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WEEKLY

THE WEEKLY DIGITAL MAGAZINE FOR THE ACTIVE LIFESTYLE MARKET



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Photo courtesy ToPo Athletic

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ON THE COVER: Photo courtesy Balega



Photo courtesy Smith

SMITH'S 2015 HELMETS PACK POTENTIALLY GAME-CHANGING TECHNOLOGY

To meet the demands of the next-generation snow and bike athlete, Smith developed a new series of helmets made to exceed safety standards and adapt to higher performance needs. The company's new Overtake cycling helmet, part of the renovated bike collection, was named winner of a 2015 Red Dot Design Award.

Smith's design beat out nearly 5,000 other entrants from 56 countries. Awarded by the Design Zentrum Nordrhein Westfalen in Essen, Germany, the Red Dot competition has been touted by industry product, communication and concept designers as the largest and most recognized product competition in the world. Red Dot will present Smith with their award for its holistic approach to product design in an online presentation June 29, 2015.

The award follows the success of Smith's Forefront all-mountain helmet, a full-coverage helmet with Aerocore construction made for both riding and racing. This low volume helmet is made with what looks to be the game-changing Koroyd material, also used in the Overtake. Colors differ from the exoskeleton construction and inside ventilated lining, making for a radical look.

Although both the new Overtake and former Forefront are designed with attention to visual aesthetic, Smith is primarily concerned with protection. The company's helmet strategy tackles the challenge of protection against low speed, high speed, rotational and multi-impact forces. With a knack for sourcing new materials, Smith hopes to exceed the standard of today's international helmet offerings. How? By coming up with solutions to real needs snow and bike users experience, including improved energy absorption, aerodynamics, ventilation and overall noggin protection. The approach is to source the newest, most innovative performance technology.

Smith's go-to Aerocore construction featuring Koroyd, first introduced in helmet products in 2013, has proven to be the answer to the company's goals. Aerocore combines tried and true EPS- based core construction with the innovative Koroyd. Not since the use of Styrofoam in the 1960s has a material revolutionized protective headwear, according to Smith.

Koroyd is a cluster of thermally welded co-polymer tubes that together form an absorbing, honeycomb-looking protective core. Koroyd's construction is malleable and provides full breathability. Its energy absorption properties reside in the tube construction, as the cores crush upon impact and decelerate force while reducing trauma.

Smith's Overtake is also built with EPP foam for multi-impact crashes and MIPS liners in the event of multi-rotational forces. Aerocore with Koroyd is said by Smith to absorb 30 percent more energy than traditional EPS. The design is also compliant with Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) design, adding to its aerodynamic benefits. Additional features include 21 vents, Smith's VaporFit dial-operated 360-adjustable fit system, and sunglass, goggle and camera integration. Conquering the solution to direct impacts, Smith's helmets, combined with MIPS, absorb oblique forces by allowing rotation of the outer shell relative to the liner.

For 50 years now the Idaho-original company has grown to become an industry leader in eyewear and helmets.



Smith's Overtake cycling helmet



Smith's Forefront



PLAY AGAIN NOW GEL KICKS SORENESS

Whether you're biking to work, prepping for a marathon or cross training at the gym, there's only one caveat to being active – muscle soreness. The list of non-invasive remedies for everyday aches and pains is lengthy: some swear to pickle juice, while others vow by compression or external hot/cold creams and gels. Play Again Now is another approach you might consider.

Play Again Now is an oral liquid gel made with hyaluronic acid (HA), a substance found naturally in the body, which acts to lubricate joints and tissues. According to Play Again Now, HA also attracts and holds moisture in the body, coating muscle sheaths and

connective tissues keeping joints, tendons and ligaments elastic. Naturally occurring HA degrades in viscosity and quality through aging, rigorous workouts, overuse, injury or surgical procedures, so an extra boost may be the difference in reducing the effects of that last five miles.

The supplement, created from a clinical study by Dr. Gitte Jensen and her team at NIS Labs out of Klamath Falls, OR, was made to ease body soreness and stiffness, making recovery as simple as taking a week off. The end game? Shorten recovery and athletes get back to being active.

Play Again Now said the product is both clinically tested and physician recommended. In a yearlong clinical study, the results of the randomized, double blind, placebo-controlled test resulted in positive findings that Play Again Now does its job. The study also found that when used, the gel improves sleep quality and softens skin. Study results were published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Medicinal Food* in January 2015.

Play Again Now is also backed by the word of athletes like figure competitor Monica Brant, BMX veteran and Red Bull Athlete Kevin Robinson, PGA golfer Russ Cochran and 2014 America's Strongest Man, Dimitar Savatinov, to name a few.

Play Again Now comes in a 24-oz. bottle, \$50, available for purchase at GNC.com and tryplayagainnow.com. The gel is caffeine and gluten free, zero calories, zero carbs and 75 mg of HA in each serving.

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GATES CORPORATION POWERS INTO STATIONARY BIKE MARKET

Gates Corporation, manufacturer of power transmission belts and power products ordinarily reserved for trucks, tractors and other power rigs, is making a push into the growing stationary bike market.

Already a recognized player in the cycling world with its Gates Carbon Belt Drives, the push was prompted not only from the need for stronger, quieter belts but also a continuing trend in spin class popularity. Leading stationary bike makers like Stages Indoor Cycling, FreeMotion Fitness and Schwinn Fitness will use Gates Carbon Drive belts on new models. It is the hope that adding Gates Carbon Drive belts will enhance smooth and low-maintenance performance on these models.

"Gates sees a great opportunity to grow sales in the stationary bike market thanks to the spin class phenomenon, and as health clubs and fitness centers upgrade their studio fleets with new lower-maintenance models," said Todd Sellden, director of Gates Carbon Drive Systems.

Stages Indoor Cycling brought its recently launched SC2 and SC3 models to the March 2015 IHRSA 34th Annual International Convention and Trade Show in Los Angeles, where the new models' CarbonGlyde drivetrain bolstered the most attention. Stages says this feature allows the SC2 and SC3 to provide "the smoothest, most realistic ride available indoors, with unparalleled reliability and lack of maintenance."

