

# swim bag: tech suits

Manufacturers and distributors provided samples for this review of products available in the market.

**S**uit manufacturers have been busy designing and producing tech suits to meet new FINA rules. Our product testers rated them on ease of donning, comfort, perception of buoyancy and compression, and other factors.

With the demise of zippers and fasteners, the hard truth for women is that the suits are quite difficult to get into. In order to keep a snug fit, they are

built small at the top, but they still have to be pulled over larger body parts. For women with wider hips this will mean more long pre-race donning parties in the locker room.

Men had an easier time of it, but our testers did notice that the new style in race jammers is quite a bit lower cut than race jammers of yore, and they were reminded of the importance of drawstrings.

The fabric for some of the new suits will remind anyone who swam through the 1980s of the paper suits. Improvements have been made with heat-bonded seams and strategically placed compression panels.

The big question on everyone's mind is "Can these suits do what the full-body tech suits did for me?" In some cases, possibly. Several testers noticed only a small dif-

ference in their times from recent meets with full suits. Others noticed quite a bit of difference. There are so many factors to consider that it will be impossible to predict the outcome this early in the game. As the field evolves, *SWIMMER* will continue to test and evaluate suits so that our readers have more resources to make their tech-suit purchasing decisions.

## Agon Paper

**Jammer \$47; knee-length ProBack \$60 (solid colors)**

According to the manufacturer, Agon's suit is made from the same material as some of the other suits tested. It does have a thinner, more slippery feel, which is apparently due to the extreme-heat pressing of the fabric done in order to make the customized team patterns Agon is known for. The water repellency of the fabric is excellent. Agon uses regular sewn seams, rather than heat welded or bonded seams, and there are no compression panels. Testers did feel this difference in the buoyancy and compression offered by the Paper suit, which was lower than some of the other suits tested. A female tester reported good compression in the kneeskin, and a complete range of motion. The male tester stated that the suit was comparable to a practice jammer as far as ease of donning and compression.

What all the testers loved most about this suit was the ability to customize team colors, logos and patterns. Several felt that this suit would make an excellent tech suit for local and regional meets, but stated that they would probably purchase one of the more expensive suits for national meets. [agonswim.com](http://agonswim.com)





### Arena Powerskin R-EVO

**Jammer \$260, Kneeskin \$375**

The papery fabric of the Powerskin was not very stretchy. Female testers had to spend some time getting into it, but once in, the suit was quite comfortable and provided good compression in the thighs without cutting off circulation above the knees. In the water the suit felt great, conforming to the body better once wet. Female testers liked the high neck that prevented water scooping off the blocks. The fabric did show some water repellency, although not as good as some other suits tested. Testers loved the seamless design, accomplished with nearly invisible heat-bonded seams.

For male testers, the sticky rubber strips on the waistband and leg openings made this suit more difficult to don than some of the other suits tested. The built-in modesty panel also made the fit slightly snug on land. In the water, the suit performed well. One tester noted, "It kept me riding high in the water and I felt I had a whole range of motion while doing the breaststroke kick."

Arena sizing does seem to be more in line with practice suit sizing, so ordering down a size or two may result in a suit much too small to squeeze into.

### Blueseventy nero tx

**Jammer \$199, Kneeskin \$299**

Women gave the thumbs up for the new Nero's basic black appearance. They also appreciated the flexible, comfortable straps, which stretched easily when donning, although the tight fabric of the suit was still, as expected, a struggle to wriggle into. The heat-welded seams were a big hit, giving confidence against the seam rips that plagued the former Nero and other brands. Testers reported that this suit runs about a size smaller than the previous Nero tech suits and suggested anyone in doubt order up a size. One tester also suggested that the coverage at the top of the suit might not be adequate for women who are larger breasted.

Female testers also liked the leg compression and felt the knee openings were not too constricting. One who had used the previous Nero kneeskin noticed a big difference for her, as the previous model had cut off her circulation. Another tester noticed that the legs were shorter than some of the other brands she has worn recently and that longer-legged women may have trouble with the leg bands riding too high.

Male testers had less to say about appearance. Donning the suit was difficult and testers reported the thin fabric does not stretch easily. Once in the water, however, the suit conformed nicely to the body. A male tester felt that the band at the bottom of the leg stayed very tight during the swim, limiting his range of motion during the breaststroke kick. [blueseventy.com](http://blueseventy.com)



## Finis Hydrospeed 2

Jammer \$89, Race John \$199

Testers liked the scaled appearance of the Hydrospeed 2. Both the male and female testers also like the cut of the suits. The women's cut was generous and provided good coverage, even though it was fairly low-cut in the back. One tester remarked that the suit was much better than others she had tried in compressing extra fat toward the back of the arm holes and lower back.

