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THE EVOLUTION OF THE MASSAGE BALL

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SAUCONY AND RUNKEEPER TACKLE CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Saucony launches the Run for Good Challenge in partnership with RunKeeper, encouraging runners to join the fight against childhood obesity.

Starting September 1 through September 30, runners and walkers can participate in the Saucony Run for Good Challenge by challenging themselves to run 26.2 miles, logging all of their miles with the RunKeeper app. The free RunKeeper app can be downloaded from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store. Once an account is created, participants can log miles in real time or after their workout. When a user completes the 26.2-mile challenge, Saucony will donate \$26.20 to the Saucony Run for Good Foundation - up to \$100,000 - to benefit childhood programs that keep kids healthy and active.

Richie Woodworth, president of Saucony and the Saucony Run for Good Foundation, noted that statistics show that nearly one in three children in America is overweight or obese. "At Saucony, our brand mission is to empower the human spirit through running - and that must include our kids. The Saucony Run for Good Challenge is an opportunity for our running community to help eradicate the childhood obesity epidemic simply by doing what we love - running," he said.

One of the first apps in the 2008 App Store launch, RunKeeper now has more than 45 million users across 200 countries. According to a Saucony online consumer survey, nearly 60 percent of runners carry a phone on a typical run.

"Our partnership with RunKeeper, one of the largest and best mobile fitness platforms in the world, allows us to tap into the emerging connected fitness trend to further open the door for runners to join us in our goal to tackle childhood obesity," said Woodworth.

Added RunKeeper founder and CEO Jason Jacobs, "Our users have been eager for opportunities to make their running miles work for causes they care about, so we're thrilled to partner up with Saucony to seamlessly enable them to run for good."

Since 2006, the Saucony Run for Good Foundation has awarded more than \$1 million in grants to schools and community organizations all dedicated to preventing childhood obesity through running and a healthy lifestyle. Encouraged by recent signs of progress in turning childhood obesity rates around, Saucony remains even more committed to putting kids on the path to a healthy future.

"We know that running can be a transformational and powerful engine for good," said Woodworth. "The Saucony Run for Good Challenge is an impactful way for runners everywhere to connect as a community, truly transforming their run into a run for good."

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SKECHERS

BECOMES TITLE SPONSOR OF LOS ANGELES MARATHON

Skechers Performance, which is a division of Skechers USA Inc., entered a multi-year partnership to become the official title sponsor of the Los Angeles Marathon.

Asics had been the title sponsor for the last three years. American Honda Motor Co. Inc previously held the spot.

The event will now be called Skechers Performance Los Angeles Marathon. The next race will be held on Sunday, February 14, 2016. Registration for the race opened on Tuesday, September 1, 2015.

As title sponsor of the race, Skechers Performance will have a prominent presence at all marathon week activities including the Los Angeles Marathon Health & Fitness Expo. Additionally, Skechers Performance will outfit course volunteers and staff, and provide finishers' shirts for all runners. Comprehensive and integrated Skechers Performance Los Angeles Marathon marketing and communications initiatives leading up to and during the race will include the Skechers Performance Los Angeles Marathon website (lamarathon.com) and app.

"Partnering with the Los Angeles Marathon is a strategic step forward for our company and the Performance Division," said Michael Greenberg, president of Skechers. "As a Los Angeles-based business, we have always wanted to be a part of this iconic race since we began developing our performance footwear division and we could not be more thrilled to join the Los Angeles Marathon as title sponsor."

"Much like the City of Los Angeles itself, Skechers is an iconic, global, and stylish brand and we are extremely pleased to announce this new

partnership on the Skechers Performance Los Angeles Marathon," said Tracey Russell, chief executive of LA Marathon LLC. "Skechers has achieved prominence across the global endurance sports market and we look forward to delivering a world-class marathon experience together here in Los Angeles and to collaborating on exciting new initiatives across the U.S. and around the world."

The Skechers Performance title sponsorship comes on the heels of the 30th edition Los Angeles Marathon in 2015. Not only did registration sell out for the third straight year, but the race also played host to the 2015 USA Track & Field Marathon Championships, where top American elite athletes vied for a record prize purse of \$150,000. The iconic "Stadium to the Sea" course attracts runners from all 50 states and more than 55 countries all over the world, ranking as one of the five largest marathons in the U.S. and one of the 10 largest worldwide.

