

# SGB

ISSUE 1337  
SEPTEMBER 16, 2013

# WEEKLY

THE WEEKLY DIGITAL MAGAZINE FOR THE SPORTING GOODS INDUSTRY



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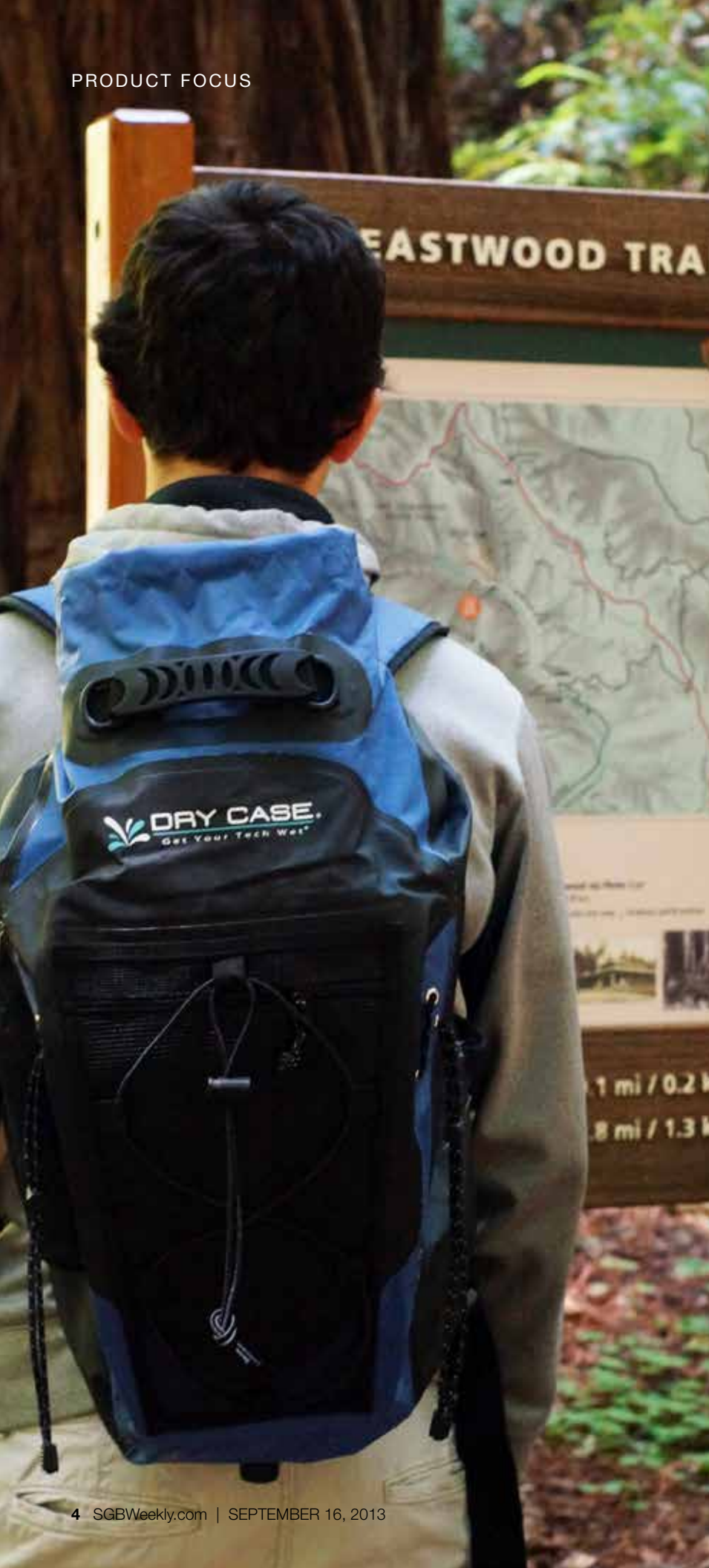
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# ELECTRONICS CONTINUE THEIR MARCH FORWARD

By Aaron Bible

Some surly, old school outdoors folks have a trepidatious attitude toward electronics, especially in the backcountry. But upon deep inspection, the entire progression of our industry, of our lives for that matter, is inextricably linked to technological innovations, from better ski bindings to delicious freeze-dried foods and lightweight packs. Sure, electronics require power to be effective, but we've got solutions for that, too. Following is a look at some top electronics and gadget-related products for Spring 2014.

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Pictured left: Drycase Waterproof Backpack includes a purge valve to inflate/compress the pack, waterproof 30L main compartment, internal zippered waterproof pocket, front mesh pocket, side water bottle holder, bungee cords, padded shoulder straps and back support.

Photo courtesy Drycase



Soleus GPS mini

The smallest GPS watch on the market, the Soleus GPS Mini is lightweight with a low profile design, yet still easy to read. The highly functional GPS Mini is available in four fashion-forward colors, which makes you

want to keep it on even after your workout. The Soleus GPS Mini records speed, distance and pace. Charge and upload via integrated USB; features include 100-lap memory, automatic lap splits, calorie counter, four-button user interface and a customizable display viewing.

The Suunto GPS Track POD stores and tracks speed, distance and GPS altitude data while you explore new territories, race or train. You can also connect it with selected Suunto heart rate monitors for real time distance and highly responsive speed-readings for your outdoor activities using Suunto FusedSpeed. Rechargeable, lithium-ion battery features up to 100 hours battery



Suunto GPS Track POD

life with 60 second recording interval or 15 hours battery life with 1 second recording interval. Water resistant to 30m/100 feet (ISO 22810). Unit is small and lightweight (35g/1.2 oz.) with versatile attachment options. Features interference-free Suunto ANT Transmission Technology and is compatible with Movescount.com.



Brunton's Hydrogen Reactor

Brunton's Hydrogen Reactor is a portable fuel cell device that combines hydrogen and oxygen to produce electricity. Users lock a Hydrogen Core (1000 charges) into the Reactor fuel cell. The solid-state hydrogen mixes with oxygen from the air to form water vapor and electricity. The solid-state hydrogen has no toxic chemicals and doesn't suffer from natural discharge like batteries, making it ideal for long stretches without power. The Reactor has standard USB output and is optimized to power tablets, smart phones, UV water purifiers, re-chargeable lights, GPS transceivers and other personal devices.

