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By Lindsey Bertomen

Law enforcement officers spend a lot of time deciding what products will make their shifts safer and easier. They consider carefully which weapon, holster, baton and flashlight will give them their edge. Footwear, often viewed as a less intriguing choice, should be weighed just as carefully. An intelligent footwear choice can and will prevent long-term problems such as back and lower-body conditions.

Before purchasing a new boot, an officer should review what he does on a routine basis and the situations he may encounter that would require extra footwear features. For example, the skirmish line is the wrong place to wish you had a boot that could be hosed off after use. An officer would be underdressed and unprotected with a glove-leather sneaker in a riot control situation. In environments with abrasive surfaces or chemicals, such as shore patrol or cold weather climates where roadways are salted, premium materials like full-grain leather or thick nylon uppers are the way to go. Officers serving in detention centers or prisons may want to consider products with slip-resistant soles and water-resistant barriers designed to protect them from infectious diseases.

Officers also should consider how they set their foot on the ground. Each person has a different way of walking. Most people pronate, where the foot rolls from the outer edge to the inner edge, beginning when the heel first touches the ground. There are an infinite number of degrees of pronation, from under-pronation to over-pronation. No boot will fit the bill for every wearer. However, an under-pronator benefits by wearing softer boots that allow his feet to roll freely, while an over-pronator benefits from stiffer, motion-controlled boots.

The foot bed's softness is also a key consideration. If the foot bed is soft, it will feel good in the store. An officer might imagine that he will enjoy cushiony soft comfort all day. And he will, if he spends some time each day behind a desk or in his patrol car. But if the officer does a lot of walking and the foot bed is too soft — especially in the midsole — the rolling action of the foot against the foot bed will tire out the foot and transmit this fatigue to the spine. Likewise, if the foot bed is too hard, the boot will fail to flex properly and walking becomes unnatural.

"Law Enforcement Technology" recently tested boots from Danner Inc., Magnum

ON YOUR FEET

A review of tactical boots



USA, Cove Shoe Company, Original SWAT Footwear, Weinbrenner Shoe Co. Inc. — Thorogood, Bates Uniform Footwear, and Redback Boots. Our test team found a number of quality footwear choices exist for many types of feet and a variety of law enforcement-related chores.

When testing concluded, it was clear that specific boots seemed better suited for certain jobs. Testers recommend tactical officers lean toward Cove Shoe Co.'s Corcoran Professional Tactical Boots #1800 and #1900 because of the outstanding mobility of the product. For the busy patrol officer who also must maintain a dressy appearance, there is the Bates Enforcer Ultra-Lites 8-inch Tactical Sport Side Zip model. Redback boots were found to be superior in custody settings such as jail, prison or work crew supervision. Testers also believed these boots would be outstanding in crowd control situations. The heavy leather would prevent cuts and tears to the foot. Original SWAT models favored everyday uniform wear, where an officer needs a soft footbed and good breathability.

Was there a boot that did every job well? There were two, actually. After a steady rotation of wearers, tests and inspections, the Danner Striker CTX and the Magnum Elite WP models were crowned the Boot Champions. They both had a short break-in period. They were waterproof past the ankle. They were completely fatigue-free during long periods of standing and carrying heavy loads. They easily prevented dust and sand from getting to the foot and they hosed off and shined up for the next duty day. Although Magnum and Danner had different approaches to sole design, they accomplished the same goals: mobility, protection, comfort and good looks.

The following article is a complete rundown of the test team's results for each boot.

Magnum USA

Testers reviewed Modesto, California-based Magnum USA's Stealth and Magnum Elite series of boots. The Magnum Stealth Side Zip is a leather and 1150-denier nylon boot with an insole similar to the Elite. Our testers found it a full-featured complement to the Elite. It is for the wearer who wants the quality of the Elite but does not need its premium features. The Stealth's strong point is that it is available in a variety of sizes and widths.

The Stealth is a general-purpose patrol boot made of worthy materials. These boots felt like crosstrainers, the kind of shoes people wear when they plan to play basketball and are sidetracked by an open racquetball court. The Stealth was outclassed by the company's own product — the Magnum Elite.

The Elite Series represents the company's premium line of boots. Testers reviewed the 8-inch leather and 8-inch leather and nylon upper models. Both boots feature a waterproof and breathable Sympatex Plus bootie.

Magnum's boots were just as pretty going into the waterproof test tub as they were coming out. The Elite 8-inch Leather WP used a high bellows tongue to make it waterproof high above the ankle. Magnum also included a mesh lining on the collar and a flexible cuff.

Testers liked the hardware on the Elite Series. There were slip eyelets on the instep with a pair of locking eyelets just above them. The wearer could pull, then lock, then continue to lace, giving a firm lacing at the instep. This system was coupled with a firm yoke that wrapped around the top of the foot from the heel counter. This turned the boot into a



comfortable walking shoe with a higher top. With these boots, an officer can go from the patrol car to a sprint.

Both Magnum Elite boots excelled in the backwoods. The tread design was fair on muddy surfaces, though testers say they would have rounded the outside edges more. Without the boot's excellent lateral support, hyperextension from the abrupt square edge of the sole would be a problem. On the beat, testers recognized immediately why the tread looked the way it did. It was fatigue-free on concrete, completely silent on tactical missions and a relief on all-day traffic detail.

The Elite sole felt different than the other boots. It had a geometry that canted the foot slightly forward like the thick-soled fashion shoes popular in the '70s. A wearer can stand still on a concrete floor all day in the Magnum Elite and still have feet left at the end of the day. Our testers wore the Elites on shooting ranges, concrete floors and walking on the trail.

Magnum makes an Elite Kevlar model that is similar to the leather Elite WP. The Kevlar breathed rather well and provided upper rigidity to the package. This boot proved to be one of the finest boots in the industry. Our testing team would buy any Magnum Elite product with confidence.

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