A female tester also noted that the suit was secure in starts and turns, and felt streamlined. The fabric felt thick and she felt effective compression, without restricted breathing from excessive tightness in the chest area and, "everything stayed in place" during race conditions. Her only complaint was tightness just above the knees while swimming breaststroke.

The men's suit was also given high marks for appearance and comfort. Male testers did not have any trouble with excessive tightness around the tops of the knees. [finisinc.com](http://finisinc.com)



## Nike Hydra II

Jammer \$260, Neck to Knee \$375

Nike's tech suit reminded testers of the older paper suits, only with better quality and more durability. The women's cut was given high marks for comfort and fit, with some initial difficulty getting the suit on. Once on and wet, the suit was comfortable, allowing for excellent range of motion. A female tester noted that the top of the suit retained its compression, even after quite a few swims, and did not start to gap open at the top. A tester noted that the thicker panel in the buttocks area of the suit gave extra compression and buoyancy, helping her to keep her hips up in breaststroke and butterfly. The knee bands were said to wear and loosen up a little too much after a week of swimming in the suit. The cut and fit of the jammer were rated highly and one male tester reported that it provided more compression than his practice jammer, although he could not compare it to his previous full-body suit. [allamericanswim.com](http://allamericanswim.com), [swimshop.com](http://swimshop.com)

## Q-Tech

Jammer \$240, Kneeskin \$360

Testers like the appearance and seam color choices of the Q-Tech. The fabric is different than the papery feel of the other suits. Female testers reported a good fit, and say the longer inseam will accommodate longer-legged women. The top of the suit was noted as small and "not particularly stretchy," and may not be right for larger-breasted women. The suit tested was Q's open back model, which was reported as too skimpy, allowing too much skin to spill out. (Q offers a closed-back version.) Comfort was an issue with the Q-Tech. One female tester reported, "The fabric seems ideal and the suit is very compressive. The lack of flexibility/stretchiness of the fabric made it difficult to rotate when swimming."

Our male tester liked the appearance of the Q, and noted that the fabric was more cloth-like. "I didn't like the way the suit fit around the leg-cuffs and the waist. Every other part of the suit was great with compression but those two points weren't as tight and felt a little off." An upcoming model of this suit will utilize bonded seams. [qswimwear.com](http://qswimwear.com)



## Speedo LZR Elite

**Jammer \$260, Kneeskin \$375**

The LZR was a favorite. This suit reminded testers of Speedo's FS Pro of several years ago, only better. Female testers reported that the inseam is a little longer in the kneeskin than some of the other brands, which they appreciated. They also felt that the suit provided excellent coverage and comfort. Some did not like the "triangular cutout," which is thinner fabric in the midsection created by the modesty panels, and would have preferred to have thicker fabric and more compression there. Several testers noticed significant compression and buoyancy, especially during flip turns and streamlines. Water repellency was excellent; one tester noted that it looked like the suit "glowed" underwater and the LZR beaded up immediately upon exiting the water, significantly more so than the other suits tested.

Comfort was also rated high and testers appreciated the gel strips in the leg openings, which minimized chafing and digging. The suit was said to "fit like a second skin" without being restrictive. Male testers had more difficulty donning this suit than a practice jammer due to the rubber grip lines at the waistband and leg cuffs, but loved the fit once on. Compression was excellent. [speedousa.com](http://speedousa.com)



## TYR Tracer Series

**Tracer Light Jammer \$140, Shortjohn \$220**

**Tracer B Jammer \$100, Shortjohn \$300**

**Tracer C Jammer \$260, Shortjohn \$375**

TYR sent us three new tech suits, with compression panels and water-repellent fabric. The B is made from more papery, water-repellent fabric with heat-bonded seams. The Light and C models have more cloth-like fabric with stitched seams, which is easier to get into. The C also boasts "power mesh" and "power compression panels" designed to provide large muscle compression in the body's core. Sizing of the B series, the bonded-seam, papery model, appeared to run smaller than the C and Light. Ordering down from practice suit sizes, in the B series only, may result in a suit too small to get into.

Female testers appreciated extra elastic in the shoulder straps in all three models, which made getting into the suits much easier than some other suits tested. Female testers liked the appearance of the TYR suits and felt that the cut and compression areas were attractive and functional. Compression and overall tightness, and perception of buoyancy, were highest in the B series, although one tester commented on the Tracer Light: "Water beads up on it well, and you can feel the water running over it while swimming. I was surprised that I could feel a little bit of a buoyancy factor with just jammers."

Lettering on one suit started to fall off after a few swims, but one tester noted, "It feels sturdy and like it will provide compression without falling apart after three swims." [tyr.com](http://tyr.com)