Trimble Outdoors is a GPS company with mobile apps and a desktop trip planner. They are offering two new products: Topo Maps SD cards and the TopoCharger. The Topo Maps feature SD cards that provide outdoors enthusiast with instant access to topographic maps in Android phones and



Trimble Outdoors Topo Maps SD cards and TopoCharger.



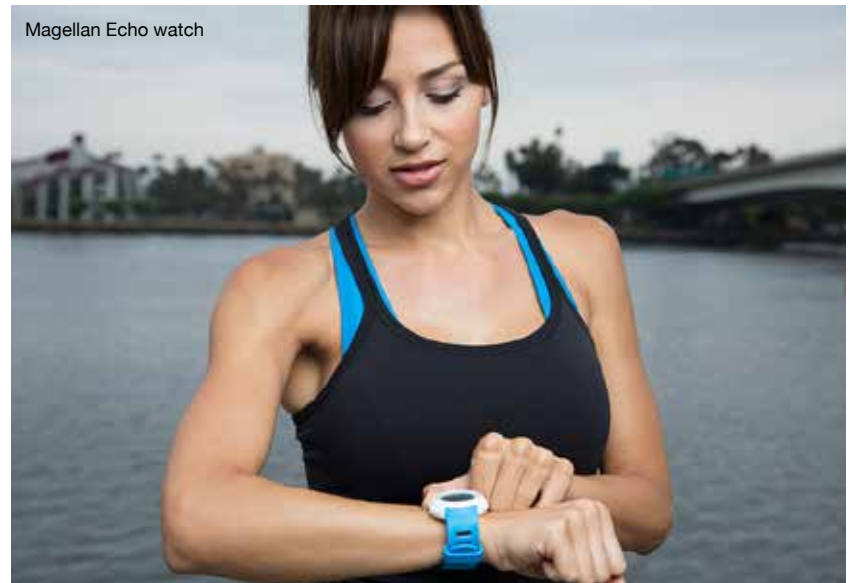
life. The three-ounce case also includes the Trimble Outdoors Navigator app to guide you in the field.



Magellan RoadMate GPS

tablets. The plug-and-play memory cards work off the grid and include full-color topo maps in 15 zoom levels (1:250K to 1:24K). SD cards are available for every state except Alaska at press time. The TopoCharger supercharges iPhones in two ways. It comes pre-loaded with full-color statewide topo maps in 15 zoom levels (1:250K to 1:24K). And, the built-in 1440 mAh battery doubles the phone's battery

Magellan introduced a new seven-inch RoadMate GPS unit for RVs featuring special safety, convenience and trip-planning features for RV travelers and towers. Pre-loaded RV resources include vehicle profiles, campground directories, dump and fueling stations,



Magellan Echo watch

and Geotag navigation. The new Bluetooth Smart-enabled Echo watch allows users to control smartphone apps such as GPS, music and exercise trackers from the wrist while the phone is tucked safely away. Much like your phone, just tap the screen to page through the function screens. It uses an open platform to stay up to date with app developments.

The Garmin Virb and Virb Elite POV camera is a first-in-class GPS product that tracks altitude and speed while recording adventures in HD. The machine tracks motion data in six ways including heart



Garmin Virb and Virb Elite POV camera

rate, acceleration, altitude and GPS. It is waterproof and protected from drops without a case. An innovative screen uses ambient light instead of backlight to save batteries. Units feature WiFi and Ant+ signal transfer and can also be controlled by a different Garmin unit such as the company's Fenix sports watch or Edge bike computer.



MIO Alpha

The MIO Alpha is the first performance-level, continuous heart rate monitor sport watch without a chest strap. The entire system of the Alpha is housed within the watch and has proven accurate up to running speeds of 14mph, though it's perfect for any fitness activity. The Alpha also uses

Bluetooth technology to connect with your smartphone as you train, allowing you to track results with your favorite fitness app.



Goal Zero Lighthouse 250 Lantern

Portable solar pioneer Goal Zero introduced its Lighthouse 250 Lantern and USB Power Hub at Outdoor Retailer, and the solar powered Eddie Bauer Katabatic 2 Tent. The 250-lumen Lighthouse provides up to 48 hours of LED light on a single charge. Adventurers can power the lantern via USB or with the integrated hand crank in the field. Lighthouse doubles as a re-charger to power mobile devices. The

new lantern can also be charged with one of Goal Zero's solar panels such as the 18-watt monocrystalline, weather-resistant panel supported by Eddie Bauer's new Katabatic 2 tent.

Snocru, a leading digital app development company based in Park City, UT, makes a free mobile app that allows skiers and snowboarders to see and connect with each other on the mountain in real time, and released new updates for the 2013/2014 season.



Snocru

The in-app Leaderboard tracks vertical feet, speed, run total and check-ins and allows international users to compete to ski and ride the most vertical feet. Other updates for Snocru in 2013 are: overhauled tracking to deliver service when no cell connection is available; track day on a resort's detail screen; general bug fixes and performance optimizations. Riders can find friends on the hill, view global snow forecasts, track their day on the mountain, find local restaurants, ATMs and even hospitals, available for both iPhone and Android phones.



Outdoor Technology Buckshot

Outdoor Technology Safe 5



Outdoor Technology Privates

Outdoor Technology, player in rugged outdoor wireless audio, launched three innovative products at Outdoor Retailer. The Buckshot water resistant, portable speakers that pairs with any Bluetooth device and includes a built-in speakerphone and microphone for hands-free calls and mount for a bicycle, golf cart or baby stroller. The Safe 5 makes an iPhone 5 waterproof and has an IPX-7 level rating. The phone maintains full usability and a rubber coating on the case's front improves grip. The Privates stream clear audio for a range of up to 32 feet for 10 hours on a single charge. Fully wireless and portable, it connects with your smartphone, tablet, laptop or other Bluetooth-enabled device, and operate via a touch pad on the right earpiece.

