

Gator Skins

A product review by Rev Tramp



I was recently contacted by Gator Skins and asked if I would be interested in doing a product review of their line of Made In The USA thermal underwear for The Horse Back Street Choppers magazine. Since I haven't had anything published in quite awhile, I told them to contact Englishman first to see if THBC would even be interested in running it. Well, as you can probably guess by now, the answer was yes. So the only question left would be, do Gator Skins actually perform like the company claims they will?

The first thing I noticed when I took them out of the package was that they felt like brown packing paper, but at the same time stretchy. I had never felt or seen anything quite like them before and wondered how the hell they were going to work being as thin as they were. They also felt cool to the touch, so I was really starting to think the company's claims were bogus and wondered why they would even send them out to me. About that time I noticed my hands were actually starting to warm up.

The next day was supposed to start out in the upper 40's and end up in the low 80's, so I was really looking forward to seeing how these things performed under those conditions. I followed the wash and care instructions, and was ready to roll the next morning. Well, at least that was my plan. However, as I was rolling the bike out, I noticed that it was way past due for an oil change. As I was putting the drain pan under the bike, I noticed my back and the backs of both of my arms were really starting to heat up where the sun was shining on my leather jacket. Now since it was only 47 degrees out, that really got my attention. I pulled my leather off and started draining the oil into a recycling container. The oil was barely running out of the tank even with the oil cap off but even with my leathers off my back and arms, they still felt like I had an electric heating pad on. I had been kneeling down on one knee while draining the oil, and when I got up I noticed that even though the knee of my pants was soaking wet my knee wasn't.

Okay, now I was really starting to be impressed by these things. However, as it turned out, that day by

the time I got finished with my oil change, along with some preventive maintenance I had not kept up with, it had warmed up too much to test any cold weather apparel. That's when I noticed the next thing about these Gator Skins; even though I had worked up quite a sweat, I never got that "cold to the bone" feeling you get when wearing regular cotton thermals after they become soaked in sweat.

The next morning it was 55 degrees, so I hit the road early. Now the real test would begin on how these things would hold up under riding conditions. Even though 55 is not that cold, it would be a good test nonetheless. I didn't bother putting my leather jacket on since it was supposed to reach the mid 80's again that day. When I stopped for gas later that morning, I noticed a film of oil all over the left side of my bike. After checking the oil level and finding it was still almost completely full and I was only about 5 miles from a friend's burger and beer joint, I decided to head over & grab a bite to eat while I let the bike cool down. Besides, I didn't have any tools with me but I knew Steve, the owner of the place, would have everything I would need to find and fix the problem.

As luck would have it, Steve was up early and was already outside stoking up the BBQ while getting ready to start his work day. Since they weren't open yet, I gave the bike a quick once over and quickly found the leak. A quick search of Steve's tool box got me the correct tool needed for the job. By the time I finished my beer and steak burger, the bike had cooled enough to get my hands dirty and fix the problem. Once again I worked up a good sweat, and by the time I headed back out for the ride home, the sun was casting long shadows and the temperature was dropping fast.

I made several more trips under various conditions, which included an hour's ride in light rain with a brief heavy

downpour. The temperature ranged from between 24 degrees to the mid 80's, and I rode around 100-150 miles per trip. Since I ride all winter, I pretty much know what I have to wear to keep as warm as can be expected when you are out riding in sub-freezing temperatures. Once you get down below freezing, and especially in the 20 degree range, things tend to get cold fast and stay that way no matter how many layers you put on.

Now most people think I'm crazy for riding under some of the conditions I ride in. Come to think of it, they are probably right, but I'd rather freeze my ass off and be out riding than be nice and toasty warm inside a cage, although being nice and toasty warm sure would be kind of great on those below freezing days.

I was pleasantly surprised to find Gator Skins did everything the company said it would and surpassed my expectations. I did have a few issues with the first set I got, but it was due to me ordering the wrong size to start with. However, before I could send the first set back, I had a replacement set in the right size. I was also pleased when they told me to keep the extra large set to show around to other riders fighting those winter blues.

That also answered my question as to why they would even send me something like these to try out, since I guess they had already started getting orders from folks that I had shown the thermals too. It also gave me the opportunity to see if wearing an extra Gator Skins shirt would be twice as warm as wearing one was. Since I had been asked that question several times I decided to try it out and see. On my second set, they also added a set of boot liners along with a second pair of gloves.

I was able to ride in 24 degree weather for the very first time without my hands & feet hurting within the first few miles. I also never got cold enough to stop and put on any of my normal extra layers over the T-shirt I was wearing on top of the two thermal shirts. Usually at that temperature I have to add a sweatshirt, along with a military long sleeve winter undershirt with zip up collar with a thick flannel shirt over that. Usually, by the time I get my leather coat with zip out liner on, my movement is quite limited.

With only two Gator Skins and a t-shirt under my leather jacket, I wasn't "toasty warm" by any means, but I was comfortable enough to not have to stop to add any more layers. I can safely say that every single person I handed the thermals to, with the exception of one, asked where I got them, how much they cost and how they could get some too. For more information and prices on all Gator Skins products, you can contact them at 717-755-7105, or you can check them out online at www.gator-skins.com Just tell 'em Rev Tramp from The Horse Back Street Choppers Mag sent ya. Until next time, later gators, and you can bet I'll be out there doing whatever it takes to Keep On Puttin' ~~~

