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WEEKLY

THE WEEKLY DIGITAL MAGAZINE FOR THE SPORTING GOODS INDUSTRY



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ON THE COVER: Photo courtesy Adidas

MOVERS & SHAKERS

GoPro appointed **Zander Lurie**, formerly EVP at Guggenheim Digital Media, as SVP of Media. Lurie will provide strategic leadership of the creation, curation, and distribution of content.

Jack Wolfskin, Germany's leading domestic outdoor apparel, equipment, and footwear brand, appointed **Melody Harris-Jensbach**, who previously worked for Esprit and Puma, as chief executive. Michael Rupp, who has been at the helm since July 2012, decided for personal reasons not to extend his contract with the company.

Line, makers of athlete-driven skis and freestyle skiing pioneers, entered into a partnership with international pro **Tom Wallisch** to further solidify the brand as the global leader of freestyle skiing.

Lululemon Athletica appointed **Duke Stump**, formerly at Nike and Easton Sports, to its senior leadership team as EVP, community and brand, effective December 1.

New World Consumer Products, LLC., added World Champion Cyclist **Mike King** as a brand ambassador for its flagship product XRCEL, a cutting-edge sports performance fuel based on New World Pharmaceutical's patented formulation.

Outdoor Retailer Show Director **Kenji Haroutunian** will step down at the end of November and be succeeded by **Marissa Nicholson**, most recently group sales director of Emerald Expositions' Sports Group.

Under Armour promoted **Henry B. Stafford** to chief merchandising officer, **Matthew C. Mirchin** to president, North America, and **Adam Peake** to EVP, global marketing. And added **Jermaine Jones** to its roster of athletes.



ADIDAS

PROFIT HURT BY GOLF UNIT, RUSSIA EXPOSURE

Adidas AG reported third-quarter profits slid 11.0 percent to €282 million (\$349.8 mm), or €1.35 (\$1.67), due to negative currency effects and a continuing slide at its golf division.

The Group's gross margin decreased 1.9 percentage points to 47.4 percent mainly due to higher input costs and negative currency effects. In addition, increased clearance activities, in particular in Russia/CIS, contributed to the gross margin decline.

Group revenues increased 9 percent on a currency-neutral (c-n) basis, driven by a double-digit sales increase in Retail and a high-single-digit revenue growth in Wholesale. All regions, except North America, contributed to the c-n revenue growth.

"Our group delivered a solid third quarter with accelerated growth rates in many of our key markets and categories," said Herbert Hainer, Adidas Group CEO. "At the same time, we have been aggressively addressing our key challenges - restructuring and stabilizing TaylorMade-Adidas Golf, adjusting our business in Russia/CIS, and intensifying our efforts to revive momentum and growth in the U.S."

Western Europe increased 10 percent mainly as a result of strong sales increases in Germany, France, Spain, and the U.K. In European Emerging Markets, c-n revenues were up 19 percent driven by double-digit growth in Russia/CIS. Group sales in North America decreased one percent on a c-n basis, as mid-single-digit sales growth at Adidas was more than offset by declines at TaylorMade-Adidas Golf and Reebok. In Greater China, group sales were up 13 percent on a c-n basis due to continued momentum across all channels. Currency-neutral revenues in Other Asian Markets grew 6 percent driven by double-digit sales increases in South Korea and India. In Latin America, c-n sales grew 16 percent with double-digit increases in most markets and in particular Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico.

From a brand perspective, the strong top-line momentum at both Adidas and Reebok continued during the quarter. Third quarter sales at Adidas increased 12 percent on a c-n basis driven by double-digit sales growth in the Sport Performance football and running categories as well as at Adidas Originals & Sport Style. Sales at Reebok grew 7 percent on a c-n basis driven by sales momentum in the fitness training, walking, and fitness running categories. Revenues in the TaylorMade-Adidas Golf segment declined 36 percent on a c-n basis as a result of the continued weakness in the golf market as well as TaylorMade-Adidas Golf's ongoing efforts to clean retail inventories and the timing of new product introductions compared to the prior year period.

Revenues at Reebok-CCM Hockey increased 15 percent on a c-n basis mainly due to growth in key categories such as skates and protective equipment as well as in hockey apparel. Rockport sales increased five percent c-n. Currency translation effects had a negative impact on sales in euro terms. Net group revenues increased 6.2 percent to €4.118 billion (\$6.1 bn).

Adidas continues to expect sales for the full year to increase at a mid-to-high single-digit rate on a c-n basis.



Herbert Hainer,
Adidas Group
CEO

FOOT LOCKER
PRESIDENT AND CEO
KEN HICKS TO RETIRE

Foot Locker, Inc.'s Ken Hicks plans to retire as president and CEO of the company effective December 1 and be replaced by Richard (Dick) A. Johnson, currently COO.

Hicks will continue as executive chairman of the board through the company's annual meeting in May 2015 and then step down from the board. As executive chairman, Hicks will participate in day-to-day operations through the first quarter of fiscal 2015 to ensure a smooth transition.

Hicks and Johnson are currently working closely together to develop the next phase of the company's long-range strategic plan which is being spearheaded by Johnson and expected to be presented to the investment community in Spring 2015.

