

I FEEL IT IN MY ~~SOUL~~ SOLE

My earlier blog on what shoes are best for Dance Fitness got me thinking about insoles – not the sexiest of topics I know, but one dear to my ~~heart~~ soul sole 😊 😊.

I do a fair amount of dancing in a week, and anyone who has come to my classes will know that I love to wiggle, but I also love to jump around 😊. I have found that I sometimes have an achy sensation in the ball (forefoot) of my foot at night. Occasionally my knees also ache a bit if I have been doing a lot of higher impact choreography/practice. I felt I needed a bit more cushioning in my shoes to assist with absorbing the impact when my foot hits the floor. So I thought I would try out some “off-the-shelf” insoles to see how they perform for Dance Fitness. This blog sets out the results of my insoles experiment.

Could I find insoles that would be suitable for Dance Fitness?

The first hurdle I faced is that insoles available in NZ tend to be designed for running. Why does this matter you ask? When you run, the first part of your foot to hit the ground is your heel, so cushioning in running shoes, and insoles designed for running, is concentrated in the heel. However, in a NSD class, when we jump around we need more cushioning in the forefoot (see photos below).



Photo of me jumping in class . You can see that the first part of my foot that will hit the ground is my forefoot (not my heel).

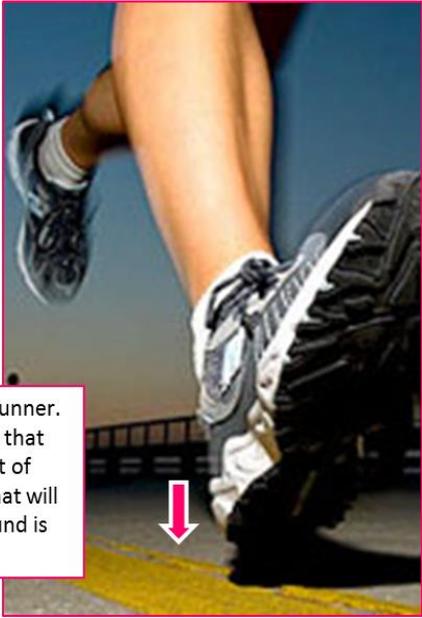


Photo of a runner. You can see that the first part of their foot that will hit the ground is the heel.

Thank goodness for the Internet

I managed to find 3 insoles with forefoot cushioning, but only 1 of the 3 was available in NZ. So I ended up trying the following:

1. Sofsole Airr Women's Performance Insoles – available at Rebel Sport
2. Bama Aerobics Sport Replacement Insoles – ordered online from the UK
3. RX Sorbo Ultra Work Sport Insoles – ordered online from the US

The Experiment

I wore each set of insoles for about 3 weeks. When I say I wore the insoles, I removed the factory provided insoles from my Nike cross trainers, and replaced them with the above insoles. Each week I taught six 1-hour dance fitness classes, as well as doing a minimum of 3-hours per week choreography and practice. I should add that I don't have issues with my arches, so arch support was not an issue, nor do I tend to roll out, or in, on my feet. So the only quality I was really concentrating on was cushioning/impact absorption. The results are discussed below.

1. Sofsole Airr Women's Performance Insole



The Sofsole insole was the only insole with any forefoot cushioning that I could find available in a shop in Wellington (you may have more luck 😊). The price for 1 set of insoles was NZ\$59.99.

The Sofsole insole is really aimed at running. Therefore, the heel cushioning in this insole was very good. The forefoot cushioning in these insoles was better than the factory insole that came with my shoes, but of the 3 insoles I tried, the Sofsole insoles had the least cushioning for the forefoot. The Sofsole insoles fitted in my shoes well as they were not too thick. The insoles did not slide or bunch in my shoes.

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Initially I noticed a positive difference from using these insoles – my feet were feeling better. However, by the end of the 3 weeks the forefoot cushioning seemed to have flattened out, and my feet were starting to feel a bit achy again.

I also found that finding the right size was a bit of a challenge. These insoles have a size range, so the ones I tried were size 3 – 5.5 (US). This is because they suggest you fit the heel of the insole into your shoe, and then trim the toe to fit. Initially I tried the next size up (on the advice of the shop assistant). But if I had followed the instructions to fit the heel and then trim the toe to fit my shoes, then the forefoot cushioning would have been in the wrong place for my foot (i.e. the green part in the image above would have been under my toes instead of under my forefoot 😊). So I swapped them for the smaller size which luckily fitted pretty well without trimming. So getting the right size could be tricky if you can't find a size that will fit your shoe exactly without any trimming. Once again, this just shows that this insole is focused on cushioning the heel for running.