Although the lifespan for stationary bikes extends beyond that of regular bikes, due to less frame flex and optimal belt operation, they ironically require more maintenance. Chains can stretch and wear, causing a shorter lifespan for the cycle, not to mention noisy operation that can distract from classes, as well as time-off-bikes for customers.



Gates' Carbon Drive belts do not require lubrication and won't stretch. Gates belts are also proven successful in promoting superior belt efficiency, keeping the ride smooth.

Other brands have enlisted the help of Gates to upgrade stationary bike products. FreeMotion Fitness uses the Gates belt on its Le Tour de France stationary bike, and Schwinn Fitness equipped both the A.C. Performance Plus and the A.C. Sport with Gates belts.

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Osmo's White Mocha Protein (left) and Strawberry Hydration (right)

OSMO'S SWEET ADDITIONS TO WOMEN'S SPECIFIC FUEL

Osmo Nutrition puts to bed the last shreds of belief that any old hydration and protein products will work “just fine” for today’s active woman. Their lines of scientifically reviewed products, including the sweet and newly released Strawberry Hydration and White Mocha Protein, have been formulated around the physiological and hormonal fluctuations unique to a woman’s body.

According to Osmo exercise produces altered energy metabolism levels in women. These shifts directly impact recovery and performance. It is not the norm to design recovery and hydration supplements around female-specific hormone shifts, because the research is daunting. Due to hormonal fluctuations brought about mainly by a woman’s monthly cycle, most researchers are resigned to learning about men’s performance, letting uniquely female findings lag.

Based off the pioneering efforts of Osmo Founder Dr. Stacy Sims, the company has evolved to understand the complicated science of women at work. That means lifting, running, biking, hiking - any activity where performance is required to thrive and make gains. Former generalizations about recovery carb to protein ratios and hydration essentials fall flat to Osmo recipes.

“We deserve nutrition made specifically for us,” said Sims. “As a woman athlete, physiologist and nutrition scientist, I knew it was time to develop products for women athletes.”

Osmo added a second flavor, Strawberry, alongside Mango, to the Osmo Women’s Hydration line. Designed to address the impact hormonal changes have on health, wellness and athletic performance, the line increases power output, improves endurance and helps users avoid premenstrual-related performance decline. It may sound like an over-pumped claim, but the physiological impacts of PMS can impact the experience of working out.

The breakdown, according to Osmo, is that during a woman’s monthly cycle, her core temperature increases, requiring more and different electrolytes than men. Her plasma volume drops, requiring much more than water for optimal hydration.

Like Mango, Strawberry comes in a 40-serving can, \$20, or 24-unit single-serve stick pack display, \$32. Mix two scoops, or one packet, with 16 fl. oz. of water and drink throughout the day when exercising.

As for Osmo’s Protein line, White Mocha was added to the flavor lineup. Formulated to promote muscle synthesis, reduce the side effects of hormone fluctuation and optimize training, Osmo’s protein is highly sophisticated in its efforts. At a biological level, men and women use proteins differently. In women, progesterone inhibits muscle repair and estrogen promotes fat storage. The three-to-one protein to carbohydrate ratio and 20-grams of protein per serving in Osmo’s products are scientifically optimal for building muscle, while adding the dual power of extending recovery.

Like the current offering, Honey and Spice, White Mocha comes in a 12-unit single-serve sachet, \$36, or 12-serving canister, \$30. Mix one scoop or one packet with 8 to 12 fl. oz. of water, or two scoops/two packets for hard sweat session recovery.

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Soleus Fly, One, Turbo

SOLEUS ADDS GPS WATCHES FOR EVERY BREED OF RUNNER

The golden rule of gear is you want it made by those who use it. The gang at Soleus, officially Soleus Running, are just that - runners. Based in the active community of Austin, TX, the company has distinguished itself as an important player in the running accessories category, focusing on fit trackers, heart rate monitors and style-driven watches.

But as the run category evolves, new products have to serve the varying personalities of the modern-day runner. With simple, intuitive and high-performance technology and design, Soleus adds three new GPS options to meet the demands of every runner from field to trail to road.



David Arnold, Founder and CEO, Soleus

By sourcing new tracking technology and asking some of the fastest sponsored athletes, like Nick Symmonds and Alysia Montaño, to give their input, Soleus developed the One, Fly and Turbo.

“Our relationships with runners all over world, especially our elite athletes, gives us tremendous insight into the needs and wants of every type of runner,” said Soleus Founder and CEO, David Arnold. “Our goal is to have a full portfolio of products and with One, Fly and Turbo, we’re serving a growing and diverse population of runners.”

The One, \$79, is launched as Soleus’ simplest model. The word simple may be a deception, however. One is made for the old-school runner - who leaves the house for a run with nothing but their shorts and shoes. With the accuracy of Soleus’ GPS technology, the One maintains a classic and flair-free look with a one-touch start while doing the job it needs to do - track. The face display shows three lines of data - run time, pace and distance - and does not electronically hold a record of the data.

Fly, \$99, is upgraded from the best selling Fit, with features like smaller casing and bandwidth, cleaner user interface with descriptive icons, and four new colors. The Fly will track everything from time, pace, distance and calories burned, with the ability to upload to online training logs and social media. For the runner who likes more interaction in their training, the Fly is a step up from the lone-wolf features of the One. Although Fly is a metamorphosis of the former Fit, both the One and the Turbo are entirely new breeds.

Turbo, \$129, as the name suggests is for the runner that is fully engrained in real-time active tracking, and likes a boost of motivation when fatigue hits. All metrics of GPS information are provided on the Turbo including time, pace, distance, a pre-determined “Pace Partner” tool, pace alerts to keep runners on track with your set goal and “Auto Pause” that can identify a halt in forward movement, used to make up for unintended detours and slow-downs. With equal social compatibility as the Fly, Turbo workouts can be synced to online training groups and allows the runner to upload and store workouts.

