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AUGUST 4, 2014

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AUGUST 4, 2014

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SPONSORSHIPS

Adidas entered into a five-year partnership with **Eastern Illinois University**. Nike previously outfitted the school.

Epoch Lacrosse was a sponsor of the **Guardian National Championships**, the combine/championship style event that took place from July 29 to 31 at the Spooky Nook indoor sports facility (outside of Philadelphia, PA).

Modell's Sporting Goods sponsored the landmark quadruple header of world-class professional boxing to celebrate the 200th episode of **"SHOBOX: The New Generation."**

New Era Cap has been named the Official Cap of the **2014 U.S. Ryder Cup Team**. Partnering with the PGA of America, New Era has secured exclusive rights to headwear during the biennial competition through 2016.

Ogio has partnered with **Ironman** on a bag collection consisting of seven total pieces and includes transition bags, backpacks, luggage and a briefcase.

The Outdoor Channel is active in supporting conservation and sportsmen and is once again sponsoring **National Hunting and Fishing Day**.

Red Fox Wireless, the maker of wireless audio headphones and accessories, announced its partnership with the **USA Pro Challenge** professional cycling race in the Colorado Rockies.

Spalding, a trademark of Russell Brands, LLC, will again be associated with the **King of the Beach** (KOB) Volleyball tour. The tour takes place across the beaches of Southern California, Florida, New York, New Jersey, Chicago, Virginia, Seattle, and Colorado.



AUTHENTIC BRANDS GROUP ACQUIRES COLLECTIVE LICENSING

Authentic Brands Group, LLC (ABG), the parent of Prince, Spyder and TapOut, agreed to acquire Collective Licensing International, LLC, including Airwalk, Hind, Vision Street Wear, and Above The Rim. Terms were not disclosed.

The seller was Payless Holdings, the company that includes Payless ShoeSource and Collective Licensing International (CLI). In October 2012, Golden Gate Capital and Blum Capital Partners acquired the operations of Payless ShoeSource and Collective Licensing International from Collective Brands, Inc.

ABG said each brand would continue to work with its existing licensees on expanding its U.S. presence and product offering. ABG will move forward with a strategic plan to grow each brand's business internationally. Airwalk, Collective Licensing's pinnacle brand, will continue to be sold at Payless.

"Airwalk has built a loyal following through shaping and influencing the progression of the action sports community and industry," said Jamie Salter, chairman and CEO of Authentic Brands Group. "Airwalk's history is filled with stories about people pushing innovation, supporting the athletic scene, and taking creative risks, all fueled by a passion for athletes and action sports – this is exactly the kind of attitude and passion that makes Airwalk a great fit for the ABG portfolio."

The Vision Street Wear, Hind, and Above The Rim brands focus on youth, activity and American sports culture. ABG said it would work to re-establish Vision Street Wear's roots by finding a master licensee in California where the brand was born.

The Airwalk, Vision, Hind and Above The Rim brands each resonate with the younger customer who is searching for authentic ties to sports culture," said Nick Woodhouse, president and chief marketing officer of Authentic Brands Group. "We are convinced that there is an incredible opportunity to grow each of these brands and re-connect consumers with them in a powerful way."

ABG brands include Marilyn Monroe, Mini Marilyn, Muhammad Ali, Elvis Presley, Juicy Couture, Judith Leiber, Adrienne Vittadini, Taryn Rose, Hickey Freeman, Hart Schaffner Marx, Palm Beach, Misook, Prince, Spyder, Ektelon, Viking, Bobby Jones, TapouT, and Sportcraft.

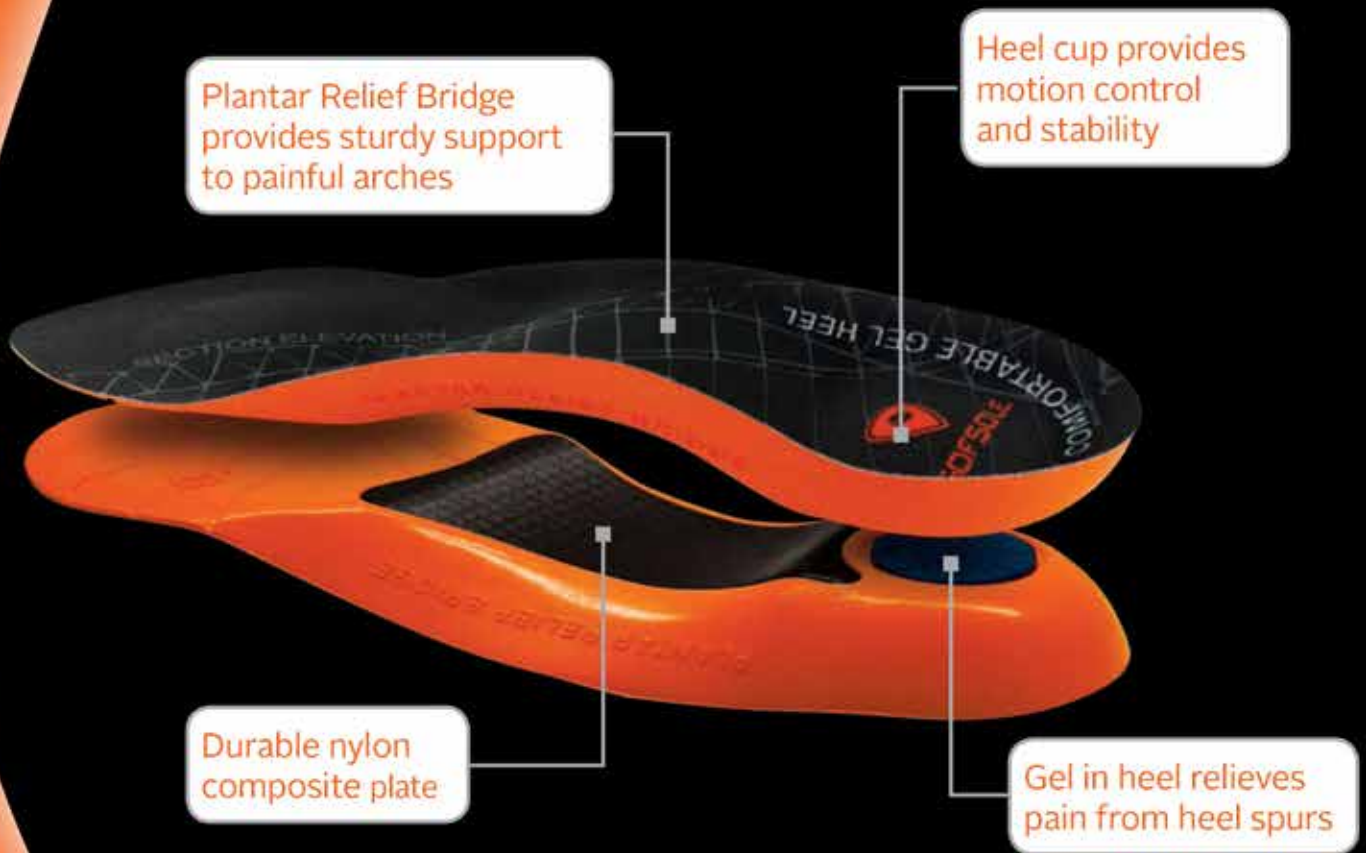
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BY THE NUMBERS

+12.9%

Gildan Activewear reported sales in the third quarter rose 12.9 percent to \$693.8 million. Printwear sales advanced 11.6 percent while Branded Apparel segment revenues grew 16.0 percent, with strong demand for both Gildan and Gold Toe. Net earnings were basically flat at \$116.0 million, or 94 cents per share. Results were impacted by transitional manufacturing inefficiencies and capacity constraints to fully service sales demand in its branded apparel.

+79.0%

Garmin, Ltd. reported sales by its Fitness segment soared 79 percent in the second quarter ended June 28 as consumers snapped up its Vivofit fitness trackers as well as a new cycling computer and Forerunner smart watches. The growth more than offset disappointing sales of the company's first action sports camera, which prompted Garmin to downgrade guidance for its Outdoor segment.

-0.6%

Puma reported sales dipped 0.6 percent on a currency-neutral basis as a 9.1 percent decline in footwear was only partly offset by a 12.8 percent gain in apparel. By region, sales on a currency-neutral basis grew 4.6 percent in the Americas but declined 1.4 percent in the EMEA region and 2.3 percent in the Asia-Pacific. Net earnings were down 76.2 percent to €4.2 million (\$6 mm) but both earnings and sales were in line with expectations. Puma reiterated its outlook for the year.

-4.9%

Big 5 Sporting Goods Corporation reported declining demand for guns and ammo dragged its comp stores sales down 4.9 percent in the fiscal second quarter ended June 29. Earnings slumped 59.0 percent to \$2.5 million, or 11 cents a share.

-13.4%

With firearms sales only slowly stabilizing, Sturm, Ruger & Company, Inc. reported second-quarter revenues fell 13.4 percent to \$153.0 million. Earnings slumped 31.0 percent to \$22.3 million, or \$1.12 a share. Ruger estimated sell-through of Ruger products from distributors to retailers was down 31 percent in the quarter, worsening from the 11 percent decline seen in the six months. Ruger attributed the estimated distributor sell-through decline to the reduction in overall industry demand, aggressive discounting by many competitors, and the absence of recent significant new product introductions from the company.



OGIO

PARTNERS WITH IRONMAN ON BAG COLLECTION

Ogio has partnered with Ironman on a collection consisting of seven total pieces and includes transition bags, backpacks, luggage and a briefcase.

