

# SGB

ISSUE 1432  
AUGUST 11, 2014

# WEEKLY

THE WEEKLY DIGITAL MAGAZINE FOR THE SPORTING GOODS INDUSTRY



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Photo  
courtesy  
Mizuno

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Photo courtesy Reebok

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## BY THE NUMBERS

**+1.7%**

**Canadian Tire Corp.** reported FGL Sports continued its strong performance with retail sales growth of 1.7 percent and an increase of 6.4 percent in same-store sales compared to the prior year.

**+1.9%**

**Mizuno Corp.** reported revenue in its first quarter ended June 30 reached ¥46.1 billion (\$451 mm), up 1.9 percent compared with the same period in the previous fiscal year as running offset a poor golf performance. Operating profits were down 20.1 percent.

**+3.5%**

**Zumiez, Inc.** announced that total net sales for the four-week period ended August 2, 2014, increased 11.9 percent to \$62.8 million. Same-store sales grew 3.5 percent.

**+10.0%**

**Adidas Group** revenues increased 10 percent on a currency-neutral basis in the second quarter ended June 30, driven by double-digit sales increases in Wholesale and Retail. All regions contributed to the currency-neutral revenue growth, despite the rapidly falling golf sales and deteriorating conditions in Russia that prompted Adidas to issue a profit warning the prior week.

**+11%**

**Dorel Industries** reported organic sales at its bike business increased by approximately 11 percent in the quarter and 15 percent year-to-date thanks to overseas demand for its Cannondale and other premium bikes and strong sales to mass merchants in North America.

**-45.0%**

**Delta Apparel, Inc.** reported earnings fell 45 percent in the third quarter ended June 28 to \$2.2 million or 27 cents per share from \$4.0 million or 48 cents a year ago. Revenues were down 7.6 percent to \$123.5 million from \$133.6 million.

## UNDER ARMOUR LAUNCHES ITS LARGEST GLOBAL WOMEN'S MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Under Armour launched I Will What I Want, its most expansive global women's marketing campaign to date at a press event in New York City. Drawn from the brand's I Will mantra, I Will What I Want celebrates the inner and outer strength of women and highlights the brand's commitment to designing elevated products for athletic females. At the event, moderated by popular television personality Sage Steele, Under Armour Founder and CEO Kevin Plank and SVP and Creative Director Leanne Fremar introduced the new campaign with the help of world champion downhill skier Lindsey Vonn, American Ballet Theatre soloist Misty Copeland, and U.S. Women's National Soccer Team standout Kelley O'Hara.

The campaign features an all-star roster of trailblazing female talent, including Vonn, Copeland, O'Hara and professional tennis player Sloane Stephens. Creative elements depict real moments of will that each woman has faced in her life, capturing the grace and determination that defined each of them in their personal triumphs. Copeland, the first non-traditional athlete to join the Under Armour family, stars in the campaign's principal creative spot.

"Today's athletic female expects the same level of performance and authenticity from her apparel and footwear as the world-class female athlete," said Fremar. "In addition, she has expectations that the brands she trusts will also deliver the same style quotient that exists in the rest of her closet. Our new I Will What I Want campaign connects Under Armour to the breadth of women's athletic experiences and recognizes that their individual stories are central to the conversation."



Lindsey Vonn at Under Armour 'I WILL I WANT' Campaign Launch in New York City

"I've been a part of the Under Armour family for nearly a decade, and like me, the brand has grown and changed over that period of time," said Vonn. "The I Will What I Want campaign demonstrates Under Armour's ongoing celebration of strong and determined women as well as the fearless attitude it takes to explore new heights."

"I am excited to be part of the new Under Armour Women's campaign and to be able to inspire women as they find the will to pave their own way, just as I have in my own career," said Copeland. "I am honored to be a part of a brand that recognizes the power of hard work and dedication over fate and luck. That kind of inner strength is what keeps me going."

Under Armour worked with NYC-based creative agency Droga5 to develop extensive campaign content, including a 60-second spot featuring Copeland that debuted on television in the U.S. on Monday, August 4. The spot will air on multiple networks including ESPN, E!, MTV, and ABC. Digitally, the brand will advertise with media partners Glamour, Mode, People, Refinery29, Us Weekly, Well + Good and more. Other campaign elements include out-of-home, grassroots, and international extensions.

The digital campaign centers on the launch of a new mobile experience via IWILLWHATIWANT.com that will serve as a community for women to track, analyze, and share their fitness and athletic lifestyle. Vonn, Copeland, O'Hara, Stephens and other Under Armour athletes will be providing consumers with unique insights into their day-to-day activity and motivations.

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## MOVERS & SHAKERS

**Body Glove** Wetsuits hired **Joe McNulty** as sales manager for the surf, wake, and dive categories. McNulty spent eight years with Oakley.

**Cramer Products**, a leader in sports medicine and physical education products, announced the retirement of **Thomas K. Rogge**, president and CEO, effective September 30, 2014, and the appointment of **Robert Mogolov** to the position of general manager, effective August 25, 2014.

**Cutters Gloves**, the creators of C-Tack performance grip material, added All-Pro Kansas City running back **Jamaal Charles** to its roster of world-class athletes.

**Delta Apparel, Inc.** said **Steven E. Cochran** resigned as president and chief operating officer effective immediately.

**Johnson Outdoors, Inc.** named **Julie Andersen** as global marketing director for its dive gear and equipment business.

**Pendleton Woolen Mills** has hired former Filson executive **Harry Egler** to fulfill the role of VP of direct business channels.

**Princeton Tec** named **Brian McKinney** outdoor division manager to replace **Justin Kline**, who will be shifting his focus to leading international sales.

**Reef** hired **Jay McGregor** as its new VP of sales for the Americas and APAC regions. He was most recently VP of sales, Americas, Gerber Legendary Blade.

**REI** named **Alex Thompson** as the company's new VP of communications and public affairs. Thompson most recently served as executive VP of corporate and public affairs in the New York office of Edelman, a global communications and marketing firm.

**Respect Your Universe, Inc.** named **Marcello Leone** as its CEO and chairman.

**Rusty Surfboards, Inc.** hired **Royce Cansler** as VP of sales.

**Under Armour, Inc.** announced that **George W. Bodenheimer**, former president of ESPN, Inc., a multimedia, multinational sports entertainment company, has joined the Company's board of directors.

**Yakima Products, Inc.** has hired **Ryan Martin** as its new CEO, effective immediately. Martin was most recently global director of strategy and business development with Whirlpool Corporation where he worked closely with Yakima's Taiwanese parent company.



Michael Phelps and Coach Bob Bowman unite with Aqua Sphere to develop a new global swim brand.

## MICHAEL PHELPS

### PARTNERS TO DEVELOP NEW GLOBAL SWIM BRAND

Aqua Sphere announced that swimming legend Michael Phelps and his coach, Bob Bowman, signed deals to develop "a new class of swim products" and expand water-safety efforts. The deal includes the development of Phelps' own racing suit. Phelps had long been sponsored by Speedo.

Aqua Sphere, which specializes in the design and production of swimwear, wetsuits, eyewear, and accessories for triathletes, open-water, and fitness swimmers, said the partnership with Phelps and Bowman would expand the company's product line to the competitive swimming community. The partnership will include a diverse collection of swim products and accessories designed for every level of swimmer with a focus on comfort and performance.

"I benefitted from being exposed to a tremendous swimming curriculum at the entry level that helped propel me through the various stages of the sport; over time, I realized that such programming and instruction is not widely available, and so we have tried to address that through programming we develop at the Michael Phelps Swim School," said Phelps. "We've also seen over the years how certain technical aspects of swimming products and teaching aids could be improved, not only for the elite level competitive swimmer, but also for entry level and fitness swimmers. With Aqua Sphere's product design and development capabilities, we believe there is an opportunity to help make the sport more inviting to others by recognizing that everyone begins at different levels, requires assistance matching their skills with products, and lacks the appropriate context in order to maximize their swimming experience."

A primary focus will be transforming the overall retail experience for consumers with products that are thoughtfully presented in the context of progressive instructional programming and provide appropriate education and recommendations through the various stages of the swimming lifecycle. Aqua Sphere will utilize its design, development and manufacturing expertise to leverage the company's international distribution channels and retail partnerships with its parent company, Aqua Lung, for a global footprint in more than 90 countries.

"From our first conversations with Michael and Bob, it was very evident that their goals and aspirations for swimming extend well beyond the competition pool. We are energized by the challenge to design, develop, and package a premier brand that is inclusive and available for swimmers of all skill levels around the world," added Todd Mitchell, business line manager, Aqua Sphere.

