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JUNE 17, 2013

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Photo courtesy Boulder Running Company

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ON THE COVER: The All Out Fuse by Merrell
Photo courtesy Merrell

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SPORTS PERFORMANCE BRAND INOV-8 CELEBRATES TEN YEARS



The original Mudrock 290, introduced in 2003, is pictured next to the latest version.

Ten years after launching its first running shoe, fast-growing British athletic footwear and apparel brand Inov-8 is today celebrating a decade in business. To celebrate the anniversary, Inov-8 is running a twitter campaign asking fans to share their favorite Inov-8 shoe and proudest achievement when wearing them using #inov8decade.

Founded on June 11, 2003, Inov-8 is the brainchild of Wayne Edy, a former consultant in the outdoor industry, who spotted a gap in the off-road running market for innovation.

Initially operating out of a coach house in his garden and then an old church hall, both in the North East of England, Wayne launched his first shoe, the mudroc. Aimed at fell and mountain runners, it weighed just 290g and delivered outstanding grip through an aggressive outsole.

Zimbabwe-born Wayne quickly became a regular at off-road races across the UK and Europe selling the shoe out of the back of his pickup. Later that year, New Zealand athlete Melissa Moon won the World Mountain Running Trophy in a pair of mudroc 290 shoes she borrowed on the day of the race in Alaska. The shoe was an instant hit.

Building on that success, Wayne launched three more off-road running shoes and pioneered the arrow system, based on the height difference between a shoe's heel and toe. The system provides a transition-focused approach for committed athletes to develop a more natural running technique.

Inov-8's stripped-back, minimalist footwear range continued to go from strength to strength as athletes wanting to push boundaries discovered the brand.

This was the case in the U.S. in 2009 when a then relatively unknown functional fitness community discovered the low-profile Inov-8 f-lite 230 shoe as perfect for their high intensity workouts.

Today Inov-8 trades in over 60 countries around the world and boasts more than 80 shoes, meeting the needs of off-trail, off-road, road and functional fitness athletes. It also has a global team of athletes who compete at the extremes of sport and stretch limits.

The team includes UK-born Joe Grant, who raced 350 miles across the Alaskan wilderness earlier this year in the world's longest human-powered winter ultra-marathon, the Iditarod Trail Invitational, and Brendan Davies, who recently won the high-profile TNF 100km trail race in Australia, shattering a course record previously held by three-time Skyrunning champion Kilian Jornet.

This summer Inov-8 will also launch its first running apparel range, tested by international mountain runners.

Wayne said: "I am proud of what we have achieved, it has been an amazing ride so far. We are not followers, we carve a new way, and that's why our products are different. "And we will not let up. We will continue to sweat innovation and provide outstanding products for committed athletes wanting to run fast on all terrains and smash hardcore workouts."

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE E-COMMERCE SITE FOR RUNNERS LAUNCHED

The first socially responsible e-commerce site designed specifically for runners has reportedly been launched. Kindrunner.com's proprietary Free 3-Way Shipping allows customers to receive newly purchased shoes and return their old shoes at no cost, while receiving a discount on future purchases.

With Kindness Cash Rewards, customers will receive a \$10 credit toward a future purchase when returning their used shoes. Returned shoes bypass local landfills and instead are donated through one of their global partnerships - Soles4Souls, Inc. and The MORE Foundation Group - focused on getting shoes to those who need them most. Kindrunner.com has also partnered with UPS to utilize their certified Carbon Neutral Shipping option for all inbound and outbound shipments.

"Kindrunner.com's mission is to change the way runners think about how they use and consume their shoes, while rewarding customers with our eco-centric approach," said Kindrunner.com co-founder Michael Conforti. "Kindrunner.com is the first socially responsible e-commerce website that incentivizes customers to repurpose their used running shoes. We help those in need while reducing a runner's carbon footprint to its smallest possible size."

Although Kindrunner.com's mission is predicated on minimizing every runner's carbon footprint and helping those in need, Kindrunner.com's Virtual Running Shop and Confident Runner Price features help ensure customers' individual footwear needs are met at the right price. In addition to his Kindrunner.com venture, Conforti owns and operates three Sneaker Factory Running Centers in northern and central New Jersey. Sneaker Factory's original location in Millburn, NJ, purchased by Conforti in 2005, is said to be New Jersey's oldest specialty running store, in business since 1978.



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BY THE NUMBERS

-53.1%

Yue Yuen Industrial Holdings, Ltd. reported earnings during the first quarter fell 53.1 percent to \$55.7 million, down from \$118.7 million last year. First quarter revenues inched ahead 0.5 percent to \$1.71 billion. In the U.S., revenues grew 11.7 percent to \$529.7 million. By category, Athletic Shoes declined 1.2 percent to \$865.5 million, Casual/Outdoor Shoes were up 5.5 percent to \$281.5 million, Sports Sandals were down 28.5 percent to \$29.2 million and Soles, and Components & Other were off 10.1 percent to 119.1 million.

