

One of the hardest things to grasp in the NBA is the fact that LeBron James is 32 years old.

From the kid rocking Zoom Generations in his first game, through the different teams, Finals failures, championships in Miami and CLE, to now being an elder statesman in the League, one thing has been consistent: he has worn a swoosh on-foot.

How does the [Nike LeBron 14](#) compare to the past greats, like the 2, 8, and X? Well, you have to read...

Depending on the floor, great. Or not great. Good, maybe? Really, on a semi-clean, fairly finished floor, the traction was really good. A step below the Rose 7 and Curry 2, but still really good.

The little nubs on the pods wear down quickly, leaving a flat surface across the pods, which actually made the traction better. The large flex grooves also help with grip, allowing you to really dig into the floor and push off easier - more flex equals more of the sole touching the floor, meaning more rubber to grab. But really, Nike, it's time to drop the translucent - we all know by now what Zoom looks like and most of us can feel it when it's good, so get us back to solid rubber and consistent traction.

Nike has been on a serious come-up this season, giving us Max Zoom in the KD9, full-length Zoom in the Hyperdunk 2016 Elite (and the regular segmented version wasn't bad either), and full-length unlocked Zoom in the Jordan XXXI. Now, the massive Zoom pods in the [Nike LeBron 14](#) join the club, and they make the shoe extremely fun.

Even with the Zoom broken into the smaller units, it is still bouncy, responsive, and cushions every landing and step perfectly. It is bottom loaded, under the Phylon, so the extreme response like the KD9 and Jordan XX8 isn't there. However,

it feels more stable than both of those shoes and actually plays smoother in transition because of it.

The heel is Zoom across the whole section and is contained enough that off-center landings never feel like the shoe will roll. Having the pods split like they are also allows for extreme flexibility, something most LeBron shoes lack; it improves traction and court feel while cutting down on foot fatigue.

Mesh, mesh, and more mesh make up the upper of the [Nike LeBron 14 flip the switch](#) . This isn't bad, but for the price it isn't T-bone either. The upper is super-soft and feels great on-foot, with the foam between the mesh providing comfort and padding over all stitches and possible hot spots. The toe bumper/rand and the tongue logo feature a supple leather (wish there was more of that here than just the detailing). Flywire appears again in the forefoot to help with lacing and lockdown. Pro Combat padding makes an appearance on the ankle/heel strap. Overall, the materials get the job done in a nice package, but they just don't feel like \$175 materials. If you enjoyed the Soldier X, well, ditto.

Very questionable. The one piece bootie/upper system has been around long enough to make a better showing. The forefoot and midfoot are locked ▪ no movement at all in my testing. The shoe was cinched tight, making the Flywire rub into the foot a little, but movement was nuh-uh.

Length-wise, true to size was the way to go ▪ about a finger's width between the big toe and the end of the shoe. The problem was the heel. If the top laces were pulled super tight, heel slip went away. Otherwise, the wide mouth opening and the lack of a strong lacing system led to heel slip every time. The strap was supposed to help, but being a layover (instead of a hook and loop) means there was no force to pull against when tightening it ▪ it just "laid over" the instep. The strap did pull the foot into the heel cup, but the ankle collar was still loose and slipped. If you don't mind pulling your shoes reallllly tight (I don't), then fit should be good.

Not much above the midsole, really. The strap does try to pull the foot into that external heel piece, but again, it is working against itself. The biggest help for support is the flexible outsole and wide base. The base keeps you from rolling over

on any landings and the outsole is flexible enough that some part of it is able to keep floor contact at (almost) all times.

The midfoot Zoom unit helps with arch support by not letting the bridge fall and injure your foot. The heel cup is low, making the LeBron 14 really feel and play like a low, but it is made of hard plastic and is stable enough to hold you in. The lacing system doesn't really do anything at all, except heel keep your foot in, so support from that area won't happen. Overall, this is probably the least supportive LeBron signature ever.

Fun, fun, fun. I never thought a LeBron shoe and fun could be said together. The overall court feel, transition, cushioning, and clean-floor traction make the LeBron 14 feel fast and smooth to play in. The flexibility and lack of Posite wings or support allows the player to feel free and quick, while the Zoom is just responsive enough to keep your legs from dying without bouncing like Tigger.

If you have stayed away from LeBrons in the past because of weight, stiffness, or looking like boots, don't be scared, because the LeBron 14 is none of those. If you like court feel, speed, and cushioning, the 14 is for you. Whatever the delay from Nike to get these on shelves, do it again ▪ performance should trump technology every time, and when you can include both, like in the LeBron 14, you have a shoe fit for a King.

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