Under Hicks' leadership since joining Foot Locker in August 2009, the company has achieved dramatic gains across all key metrics. Specifically, in 2013 sales increased to \$6.5 billion from \$4.9 billion in 2009. During the same period, earnings before interest and taxes grew to 10.4 percent of sales from 2.8 percent, net income grew to 6.6 percent of sales from 1.8 percent, and return on invested capital rose to 14.1 percent from 5.3 percent. Since the beginning of 2010 through today, Foot Locker has returned more than \$1.2 billion to shareholders through dividends and share repurchases and over the same period, the company's market capitalization increased from \$1.8 billion to approximately \$8 billion.



Ken Hicks, President & CEO, with Foot Locker employee

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The advertisement features three panels showcasing Coghlans products. The first panel, labeled 'POWER.', shows a blue and black portable power station on a wooden log. The second panel, labeled 'LIGHT.', shows a grey and black flashlight and a black headlamp with 'COGLANS' branding on a wooden surface. The third panel, labeled 'VERSATILITY.', shows a white and black insulated water bottle. A red banner at the bottom contains the text 'NEW FOR 2015 ORDER NOW', the website 'WWW.COGLANS.COM', and the 'COGLANS' logo.



Saucony NYC
Triumph

SAUCONY

LAUNCHES WHOA MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Coinciding with the TCS New York City Marathon, Saucony launched the Whoa marketing campaign, a multichannel global marketing platform that "articulates – with just one word—the absolute expression of delight and surprise that runners feel when they run in the new Triumph ISO."

The Triumph ISO, \$150, showcases two of the brand's latest innovations - ISOFIT and PWRGRID+. The ISOFIT system adapts to the runner's foot in action. The PWRGRID+ platform offers enhanced cushioning.

"The Whoa campaign concept was really an unintended, genuine creation by our athletes and community of runners," said Mary O'Brien, VP of global marketing Saucony. "Every time one of our runners stepped into

the Triumph ISO for a test run, their first reaction, consistently, was Whoa. We're excited to roll this campaign out at the New York City Marathon, sharing it with the tens of thousands of passionate runners who appreciate and applaud an unforgettable running experience."

In celebration of the New York City Marathon, Saucony also unveiled the limited edition Three for NYC Collection featuring the Triumph ISO, Kinvara 5 and Saucony DXN Trainer. In reference to New York City's streets, the special edition silhouettes reflect shades of grey and black and a graffiti print that illustrates the urban metropolis. All three shoes feature apple red accents – a nod to New York City's nickname "The Big Apple" – as well as mint green touches representing the Statue of Liberty.

To round out the collection, Saucony offered runners a limited-edition apparel line featuring graffiti print in urban gray and black. The limited-edition line includes men's and women's hoodies and tee's.

Runners visiting the Saucony booth at the expo were welcomed by larger-than-life facial images of Saucony elite athletes Molly Huddle, Ben True and Duane Solomon, each revealing their personal Whoa expression. Runners captured their own images at the Whoa photo booth and shared them through social media channels for a chance to win Saucony product including the Triumph ISO. A specially designed Marathon State of Mind infographic poster highlighting past and present facts about the New York City Marathon was also handed out.

TIMBERLAND,

OMNI UNITED RECYCLE TIRES INTO FOOTWEAR

Timberland announced a collaboration with tire manufacturer and distributor Omni United, to create a co-branded line of tires under the Timberland and Radar Tires brands. Timberland Tires will be the first tires purposely designed to be recycled into footwear outsoles after their road journey is complete.

Timberland and Omni United conceived the partnership three years ago when sustainability leaders from both brands united to address a long-standing, shared concern. The tire and footwear industries are two of the largest consumers of virgin rubber. The majority of tires on the market today have a limited life span and ecologically sound disposal at the end of its life span presents a challenge.

The tires will be made in the U.S. (using domestic and imported materials) and in a rubber formulation appropriate for recycling into shoes by Timberland rather than as tire-derived fuel or dumped into a landfill.

"Our partnership with Omni United marks a new day for the tire and footwear industries," said Stewart Whitney, president of Timberland. "An outdoor lifestyle brand and an automotive industry leader may, at first blush, seem unlikely partners – yet our shared values have given birth to tires that express a lifestyle, deliver performance and safety, and prove that sustainability can be so much more than a theory. It's this kind of cross-industry collaboration that's fueling real change and innovation in the marketplace."

To bring tires-to-shoes to life, Timberland and Omni United established tire return/chain of custody process to make sure the tires go directly to dedicated North American recycling plants. The key steps include:

- » Tire retailers will set aside used Timberland Tires to be recycled after customers purchase new tires.



- » Omni United is partnering with Liberty Tire Recycling and its network of tire collection and recycling plants to sort and segregate the Timberland Tires at the companies' facilities.
- » The used tires will be shipped to a North American tire recycling facility where they will be recycled into crumb rubber.
- » The crumb rubber will be processed into sheet rubber and shipped to Timberland outsole manufacturers.
- » The rubber will be mixed into a Timberland-approved compound for outsoles and incorporated into Timberland footwear. The blended compound will meet Timberland's strict compliance standards.

Said G.S. Sareen, president and CEO of Omni United. "Given the strength of the Timberland brand, and our target consumer's appreciation for sustainability, we see a huge opportunity to change the way people choose their tires. With Timberland tires, drivers can be confident that their tires will perform, while also making a statement that expresses their lifestyle and values."



Wilson Kipsang and Mary Keitany

NYC MARATHON WINNERS WORE ADIDAS BOOST



Adidas Boost

Wilson Kipsang and Mary Keitany, who won the 44th annual New York City Marathon, wore the Adizero Adios Boost 2 with a time of 2:10:59 for Kipsang and 2:25:07 for Keitany. Their wins mark the 21st and 22nd major race victories for runners wearing the Adidas adizero Adios Boost including the marathon world record set in Berlin earlier this year.