36%

PVH Corp. reported first quarter revenue of \$1.94 billion exceeded guidance by \$40 million and increased 36 percent as compared to the prior year's first quarter. The increase was principally driven by the addition of approximately \$487 million in revenue related to the newly acquired Warnaco businesses, net of a reduction in licensing revenue attributable to Warnaco from the prior year, and an increase of \$41 million related to the Tommy Hilfiger business. The improvement was partially offset by the loss of \$28 million attributable to the Izod women's and Timberland wholesale sportswear businesses, which the company exited in 2012.

\$240 million

Hibbett Sports, Inc. reported net sales increased 3 percent to \$240 million for the first quarter ended May 4, compared with \$232.9 million for the 13-week period ended April 28, 2012. Net income for the quarter was \$26.2 million compared with \$26.4 million for the 13-week period ended April 28. Earnings per diluted share in Q1 increased 2 percent to \$1, compared with 98 cents for the 13-week period ended April 28, 2012.

13%

Tilly's, Inc. reported total net sales in the first quarter were \$109.1 million, an increase of 13 percent compared to the first quarter of 2012. Net income was \$2.3 million, or 8 cents per diluted share, which was down from \$5.9 million, or 29 cents per diluted share, in the first quarter of 2012. Net income was based on a weighted average diluted share count of 28 million shares.



Christine Day
Photo courtesy Lululemon

LULEMON ANNOUNCES CEO CHRISTINE DAY, TO STEP DOWN

Lululemon Athletica, Inc. announced that Christine Day would step down as the company's CEO as soon as a successor is named. The move comes as the yoga-themed retailer took a massive charge against first-quarter earnings as part of a recall of see-through yoga pants.

Lululemon said its board had formed a search committee and enacted its CEO succession plan.

"Being a part of Lululemon for the past five and a half years has been an incredible journey," Day said. "I am proud of building a world class team that has produced one of the best growth, brand and profit stories in retail. Plans have been laid for the next five years and a vision set for the next ten. Now is the right time to bring in a CEO who will drive the next phase of Lululemon's development and growth. I will continue to actively lead the organization while the board searches for a new CEO, and will work to ensure a smooth transition."

"Christine has been an exceptional leader for Lululemon, successfully embracing the culture while growing the business," said Chip Wilson, founder and chairman of the Lululemon board of directors. "I thank Christine for her leadership, contributions and commitment to Lululemon. I am confident that we will find the right person to lead this strong team and continue to build on this excellent foundation."

In the first quarter ended May 5, earnings edged up 1.5 percent to \$47.3 million, or 32 cents a share. When reporting fourth-quarter earnings, Lululemon said it expected earnings of 28 cents to 30 cents a share, including charges of 11 cents to 12 cents a share tied to the black Luon recall.



Net revenue for the quarter increased 21 percent to \$345.8 million from \$285.7 million in the first quarter of fiscal 2012. Comparable store sales for the first quarter increased by 7 percent on a constant dollar basis.

"The past quarter has been one of the most important in our company's history," said Day. "While we regret that we had quality issues with our black Luon we are proud of the organization's ability to get Luon delivered back into our stores within 90 days of having pulled it from our line, all the while keeping our guests happy and engaged with the brand."

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MOVERS & SHAKERS

Trigger Point Performance named Andrew Menter as CEO effective June 1.

Foot Locker, Inc. appointed Paulette Alviti as its senior vice president and chief human resources officer, effective June 3.

Quiksilver, Inc. completed a major overhaul of its C-Suite recently by hiring three key senior executives. The company named John Graham as senior vice president, wholesale sales for North America; Steve Finney as head of retail and e-commerce for North America; and Nick Drake as chief marketing officer.

'47 Brand appointed Wayne Best as vice president of marketing. Best will oversee the global marketing strategy, planning and execution of all '47 Brand's marketing efforts.

Shock Doctor Sports announced that former Major League Baseball player Todd Blyleven would join the company as its new sports product marketing manager.

Bogs Footwear tapped Kelly Wallrich, former VP of product at Keen Footwear, as its new VP of product.

Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) hired Christie Hickman as vice president of market insights.

Zamst, a maker of sports protective equipment, reached an endorsement deal with Annie Thorisdottir, a two-time World Champion in CrossFit and the only woman to win back-to-back titles in 2011 and 2012.

Moji recently hired J&N Active Sports to service its dealers in specialty athletic stores throughout Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico.

Sof Sole, a division of Implus Corporation based in Durham, NC, appointed Drew Davies as manager of national accounts.

Cudas Footwear announced that Jeff Clark of West Coast Sales, Inc., has joined the Cudas sales team.

VF TARGETS \$17 BILLION
IN REVENUE BY 2017

At its annual investor meeting in NYC, VF Corp. established a revenue goal of \$17.3 billion by 2017, representing a five-year compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10 percent, with 8 percent organic growth and 2 percent growth anticipated from acquisitions. VF also announced its earnings per share target of \$18 for 2017, representing a five-year CAGR of 13 percent.