“The collaboration with Ironman is monumental for the Ogio brand and is the next step towards our ongoing commitment to cater to endurance athletes with high quality bags,” said Mark Talarico, VP of endurance at Ogio International. “We are thrilled to be an official supplier of Ironman and to provide a collection of bags that reflect the spirit of Ironman: Durable, tough and ready for the long haul.”

“We wanted to partner with a brand that combined a stylish, intelligent design with durability and reliability, and Ogio is the perfect fit,” said Carola Ross, chief sales officer for Ironman. “Their bags boast a vibrant look while offering great carrying capabilities and organization to our athletes who demand so much of both during Ironman events and in their every day lives.”

The Flagship M9 Transition Bag is designed to organize and protect an athlete's full complement of gear. It's crafted with extremely high tensile strength light weight fabric and features two crush proof tech vaults, multiple storage pockets, a huge wet/dry area for wet-suits, external helmet storage and a stowaway rain cover, \$160. The collection also features the Newt M15 Backpack, \$90, Terminal M22 Luggage piece, \$150, M2 Training Bag, \$50, and other bags for training and everyday use.

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MOVERS & SHAKERS

Crocs appointed **Claire Fahie-Conley**, former VP of U.S. retail for Reebok, as its VP of retail for North America.

Gerber, the maker of knives, tools and gear, announced new partnerships with two sales agencies - **Maschmedt & Associates** and Outtech.

Keen hired its first in-house VP of creative, **Michael Minter**. He was most recently global creative director/global director of marketing at Sanuk.

Mountainsmith named **Scott Christoffel** as its new Great Lakes sales rep.

Nikwax named **Rick Meade** as the company's new North American President, effective immediately. Meade joins Nikwax after a 15-year career with Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI).

PHIT America announced that its Founder and CEO **Jim Baugh** will become the ninth inductee into the Tennis Industry Hall of Fame. He was formerly president of Wilson Sporting Goods.

Rocky Brands appointed **Giles Coulson** as VP & general manager of Asia Operations. Jeff Stern, SVP of Rocky and Georgia Wholesale, has expanded his duties to include all U.S. Wholesale Sales, which includes all functional and lifestyle product lines. **Cory Haberman** was hired as VP of Georgia Boot and **Jeremy Weiss** was hired as national sales manager for Durango's Western and City divisions.

Saucony promoted industry veteran **Todd Dalhousser** to the position of SVP of North American sales.

Sierra Designs hired outdoor industry veteran **Bill Conradt** as head of global sales. Conradt was the VP of global sales for Cascade Designs.

STI International, the firearms maker, hired **Greg Mooney** as president and CEO. He formerly held executive positions at Benelli USA and Benchmade Knife Company.

Super.natural, a maker of natural and synthetic blended performance apparel, hired **Troy Ballard** as director of sales in the U.S. while **Robbie Stevens** will take on the same position for Canada. Super.natural will be making its North American retail debut fall 2014.

Under Armour signed two-time, first-team, NFL All-Pro cornerback **Patrick Peterson** to a multi-year partnership. He was with Nike.

ADIDAS

WARNS ON PROFIT DUE TO RUSSIA, WEAK GOLF BUSINESS

Adidas AG lowered its full-year profit target due to a freefall in global golf sales and the souring outlook in Russia.

Adidas now expects net profit of about 650 million euros (\$870 million) this year, down from its previous forecast of between 830 and 930 million euros. Sales are now expected to grow at a "mid- to high-single digit" rate in currency-neutral terms, down from prior guidance calling for growth at a high-single digit rate.

"In addition, given that there has been little relief in the currency markets, the significantly lower contribution projected from TaylorMade-Adidas Golf as well as higher investments in marketing, the Group's Route 2015 targets are no longer achievable in the timeframe," Adidas added.

Adidas also reported that for the second quarter, top-line momentum materially improved as expected. Sales increased 10 percent on a currency-neutral basis, driven by 14 percent growth at Adidas and 9 percent growth at Reebok, while sales at TaylorMade-Adidas Golf declined 18 percent. Currency effects impacted top-line results by over 7 percentage points in the quarter. As a result, sales in euro terms increased 2 percent to €3.47 billion (\$4.75 mm).

Operating profit in the second quarter was €220 million (\$302 mm), down from €252 million. Net income attributable to shareholders for the quarter was €144 million; which compares to €172 million. Currency translation, less favorable hedging rates, higher marketing spend for the 2014 FIFA World Cup as well as a significantly lower contribution from TaylorMade-Adidas Golf offset the otherwise strong underlying growth from Adidas and Reebok in most major categories and markets.

The changed outlook for the second half of 2014 and in 2015 reflects actions taken to build on the strong top-line improvements at brand Adidas and Reebok as well as recent developments in Russia/CIS and in the golf market.

Regarding golf, Adidas said the "poor retail sentiment and the slow liquidation of old inventory in the golf category across the globe will lead to a significantly more challenging top-line and margin development for TaylorMade-Adidas Golf than originally expected in the second half of 2014." Further measure will be taken to reduce inventory in the marketplace in the second half of 2014. In addition, TaylorMade-Adidas Golf will launch a restructuring program to align the organization's overhead to match lower expectations for the golf industry's development.

Adidas added that the recent erosion in the Russian ruble "as well as increasing risks to consumer sentiment and consumer spending from current tensions in the region point to higher risks to the short-term profitability contribution from Russia/CIS." As a result, Adidas plans to significantly reduce its store opening plan in the region for 2014 and 2015, and to further increase the number of store closures.

"These steps are aimed to reduce risk and protect profit as well as to drive a faster implementation of new inventory management principles for that market," Adidas stated. "Nevertheless, management remains very encouraged by increasing brand momentum for both Adidas and Reebok as a result of local marketing investments as well as improving store operations."

The reduced guidance also reflects step up marketing and point-of-sale investments over the next 18 months to support the improving momentum at brand Adidas and Reebok and the attention garnered at the 2014 FIFA World Cup. The goal is to "drive faster growth rates and market share gains," particularly in the developed markets such as North America and Western Europe. Adidas stated, "This is underpinned by a strong product pipeline in key performance categories as we further leverage our award-winning Boost technology as well as new product and collaboration initiatives in lifestyle."

Finally, Adidas said it has completed an in-depth review of the global brands and global sales structures under the direction of recently appointed executive board members Eric Liedtke and Roland Auschel. This new organizational structure will take effect on August 1, 2014. The changes were designed "to drive faster decision making and more effective and efficient consumer focused strategies and execution in the marketplace."

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GIVING BACK

TIMBERLAND

LAUNCHES INAUGURAL SERV-A-PALOOZA

By Thomas J. Ryan



Photo courtesy Timberland

Timberland announced the "call for entries" for its inaugural Timberland Serv-a-palooza Challenge – a sponsored volunteerism competition the brand will host in partnership with CrowdRise. The six-week Challenge will encourage consumers to volunteer for a cause of their choice for chances to win prizes for themselves, as well as big donations for the non-profit organizations they choose to support.

For 17 years, Timberland has celebrated its longstanding commitment to volunteerism through the brand's signature Serv-a-palooza event. Originally created as a way to support employees in using their 40-paid volunteer hours on a large scale, the annual event has been very successful and inspiring for employees. In April 2014, Timberland surpassed the one million hours served milestone. Now, Timberland wants to get started on its next million hours and motivate the public to get out and volunteer, too.

Through the Challenge, anyone wishing to volunteer can sign-up at crowdrise.com/timberland to earn rewards for the hours they serve, donors they recruit, and money they raise. Eligible participants will prepare their fundraising pages on the CrowdRise site; then the Timberland Serv-a-palooza Challenge – and prize rewards – will begin Monday, August 11 at 12:00 p.m. ET and continue through Thursday, September 18 at 11:59:59 a.m. ET.

Timberland's partnership with CrowdRise, a digital fundraising platform created by actor and philanthropist Edward Norton, brings the brand's love of volunteerism to consumers for the first time, and incentivizes participation with prizes and donations.

"I'm a big fan of Timberland. I wear their shoes all the time and I also admire their longstanding commitment to environmental sustainability and community service," said Norton. "We couldn't be more thrilled to work with a company that's got such great priorities to leverage their volunteer efforts in exciting new ways."

"Volunteerism is an integral part of Timberland's heritage," said Atlanta McIlwraith, senior manager community engagement at Timberland. "Partnering with a socially innovative platform like CrowdRise gives us the opportunity to engage with our consumers in an exciting way; and it reinvigorates our own commitment to giving back. It's inspiring to imagine the impact this partnership could have in communities around the country."