Currently, Skechers Performance serves as the official footwear and apparel sponsor for the Chevron Houston Marathon and sponsors elite marathon runners Meb Keflezighi and Kara Goucher. Keflezighi has raced in several high-profile events wearing Skechers Performance footwear, including his monumental win at the 2014 Boston Marathon racing in his namesake shoe, the Skechers GOMeb Speed 3. Next year, Keflezighi will compete in Los Angeles wearing the new Skechers GOMeb Speed 3 – at the 2016 U.S. Olympic Team Trials for Men's and Women's Marathon on Saturday, February 13, 2016, the day before the Skechers Performance Los Angeles Marathon.



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Livall Cycle Helmet

LIVALL CYCLE HELMET INTRICACIES WIN ON INDEIGOGO

The Livall Bling Helmet set out on fundraising website Indiegogo to bring a smart cycling helmet with integrated communications, music and lighting for the unified purpose of safe biking. Within one month, the helmet raised \$160,580, surpassing its \$20,000 goal by 803 percent at press time.

Intricate design elements are no doubt the cause of its success. Elements such as built-in Hi-Fi Bluetooth speakers and microphone allow riders to make and answer calls without removing their hands from the bars and eyes from the road. For rider-to-rider communication, a walkie-talkie feature was added, which serves the dual function of converting texts to audio messages.

The helmet's Indiegogo page adds that the gear is given a brain, if you will, in its Livall Riding App. The app acts as an emergency lifeline, sending alert messages to programmed contacts in the event of a crash. And what takes the Riding App feature to a new height is the fact that riders won't have to say or do anything to activate the emergency request. Instead of dialing or requesting help, a built-in 3-Axis Gravity Sensor does the work for you, detecting a strike based on impact.

Apart from its potentially life-saving function, the app is able to sync with other smart wearable devices, like watches, pedometers and smartphones, working to play music, take photos and videos, and share your ride with Twitter, Facebook and Instagram friends.

In an effort to stand out among traffic, Livall Bling is packed with 80 LED lights on the top and back, with remote control turn signals. What Livall is calling, "the world's smallest nano cadence sensor," joins the feature well, tracking everything from speed, distance and calories. Another detail is a phone holder with internal power bank battery.

But why all the bells and whistles? "I'm passionate about bikes," said Livall Founder and CEO Brian Zheng. "And I believe that many cycling fans, like me, enjoy the cycling experience most when shared with others."



K-EDGE GARMIN MOUNT GIVES CYCLISTS MORE OPTIONS

K-Edge has become one of the leading mounts for competitive cyclists around the world. The company, named after Olympian Kirstin Armstrong, was born out of a necessity for no-fail equipment.

In its next evolution of cycling accessories, K-Edge brings the Garmin Mount, \$40 to \$65, an out front computer mount attaching the Garmin Edge Forerunner to any bicycle frame. The Mount is also compatible with Garmin's Touring cycling computers.

The new Garmin Mount, designed with K-Edge's advanced copolymer Garmin insert, will lock the cycling computer into place on the bike frame. Notorious for its aerodynamic design, the Garmin Computer Mount is one of the most advanced cycling computers currently available for performance athletes.

K-Edge has also become a cyclist's turn-to brand for camera mounts and chain catchers.

To ensure Armstrong's cycling chain would not fall off during the 2008 Olympic Time Trial in Beijing, her husband Joe Savola innovated a technical detail that would eventually become the front chain ring. It worked and Armstrong won gold. The demands for "Kristin's Edge" from other competitive athletes become so strong that the company was born (shortened to K-Edge).

Its products have helped athletes competing in the Tour de France, World Cups, Ironman and Olympics. Trickle down to the consumer level, K-Edge products provide simple yet elite upgrades for recreational cyclists interested in tracking and boosting performance. All K-Edge design and manufacturing takes place in the U.S. in Boise, ID.



WATTEAM

UNVEILS DO-IT-YOURSELF POWERBEAT

Watteam broke ground with the release of PowerBeat, the first add-on, professional grade power meter available at a more affordable price tag than current offerings. Cyclists who value do-it-yourself upgrades will swoon.