In addition to new 2017 targets for revenues and earnings per share of \$17.3 billion and \$18, respectively, the company also raised its projections for gross and operating margins. Given the exceptional growth in its highly profitable Outdoor & Action Sports, direct-to-consumer and international businesses, VF is now targeting a gross margin of 49.5 percent in 2017, a 300 basis point improvement over the 46.5 percent gross margin achieved in 2012. Operating margin is expected to reach 16 percent, up 250 basis points from the 2012 operating margin of 13.5 percent. Annual cash flow from operations, by 2017, is targeted at \$2.4 billion, with a cumulative \$9.5 billion in cash flow to be generated between 2013 and 2017.

VF's Outdoor & Action Sports coalition is expected to continue to be the key driver in the Company's growth in the coming years, with revenues expected to reach \$11.1 billion by 2017. This growth represents a five-year CAGR of 14 percent comprised of 11 percent organic growth and 3 percent growth coming from acquisitions. Outdoor & Action Sports revenues are expected to reach 64 percent of VF's total revenues by 2017, up from 54 percent in 2012. Strong growth is anticipated across all key regions: 12 percent in the Americas, 13 percent in EMEA and 24 percent in Asia-Pacific.

The North Face brand is anticipated to grow at a 12 percent annual growth rate, with revenues reaching \$3.3 billion by 2017 from \$1.9 billion in 2012. Vans

raised its average annual revenue growth projection, initially provided in June 2012, from 13 percent to 15 percent. The brand is now targeting total revenues of \$2.9 billion by 2017, up from \$1.5 billion in 2012.

The Timberland brand, now in its second full year of VF ownership, continues to anticipate growing revenues at an annual CAGR of 10 percent over the next five years, increasing to \$2.3 billion by 2017 from \$1.5 billion in 2012.

"While the transformation VF has made over the past decade has been incredible, we believe we're just beginning

to achieve our true potential," said Eric Wiseman, VF chairman and CEO. "The combination of the industry's most diverse brand portfolio, a proven strategy, a team that consistently delivers and unsurpassed competitive advantages uniquely positions VF to deliver consistent, sustainable value for both our consumers and shareholders – now and in the future."



Eric Wiseman, VF chairman and CEO

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RUNNING SPECIALTY GROUP SNAPS UP BOULDER RUNNING COMPANY

By Aaron H. Bible

Running Specialty Group (RSG), the joint partnership between The Finish Line and Gart Capital Partners, in early June acquired one of the crown jewels of the U.S. run specialty channel, Boulder Running Company. Terms were not disclosed.

In addition to the flagship location in Boulder, the acquisition includes the Littleton and Colorado Springs locations. The addition bring RSG's store count to 38, located primarily in the Northeast, Virginia, Florida, Indianapolis, Kentucky, Texas and now,

Colorado. The transaction also includes the e-commerce site at boulderrunningcompany.com.

Opened in 1996 by co-owners and running legends Johnny Halberstadt and Mark Plaatjes, South African émigrés, the business is considered one of the top running specialty operations in the country. The flagship store on Pearl Street in Boulder, CO was the first store in the U.S. to implement free video gait analysis. Boulder Running Company is consistently ranked by local

publications as the best running store in Denver and Boulder and has been repeatedly ranked among the top running stores in the U.S. by the Independent Running Retailers of America (IRRA), including the number-one ranking in 2006.

Current plans call for Plaatjes to continue assisting with the management of Boulder Running Company while Halberstadt will stay through a transition period and then move into a consulting role. All other onsite staff will remain. RSG plans to add more Boulder



The scene at a recent Boulder Running Company Wednesday evening run.

Running Company locations in metro Denver and possibly other markets based on the broad appeal of the name and the store's national reputation.

"Teaming up with the proven expertise and resources offered by the Running Specialty Group will enable us to continue growing and thriving while concentrating even more on providing passionate customer service," said Halberstadt.

In Motion Rehabilitation, the physical therapy facilities located in the Boulder and Littleton stores, is not part of the acquisition. The facilities are owned and operated by Plaatjes, a world-renowned physical therapist. "This is a great opportunity for me to continue working with our wonderful staff in the stores that I love," said Plaatjes.

The new owners have prioritized keeping Boulder Running Company "local" and connected to the community through personalized services and support of special events. Weekly runs and walking groups are offered at all three locations with local sponsors and refreshments to build camaraderie and connections among local runners.

"We have great respect for the history and heritage of Boulder Running Company because we understand the heart, the energy, the risk, and the commitment it takes to build and maintain running stores of this caliber," said Ken Gart of Gart Capital Partners. "We have admired these stores and Halberstadt's and Plaatjes' philosophy for so many years that we are honored to have it as part of the RSG group."

In an interview with *SGB Weekly*, Chris Brown, principal at Gart Capital Partners, said one clear benefit for RSG from the acquisition was Boulder Running's proximity to Gart's and RSG's Denver headquarters. Said Brown, "It's right in our backyard. So we can use it as a lab to test things and have our people frequent the store to really understand at the ground level what's working in the business. That's a huge win for us."

He also indicated the timing was right, with Halberstadt "getting a little older" and looking to cut back his hours in the business while Plaatjes wanted to dedicate more energy around building In Motion Rehabilitation.

But the Gart team had been talking to the principals at Boulder Running for three years - well before forming RSG with The Finish Line in March 2012 - in first exploring the opportunity in the run specialty channel, long admiring the concept. "Johnny and Mark both had a lot of success as runners and then they brought a lot of innovation to different aspects of run specialty when they launched Boulder Running," said Brown. "They built one of the top specialty doors across the entire landscape."