Soleus believes that through more affordable market options like their new GPS watches, the scope of running and accessories will grow in total.



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The Generous Soul beneath Balega Socks

By Aaron Bible

In 2003, the same year as the company's founding, Balega, now a leader in run and outdoor specialty socks, founded the Lesedi Project Fund, the company's official nonprofit charity foundation. Lesedi is a Zulu word meaning "light and enlightenment."

Balega's entire product line is made at its South African production facility in Cape Town, utilizing the best performance yarns produced in the U.S. in a unique cross-cultural initiative. Crafted for fit and comfort, Balega is committed to technical excellence, quality and performance. Its retail customers are serviced through their distribution center in NC.

Initially, The Lesedi Project started with the Ethembeni School for the physically disabled and visually impaired in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, but today all of Balega's charity actions and proceeds are run through The Lesedi Project, providing the ability for people to split funds and donate to more than one fund, or to change funds from year to year.

Balega's charity work aims to make a difference in the lives of many. The company's acts of charitable giving illustrate their South African "Ubuntu" belief - meaning, we can only be, through others around us. According to Balega vice president of sales and marketing Tanya Pictor, "It is our passion and absolute need, to live it every day."



The fund has supported global projects, beginning with ongoing scholarships (originally 10, now increased to 12 annually), donating funds and equipment at the Ethembeni School. Education tops Balega's charitable efforts and The Lesedi Project offers education and life skills training to more than 300 impoverished and disabled kids. The Lesedi Project raises funds for the

school by organizing fun runs through U.S. retail partners such as Fleet Feet Sports, and through sales of students' commissioned beadwork.

A key vendor partner of Fleet Feet Sports, Balega has been a partner with the retail chain to support The Lesedi Project dating back to a 2005 annual Fleet Feet Conference. "Bert [Pictor, Balega CEO] asked us if we'd like to be involved in the Lesedi Project, and we were eager to help out, and donated money for an outdoor rehabilitative play gym," said Luke Rowe, senior vice president - franchise support and development of Fleet Feet.



Bert Pictor, CEO, Balega

“We’ve been very involved over the years, establishing a trust fund, donating money to buy them a school bus...this is a desperately poor region, so it’s very worthwhile.”

Rowe said Fleet Feet has taken the Balega model and formalized it for use in its charitable efforts. At the most recent Fleet Feet Conference in June, the company gave 12 grants totaling nearly \$30,000 through a competitive application process its stores participate in each year to help raise money for local charities. “All of this was

Balega inspired,” said Rowe. “It’s been so many years now, I’m not sure everyone remembers the origin of that, but that’s where it came from.”

“It’s always been at the core of Balega to give back,” continued Rowe. “We were there at their birth and we’re excited about their transition. They’ve always been a good partner and they’re good people. We’ve learned a lot from them.”

Balega also gives back within the U.S., with sale proceeds supporting the 501(c)(3) Veterans in Need, and donations to the Breast Cancer Fund (BCF) alongside a collection of limited edition “Words of Grit and Grace” pink support socks. Balega donated one dollar per pair sold to the BCF, which works to eliminate cancer risks through public policy and education on the link between chemical exposure and breast cancer. Balega aimed to double its donation last year.

“The Breast Cancer Fund supports so many issues that Balega stands for and feels passionate about,” said Tanya Pictor. “Beyond everything, what I love most about the cause is that they are proactive – they believe in getting out there and making a difference, step by step. If we as a collective do a little bit together every day, imagine how powerful the outcome would be?”

In November 2014, Balega supported Veteran’s Day by launching its Enduro Physical Training sock. A portion of each sale (50 cents per unit) went to Homes for our Troops, a privately funded NFP dedicated to building handicap adapted, mortgage-free homes for injured veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 190 specialty homes have been built as of June 16, 2015.

“When we founded Balega in 2003, we decided that we wanted to share the blessing of success with those less fortunate,” said Bert Pictor, Balega CEO. “Every day our men and women in uniform are exposed to risk so that we can enjoy the freedom and safety we all sometimes take for granted. In some small way we are trying to make a difference by giving back to Homes for our Troops.” Last year Balega supported SoldierSocks and the Catawba County United Way. During the 2014 winter season, Balega donated 5,000 pairs of socks to SoldierSocks, a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to serving the men and women



who are or have recently served in the U.S. Armed Forces, with simple, yet essential items... like socks.

At Balega’s headquarters in Hickory, NC, the brand committed to donate 500 pairs of socks to the Catawba County United Way to assist with the Point in Time Count for homeless people living in that region of North Carolina. Point in Time Count serves as the primary source of data locally and nationally to understand homelessness trends and to track progress on efforts to prevent and end homelessness for all communities.

And the list continues to expand as Balega seeks other projects and organizations to support. At the end of 2014, the company added Back on My Feet - Chicago, which works to motivate homeless men and women to work their way back into jobs and homes by setting and achieving running goals. Balega outfits 11 chapters of the organization nationally.

As Pictor said, “It is our passion and absolute need, to live it every day.” ■



ONE-ON-ONE

FLEET FEET SPORTS LOOKS TO AMPLIFY ITS SUCCESS

Fleet Feet Sports has ramped up expansion over the last several years, including opening 22 stores last year and 21 in 2013. But much of the internal efforts over the last year have been focused on transforming the Fleet Feet Sports experience to reach the empowered digital consumer.

By Thomas J. Ryan

Since its last conference, Fleet Feet Sports has notched many notable firsts, including the introduction of its online store, the hiring of the brand's first marketing director, and the first national marketing push, Fitnatic Weekend, which arrived during last year's Black Friday weekend.

At its annual conference held in Pittsburgh in June, Fleet Feet Sports rooted its content and messaging with 'Amplify,' a theme meant to embody the power and resonance the brand has when working consistently and interdependently across its 150 locations.