Kipsang made a memorable NYC marathon debut with the victory following his London marathon win earlier this year and his eighth overall. For Keitany, the win marked her third marathon victory and first in New York City following a third place finish in 2011. As she crossed the finish line, Keitany showed her 'A Game' as part of Adidas' #mystepmatters social media fund raising support for AKTIV Against Cancer.

THE RUNNING EVENT CONTINUES EXPANSION

The Running Event, coming back for its ninth year December 2-5 in Austin, TX, is expected to add 84 new exhibitors including Ahnu, Dr. Scholl's, Helly Hansen, Shock Doctor, Jabra, Hammer Nutrition, and SKLZ. Asics, On Running and Under Armour are also increasing their presence at the show.

The event will include a conference and trade show including a conversation with Glenn Lyon, CEO and chairman of Finish Line, and Bill Kirkendall of Running Specialty Group about their expansion into the run specialty business, what they've learned and what they believe running stores can learn from them. Other speakers include Jim Knight presenting "Customer Service That Rocks," Bob Phibbs, the Retail Doctor, presenting "You Can Compete!," and Jim Dion describing "The Next Session."

The Running Specialty Hall of Fame will also return presented by IRR, and The 50 Best Running Stores in America will be named by Running Insight.



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GIVING BACK

Adidas and AKTIV Accelerate Cancer Research Efforts

By Thomas J. Ryan



Grete Waitz

Adidas celebrated its five-year anniversary as AKTIV Against Cancer partner with its charitable apparel collection and social media activation at the New York City Marathon. Co-founded by nine-time NYC marathon winner and Adidas athlete Grete Waitz, AKTIV promotes physical activity as a way to prevent and support the treatment of cancer. Since 2009, Adidas has donated more than \$3.3 million to AKTIV Against Cancer through apparel sales.

After being diagnosed with cancer in 2011, Waitz found that running improved her mental and physical state, which inspired her to establish AKTIV Against Cancer with co-founder Hele Aanesen. This year, many of the top runners were wearing a patch to honor AKTIV Against Cancer.

In an interview before the Marathon in Adidas' flagship store in lower Manhattan, Adrian Leek, general manager of Adidas running, said the program continues to honor Waitz's relationship with Adidas that for more than 40 years. But it seeks to get the message out about the health benefits of staying active for cancer patients.

Also at the store, Grete's husband, Jack Waitz, who works closely with AKTIV, said he was "really honored and proud" seeing many of the world's top marathoners wearing the AKTIV logo on their shirts. He also deeply appreciated the support of Adidas, a brand his wife wore since the early 70s. He said, "Greta was very loyal to Adidas. Until she died in 2011, I don't think she had anything else but Adidas on all the time."

A silver medalist at the 1984 games, Grete Waitz was diagnosed with cancer in 2005. She was initially told that rest would help the chemotherapy process. But she found working out gave her extra strength and supported her recovery efforts. Said her husband, "The fact that she was in such good shape not only gave her some more good years but the quality of those years were also better because of the training. So we are convinced and I'm convinced personally that activity is good both physically and mentally for everybody."

He admitted that researchers need "more proof medically" about those health benefits. In Norway, where Grete Waitz was from, researchers are following a number of patients who underwent breast cancer surgery to explore

the impact of activity on their recoveries. With the help of AKTIV Against Cancer, Norway also has specific training centers dedicated to supporting cancer survivors. A program developed with the Sports University of Norway and one of the major university hospitals licenses coaches to advise cancer victims on exercise regimens. But much broader research efforts are just getting underway in other countries, including the U.S.

"We've had some success in Norway, but Norway is a very small country and we want to convince the rest of the world that if you stay active you can either stay cancer free or you can get help with your recovery. That takes time but also money and that's why what Adidas is doing in supporting the program is very important."

For the Marathon, Adidas finally received non-profit status on sales. That allowed Adidas to donate 100 percent of its in-booth AKTIV apparel sales during the marathon Health & Fitness Expo to AKTIV. To further funds for cancer research, Adidas and AKTIV Against Cancer also asked runners, fans, and visitors at the Expo to show their "A Game." For every tweet, Instagram or Facebook post that includes #mystepmatters with an image of a hand symbol in the shape of an "A," Adidas donated \$1 to AKTIV.

Adidas also launched a new product line to benefit AKTIV for the Marathon. Leek said Adidas' designers were influenced by styles Grete Waitz wore in the 80s but added a "modern spin." The line includes a new logo and also features the Grete 30 Boost running shoe. Boasting the vaunted energy return with Boost technology, the Grete 30 Boost marks 30 years since the launch of Waitz's Adidas Originals running shoe and also honors the 30th anniversary of her medal at the 1984 Olympics.

"Grete was a champion on and off the course," said Leek. "She's always been a special member of the Adidas family – from the early strides of her legendary running career through the final stages of her spirited fight against cancer. Adidas is honored to continue its support of AKTIV by asking fans to participate in a tangible and emotional tribute to Grete's legacy and the fight against cancer." ■



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From left to right: Fritz Taylor, Nick Arciniaga, Chris McCormack, Dave Dombrow

UNDER ARMOUR UNVEILS SPEEDFORM GEMINI

By Thomas J. Ryan

Looking to build on the breakthrough success of its SpeedForm platform, Under Armour at a media event at its flagship store in New York City introduced the SpeedForm Gemini.