Brown said RSG clearly sees the opportunity to bring the Boulder Running Company name to the Denver area, which officials see as not fully penetrated. But the Boulder Running Company name overall has an "active outdoor connotation" that could work in other states, especially Western ones that likewise embrace an active lifestyle, he added.

Overall, RSG's strategy calls for not only finding well-established store nameplates but helping them expand further, particularly locally. The Boulder Running Company merger follows quickly on the May 23rd announcement of the acquisition of the six-unit BlueMile running store chain, close to Finish Line's Indianapolis, IN headquarters. RSG made its first acquisition after being formed with the October 2012 acquisition of the five-unit, Dallas-based Run On! chain, and that chain has already expanded to eight stores. In late December 2012, it acquired the Road Runner store in Richmond, VA.

Under the partnership, RSG's headquarters were relocated to Denver, where GCP manages all day-to-day operations as well as merchandising and acquisitions. Finish Line assists with direct logistics, marketing and IT support along with digital expertise, which



Chris Brown, principal at Gart Capital Partners

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has included the launch of run.com. In forming Specialty Sports Venture, GCP's team has experience rolling up a specialty channel. The business bought up 140 ski and snowboard shops before being sold to Vail Resorts in 2010.

In March on its fourth-quarter conference call, Finish Line officials predicted that RSG's sales would range between \$45 million to \$55 million in its current fiscal year ended April 2014, driven by a combination of comp store sales growth, plus the acquiring and opening of approximately 30 new stores. RSG sales in its 2013 fiscal year were \$27.6 million, with comps increasing in the low teens.

The goal of the RSG partnership is to create the nation's single largest operator within the specialty running business. The chain lags behind Fleet Feet, Inc., the franchisor that just opened its 100th store and did \$130 million in revenues in 2012. Road Runner Sports operates 31 stores but its burgeoning online business appears to put it firmly in second place.

Brown said the running specialty channel overall has been largely receptive in general to conversations with RSG about possible mergers. "The beautiful part of running and other specialty niche businesses is that they're passion-driven categories and you tend to have people who are super friendly and nice and there's not a lot of hostile competition," said Brown. "So it's a networking game and that's something I love to do. And at the end of the day, if someone wants to sell their business, that's a big decision and carries a lot of risk. It's all about first developing relationships with people."

The potential buyers often break down demographically, with younger or newbie owners early in the game more reluctant to sell while "some of the older guard who have been around a long time are wondering, 'What can I try next?'" or looking to retire.

Brown added, "There's not a lot of options there if you're exploring selling. And we maintain that heritage and culture they built their business on. Gart has a long history of doing that. There's no shortage of opportunities out there beyond the ones we've already done."

For stores, quick benefits are more around "basic disciplines" for operating a specialty business efficiently with Gart's team as well as running stores they've acquired sharing best practices with each other. Operating systems will eventually be consolidated across stores, as well as areas such as accounts payable. Leveraging RSG's size, stores gain greater access to product and collective buying power. With many not even having e-commerce, they also can tap run.com as a platform to help fill out-of-stocks.

One aspect RSG is committed to not changing is the local community approach of each location. To secure that, Lucy Diaz was hired as RSG's VP of marketing. Diaz was formerly director of advertising for Competitor Group, which operates 55 events around the world, including the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series, TriRock Triathlon Series and Columbia Muddy Buddy Series. Said Brown: "She is very attuned to the importance of connecting on the local level."

RSG also insists that even though buys can be coordinated at the corporate level, vendor reps continue to call on individual stores because it supports the local approach. "We have taken it very seriously as we acquire these local operators that we can maintain that local community involvement and community presence. Keeping that brand name relevant in the local market is so important," Brown continued.

Preserving that community activism has been a chief concern expressed by vendors. But conversations with the vendor community have also been positive, especially as they turn to ways both sides can collectively grow the channel. "We obviously have a lot of business experience and having a strong partnership with The Finish Line provides a comfort factor," said Brown. "But they're excited to work with us in terms of our resources and our people, and in being able to look at the future and say, 'How can we grow the pie?' And ultimately that comes down to, 'How do we get more people off the couch?' Because for everyone to grow, we need to provide access to more people to the sport of running." ■

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THE NEW MINIMALISM

Minimalism will be back for Spring, but this time in overall weights, while midsoles get a bump up.

By Thomas J. Ryan

With many runners reportedly finding barefoot extreme to be too 'extreme' for them, more cushioning and support is being added to ultra-lightweight run models for Spring 2014.

"I think consumers are realizing that minimal or natural footwear is not a silver bullet or the across-the-board solution for all runners," said Mike Thompson, Pearl Izumi's product line manager, run foot-

wear. He noted that despite all the minimal discussion, nine out of 10 shoes purchased at specialty run are 'traditional' run footwear, with stability still making up almost half that market.

At the same time, Thompson noted, "the days of 12 or 13 ounce stability shoes are dying quickly" in an ongoing push away from gadgets and overbuilt cushioning technologies in midsoles.



