

BMW BACK PROTECTOR 2

■ BMW doesn't stick to the status quo, whether we're talking motorcycles or back protectors. Its relatively complicated underpinnings mean it takes a bit longer to get into and out of, but once you're in, BMW's Back Protector 2 never moves around. On the flip side, it's the only one here with collarbone protection. Four plastic panels and an impact-absorbing foam core provide CE-approved coverage for the spinal zone. Coverage around the shoulder blades is excellent as well. The integrated kidney belt can bind when you're in a full track tuck, but otherwise it's surprisingly comfortable. It comes in sizes S to XL and sells for \$149. www.bmwmotorcycles.com

DAINESE WAVE T2

■ The most experienced brand in the business uses an aluminum honeycomb and low-density expanded polyethylene

material instead of the more familiar foam sandwich. Dainese says the fourth-generation version is 20 percent lighter and allows more airflow, but since a big hit also crushes the structure, it's a one-crash deal. Six interlocking segments of corrugated plastic form a hard, ergonomically pleasing skin designed to distribute impact energy more efficiently if you take a tumble. The ingenious articulated lumbar section allows sufficient freedom of movement to let you forget you're wearing a back protector at all. It comes in sizes M and L, and sells for \$189. www.dainese.com

FORCEFIELD SPORT

■ Here's the benchmark by which all back protectors should be judged. A triangular structure molded into the soft outer Armorflex skin dissipates impact energy more evenly than hard stuff, regardless of where it gets hit. Underneath, layers of shock-absorbing Nitrex foam slow impact energy to less-damaging levels. The combination transmits less force to fragile human bits beneath than anything else we've seen. Tiny holes admit enough air to keep the wearer reasonably

cool. An elastic belt and shoulder straps keep the marvelously supple arrangement in place with minimal tension. Much thinner than you'd expect for such world-class protection, the Forcefield slips under tight leathers without becoming an encumbrance. It's CE-approved to EN1621-2:2003 and EN340:2003 standards, and is available in sizes XS to L for \$140. www.johnsonleather.com

ICON FIELD ARMOR VEST

■ Here's the back protector for riders who are clearly too cool to be caught inside one of the racy ones. Designed more for freestyle street stuntaz than the knee-down set, Icon's entry offers a modicum of chest protection along with old-school armadillo-style plastic-backed armor. It's slim enough to fit

under that phat leather jacket, so nobody needs to know you roll with protection. Getting into and out of the one-size-fits-most garment could be easier, but once adjusted, it's comfortable enough to wear all day. And at \$100, it's less expensive than the others as well. www.rideicon.com

SPIDI BACK WARRIOR

■ According to CE certification test data, Spidi's Back Warrior allows less than half the residual energy permitted by the EN 1621-2 standard to pass through its impact-absorbent plastic and foam composite cells. Elastic shoulder and waist straps keep the nicely contoured Warrior from leaving its post, and internal air channels work with a well-designed liner to keep you from overheating. Six sizes from Men's S to XL and Women's S to M accommodate riders from 4-foot-6 to 6-foot-5. At just over a pound, the \$165 piece is relatively light as well. Trustworthy, comfortable, well-built and stylish, it's one of our favorites. www.motonation.com



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