The introduction comes as Under Armour's running footwear efforts are gaining traction. In its third quarter, Under Armour's footwear revenues jumped 50.1 percent to \$121.6 million. The gains were driven by expanded running silhouettes including a continued focus on more balanced price points across its sporting goods distribution while also beginning to broaden offerings across its SpeedForm platform.

The expanded line this spring includes the launch of the SpeedForm Gemini, \$130, with Charge Cushioning, and SpeedForm Vent, \$100. Said Under Armour's CEO and Founder Kevin Plank on a conference call with analysts, "We are taking the SpeedForm technology developed for a single shoe into a broader platform that will enable us to reach a broader range of consumers and gain share on the shoe wall as well."

Touted as the first shoe made in a bra factory, the SpeedForm RC was released in 2013 followed by the SpeedForm Apollo in Spring 2014. The Gemini promises to be even more accessible. At the launch event, Dave Dombrow, VP of footwear design at Under Armour, said the SpeedForm

Gemini offers greater cushioning than its predecessors and is aimed at runners training longer distances/races and for runners who want to log extra miles to reach their fitness goals.

The two major features of the SpeedForm Gemini are the SpeedForm upper, which has an "amazing precision fit, feels super light and is super breathable" with the aid of its breakthrough approach coming from being manufactured in a bra factory. The big difference is the marriage of the SpeedForm upper with the Charge Foam outsole.

"And Charge cushioning is really unique," said Dombrow. "It's an adaptable cushioning and what that means is that if you're just standing around, it's really comfortable and has this amazing cushioning. But as a runner gets up to higher speeds and gets higher forces, it actually gets more responsive and firms up. It can also adjust to a runner's weight. And that's like the Holy Grail of what a good running shoe can do. It's really soft when you really need it to be soft. And it's really responsive when you're putting more forces in. More comfort, better performance, and 360-degree fit and feel."

Also attending the event were Under Armour athletes Chris "Macca" McCormack, a two-time Ironman World Champion, and Nick Arciniaga, who recently placed 7th at the 2014 Boston

Marathon and won the Baltimore Half Marathon. McCormack ran the New York City Marathon in Gemini shoes. Arciniaga ran in the SpeedForm Vent RC, which is the same construction as the SpeedForm Apollo, but brings in Under Armour's ArmourVent technology that is used in apparel for enhanced footwear breathability.

Said McCormack, who had been training in the Gemini since July, "I absolutely love it. It gives an incredible fit and incredible feel with the SpeedForm upper and then the cushioning is amazing. It's a beautiful shoe."

Fritz Taylor, Under Armour's VP of running, added, "I've been running in a pair for a good bit right now and they are absolutely phenomenal. The shoe just feels like it was custom molded for my foot - that's the real benefit. And that Charge cushioning is just a nice lively bouncy feel. So if you're like me and most of your runs are early in the morning, getting out of bed at 5:30 in the morning, you put these shoes on and you're ready to go."

"We want to make kick-ass running shoes that inspire runners to wear them to get out the door and run more and make them better runners," said Taylor. "But along the way we're not going to be afraid to question tradition, break some rules and deliver product that are truly innovative." ■

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CROSS COUNTRY RUNNING HAS A BROADER INFLUENCE

The cross country category provides a way to reach many runners just entering the sport who will likely inspire many others to run.

By Thomas J. Ryan

Dedicating wall space to cross country shoes (whether spikes or flats) can seem like a marginal opportunity for running stores. The bigger opportunity appears to be selling to the majority of runners who catch the running bug past their school years.

But believing cross country to be one of the core foundations of the sport of running, running footwear brands still invest heavily supporting major and minor cross country events and teams as well as with product innovation.

For many, the link to their career in the running industry can be traced back to their sprints around a dusty track in their high school years and many proudly look to support one of their earliest passions. And while track & field only seems to garner much media attention every four years during the Olympics, many people get their first taste of running in track & field and wind up being the future 5K-to-marathon runners. With astute coaching that most runners never receive, many cross country runners also bring their post-graduate friends to the sport.

“Mainstream sports fans may not get why cross country is such a sexy sport, but we sure do!” said Brooks Team Brand Manager Steve DeKoker. “As one of the most participated in

high school sports and as a running-based sport, we believe it's important to cheer on runners and their teams through the training, racing, and celebrations that are all part of cross country."

Additionally, most high school programs don't cut athletes from their rosters, with the sport often introducing people to the benefits and fun of staying active.

"Everyone who wants to run, can; they're supported by the team and the coach and they're automatically welcomed into the running family, and that's something we want to help support and be a part of," said DeKoker.

According to the annual High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), track & field in the 2013/2014 Season remained the number one sport for girls and was second in boys to football. About half of those track & field runners are estimated to be focused on cross country.

"Because of high participation, cross country allows us to develop a two-way relationship with these young runners early on," said Tony Brancalone, Saucony's racing product line manager. "We hope that early exposure will result in a lifetime relationship with the brand."

Matt Donnelly, senior product manager, sports and training, Asics America, also touted the benefits cross-country brings in helping brands and stores cultivate and build brand awareness to new runners.

