

GEARING UP: Slops or Motorcycle Boots

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So why not wear slops to ride your bike? They are lekker cool, easy to slip on, cheap, easily replaceable, colour coded and many different shapes and styles! And above all in this KZN heat they are literally so COOL! Who said anything about protection – all we wanted was to keep our feet from getting dirty underneath (those oil slicks are not good) and to make sure the sand / pavement doesn't burn the soles of our feet!

Ja Boet! We know those okes who ride the bikers' trikini – slops, pants and helmet (or cap!). Ja we have seen them on occasions!

So we all know that riding like this is plain stupidity and just asking for trouble but what should you look for in a motorcycle boot?

Firstly decide on what type of riding you're going to be doing – it does influence the style of boot.

Secondly, irrespective of the type of riding you do, the following factors are essential in choosing a boot.

- Material of the boot (leather, plastic, high tech materials usually for the soles)
- Quality of the product (Stitching, protectors, fasteners)
- 'Breathability' of the boot
- Back up service (spare parts, sole replacement service, etc)
- Materials used for cleaning
- The fit of the boot on the foot with different socks (work / social / Enduro)

Taking each of the main riding categories one should be aware of the following pointers:

Superbike - Strong toe sliders of light weight material, strong ankle protection in the form of some device to keep the foot from twisting, strong heel protection and fasteners that will not break under the forces exerted on the boot. The boots should have double if not triple stitching and definitely no laces unless these are hidden away under a flap of some sort. Most leathers tuck into the top of the boot so it should at least reach the calf muscle.

The sport boot is a level down on the full on racing boot and has some of the features of the superbike boot such as toe sliders. You probably won't find the ankle and heel protection devices but merely additional padding or a 'circle' protector around the anklebone. The weekend super biker and commuter predominantly wear this boot.

Cruiser boots are also an interesting boot where emphasis is on comfort and skin protection. Some interesting designs are also common with more of a 'fashion' look to the boot. Again be wary of lace ups – these tend to get caught on foot pegs and lead to the dreaded 'car park' fall!

Going to the other extreme, the Moto Cross and Enduro boot is a tall boot reaching just below the knee to be able to accommodate and hold knee protectors. The critical issues here are the steel shank to be found in the sole to be able to support the arch whilst standing on the foot pegs and extensive ankle support and protection. Some manufacturers go to the extent of designing special leverage systems to enable the foot to move up and down but keep ankle rotation to a minimum – inner booties are also used for this purpose. The big trick with this boot is for it to feel 'right' and not just a lump of protection on the end of your foot. The feet and hands are the active contact points on the bike – make sure you're comfortable whilst being protected.

The adventure boot or dual purpose-riding boot has most of the properties of the Enduro boot with the exception of the height and extensive ankle support. It is not as strong in respect of protection – much of the riding is in non-technical off road surfaces.

The final category of boot is for the casual rider. Here we see various formats of the boots mentioned above coming to the fore with most of them reaching just above the ankle. Commonly referred to as 'short' boots or '50/50's' some of these will have steel shanks under the sole and others not – just be aware of the type of riding you will be doing – for off road riding go for the supporting shanks.

Your feet are definitely one of the critical contact points in any accident so make sure you are well protected in this area and not open to any 'trikini' criticism!