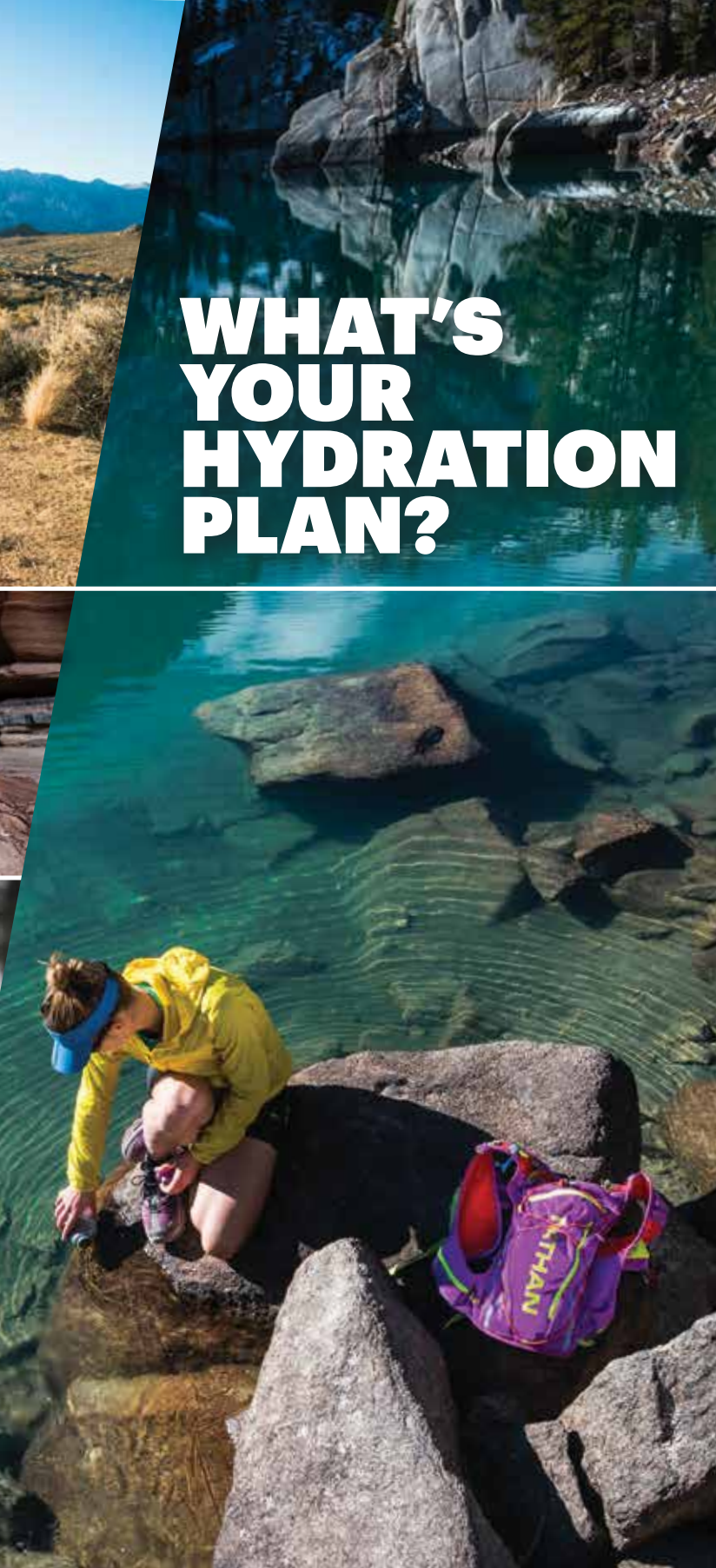
To enroll, participants simply click on the "Sign Up" button on the Challenge homepage to submit their name, location, and designated service partner. Approved volunteers will be sent a link to create a unique fundraising page where they can track their volunteer hours and invite others to sponsor their efforts with monetary donations. Donors will also be encouraged to sign up to volunteer for a cause of their own.

Throughout the six-week Challenge, Timberland will incentivize participants and donors with fun prizes. At the culmination of the Challenge, Timberland will award grand prizes to the Top Recruiter, Top Volunteer, and Top Fundraiser. Each winner will receive a \$10,000 grant to give to the cause they chose to support. The winners will also receive a \$5,000 Timberland shopping spree (or an all-expense-paid trip to the Horqin Desert to help plant Timberland's two-millionth tree in China), a custom pair of Timberland boots, and have their "Impact Maker" story shared in an online Timberland campaign. Additionally, the top volunteer will have their volunteer hours matched by Timberland employees in New England.

Full rules and details are available at crowdrise.com/timberland. Volunteers who set up their fundraising page by August 10 at 11:59 p.m. ET will be entered to win one of 50 pairs of Timberland boots to wear while they complete their service hours. ■



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* Leisure Trends™ hydration category market research, 2014

BEST PRACTICES

TIME TO REFLECT

Before attending your next trade show, evaluate your business and what your goals are before showtime.

By William F. Kendy

Regardless of what segment of the sporting goods industry you serve there likely is a trade show for you. There is the ICAST (fishing) show, the Athletic Dealers of America Expo, the Outdoor Retailer Show, the Shot Show (firearms), distributor shows and more.

Attending trade shows gives you the opportunity to talk to manufacturers, reps and fellow retailers, seeing new and interesting products, maybe doing some buying, attending seminars and getting business accomplished. Schedules can be brutal and it makes for long days.

While your days spent attending a trade show may be totally booked, this is the perfect time to bounce new ideas, get advice and do some simple market and business research.

Before you can do that you need to devote a portion of your workday prior to whatever show you are attending to reflect on your business. If you don't think you have time to think about your business, then you are missing out and not running your business the right way. Make a daily sales appointment with yourself, put your telephone calls on hold and tell your staff you can't be disturbed for at least a half hour...and stick to it.

In the writing business reporters are taught to write articles based on the who, what, when, where, why and how formula. It is helpful to consider these six "honest serving men" when you evaluate your business.

If you have a written business plan, it is time to take it out of the drawer and update it.

A business plan solves the issue of if you don't know where you are going; any road will take you there. It is a living, breathing document and a roadmap whose purpose is to help keep you on the right track in order to reach your objectives and goals. It does no good if it is just gathering dust.



Ask yourself some tough questions and here is a suggestion as to where to start. Who are you and what exactly do you do? What ancillary services do you offer like bicycle repair, gunsmithing, shooting range opportunities, special training or excursions or any ancillary customized extension and how do those services affect your revenue streams?

Before you get into the nitty-gritty of self-analysis you should do the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis.

1. Strengths: What do you do really well that gives your business an advantage over others?

2. Weaknesses: What are the characteristics that place your business at a competitive disadvantage?

3. Opportunities: What are the areas or elements in the marketplace that your business could exploit to its advantage?

4. Threats: What are the things that could cause trouble for your business?

When you do a SWOT analysis you have to be brutally honest and it is a good idea for you to recruit an objective source that has

knowledge of your industry and the market. Taking it a step further you should “mystery shop” your own store.

For a SWOT analysis to be truly relevant, you need to analyze your major competitors. What are they excelling at and where are they falling short? What markets are they ignoring, what services aren't they providing, how are they pricing, promoting and merchandising, how well are they selling and how is their service? What can you capitalize on? Again, send in an anonymous shopper.

Who are your primary customers and what are their demographics? Is your main customer men age 25 to 49, women ages 8 to 49 or people ages 18 to 34? Do you know if they are married, do they have children, what their average education levels are and what their ethnic background is? Which segment of your customer base spends the most money and what other niches make sense for you to try to capture? What is the potential?

What are the sizes of your primary and secondary marketing? Are those markets growing or shrinking? Is the composition of those markets shifting? Have you done a zip code check of customers to find out how far they, on an average, drive to do business with you? Have you asked them? Who are your major competitors in your market area? How many “boxes” do you compete with in your primary trading area?

In terms of competition, as a specialty sporting goods retailer there is nothing we sell that people really need to survive. They don't need to ski, fish, hunt, run, play golf or tennis, backpack, kayak or other recreational endeavors and the competition encompasses any business who is competing for their discretionary dollar and time. That encompasses computers, video games, woodworking, scrapbooking, and a whole host of things.

What other segments make sense for you to try to capture and what is the potential? Is the universe large enough to make the effort worthwhile?

What is your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)? A USP is a specific characteristic (s) that makes your store that makes your business special and differentiates it from the competition.

Examples of well known USP's are: The milk chocolate melts in your mouth, not in your hand, M & Ms; A diamond is forever, DeBeers; You get fresh, hot pizza delivered to your door in 30 minutes or less or it's free, Domino's Pizza and We're number two. We try harder, Avis.

Establishing your USP is important because knowing it gives your prospects a clear-cut reason to do business with you. Furthermore, if you don't know what makes your store better than the rest of the pack how are you going to know how to position yourself in the marketplace and the minds of your customers and prospects?

Where do you stand on your marketing, advertising and promotion programs? Do you have a legitimate, written advertising budget and media plan or do you schedule your advertising based on a Wild A Guess (WAG).

Have you tested to see what if your advertising is actually working or are you just repeating the same old same old? Have you monitored what media your direct competition is utilizing? Have you addressed how you are going to incorporate social media and cause marketing in your overall marketing mix?

It's all about knowing where you are at, where you want to go, how you're going to get there and your timelines.

Even though your plate may be full when you attend a trade show, armed with the information from your assessment and questions, you



have the opportunity to interface with a wealth of sources at one time that can help you go forward all in one place. You can talk to fellow retailers and find out what direction they are going, how they handled (or are handling) some of the issues and challenges that you are faced with and get some honest feedback. You can also interface with manufacturers and distributor reps to get their read on product and dealer support and talk to industry personnel to find out where the industry is going.

Napoleon Hill, author of Think and Grow Rich, said, “Whatever the mind of man can conceive, it can achieve.” With the results from your SWOT analysis and the questions you need answered, opportunities to be explored and the knowledge of where you want to go, trade shows provide you the forum to learn and get real time insight and answers but only if you know what you don't know and have your mind open to receive. It also demonstrates that you've joined the select cadre of top retailers who realize that to be successful they have to work on their business instead of in it. ■



GORE-TEX® SURROUND™ - For Rain and Shine

W. L. Gore Tackles Hiker Sweat with Surround

By Thomas J. Ryan

In surveys with consumers, W. L. Gore & Associates fortunately found that most were happy with their hiking shoes. But when probed further, many were looking for greater breathability.

“Many feel too sweaty in their shoes,” said Achim Loeffler, global footwear sports business leader at Gore at a media presentation at Gore’s global headquarters in Feldkirchen-Westerham, Germany. “Many hikers today complain it’s too humid in their hiking shoes during their activity.”