"The key to this is giving young consumers (who aren't the Mesomorph Super athletes) a place of shared meaning; a place where toughness can be defined by how fast you can run a 200 meter hill toward the end of a three-mile race," said Donnelly. "Retailers should absolutely support this category because when young runners understand that retailers 'get them,' it gives them a reason to come back to that retailer again and again."

Moreover, while many people start running later in life, they network with and are influenced by those that have been in the sport longer - in many cases the high school level athlete who ran cross country. Donnelly estimates that the size of that influencer crowd is likely larger than generally assumed.

"Remember - it's a no cut sport," said Donnelly. "National Federation of High Schools shows cross-country as the seventh largest participation sport, barely behind baseball and volleyball."

Bekah Broe, assistant product manager for performance running, New Balance, agreed that on a grassroots level, cross country athletes are the ones who convince their co-workers to run a 5K with them.

"They're the ones who decide to run a marathon after college because they're looking for a new challenge," said Broe. "They're the ones their friends and family call for advice when they start running in their 30s, 40s, and beyond. Supporting this sport shows that we support running on a very fundamental level."

From a retail perspective, cross country athletes need new shoes on a predictable, seasonal basis, and spikes provide the perfect gateway into this repeat business, Broe noted. But he also believes cross country runners continue to represent "the future of our sport," a strong belief across many brands given the positive experience many in the industry found in track & field even into their adult years.

"We have a product manager who ran both collegiately and post-collegiately, a designer whose kids run for their school, marketing associates running on competitive club teams, and many more who were first introduced to running on those muddy, leaf covered courses," said Broe. "For us, cross country elicits an inexplicable emotional response - and we want to be the brand that helps create those memories for the next generation of young runners."

For Saucony, supporting a local cross country race can be an intimate way for a brand to introduce itself to runners and educate neophytes on the sport of running.



"Picture a cool day in southern Ohio, a high school event with 4,000 kids competing, 8,000 friends and family watching, with a large Saucony blow-up arch over the finish line, 1,000 yards of Saucony snow fencing lining the course at different points, 15 tear drop flags mark miles and key points, our mobile marketing van set up with kids meeting our athletes with the Saucony ATV as the pace car," Brancalone offered. "Cross country runners don't get a stadium, court, rink, or even a track. At best, they may sometimes have a cone to guide them on a course with a parent volunteer telling them which turn to take. Anytime we can make a race an event for them we are contributing to our sport and it benefits everyone."

Saucony sponsors 50 cross country races, 16 crosscountry camps, and 400 spike-related events with its partners at specialty run.

"Saucony has a strong scholastic focus," said Brancalone. "Nearly all professional distance runners have their start rooted in cross country. It is literally the foundation for all distance running."



Saucony Carrera XC



Kilkenny XC 5



Shay XC4

The Saucony Carrera XC, \$110, is promoted as the lightest cross country spike in the market with a unique IsoFit upgrade. Built directly into the mesh, IsoFit improves the overall fit while keeping the aggressive spike plate needed for an elite performance. The Kilkenny XC 5, \$60 (spike), \$55 (flat), is Saucony's franchise cross-country spike and flat - ideal for the first-time cross country runner who wants the comfort of a training shoe with true spike performance. The Shay XC4, \$80 (spike), \$75 (flat), is a top-seven spike. Made for the varsity runner,

it features a more aggressive plate and true spike fit.

Brancalone doesn't see the broader trends impacting running shoes such as minimalism and maximalism working their way into racing

product. "In fact, those trends are followed by racing product," said Brancaleone. "At Saucony, the trends toward thinner materials, lower weights, more streamlined designs are inspired by racing styles. A clean high performance feel has made its way into all areas of our line derived directly from racing. Innovations such as Pro-Lock, IsoFit, FlexFilm, and sublimation prints all began in Saucony's racing product first then moved into the rest of the line."

Asics America is a long-time premier sponsor of the Footlocker Cross Country Championships, marking its 36th year. Said Donnelly, "We work closely with Foot Locker throughout the late summer and fall to build momentum for this event among high school cross country teams. Additionally, Asics provides custom uniforms for the regional teams to compete in at the championships."

Another example of Asics America's commitment to cross country is on a professional level through its sponsorship of the Asics Mammoth Track Club as well as supporting athletes who compete at the international level in the World Cross Country Championships. Added Donnelly, "We continue to monitor and evaluate cross-country opportunities because this is a key focus area."



Asics Cross Freak

The Cross Freak, \$85, is Asics' top model for the cross country course. The super-lugged rubber outsole provides added traction on soft surface while a five-point spike configuration offers better grip in

even the worst course conditions. The shoe comes with ten 9mm spikes and a wrench.

Donnelly said cross-country shoes have always been the example of minimal long-before the craze arrived. "Before the industry decided to repackage them as 'Minimal' shoes - racing flats and cross country flats were the minimal purpose shoes of the day," said Donnelly. "So the profile of product has remained pretty much the same. I'd say that makers of true cross country shoes have tried to design them with a little more intention - going for stronger traction design so as not to be confused with a minimal shoe."

Brooks this year partnered with the Mt. San Antonio College (SAC) Cross Country Invitational to bring its Run Happy ethos to tens of thousands of high school cross country runners. Mt. SAC is one of the oldest and most well respected race franchises in the nation. "Running is all we do, and to be part of these legendary meets allows us to celebrate the run at the competitive level and also celebrate the future stars of running," said DeKoker. "In addition to Mt. SAC, we have longstanding relationships with large meets like the Memphis Twilight Invitational and the ISU Pre-Nationals Invitational."