The iOauto and iOauto Pro are magnetic, universal car mounts for phones, GPS units, and small tablets that allow you to rotate your device in any direction. They rely on the patent-pending



iOauto

iOmounts magnetic system, which offers complete rotational adjustment, a sleek modern design, is cordless, and safe to use with all devices. A razor thin steel disc, the iOadapt, attaches to your device and a vehicle-specific dashboard mount from ProClip snaps to your dashboard in seconds. ■

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# HOKA ONE ONE LOOKS FOR OVERSIZED GROWTH

Brand strives to broaden its appeal and build sales under the Deckers Outdoor umbrella

By Thomas J. Ryan

For Jim Van Dine, part of the reason he believes in the growth potential of Hoka is personal. Since starting to run in the maximum-cushioned shoes last year, he's lost 27 pounds.

"Certainly part of it was diet," admitted Van Dine in an interview with *SGB* at the 2013 Outdoor Retailer show. "But part of it is a commitment to exercise with running at the heart of it and Hoka allows me to run again when I couldn't run."

Van Dine, who became president of Hoka soon after Deckers Outdoors acquired it last fall, had been a runner his entire life, including heading to Boise State University on a cross-country scholarship, serving as an alternate on the U.S. national cross country team in the seventies, and later dedicating his time as a running coach.

But in 2006, a doctor told him he had to stop running because his right knee was shot and it wasn't worth a complete rebuild at his age. Being a die-hard runner, he would still jog three miles every Sunday "and then I would limp around for a couple of days so I could do it again."

But Hoka changed everything. While it hasn't fixed his knee, wearing Hoka's has allowed him to run four miles a day without pain.

"I can't go too far or too fast but it's a complete rebirth of my running," said Van Dine. "It's miraculous. That's the reason I'm more excited about this product than I've ever been about any product in my life, either as a consumer or as a businessman. Because as a consumer, I've already realized the benefit of the rebirth of my running, and as a businessperson, I think this opportunity is limitless."

While one audience is "older, broken runners" like himself, the brand is more known for the rabid following it has developed with ultra-runners and the triathlon community. Ultra runners in particular have embraced





From left to right: Jean-Luc Diard, co-founder Hoka One One, Jim VanDine, president Hoka One One, Nicholas Mermoud, co-founder Hoka One One and Angel Martinez, CEO Deckers Outdoor, celebrate at the 2013 Outdoor Retailer Summer Market.

the brand as word of winning performances in competition has quickly spread. Hoka's athletes, largely ultra runners, have recorded over 30 podium finishes on five continents in the past 18 months.

As an example of its popularity with ultra runners, Van Dine pointed to the Speedgoat 50K ultra-marathon held in Park City, UT at the end of July. Of the 330 finishers, 85, or more than 25 percent, were wearing Hoka's. Said Van Dine, "Word of mouth on social media has just been incredible."

Van Dine admitted that Hoka remains "not really well known" outside ultra running hotbeds like Boulder, CO but Deckers has already helped expand distribution to about 300 doors this year, up from 92 accounts last year. With Deckers investing aggressively in the rollout, Van Dine sees Hoka's sales reaching \$100 million within a few years.

For selling floors, the most notable attribute about Hoka is it's unique. Van Dine said a user would immediately recognize the difference between any other shoe when they put a pair on, and that can't be said about other running shoes. Unlike many minimal models that have reached the market in recent years, it also doesn't require a learning curve or change in running form to use.

"It's something completely new and innovative and the first true, game-changing innovation, I think, since compression molded EVA 30 years ago," said Van Dine.

The initial idea behind Hoka came from Nicolas Mermoud, an ultra runner in France who wanted a shoe that would enable him

to go downhill faster. He bought the idea to Jean-Luc Diard, who was coincidentally experimenting with bringing an oversize design concept to running shoes. Both had worked at Salomon, where Diard at one time was president of the Salomon Group.

Diard had seen how oversized design had already transformed a number of sports equipment categories, including tennis rackets, golf clubs, bicycle tires and skis.

"The interesting thing was they didn't take existing product and try to refine it," said Van Dine. "They took the approach that there is no such thing as a running shoe; we're going to invent it. They didn't look at anything else. They took it from the ground up."

He added, "They started shaping this product in the midsole much like a surfboard shaper would shape a fiberglass surfboard. It's not just oversized, it's also about the geometry, it's also about the rocker, and it's also about how the upper sits down into the midsole. And it's the combination of all those things that make the shoe work."

The shoe launched in 2009 in Europe and soon came to the states. Hoka came to the attention of Deckers Outdoor a few years ago after Johnny Halberstadt of The Boulder Running contacted Van Dine and raved about how the product was connecting with his ultra running crowd.

Halberstadt recognized that Mermoud and Diard were undercapitalized and "didn't really have a running background" to fully exploit the opportunity, said Van Dine. At the same time, Deckers had ample capital and both Van Dine and Angel Martinez, the



Tom Daley gets back to his running roots as Hoka One One's marketing manager.



Part of the new Hoka One One team at the 2013 Fleet Feet Expo in Huntington Beach, CA are from left to right: Larry Hartford, The Hartford Sales Group; Jonathan Wilkinson, Expo/Events manager, Hoka One One; Howard Jones, National Sales Manager, Hoka One One; and Ike Alvear, brand manager, Hoka One One.

CEO of Deckers who was also a competitive runner in his younger days, had a passion for running.

Martinez, who likewise has been able to return to running with Hoka's help, hired Van Dine to his first job out of college at a running store in Northern California owned by Runners World at the time. Van Dine helped Martinez open a running store in Alameda, CA in 1979 called Island City Sports. In the eighties, they worked together at Reebok to bring the brand from a start-up to a billion in sales in five years by riding the aerobics craze. The two later partnered again to help launch Keen Footwear in 2003.

Most recently, Van Dine rejoined Martinez after Ahnu, an outdoor footwear brand Van Dine founded, was sold to Deckers. Van Dine still also oversees Ahnu for Deckers, which also owns Uggs and Teva. For both executives, Hoka marks a return to working around their favorite activity.

“We’re a running shoe brand led by real runners so that’s just pretty cool,” said Van Dine.

Diard continues to work on Hoka’s international distribution and product innovation while Mermoud supports the brand’s sports marketing and athlete management. The first new product tapping Decker’s design knowhow is the Conquest, which recently earned *Outside Magazine’s* Gear of the Show award at the 2013 Outdoor Retail Summer Market.