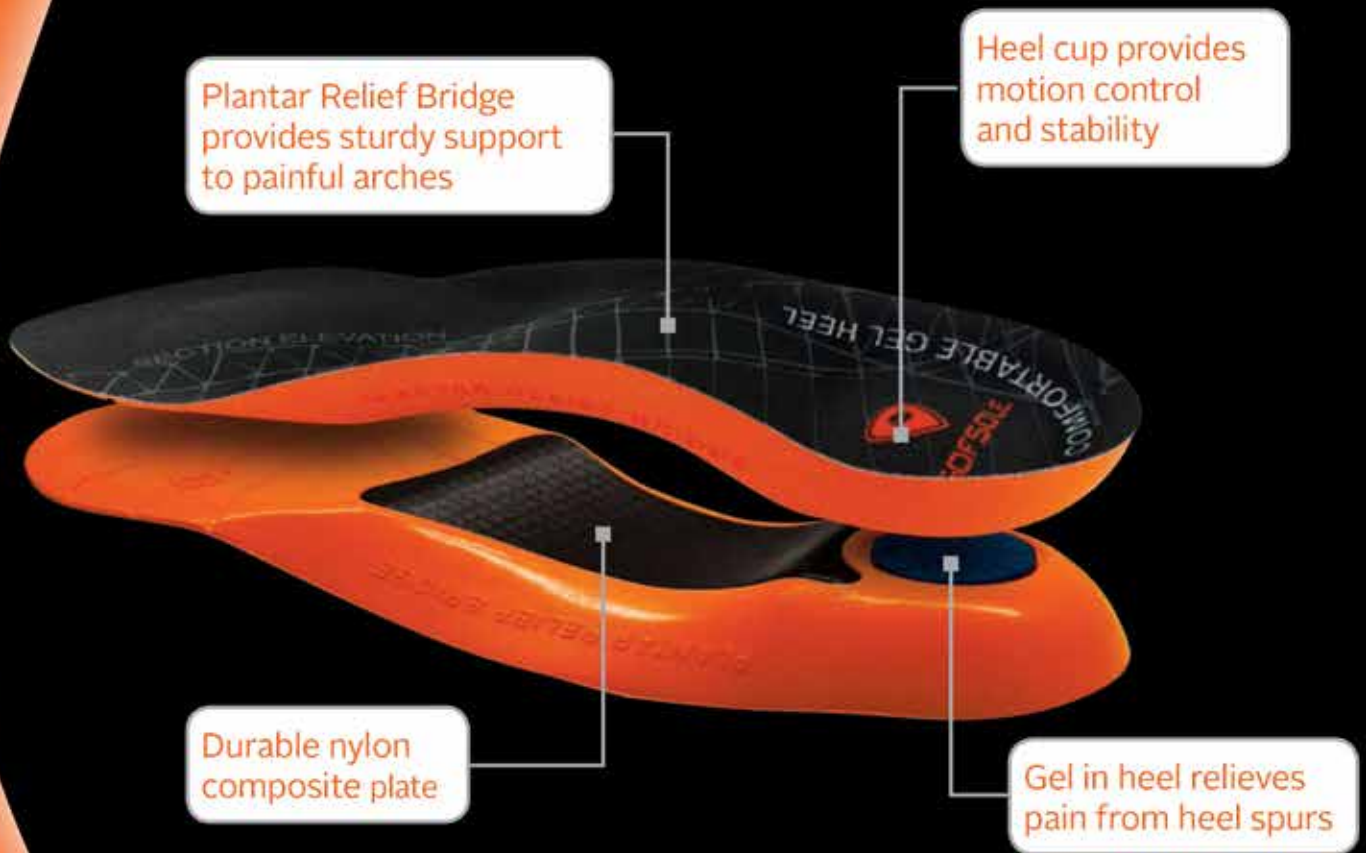
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# FILA GETS *ENERGIZED*

Fila Energized marks the next step in the brand's recommitment to innovation.

By Thomas J. Ryan



For Fall 2014 the FILA Energized Romeo (left) and Energized Turbo Fuel (right)

Having radically reinvented its business model over the last seven years, Fila is looking to further disrupt the running category with the launch of Fila Energized.

Its first shoe, made with Energized Rubber, was built around a proprietary midsole cushioning technology and is seeing a limited launch for this back-to-school season. In Spring 2015, however, distribution will be expanded and the overall collection will be extended into apparel and accessories to represent Fila's first true brand platform in more than a decade.

But Fila today is very different than Fila was in the nineties, when it was known for its marquee basketball shoes and rode a wave of popularity within the hip hop community. It's also very different than a few decades ago, when the 103-year-old, Italian-rooted brand was linked to tennis legends such as Björn Borg and Boris Becker.

Fila's strong turnaround – marked by revenue gains of 30 percent in the U.S. in 2013 and

30 percent growth trending so far this year - has been driven by running, a category Fila U.S.A. wasn't involved in six years ago. The brand will sell at least 8 million pairs of running shoes in the U.S. this year, said Jon Epstein, president of Fila U.S.A., in a recent interview at its New York City showroom.

The rebound also reflects success finding shelf space across suburban mid-tier retail accounts, instead of the urban channels that carried the brand in the past. That success is in part driven by new features and benefits the brand continues to introduce. For Spring 2015, those will include Invista's Coolmax fabric, reflective materials, memory foam footbeds, and engineered mesh uppers. Many ideas are sparked by Fila's own innovation lab located in South Korea. Finally, a large part of its success comes from combining the features and benefit message with a strong price-value relationship, which has appealed to both consumers and its retail partners.

The turnaround strategy was born after Fila was bought by its Korean licensee in early 2007 and Epstein likens Fila's evolving business model to the success some major firms from Korea have had in other industries. He pointed to how Hyundai and Kia have slowly risen over the past ten years to challenge the established carmakers with market share gains and frequent 'Car of the Year' recognitions.

"How did they do it?," said Epstein. "They built a platform. They created product that was compelling for the consumer, passed along good value, over time they took their profits and reinvested into the brand, and started to innovate up."

In the same way, Samsung "had to fight against big companies like Panasonic and Sony" with its entry into the hyper-competitive electronics space. "But they built good product with good value and over time they likewise innovated up. They gained market share, generated profits and reinvested in marketing, innovation,



and organization. Long term, here they are challenging Apple.”

Not that Fila plans to take on Nike, the equivalent of Apple in the athletic footwear space. Rather, Fila is positioning itself as a value alternative to Nike. Fila generally sells at around \$75 a pair, about \$40 less than comparative models from Nike, Asics, and others, but touts many of the same features and even works with many of the same factories and suppliers as those brands.

“It seems to be working and the sell-throughs have been really great in the best places where Nike is available,” said Epstein. “The consumer walks in - maybe not necessarily with Fila in mind - but they see our product and try it on. They like the fit, the feel, the look, the features, and everything else we put into it, and they buy it. And they’re buying a lot more of it.”

Epstein also admitted that the “innovate up” model wasn’t necessarily by choice. When Gene Yoon, chairman and CEO of Fila Global, and Jon Epstein attempted a turnaround of Fila in 2007, the brand’s revenues in the U.S. were below \$65 million and it was “losing lots of money”.

He continued, “When we got here, the urban business was teetering on the edge of failure. The urban kid was moving to Nike, and we had no suburban business. The consumer didn’t know us other than in tennis. They saw us as an urban brand.”

Ideally, a brand would stake out a premium position and then leverage that with more value-oriented product for volume; however, “the only problem with that model is you run out of time or you run out of money, and we had neither,” noted Epstein.

The market was also already “oversaturated” with a dominant player in Nike. In many ways Fila repositioned itself as the “offset to Nike” looking to complement, rather than compete, with the mega-brand in the marketplace.

Distribution was significantly shifted to focus on the more-expansive, mid-tier channel with accounts such as Kohl’s, Macy’s, JC Penney, Academy Sports and other family shoe chains. It also featured an overall cleaner distribution than the brand had in the past. Said Epstein, “We generally do not open accounts with anyone who is not selling Nike, Adi, New Balance or Asics. It’s all middle-market and up.”

A second refocus was on running, not only because it was a huge category, but also it was “where the open-to-buy dollars are,” said Epstein. Thankfully, its rich history had established Fila as a “believable authentic sports brand” with license to explore multiple sports categories.

But what has transformed Fila’s business more recently is its close partnerships with many of the

premier factories in China and Korea. In 2012, an office was established in Korea with 30 employees focused on material research and advanced design and development. Another location focuses exclusively on samples for retailers that can be turned around in one week producing up to 3,000 pairs a month. In some cases premium materials from Korea are sent to China to raise the innovation bar. The net result is that Fila is better able to segment the brand in the marketplace while also providing a quick turnaround for customized product requests for retailers.

Also unique is Fila’s packaging with boxes that openly promote and explain the features and benefits such as Coolmax fabric, energized mesh, or memory foam. With many of its retail partners moving to a self-serve model, the packaging “makes the shoe inside the box come to life,” said Epstein.

Recognizing that retailers have “a lot of options” well beyond Nike, Fila has also delivered a compelling buying proposition for retailers with margins and terms. “The retailer has to buy Nike because they’re the number one brand in the world and as a result, we have this rising tide effect,” said Epstein. “The more innovation we put into the product, the more we can ask for it, but we can still stay underneath the guy who is driving the market. That’s why the business is up 30 percent.”

But the orders only continue because the product is selling through with the combination of the Fila brand, fair value, innovative concepts, and materials.

The next step-up in innovation is Fila Energized Rubber”, a proprietary cushioning compound that “gives the shoe more life and more rebound” than the EVA traditionally used in midsoles. The cushioning technology was developed by one of its close Korean suppliers. Epstein remarked, “It really works and you can feel the difference.”