New Balance 860v4

“High quality EVA foams are replacing the air bags, gels and wave plates of the past,” said Thompson. “Heavy weight synthetics in the uppers are now being replaced by lighter weight TPU films. Heavy, stiff TPU shanks found in the mid-foot of the midsole are now being removed and replaced by EVA that is flush to the ground. Simplifying footwear is a great thing for the consumer and the retailer.”

The challenge, said Mikal Peveto, director of running at Adidas, is getting lighter without sacrificing performance, comfort or even aesthetics. He added, “Running understands that and strives to meet not just a singular need within a shoe, but to make truly holistic products that perform at the highest level in all aspects.”

That leaves many footwear vendors pursuing their unique “sweet spot” largely around neutral and light stability. Still, an ongoing benefit of the minimalist craze has been that runners are more open to new options and even alternative running experiences.

“Being able to run in a shoe that is 'barely there' has been an eye-opening moment for a lot of runners over the last few years,” said Rod Foley, Mizuno’s director of product, running. “The experience can be very liberating and energizing, and can also, unfortunately, be very jarring and uncomfortable in a lot of cases if they are not running in the right shoe. We believe runners are seeking gear that allows them to forget about the shoes on their feet and enjoy the experience, the emotion, and the euphoria of running.”

Tom Carleo, VP of running at New Balance, in the same way believes more than ever, runners are looking for product advancement and fresh new experiences. “This market is seeking more than just new midsole stories, but holistic improvements to the entire product,” said Carleo. “Elements like midsole ‘drop-heights,’ natural lasts and new upper construction like Fantom-Fit are all critical in making better running shoes. With this new approach and innovative thinking, New Balance also recognizes that there are significant parts of the running market that look for evolution with more cautious updates. This balancing act has been exciting at New Balance with growth in both sectors. Authentic, end-user driven technology has become so much more important to the running marketplace.”

ASICS

For Spring 2014, Asics is focusing on its Natural33 collection, which is designed to deliver an altogether different running experience from traditional trainers.

“Our goal was to create a collection of products that runners can use and alternate with traditional trainers,” said Brice Newton, product manager, Asics. “We feel this will be the new precedent for natural running products. It’s no longer about having one shoe to wear for all your training, but rather having a collection of shoes offering a variety of weights, cushioning, heel drops, and protection. This diversification allows the runner to have a completely different running experience based on an assortment of shoes.”

Neutral runners wearing the GEL-Nimbus or GEL-Cumulus can transition to the GEL-Excel33 3 or the GEL-Lyte33 3 for a more lightweight, natural ride. The third generation of the GEL-Excel33 series, the GEL-Excel33 3, MSRP \$120, weighs in nearly an ounce lighter while boasting underfoot comfort from the new FluidRide midsole and Ortholite Lasting. The ergonomically shaped upper is constructed with engineered mesh, seamless construction, and a lightweight heel clutching system.



GEL-Excel33 3



GEL-Electro33



GEL-Super J33

Fans of the GEL-Kayano or GT-2000 series will enjoy the new GEL-Electro33 and GEL-Super J33. Powered by FluidAxis, the GEL-Super J33, MSRP \$100, is designed to meet the specific needs and foot geometry of mild to moderate overpronators. It has a 6mm drop combined with GEL Cushioning and Solyte midsole. For the mild to moderate over-pronator, GEL-Electro33, MSRP \$110, offers support combined with engineered mesh and seamless construction.

BROOKS SPORTS

Continuing to work both its Float and Feel sides, Brooks Sports will continue to improve fit and ride with updates to the PureProject collection, Adrenaline GTS 14 and Ravenna 5.

Each of the three original PureProject Road Shoes – PureConnect 3, MSRP \$100, the PureFlow 3 and the PureCadence 3 – are being updated with a more rounded 360° Ideal Heel which brings contact points closer to your joint center. A sculpted medial arch integrates with the upper for a closer fit while a repositioned Toe Flex allows the first two toes to work as a functional unit. Changes to the upper wrap allow it to pull from the medial side for a more conforming fit.



Ravenna 5

With the Ravenna 5, MSRP \$110, the BioMoGo DNA now graces the entire midsole for cushioning and stability. It also has an extended Caterpillar Crash Pad for full ground contact, and an adjustable saddle wrapping from the heel and midfoot.

Kira Harrison, footwear merchandising associate at Brooks Sports Footwear, said the marketplace is clearly seeing a swing back to cushioning. "Lightweight is still relevant in the market, but the conversation is changing," said Harrison. "It isn't about one 'right' way to run or all about minimal footwear. It is about each individual's running experience and choosing what's best for you."

Upper trends include using new materials and techniques that are conformable, flexible and add integrity to the upper without weight and stitching, she added. Two examples of this are the TPU film (thin, no sew overlays) in the Ravenna 5 and the 3D Fit Print (screen printing technique that adds layers of a highly viscous liquid polymer) on the Adrenaline GTS 14.

SAUCONY

At Saucony, the overall focus for Spring 2014 includes ever-lighter shoes; more flexibility in each strike; lower offsets for a more balanced, comfortable and powerful stride; fit; and strategic stability zones that provide support while maintaining cushioning and flexibility.