The package runs \$500 and includes both a right and left power meter. The small, non-intrusive PowerBeat gives riders normalized, average and maximum power data, along with what Watteam boasts as “exact cadence.”

“In an industry where expensive power meters have become the norm, we are offering a power meter that is not only affordable but also one

that provides the necessary metrics that cyclists need to reach peak performance,” said Watteam Co-founder and CEO, Ofir Gal-on.

Based in California, with research and development performed in Israel, Watteam is a team of cyclists who create professional-grade products for cyclists.

PowerBeat expands the company’s development innovation, using advanced strain gauge measurement technology to detect power output and provide precise, accurate and consistent data. Built from rods and springs and weighing only 24 grams on each side, two patented mechanical sensors attach to both crank arms, sense pedal stroke up to the millisecond and record the direct and immediate torque applied. The sensor then feeds the data to PowerBeat’s patented algorithm, located inside the comp units, where it is translated to accurate power data.

Furthermore, PowerBeat works on hollow aluminum cranks, no matter the year or make of the cycle, with an aluminum and carbon-compatible version set to release in 2016.

“My passion for riding motivated me to create a pro-level power meter that’s easy to install and use,” said Gal-on, who is also an elite cycling coach with experience training professional and master racers.

The do-it-yourself installation process features video instruction guides for a quick and easy experience. The PowerBeat kit includes two sensors that attach to a bike’s crank and two comp units that attach to each pedal. The comp units feature a rechargeable battery, which lasts 80 hours. The kit also includes a USB compatible battery charger and all the tools needed to attach and calibrate the PowerBeat before hitting the road.

Slated to ship in the U.S. at the end of 2015, U.S.-based customers can find purchase information at watteam.com.



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Photo courtesy Finish Line

FINISH LINE INTRODUCES PUMA IN-STORE SHOPS

The Finish Line Inc. opened 10 Puma shop-in-shops across the country and online at FinishLine.com in August.

The "Puma Edge at Finish Line" includes expanded product offerings with a unique approach to marketing and content creation designed specifically to connect the Puma brand to the Finish Line consumer.

The shop launches will be supported by several digital and social media initiatives including digital paid media, email marketing with a mobile focus, geo-targeted Facebook and Twitter posts as well as blog and website placements. Puma has also found success opening five Puma Lab shops inside Foot Locker.

"We are incredibly thrilled to share this exciting partnership opportunity between Finish Line and Puma with our customers," said Jeff Morrell, Finish Line's SVP and GMM. "We believe that the Puma Edge will heighten the customer experience by bringing together the edge of sport and style with unique and distinctive products."

"These shops bring Puma a unique opportunity to partner with a leader in the athletic specialty space with an exciting brand experience connecting us to The Finish Line Consumer," said Jay Piccola, president, Puma North America. "We look forward to bringing new and exciting products to these shops that push the boundary of sport and style."

Finish Line and Puma will host three VIP events in targeted markets including Philadelphia, Atlanta and southern California to help elevate the launch of the new store experience. The company will invite Winners Circle members and influencers for both Finish Line and Puma located in those selected areas to attend and receive a "first look" of the shops. Customers can connect with the VIP action by using the hashtag #ForeverFaster.



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HEAR HER ROAR...AND RUN

Women now dominate the buying power in athletic running apparel, inspiring the styles of evolving collections like Pearl Izumi's Escape and Pursuit

By Jahla Seppanen

In 1990, the populous of “running event finishers” was made up of 75 percent males and 25 percent females, based off data from Running USA. In what hints to a reversal of those figures, Running USA polled 2014 finishers as 43 percent males and 57 percent females. This overturn has ambushed apparel brands and forced a new look at run’s dominant consumer.

Pearl Izumi, the CO-based performance apparel and footwear brand more commonly known among core cyclists, has taken its Run division and amplified apparel focus to respond to the powerful female consumer. Pearl Izumi’s run offerings currently account for less than 10 percent of overall business - including footwear and apparel - however plans for Spring 2016 and 2017 run collections suggest big shifts in company mindset regarding both the fashion and function of run-wear for women.