As a category, “Fila Energized” also holds appeal not only across footwear, but also for apparel with ample opportunities for Fila to play with imagery. Yoga mats and other accessories are planned as part of the broader platform push, too.

The launch, this back-to-school season, is being supported by 700 billboards along highways with a major print push in weekly and monthly magazines like *People* magazine. The digital portion is 100 percent aimed at the 32-to-55 year old male demographic with a focus on mobile phones and a play in finance, sports, and movies according to Kelly Funke, VP of U.S. marketing for Fila U.S.A.

Fila also inked a unique Fila Energized

promotion with weatherbug.com. Whenever it rains, a digitized ad will appear on weatherbug.com “with lighting coming out of the actual shoe, playing on the name” said Funke. The campaign is also utilizing a geo-fencing effort to enable stores to reach consumers on their mobile devices when they come within 10 miles of their lease-lines.

While the broad running push remains Fila’s “focus”, the brand is staying committed to its heritage categories.

In tennis, Fila has more than 800 accounts, including Masons Tennis and Paragon Sports, as well as La Costa Resort and other high-end posh resorts; with 12 reps servicing the category across the country. Said Epstein, “It’s a boutique business, but it’s very important to us in terms of connecting with the company’s heritage. The style piece of Fila has always been a really important part of the brand’s DNA.”

A Fila Energized Rubber tennis shoe is in the works and the its apparel business recently garnered attention with an updated heritage collection designed by Ginny Hilfiger. Her global collection includes skiwear, swimwear, tracksuits, and other lifestyle pieces. Jelena Jankovic’s Fila dress for the 2014 French Open “was all over the French press and she was voted best dressed at the French Open,” said Epstein. And in November, Fila’s first B2B commerce site will launch to help its tennis accounts more easily view inventory and place orders.



Jelena Jankovic's Fila dress for the 2014 French Open was voted best dressed at the French Open.



The Original Tennis/NYC Slam Pack. Available August 21 and the 97/Tradition Pack, available September 4, 2014 at select retailers nationwide and on Fila.com



The FILA x BAIT 96 "Next Chapter", an exclusive collaboration with BAIT store and website



TMNT X FILA M SQUAD as seen on Michelangelo in Paramount Pictures new film Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, exclusive to Fila.com.

In heritage basketball, Fila is slowly rebuilding its roots with the urban community. In the last eighteen months, Fila reintroduced a string of retro updates, including signature marque styles worn by Jerry Stackhouse, Grant Hill, and Kevin Johnson, as well as the Fila Cage. This year, Fila supported the effort by partnering with radio personality Charlamagne the God for a 13- part video series called WALK WITH ME available exclusively on Fila U.S.A.'s Vimeo channel and featured prominently on the Clear Channel website and video channels.

For 2014, the heritage basketball focus is on customization, according to Louis W. Colon III, Fila's director of heritage product and marketing. Capitalizing on its China factory's ability to handle shorter runs, Fila has designed a series of limited-edition collections for key urban accounts as well as street wear personalities. For Eddie Huang, the restaurateur, author, and television personality, Fila made 24-units of a yellow edition of The Cage silhouette for his family and friends that received huge social media attention. The tongue featured an embroidered Taiwanese flag with "FOB" below it - a reference to Huang's VICE series, Fresh Off the Boat.

But many of the limited-edition launches are reserved for key urban accounts such as Atlanta's Wish, California's Bait, and Detroit's Burn Rubber. Colon said the limited collections, which generally come in groupings of 60-to-100, can be used as a point of differentiation and an in-store display for the stores but are often reserved for each store's friends and local influencers. The shoes often gain an upgrade with nubuck suede and leather accents and are also personalized for each locale. For Ubiq in the Philadelphia region, Fila designed a limited collection collaboration where the color schemes and call outs are unique to the city. The collections also come with customized packaging and are sometimes paired with a customized version of one of Fila's popular bucket hats. The limited editions are already finding their way to sneakerhead stores in other major cities such as Barcelona, Paris and Japan.

Colon said the limited edition collections are designed to deepen relationships with key accounts, open up opportunities for more special-make ups, and to support its baseline business. With the details and packaging, "we have a new customer expecting our shoes to be \$110 or better and not thinking as much about Fila as a \$65 brand."

Globally, Fila Korea completed an initial public offering on the Korean stock exchange in 2007. In 2011, Fila Korea teamed with Mirae Asset and a consortium of Korean investors to acquire Acushnet, the parent of Titleist and FootJoy. Fila U.S.A. has experienced both top-line and bottom-line growth each year since its return to profitability in 2010. Last year it achieved an operating profit of \$15.9 million on sales of \$216.2 million.

Overall, Fila will be offering over 800 SKUs for Fall 2015, with extensions into boots, kids, and other lifestyle categories built on the traction it has gained in running. Encouragingly, buyers looking at the Spring 2015 Fila Energized line are choosing more expensive styles, essentially looking at the brand as a way to raise average unit prices rather than just a value play. Fila is also seeing more advanced orders, a strong sign that retailers rely on the brand to complement their mix of brands and products.

"I think we have found our place in the market where we resonate with the retailer and ultimately their consumers," remarked Epstein. "We know consumers like what we are doing because retailers keep expanding their assortments. And that is what it's all about." ■



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Photo courtesy Lorpen

## Sock It To Me!

For Holiday 2014 | Spring 2015, Sock vendors continue to push the envelop.

By Thomas J. Ryan

Socks used to be about comfort and protection. To some degree, they still are with new fabrics promising unbelievable softness and durability in often an ever-thin package. Sock vendors are continuing to push the envelop on keeping feet dry and temperature regulated; but some of the biggest innovation involves socks as a tool for recovery, with many compression-driven styles aiding circulation with some sock manufacturers directly taking on plantar fasciitis. A snapshot of available styles for Holiday 2014 and Spring 2015 follows.

From **2XU**, the Elite Compression Sock at \$60 offers a versatile take for both performance and recovery. Strategically placed fabric zones start in the footbed, wrap the heel and ankle, and gradient compression ensures maximum venous return and muscle containment in the lower leg. Linked toe cage and light padding is added



2XU Elite Compression Sock

while high filament yarns support dryness by wicking moisture to the fabric exterior.

At **Balega**, the Enduro V-tech Quarter, \$122, not only follows the contour of the foot but aligns with a shoe's midfoot structure for softness and support. Now with new enhanced compression bands and sensitive rib top, the sock creates an ideal midfoot support structure. In addition, it features U.S.-made fibers, handlinked toe seams, non-constricting compression bands, mesh construction for ventilation and cushioning for impact resistance



Balega, Enduro V-tech Quarter

The need for this addition to the popular Enduro collection stemmed from the runner's response and feedback around Balega's popular Enduro Quarter 2 sock. "The new Enduro is unique due to its elastic technology," stated Tanya Pictor, VP of sales and marketing for Balega. "No longer do we use one single strength elastic in our socks, but we create variable compression zones across the foot for the performance and comfort."



Balega Falke TK Stabilizing Sock

Also from Balega, the Falke TK Stabilizing Sock, \$40, offers ankle compression for stability and to reduce injury. The two-layer sole construction wicks moisture and each sock is anatomically correct for a true fit.

At this Outdoor Retailer Summer Market **Darn Tough Vermont** introduced Vertical, a new category that incorporates its current Ski/Ride category. Defined by bright colors, bold fonts and vibrant patterns, the sock range offers the same comfort, fit and durability as its classic ski and ride socks.

“Over the years we’ve expanded our Ski and Ride line to include an extensive range of socks for every type of downhill snow sport activity,” explained Ric Cabot, president and CEO of Darn Tough Vermont. “We’ve found that categorizing socks into either ski or ride is artificial. Riders and skiers are choosing socks based on what’s best for them not by how a company categorizes socks for their sport. Accordingly, we’ve decided to group all our downhill snow sport socks under one name - Vertical.”

The men’s collection includes the Captain Stripe, DT, Pinnacle with Yeti. The Shortcake, and Peace



Darn Tough Vermont Captain Stripe

Love Snow round out the new styles for women. Priced between \$23 and \$25.

Made with naturally antimicrobial, fine gauge merino wool and True Seamless knitting technology to create a virtually undetectable toe seam, Darn Tough Vermont socks aggressively wick moisture. At 1,441 stitches-per-square-inch, the knitting ensures a smooth fit to reduce blisters, slipping, and bunching.

**De Soto’s Run/Cycle Sox**, \$10, stands out because it has no cotton.

The brand finds when cotton gets wet, it swells and does not breathe. Ideal for long distance

running and cycling, the Sox are made of a polypropylene, nylon, and spandex blend that is non-abrasive, quick drying, breathable, and durable. The material is cool, thin, and very stretchy and offers arch support for comfort and fit. The “Y” heel and toe have the sock lock in those areas to prevent slipping.

No longer just a recovery sock, De Soto’s Compression Sock, \$44, is designed to be worn before, during, or after activity. The high polypropylene fiber content makes it an ideal sock for snowskiing, snowshoeing, and snowboarding to keep feet from getting too cold or hot. Polypropylene absorbs less moisture than any fiber on the market so feet and lower legs stay dry and comfortable. Targeted compression to accentuated areas of the sock



De Soto Compression Sock



De Soto Run/Cycle Sox

offer improved blood flow and oxygen delivery to muscles to reduce lactic acid production, and feet and legs from swelling.