The problem is that getting wet is even more annoying to hikers. Compared to dealing with rainy conditions with apparel, water protection can be more of a challenge for footwear developers since it depends greatly on ground conditions, whether puddles or dew, according to Mark Peikert, Gore’s global outdoor footwear product specialist. For users, waterproofness in shoes becomes “really, really critically important,” largely because they can’t quickly take their shoes off and on like a jacket. As a result, footwear developers have traditionally had to compromise in making hiking shoes. And in general, more resilient waterproof protection

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as well as enhanced comfort came at the expense of greater breathability.

But Gore believes it has found a way to avoid that compromise with Surround, which it describes as “the first technology for hiking footwear with all-around breathability.” The centerpiece of the new technology is a special construction under the foot. Sweat can escape through the Gore-Tex laminate positioned in the underside of the shoe into the open structure of the “spacer” – and from they’re out of the shoe via side ventilation outlets. In effect, excessive moisture and heat not only escapes through the upper but down below the port laterally through the Gore-Tex membrane.

This unique construction keeps feet drier because the sweat produced by the feet – about one third of sweat glands are on the soles of feet – is transported away from feet faster. Dry feet enhance a sense of well-being and prevent rubbing and painful foot blisters from occurring. Overall, the new construction consists of five components: the ventilation outlets in the side of the upper; a layer of Gore-Tex’s existing Extended Comfort membrane technology underneath the upper material; a breathable, removable insole; the new form of Gore-Tex membrane technology called Surround underneath the insole; and finally the Surround ‘spacer’ component underneath that.

Surround launched in a limited number of casual footwear ranges in 2013. But following extensive testing, 25 outdoor footwear brands are incorporating the technology into their spring 2015 hiking footwear collections. Ranging from casual low-cut styles, mid-cut hiking boots to technical approach shoes, brand suppliers include Alfa, Bestard, Chriuca, Crispi, Dolomite, Hanwag, Härkila, La Sportiva, Mammut, Meindl, Salewa, Scarpa, Treksta, Viking and Zamberlan.

“The Gore-Tex brand has its roots in outdoor activities in which people participate to enjoy life and explore their surroundings,” noted Peikert. “These activities include not only climbing and mountaineering but also hiking – the perfect sport for people who prefer taking moderate exercise in unspoiled countryside rather than going to extremes.”

In the case of casual shoes, the technical solution is slightly different: excess heat and moisture are transported out of the shoe through large openings in the sole. This construction allows footwear designers to focus on fashion elements when they are designing the shoe upper while also creating a completely new class of



Photo courtesy GORE-TEX® SURROUND™

sole designs. On the other hand, when designing their soles, Gore-Tex Surround hiking footwear manufacturers can concentrate on characteristics such as grip, stability, protection and the transition from heel strike to toe off.

In developing Surround, Gore had to hold to its brand promise “as the enabler that allows users to experience their environment in comfort and durable protection,” noted Loeffler.

Gore didn’t want to betray its fans in the push. According to a recent internal survey in its three key markets, brand awareness for Gore-Tex is 70 percent in Europe, 74 percent in North America, and 78 percent in Korea, which Gore said ranks as the second biggest global outdoor market behind the U.S. On brand preference, Gore-Tex also scores comparatively envious marks with 71 percent offered an option preferring the brand in Korea, 44 percent in North America and 59 percent in Europe. An even more critical measure for Gore is repurchase rate, or the propensity for a consumer to repurchase a Gore-Tex product after buying one. The repurchase rate stands at 98 percent in North America, 90 percent in Europe, and 79 percent in Korea. Loeffler said the Korean consumer has shown a tendency to be “always looking for new things.”

As such, Gore made over 700 pairs of shoes as part of its extensive field and lab testing efforts. One test probed breathability. A second focused on climate comfort and involved hikers in backpacks scrambling up a treadmill on a slight decline in a temperature controlled test chamber. Durability of the construction was gauged over time and conditions in measuring breathable and waterproof attributes. “They’re the same level of waterproofness as on Gore-Tex’s standard shoes but we’re setting a higher minimum standard for breathability,” said Peikert.

For Gore, Surround has been four to five years in development and marks its most significant

innovation in footwear since its launch of Extended Comfort around 12 years ago.

Loeffler noted that Gore doesn’t typically communicate all its market innovations “on a big scale,” leaving its vendor partners to showcase the innovation story. But Gore felt Surround was “really a step-change innovation” that deserved its own name and “we really wanted to go bold to the market with it.”

Another unique part of the project is that Gore tends to be better known for launching major solutions for athletes tackling mountain expeditions enduring extreme activities. Juergen Kurapkat, Gore’s EU footwear public relations, admitted hiking “doesn’t have the smell of adventure” compared to those mountaineering quests.

But internal and external data identified a whopping 223 million hikers across North America, Europe and Asia. Gore also found that hiking means vastly different experiences to different people. They included hiking high up in the Alps for the Swiss but increasingly leisurely strolls by many looking to get in touch with nature across many countries that’s driving up participation rates.

For Spring 2016, many more outdoor brands are planning to add Surround to their hiking low-cut and mid-cut shoes as part of a broad expansion similar to Extended Comfort is expected in the years ahead. Further on, the technology promises to extend across more categories, including running. But Gore felt hiking as a natural fit for now.

“Surround is positioned as a type of shoe for your daily activities,” said Peikert. “You’re going out with your friends and hiking to enjoy nature. So it’s not so much, ‘I have to be the first one on top of the peak.’ It’s a more relaxed thing. More and more people are doing that.” ■



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SPRING 2015

BACKPACKING GEAR TRENDS

"Lighter and Faster" *plus* A Whole Lot More

By Scott Boulbol

It seems at every Outdoor Retailer show the key words in the backpacking/camping realm (and many others, too!) are “lighter and faster.” Saving weight and improving design so the user can ultimately go faster and/or longer with less effort is always at the forefront of the key trends in backpacking, and understandably so. But other novel ideas also abound for Spring 2015.

We looked at the key trends in the three big categories: tents, backpacks and sleeping bags. Yes, lighter and faster was on every brand’s list, but there were also some other very compelling stories that will grab attention at this summer’s show, whether the broadening of recent trends or new innovations. In tents, for instance, a few years back there was a novel idea to focus on a different kind of “light:” built-in lighting. Some brands are now using this idea in backpacking tents. Another biggie is minimal-pole designs – not just for weight savings but also easier use and more living space.

With sleeping bags, while treated or “waterproof” down has been around a while, it is now hard to find a down bag that isn’t treated somehow. There are numerous treated down options on the market to choose from – all offering some combination of quicker drying times, better performance in wet conditions, and even improved loft – and we’re seeing big growth in treated down/synthetic combo bags. The designs of these bags also continues to move away from the traditional rectangular or mummy styles, toward more moveable, comfortable and warmer configurations. People simply aren’t designed the same, and different areas of the body require different things, so bags with innovative foot boxes, contoured sides, flexible zones, varied insulation zones, etc., are becoming the new norm.

Of course all of that gear needs a place to ride, and backpacks are getting better at organizing the loads while growing ever lighter and sleeker. And they're doing so much more comfortably than ever – again not just for the generic consumer, but for real people in various shapes and sizes. Creative fit and suspension designs are changing the way packs fit and perform – from on-body adjustments to separate compartments, articulated movements, to maximum airflow. As materials continue to get stronger, lighter and often more flexible and waterproof, pack makers can create innovative designs that have increased functionality over previous iterations, with much sleeker designs and less extraneous parts and materials.

Tents

Tent makers have made huge strides in recent years to bring the comforts of home to the outdoors, by way of increasing headspace, more vertical walls, better ventilation and storage, and easier setup. And some have even figured out ways to improve lighting inside the tent, without

minimal cost increases,” said Bill Gamber, co-founder and president. “By adding lighting and power to our products, we’re bringing technology into the outdoors to deliver a whole new level of functionality, convenience and comfort.”

The Copper Spur 2, (90”x50/42”x42, 3.3lbs, \$450), and Tumble 3, (93”x73”x46”, 5.3lbs, \$300) – along with other backpacking and car camping offerings, from one- to six-person – feature the Mtnglo lighting. This is achieved by integrating a thin strip of LED lights along the seams at the top of the tents. The strips are powered by three AAA batteries and turned on/off with an integrated light switch. Both offer over nine feet of vestibule space and feature extremely light carry weights. The Cooper Spur sports a silicone- and polyurethane-treated floor and fly for added waterproofing and strength, and the Tumble features a 1200mm polyurethane coating.

Wenzel
Ridgeline
3-Person
Tent



At just over seven pounds, it’s not necessarily a backpacking-specific tent, we also have to include the new **Wenzel** Ridgeline 3-Person Tent, (84”x84”x50”, \$80), with Light Reflect technology, it just might be worth the extra load. An innovative adjustable storage loft at the top of this freestanding, dome-style tent holds a flashlight, headlamp or small lantern pointing up. The light is then redirected across the tent from reflective panels on the dome. The ridgeline also features a D-shaped door with zip window cover, plus four-panel mesh roof and rear window for visibility and venting. A seam-sealed rain fly keeps the moisture out.

Natural light – weather from sun or stars – is also a key feature in today’s tent designs. While eschewing electronic lighting, many manufacturers are focusing more on huge mesh windows and roof panels for the views and the

venting. And high-tension pole designs, often with ultralight and strong carbon poles, help provide maximum floor space and headroom. **Brooks-Range Mountaineering** (BRM) offers two tents that exemplify these ideas. While the freestanding Tension 30, (86”x50”x40”, 2.6lbs, \$460), and Tension 40, (94”x62” x42”, 3.5lbs, \$420),

Brooks-Range
Mountaineering
Tension 30



were actually recently released, BRM still considers them a key product in its Spring 2015 lineup. The two- and three-person tents, respectively, achieve their svelte weights through an almost entirely mesh upper with two aluminum and one carbon pole, made more secure by a 2mm cord attached at the seams. But if the weather turns, a fully taped rain fly offers top-to-bottom coverage, with each offering 6.6 feet of vestibule space, and an innovative “gutter” that flows water away from the zipper for less drip on entry.