The Conquest, which hits retail stores in January, gets a more modernized look but the big change from the performance side is the addition of a proprietary Rmat midsole material, a blend of EVA and rubber that offers both “tremendous rebound” and “great shock absorption” along with strong durability, said Van Dine.

The basic geometry of the shoe remains the same. Among the features are:

- » The foam in the midsoles is up to 30 percent softer than the material used in traditional running shoes with up to 2.5 times more midsole volume, enabling the runner to float over the ground instead of repeatedly pounding;
- » The voluminous midsole allows for two- to three-times the vertical travel of conventional running shoes, also feeding a softer ride with better control;
- » A 40mm high sole design and a 13cm rocker profile that extends over the front half of the shoe allows for a fluid stride and a plush ride;
- » A 50 percent increase in outsole surface area, compared to traditional running shoes, allows greater contact with the ground for grip and stability.



Despite the girth, the shoes are still about 15 percent lighter than most running shoes. Van Dine said the industry hasn’t found a way to reduce the amount of running injuries over the last thirty years. And while no scientific evidence exists, scores of runners, anecdotally, are touting the benefits Hoka brings in dulling the pounding the knees, joints and lower legs take from running.

While appealing to ultra runners, Van Dine sees Hoka working for all types of runners, including road marathoners. Runners may want a sleeker shoe for speed workouts around a track, but Hoka is ideal for recovery runs, which represent the majority of runs for distance training. Van Dine added, “Even an elite runner would benefit from having a shoe that reduces the stress and strain on their recovery day.”

Beyond running, Van Dine sees the opportunity for Hoka to expand into walking, hiking and possibly other athletic activities. Although much of the attention has focused on the oversized design, the

brand is also working on non-oversized shoes that take advantage of Hoka’s “tuned midsole geometry” stemming from its unique shape.

“You almost gain the type of benefits that dual density would provide without the dual density. It’s more of the shape that’s the real innovation,” said Van Dine. “Nobody’s done that.”

The focus now is on run and Hoka has hired nine field service tech reps to canvas the country. Its internal team includes Isaac “Ike” Alvear, who formerly ran Avia and Ryka for American Sporting Goods, as Hoka’s brand manager; Howard Jones, formerly of Montrail, as its national sales manager; and Tom Daley as its marketing manager.

The marketing push includes a heavy social media and grassroots focus, with plans to be at weekly fun runs at the local level, as well as a presence at races and race expos, including major ones such as Boston, New York, Chicago and the Marine Corps. Hoka’s athletes’ roster will also be expanded.

Overall, Van Dine said Deckers is “investing as if this is a brand that’s already a large brand,” to quickly fill its potential. Added Van Dine, “We have the benefit of a small entrepreneurial quick strike team with the power of Deckers behind it.” ■



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# INSOLES STEP UP

While athletic shoe technology has advanced relentlessly, insole makers have been there every step of the way.

By Thomas J. Ryan

With the marketplace seeing a shift away from the 'barefoot' or minimal shoes and a move to more cushioning, support and impact protection, insole makers stand to benefit.

"The shift away from minimalist footwear is a positive for Sof Sole, as our business for over 20 years has been to improve comfort and performance of all footwear with insoles for any activity," said Kurt Wineman, SVP of sales, Sof Sole. "The depth of our product line allows us to remain a consistent player across a variety of trends and footwear categories."

"More and more active consumers are asking for a way to add cushioning, impact-shock protection and pain relief to their workouts," added David Church, president of Sorbothane. "Whether walking, running or standing - they are looking for a natural insole that will support and cradle their foot in comfort and provide a layer of impact protection."

Jeff Antonioli, global sales director at Spenco Medical Corp, believes many retailers have been more greatly investing in the insoles category in recent years because of the category's healthy margins. But he also feels the minimal movement has drawn consumers to the category because they've become more knowledgeable about foot health.

Spenco has found an audience for its Total Support Thin collection, released last year, given the wide acceptance of low-profile shoes in the marketplace as well as many athletes looking for semi-flexible support as part of their activities. "They're still looking to thinner, lighter insoles even though it may now be used more than just minimalist shoes," said Antonioli.

At the same time, he believes the minimal movement has also been positive for Spenco's original Total Support insole offering featuring semi-rigid orthotic arch support as well as its Total Support Max, an even-more rigid version that came out at the same time as the Thin collection because some runners are recognizing they need support. He expects ongoing interest around natural running to also support the overall insoles category.

"The minimal movement may be slowing but that's not going to stop runners' interest in achieving a natural gait or running in grass and sand or looking for other ways to improve their foot health," said Antonioli. "The movement has helped many realize how insoles support healthy feet. We can promote that entire line of foot health for someone who wants to let their foot



Spenco Race & Train series

relax more naturally while also offering semi rigid to rigid insoles to others looking for more support.”

Spenco is building on its partnership with the Ironman series with the launch of the Race & Train series featuring a lightweight shell for optimal performance on race day but is also supportive to use as a training tool. Said Antonioli, “For Train we beefed up everything for the ideal

training insole. We still use a cooling top for both so it’s great bare-foot running or socked. Both use a proprietary faceted cradle design that increases rigidity while shedding weight.”



Sof Sole Thin Fit

Sof Sole recently unveiled the Thin Fit, the thinnest and lightest insole made by Sof Sole, weighing just 1.3 ounces. Designed with a lightweight, flexible foam that conforms to the foot and promotes a natural stride, the Thin Fit insole offers increased cushioning in the heel and forefoot for enhanced shock absorption upon impact.

“Sof Sole is seeing a rising need for cushioning within training and cleat footwear,” said Wineman. “Since many of those shoes feature liners that can’t be removed, our new Thin Fit product fits easily on top of existing liners to improve the performance and comfort of footwear. The flexible foam conforms to and moves with the foot, and Coolmax fiber in the top cover wicks away moisture.” Microban treatment also helps prevent growth of odor-causing bacteria. The Thin Fit’s low-profile design fits in most footwear and is ideal for additional comfort in cleats, basketball shoes, training, casual and running footwear.