From **Farm to Feet**, the Roanoke, \$16 low; \$17 quarter-crew, is an ultra light running sock featuring Friction-Free technology for abrasion control and heat management. Using a combination of U.S. merino wool and U.S.- sourced PTFE nylon, the sock is designed with airflow channels over the instep and a flat-knitted frictionless bottom to keep feet cool.



Farm to Feet Roanoke

Key features in all Farm to Feet U.S.-made socks include a heel-to-arch sculpted performance fit, seamless toe closures, and 22.5 micron U.S. merino grade wool.

**Feetures!** will debut this Fall the Plantar+Calf Sleeve, \$60 featuring 20-30 mmHg of compression at the ankle which graduates toward the top of the sleeve for improved circulation. A calf stabilization zone reduces muscle vibration, while iWick fibers wick moisture to keep feet cool and dry. The sleeve can be worn comfortably under socks during running or recovery.



Feetures! Plantar+Calf Sleeve

“We’ve seen an increased demand from runners for a product that can treat Plantar Fasciitis while allowing them to continue training and racing,” said Joe Gaither, Feetures! director of marketing. “The Plantar+Calf Sleeve lets runners treat the symptoms of plantar fasciitis and enjoy the performance and recovery benefit of graduated compression while continuing to run, race, and stay active.”

From **Fox River**, which is America’s oldest sock brand, new for Spring 2015 is the is the 2335 PEAK Series Forester, \$19. This new medium-weight hiking sock features Fox River’s exclusive Helix Fit System with volumetric compression. Wick Dry technology keeps feet dry and blister free. Plus, a premium blend of sustainable tencel and merino wool provides softness and comfort.



Fox River 2335 PEAK Series Forester

For Spring 2014, **Icebreaker** relaunched its run sock collection with a new series of ultralight warm weather running socks. New to the collection are the Run+ Ultralight Micro, the Run+ Ultralight Mini, and the Run+ Cushion Mini. Icebreaker re-engineered the ventilation zones on its range of run socks to increase breathability, comfort and sleekness.

Built for comfort and durability, Icebreaker socks have a seamless toe to prevent blisters, breathable mesh zones, activity-specific cushioning, comfort cuffs, and support features designed to give a perfect fit. “Icebreaker is ideal to wear next to the skin in warmer weather because our premium merino regulates temperature, breathes to prevent overheating and clamminess, is soft and non-itch, and resists odor for days – sometimes weeks,” said Mark Koppes, Icebreaker VP of product.

Lorpen Trail Running & Multisport Socks



For Spring 2105, **Lorpen**, the Spanish-based sock manufacturer, has developed a blended yarn technology using a combination of Coolmax, Tencel and Nylon resulting in a high performance sock that keeps feet dry, comfortable, well ventilated, and blister free.

The range includes Trail Running & Multisport Socks, \$11 to \$13.00, with a blend of natural and synthetic yarns and enhanced ventilation on the top and sides to keep feet blister-free during rigorous activity in hot climates. Additional structural reinforcement creates a stronger sock that stands up to whatever the wearer puts it through over a long period of time and hundreds of washings.

“Our research and design group is driven to find fibers that we can combine to make a super fiber that can improve all aspects of the performance we see in today’s traditional sock designs,” said Bruce Barrows, VP of sales and marketing at Lorpen North America. “We have integrated the best fibers for warm weather performance into these new products and have also improved the knitting structure to enhance the breathability throughout the sock.”

Also updated for Spring 2015 is Lorpen’s Compression Calf Sleeves, \$30 (lightweight); \$35 (midweight), with an improved design, brighter colors, and graphics to match the Lorpen trail running and multisport socks.

For Spring 2015, **Point6** will introduce its Active Life collection. By combining the brand’s Active and Lifestyle categories, Point6 hopes to

bridge the gap between style and performance. The new collection offers a fun array of prints and colors for all outdoor pursuits. Other new styles for spring include an expanded cycling line and kids hiking socks with new colors across the board.



Lorpen Compression Calf Sleeves



Point6 Rebel

Taos, \$19, is also a three-quarter crew featuring Point6 merino, extra light cushioning under foot, bold colors and fun prints.

The Whisper, \$17, is a mini crew featuring one and one-quarter inch cuffs, light cushioning under foot for comfort and support, 100 percent, and soft compact-spun merino yarns for durability and a soft hand. Versatile for any activity.



Point6 Taos



SmartWool PhD Run Socks

At the Outdoor Retailer Summer Market, **SmartWool** unveiled its first women’s-specific run sock. While women’s-specific socks have traditionally been a smaller version of male or unisex construction



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(shrink and pink), all of Smartwool's new 2015 PhD Run Socks for women, \$16 to \$17, feature the first women's-specific fit with a smaller heel pocket and toe box that enhance a tapered construction. Women's-specific ventilation - as determined by thermal body mapping technology - mitigates heat and moisture through strategic mesh and elasticity placement.

Overall the socks offer improve performance through enhanced breathability and a frictionless fit. To this end, thousands of hours were spent abrasion testing the new 200-needle fabric composition in addition to months of wear testing by SmartWool Fan Field Testers and globally ranked trail runners Jason Schlarb and Darcy Piceau-Africa. Besides the women's-specific fit, the research heavily influenced cushion placement in the socks - which not only helps regulate the internal climate of the shoe, but also minimizes friction and impact over long distances, climbs, and descents.

At the Outdoor Retailer Summer Market, **Sof Sole** showcased its Multi Sport Cushion Socks at \$10 for three pairs. Built with a seamless toe and full cushioned sole, the socks provide comfort and absorbency. The deep heel pocket construction supports a snug fit and prevents slippage.



Sof Sole Multi Sport Cushion Socks

Sof Sole Running Select priced \$10 for two pair, are made with Coolmax Polyester moisture management technology. With mesh venting for breathability and a banded instep for secure fit and arch comfort, the sock is an optimal choice for racking up the miles. A deep heel pocket, seamless toe, and nonbinding top all assist in providing extra relief.



Sof Sole Running Select

The CEP Progressive Run Sock 2.0, \$60, is made with filament fibers for extreme durability. It has a wide top band and anatomical design and an extra flat toe seam to prevent pressure points. The hydrophile finish wicks moisture for heat and moisture management. Other key features include a metatarsus compression zone for arch stabilization, open-pore mesh structure in the calf, optimized achilles tendon protector, and air channels for ventilation in the foot area.

For the gift that keeps on giving beyond December, **Swiftwick** offers the Swiftwick Sock Club with members receiving exclusive, limited edition compression socks before they are seen or sold anywhere else on a monthly basis.

At retail, the Medical Class II HEALTH+, \$25, offers graduated compression from the ankle to below the knee, at a sharp price point, for improved blood flow in the lower leg and to protect against discomfort. A plush footbed adds to Swiftwick's careful attention to antimicrobial and moisture-wicking capabilities.



Swiftwick SMedical Class II HEALTH+

Swiftwick Aspire



Swiftwick's also has a colorful line of thin compression socks with the Aspire at \$13 for low-cut. The toe seam is eliminated using linked-toe technology eliminating uncomfortable bunching no matter what your sport.

From **Thorlo**, the Experia Collection, \$15, features plush padding under the heel and forefoot. The lightweight achilles tendon pad protects against rubbing and chafing. CoolMax fabric in the heel and the ball of the foot takes wicks moisture. Nylon/Lycra provides a glove-like fit.

Thorlo Experia Collection



Wigwam Taos (right) and Tall Trekker Fusion (left)

From **Wigwam**, the Tall Trekker Fusion, \$19, features a merino wool outer layer and moisture repelling inner liner. Graduated compression enhances circulation. It also features a breathable mesh instep, foot hugging fit, and seamless toe closure

Also from Wigwam, the Taos, \$19, is an outdoor lifestyle sock with a timeless pattern. The merino wool sock is soft, breathes, and insulates. A cushioned sole adds comfort.

**Zamst** introduced at Outdoor Retailer Summer Market the HA-1 Compression, \$60, combining the dual benefits of both the HA-1 Run LE and a compression calf sleeve. Besides addressing plantar fasciitis, the G-Fit technology delivers vertical gradual compression from the ankle through the calf muscle to improve circulation and encourage blood and oxygen flow to the muscles to enhance performance. Also, it flushes away bi-products (lactic acid), reduces muscle vibration and fatigue, and improves muscle endurance and recovery. Built in a-Fit technology, (anatomically correct support and fit for left and right feet), is also featured.



Zamst HA-1 Compression

"The HA-1 Compression is an example of our innovative and pioneering approach to product design," explained Marketing Manager Laura Cleveland. "Zamst continues to draw on the expertise of its parent company, Nippon Sigmax, a leader in medical orthoses," she explained. "We leverage this capability to design the most technically advanced sports protective equipment on the market."

Zensah introduced its Ultra Compression Leg Sleeves, \$45. Made in Italy of Zensah fabric, (a blend of Polyamide and Elastine), the leg sleeves provide athletes with an extra tight fit and muscle support and are made with a seamless construction. Using the leg sleeves for running helps prevent micro tears to muscles but cyclists can also use the leg sleeves due to the footless construction. ■



Zensah Ultra Compression Leg Sleeves

SPRING 2015

# Trail Runners Look for Adventure

Forget the quiet trek through the woods;  
trail runners are heading to the races.