Untraditional designs using high tension and offering better views are also key in Sierra Designs new Tensegrity Elite tents. “For decades, backpackers have had little choice but to rely on overbuilt and underperforming tents. We realize there is a better way out there and we are reimagining the way we live in the backcountry,” said VP and Brand Manager Michael Glavin.

Using only two trekking poles, one included pole, and seven stakes to pull everything tight, these tarp tents are light and sturdy with plenty of interior space. The one-person model, (88”x30”x44”, \$400), weighs a mere 1.8 pounds, and the two-person, (88”x 50”x41”, \$490), is only 2.1 pounds. The unique design provides more space at the top than at the bottom, and a large drop door with awning makes for dry viewing



Big Agnes Copper Spur 2

considerable weight gain or cumbersome electronics. While this already exists for car camping, albeit still on a small scale, **Big Agnes** has managed to bring it into the backpacking realm with its new Mtnglo line.

“We’ve wanted to integrate tents and lighting for a long time, but it wasn’t until now that the technology had progressed enough for us to provide an effective, lightweight solution with

and entering. Instead of vestibules, Sierra Designs tents use what they call a “gear closet” on each side, with interior or exterior access, and these can be rolled up for better views.

The North Face gets in the mix as well, with their Triarch 3, (88”x68”x47”, 4.8lbs, \$490), also new for Spring 2015. This three-person offering looks like a combination of their trademark geodesic dome shaping with a big-top tent in the middle, and almost entirely made of mesh for maximum viewing and ventilation. The creative five-pole design is freestanding and offers two large vertical D-shaped doors and good headroom in the center. Lighter colored mesh panels also improve privacy without inhibiting view. And the silicone-treated rainfly has multiple configurations so you can fine-tune breathability.



The North Face
Triarch 3

Also featuring different fly configurations is the new Shifter 2, (83”x54”x 36”, 5.8lbs, \$200), from **Mountain Hardwear**, which is also available in a three-person version. These dome style, freestanding tents both allow for different fly configurations depending on needs: Position the entry side of the “U-Turn” fly over the nylon door for better wind and weather protection; or position it over the mesh door for improved ventilation and visibility. The other side of the fly features a smaller vestibule that’s squared off at the bottom, for dry pack storage.

Scenery and comfort may be a nice bonus, but both Bergans and Hilleberg have focused more on maximizing protection from the elements while increasing strength and livable space, and decreasing weight. Hilleberg’s President Petra Hilleberg said, “Although Hilleberg has never really been a ‘trend-driven’ company – since their ultimate goal is to make the best quality tents available – they do continue to listen to the market and strive to make



Mountain Hardwear
Shifter 2

their tents lightweight yet strong enough to withstand the harshest of conditions.”

One way to do that is by using traditional “tunnel” designs – long popular in Europe, and seeing a resurgence in the U.S. These structures offer more vertical walls and livable space, plus easy setup compared to many dome tents, as well as excellent vestibule space. And while not freestanding, they’re quite stable when staked and in the proper alignment from the wind.

Hilleberg’s Enan, (84”x 37”x 37”, 2.5lbs, \$625), three-season solo tent is a prime example for Spring 2015. At 2.5lbs the single-pole, non-freestanding design is certainly ultralight, but a triple coating of silicone on both sides also ensures it is extremely waterproof and very strong. To achieve this they developed a new Kerlon 600 material. “Our goal was to create a solo three-season tent that was both as light as possible but that also matched our principles of strength,” said founder Bo Hilleberg. “We are quite happy with the result.” The tunnel shape also offers front-to-back ventilation with mesh panels at both ends even with the rain fly in place.



Hilleberg Enan



Bergan's of Norway
Rondane

Bergan’s of Norway also knows a thing or two about protection from the elements, and their Spring 2015 Rondane line has two, three, and four-person offerings with excellent combinations of weight and function. The all-season, three-person tent, (63”x91”x31”, \$600), weighs a very respectable 7.6 pounds but still offers a whopping 28 square feet of vestibule space. The inner tent is suspended from a silicone-coated ripstop nylon outer tent for easy pitching and excellent weather protection. And two high-tensile aluminum poles offer this non-freestanding tunnel tent added stability.

Sleeping Bags

“Waterproof” or “treated” down – traditional down feathers treated for improved water repellency – have been around for a few years, but now, with more options available, almost all down bags feature some type

of treated down. So, since wet weather is no longer a deterrent to down bags, they're beginning to make inroads into synthetics previous territory. Nick Brown from Nikwax – a leading provider of treated down – explained: “For really extremely wet conditions, synthetics remain a good choice. But hydrophobic down definitely extends the range of conditions in which you can use down, and even will enhance performance in extreme cold where condensation often compromises down.”

In short, added Brown, this is how it works. “Down loses all of its elasticity when it absorbs a lot of water and simply collapses, losing its insulating capacity. By reducing the ability of the down to absorb water, we make the down perform much better in humid and wet conditions.”

Therm-a-rest, who uses Nikwax’s Hydrophobic Down exclusively, has redesigned its entire Spring 2015 down line to include this product. And wet-weather performance isn’t the only reason they chose this product. Nikwax is following a growing trend in Europe to steer away from fluorocarbon and PFC-based treatments, and substituting a water-based,



Therm-a-rest
Antares HD

non-FC or PFC treatment. They are the only company to do so in the U.S. They say these are safer, healthier alternatives, especially considering the proximity of the down to the user.

One of their flagship bags for Spring 2015 is the Antares HD, (1.9lbs, \$500), featuring its Thermacapture reflective lining, plus a sewn-through, insulated bottom, and 750 plus treated down fill. It also features another recent trend – fitted straps through which a Therm-a-rest (or other) pad slides into place, to stay put no matter how much you toss and turn.

While not entirely new, **Big Agnes** has redesigned its best-selling Lost Ranger 15° sleeping bag, (3lb, \$280), for 2015. They say the improvements mean added comfort and warmth. The 650-fill Downtek – their version of treated down – bag is updated with a new contour that widens the space in the shoulders and knees for side sleepers, who are being catered to increasingly in the camping world, rather than only designing for back sleepers with the traditional mummy style. And new tapers in the footbox help retain heat, they said.

The new Drift 0-Degree Bag, (2.7lbs, \$630), features 850-fill DownTek treated down, and 15D nylon keeps the weight-to-warmth ratio at the highest level possible. It also features flow construction which they say



Big Agnes
Drift 0-Degree

keeps the down from shifting within the bag. It’s also available in 45, 30, 15, 0, and -10-degree options.

Combining the best of synthetic insulation and their treated Dridown, the **Kelty Dualist 20 Sleeping Bag**, (3.2lb, \$159), provides backpackers a more affordable bag that still offers the protection and compressibility of down. The treated down, which has better water repellency than synthetic, is layered just below the shell where outside moisture is an issue. Then Thermapro synthetic is placed under it, just above the liner. This design, also available in 0- and 35-degree models, gives the best combination of heat retention and protection from moisture, they say, while weighing in 20 percent less than full-synthetic with 40 percent better compression.

Kelty
Dualist 20



But non-traditional doesn’t just mean shape. Another trend we’ve seen over the years, that is very strong for Spring 2015, is untraditional sleeping bags and/or bedding setups. Bags that



Photo courtesy Big Agnes

zipper open to become blankets for warmer weather (or as an additional layer in cold weather). Two-in-one systems, with removable liners, can double as warm weather bags. Sierra Designs' Backcountry Bed Elite, (1.6lbs, \$519), is a good example. Building on their popular Backcountry Bed, the new Elite three-season model uses 850-fill Dridown and better materials in the shell and liner. It features a completely zipperless design, with an oval entry/exit opening on the top, an integrated comforter, and arm/hand sleeves. A hands-free foot vent allows the user to slide his/her feet in or out of the bag easily just by bending legs.

"This design allows you to sleep like you would at home – on your back, side or stomach – without getting tangled up in the bag," added Glavin.

The North Face will also offer alternative bags in Spring 2015. Their super light, synthetic fill Ocelot, (1.5lbs, \$99), has two uses: As an overbag it will add warmth to the main sleeping bag, or on its own as a summer weight bag. It features Heatseeker Pro cut-staple insulation and includes a full wraparound footbox zipper



that allows it to lay flat like a blanket. It also packs down to about the size of a liter bottle.

On the other end of the temperature spectrum is The North Face Inferno -40 Sleeping Bag, (3.9lbs, \$730). This longstanding bag has been rebuilt this season to keep up with the current trends. It features 800-fill treated down, a wider cut to allow users more comfort and to wear more layers inside the bag in the extreme conditions for which it is meant, and a trapezoidal footbox. Plus a new center zip means easier access, while the full draft collar and tube help prevent heat loss, and a rectangular side baffle prevents down migration. It's also available in -20 and 0-degree models.

Backpacks

Especially in the backpack category, lighter and faster is always the big trend. But along with that, we see vendors making packs more comfortable and adjustable with articulated movements, on-body adjustments, and always-improving moisture management. The days of the millions of straps hanging from every corner of the pack have been replaced by sleeker and more focused straps and pockets, and all the while improving storage intuitiveness with separate compartments for specific items.

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D.



G.

E.



F.