For Jeff Phillips, Fleet Feet Sports president and CEO, the most nerve-racking task of the week involved throwing out the first pitch last Wednesday before the Pittsburgh Pirates and Cincinnati Reds game at PNC Park. The pitch – a high strike to Pittsburgh Fleet Feet Sports owner and official conference host Bob Shooer – kicked off the first Runner's Night at PNC Park, a partnership sponsored by the Pittsburgh store which brought 600 runners to the stadium.

Here, SGB talks with Phillips about the Amplify theme, headwinds with the recent softening in the running category and consolidation in the channel, and the franchisor's ongoing plunge into the digital world.

What's the 'Amplify' theme about? It's about breaking through the noise with a loud, definable voice that resonates with customers. We're in a unique position with a large network of independent owners and operators in different markets. We can be pretty loud when we're united and amplifying together. So the theme's about taking everything we're doing and amplifying it through our messaging in order to reach more consumers.

Is it largely a marketing push? Certainly marketing is a really big piece of it. We've been going through a branding communication refresh. We rolled out 'Be the Movement' a few years ago and that was just tremendous. Our stores embraced it, it resonated with our customers, and it resonated with potential customers. We're now rolling out a new campaign called 'The Power Of Running.' Running is a powerful thing physically and mentally, and a fairly simple activity that yields a really high return on investment relating to health. It can also yield a tremendous amount of good in terms of uplifting communities. We wanted to create a consistent message that leverages those ideas and showcases all our stores are doing that speak to that, so we're building an entire campaign to execute that across the whole

system. When we have a really concise singular message that we can amplify across 150 locations, that's pretty powerful.

How does it build on Experience 2.0? Experience 2.0 wasn't really consumer facing. It was the internal mantra for the things we're working on. Training and education, digital, marketing, store design and build out, the way we engage customers - basically all the touchpoints with customers. And it's many things we continually work on. It doesn't go away.

How was the Fitnatic Weekend? It was a huge success. We drove 12 percent comp store growth over that weekend, a time period that the National Retail Federation reported that overall national retail numbers were down. But the really nice thing is we saw a halo affect in the months following that, and we had really positive comps all the way through the beginning of February. Now we're rolling out 'Power of Running' and our plan is to launch three to four campaigns across the whole system on an annual basis. And we have a lot of confidence in terms of doing that in the future because Fitnatic became such a huge success. We'll also do Fitnatic again this year. But it won't be a weekend campaign, it will run across the whole holiday shopping season.

The running category faced some challenges last year and we noticed Fleet Feet didn't report comparable-store results after showing a string of double-digit gains for several years. How was Fleet Feet's performance last year? We had a good year. Everyone knows that running has hit a plateau of sorts from a category standpoint. There are still plenty of people running, and I think the core driver for running is still health and fitness. Our comps have been impacted by industry trends, and we've certainly been impacted by the winter weather just like everyone else. The biggest factor impacting our comps is a large number of our highest volume franchisees adding a second, third, fourth or in some cases - a fifth or sixth location - in their market area. When you open another location, it cannibalizes sales for some period of time in the existing locations, and we've seen that the past couple of years. Without context, it looks misleading, but in reality we just have owners who want to truly service the size of the community they are in relative to the number of locations they have, and are making the decision to sacrifice short term comp store growth in order to expand the number of locations and drive long-term growth in their markets. Our overall growth in these markets is really strong - and our growth across the system is solidly in the double digits - and that's exciting.

What do you see causing the plateau of the run category? Are there too many run specialty doors? There are some markets that are crowded with specialty running stores, but I see proliferation of distribution as a bigger challenge. Five or six years ago, performance running footwear wasn't exactly exclusive to run specialty but we were the primary resource for many core products. Now you can find that product in a lot of places. And we went through more than a decade of unprecedented growth in running and I think anyone who is rational would know that it wasn't sustainable and wouldn't just continue forever. Then some things that no one could have predicted, like the weather as well as the whole minimalist movement that created a billion dollar category overnight and has now gone over the cliff, affected everyone. So we certainly benefitted on some level when those favorable running trends are happening but when they go away, it

really hurts the rest of the industry more than us because other channels of distribution will chase those categories when they're hot. So my feeling is that we're going through somewhat of a normalization process right now, which I like. This will sound strange coming from a guy in the running business, but I'm happy that running as a category has cooled a little bit because we'll be the channel of distribution that will benefit the most from that. As the category cools, a lot of other channels of distribution that jumped on the running wave and things like minimal will go out with the tide. We'll still keep doing what we do so and I feel good about that.

Some of the mainstream chains have seen a shift away from performance towards fashion models. Does that affect Fleet Feet? Affect is too strong a word but fashion does influence us. It's amazing when you go into our stores now and see a shoe wall. Five or six years ago, men's shoes were primarily navy, gray and white and now we're seeing a blast of vibrant colors. We have seen materials, and some of the things from the fashion world transcend into technical in really positive ways. When running gets hot, we benefit. When running slows down, we don't tend to slow down as quickly or as much as the other folks do.

Running Specialty Group recently announced plans to curtail expansion to focus on profitability. Has your expansion position changed? We have aggressive expansion, and we're on pace to add another 20 locations this year. We have existing franchisees opening second, third or fourth stores - that's actually the biggest driver of our growth. We're still opening some franchises, we're still making some acquisitions, and we even have some franchises acquiring their competitors. So we don't plan to deviate from that because it's working for us. And while we're growing at a good clip, we also feel we're growing at a pace where we have the resources to manage it successfully

How is the consolidation affecting Fleet Feet? It doesn't have much affect on us. I probably sound like a football coach getting ready to play the next game, but we're just focused on what we're doing and things we can control.

Does run specialty's message have to change to reach Millennials? I don't know if the message has to change but the method has to change. Millennials shop differently than you and I. So embracing digital at every level is going to be important to connect with Millennials. One of the things we have to do in terms of long-term sustainability, long after I've left this business, is we have to connect with the next generation of runners. And we're going to have to connect on their terms.