The Guide 7, MSRP \$120, now weighs about 10.2 ounces, among the lightest stability shoes in its class. Featuring a 8mm offset, it has been put through a rigorous testing program.



Guide 7

In its Natural category, the Mirage 4, MSRP \$110, features a redesigned upper utilizing FlexFilm and minimal overlays resulting in a seamless feel. Heel cushioning technology is upgraded to PowerGrid. Other updates for Saucony include the Hurricane 16, Triumph 11, Peregrine 4 and Virrata 2.



Mirage 4

MIZUNO

Mizuno, Wave Rider 17, MSRP \$115, gains a notable addition with its new U4ic (pronounced euphoric) midsole technology extending across its Spring 2014 line.

"It has enabled all shoes in our portfolio to move down in weight considerably, yet maintain the cushion, support and durability needed," said Foley of the U4ic. Combined with Wave technology and sculpted rubber outsole, the Wave Rider 17 weighs 8.8 ounces.

"To us, lightweight isn't a trend and we chuckle when we hear it referred to as one," said Foley. "This is an enduring fundamental for the industry and how gear is designed that runners want to run in. The trick is figuring out how to make our shoes lighter without sacrificing the features runners trust us to provide - protection, durability, comfort. This has been, and always will be, a focus of our innovation efforts."

Promising the world's first Super/Natural running experience, the Wave Prophecy 3, MSRP \$210, features an entirely new full length infinity wave

tuned for maximum cushioned comfort as well as lighter u4ic midsole for increased flexibility.

From more of an aesthetics view, Foley noted how the form a running shoe can take has completely transformed. "Not being held to the traditional rules of stitched overlays has allowed for some innovative looking products from a lot of manufacturers," he said.

He also said one of the big trends Mizuno has identified for Spring/Summer 2014 is the re-emergence of white. Added Foley, "Does that mean color is dead? Certainly not. There will be a place for color, but you will also see fresh approaches to using white."



Wave Prophecy 3

NEW BALANCE

New Balance will be introducing the 860v4, MSRP \$115, an update to the award-winning 860v3. For maximum shock absorption throughout the gait cycle, the 860v4 features an extended Abzorb crash pad, running heel through the forefoot, and interfaces this larger shock absorbing foam with an ActevaLite midsole to create a cushioned ride. Engineered with the newly- designed PL-12 last, the 860v4 has an improved toe box that maintains the same 12mm offset, but adds more toe spring.

Carleo believes the New Balance 870v3, a mild stability model, is benefiting from an overall healthy trend towards "mild stability" models, driven in part by New Balance midsole geometries becoming inherently more stable. He added, "With that said, the more traditional stability market is still very healthy and very important to the running specialty channel, as well many international markets."

Around its Minimus Zero push, New Balance will introduce the Minimus Zerov2, MSRP \$110, an update to its Minimus Zero collection. With the same innovative technologies as the 00v1 Road, the 00v2 Road gets a redesigned ultra-thin Fantom Fit upper that reduces the weight by about half an ounce while providing support in key areas such as the heel, lateral forefoot, and medial midfoot. By concentrating on these areas only, material usage is kept to a minimum while traditional overlays are avoided to keep flexibility and natural foot motion a priority.



Minimus Zerov2



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“We will also continue to develop innovative, lightweight and low profile models within our RevLite collection,” said Carleo. “The success of these franchises has been very good for our business and brand in the U.S., but even more critical in our other global markets.”

REEBOK

For Spring 2014, Reebok will build off the fall 2013 launch of the its new Reebok One Series with the Reebok One Lite, MSRP \$105, a neutral running shoe; and the Reebok One Max Cushion, MSRP \$129, a premium cushioning model.



Reebok One Lite

Debuting with the Reebok One Cushion and the Reebok One Guide, the One platform features “Zoned” technology that mimics the way the foot moves, meeting the demands of the runner through each phase of the Gait Cycle.

Three distinct zones complement the runner’s needs at each phase of their gait. Zone 1 is the Contact Zone – featuring a soft foam compound that provides shock attenuation with every stride. Zone 2 is the Midstance Zone – engineered to provide a smooth mid-foot transition. Zone 3 is the Propulsive Zone - featuring an ultra-responsive, high-rebound foam compound to help propel the runner forward during toe-off.

Reebok’s head of running, Bill McInnis, said the brand looked at the foot in motion to build a footwear solution that addressed the gait cycle from front to back that started with mapping the foot in motion and building a new performance last to address fit.

“The One Series is not the traditional component layered approach to cushioning and support, but a smoother, more fluid approach fusing three unique foams together in the bottom and three unique textiles in the upper,” said McInnis. “We removed traditional seams, cements, and layers and provided only what the runner needs in a unique visual form.”

He believes One’s innovative approach is a good example of what will drive growth for Reebok running and the category as a whole. “Lightweight and minimal won’t go away, but in a crowded environment layering additional function and solutions will win over the consumer. Lightweight or minimal is not a story anymore unto itself.”