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- B. BLUESMITHS - Kula Jacket
- C. SUGOI - Alpha Hybrid Jacket
- D. CHOUCAST™ HATS - Glide Hat
- E. WINGS + HORNS - Bunker Jacket
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Always among the best value in the biz, **High Sierra** will debut the Tech II Series internal frame packs at Outdoor Retailer. The key pack in the line will be the Lightning 35, (35L, 3.8lbs, \$119), also available in a women's model. Like many in the industry now, these versatile multi-day packs use a new air-mesh fabric on the suspended Airflow back panel, shoulder straps and waist belt. They say this has more surface texture to wick moisture and reduce perspiration. The pack also features aluminum tubing, cord zipper pulls, integrated stretch mesh front pockets for quick access, and a pivoting hip belt with two pockets.



High Sierra Lightning 35

Better known for Alpine packs, **Mammut** offers a crossover design with its Spring 2015 Trion Pro 50, (50L, 3.7lbs, \$200), for backpackers who may also want to bag a peak on their journey. It's plenty tough, with durable triple ripstop nylon fabric, and also has a fully removable and floating top lid and removable hipbelt. The large front pocket is designed for crampons but could also house a shovel, or extra clothing. But the key feature is the large zippered opening in the back, near the lumbar area, that allows access from either side to any part of the pack without spilling the contents.

If you add their Neon Speed Pack, (15L, 1lb, \$80), into the Trion you've got a perfect summit pack to bag the peak. This unisex 15L pack stows into its own pocket for easy storage inside a larger pack. It's based on the same footprint as their minimal trail-running packs, but with a more durable fabric for sliding around in the rocks. Plus an expandable front panel will hold a helmet, etc.

While not quite large enough for more than a single overnight, and released in



Mammut Trion Pro 50

2014, **Camelbak**'s Alpine Lumbar line is still worth a mention, thanks to its hydration storage. The Pursuit 24, (24L, 2.5lbs, \$150), features an innovative lumbar-based hydration pocket – a first in the industry they say – which focuses the water weight on the hips rather than the shoulders. It holds a 3L bladder, with 21L of storage remaining, but features enough compression mesh and straps to carry some additional gear externally. Suspended external



Camelbak Pursuit 24

mesh keeps the air flowing, and a pocketed hip belt holds it all in place.

And Camelbak also offers a combination summit bag/hydration sleeve in their Arete, (16L, 10oz, \$165), although it's a carryover product. This ultralight pack houses a 2L hydration bladder when



Camelbak Arete

in a pack, and expands to hold 16L worth of necessities for a quick day trip or summit.

Women's-specific designs also continue to gain strength, and **Mountain Hardware's** Ozonic 58 women's-specific pack, (58L, 3.4lbs, \$260), has all the latest features plus a guaranteed waterproof outdry construction. They say it's been rain-room tested for over 12 hours to back up the claim. Customizable women's-specific suspension ensures the fit, and venting channels allow for airflow across the back. The top pocket flips for either maximum weather protection, or easier access to its contents. The Ozonic is also available in men's 50L and 65L versions.

For a woman's longest adventures, **Gregory** offers its new Deva 80, (80L, 5.1lbs, \$350), their largest all-season women's pack. Thanks to the women's-specific Response A3, Gregory said the Deva 80 can haul loads of up to 60 pounds over long distances comfortably. Each size offers three harness sizes and five hip belt options for 15 different configurations. And there's room for everything with its roomy interior, plus two side-mounted, zipper gear pockets, dual hip-belt pockets, and U-zip front or top access. The line also includes 70L and 60L, plus a men's version, (called Baltoro), in 75L and 65L models.



Gregory Deva 80 and Stout 65



Gregory will also offer the Stout 65, (65L, 3.7lbs, \$200), as a lighter, more versatile option. They suggest it can be used just as well on the trail as it can

on the road as a travel pack. The Trailflex suspension – a lighter version of the Response A3 system from their Baltoro/Deva line – keeps the load on the lumbar area. It also features a

clever removable daypack, that doubles as a hydration sleeve inside the main compartment, for a side trip, and dual hip-belt pockets and water bottle sleeves. The line also includes 75L, 45L and 35L models, and the women's Amber version comes in 70L, 60L, 44L, and 34L. ■



Gregory Amber

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WILD - Burnside Alpha
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A close-up photograph of a person's legs from the knees down, wearing brown suede hiking boots with white laces and white socks. The person is sitting on a rocky ledge, and the background is a clear blue sky. The boots have a rugged, multi-layered sole and a protective patch on the side.

SPRING 2015

Hikers Get *Faster*

Spring's multisport and hiking shoes fuse sleek styling with rugged tech features.

By Thomas J. Ryan

Ecco Biom Terrain
Photo courtesy Ecco

Lighter, lower profile and aggressive styling continues to drive the hiking category for Spring 2015. “The trend in hiking is moving fast on the trails and using lighter footwear is essential,” said Jonathan Lantz, president of La Sportiva.

Overall, boot buyers are looking for versatility and the lightweight, flexibility they get from their athletic shoes but they are also looking for protection, breathability, comfort and waterproof attributes that they’ve come to expect from their athletic shoes.

“In general, hikers want what they have always wanted, the best performing, lightest weight, most reasonable-priced products that look awesome,” added Yahn Lebo, Wolverine’s product line manager.

Joanna Tomasino, Mammut’s category manager softgoods and footwear, sees an upswing in the hiking category overall as more people look to get outside whether it’s for a quick morning walk or an all day hike. Said Tomasino, “Consumers are also getting more savvy and are pushing manufacturers to create technical yet lightweight products which will keep them happy, healthy and safe in any environment.”

Mark Mathews, director of summer product development, Scarpa North America, agreed, “While it seems pretty clear that the trend in backpacking continues to be shorter trips and lighter pack weights, people still need good-quality, supportive footwear to accomplish their objectives.”

Bogs is among the brands seeing a benefit from people looking to use hikers for everyday use. “The technical hikers these days are primarily being bought by true gear-heads,” said Kelly Wallrich, Bogs’ VP of product. “What we are seeing a lot of is hiking footwear becoming more of a lifestyle product. There is a sort of hybrid happening. A technical hiker with the right design is becoming a universal, everyday shoe. People like the comfort and stability of this true hiker so they are starting to wear it as an everyday shoe as long as the design looks good.”

Overall, the category is expected to continue to expand with continued interest in more weekend hiking or “done in a day” style hiking. Said Greg Thomsen, managing director, Adidas Outdoor U.S., “We see a younger generation in their early twenties, having a growing interest in hiking and outdoor sports. Health, fitness and fun is a top priority for this demographic.”

For Spring 2015, Arc’teryx’s has given a lot of attention to its upcoming arrival into the footwear category. The eight shoe styles for men and women - separated into low-cut approach shoes (Alpha FL) and mid-cut hiking and light trekking boots (Bora Mid) - all share Arc’teryx’s Adaptive Fit technology, featuring separately manufactured inner and outer shoes that work together for the best fit-adaptability, breathability and weather protection.

In the top-of-the-line styles, the Alpha2 FL, \$270, and Bora2 Mid, \$320, the liners are completely removable and interchangeable for improved wash and dry-ability and to extend the use and climate adaptability of the shoes. The durable outer shell is made

from a seamless one piece upper that is laminated from four layers of technical, hydrophobic materials. A large breathable woven PU coated nylon yarn insert area allows for air exchange while increasing durability.

Each product line is equipped with an activity-specific exclusive Arc’teryx Vibram sole. A cushioned EVA midsole moves freely in the heel to provide secure and flexible treading. Shaped individually for every size available, three-dimensional rubber components protect heel and toe areas from rock contact.

“We have a rich history of thinking beyond current materials and construction and everything about these shoes reveals the Arc’teryx genetic code of understanding what a product needs to be at its most essential level,” said Federico Sbrissa, Arc’teryx’s footwear product line manager. “By incorporating techniques like lamination, we developed shoes that offer unprecedented durability, comfort and precision performance in the most breathable mountain footwear construction on the market.”

Across brands, however, a notable launch is Gore-Tex’s Surround technology, which is being rolled by La Sportiva, Mammut, Scarpa and others.

The centerpiece of the new technology is a special construction under the foot. Sweat can escape through the Gore-Tex laminate positioned in the underside of the shoe into the open structure of the “spacer” – and from there out of the shoe via side ventilation outlets. The unique construction keeps feet drier because the sweat produced by your feet – about one third of sweat glands are on the soles of the feet – is transported away from feet faster. Dry feet enhance a sense of well-being and prevent rubbing and painful foot blisters from occurring.

Mammut is utilizing the technology in its Comfort High GTX Surround Boot, \$199, that comes in two styles for both men and women in a high- and low- cut version. “Developed closely with our partners at Gore, this technology will introduce a truly comfortable waterproof and breathable hiking boot to the market which will achieve a more optimal micro-climate, less risk of blisters and a noticeable improvement of overall foot comfort,” said Tomasino.



Arc'teryx' Alpha2 FL and Bora2 Mid



Mammut Comfort High GTX Surround Boot

Additional ventilation in the Comfort High GTX Surround is provided by an air-permeable layer between the wedge and insole, which also offers comfortable cushioning. The lightweight hiking boot also features board lasting; Mammut's patented Rolling Concept; a Hybrid Shell that provides shape and stability; an IP EVA wedge with elevated cushioning and integrated arch support; and a protective liquid rubber toe cap. The new Sonar comfort sole by Gripex features multi-directional lugs and two different rubber hardnesses for grip on any terrain.

Tomasino believes the trend in hiking footwear begins to mimic the trail running category - as more hikers seek footwear that allows their feet to remain in a more natural position while providing enhanced cushioning without added bulk or weight. Tomasino added, "Our new Comfort Hiking series accomplishes this and more by incorporating features such as a comfort last with more room in the forefoot, an IP EVA wedge for added cushioning and using lightweight upper materials like our breathable and durable ripstop nylon mesh hybrid shell design."