What other challenges is digital presenting? We have a lot going on right now. The world is changing fast. The consumer is changing fast. For those of us who have been in the industry for a long time, we've seen the power shift from manufacturers to retailers and now fully to the consumer. We're making sure we stay not just relevant but important to the consumer in the way they want to interact with our brand while not abandoning the tried-and-true things that have defined our brand forever which is the locally owned-and-operated business model and deep rooted connections in the communities where we operate. We're coming up on the 40th anniversary next year and that's a philosophy that has served this brand well since the first store opened in Sacramento. We're not looking to deviate from that. ■

RUNNERS LOOK FOR MORE OPTIONS

While cushioning continues its comeback, runners are looking for more versatility and different experiences.

By Thomas J. Ryan





Photo courtesy Newton Running

While minimalism may have taken a step back, it also opened many runners' eyes to what shoes can do.

On the one hand, runners are increasingly looking for more multi-purpose shoes, including models that can handle a CrossFit workout as well as a road run, or a hybrid run/trail shoe. On the other hand, experimentation with minimalist and maximalist shoes is leading many to recognize that different shoes provide different experiences and benefits.

"Runners are beginning to realize different needs for different shoes," said Claire Wood, senior product manager for performance running, New Balance. "It's not a 'be-all, end all' to a certain offset, amount of cushioning or substantiation of shoe. There is something to be said for even the brand new runner having a toolbox of gear – different products for different days."



Claire Wood, Senior Product Manager
Performance Running, New Balance

Carson Caprara, Brooks' senior footwear product line manager, believes the popularity of running

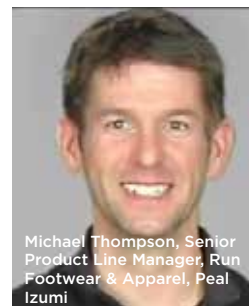
experiences such as minimalism and maximalism has brought the importance of choice to the forefront of runner's minds. He said that while runners have been told for decades what type of shoe they should wear based strictly on their biomechanics, preferences are starting to play a greater role in influencing their buying decisions.

"We believe the future of running shoes and the industry will allow the runner to choose their preferred running experience, while still providing support in new and smarter ways," said Caprara.

Smarter support, according to Caprara, starts with the concept that

the body has a preferred motion path where the joints are able to move with the least amount of effort and friction, which the runner recognizes as comfort. Footwear that is able to work together with the individual's motion - not against it - will be the next frontier. Caprara continued, "The future is a 100-percent focus on the runner, providing them with the power to choose their running shoe experience, while celebrating their body's unique way to run."

Although classifications continue to blur, motion control and minimalism continue to lose ground while neutral and mild-stability categories continue to gain momentum.



Michael Thompson, Senior
Product Line Manager, Run
Footwear & Apparel, Pearl
Izumi

"I think the run footwear category has found the bleeding edge of what is acceptable in the marketplace with minimalism and maximalism footwear trends over the past five to seven years," said Michael Thompson, senior product line manager of Pearl Izumi's run footwear & apparel. "You are starting to see brands and styles that represent both ends of that spectrum coming back slowly toward the middle. I believe there is a healthy

space where you can offer a consumer a full range of run footwear that allows them to run in lightweight racing flats to high mileage trainers and everything in between."

The ongoing popularity of mud runs, color runs, zombie runs and other casual runs are bringing newcomers to the sport. But Patrick O'Malley, SVP of global product at Saucony, said this puts responsibility on the industry to "make sure the customer has a real positive experience and stays injury free." More debatable is whether the maximalism trend, initiated by Hoka One One, has peaked, but others see its influence just starting around running shoe construction.



Jim Van Dine, President,
Hoka One One

"Maximalism continues to grow and evolve," said Hoka One One President Jim Van Dine. "As Hoka moves from niche to mainstream, we see our shoes and previous lines driving innovation among all brands. Runners are calling for dynamic stability, lightweight rides, and shoes that simply feel good – our Spring 2016 line responds directly to those requests."



Photo courtesy Newton Running

Hoka One One

Responding to runner's requests for more stability with an entry-level price point, Hoka will be introducing the Infinite, \$120. Built on a wider platform and featuring Late Stage MetaRocker geometry, the Infinite offers a strong balance of cushioning, stability and durability while remaining lightweight.



Hoka One One Infinite

Another highlight from Hoka for Spring 2016 is the Speed Trainer, \$150, a racing flat with the stability and cushion of a training shoe. It features Pro2Lite technology with a softer heel for cushioning and a firmer forefoot for propulsion. The RMAT outsole layer eliminates the excess weight of traditional rubber. While meeting the demands of its core runners seeking performance, the Speed Trainer is also designed to resonate with the young, fashion-forward consumer.

Along with greater sole padding, consumers also express interest in more styles and fashion colors. "Bright is the new black," said Van Dine. "With hot new color ways in the whole Spring 2016 line, our products speak to a wider range of consumers."

Brooks is redefining its internal footwear classifications based on learnings from its Stride Signature research project designed to build shoes based on individual needs and preferences.

In its Cushion Me category, the Transcend 3, \$170, features a softer, co-molded GuideRail with less glue for a softer underfoot feel. The Nylon External Heel Counter is stronger and delivers support of calcaneal adduction. A three-layer Laser Cut Mesh is soft against the foot but engineered to be supportive where the runner needs it and breathable where they want it. The Transcend 3 also plays up an increased toe spring for smoother toe-off.

In the Energize Me category, the Ravenna 7, \$120, plays up Brook's Forefoot Response Pod Construction for a springier ride and sidewall geometries. A rear-foot saddle adjusts the foot as runners lace up.

The PureFlow 5, \$110, in the Connect Me category, combines the sharp silhouette and flexibility of the PureConnect with the cushioning and run-ability of the PureFlow. The Midsole Flex Grid provides improved forefoot flexibility while a 3D Fit Print upper reduces seams and overlays,

The Neuro, \$130, in the Propel Me category promises to deliver responsiveness, speed and strength to the runner although full details won't be revealed until the Outdoor Retailer show.