By Thomas J. Ryan







A diverse range of race events - from ultra runs to mud, obstacle and other fun runs - are providing a boost to the trail running category. Some of the events represent a grueling step on the performance side versus the marathon while others are more social in nature. But to footwear vendors, they underscore that people are looking for unique running experiences.

“People are looking to do something different than the road,” said Golden Harper, founder and brand manager at Altra. “They want something exciting. They want something fun. If they’re going to pay for a race, they want an experience.”

But the experience can vary wildly. Ultramarathons typically cover 50 to 100 miles and often present severe course obstacles, such as inclement weather, elevation change, or rugged terrain. They can also include 24-hour races, and multi-day races of 1,000 miles or even longer.

Todd Lewis, global product director, footwear at Montrail, Sorel and Columbia, believes the popularity of ultraruns mimic the appeal of marathons in the 70s. “Nobody did ultraruns 10 or 15 years ago,” observed Lewis. “But now it’s becoming something like, ‘This is what I do. I would rather do this than run a marathon.’”

Ted Fitzpatrick, director of product marketing at Reebok, said people are increasingly drawn to obstacle races such as the Spartan Race because of the challenge as well as the camaraderie. “The consumer is younger and not your traditional everyday jogger,” added Fitzpatrick. “They like to express themselves through the community and digital, which is why a good portion of our marketing is laser-focused on where this consumer spends their time - at the event and online.”

Evan Wert, president of Icebug USA, sees a big jump from road racing and running to more off trail, obstacle course racing, and fun events like mud runs. Also growing in popularity is orienteering, a running challenge that requires navigational skills and tools, such as a map and compass, to navigate from point to point. “People are looking for new challenges and also they want to stop pounding the pavement,” said Wert. “These new events offer a fun way to get outside, challenge yourself and also get a better all over workout. We are also seeing the rise of more types of trail triathlons mixing mountain biking, trail running and lake swimming. In Sweden we are seeing a new sport emerge called SwimRun. This combines swimming and running without taking your shoes off.”

In its annual report, Running USA estimated the country now has more than 35 non-traditional or themed running series that include mud, color, foam, electric, zombie and even ugly sweater runs. Not necessarily competitive, participants are doing these races for fun, camaraderie, and sometimes teamwork.

Jonathon Lantz, president of La Sportiva N.A., believes the mud runs and adventure runs have brought “a new consumer to the trail market” but he also believes a “big influx” of customers are coming to trail from the hiking category. The day hiker prefers the lightweight and flexible design of the trail runner.

“As more people are going lighter and faster they are shying away from traditional hiking boots and they are using trail running shoes for their hiking endeavors,” said Lantz.

Beyond addressing the light & fast trend, innovation stories are also helping the category with both the maximalism trend, driven by Hoka One One, as well as interesting takes on grip and drainage.

Not to say the trail running category isn’t a challenge. The category remains small next to road running and crowded with both road and outdoor footwear vendors attacking the category. In the 90s, the category benefited from a lifestyle trend marked by the popularity of the all-terrain 800 series from New Balance but the fashion boost today is missing. For mud runs, many participants are just using their old road running shoes. While potentially attracting newcomers to running, many participants in ‘fun runs’ tend to only do the one-off event. From a design standpoint, the trail category also demands much more variety than just meeting the needs of those pounding the pavement.

In developing its trail models, **Asics** plays up lighter weight, seamless upper construction, and full ground contact. But the big difference between the three trail models for Spring 2015 is the outsole thread tailored to the surfaces of the shoes that each will be asked to brave, according to Brice Newton, senior product manager running footwear at Asics America.

The GEL-FujiRunnagade, \$100, is designed for rainy areas of the country but it's also built to handle mud runs or extreme obstacle races. It features a fully gusseted upper that keeps the shoe secure while preventing dirt and debris from getting in. Water-resistant closed mesh makes post-race clean up easy. It also features a deep-lug pattern to grip in mud pits and water release drainage ports.



Asics GEL-FujiRunnagade and GEL-FujiAttack 4

For more rocky geographies such as the Rocky Mountain States, the GEL-FujiAttack 4, \$110, boasts an aggressive, trail-specific outsole and a Rock Protection Plate as well as a Discrete Eyelet construction on the upper for an adaptive, secure and comfortable fit.

Finally, the lightweight GEL-FujiPro, \$120, is designed to handle hard-packed dirt and “still provides traction but it's much flatter,” said Newton.

Asics has a strong foothold in trail at run specialty stores and Newton describes the category as a “small niche” business for the brand. But it appeals to Asics because it helps the brand reach an often-younger audience beyond its core road-runners.

“If you look at all the obstacle and mud runs, the participants are coming from all different sports,” said Newton. “We're seeing football, basketball and baseball players doing it, and softball players, for instance from the ladies' side. And we don't make football or baseball shoes so it gives us an opportunity to expose our brand to that customer. And many of the races are social rather than competitive. They don't care about how fast they're doing it; they just want to get



through it. So it's an opportunity to introduce new customers to our brand and tell our story.”

**Brooks** is offering a major update in the Cascadia 10, \$120. To improve the adaptability of the shoe, Brooks decoupled the outsole around the pivots to maximize function and allow the pivots to activate more readily. The fit of the upper was also improved by adding free-floating webbing on the medial side and a TPU saddle on the lateral side – both working together to provide a locked-in fit. Soft, pliable materials are also used throughout with a virtually seamless upper construction. The only stitching is in the heel and u-throat for durability.

“Over the past decade, the Cascadia has set itself apart from the market and has been the leader in trail running because of its technical trail features combined with Brooks' heritage and its ability to work for a large variety of people,” said Brooks Footwear Merchandising Associate Kira Harrison. “It is important to us to always maintain the essence of this shoe while adding new technologies that improve the fit and ride. The update this season focuses on enhancing the Cascadia's key offerings - protection and adaptability, traction and a locked-in fit and comfort.”





Building on its successful launch this year, **New Balance** is providing a quick update with the Leadville 1210v2 retailing at \$125. The last is modified in the forefoot based on research New Balance conducted around how ultra runners' feet swell over a 100-mile run. The sock liner is 3mm thicker than the original version, a new upper provides a softer feel and secure fit, and the toe protection is enhanced. But the overall changes were minimal with the shoe retaining the responsive ride of N2 and REVlite cushioning, the durable traction of a Vibram outsole, and the protection of a gusseted tongue that denies dirt and debris. "There wasn't a whole lot to fix," said Claire Wood, senior product manager at New Balance. "The Leadville made a lot of noise for us in its first year."

After a four-year absence, the **101**, retailing at \$90, returns with the same tooling but modernized materials. Delivering a minimal feel in an all-terrain outsole, it offers no-sew mesh upper overlays, New Balance's Rock Stop buffer for added forefoot protection, interlocking Sure-Laces, and an Acteva Lite midsole for comfort on long mileage runs.

Wood said New Balance continues to have a multi-pronged approach to trail. For hardcore ultra runners, it has the 1210 shoe. For the "lightweight, feel faster on the trail" runner, it's working on a new 910. In July, it debuted the Fresh Foam Trail and continues to support the Minimus trail for those runners still looking for the minimal experience on the trail. NB plans to play up its Leadville sponsorship more over the next year.

"Our focus is on the performance end and exploring, for instance, how the shoe performs at 50 miles," said Wood. "But it's interesting to see how some of these hardcore trail races are developing and shows like America Ninja Warrior arriving. At its core, it's performance run."

Fresh off winning the *Runner's World's* Editor's Choice Award in the Trail Category (Peregrine 4), **Saucony** is showing a new Peregrine 5 featuring an outsole with deeper multi-directional lugs on a wide range of off-road terrain, both on ascent and descent. Co-molded External Bedrock Outsole plates in the midfoot and forefoot are engineered with nylon mesh, reducing weight and providing "great flexibility but also protecting you from any rocks, roots and other debris," said Patrick O'Malley, SVP of global product at Saucony. A new rubberized toe tip adds another level of durability and protection.



Saucony Peregrine 5

The Peregrine continues to feature a 4mm offset, allowing the foot to move naturally and uninhibited while increasing the runner's proprioception and balance over tricky trails. Welded overlays eliminate the amount of stitching in the shoe "and allows you to make it lighter but it also allows you to

conform to the foot and hold the foot into place," said O'Malley.

O'Malley said trail running is important to Saucony in Europe, where it's a bigger category than the U.S. In the run specialty channel in the U.S., it's a small overall category, "but it's an important one because in certain spots of the country, it's really relevant. It also allows us to have a different design DNA and it's a different challenge for us, which we appreciate."

While **Mizuno's** focus in the U.S. in trail had been on the Wave Ascend, the push is broadening with the introduction of the Wave Kazan, \$120, and Wave Hayate, \$110.



Mizuno Wave Kazan and Wave Hayate

The Wave Kazan derives its name from the Samurai battle standard of "Furin Kazan," translating to "move as swift as the wind, stay as silent as the forest, attack as fierce as fire, and be as undefeatable as the mountain," according to Doug Smiley, business unit manager, running footwear at Mizuno USA.