Sof Sole’s other new insole, the Plantar Fasciitis is a long-lasting and comfortable solution for pain resulting from stress placed on the plantar fascia. A Plantar Relief Bridge provides sturdy relief to painful arches, while the heel cup offers motion control and stability. Gel in the heel provides targeted cushioning and pain relief from potential heel spurs. The three-quarter length design allows it to fit into any type of footwear.



Sof Sole Plantar Fasciitis

Heralding it as the brand’s most innovative performance product in more than 35 years, Superfeet in Spring 2014 is introducing the Carbon collection that directly addresses the minimal running movement. The Carbon utilizes new materials; the most noteworthy is the carbon fiber-reinforced heel cap. The Carbon insole is the thinnest in Superfeet’s collection, and the proprietary blend of materials, EvoLyte, makes it the strongest heel cap. Carbon’s distinct biomechanical shape and low-volume



Superfeet Carbon collection

design can help improve the fit and feel of tight-fitting, lightweight athletic footwear.

“A higher density foam allows the insoles to continue to be incredibly thin

so it fits in low-profile minimal shoes but still gives some fore-front cushion,” said Ellen Harwick, communications manager at Superfeet. Harwick also said that while the slowdown of FiveFingers showed that minimalism “is not for everybody,” Superfeet still found “there is something to the minimalist movement.” She added, “The Carbon maintains what it is an athlete is looking for in that minimal shoe - lightweight, really feeling the ground - but still needing a little bit of support and help to allow your foot to do what it should do.”

Harwick said the whole minimalist movement continues to help Superfeet because it has led to many conversations around how the foot works. “It’s opened up the dialogue and our retail partners have been helping us explain how insoles work in general,” said Harwick. “And if Superfeet is not for you, it’s not for you obviously. But so many people benefit from having some support. And it’s put us in the spotlight all of the sudden with foot health being such a hot topic.

Shock Doctor, which entered the insoles category in January 2013, is adding its first three-quarter-length insole with the Active Trim-Free Insole.

“Shorter insoles have been around for years,” said Jason Richter, Shock Doctor’s product marketing director. “The big benefit is that they can be used where a full length insole can’t be used due to low volume shoes (casual shoes, boots, etc.) or for someone who just wants to slip them in and go. We decided to enter this segment because we wanted to give all athletes an option for any type of footwear they could be using.”

Providing the same benefits as the advanced full-length insoles, the super thin insole, which weighs less than 1.5 ounces, locks the heel in place and stabilizes the foot and can be used to help reduce heel and plantar fasciitis pain. With Adaptive Arch Technology, which adapts to any foot shape for perfect fit, and natural shock absorption, the insole also features a biomechanical contoured design that cradles the foot for comfort and support.

Richter said that besides lightweight, seamless construction and flexibility, the new trends for insoles are efficiency and maximizing energy. In addition to preventing pain and joint fatigue, insoles can also provide comfort and help shoes to fit more securely.

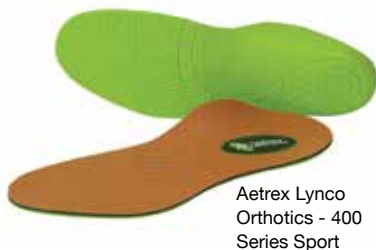
“Long distance runners like our Active Impact Insole, which is specifically engineered for longer runs and hikes on harder surfaces, placing less stress on your joints,” noted Richter. “Not all runners



Shock Doctor Active Trim-Free Insole

are into long distance though, so we've created options for them as well with the Active Performance Insole, which provides comfort and support, stabilizes the foot, absorbs impact for those who like to run, hike or train. We also have an insole for the all-around athlete called the Active Ultra Insole that provides full foot alignment, stability, support and maximum shock absorption.

Aetrex is introducing the Lynco Orthotics - 400 Series Sport, which features an advanced Lynco arch support to comfortably balance the feet and provide proper body alignment. The insole also features a Pro-Shox center layer for comfort and shock attenuation and an AeroCell polyurethane core for support and shape retention. A soft, CopperGuard top cover made from state-of-the-art copper fibers helps prevent bacteria, fungi and odor.



Aetrex Lynco Orthotics - 400 Series Sport

Hadas Cohen, senior marketing manager, Aetrex Worldwide, finds consumers are willing to pay to achieve greater customized comfort and performance by also fitting the inside of their footwear to their unique arch type and pressure points. Lynco orthotics are available in different configurations, each designed to meet the needs of different foot types.

Cohen noted that Aetrex's orthotic sales have grown significantly over the last few years. Said Cohen, "The strong and consistent growth of Aetrex insole sales during this period suggests that minimalist wearers also appreciate the comfort and performance benefits which come with customizing the inside of their athletic footwear with orthotics."

Hickory Brands has branched well beyond its shoelace roots with both its Ten Seconds collection, which are popular among professional teams and colleges; as well as its licensing partnership with New Balance over the last eight years.



Hickory Brands Three-Quarter Air2

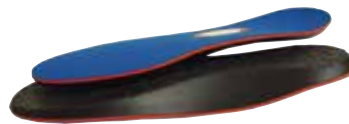


Hickory Brands Arch 1000



Hickory Brands Arch 2000

With a focus on cushion and support, Ten Seconds insoles focused on the run include the Three-Quarter Air2, Arch 1000, Arch 2000, and Flat Foot Sport. The Air2 Insole allows the shoe to remain lightweight while providing cushioning where there is little to no insole in the shoe. The Arch 1000 and 2000 include Poron for shock absorption and cushioning, arch support using a DuPont Hytrel indestructible plate and also found in the Arch 2000, an extra layer of Polyurethane Foam for added cushioning. The Flat Foot Sport provides people with low arches or flat feet, who have been forced to live with foot,



Hickory Brands Flat Foot Sport

ankle, knee, hip and lower back pain, to no longer have to endure painful standing, walking, or running experiences.



Hickory Brands Flat Motion Control Insole

Under its New Balance license, Hickory Brands offers Motion Control Insole and Supportive Cushioning Insole. They include most of the same features and benefits including Abzorb Cushioning, an anti-blister top cover, metatarsal arch rise, arch support and an extra deep heel cup. The difference in these two insoles is that the Motion Control has an external arch support, which is more rigid. The Supportive Cushioning has an arch support that is built up slightly higher than the arch in the Motion Control, but is more flexible, and with the extra deep heel provides additional stability.