Brooks

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Brooks Transcend 3



Brooks Ravenna 7



Brooks PureFlow

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ToPo Athletic

For Spring 2016, Topo Athletic will introduce the MT-2, \$100, an evolution of its popular hybrid road/trail shoe platform: the MT. The MT-2 retains the same rugged multidirectional lug traction; a fully gusseted tongue and forefoot flex grooves while including more robust mid-foot overlays, better mud release, and added underfoot protection (a 23mm platform, 3mm drop).

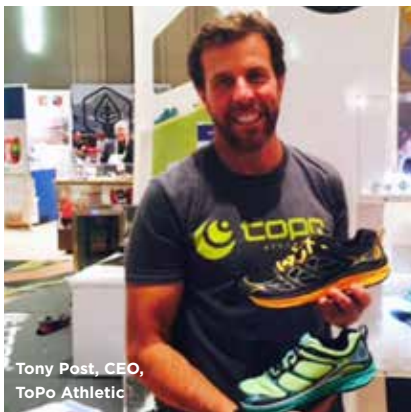


ToPo Athletic MT-2

"Although some consumers look for activity-specific shoes, most workouts these days are not absolute," said Tony Post, CEO, ToPo Athletic.



Photo courtesy ToPo Athletic



Tony Post, CEO,
ToPo Athletic

“There’s a good chance a runner will need to be on the road for a couple of miles before hitting the trail or a CrossFitter will be doing a WOD (Workout of the Day) that involves both lifts and sprints. People want a platform that will support these combinations, like the MT-2: rugged enough for the trail but flexible enough for the road.”



Everun technology will be featured in the Triumph ISO 2, \$150, Hurricane ISO 2, Guide 9, Kinvara 7, and Peregrine 6

Saucony

Saucony is looking to build on the strong response seen this spring to its ISOFIT technology, a system that adapts to the runner’s foot in action, with the launch of Everun, a resilient foam that delivers continuous cushioning no matter how long the run.

Using a new patent-pending construction method called Topsole, the Everun material is placed directly underneath the sock liner, tacked to the strobil board instead of embedding it in the midsole. Patrick O’Malley, SVP of global product at Saucony, said this brings the foam closer to the runner’s foot for a more lively and responsive feel. Everun has shown an 83 percent energy return and maintains its property three times longer than traditional EVA.

“Runners are really going to notice it later in their run,” said O’Malley. “Typical EVA foam heats up and gets softer the longer the run, just when the body gets tired and needs impact protection the most. Everun has the same plush feel in mile one as mile twenty.”

Everun technology will be featured in the Triumph ISO 2, \$150, Hurricane ISO 2, \$160, Guide 9, \$120, Kinvara 7, \$110, and Peregrine 6, \$120.

O’Malley said Saucony is addressing the maximilism appeal with the new Triumph ISO 2, which provides ample cushioning in a more traditional model.

Minimalism has softened overall but Saucony’s Kinvara continues to find growth with its focus on providing a “little less structure to let the foot work naturally.” O’Malley is interested to see whether minimalism gains a

bounce back once filming ensues for the major motion picture “Born to Run,” starring Matthew McConaughey as Caballo Blanco.

Overall, O'Malley likewise sees cushioning gaining ground over more stability-based models but also noted that many cushioning shoes now pack inherent stability. Said O'Malley, “Many runners can now wear cushioning shoes where in the past they could only wear stability shoes.”

New Balance

From New Balance, the major launch for spring 2016 is the Fresh Foam 1080, \$150. Claire Wood described Fresh Foam 1080 as the “most pinnacle execution of Fresh Foam” yet, capitalizing on the brand's data-to-design approach.



New Balance Fresh Foam 1080

First used to build customized shoes for its athletes based on their landing patterns, New Balance's design team used sensors inserted into the bottom of runners' shoes, high-speed cameras, and tiny reflective balls pinned to shoes, to measure the stride of a number of active New Balance employees. The loads of data collected are now enabling New Balance to fine-tune the midsole.

Wood said New Balance's ability to collect data and apply it to these products “delivers an incredibly authentic ride and a point of view around cushioning,” and the engineering and science behind the different experiences of the Fresh Foam collection.

“There is a beauty in the simplicity of Fresh Foam,” added Wood. “Our premiere cushioning shoe hits the scores we benchmarked it to, and

does this in a very clean way. No parts, drop-ins and glues, but a singular platform we can alter through the data collected. It's a pretty cool thing.”

Wood added that the Fresh Foam 1080 compliments its Fresh Foam platform by being the pinnacle offering, and offering a different ride and feel to the proven Fresh Foam Zante. Staples, like the 860 series, continue to be a focus of modernism and innovation. Said Wood, “No area of a line should lack forward thinking and movement, there is nothing that should be ‘preserved’ only for preservation sake if we know how to make better running shoes.”

Spring 2016 for New Balance also includes an update to its 1500, in the 1500V2, as well as updates to all three of our road flats – the 1500v2, 1400v4, and 1600V3.

Wood added that classifications continue to blur with New Balance's neutral lines often tough to compare with other neutral shoes.

“We work to engineer shoes on what we call ‘inherently stable platforms.’ We don't want an unstable shoe,” said Wood. “That said, the additional parts, densities, etc. continue to steer the classification – but the way a line is set up, the experiences products can offer have dimensionalized dramatically. It is the classification we all need to nudge forward into a more modern realm.”

Pearl Izumi

At Pearl Izumi, spring 2016 will find new updates to the Road N0 v2, \$100, Road N2 v3, \$120, and Road M2 v3, \$125, styles.



Pearl Izumi Road N0 v2

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Pearl Izumi Road N2 v3 (left) and Road M2 v3

The upper gains an advance with the use of the brand's 3-D Seamless Print technology.

"Most run shoes are designed like a tech pack, with medial and lateral views," said Michael Thompson. "I wanted to look at the new upper designs in a 360-degree way and have the consumer be really engaged with the upper design and where it starts and ends."