SKECHERS

Building on the success of the GOrun Ride 2, featuring enhanced Resalyte cushioning and engineered mesh, Skechers will deliver a third generation in the Ride series, Skechers GOrun Ride 3, MSRP \$80, with an updated outsole construction for a sleeker, faster look.



“We’re also excited about our new maximalist running concept, Skechers GOrun Ultra,” said Rick Higgins, VP global merchandising/marketing Skechers Performance Division. The shoe features GOimpulse sensors that provide sensory feedback and 360-degree flexibility.

Like the GOrun Ride, the GOrun Ultra, MSRP \$80, features a lightweight Resalyte midsole with memory retention; independent circular sensors on the

sole deliver feedback for an interactive running experience; and M-strike technology engineered to promote a mid-foot strike, can help transform impact into reusable energy.

ADIDAS

Adidas has benefited from this year’s launch of the Energy Boost platform, heralded as the brand’s most successful running launch.

Beyond the energy return from Boost, the Adistar Boost, MSRP \$170, coming Spring 2014, features a Techfit upper to hold the foot securely in place and provide support. The updated Supernova Glide Boost, MSRP \$130, is lighter, faster and features Boost technology for energy return.



Adistar Boost



Supernova Glide Boost

Peveto said that from Adipure to Adizero to Boost, Adidas has something for every consumer - in all three of its footwear silos - neutral comfort, stable comfort, and natural comfort - in a lightweight package.

“All of these products will be brought to life via our amazing Spring/Summer 2014 color story that will tie back to the energy and beauty of the Brazil World Cup,” said Peveto. “From the expansion of the Boost platform to the continued launch of Springblade, expect 2014 to be a watershed year for Adidas running.”

KARHU

For Spring 2014, Karhu, the Finnish-brand featuring patented “fulcrum” technology designed to transfer the footstrike into forward momentum, is launching the Fluid3 Fulcrum, (Neutral, MSRP \$125), and Steady3 Fulcrum (Stability, MSRP \$125).



Fluid3 Fulcrum



Steady3 Fulcrum

“We created these models with the guidance of an industry dealer council and sought to create the ‘everyday trainer of the future,’” said Meagan Nedlo, Karhu’s run sales manager. “These models utilize an open, clean air mesh and synthetic suede welds to create a very breathable and

flexible upper. The body of the shoe combines an injection-molded midsole with a compression-molded fulcrum unit - our trademark technology designed to promote efficiency - to create the perfect blend of responsiveness and protection with a comfortable 8mm drop."

Overall, Nedlo believes the rapid decline in extremely lightweight, low- or zero-drop shoes is indicative of how that option simply isn't feasible for everyone all the time. But many of minimalism's principles - a focus on improved running form and efficiency, flexible and breathable uppers, lightweight materials, lower than the traditional 12mm drop - are product evolutions that can benefit most runners when applied to a shoe than can be worn every day.

"Similarly, the minimalist movement also seemed to usher in (or at least coincide with) brighter and bolder colors especially with midsoles," added Nedlo. "This bold aesthetic is now becoming the norm, and more runners are seeking more vibrant, 'fun' options - no more stark white footwear walls."

PEARL IZUMI

Pearl Izumi is introducing the EM Road N, MSRP \$100, its most minimal road style that Thompson describes as a "true racing flat that is perfect for the 5k to half-marathon distance. A barely-there seamless upper and a smooth E:Motion midsole make it feel slipper-like, light and flexible. The outsole combines outsole-grade EVA with blown rubber in the forefoot for traction and durability.



EM Road N

The EM Road M2, MSRP \$110, features blown rubber in the forefoot and carbon rubber in the crash pad combined for cushioning and abrasion resistance. A high-density post at the medial mid-foot is engineered for pronation control.

Pearl Izumi's E:Motion line features a dynamic offset midsole, meaning that the height offset between the heel and the ball from landing through toe-off feeds a smooth transition.



EM Road M2

Thompson believes the pendulum has swung back from the barefoot extreme of a few years ago to a healthier space. He added, "Cushioning between the ground and the runner is a good thing and you are starting to see footwear that was barefoot inspired originally have more

cushioning in the midsole to appeal to a larger running audience."

Thompson also sees bright colors still trending in 2014, but the winning colors have to look fast and fun, yet sophisticated.

"Being purposeful with color is key and appeals to a greater variety of consumers," said Thompson. "Using the materials and textures of the materials and how they react to each other to inform the design language of the shoe will be key in 2014."

MERRELL

Merrell is introducing the AllOut Collection that includes the AllOut Fuse, a hybrid running shoe built to transition from road to trail; as well as models specifically for the trail and hike. The collection features a flexible underfoot wrap that mobilizes the arch. The design activates the body's natural form by creating continuous ground contact for increased mobility and efficiency.

In addition to arch activation, other key design features include the UniFly Impact Protection of ultra-resilient, strategically placed foam pads that provide a soft landing by dispersing impact and allowing for stable takeoff, ample ground feel and protection to go further, faster and longer.

Shaun Bohnsack, category business manager, Merrell Outside Athletic, sees consumers seeking natural motion options that offer more protection underfoot without inhibiting movement.