Sole recently partnered with 3M on its new Insulated Footbed Series. Designed for low-to-high volume footwear like winter, hiking and work boots, the series comes in three thicknesses ranging from no cushion (Signature CD Thin), 1.6mm of Softec cushion (Insulated Response); to 3.2mm or Softec cushion (Insulated Ultra). The line features 400 gram 3M Thinsulation



Sole Signature CD Thin



Sole Insulated Response



Sole Insulated Ultra

insulation for warmth. Mike Baker, president and CEO of Sole, said the collection offers 23 percent more insulation compared to its Softec Footbed series.

The orthopedic shape equalizes pressure distribution, reduces plantar fascia strain an average of 34 percent, increases balance and feel, and improves the heels natural cushioning. Sole Custom Footbeds can be wear-molded or heat-molded in the oven up to five times for fit and support.

Baker said Sole is finding success with its Signature Series Custom Footbed line. The insulated Signature CD Thin was designed in collaboration with Sole sponsored athlete Chris Davenport, the renowned big mountain skier. Similar to other Signature Series collaborations around the Ed Viesters Ultra and the Dean Karnazes Response, the CD Thin has also

***SPORTSCANINFO***

A woman with dark hair, wearing a bright blue zip-up athletic jacket and black leggings, is captured in a dynamic running pose. She is wearing white earbuds and looking upwards and to the left. The background is a soft-focus forest with tall, thin trees and green foliage. The overall mood is energetic and focused.

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become part of Sole's philanthropy program. A dollar from the sale of each pair of CD Thins sold is goes directly to Protect Our Winters, a charity dedicated to the fight against climate change picked by Davenport. As of the Outdoor Retailer Summer Show this past August, the Ed Viesters Ultra collection had raised \$142,000 for Big City Mountaineers while the Dean Karnazes Response had raised \$130,000 for Karno Kids.

"The Signature Series Footbeds are popular not just for their added features such as ventilation and anti-odor treatment, they also represent the social conscience of the brand," said Baker. "Social entrepreneurship has been part of our business since day one; these footbeds extend our philanthropic reach in ways we couldn't imagine otherwise."

For Spring 2014, Sorbothane is introducing the Ultra Graphite Arch with high arch support that was developed directly from customer input. "Active insole users requested a comfortable and supportive insole that would incorporate a proven design concept, impact shock protection, lightweight heel-to-toe cushioning, a higher arch support and energy return in the forefoot," said Church.



Sorbothane Ultra Graphite Arch

The Ultra Graphite Arch features a Sorbothane Heel Insert, which absorbs up to 94.7 percent of impact shock, reducing impact-related injuries, relieving pain and providing cushioning comfort. A lightweight base layer cradles the foot in natural air-infused comfort. The High Graphite Arch provides support and stability in a composite high arch design

while a Gel Forefoot Energy Pad delivers energy return and comfort upon absorbing impact.

FootBalance, which offers a 100 percent custom molded option, is seeing a need for a more objective foot and/or gait analysis in the insole category. Through its in-store podoscopes, the FootBalance analysis and molding of the insoles combined take under ten minutes from start to finish. Earlier this year, it rolled out home-moldable footbeds.



FootBalance Performance

FootBalance Dynamic Blue

"Consumers like to be educated about their posture, gait, anatomy and individual needs," said Christopher Griffin, director of sales, FootBalance Systems. "Many retailers and consumers have accepted and benefitted from our analysis. We are finding that an educated/informed consumer is an active purchaser and that benefits us all whether on a retail, supplier or consumer level."

Griffin said FootBalance's collection, promotes natural flex with support, function and comfort, have fit well inside the minimal trend. Its footbeds offer additional arch support and alignment for traditional running shoe models. Added Griffin, "On the flip side,

run-specialty is finding that our footbeds are thin and offer a natural flex pattern, which compliments the natural movement of the foot and works very well with barefoot/minimal footwear models."

The core offering for FootBalance continues to be the Dynamic Blue, its most popular footbed among European customers that offers all-around performance and comfort for multiple sports and activities. For those looking for light support, the Performance is designed for tight, low-volume footwear such as cycling shoes, spikes, soccer shoes, skates, minimalist and natural running footwear.

Powerstep's Pulse Performance Orthotics, available exclusively to specialty retailers and made in the U.S., were designed for use in advanced athletic shoes to enhance the structure and stability of the foot during rigorous athletic activities such as running.

Today's runners are savvy consumers. They are increasingly more educated on current trends and latest advances in footwear. "Powerstep orthotic supports go beyond typical insoles - they support and cushion the foot and arch using a supportive plastic shell encapsulated with comfortable cushioning foam," said Ben Appel, general manager, Powerstep. "The Powerstep Pulse has bold, vibrant colors, complementing the current trend in running shoes and apparel, without sacrificing foot-support features vital to relieving foot and heel pain."

Appel said that while barefoot or minimal styles boast a more natural step, users must consider that modern hardened surfaces, such as pavement, may lead to increased injury or discomfort. He added, "A shift from barefoot/minimal models to more cushioning may be a direct effect of this trauma. We have always developed orthotic supports that supply enough foot control to help prevent repetitive injuries, yet are flexible enough for the foot to function more naturally."

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Icebug, Swedish shoe brand known for its built-in carbide stud traction cleats, is bringing its ArchFlex Insoles to North America. Designed by Orto-lab AB, the leading Scandinavian orthopedics lab, every ArchFlex Insole is built on their proprietary, patented shape. The dynamic support means the natural movement of the arches is not blocked, instead they offer the proper amount of support throughout the entire gait, supporting the arches even when the full body weight is over the foot.