Beyond sponsoring meets, Brooks honors the country's most dedicated coaches through its Inspiring Coaches program. Recently wrapping up its fourth year, Renee Williams-Smith of Mira Costa High School in Manhattan Beach, CA and her team received \$10,000 in Brooks gear and \$2,500 cash for team expenses. Twenty-four other finalists received \$5,000 in gear and \$500 cash. Brooks also supports 600 high school coaches across the U.S. by providing gear and other perks to help bolster their programs.

Brooks Senior Product Line Manager Carson Caprara said cross country can be a demanding sport, and runners want gear that will help them take on the distance of their races as well as handle the mud, dirt, grass, roots, rocks, and other technical surfaces they might cross. "The minimalist trend left runners asking for light shoes that were simple and functional while maximalism has runners talking about comfort on the run," added

Caprara. "The competition side is incorporating lightweight insights with an incredibly unique experience underfoot. Runner's look to their racing shoes to give them an advantage."



Brooks Men's Mach 16

Brooks franchise XC shoe is the Men's Mach 16, \$75 (spikes), \$70 (flat). With great traction and asymmetrical lacing for a wrap-your-foot fit, the sprinter weighs in at only 5.3 ounces and features a supple, seamless upper that lets the athlete run sockless. The Mach update for 2016 will push the envelope on the functionality and performance to a new place.

"You will see an extremely aggressive design meant to absolutely shred the terrain, coupled with an ultralight frame designed to put the athlete in a position to maximize their effort on the course," said Caprara. "The spike will break some of the long standing 'rules' for how a cross country spike should look and deliver added confidence to the runner as they approach the starting line."

New Balance partners with select cross country camps like Foss Running Camps as well as regional meets such as the DCXC Invite with Pacers in Washington, D.C., the Disney Cross Country Classic in Florida or the Cross Country tour with Skinny Raven in Anchorage, Alaska.

"We also sponsor collegiate, high school, and club teams to make sure they have the tools they need on their quest for the 'perfect 15,'" said Broe. "While we're immensely proud of these efforts, our biggest contribution to the sport comes from the 'spikes on the ground' efforts of our reps in the field. Our Trackster team spends the late summer and fall setting up demo runs at camps, working spike nights at local stores, and providing incredible race day experiences at cross country meets across the country. The impact of that direct engagement is hard to measure but impossible to replace."

A cross country franchise for New Balance is the XC5000 Spike, \$125. Born from the insights of Team New Balance athletes who have taken on the toughest cross country courses, the New Balance XC5000 competition flat features a snug performance upper, a four-spike forefoot plate and a featherweight outsole.



New Balance XC5000 Spike

"The needs of the cross country runner are fairly evergreen - great traction, supportive fit, nimble ride - so we tend to see less trickle down of overarching footwear trends like minimalism," said Broe.

While cross country models may be fairly immune to the ebbs and flows, they definitely benefit from New Balance's overall understanding as a footwear brand. For example, the attention to detail with the "footprint" of its running models has informed a generation of cross country spikes with full ground contact and geometries. Said Broe, "With an incredible assembly of athletes, we can also go straight to the source for inspiration with our spike lineup. Take Jenny Simpson for example - an extremely articulate, high school cross country star turned Olympian who helps us set the trend for these pinnacle competition products."

At Adidas, higher-end models for the cross country runner includes the Adizero Avanti 2.0, \$110, and the Adizero Cadence 2, \$100. Designed for more aggressive acceleration with less braking, the men's Adizero Avanti 2.0 spikes have a lightweight mesh upper



Adidas Adizero Avanti 2.0



Adidas Adizero Cadence 2



with a glove-like fit, flex grooves beneath the toes for a natural feel, and a Pebax plate with replaceable spikes. The Adizero Cadence 2.0 spikes are a fast and light 10K track style made

for better acceleration and less braking. Weighing just 5.3 ounces, the shoe has an air mesh upper, a glove-like fit, and a flexible outsole with replaceable spikes.

Other more budget-friendly options from Adidas include the XCS 5 Spikes, \$70, designed for maximum energy return and minimum weight with a strong all-over print. The

Adidas Adizero Avanti 2.0



Adizero Ambition Spikes, \$85, have a seamless two-mesh upper for lateral support with open mesh on the medial side for breathability.

Adidas Adizero Ambition Spikes



Currently, Adidas America supports two large-scale XC events - the Wisconsin Adidas Invite and the Adidas XC Challenge. Held in Madison, WI, the

Wisconsin Adidas Invite hosts 15 of the top 20-ranked teams for men and women. A total of 78 Division 1 teams compete in what many consider to be the best non-championship meet of the NCAA season.

Hosted by N.C. State in Raleigh, NC, the Adidas XC Challenge this September marked its 21st year. One of the largest cross country meets held in North Carolina, the Adidas Cross Country Challenge looks to showcase the top North Carolina high school teams with some of the top ranked out-of-state teams, in one of the premier early season meets in the southeast. Adidas is aggressively exploring other opportunities in the high school demographic in the next year.