The updates also paid attention to reflectivity. Reflective tongue mesh and laces, as well as heel welds incorporated into the shoes enable runners to be seen by drivers from over 800 feet away. The reflectivity is purposely added in "subtle ways" to give the shoes a natural look. Said Thompson, "We want these features to compliment the overall aesthetic and not dominate it."

On the midsole, a new platform softens the underfoot experience of the Road N2 and M2. Said Thompson, "We have developed a new lasting board that allows us to use significantly less adhesive versus a traditional lasting board and it allows our 1:1 Energy Foam cushioning technology in the heel and forefoot to be amplified. The end result is a softer heel and a more responsive forefoot cushioning experience."

On

From On, the Cloudflyer, \$150, brings extra cushioning and stability. The shoe continues to feature the Swiss running company's patented CloudTec system that allows for a softer landing and a more explosive take-off. But the Cloudsurfer is even lighter and more agile, transforming more running energy into forward motion. The patented Speedboard promotes a fast transition and propels the runner forward. To prevent slip in wet conditions, an arrow pattern on the outsole promises outstanding grip and traction. Around the upper, a uniquely engineered mesh puts breathability and support exactly where the foot needs it.



On Cloudflyer

On Cloudsurfer



Ted Goodlake, On's director of North American sales

Ted Goodlake, On's director of North American sales, believes the two talked-about trends aren't offering wide appeal, with minimalism offering limited appeal to the gym or CrossFit-type consumer and maximalism proving to be a niche yet small category. As such, specialty run shops are still looking for products or a classification that can complement the dominant stability category.

"Neutral products that still offer cushioning but geometry that offers some support/not a post still seem to be a viable idea," said Goodlake.

"No one has really nailed this yet or has ownership over it. The new On Cloudflyer and the updated On Cloudsurfer are looking to improve on this classification of shoes."

Altra

Altra's biggest road launch is the Adapt Smart Shoe, \$200, which senses a runner's foot-strike, cadence, and pressure on each foot. The shoe then offers real-time feedback to a watch or smartphone and communicates that information along with coaching tips to help runners run with low impact and efficient running technique, said Golden Harper, Altra's founder.



Altra Adapt Smart Shoe



Golden Harper, Altra's founder

In the stability category, Altra's Provision 2.5, \$120, offers stability with the use of a full length Varus Wedge and StabiliPods in the midsole to keep the foot stable through all phases of the gait cycle whether walking or running.

Altra's Olympus 2.0, \$145, also gains a strong upgrade on the maximal side, while the new Instinct 3.5, \$115, and Intuition 3.5, \$115, feature updates on the lighter, firmer side of the spectrum.

"In spring 2016, Altra is continuing the course of offering everything from maximal to minimal to match the diverse needs and preferences of the modern runner," said Harper. "Many customers are wearing and buying both a maximal and minimal shoe simultaneously and using them for a variety of purposes. I think this is a great thing."

Salewa

Technical apparel and footwear brand Salewa creates cross-genre footwear for mountaineering, climbing, hiking, trekking and other outdoor sports. The new Men's and Women's Ultra Train is designed for long, aggressive days in the mountains, made in partnership with Michelin tire brand to offer a cushioned sole similar to ultra-running shoes. Michelin's Salewa sole offers a unique tread pattern and rubber compound promising a strong platform for hard-packed ground and double density EVA for 'sole-unit' interaction. Salewa's new Women's Firetail 3 is also made for mixed terrain, with a flat Vibram



Salewa Ultra Train (top) and Firetail 3 (bottom)



Megagrip sole designed for comfort and control. Although Salewa's maximalist options do not conform to the foamy padding ordinarily associated with the term, they are durable and stable - two traits inherent in the maximalist category.



Salewa Lite Train

Salewa's new Men's and Women's Lite Train, also made in partnership with Michelin, feature a tread pattern and rubber compound for "slope-traverse" stability and aggressive braking power. For minimalist performance shoes, it's all about balance between durable and light.

Mizuno

The new Wave Catalyst, \$110, reintroduces Mizuno into the lightweight support shoe category. Weighing 9.0 oz. with a 10mm ramp, the Wave Catalyst provides runners with a smoother landing and heel-to-forefoot transition due to a newly engineered pebax fan Wave Technology platform. The classic 3D fit Mizuno is known for offering a conforming, supportive upper while new stretch laces enhance the dialed-in precision fit feel.



Mizuno Wave Catalyst

A big upgrade comes with the Wave Inspire 12, \$120, featuring a new design with the introduction of Mizuno's latest material innovation, the U4icX (pronounced euphoric-X). The new midsole foam located in the heel wedge delivers a smooth, soft landing. A premium sock-liner and U4ic-X strobel material enhances the under-foot experience.



Mizuno Wave Inspire 12

Mark Sheehan, VP product management, running, Mizuno USA, said Mizuno's team isn't seeing any new trends in the run space emerging in Spring/Summer 2016.

"Innovation is in the air though," added Sheehan. "The race is on for the next big thing to arrive in the market. Mizuno is working hard in this arena. Runners searching for great running shoes are not going to be disappointed. The sport of



Mark Sheehan, VP product management, running, Mizuno USA

running is multi-faceted with new runners getting the best each brand has to offer, and the experienced runners are able to really enjoy the products they have trusted for many years."

Newton Running

At Newton Running, the Gravity V, \$175, adds additional flexibility and durability with an entirely new midsole design.

"The upper of the new Gravity is also one of our best uppers to date," said Mike Nesladek, VP of marketing for Newton Running. "It



Newton Running Gravity V



Mike Nesladek, VP of marketing for Newton Running



Photo courtesy Newton Running

combines the flexibility and breathability that Newton uppers are known for with an all-new, four-way stretch mesh around the metatarsals. The design makes big strides in looks, fit and function."

Newton will also introduce the Fate II, \$129, and Kismet II, \$129, in 2016 - both styles blending new upper designs, enhanced materials and new colors.

"Newton has remained true to its purpose and product architecture since its inception," said Nesladek. "Not minimalism, not maximalism, but a true dynamic cushioning system that absorbs impact, loses less energy and propels a runner forward thus reducing effort and improving the 'feel' of the run."