Kelly Davidson, Product Line Manager, Run Apparel, Pearl Izumi

“The Women’s industry in general is booming right now,” said Pearl Izumi Product Line Manager for Run Apparel Kelly Davidson, who sat down with SGB to contextualize how exactly the overturn happened, in both Pearl Izumi Run and throughout the industry as a whole.

Davidson, an apparel trends guru, mentioned one of the first signs of the change showed up in denim. “Jeans this last year

are down while black tights are up double digits. Women want to be comfortable and are shifting the market to include more activewear.”

Design teams at performance brands have taken note of the change, but so have fashion labels like J.Crew, Abercrombie and Gap, launching their own athletic lines as a response. The result: a new status quo. “It’s very odd for a lifestyle company to not have athletic apparel now,” said Davidson. Now, no matter where a woman shops, she’s likely to find athletic apparel.

Ana Trujillo, runner and author of the blog RunReadRace.com, said, “There’s a ton of research out there showing that women hold the buying power in this country. A few years ago companies finally wised up, stopped shrinking and pinking, and started offering products specific to our bodies.” Trujillo saw the change as one of the smartest moves apparel companies could make. “All companies should be wooing women,” she said. “When it comes to the purse strings, women are in charge.”

Tech Goes Trendy

Davidson noted Pearl Izumi’s past run apparel lines were geared toward core performance athletes who wanted tons of technology and high-performing products. All that has changed. The brand’s newest **Escape** line, plotted to receive stylistic changes in design and color for 2017, will “encompass the new emerging female consumer,” Davidson said. Escape’s sister-line, Pursuit, is set to release 2016 performance-focused changes responding to some of the first shifts in female consumer behavior.



Ana Trujillo, Author, RunReadRace.com



Photo courtesy Pearl Izumi

“Women are demanding that the market change to adapt to their needs,” said Davidson.

What Women Want

Athleisure is a trend where activewear is designed to be worn both during activity and pre/post-sweat, in the world outside the sport. Some say athleisure apparel is built around the dueling principles of performance and style.

Whether in *Elle Magazine*, *CNBC* or *The Wall Street Journal*, the trend has been noted by everyone from stock market analysts, high-fashion designers like Alexander Wang, Outdoor Retailer Summer Market attendees, sporting chain retailers like Dick’s Sporting Goods and pop culture celebrities like Beyoncé.

With athleisure in mind, Pearl Izumi Run designers built its Escape line around athleisure fashion trends in conjunction with shifts in women’s shopping habits - most dominant being an allure to versatile athletic apparel that is comfy, cross-genre and cool. “We’ll be pushing to the next level with silhouettes, which is somewhat nontraditional for run,” Davidson said. “And we’ll make the clothes more workable, bring textured materials and have a little more fun. It doesn’t have to be a super-techy flat-faced material any more.”

For 2016, Escape brings two new pieces, the Women’s Escape Shrug and Women’s Escape Skort. Until 2017, the rest of the line will be carryovers from Pearl Izumi’s Flash apparel, keeping the name Flash until updates are made to transition the collection to its Escape title. Expect big changes, as the purpose of Escape is to reach woman seeking style and



Escape Shrug

Escape Skort



Photo courtesy
Pearl Izumi

adventure, not just performance.

In terms of design, the Escape Shrug was made to be a feminine yet functional layer in a new chic silhouette pallet made, I'm sure you guessed it, to compliment a woman's body contours. Shrug's Transfer Dry fabric pulls sweat away from your skin during activity and has UPF 50+ fabric in the main body. The Shrug integrates with almost any sports tank and includes strategically placed mesh for ventilation. Plus, it's easy to imagine turning to this arm warmer during bike rides, yoga, out to a coffee shop, or all of the above.

The Escape Skort, a name that might send you on a #TBT back to elementary school days when the skirt/short design was popular, is a classic and flattering run alternative to shorts or tights. Like the Shrug, the Skort uses Transfer Dry fabric for moisture management, with built-in shorts also made from the wicking material. The wide waistband both flatters aesthetically and is comfortable, while the internal waist key pocket is a hidden gem. Nobody likes running with a set of jingling keys in-hand.