The Puma Bolt EvoSpeed Electric v2, \$120, is a men's sprinting spike that features an aerodynamic Clarino Rovenica synthetic upper that wraps and secures the foot. A full-length, eight-spike Pebax plate offers aggressive traction. Soft on-skin feel, the microfiber and suede lining ensures a smooth comfortable fit. The TFX Distance v5, \$65, is a men's distance spike built for high school or collegiate athletes looking for an affordable entry-level and distance track spike. It features a lightweight breathable upper mesh for barefoot use. ■

Puma Bolt EvoSpeed Electric v2 (above) and TFX Distance v5 (below)

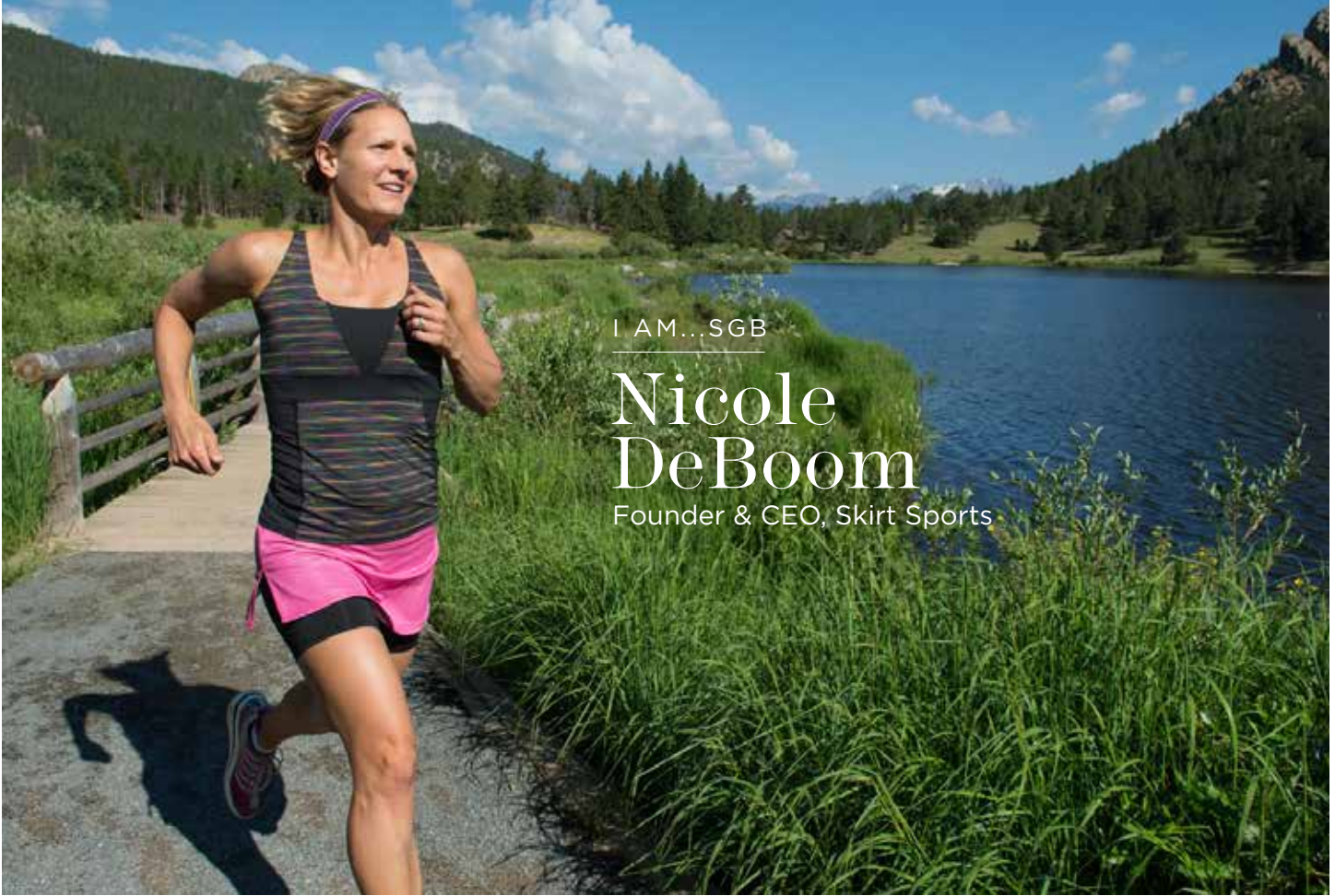


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Nicole DeBoom

Founder & CEO, Skirt Sports

What was your favorite sports growing up? I was a serious swimmer in the Chicago suburbs. By the time I was 16, I ranked fifth in the country in the 100 breaststroke and swam in the 1988 Olympic Trials.

Proudest athletic moment? I won the 2004 Ironman Wisconsin wearing a prototype of the first running skirt. Not many people get a launch pad like that for building a business!

How did you get your start in the industry? I had zero apparel or business background prior to launching Skirt Sports. I was simply a woman looking for something that didn't exist. It came to me on an epiphany run in December 2003 when I glimpsed my reflection in a storefront window in the small Rocky Mountain town of Lyons, CO. I had three distinct thoughts - I looked like a boy, I was uninspired, and I just wanted to feel pretty. I ran home and scribbled my notes on a piece of paper outlining how I would shake up the women's athletic apparel world with a new invention, something that I was certain would inspire many women to get out the door - the running skirt.

Did you have an early mentor? I was lucky to be friends with Lara Merriken, the founder of

Larabar. When I scribbled my notes about starting a business, I knew immediately that I didn't want to do this alone, that I would create a team environment, much like Lara had done. I also learned that it's very important to outline your business' core values from the beginning. It's a great gut-check along the way. Ours still stand strong today - Relationships, Innovation, Hard Work, Fun, Fitness, and Passion.