2. Bama Aerobics Sport Replacement Insoles



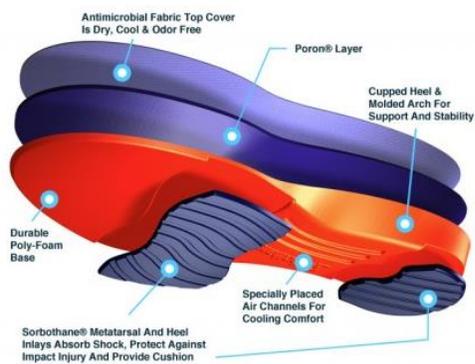
I couldn't find the Bama insole in New Zealand. I ended up ordering the insoles via fishpond.co.nz, and waiting for them to be shipped from the UK. The cost was NZ\$24.97 (included shipping).

The Bama insoles are designed for aerobics (or similar), so they have good forefoot support. I also found their inbuilt arch support was very comfortable, even though I do not have arch issues. I did find these insoles to be a bit thick, so my shoes started to feel a bit tight. As a result, I felt like my feet were prevented from splaying to their full extent when they hit the ground. This would not be an issue if you already have a bit of spare room in your shoes, or if your shoes have some give to them. These insoles also did not slip or bunch.

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Once again, initially I noticed a very positive difference from using these insoles – my shoes felt very springy and my feet were feeling better. However, by the end of the 3 weeks the forefoot cushioning had flattened a bit, and my feet were starting to feel a bit achy again.

3. RX Sorbo Ultra Work Sport Insoles



Once again I couldn't find the RX Sorbo insoles in New Zealand. I ended up ordering the insoles from the US using NZ Post's "YouShop"¹. The cost for the insoles and shipping within the US was NZ \$55.33, plus \$17.25 shipping from US to my address – a total of NZ \$72.58. **Update: since carrying out this experiment, RX Sorbo now ship direct to New Zealand.**

RX Sorbo do not have an insole specifically designed for aerobics/dance, but I chose their Ultra Work Sport insoles because they have the most forefoot cushioning. The fit for these insoles was very good – they have exact sizes (no trimming required), and the insoles are quite thin so they do not affect the fit of your shoe. Once again, there were no slipping or bunching issues with these insoles.

The RX Sorbo insoles had the best forefoot cushioning, and the cushioning has continued to be good beyond the 3 weeks (I have not taken them out of my shoes ☺). Initially they didn't feel as springy as the Bama insoles, but jumping around just seemed easier, and my feet and knees have simply stopped aching. I would definitely recommend these insoles, and not just for NSD classes, but for any activity that involves your feet acting as shock/impact absorbers.

¹ NZ Post's YouShop gives you delivery addresses on the ground in the UK (for shopping across Europe), USA and China so you can get access to brands in those countries that do not normally ship to NZ. NZ Post then handles the shipping from their warehouse in the UK, US or China to your address in NZ.

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In Summary

Insoles	Ease of Purchase	Price	Fit	Cushioning
Sofsole Airr	Easiest to buy - available in NZ shops.	\$59.99. So fairly expensive.	Hard to get sizing right as designed to be trimmed. No slipping or bunching issues.	Designed for running, so the cushioning is concentrated in the heel rather than the forefoot. The limited forefoot cushioning flattened out over time.
Bama Aerobics	Couldn't find in NZ. I had to order via fishpond.co.nz, and wait for shipping from UK.	\$24.97 (incl. shipping). So, the cheapest even with shipping from UK.	Nice arch support, but too thick, so they impacted negatively on the fit of my shoes. No slipping or bunching issues.	Designed for aerobics (or similar) so good cushioning in the forefoot. However, the forefoot cushioning flattened out over time.
RX Sorbo Work Sport	Couldn't find in NZ. Even fishpond had only a very limited range. I had to order from US using "YouShop". Update: RX Sorbo now ship direct to NZ	\$72.58 (incl. shipping). So, fairly expensive with shipping, although that should be better now they ship direct to NZ.	Fit was very good. Exact sizing (so no trimming required) and not too thick. No slipping or bunching issues.	While these insoles were not designed specifically for aerobics/dance, they had excellent forefoot cushioning. The forefoot cushioning remained very good over time.

Conclusion

After my 9-week insole experiment, I would absolutely recommend the RX Sorbo Work Sport insoles as the best insoles for Dance Fitness, of the 3 insoles I tried. The website to order RX Sorbo Work Sport insoles is: <http://www.rxsorbo.com/>.

Also, if you have any questions about insoles, or if there's anything discussed in this post that is unclear or needs clarification, please let me know, or see me before or after class.

2017 Update: I have been using these insoles now for over a year, and I still absolutely love them!!