From **La Sportiva**, the Core High GTX, \$180, and the Primer Low GTX, \$160, also use the new Gore-Tex Surround Technology. "The breathability of Gore-Tex Surround technology is really impressive for waterproof footwear and when we combine it with La Sportiva's craftsmanship and attention to detail, the result is some of the highest performance shoes we've ever offered," said Lantz.

Both boots feature innovative nanocell technology in the upper that wraps the foot in protection while allowing maximum breathability and waterproof protection. STB Technology stabilizes the foot by wrapping the midsole and unifying it with the upper for a locked-down fit.



La Sportiva
Primer Low GTX



La Sportiva
Primer Low GTX

La Sportiva likes to view its hiking models as 50 percent mountain running, 25 percent approach and 25 percent mountain boot in their design elements.

"Both styles use the Gore Surround technology and they are lightweight hiking boots that have aggressive traction but they feel like a trail runner under foot," added Lantz. "All synthetic, waterproof and highly breathable; the Core GTX and Primer GTX all sport Vibram soles and our new Nano cell upper technology. This is a TPU Grid directly injected into the mesh upper to provide structural integrity while allowing maximum breathability. You can hike in them, you can run in them and you can go all day in them and be protected and comfortable."

Adidas Outdoor is introducing the Terrex Scope High GTX, \$200, a mid-cut approach shoe featuring a Stealth rubber outsole for grip and control over wet and rocky terrain. It also features a Gore-Tex membrane, an adiPrene insert for comfort and shock absorption, a neoprene collar for comfort and protection, and a molded Ortholite sockliner.



Adidas
Outdoor
Terrex Scope
High GTX

Hiking has been one of Adidas Outdoor's fastest-growing categories since its relaunch, with its Fast X GTX standing out as a strong seller. "Overall hikers are looking for comfort, light weight and performance



Photo courtesy Ecco

and of course, maximum grip,” said Thomsen. “Our general product focus is on style, protection, performance technology and value.”

Asolo will introduce the Magix, \$120, designed for the hiker who needs the torsional support and durability of a boot but wants the freedom of a lightweight low top shoe. “We saw a demand for a low top shoe that still offers the support, protection and durability of a hiking boot,” said Henry Barber, Asolo’s head of sales. “The Magix is our answer to that need. The Schoeller upper provides incredible durability without adding weight, and we use an Asoflex lasting board to provide appropriate flex and torsional stability in uneven terrain. The PU heel insert and micro-porous rubber insole offer shock absorption for all day walking in the mountains, but, at only two lbs. per pair and with a low cut design, customers experience a new freedom of movement.”

Bogs’ new Bend Hiking Boot, \$130, offers a lightweight, breathable option for the trail. It’s crafted with nubuck leather and breathable mesh as well as Bogs’ Max-Wick and DuraFresh to move sweat away and keep odor at bay. With Rebound in the outsole, hikers can be assured of lasting comfort. “People are looking for comfort, stability and traction,” said Wallrich. “Depending on their environment they are also looking for waterproof and breathability.”

With consumers wanting more usage from their boots, including for more casual purposes, **Lowa** is offering a DLX version in core models such as Renegade GTX Mid for men, \$250. It features all the same comforts as the original Renegade with optically enhanced textured full grain leather, gummy colored sole, waxed laces and metal Gore-Tex logo. Said Peter Sachs, general manager for Lowa Boots, “While many of these shoes will be used for hiking, today’s customer does want to look good. This is evidenced by not just the boots, but also jackets, packs and so on which are all made with colors reflecting current fashion trends.”

For women, the Ferrox GTX Mid, \$195, returns with a new fashion-forward color palette. It features a lightweight synthetic upper, Lowa’s injected PU sole technology and Monowrap construction for support and stability, a Gore-Tex lining, and a NXT sole for traction and durability. It’s constructed on a women’s specific last.

Sachs said color is a big part of the story in Lowa’s outdoor fitness speed hiking models with the Ferrox as well as the Innox. Added Sachs, “These shoes need to reflect the athletic inspirations and not look like another ‘brown’ hiking boot. They can absolutely be



Asolo Magix



Bogs Bend Hiking Boot



Lowa Renegade GTX Mid



Merrell Capra Mid Sport Gore-Tex



Merrell Capra Sport



Keen Targhee II Mid-TAC



The North Face Hedgehog Fastpack GTX

worn on the trail and they can absolutely be worn with a pair of jeans at the martini bar or with a pair of Lululemon tights on a fitness walk outside and out of the gym.”

From **Merrell**, the Capra collection of hiking shoes and boots are built for steep ascents and rocky trails. A scrambling design is nimble with a Vibram MegaGrip outsole inspired by the dexterity of the mountain goat, offering climber-like traction in extreme conditions - wet or dry. A Merrell UniFly midsole is tapered with deep cushioning in the heel and thinner cushioning in the toes for greater feel and agility. Lace-to-toe design moves with the foot while providing stability for ascents and descents. For men and women, the collection is available in the Capra Mid Sport Gore-Tex, \$190, and low-cut Capra Sport Gore-Tex, \$160. The, Capra Sport, \$130, is a low-cut version with a synthetic leather and mesh upper.

“When we talk about the trail, it means so much more than just a destination. It’s our inspiration,” said Martin Dean, creative director at Merrell. “We look up to nature and hold it as our creative muse because nature holds all the answers to the problems we aim to solve with the products we create.”

Keen has a major update in the Targhee II Mid-TAC, \$135. A notable change includes replacing the leather underlays with an ultra-durable and lightweight synthetic that saves a little over an ounce of weight on a men’s 9. Other features include a Keen. Dry waterproof, breathable membrane; a removable metatarsal dual density EVA footbed; torsion stability ESS shank; dual-density compression molded EVA midsole; and 4mm multi-direction lugs. “We’re always looking for ways to improve, even on styles that are fan favorites,” said Keen’s Outdoor Business Unit Director Jeff Dill.

Dill said the hiking category has been “growing rapidly” for Keen in recent years. “Fit and function will always rule the day for more serious hikers,” said Dill. “But if you can provide that plus an element of protection plus being lightweight, then you have a winner. It tends to be on a sliding scale depending on the athlete and length of the hike, but some combo of all the above is important.”

The North Face will unveil its men’s Hedgehog Fastpack GTX, \$120. The lightweight, waterproof hiker travels fast with the support of a Cradle Guide midsole, a durable Vibram outsole, and a waterproof and breathable Gore-Tex membrane. “This is the relaunch of an iconic style,” said The North Face’s Footwear Director Carey Platto. “We kept that out of the market for the year of 2014 and that’s a tough decision as a brand because it’s perennially

our strongest seller. But we dried it up. Demand was slowing and it was dated, so we needed to refresh it and bring it into our modern aesthetic. So not only do we launch the Hedgehog Fast-pack in Spring 2015, but we expand Hedgehog into a five shoe collection.”

Columbia Sportswear’s Spring line is anchored by the Vent collection. “The original Drainmaker, introduced in Spring 2011, was a hybrid water shoe that quickly became our most successful and best-selling style,” said Todd Lewis, product director, Columbia Sportswear. “But, customers told us that the product benefit was larger than drainability, larger than water. They told us the larger benefit was venting and warm-weather comfort. We listened and have expanded the collection beyond Drain to Vent, and in the process have added dozens of new styles in varying silhouettes.”



Columbia Sportswear Ventralia

The Vent Trail collection is led by the Ventralia, \$90, which uses vent channels that are strategically placed for airflow and lightweight cushioning to handle any trail with support and comfort. The Ventralia features Omni-Grip, multi-directional traction on the sole. “We’ve taken breathability to an extreme by offering a sockliner with strategically-placed vents and an upper that features two panels of open mesh,” said Lewis. “With all that airflow, the Ventralia has surprising stability and support on trail, thanks to EVA strobe in the heel for torsional rigidity.

The Megavent, \$105, has an incredibly ventilated upper and a unique, patented Techlite midsole design that moves air with every step. The lightweight shoe is bonded with rubber supports to provide superior stability and traction on all surfaces. “Simply put, this is the most ridiculously versatile footwear in the outdoor industry,” said Lewis. “Our customers will be able to easily spot our iconic vented soles on the wall in their favorite store and on the feet of their active friends and neighbors.”

Addressing performance hikers’ need for an agile, versatile shoe for fast hiking, **Vasque** is introducing the Inhaler Collection, \$120, \$140 with Gore-Tex. Built upon an Equalizer Last with an athletic EVA midsole, the lightweight Inhaler collection includes Vasque’s most



Vasque Inhaler Collection



Vasque Inhaler Collection

breathable performance hikers which feature a structural ventilation of mesh, perforated foam and air-permeable toe and heel counters for maximum air flow. The combination of the Vasque exclusive Vibram Pneumatic outsole and Megagrip rubber gives hikers significant traction over a variety of terrain while still providing comfort and protection, so they can move quickly along the trail with confidence.

“The Inhaler Collection fills a niche in the performance hiking category that has been missing,” stated Brian Hall, Vasque’s director of product development. “We’ve taken what we have learned from long distance thru-hikers and applied it to a shoe that we expect to be as popular for them as it will for day hikers and those going out for weekend excursions.” The mid-version, Inhaler GTX, \$160, is only available with Gore-Tex and comes in two colors for men and two for women. The Inhaler Low is available in a Gore-Tex, \$140, and non-Gore-Tex version, \$120.

Seeking lightweight and versatility, Hall said hikers are looking for a blend of the athletic features of trail running shoes with stability attributes of more traditional hiking boots. “Vasque is adding Vibram sticky rubber compounds to our Spring 2015 Performance Hiking line adding more traction in a wider variety of terrain,” said Hall. “Overall, we see the hiking category as very healthy.”