It features a Concave Wave to cradle and stabilize the heel at landing, a midfoot X-Groove to enable greater independent movement of the heel and forefoot to deliver more support and traction, and an X-Stud for multi-directional grip on uneven terrain and adverse conditions. The striking upper design was patterned after topography and Japanese rock gardens. “The Kazan is more of a direct evolution of the Wave Ascend,” said Smiley. “So it’s more versatile, more adaptable and ultra protective. It can go anywhere from a three-mile trail run on a hard packed trail to Michael Aish, our sponsored athlete, covering the recent Western States 100.”

Like the Kazan, the Hayate features an X-lug outsole that grips in all directions and the U4ic midsole for cushioning and stability. But it’s slightly more lower to the ground with a 9mm ramp and lighter at nine ounces versus the Kazan’s 9.5 ounces added Smiley, “This is going to be a faster, speedier trail shoe.” Overall, Smiley said Mizuno is evolving its trail offerings to match the many different experiences runners look for.

“The trail is an addictive experience,” said Smiley. “You can reach a point where the conscious world disappears. You can’t really experience that when you’re running down the street and there are stoplights and cars. But when you’re on a trail in nature, two hours can go by and you don’t even know you’re running out there.”

For Spring 2015, **Adidas** will continue to focus on its all-terrain (ATR) line, which is specifically designed to function on and off the trail. “Even as more people transition to the trails, the bulk of these people still do a large portion of their training on roads and other less technical terrain,” said Chris Brewer, running specialty category manager for Adidas America. “Adidas understands that not everyone has the ability and/or desire to have multiple running shoes for multiple surfaces.”



Adidas Energy Boost 2 ATR and Supernova Glide Boost ATR

Its established and award-winning Energy Boost, and Glide Boost models arrive in an ATR version for the road and trail hybrid runner. The Energy Boost 2 ATR, \$160, offers an elevated secondary Techfit print layer for increased protection while still providing optimum fit, control and comfort. The Supernova Glide Boost ATR, MSRP \$130, offers an all seasons, weather-resistant Climaheat upper for protection from the elements. Both benefit from Adidas’ Boost cushioning for energy return.

“Our Boost midsoles provide unmatched energy return and superior cushioning as well as being significantly more temperature resistant than standard midsole materials,” said Brewer. “This means that whether on technical trails, roads, or anything in between, the runner gets the amazing experience of Boost. Additionally the ATR models are paired with Adidas’ Traxion web outsole lugs which are biomechanically designed to work with Boost to grip the surface where traction is needed.”

At **Reebok**, the All Terrain Super 2.0, retailing for \$120, is updated with Terrain Skin technology to provide the obstacle course enthusiast and competitive racer with an ultra-thin layer of protection designed to prevent water and mud retention, improve midfoot durability, and make the shoe easy to clean. Additionally, the 2015 model adds a speed lace for a more secure fit in all conditions.



Photo courtesy Mizuno

“Move as swift as the wind, Stay as silent as the forest, Attack as fierce as fire, and be as Undefeatable as the mountain.” - Mizuno’s Wave Kazan derives its name from this Samurai battle standard.



Reebok All Terrain Super 2.0

Built specifically for the demanding needs of obstacle course racing, the All Terrain Super 2.0 is built with 360 degrees of traction, but the elements of running through mud, climbing rope, and hurling yourself over an 8' wall dictate other features that are just as critical. "As a result, drainage is key which is why we engineered our H2O Drain upper technology," said Fitzpatrick. "We also built toe picks on the front of the shoe to make scaling walls easier and midfoot teeth on the bottom for rope climbing. These somewhat small elements result in superior performance, making the shoe a must-have for the obstacle race enthusiast. When the consumer sees the shoe in action, pumping out water there, is a an 'a-ha' moment that made us quickly realize we solved a problem that no one was addressing for an emerging and growing consumer base."

Building on the traction the brand is seeing in its mountain running category in recent years, **La Sportiva** is introducing the Helios SR, \$125, and the Mutant, \$130. The Helios SR is an 8.5 ounce, 2mm drop shoe that utilizes FriXion XF sticky rubber on the forefoot and FriXion AT rubber on the heel. An Endurance Platform Rock Guard in the forefoot provides additional protection from rocks and roots. At 11.3 ounces and a 12mm drop, the Mutant is one of the most cushioned shoes in the La Sportiva line but also an aggressive, neutral trail shoe with a sticky toothed outsole. A



La Sportiva Helios SR and Mutant

Spyral tongue provides a customized fit and the Fusiongate lacing system uses high frequency welding reinforcements for a soft, supportive lacing harness.

"We are seeing people really trending toward technical trail shoes again," said Lantz. "As we all can see cushion is back in a big way. People have come full circle and they are reappreciating the protection of a true trail shoe. On that note, the consumer is looking for protection and cushioning without sacrificing the lightweight feel that

everyone found during the minimalist trend."

From **Ecco**, the Biom Trail FL combines a natural running feel with grippy outsoles and rugged construction. It features an engineered sole profile specific for trail running with a wider point in the forefoot for off- and on-road traction and stability. The shoe is designed with gender specific heel-to-toe-drop specifications (7mm for men's, 6mm for women's), promoting a forefoot running style. "With this latest advancement, we're capitalizing on the success of the Biom Ultra Quest multisport shoe and incorporating what we learned from our Better Running Lab experiments," said Andrzej "Bartie" Bikowski, lead designer. "We have achieved an ideal blend of flexibility, cushioning and support that will make you wish every run was just a bit longer."



Ecco Biom Trail FL

Bonded uppers create a glove-like fit while polyurethane insoles feature printed silicon traction elements to stop the foot from sliding. A Kevlar mudguard and heel cap provides lightweight protection. The Biom Trail FL available in textile for \$150 and yak nubuck leather for \$170.

**Vasque's** two trail models – the Trail Bender SST, \$140, and the Pendulum II, \$120 - are both designed to rack up the miles on the trail. "The trend towards maximum cushioning makes sense for running long on trails, yet we know others prefer a middle path with just enough cushioning and protection," explained Brian Hall, director of product development at Vasque footwear. "Our Spring 2015 line delivers versatile options to suit a variety of endurance runners."



Vasque Trail Bender SST

The Trail Bender SST is a maximalist trail runner with EVA pods and a 4mm PU foam footbed that molds to a runner's foot. The bonded static air mesh upper and lacing system holds the foot securely, allowing a runner to adeptly navigate

the most technical trails. A Vasque Morpheus outsole, with its stability and multi-directional lateral lugs that assist with balance and traction, ensures runners stay upright no matter what the terrain.

The Pendulum II has the same basic tooling as its popular predecessor but performance updates make it a lighter, faster, more technical trail runner. A bonded upper eliminates issues such as hot spots and blisters and the Pendulum II's midsole is designed to completely conform to a runner's foot for fit. The Pendulum II also comes in a Gore-Tex version, \$150. It's ideal for trail runners looking for a shoe that falls in the middle between maximalist and minimalist.



Vasque Pendulum

After more than three years of product development and field-testing, **Icebug** is introducing the Zeal Trail Shoe, featuring the Swedish brand's newly developed 'HGMS2' technology. Short for 'Holy Grail Midsole Soft and Stable', the HGMS2's midsole design provides a stable; soft heel grip combined with side and underfoot protection. The HGMS2 is also made with two different densities for maximum feel, comfort and protection, but in a lightweight package. The Zeal features a light, durable nylon upper and a new lacing system for a close fit.



Icebug Zeal Trail Shoe

The Zeal is available with two different outsoles: the Olx, \$185, with 16 carbide steel studs and a tread pattern for control on the trail, and the RB9X, for \$170, that features Icebug's exclusive rubber compound and lug pattern for all around feel on wet or dry surfaces.

Wert said Icebug is finding trail runners looking for shoes that are built for the trail, not just made to look like it. "We see the demand for light, fast, stable and protection as important for those looking to really enjoy their runs on the trail," said Wert. "We also see a very strong trend towards both OCR (obstacle course racing) and orienteering that is impacting design."

**The North Face** is introducing the Ultra Cardiac, \$110. Named for Cardiac Hill at the top of the famous Dipsea Trail, the Ultra Cardiac was designed to stand up to tough ascents and steep descents. Developed with numerous insights provided by Tim Olson, the ultra trail mountain runner, the shoe was created to handle a wide variety of terrain. "It provides great cushioning in a lower profile than a lot of other styles in running right now," said Product Manager Mark Magruder. "The medial sidewall is built up to provide a wide platform that will keep your mechanics in check on longer runs and the wide forefoot allows the foot to splay out naturally."



The North Face Ultra Cardiac

Also from The North Face, the Ultra TRII, \$110, features a featherweight ripstop upper and glove-like fit. It comes complete with the Ultra Series suite of technology, including a full-length, road-to-trail Vibram Outsole, FlashDry Upper and Cradle



The North Face Ultra TRII

Guide midsole platform; the Ultra TRII is engineered for traction and balance.

“Our athletes challenged us to push the limits as far as we could go with weight while keeping the same ride and traction they’ve come to love,” said Magruder. “The North

Face inspired ripstop fabric fit the bill for this upper to provide a snug fit with no extra frills or unnecessary materials.” The outsole came from a study The North Face did on traction. Added Magruder, “We found that more surface contact provided better traction for a variety of terrain as opposed to big deep lugs. The outsole was designed with UTMB in mind where you’re running cobblestone road to tech trail and insane weather changes.”

