

Harnesses

Over the last few years there have been quite a few new harnesses launched (mainly based upon light weight, leg loop type harnesses).

I think the first real good harness that came along was the **komet butterfly** with its sliding front anchor point and plenty of gear loops and quick release buckles. This harness was so easy to wear and was a massive shock to me after climbing in my old Willans harness. At first I found the butterfly a bit of a nut crusher and found myself constantly checking the buckles, just in case they popped open.

Once I adjusted it to fit properly, no more crushed nuts and the non-restricting fit allowed a lot more movement than my old harness.

I would compare this harness to wearing a thong, and my old one to wearing a giant nappy. I bought my first Komet Butterfly in the late nineties and around that time most of the lads competing in the climbing events were wearing one too. I have had a couple of the butterflies over the years and since they have been changed and upgraded and now has replaceable parts and is still one of the most widely used harnesses around.



Safety Technologies harness



I'm well into my forties now and have all the usual aches and pains associated with the industry. I've been going to a back specialist once a week and he's told me that at my age I should be climbing a bit less and he even suggested a career change. I love my job and don't want to change my career. I was talking to Paulo Baveresco at the A.P.F last year and he told me he was working with safety technology to develop a new harness offering more back support. I looked at the harness and tried one of the prototypes. It felt good but you've got to use it often to get the real feeling. After a couple of design modifications and different prototypes Safety Technology and Paulo have put this harness through its paces and come up with a real winner. I have had mine a couple of months and it's a real pleasure to wear the large back pad, which supports my lower back well. This back support has been contoured, along with the leg loops, so that there is plenty of support but

where support is not required the pads have been trimmed to make them more comfy and a tad lighter. The pads are lined with a honeycomb fabric padding (similar to rugby players body armour) which is a real luxury. The harness is covered in well designed and well positioned tool hangers. The open belt also allows a couple of clip tool hangers to be fitted. I like how the front sliding anchor point can be replaced when worn.

Over the last couple of months I've climbed six days a week with less back ache than I've had for ages. Although this one of the most expensive harnesses I've bought I think it's worth every penny and I'm saving £35 a week not having to visit the osteopath, so in my eyes it's already paid for itself. My only crib is that the harness didn't have the same quick release buckle at the front of the waist belt, as it has one on each leg.



Good Old Komet Butterfly worn by good old George



Young Bell the apprentice in his weaver pit-pony type harness



Edelrid Tree Magic harness

by Mark Bell

I tried the **weaver harness** - the leg loop one. These are manufactured by the Amish people in America. The leather work is superb and the quality or the finish is very robust.

I found the harness to be quite stiff, and although this is to be expected of anything made of new leather I found the whole thing a little bit restrictive and it felt heavy. The metal work on the harness rattled and was noisy. No pinch clip buckles on this baby, the straps are secured by good old-fashioned belt buckles and the belt has plenty of brass lined adjustment holes, like the type on a horse's girth strap. Well designed tool hangers and clips, though. The front anchor point sliding D's is good. I will be surprised if anyone ever wears one of these harnesses out. I didn't get on with this harness and think it belongs on a pit-pony. However, young Ben (our apprentice) thinks this harness is the business. They are used at Askham Bryan College, where he is doing an

NVQ in arb'. He, and his mates, love the Weaver. He said "you're picky and too choosy." Ben's only just 18, maybe when he's in his 40's he'll be picky and too choosy.

We've tried the **Tree Magic by Edelrid**. When we first took it from its packaging we found it difficult to adjust and I was worried it would not adjust to fit "Big" Don (he's the muscles in our team). If you've seen the Mad Max film, the one with the thunder dome, "Two men enter, one man leaves", well I'm sure the big, ugly guy was modelled on Don. The harness fits. Don is a quality climber who subs out to quite a few firms. He's the guy everyone gets to do their nightmare trees and if anyone can test something to its limit Don certainly can. The harness is covered in gear loops and comes with a natty little side

clip as well. It fastens with pinch clips and has a good free-running sliding D front attachment point. There are no comfort issues with this harness. The harness is well designed and well made and the front strap, so big D says, can be replaced when worn.

We have tried the **Tree Austria II**. The harness felt a bit weird when I put it on, I felt a bit top-heavy and at one point I thought I would find myself hung upside down. I re-adjusted the harness and had no more fears. The harness has loads of tool hangers and gear loops on it. It also has specially designed first aid kit holder (top marks for this). This harness fastens with pinch clips on the leg and waist loops. There are also clips to fit a seat strap as and when required, without having to take your harness apart – you simply just plug your seat in.

This harness is a good work harness, but you will also see it around the competition circuit. My only crib is the front attachment strap for the sliding D anchor point is not replaceable. Then again I am picky.

All the harnesses we have tried are the sliding D front anchor point type. They all work very similarly and all have side attachment points for pole strops or work position lines.

We have really tested everything in every situation, including aerial rescue. You can't just put any harness on and expect it to be the right one. You can't beat trying a few different ones and then choosing what's right for you. We work too hard for our money to buy something that's not quite right, and if that's being picky and too choosy then so be it.

My particular favourite is the Safety Technologies harness with a very close second from the Tree Austria II.



Tree Austria II



Big Don, testing everything to the limit.