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DIVER TESTS

FINS Cressi Reaction

HOW CAN A GROWN MAN GET EXCITED ABOUT A LUMP OF PLASTIC? How can an experienced diver covet another's flippers? Why do my own fins always look so shabby, when the ones sent to me come out of their bag all sensuous and slippery, in rich mixes of colours?

These were the thoughts that ran through my head when I first saw the new Reaction fins from Cressi. The Italians are past masters of injection-moulding, and the Genovese manufacturer has come up with some sexy-looking fins in the past, although some of them were less than successful when subjected to the rigours of life getting on and off a dive-boat.

There are some aspects that one cannot assess without long-term experience, but these new fins certainly have shop-counter appeal.

They are not unlike the Cressi Rondine A fins I tried about a year ago. They have the same long foot-pocket that encompasses the whole of my foot, and this is beautifully integrated with a broad, flat blade that flexes along its length but offers no flexibility across its breadth.



PLUS

+ Beautifully crafted
+ Works well in challenging conditions

MINUS

- You need to be fit to use them

Human machines

There is no way this fin will scoop and shovel water. It relies on the user having the strength and fitness in both thigh and calf muscles to keep the flat blade presented at the most effective angle to the water. People still think they can buy performance. Perhaps you can with machines, but fins are merely the propellers fitted to the machine - and that machine is you!

With online diving forums loaded with questions about how to get fins that are easier on the muscles; and with floppy, ineffective fins finding an easy market among those who want to swim without effort, Cressi stands by its creed that its fins are merely extensions of the user's legs, and the user is responsible for

making sure that those legs are effective.

While unfit divers flap in a head-on current, wondering why their easy-to-use fins are getting them nowhere, the users of fins such as Cressi Reactions power ahead. This is not a criticism of the easy fins, more of the expectations of some customers.

The Reaction's rigid blade is combined with softer thermo-plastics that give the minimum concession to channelling of water flow, and side bars that do much the same. The soft plastic is used as a trim to form a kinder leading edge, for which your buddy may be grateful if his head is following close behind.

The foot-pocket has good grips that prove effective when climbing a spine-ladder, and the blade dips away in the style of the original Cressi Frog fins.

Straps and buckles are very conventional, if a little more substantial than those from the Far East to which we are getting accustomed on some fins. They were easily adjusted, even with a gloved hand.

The two-tone blue fins I was sent were finished in a metal-fleck effect, just like the metallic paintwork of an expensive German-made car. Lovely!

Cut to a scene during our deep-water reg tests. A diver lies pathetically face-down in about 30cm of water at the edge of the beach. He is paralysed with cramp in his leg-muscles.

The emergency services, in the shape of Police Inspector Bradley and Fire Service Watch Commander Wade, quickly arrive. The Inspector charges down the beach like an angry rhino and the experienced Fire Officer instantly understands the situation as he sees the stiff, twitching figure of the diver who has reached the shore ahead of him and got his fins off.

They free me of tanks and weights, drag me upright - and I am OK! I had just swum 300m from our test site with a twin-set and sling tank. If you want to be an effective fin-swimmer, tune the motor before you alter the pitch of the prop!

Reactions are also available in black/red and white/yellow combinations. Available in four sizes from XS to L/XL, Cressi Reaction fins cost£69.

- *Cressi-sub, www.cressi-sub.it*