The Pursuit line, engineered for Women to "chase their goals," is more performance and less fashion-driven than the Escape. New Pursuit pieces for Spring 2016 include everything from a short sleeve shirt, 3" short, singlet, 4.5' short, endurance short sleeve shirt, 6' short and a long sleeve shirt. After all, Pearl Izumi is a performance brand. It will incorporate lifestyle design cues into its repertoire but never depart completely from core athletes. And we wouldn't want it any other way.

However, the decision to incorporate fashion into performance apparel is a big deal. In the end, Pearl Izumi's new Escape products like the Skort and Shrug came about as a response to new consumer demands.

And it appears the new booming voice made up of women consumers

has finally expressed what active lifestyleers have been trying to convey for some time: Versatility. Today, most athletes, recreation runners and gym-goers aren't buying specific wardrobes exclusive to each sport. And with the rise of cross-training and kooky hobby sports like pickle-ball or Nia, people are partaking in a wider array of activities than ever before. That being said, a pair of yoga shorts should be functional on a run; and a running bra should have a groovy pattern for the studio as well.

For Pearl Izumi Women's Run, the core concept driving versatility adaptations within Escape and Pursuit comes down to minute details. "It's making little tweaks in our products," said Davison, "like moving a zipper from center back to the side of the hip."

Box Versus Boutique

Versatile activewear is not only a want but a demand, and everyone's adapting for survival. Even Big Box stores like Target and Walmart now offer apparel for female runners, creating fierce competition for the customer dollar.

Contending for the purchase means specialty run stores need to "reinvent the selling experience," Davidson said. "Over 65 percent of sales at a specialty retail store are Women's products," she added. Although there are shopper-experience techniques weaved into Big Box selling approaches, the main allure for their run apparel boils down to convenience and cost.

Pearl Izumi works in collaboration with specialty retailers, giving its apparel a more boutique and unique feel. Davidson and the rest of the Run design team are constantly thinking of how its brand messaging can play to in-store selling. However, a great brand slogan can't always make up for the "experience," of buying.

With the hope that specialty run retailers can maintain an edge with the new female consumer, Davidson suggests two minor shifts that can bolster apparel sales at smaller shops. The first is educating staff with apparel knowledge. "Specialty run normally focuses on footwear, so they're not as knowledgeable on the apparel." Knowing what distinguishes a piece of apparel as high-tech, high-performance, with current style trends, can communicate the quality of a pricier piece, versus its cheaper Box option. A nine dollar run tank is a great last minute option, but it won't wick, smell or ultimately perform as great.

Davidson's second piece of advice for specialty run retailers is to renovate dressing rooms. "You walk into most specialty run stores and it's a closet or even a bathroom. The lighting's not great, and it doesn't make a woman want to spend time trying on more products."

Future of Female Buying

The rise of the "Sheconomy," as a 2010 Time article phrased it, may be here to stay. Looking to younger generations and their sports activity levels may provide the most reliable insight into the future of female buying, and whether their influence will remain on top.

The High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) over the past year showed that boy's participation dipped 8,682 from the previous year, while girl's participation increased for the 26th consecutive year, with an additional 20,071 participants. These numbers set an all-time high for high school-aged female sports participants, at a broad 3,287,735. Furthermore, the number one sport for girls came in as track and field, with crosscountry charting third most popular.

These findings show that it's not just adult females who are becoming increasingly more involved with Run, but all women, across all ages. So, from the style, the numbers and the trends, it's safe to say the jungle of running has a new king...or better yet, queen. ■



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RACE PARTICIPATION SHIFTS

A shift away from timed-events toward more experiential ones is impacting race participation.

By Thomas J. Ryan

After experiencing 300 percent growth from 1990 to 2013, running event finishers in 2014 were slightly down from the all-time record set in 2013, according to Running USA. While the marathon and half marathon continue to grow, other distances declined.

The news surprised some. But in an interview with *SGB Weekly*, Rich Harshbarger, CEO, Running USA, said some slowing of the momentum had been expected given the rapid rate of growth in race finishers over the last few decades.

Race event finishers reached 18,750 in 2014 from 13,000 in 2010 and expanding from 8,600 in 2000. Just over the past few years, participation had grown strongly after a rare dip after the Great Recession. Finishers were up 22.4 percent in 2013; 11.1 percent in 2012; and 7.4 percent in 2011.

“That kind of growth can’t sustain itself in the long term so we anticipated we would see a flattening out,” said Harshbarger.