What's new at Skirt Sports? After ten years, we have decided to focus our business on being the one brand that caters to a busy woman's entire running life, whether she's relaxing, running, or celebrating. This means that we eliminated our cycling and tri products, and we are expanding our running offerings to include Relax and Celebrate products. Stay tuned for some really unique fabrics in these new categories, from super-comfortable to super-party-time. We are also focused on growing our sports bra business which is currently our second largest category. Once women try our bras, they're hooked.

What's Skirt Sports biggest challenge? Getting people to know we exist. We could never compete against the big footwear brands on dollars alone. That's why it's important to focus on our unique position. We do not

sponsor big-name athletes, spend tons of marketing dollars, or set unrealistic standards for women. We accept our women as they are, providing support to help them navigate their running lives, much like our best retail partners who create a caring, non-intimidating environment. Our products fit a range of personalities and body types, something that is unique in the industry. Whether she's bold and body-confident, more serious and athletic, or more casual and modest, we have styles, prints, and color stories that work for her. To back up our inclusive approach, we have created an in-house fit process that targets multiple body types for each size. It's a grueling process but, in the end, we achieve our goal of making products that fit real women's bodies - helping all women get out the door.

What do you do for fun? Run, bike, hike, swim, do FitWall (my new discovery - the world of HIIT), in other words - get outside and exercise.

Name one thing that the industry may be surprised to know about you? I'm a loud and obnoxious mom. I don't care how embarrassing I look to anyone else. If I can coax a laugh out of my almost three-year-old, I'm a happy mama. ■



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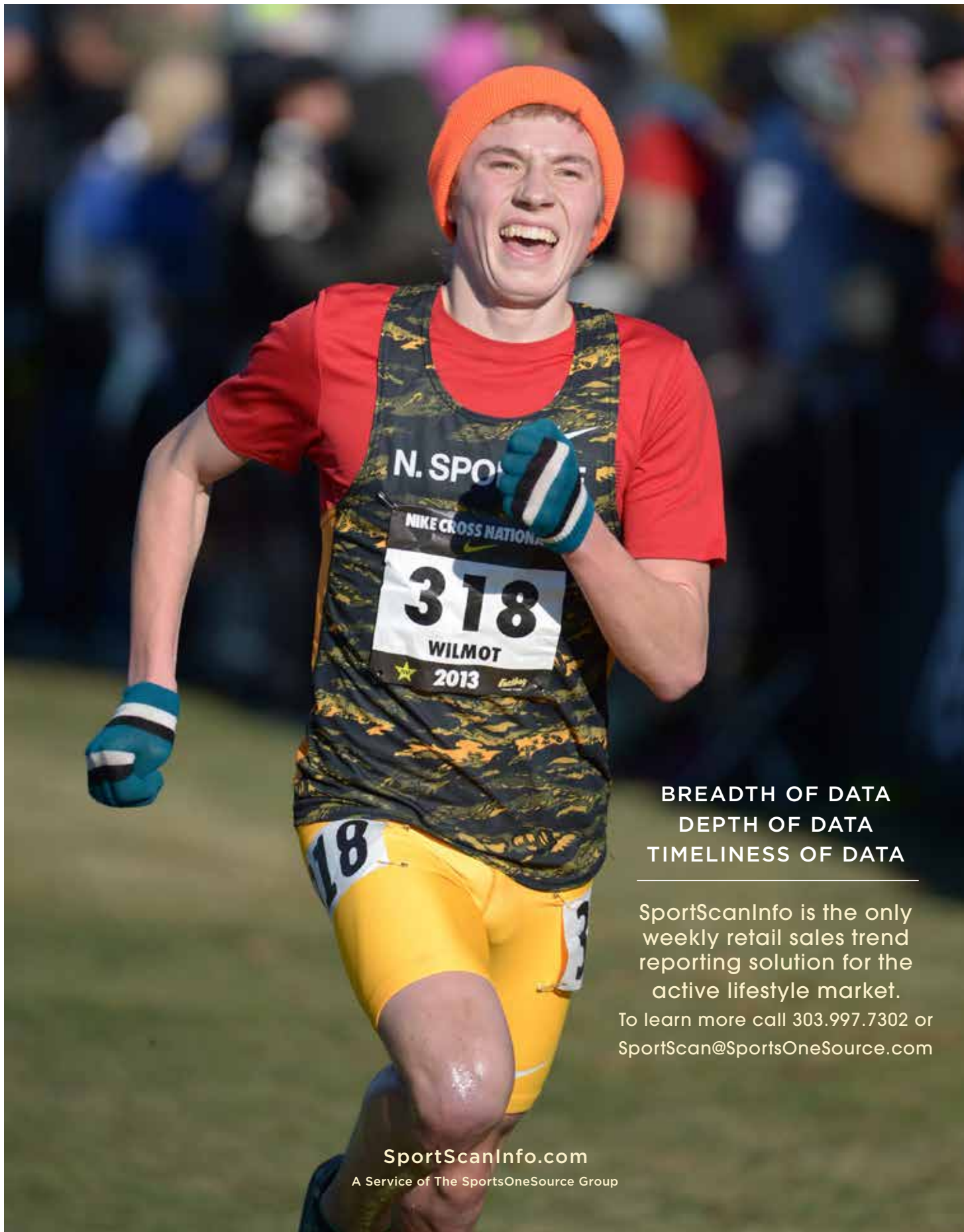
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