Altra has a major update with the Superior 2, \$110, a fast trail shoe that plays up an aggressive, sticky outsole and a slimmed-down EVA to save weight. One unique attribute is its removable stone guard “so if you’re on nasty terrain, you put it in. If you’re on easy steps, you take it out,” said Harper. It also features a mesh upper that keeps feet dry.



Altra Superior 2

Another update is the Olympus 1.5, \$135, which Harper said saw a “huge” response in its introduction, especially from ultra runners. He claims it’s the first foot-shaped, max-cushioned, zero-drop shoe available with the extra-cushioning “helping to keep feet from getting beat up.” Altra’s open-toe box also continues to stand out as a “huge deal” for many runners. The update is virtually identical to its predecessor with a little more traction added to the outsole.

Harper said Altra continues to build a loyal following among ultra runners with the popularity of the Paradigm and Lone Peak as well as the Superior and Olympus. Shoe counts conducted by the company show close to 30 percent of participants at ultra marathons are wearing Altra.

Hoka One One is unveiling the Challenger ATR, \$130, complementing the lightweight, smooth-riding characteristics of the Clifton with a more aggressive outsole, and increased support in the upper to create an all-terrain shoe for varied surfaces. Early Meta-Rocker geometry provides a fluid, efficient ride and independent rubber pods provide stability on uneven terrain for the runner who values versatility in their running shoe.

“As with our award-winning road model, the Clifton and the Challenger ATR offers a very good cushioning-to-weight ratio, but with the benefit of



Hoka One One Challenger ATR

added traction for the trail,” said Hoka’s President Jim Van Dine. “Based on the incredibly positive response we received with regards to the Clifton, it was natural to take that platform and adjust it for runners who also run on the trail.”

Montrail is revamping its entire line, including its two biggest models in the Bajada II, \$135, and Mountain Masochist III, \$125, according to Lewis.

With seamless midfoot frame construction and a Fluidfoam midsole, the Bajada II is built for both flexibility and support. Lewis noted that all the plastic has been removed to reduce weight while no-sew construction creates a close-foot fit. A print-mix with rubber over the top gives it more support and abrasion resistance. Lewis added, “It’s a little lighter this season and a little closer to the foot fit but still really breathable.”



Montrail Bajada II

The Masochist’s design is “freshened up a bit,” and gets lighter with some metal taken out of the D-ring fastener. It also adds Fluidframe midsole technology that uses three different densities for sturdy support that remains flexible. The core features - including a rugged outsole and adjustable fit in the webbing on the upper - remain intact.

For more of a lightweight play, the FluidFlex ST, \$95, adds a “little more structure to the popular Fluidflex. Deep flex grooves in the Fluidfoam midsole increase the FluidFlex ST’s flexibility while abrasion-resistant overlay materials support and protect the mid- and forefoot. Added Lewis, “It’s a great trail product but it’s flexible and has a great ride and you’re able to take it on the road as well.”



Montrail FluidFlex ST

Montrail will also upgrade its rugged, outdoor product with Columbia’s Outdry waterproof, breathable technology, and is also adding a stability model to its Fluidfeel road series.

On the marketing front, Montrail will pay more homage to its trail running heritage. While Montrail will continue to support its athletes and the elite races, “we don’t want to exclude a lot of others who are into trail running and just enjoying the trail.” As such, marketing will focus on “inviting people to get off the road,” said Lewis. One tagline is: “Treadmill beats nothing, a road beats a treadmill, a trail beats a road, nothing beats the trail.” Added Lewis, “Everybody’s favorite run is a trail run so we’re going to talk more about that from a brand perspective.”

Expanding its line of fast and light trail running shoes, Merrell is introducing the All Out Collection, which features a flexible underfoot wrap that mobilizes the arch. The design activates the body’s most natural form by creating continuous ground contact for increased mobility and efficiency.

Other key design features include the UniFly Impact Protection of ultra-resilient, strategically-placed foam pads that provide a soft landing by dispersing impact and allowing for stable takeoff and protection. A circular design in the M Select Grip outsole rubber allows each lug to move independently, providing multi-directional contact and increased surface area for a stable and connected ride. A new HyperWrap fit system locks the foot in place to enhance stability and agility.

For mountain pursuits, the All Out Peak, \$130, sports 24mm of cushioning for a soft but connected ride on



Merrell All Out Peak

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- B. BLUESMITHS - Kula Jacket
- C. SUGOI - Alpha Hybrid Jacket
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- F. MAKERS & RIDERS - Dispatch Rider Weatherproof Trousers
- G. QOR - Alpha Waxed Cotton Jacket



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Merrell All Out Charge

the trail. A Vibram outsole with 6mm lug depth offers ample traction to ascend and descend confidently. Total stack height is 32mm and drop is 6mm. A Gore-Tex version is also available at a suggested price of \$160. To go the distance

on rugged terrain, the All Out Charge, \$120, features 20mm of cushioning and a Vibram outsole with 5mm lug depth. Total stack height is 27mm with a 6mm drop.

Part of its CityTrail concept, **Salomon** is introducing the X-Scream 3D, \$125, which plays up a multi surface grip and a responsive ride. The upper features Salomon's well-known Sensifit and Quicklace system for strong foothold and comfort. Add Endofit and a seamless upper, and X-Scream



Salomon X-Scream 3D

3D feels great on the feet, even without socks. Under the foot, X-Scream 3D uses a 3D Ride midsole that provides enough cushioning for hard surfaces, with flex and rolling for an even stride. Completing the package is Salomon's Contagrip Outsole,

with multi-density compound and varying chevrons to ensure grip on hard or loose surfaces, and long wear on pavement.

"One of the most interesting parts of running on trails is the varied landscapes and surface conditions. It adds a challenge and it's fun," explained Pete Cameron, product line manager for Salomon Trail Running Footwear. "We've taken this same idea of changing terrain and surfaces, and expressed it for a more urban environment. The shoes need to fit precisely to hold the foot for agile movements, and grip on varied surfaces, but they also need the cushioning and ride for running on pavement."

At **ToPo Athletic**, the new Runventure, \$110, features plating protection without sacrificing ground feel and traction across a variety of terrain.

"From a performance standpoint, we were overwhelmed with the compliments that we received in response to our MT model – people were blown away by how we were able to design a platform that performed equally well on road and trail," said Tony Post, ToPo's



ToPo Athletic Runventure

CEO. "A large part of this is credited to the three-density foam we use, which we've used in our new Runventure trail running model as well."

From an aesthetics standpoint, the Runventure plays up a more adventurous color scheme. Added Post, "We experimented with more sophisticated, tasteful uses of color pop and color blocking, such as our women's model, which is bright red with black design accents."

Overall, Post said trail running shoes have improved from being "notoriously known for being stiff and clunky in the past," resulting in a lot of bruised feet. But he suspected the infatuation with stack height and cushioning will eventually settle more in the middle.

"We believe trail runners are really looking for shoes that hit that sweet spot where the platform is flexible and responsive enough for the varied terrain but with the right amount of underfoot protection," said Post. "Aesthetically, we're seeing the same migration towards bright, rich hues and unconventional color pairings that we saw with road shoes."

**Oboz** is coming out with three TrailSport styles that combine trail running and hiking, a scrambling activity Josh Fairchild, Oboz's



Photo courtesy Altra



Oboz Emerald Peak (top), Sundog (middle) and Palisade (bottom)



VP of development, describes as "rucking." Fairchild said the collection's "go-fast, low profile design balances weight savings with crucial foot protection and trail-worthy grip."

Common features of the three shoes include Hyalite outsole design that offers aggressive traction from 4mm deep lugs yet flexes naturally and has a light feel for the ground. Single piece mesh uppers provide a custom feel and fit while a breathable mesh and unlined forefoot promotes airflow. Other features include a light, compressed EVA Super Skin (ESS) plate for forefoot protection, a dual density EVA midsole, and a BFIT Essential insole.

For women, the Emerald Peak, \$110, supports the foot with a structural cage of welded

TPU. A neoprene mini-collar makes for sock-free comfort and helps keep trail debris out of the shoe. For men, the Sundog, \$100, keeps it simple with a basic mesh upper that conforms readily to the foot. Synthetic leather bolsters durability and protection of the toe, heel and midfoot areas. The men's Palisade, \$110, has welded TPU overlays that add structural support to the mesh upper.



# BEHOLD!

## THE 2014 POLARTEC APEX AWARD WINNERS

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- ▲ WILD - Burnside Alpha
- ▲ LULULEMON ATHLETICA® - Flexy Base Jacket
- ▲ STRATE - Cham Pant
- ▲ PATAGONIA® - Diamond Guff Snap T
- ▲ GIRO - Wind Guard 1/4 Zip

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Pearl Izumi EM TRAIL N2

At **Pearl Izumi**, a highlight is an update with the EM TRAIL N2, \$120, which features the brand's Dynamic Offset technology eliminating forefoot slap and reducing shock. Featuring a low 4mm drop, the EM Trail N2 is neutral trail running shoe and includes Pearl Izumi's nimble, yet cushioned, level 2 midsole along with an aggressive self-cleaning lug pattern with a

forefoot rock-plate. A seamless upper uses bonded technology for structure and durability.