"In general we see consumers wanting under-complicated solutions that allow them to connect to the terrain in a natural and efficient manner," said Bohnsack. "We continue to focus on finding the right balance of cushioning and protection without reducing the stability and ground feel that our runners want. Our design approach is simple - create the strongest connection between the ground and the runner improving the body's ability to stabilize itself, align posture and increase performance."

VIBRAM FIVEFINGERS

Vibram FiveFingers will introduce the Bikila EVO, MSRP \$120, a medium-distance roadrunner offering the benefits of going barefoot with slightly more cushioning. The toe shoe features zero drop construction with an 8.5 mm sole to aid in transitioning from a traditional running shoe. MegaGrip rubber pods offer grip while an EVA midsole reduces weight.



Bikila EVO

SKORA

Skora is unveiling the Skora Fit, MSRP \$95, a lightweight, zero-drop training shoe with 16mm stack height, a curved outsole that mimics the shape of the foot and allows for natural movement and stride with protection and cushioning. A 3D-printed upper provides structural support while asymmetrical lacing relieves pressure across the top of the foot for a customizable fit.



Skora Fit

David Sypniewski, CEO, Skora, said the Fit is built on the same platform as the original Form and Base, but has added a couple millimeters of cushion, for a better balance of comfort and performance. Sypniewski sees minimal design techniques veering towards Skora's philosophies around cushioning, ground-feel and foot neutrality.

"Technical running shoe innovation is thriving thanks to advancements in materials and outsole technologies that provide a more anatomical fit and more natural ride, resulting in increased comfort and connection to the running surface," said Sypniewski. "The future of running shoes will compliment and enhance a runner's natural running style and signal a realistic return to natural running with real world runners, built with respect for the body."

PUMA

Puma is looking to build on its launch earlier this year of its Adaptive Running platform with the introduction of its Mobium Elite shoe.



Mobium Elite v2

For 2014, the Mobium Elite v2, MSRP \$110, adapts to the foot as it moves, expanding and contracting as the foot naturally does in stride. Four advanced proprietary technologies - Expansion Pods, the Mobium Last, the Windlass Chassis and the Mobium Band - operate as a system to move the foot through the entire gait cycle. A key feature is the elasticized Mobium band, which expands and contracts along the foot while giving the runner extra bounce and lightweight stability.

Puma will also introduce the Faas 300 v3, MSRP \$90, now in a more technical but sleek, modern package. It features a 8mm HTD, FaasFoam+ one piece midsole and EverRide+ forefoot blow rubber.

ON RUNNING

Swiss-based On Running, whose shoes feature pods underneath that attenuate shock and set up the foot for toe-off, is introducing The Cloud, MSRP \$119. At seven ounces, the lightweight performance running shoe blends cushioning with lightness and flexibility.



The Cloud

Ted Goodlake, On running director of sales, North America, said runners are increasingly looking for shoes that put them back into control instead of constraining them. And while the natural running movement started this movement, it couldn't deliver for the average runner who does not want to change his running in a long and potentially painful process.

"What we need are light, flexible shoes that promote an active running movement yet still provide the cushioning and protection that you need to absorb impact and to prevent injury," said Goodlake.

"This is the very essence of On's patented CloudTec sole."

On the aesthetic side, On's Cloudracer 2014 competition model combines the lightness of a thin mesh and re-enforces it at critical spots. Added Goodlake, "The idea is taken from the taping of athlete's feet. Trouble spots are enforced without constraining the full foot. The result is a very functional upper that is unique in its design."

On updates the Cloudracer, MSRP \$130, the ISPO Gold Award Winner as the best performance shoe for 2013, with a new taping system woven into its ultra light upper.

Goodlake sees the natural trend fading out, but believes it accelerated positive change. Added Goodlake, "Runners deserve shoes that combine minimum weight with maximum performance."

K-SWISS



Kwicky Blade Light Stable



Kwicky Blade Light Neutral

K-Swiss, which was recently acquired by South Korean apparel conglomerate E-Land, plans to introduce an ultra lightweight, high-mileage stability running shoe in the Kwicky Blade Light Stable, MSRP \$150. GuideGlide dual-

density midsole construction combined with Blade-Light Technology for progressive cushioning enhances the ride. A Medial Integrated Lacing system provides mid-foot lockdown and fit, complemented by a firmer density medial post to discourage over-pronation. Its partner is the Kwicky Blade Light Neutral, MSRP \$145, featuring a seam free upper and a new outsole drainage to expel moisture build-up from inside the shoe.

SCOTT

At Scott, the Race Rocker 2.0 features a low-profile platform that promotes a quick heel or midfoot to toe-off transition. Updated for 2014, the Race Rocker 2.0 features a lightweight and breathable upper with a slightly tighter-fitting forefoot. Fast and responsive, it is ideal for races up to a half marathon, fast training sessions or minimal concept workouts.



Race Rocker 2.0




T2 Palani

The T2 Palani, a versatile, high performance, neutral trainer and racing shoe, it is Scott's lightest race shoe with enough support to be used as a trainer. The same trademark eRide technology is found throughout

Scott's shoe line to promote a faster and more efficient transition for those who require less support and crave speed over long miles. ■

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