Asics

At Asics, a major update for Spring 2016 is the GEL-Nimbus 18, \$150, with its new GEL placement offering modernized geometry of cushioning designed to increase shock-absorption, shock-attenuation and mitigate



Asics GEL-Nimbus 18



Photo courtesy Pearl Izumi

impact. The improved Guidance Line technology syncs componentry to the motion of the runner's gait cycle. New colors for men and women will also be introduced.

361 Degrees

With a mantra of "One Degree Beyond," 361 Degrees, the second-largest athletic brand in China, launched this year in the U.S. with the help of ex-Asics Americas' execs, Rich Bourne and Jim Monahan, is already earning accolades from the running consumer press.



361 Degrees Rich Bourne and Jim Monahan

361 Degrees
361-Spire



For spring 2016, a highlight is the 361-Spire, \$140, a high-mileage shoe with extensive cushioning, without the loss of responsiveness. The breathable air mesh upper with strategically positioned welds provides a comfortable and secure fit. The midsole is a three layer QDP system utilizing the brand's coated QuikFoam

with interlink construction to maximize softness and maintain responsiveness. The outsole is an ergonomically designed platform featuring forefoot cushioning with lightweight traction and flexibility.

Zoot Sports

Zoot Sports will introduce the Makai, \$135, a neutral lightweight racing shoe. The midsole is a dual density Z-Bound with ZVA placed in a heel-to-toe configuration for support throughout the stride and late-stage pronation. Carbon rubber treads give the outsole lightweight, durable traction. A BareFit lining combined with the internal support structure feeds a close-to-the-foot fit while the breathable mesh upper allows for drainage and cooling.



Zoot Sports Makai (top) and Solana 2 (bottom)

A key update from Zoot is the Solana 2, \$100, which gains new heel construction, durable breathable mesh, and a new sole unit with enhanced Constant Ground Contact technology.

"We strongly feel that maximal cushioning shoes will continue to penetrate the market, for that we will be continuing to support the Zoot Diego and Del Mar," said Molly Kline Romais, marketing manager, Zoot Sports. "The "rocker" or what we call Progressive Forward Roll which will also be strong in 2016 as runners can visually see and physically feel the benefit. As far as upper construction, engineered mesh and 3D printing will continue to be strong throughout 2016." ■



Molly Kline Romais, marketing manager, Zoot Sports

I AM...SGB

ERIK JOULE

Chief Marketing and
Commerce Officer
Strava

Erik ("EJ") Joule came to Strava from Levi Strauss & Co. in late 2014 and is charged with building the digital platform of Strava into a full-featured brand. Joule is a lifelong cyclist and was a member of Strava's advisory board for a year before moving over from the fashion industry.

Strava designs technology for athletes and is the leading global community of runners and cyclists.

EJ is the former president and chief merchandising officer at Alternative Apparel. He spent 20 years in the apparel industry working for global brands such as Levi's, Disney, Guess, Quiksilver and Gap Inc. Joule is a native of Corsica, France.

Why is Strava the face and social voice of the performance athlete today? Strava is truly a community of athletes. I think today we yearn to connect with one another and what better way than through sport? There is a competitive piece to it indeed, a way to rank yourself against yourself and others is important for all of us athletes, it unlocks our potential. However, the Strava community goes way beyond this. This is a place where pros and amateurs both converse and connect. It is a place where deep technical analysis of one's performance is possible and a place where having fun, sharing photos and connecting with one another via flybys is also possible. Strava leans into a cultural movement, rooted in our desire to go beyond our potential through performing our sports and connecting with one another.

What are your greatest passions beyond business? I love riding my bike wherever I can... Vermont, Corsica, New Zealand and of course California, which is my home. I'm inherently passionate about people because I have such deep faith in our ability to do good. I love each story I hear, whether it is in a five-minute connection at a bike stop or a multiple year friendship, each story reminds me of our diversity which is our core strength as a people. I am passionate about the conjunction "and" versus the conjunction "or." That is what humans are about...a series of "ands." I love that.

What good are you trying to do at Strava? We help people go beyond what they thought possible via sport, and that to me is incredibly powerful. This is not only being the best in your field, but is about being better than you ever thought you could be. This builds confidence and enables people to think beyond the possible. We are very committed to enabling our urban centers in becoming more connected and more green by facilitating the creation of better bike lanes via the data we provide through Strava Metro. This is something I am personally very committed to. Fifty percent of us live in cities. It is paramount we reduce their environmental impact by minimizing our reliance on cars. Strava Metro aims to make urban planning smarter.



How has your background in the apparel industry influenced what you are doing at Strava? The apparel industry is not dissimilar to Strava - it has a go-to-market process, it has product, it has communication mechanisms. It does, however, ultimately exist through a tangible experience. At Strava we are juxtaposing our digital community with rich analogue experiences, it is this balance that I learned in apparel that I think is very relevant.

How are all things in life connected and how does the bike fit in to that? They are all a reaction to the broader context in which we operate. Ultimately, I think life teaches us if we are willing to listen. The Greeks figured that out with many allegories, which are still being pondered today. The bike for me is the ultimate allegory for life...It requires clarity and balance, it demands discipline and perseverance, it is about team work in the flats, it is about sole determination in the climbing of steep hills, and extreme focus and flow in descending...that is life in a nutshell, that is how the bike fits in.

What's your advice to young people coming up in the active lifestyle industry? Youth is paramount. My advise to Gen Xers is to ensure we make it as easy as possible for them, that we embrace their lack of experience as a weapon to innovate. My advise to the young generation is not to lose the incredible ebullience and curiosity that technology is enabling and dare to think that business can be a source of economic wealth and social change. My advice is never to settle, always question but always believe with the optimism and the innocence of a child. ■

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A man with a beard and dark hair, wearing a teal t-shirt and black climbing gloves, is climbing a thick rope. He has a determined and slightly pained expression on his face, with his teeth clenched. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with dry grass and trees.

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