The race participation figures have also been helped partly over the years by a hike in the number of races. Overall race events grew to 28,200 in 2014 from 23,000 in 2011, an increase of 22.6 percent. Harshbarger said supply might be starting to outpace demand.

“The race events that are going to be successful are going to be ones

that stand out and deliver a unique experience or race course,” said Harshbarger. “Those are the ones that are going to last.”

Among traditional race-timed events over that three-year period, the biggest gains were seen in the half-marathon, expanding 66.7 percent to 2,500. That was followed by marathon, 52.8 percent to 1,100 races; 10K, 23.3 percent to 3,700, and 5K; 20.8 percent to 15,100.

Another factor impacting race events in certain areas was the weather, which included an extended winter in Spring 2014 and then some punishing snow in many areas in the latter part of last year. The Northeast was hard hit last November and December with Boston’s record snow likely impacting races supporting the Boston Marathon. Said Harshbarger, “There are those folks who are just die-hards and train regardless of the conditions but others likely pulled out trying to train in all that snow or didn’t hit all the tune-up races like they usually do.”

But certain factors appeared to impact certain races. Among specific races:

- 5K finishers reached 8.3 million, the same as last year after seeing a 34 percent jump in 2013;
- 10K finishers were down 5 percent to 1.4 million after showing a 1 percent gain in 2013;
- Half-marathon finishers grew 4.4 percent to 2.05 million, after gaining 6 percent in 2013;
- Marathon finishers reached 550,600 against 541,000 a year ago, an increase of 1.8 percent. Marathon finishers grew 11 percent in 2013; and
- “Others” finishers declined 4.4 percent to 6.45 million, a turnabout after seeing a 22 percent gain in 2013.

Harshbarger said the flat growth in 5K finishers and the slight drop in 10K finishers might just be participants upgrading their goals to pursue half or full marathons, which both continued to see growth in finishers in 2014. But he said Running USA finds the average race participant running five to seven events a year and some shifts among event categories likely reflect the greater variety choices for runners in the marketplace, including more

adventure or fun-run races.

“There’s more and more options out there for runners from more challenging destination races to experiential events,” said Harshbarger. “It’s more competitive for race events than it’s ever been.”

Meanwhile, the “Other” events category saw a rare decline although it involved unique factors outside interest in the sport of running. The category includes races that don’t fit in the 5K, 10K, half-marathon and marathon brackets and includes a number of other distance races - 1 mile, 2 mile, 8 mile, etc. - as well as kids runs, trail runs, fun runs and charity runs.

The 4 percent decline in finishers in “Other” events was surprising since it followed a 22 percent gain in 2013. The number of “Other” race events declined at an even steeper rate, sliding 8.7 percent to 4,200 from 4,600.

Part of the problem was turbulence in the hyped-up fun-run/adventure event category, said Harshbarger. The category includes mud runs, color runs, foam runs, electric runs and other shorter and more socially driven races.

Harshbarger said a number of fun runs were cancelled last year with short notice, often with no refunds. Said Harshbarger, “It was all across a country. You’d hear a fun run opening up registration and then they’d be gone the next day.”

He said an important distinction is that there are events that are official The Color Run and then others that are essentially the same but produced by other companies and groups. Said Harshbarger, “We have seen those events that are less experienced and less tenured are the ones less viable and able to sustain themselves.”

On the positive side, Harshbarger said the fun-run/adventure-type events still hold strong appeal, particularly with younger runners. Harshbarger noted, “The fun run category is still very much in demand and growing - things like Santa Runs, Super Hero runs, Turkey Trots, Speedo runs, etc.”

Harshbarger still suspects over fun-run-type events finishers increased last year although the fraud incidents led to a slower growth for a category that had been strongly boosting the “Other” running event category.

The other factor impacting the decrease in the number of participants in the “Other” events category has been a drop in events around causes, or those supporting largely untimed events such as Komen Race for the Cure and Relay for Life.

“Charities whose prime fundraising approach in endurance sports have seen a decline overall recently,” said Harshbarger. “Anecdotally, I think it could be because of a one-and-done experience or that people may simply want to raise funds for their particular cause on their own.”