Both the ArchFlex Premier and the ArchFlex SlimSport are available in three arch heights (low, medium and high) for an intimate fit to the foot, as opposed to the typical "one arch height fits all" style found in the majority of insoles currently on the market. The Slimsport features 2mm of cushioning. The footbeds are made with multi-layered materials that are designed to add support and comfort to the foot. "They're designed to work seamlessly with any footwear, from trail runners to soccer cleats to dress shoes," said Evan Wert, North American director of sales and marketing for Icebug. ■



Powerstep Pulse Performance Orthotics

Icebug ArchFlex SlimSport





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## Biomechanical Sandals Arrive

Insole suppliers are bringing maximum comfort and support to Sandal's category

By Thomas J. Ryan

In recent years, traditional insoles providers have found quick success branching out into sandals as well as other footwear categories. Often positioned as recovery tools for cooling down after a workout, sandals and flip flops have become popular at running and outdoor specialty stores. But with people wearing them far beyond the beach for more occasions and even throughout the year, the bigger opportunity is replacing the unhealthy options for consumers in the category with footbeds that offer greater biomechanical support.

Spenco launched a limited line of sandals three years ago – a black and brown for men and black and pink for women. With a launch price of \$40, the high value made it a blow out item. “You could buy a sandal with orthotic benefits for the same price as many guys are selling insoles,” said Jeff Antonioli, global sales director at Spenco Medical Corp.

Its basic sandal lineup, now priced at \$50, continues to do well and has been amplified with the addition of many colors. Overall, Spenco’s footwear collection has been expanded to about 100 colors

and styles, including a slide that has been “incredibly well received,” said Antonioli.

Drawing on their 45 years of experience in designing insoles and insole delivering close to 200 million units, all Spenco footwear incorporates a cushioned heel, deep heel cup, orthotic arch support, metatarsal dome, and a cushioned forefoot. Unlike other footwear that claims orthotic benefits, Spenco offers an initial soft feel and instant comfort, carrying the tagline, “The Shape That Feels Great.”

Beyond color, Spenco’s footwear lineup continues to expand with canvas, suede and leather uppers as well as more fashionable takes such as floral and quilted designs and mesh treatments. Many have aggressive outsoles to avoid slippage as well as microfleece lining to enhance comfort.

A Mary Jane incorporates a lightweight compression molded EVA footbed. An ankle-length Chukka boot features a full-grain leather upper and padded tongue. The Supreme Slipper features premium suede upper complemented by faux shearling. Antonioli said Spenco’s footwear line works as a recovery shoe but also

addresses the support lacking in many everyday shoes. "It's a lot of the very casual looks people are wearing all the time but it also packs our footbed to cushion and cradle the foot on the inside," he added.

Superfeet moved into the sandal category in 2011, although it's specifically doing flip-flops. "The reason for that is because flip-flops in general are really bad for your feet," said Ellen Harwick, communications manager at Superfeet. "There are a lot of studies scientists have put out that urge people to stay away from flip-flops but they are wildly popular. Even in the middle of winter, snowboards and skiers take off their boots and they put on flip-flops by the fire in the lodge. So we put an orthotic in a flip-flop and they're incredibly comfortable."

Superfeet also believes its flip-flop line, FLP, filled a gap in the footwear industry that had widened as companies have produced more sport-specific footwear but weren't offering supportive options for post-activity or 'play time.' The FLP features a built-in three-quarter length Superfeet orthotic that reduces pronation combined with advanced shock absorption and torsional rigidity. The forefoot flex groove ensures precision gait function and the 4-way stretch strap technology helps hug the foot and reduces hot spots.



Superfeet FLP2

For Spring 2014, an upgrade arrives with the FLP2. The heel lift is removed after Superfeet's designers realized the lift was unnecessary and was leading to a "real bulky sandal," according to Harwick. The FLP2 also features a new footbed. But the most noticeable difference is that the strap material now features neoprene that makes it soft to the touch while also allowing Superfeet's designers to add more color pop to its women's styles.

Harwick said the sandal collection has done well at run specialty and are dedicated to making sure they're giving their customers a foot-healthy product. Said Harwick,



## "THE SHAPE THAT FEELS GREAT"

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"It's a lot of the very casual looks people are wearing all the time but it also packs our footbed to cushion and cradle the foot on the inside."

- Jeff Antonioli, global sales director at Spenco Medical Corp.



Spenco Siesta Slide



Spenco Crystal



Spenco Brooke



Spenco Seabrook

"Once they realize they can get the same comfort they've come to expect from their running shoes with a sandal from Superfeet, they're on board."

Sole jumped into the sandal category about five years ago. "It was a natural next step given the success we've had with our Footbeds and what we've learned about foot comfort," said Mike Baker, president and CEO of Sole. He also said loyal fans of Sole's Footbeds wanted to wear Sole all the time and "since we can't put our Footbeds onto a sandal as an aftermarket option, we built our Footbed into the platform of our Flips."

The sandals feature a wear-moldable orthopedic platform for customized support, a feature Sole has patented with a supportive arch, deep heel cup that promotes the foot's natural cushioning and a metatarsal pad that lifts and supports the ball of the foot.

The sandal line ranges from the Sports Flip and Sports Slide to the Cork Flip, featuring a cork-wrapped footbed. Sole also offers premium flips featuring full grain leather straps, leather-wrapped footbeds, cork and leather details. Also joining Sole's footwear lineup over the years are winter booties, an after-sport boot, and knee-length, full-grain leather boots for women. Sole also makes footwear, specifically the Steady, for healthcare and food service industries.

For Spring 2014, Sole will add the Navigator, a sports sandal featuring a customizable EVA footbed with a rugged outsole designed to handle trekking, water travel and other more aggressive activities. It features the orthopedic shape of the Flip with an ankle strap for a secure fit for walking, hiking or everyday wear. Adjustable straps support easy-on, easy-off access. Baker said the line came about after Sole heard from customers who were fans of Sole footbeds but just didn't like wearing flip-flops. Said Baker, "We've had people asking for this for a long time so we're glad we got that dialed in and ready."

Overall, Baker said the market is crowded with sandal options but few have an orthopedic shape in the mid-sole to maximize comfort. Added Baker, "When you try it on, you immediately recognize the difference versus another sandal brand."



Sole Navigate

FootBalance recently entered the sandal category with the launch of what it claims to be the first sandal to be 100 percent custom molded to make each sandal unique for each individual. The Henrik for men and Hilka for women, are molded on-site at retailer locations in fewer than 15 minutes, as part of the FootBalance Recommendation System. The system also provides users with a foot analysis and report. The sandals feature a dynamic arch support, flexible toe-off, rounded heel cup to reduce impact and

Footbalance  
Henrik



guide toward natural motion, an EVA horseshoe for stability and the FootBalance Pet-G Balance Plate in a U-shape.