Mike Thompson, Pearl Izumi's product line manager for run apparel and footwear, said trail running is healthy and the market is strong in both the SRA channel and outdoor channel. He added, "Trail running allows consumers to explore the outdoors in a new and refreshing way and the dynamic nature of running on trails is generally better for you and your body versus the repetitive mechanics involved in road running. Trail races, especially mud runs and ultras, give runners a goal to achieve and in the process they are helping to fuel the growth and popularity of the sport."

But he said giving the runner adequate amounts of cushioning, comfort, protection, and traction without compromise are critical in trail running. Said Thompson, "All of these things can be achieved without going to one extreme or the other. We will continue to stay the course at Pearl Izumi with our award-winning trail footwear line and delivering on all of those product needs without going to one extreme or the other."

At **Inov-8**, the Race Ultra 270 is a new, lighter racing version in the race ultra series. At just 270 grams, the shoe brings the athlete closer to the



Inov-8 Race Ultra 270 and Roclite 295

ground with its reduced 4mm drop. It offers optimal cushioning and comfort for the long-distance athlete, while also delivering increased levels of proprioception. A flatter outsole ensures a stable ride when fatigue sets in. Clipping a race ultra gaiter onto Inov-8's unique on-the-shoe attachment system ensures all debris is kept at bay.

The updated Roclite 295 is a high mileage, off-road running shoe that now boasts a new and improved fit. Its durability and deep cleats were designed for long training runs and adventure races when the miles are big and the terrain unpredictable.

Paul Staudigel, Inov-8's footwear product manager, is likewise seeing a "massive increase" in participants in off-road events, including extreme competitions such as OCR/mud runs of varying distances, Ultra Running, Mountain Running, and Sky Running. For all of these athletes, grip is the most important in their shoe and remains Inov 8's focus.

"While things like heel drop and creating a level of cushion/protection that's right for them are definitely important, neither of those things matter if the grip on the shoes isn't designed to give them sure footing when they're out on the field of battle," said Staudigel.

He added, "At the end of the day, if our product isn't working for the athlete and giving them the confidence they need to tackle anything off road, whether it be single track, mud covered walls, or 1000 foot descents down the sides of mountains, we don't make it - period." ■

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# CALENDAR

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Photo courtesy Altra

## AUGUST

- 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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I AM... SGB

## TERRY REILLY

Assistant Store Manager Running Fit

**How did you get into the run business?** I began as a sales person in 1980 at a store called Total Runner in Southfield, MI. I assisted in opening new locations in Grosse Pointe Woods and Ann Arbor, MI. Within four years, the Total Runner owners decided to sell and Randy Step, who I knew from a running club, decided to leave the funeral business and go into running. I was there until 1992 but recruited to join a footwear specialty store in Ann Arbor, MI. After 20 plus years there, I decided to go back to Running Fit.

**When did you get into running?** Since 1977 or thereabouts. I wanted to be in better shape for winter cross-country ski racing and running was a natural off-season activity. My older brother also inspired me. I never ran in high school. I was 24 when I began running.

**Were you a big racer?** I've finished 45 marathons (PR 2:41.05) and countless other races from a mile to 30k. I remember being in that stage where I thought I had to break triple-digits for my weekly mileage, so I really tried. I made it to 92 miles and was exhausted.

**Do you have any mentors?** Adele Rubenstein, a former co-worker and manager of another location where I used to work,

as well as Steve Angerman, one of the founders of Running Fit. Both combined amazing product knowledge with a passion for footwear and accessories and stressed customer service that is second to none.

**What do you like about working in the running industry?** The constant change in products. It's sometimes frustrating to customers who frequently want more of the same in footwear and cannot get it. But by and large, innovation is a good thing.

**What's unique about Running Fit's approach?** The challenging events that keep runners engaged. For example, Dances with Dirt is a 100 km team relay event that takes place on hiking and horse riding trails in Pinckney, MI. It attracts 400 teams with five people on each team. It long predates any of the Warrior Dash events and sells out in February (the event is held in September).

**Is there anything unique about the Michigan runner?** They're a hearty bunch. The hard-core people are out there year round in all weather for the most part.

**Favorite part of your job?** New runners are the most fun because they really listen to advice on getting into running. Getting them excited about getting and staying fit without injury is very important. Convincing them they can achieve a fitness goal is great.

**Least favorite part?** Unpleasant people. Thank goodness the great ones far outnumber the troublemakers. A close second? The pervasive online presence that fosters the misconception that online is ALWAYS cheaper.

**What do you look for in a new hire?** Reliable, trustworthy and social staffers who are committed runners. Speed isn't as

important as relating to the average person who comes to us for help.

**What's different about today's runners versus past generations?** Too many athletes are way too over reliant on technology. They are so data driven they sometimes appear unable to get a run in unless they know EXACTLY how far they went, how many steps, calories spent, etc., and then feel compelled to share everything every day with others. I start my watch and go.

**What would many in the industry be surprised to know about you?** I have a Broadcast Arts certificate from the Specs Howard School of Broadcast Arts. I was very interested in a career in radio/TV, but couldn't take the pay cut. I still love radio, particularly public radio in Detroit and Ypsilanti/Ann Arbor, MI.

**Favorite motto to live by?** Give everyone a wide berth; life is too short to force yourself on others.

**If you could have a dinner with any three people, who would they be and why?** The Dalai Lama, Steve Allen and Kurt Vonnegut. A great cross-section of humor, spiritual and literary brilliance. ■



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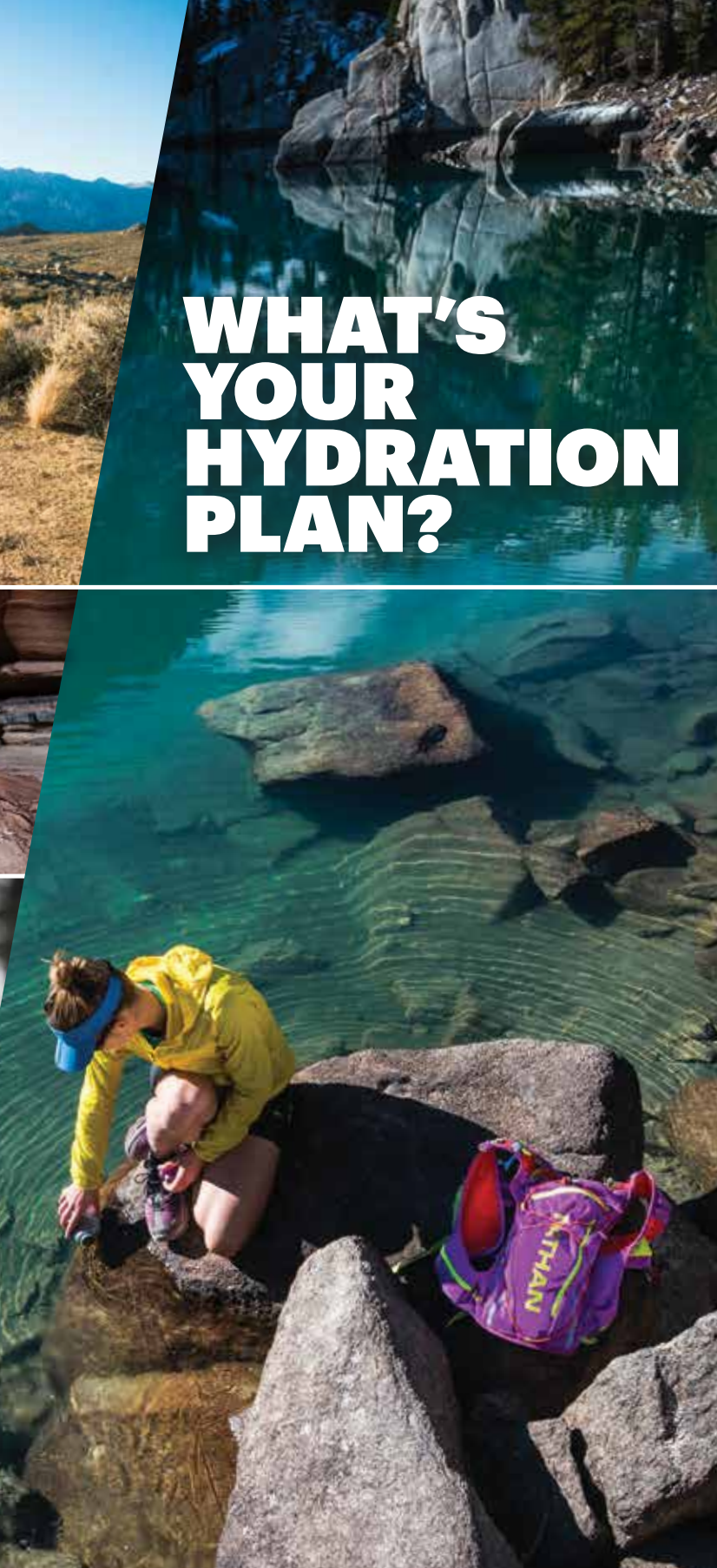
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