least in the area covered by the laces, which many other brands use, would have been a reasonable addition.

SHAPE

The toebox shape of the skate version hasn't been changed compared to the original Chuck Taylor. The model features a rounded toebox. However, since the radius is comparatively small and the sidewalls taper towards the toebox, it is more of an arrow shape with a round peak. The pictures will give you a good impression of the exact shape.

BOARDFEELING

The Chuck Taylor Skate possesses near enough the maximum boardfeel that is possible, and bearable, for a skate shoe. The thickness of the sole in the whole forefoot area is as thin as possible, cushioned only by the very thin insole. Even in the heel area, the height of the sole is only about 7mm. Even vulcanised soles of other shoes are normally somewhere between 13 and 17mm, which doubles the distance between foot and board. The insole of the CTS, with the thicker heel area, puts this factor into perspective, but it is absolutely necessary to prevent injuries. Since the construction of the sole between the toes and the middle foot is largely responsible for the subjective impression of the boardfeel, it's obvious why the CTS performs so well in this field.

GRIP

The sole of the CTS takes a surprisingly long time to develop its full grip. During testing, it took between one and two hours of skating, which is unusual for such a thin vulcanised sole that you'd expect to be grippy right out of the box. As you can see in the pictures, the classic sole pattern of the Chuck Taylor has been used for the skate version too. Since it features areas with little structure, the pattern can't compete with traditional herringbone patterns, which, most of the time, can feel like your feet are „glued“ to the board. However, the rougher pattern in the forefoot area, and the very flexible construction that provides maximum surface contact, compensates for this negative aspect. All in all, the impression of the grip of the Chuck Taylor Skate is rather positive and the shoe should especially appeal to those who like a soft grip without the feeling of being „glued“ to the deck in a negative way.

COMFORT

The wearing comfort of the CTS is mainly influenced by the very thin sole construction, which, on one hand, offers an outstanding boardfeel but, on the other, causes you to feel every landing. The insole with the thicker heel area is able to cushion the developing forces to a certain degree, but the foot is still not as protected as you might be used to from other shoes. A feature that stood out was the U-shaped plastic addition to the insole in the heel area. It improves the ergonomics because it assures that the insoles wraps well around the heel and is also able to avoid painful landings when landing primo. A negative aspect is the edge caused by overlapping materials on the inside of the shoe. This is in the area of the pinky toe, approximately where the cross stitching is placed, and can cause blisters. In general, it is recommended to break in a CTS by walking in it before starting to skate it. This will ensure the sole has its full grip and the feet have time to get used to the exposed stitched areas around the achilles tendon and the ankles. A feature that adds comfort to the CTS is the relatively slim cut, which gives the shoe a close fit. The use of memory foam in the tongue and heel area is also positive. This foam has the ability to adopt to the individual foot shape. The tongue especially gets more comfortable because of it, but the difference to regular cushioning material in the heel area isn't very noticeable though.

SUPPORT

A weakness of the Converse Chuck Taylor Skate is the little support it offers to the foot. The C-shaped plastic reinforcement in the heel is relatively bendable and small. You can test this feature by squeezing the heel. Because of this, the shoe has a lack of the stability that is necessary to reliably support the foot. The low cut, especially around the ankle and the thin sidewalls that are made out of just one layer of suede and one layer of woven material, doesn't offer much additional stability. With time, the CTS gets softer and flexible and sops preventing horizontal movement of the foot inside the shoe. The Stability of the Chuck Taylor Skate is, all in all, below average. People who are looking for a shoe with a good ankle support, maybe because of former injuries, should consider a different model or at least try the CTS on in a local shop to get a personal impression of whether the shoe offers enough support for their needs. Skaterboarders that look for this freedom around the ankle, and attach high value to boardfeel and soft grip, should definitely consider the Cons Chuck Taylor Skate.