At **Timberland**, the Earthkeepers Gorham Chukka Waterproof, \$130, is a trail-capable chukka that merges a casual silhouette with a 100-percent Vibram EcoStep rubber outsole for traction on any surface. Premium full-grain waterproof leather from a Silver-rated tannery and waterproof membrane keep feet dry, and a removable Anti-Fatigue technology footbed provides all-day comfort and support. It also comes in a low waterproof version for \$120.

“We’ve seen the lifestyle trend really take off in the outdoor world over the past few seasons,” said Gregg Duffy, senior director, outdoor performance at Timberland. “Now we’re



Timberland Earthkeepers Gorham Chukka and low Waterproof

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seeing outdoor beginning to find its way into the more urban settings. Consumers are looking for function with style in their footwear and today's Timberland offers much more than just rugged functionality. Style, craftsmanship and versatility takes consumers from the office, to the café, to the trail and can handle whatever their outdoor experience calls for."



Oboz Teewinot

From **Oboz**, the suede-leather Teewinot, \$120, features a new outsole with sticky rubber - the first time for Oboz - and 4mm lugs. Overlasted construction encapsulates the midsole and adds support and comfort. It also features Oboz' BFit

Deluxe insole - heralded by many retailers as equal to aftermarket insoles. Josh Fairchild, Oboz's VP of development, said hiking continues to be a healthy category for the brand.

"Yes, the economy is improving, but people are still seeking high value in their footwear purchases," said Fairchild. "Though they are accepting higher price points, they expect more for their money and I think we have succeeded in delivering on that proposition in great fitting products that endure and perform. Color is important in the hiking category but you also have to first hit the mark on materials and function."



Scarpa R-evolution GTX

At **Scarpa**, the R-evolution GTX, \$239, ushers Scarpa's unique Sock-Fit technology into the backpacking category. "Customers continue to seek out products with which they can do more with less - less weight, less bulk and less complications," said Mathews. "We are addressing this with a design concept we call Scarpa Sock-Fit. By replacing a traditional tongue construction with stretch materials, we have reduced weight and bulk, and at

the same time enhanced fit and comfort."

First unveiled in a boot designed with climber Ueli Steck, Sock-Fit reduces bulk and improves precision using a stretchy Schoeller softshell instead of a traditional tongue. A multi-sport shoe for trail and travel, the Oxygen GTX, \$189, blends Scarpa's Sock-Fit construction with Gore-Tex Surround technology that allows the shoe to breathe through the footbed, not just the upper. "Hikers are looking for a versatile, durable product that fits well, and performs on and off the trail," added Mathews. "And product that looks good, too!"



Scarpa Oxygen GTX



Wolverine Fletcher Mid Fx

At **Wolverine**, the Fletcher Mid Fx, \$100, features waterproof full grain leather and fabric upper as well as a moisture managing mesh with a waterproof breathable membrane lining to ensure feet stay dry and comfortable. A polyurethane abrasion resistant toe-bumper offers toe protection, and a rubber lug outsole provides reliable traction on a variety of terrains. A removable EVA footbed and compression molded EVA midsole cushions and supports.

"The consumer we built the Fletcher for wants features like waterproofing but, for our brand, isn't willing to spend a lot of money on an expensive waterproof/breathable membrane in a hiker," said Lebo. "That same

consumer needs us to deliver the right aesthetics but may not be the first adopter of a new design concept. Once those guard rails were in place, the Fletcher started to take shape to be a \$100 mid-waterproof hiker for a moderately athletic guy."

Five Ten is partnering with Gore-Tex to produce a waterproof version of the brand's best-selling Camp Four Mid GTX, \$210, and Camp Four GTX, \$180. The new trail shoes have a synthetic upper with a Gore-Tex membrane for breathability and waterproofness, plus a stabilizing TPU heel cup, Ortholite sock liner to fight moisture and discourage bacteria, and deep Stealth S1 lugs for soft ground penetration.



Five Ten Camp Four Mid GTX and Camp Four GTX



"The trend that is continuing is people moving away from bulky, heavy leather hiking boots, and looking for lighter, more breathable high-performance synthetic or leather-blend models," said Laura Sanders, director of U.S. sales and global marketing. "We have addressed demands for dry-in-a-night materials, but see consumer demand for all-season shoes that not only don't soak up moisture, but repel it."



Five Ten Catburgler

Five Ten is also introducing the Catburgler, \$95, a multi-sport shoe designed for people who want to be fast, light and stable on mixed terrain. The models, available in both men's and women's specific models, utilizes Five Ten's super-sticky Stealth HF rubber. Said Sanders, "This shoe

was tested by our athletes who live for adventure - sometimes publicly on shows like American Ninja and The Great Race."

At **Salomon**, the updated Quest 4D 2 GTX, \$230, retains the predecessor's strong stability and grip, with a more ergonomic tongue for improved comfort, laces that stay tied better and fresh design details. Includes a non-marking Contagrip outsole, Gore-Tex membrane, waterproof bootie lining, molded EVA midsole, and Salomon's 4D Advanced Chassis to help control flex, reduce ankle strain, enhance stability and protect feet from rough terrain.



Also from Salomon, the S-Lab X Alp Carbon GTX, \$300, with a low-cut and lighter Carbon Edging Chassis, is built for speed-oriented, professional mountaineers during ridge ascents, easy climbing sections and glacier crossings. It also features an integrated gaiter, great flexibility and grip while being crampon compatible. Anne Deroulede, product line manager for Salomon footwear, remarked, "We've had more than 40 testers and dozens of prototypes for over two years, and finally we have the ultimate shoe for the new generation of mountaineers."



Salomon Quest 4D 2 GTX and S-Lab X Alp Carbon GTX

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Muck Boots will introduce the Peak Hardcore, \$200, a versatile hiking boot comprised of full grain crazy horse leather with an insulating neoprene bootie. Rated at -40 degrees, the Peak Hardcore is waterproof, lightweight, and has an aggressive outsole that works well on all types of hiking terrain.



Muck Boots Peak Hardcore

“The trends we are seeing in the hiking category are versatility,” said Sean O’Brien, global director of retail footwear for Honeywell, Muck Boots’ parent. “The other trend in hiking is using new, lightweight materials. Muck Boots uses their signature neoprene material to provide maximum comfort, warmth and waterproof protection.”

Ecco will show an update to its Biom Terrain Light Hiker, \$230. The boot offers a yak flexible leather upper and new lacing pattern for an even better fit. Weighing only 555g (men’s size 41) and 455g (women’s size 37), the boot features a PU midsole and rubber outsole with specialized lugs for traction over a wide range of conditions.

Biom Terrain represents a slimmer, more athletic alternative to the Biom Hike, the first in a new generation of boots that allows the foot to move as nature intended with its anatomical footbed. Other core features include a Gore-Tex membrane, a direct-injected midsole a rubber ankle insert cushioning for an athletic fit, rounded heel and forefoot to promote a natural stride, a reinforced toe cap, and scratch-resistant Kevlar for extra protection.

“We believe that form follows function, which means you need shoes that really fit to your feet, especially when it comes to performance products,” said Ejnar Truelsen, chief designer, Ecco. “BIOM Terrain inspires you to explore the back country through its low-to-the-ground construction and anatomical footbed that balance comfort and stability.”



Hi-Tec Sports Altitude Lite Hiking Boot

Hi-Tec Sports is introducing its Altitude Lite Hiking Boot series, \$90 men’s/women’s, \$85, kids. The hiker combines waterproof suede and nylon mesh in a durable, breathable upper. The Dri-Tec waterproof, breathable membrane keeps feet dry from inside and outside the boot, while a nylon shank supports the foot on uneven terrain. I-shield technology repels dirt and water. An OrthoLite sockliner cushions the foot. A Ghille lacing system snugs down securely for uphill and downhill foothold. Fashionable color pops and outdoor styling run across styles with two colorways for men and women, and three colors for kids.

“Hikers are looking for versatility and lightness in a boot or shoe that can perform a number of functions from day hiking to dog walking to casual wear,” said Ian Little, marketing manager, Hi-Tec Sports USA. “Hi-Tec has a range of products that are technical yet just as suitable for the urban environment, or yard work.” ■

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CALENDAR

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AUGUST

- 3-5 Imprinted Sportswear Show
Las Vegas, NV
- 5-7 FFANY
New York, NY
- 6-9 Outdoor Retailer Summer Market
Salt Lake City, UT
- 14-16 Sports Inc. Outdoor Show
Nashville, TN
- 17-19 MAGIC
Las Vegas, NV
- 18-20 WSA Show
Las Vegas, NV
- 19-20 PGA Expo
Las Vegas, NV
- 23-25 Atlanta Shoe Market
Atlanta, GA
- 24 Tennis Industry Association
The Tennis Show
New York, NY

SEPTEMBER

- 3 Surf Expo Board Demo Day
Orlando, FL
- 3-8 NBS Fall Semi-Annual Market
Fort Worth, TX
- 4-6 Surf Expo
Orlando, FL
- 4-6 Imprinted Sportswear Show (ISS)
Orlando, FL
- 10-11 Health & Fitness Business Expo
Las Vegas, NV
- 10-12 Interbike International Trade Expo
Las Vegas, NV
- 16-17 SFIA Industry Leaders Summit
Chicago, IL

OCTOBER

- 7-9 OIA Rendezvous
Asheville, NC

NOVEMBER

- 3-5 NBS Fall Athletic Market
Ft Worth, TX
- 14-16 ADA Fall Show
Palm Springs, CA
- 23-25 Sports, Inc. Fall Team Dealer Show
Las Vegas, NV

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