“When our R&D department came up with this, we knew the sandals had to be heated and molded the same way as our footbeds, and the end result should reflect our idea about dynamic support, better foot alignment and natural movement,” said Hilka Liponkoski, FootBalance global brand and marketing director. “With these angles in mind, we created a product that separates us from the competitors in the field of flip-flop sandals and gave us the chance to enter the footwear market.”

In the Henrik and Hilka, FootBalance’s balance plate is modified to a U-shape to allow adding a Poron XRD insert to the heel for comfort and softer feel.

Aetrex, founded in 1946 as a specialist over-the-counter arch supports, went into the footwear business when we came out with its first Ambulatory shoe. It now distributes manufactures casual, dress, sandal, and athletic and therapeutic footwear for both men and women in comfort and wellness category.

“The great thing is that we can transfer the Aetrex experience to non-Aetrex footwear with our orthotics that include the “healthy 3” that are built in most of our footwear,” Hadas Cohen, senior marketing manager, Aetrex. “And for Aetrex footwear, our orthotics offer an upgrade providing comfort and wellness. Both categories complement each other and achieve optimal results when used together. A good orthotic will not be very beneficial in a poorly designed shoe.”



Aetrex RX  
Runners

A particular focus in recent years for Aetrex has been running. The RX Runners features 10 mm of technologically advanced Visco Polymer Fat Pad for shock attenuation. Includes a Heel Cradle Midsole with unique horseshoe design and Gateway External Heel Counter for rearfoot stability and extra support. ■



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## Scott Montgomery

Club Ride CEO

As more people continue to get into cycling, more of them seem to be heading down the non-spandex road. The burgeoning “Casual-Technical” market has been growing for several years now, inspired along with the yoga, fitness, hike and run markets as consumers continue to seek apparel that can be worn from “trail to table.”

One of the first on the casual-technical scene was a small Idaho brand called Club Ride, founded by Mike Herlinger in 2008. The company utilizes moisture wicking fabrics with UPF coating, mesh panels and hidden pockets to create fashion-forward technical cycling apparel. The North Face entered and exited the market rather quickly, but others are popping up in its place. Giro this year introduced a technical commuter-style line they are calling “New Road,” saying the cycling world is expanding outside its bike-geek roots and asking for looser fits and more natural fabrics like everyone else. Long time cycling apparel brand Rapha followed suit. In mountain biking, start-up Kitsbow is also gaining some well-deserved attention, somewhat taking up with Merino wool in cycling apparel where Icebreaker left off.

To find out more about this potentially profitable growing category, SGB sat down with Club Ride CEO Scott Montgomery.

By Aaron H. Bible

**HOW MUCH GROWTH HAS THIS CATEGORY EXPERIENCED IN RECENT YEARS?** Here at Club Ride we have been increasing at over 100 percent every year. I can see we have new entrants in the category almost weekly and it's not slowing our growth, so we know we are in the middle of a small revolution. As my father used to say when we were building Cannondale in the early years, “Don't listen to focus groups or hire consultants, just hire good people and listen to them and make the products we want to use and the growth will take care of itself.”

**WHAT DON'T PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT THIS CATEGORY? HOW DOES IT TIE INTO THE WHOLE “TRAIL TO STUDIO TO TABLE” MOVEMENT HAPPENING RIGHT NOW IN PERFORMANCE/FITNESS?** We in the bike industry have been absolutely fantastic at making cranks, cassettes, frames, pumps and tires, lighter,

stronger and better, which has consistently grown our industry. But for some reason when it came to apparel it has been our Achilles heel. I think it has been due to the fact that the entrepreneurs that started bike shops were mostly men who shared a passion for bikes, so they understood and pushed suppliers to make the next weight-weenie widget. When it came to clothing though, the attitude was indifference as we were successful with the hard goods and that is where we excelled. Now, as competition has intensified, retailers are realizing that full margin products like apparel are appetizing. And as high-end road bike sales have softened in this post-Lance crazed period, they're realizing it's time to reconsider what they need to do to increase sales in a segment like apparel.

**WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR GROWTH?** We think we can continue to double each season, and as we have built up our staff we keep seeing new innovative products that need to come to market so we only see more opportunity ahead. We increased doors this season from 400 to over 600 and we consistently add five new doors a week. We are starting to see demand overseas and we are formally working on plans for expansion into Europe soon.

**WHO'S YOUR TARGET CUSTOMER?** It is widely reported that the bike industry is second in terms of participants in the U.S. with some 39 million consumers. We think the top of the pyramid - the five million hardcore spandex clad consumers - are very, very well served. But we see the 34 million casual riders, the ones who, when a retailer shows them the new spandex bib shorts the customer politely says “NFW” and walks away, those are our customers. I race in it and it functions perfectly well, but we have no plans to take the traditional approach. We prefer to concentrate on bike store staff, if they like it, they wear it, and then they sell it!

**WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO GROW THE SEGMENT, AND WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT?** We are big believers and supporters of advocacy groups Bikes Belong (People for Bikes) and IMBA, both of which are effective at increasing widespread awareness for bicycles... using Washington to build support and funding for more bike paths, education, awareness, and IMBA of course continues to expand trail use. Rails-to-Trails is another great organization that is building ways for Americans to exercise without competing with the bicycle. I am convinced as we broaden the appeal of the apparel we will help the entire industry grow and everyone will benefit.

**WHY IS THIS OPPORTUNITY A PERSONAL PASSION FOR YOU?** I have been very fortunate to be a part of two dramatic growth periods in my cycling career. First with Cannondale and the advent of the mountain bike which aluminum helped usher in with lighter, stronger frames and many great pioneers like Paul Turner of Rock Shox fame. Then I participated in the “Lance boom” with Scott Sports where we produced the lightest carbon frame on the planet at that time. I actually feel this current opportunity is just as significant; and we intend to help retailers in the cycling industry grow from our current average 10 percent annual apparel sales first to 20 percent within five years and then to 30 percent within 10 years. ■



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