Overall, Harshbarger was the health of the race industry - and overall running participation - is still evident with growth in finishers at the key timed races: the marathon and half-marathon. The number of marathon races stayed the same at 1,100 while the number of half-marathons grew again, to 2,500 from 2,100 in 2013. Said Harshbarger, “We’re still very much a growth sport and a growth industry.”

The strength of running participation is also evident with figures from the National Sporting Goods Association. The 43 million runners in 2014 represented a 2.4 percent increase over 2013.

“The running participation figures have been steadily climbing for several years,” said Dustin Dobrin, director, research & information, NSGA. “Frequent running participants (those participating 110 or more days during the given year) grew to 10.3 million, up 3.7 percent versus 2013.”

NSGA’s figures represent both organized and recreational participation (i.e. whether someone is running in a race or simply going out jogging for exercise/fun).



Harshbarger doesn’t think rising fees for runners around races are having much of an impact. He does hear the higher-price discussion come up from market to market with any pullback but he said the market remains competitively priced.

“It goes back to what the experience is but price is also a way for events to compete,” said Harshbarger. “If you’re going to run Pittsburgh or Cleveland, they’re roughly 75 miles apart. And if you’ve done both in the past and one is \$85 and another \$65, you might choose the \$65 one. But on the flip side, you have more and more expenses than ever with permits, security, police, etc. So there are real factors around price for these events to contend with”

More unknown is the future impact of Millennials, who are supporting the fun run craze, as they reach the traditional core runner age. Running USA is commissioning a study on the generation to explore their attitudes and behaviors. Harshbarger said that while the second running boom was boosted by women coming into the sport, the Millennials promise to recast race events over the next few decades.

Harshbarger said Millennials are already showing that they’re “very much a social pack and want experiences they can do together and ones they can share together.” They also are looking for affordable and accessible options.

“The traditional runner’s quest is New York, Boston or Chicago but Millennials are making decisions with different mindsets,” said Harshbarger. “They may look to run to support the local community race, recycling their cups along their run, and making their smaller entry fee a donation to the city of Cleveland or downtown Detroit. But I think the jury is still out on whether they’ll change things.”

Regardless, Harshbarger said the running market appears robust.

“It’s still growing in the key distance of the half and full marathon,” said Harshbarger. “The average age of the runner is still in their mid-30s, and it’s still an incredibly desirable demographic for brands and sponsors. They have a higher education and national income average than their corollaries. So it’s still a desirable demographic and remains a very accessible sport. All you need is a pair of shoes. ■

RUNNING BRANDS SOUND OFF ON RUN PARTICIPATION

SGB Weekly reached out to a few running brands to explore the changes in race participation and the emerging running enthusiast.

By Thomas J. Ryan



“Running is the largest opportunity in the U.S. athletic industry. The number of marathons and half marathons continue to grow and more people are running than ever. Adidas is heavily investing in catalysts for growth of the sport – including the female athlete, unique consumer experiences, engaging staff and bridging the gap between technical and lifestyle product.”
- **Chris Brewer, Director of Running Specialty, Adidas America**



“We believe that the sport of running continues to be an incredibly healthy sport. Participation is still incredibly strong and big. Millions of people continue to participate in races, and overall, health and wellness programs are not slowing down. Running is core to a fitness work out and more people are active than ever before. Our intuition as a brand is that more people will be running across North America and the world in five years than there are today. I think a brand like ours has to be encouraged by the power that running has in people’s lives. We get letters every day at our office telling us personal stories about how running changed a person’s life. There isn’t another sport that has the transformational and powerful impact that running does.”
- **Dan Sheridan, EVP, General Manager North America, Brooks Sports**



instance, as the millennial generation enters its prime, their propensity for social interaction and the need for "new and different" is shifting how people stay fit. We believe we are seeing a correlated uptick in training and studio activities as we witness a slight decline in what may have been viewed as the traditional running peak. The more social, group-based activities better align with the millennial ethos as seen in the explosion of group programs like cross training, SoulCycle, barre, yoga, ClassPass, etc. As a true sports performance brand committed to meeting the needs of all athletes, we are embracing this shift with an increased emphasis on training/studio footwear, apparel and accessories while also continuing to build the best performance running footwear in the world. Our mission is to empower people to lead healthy lives regardless of which sport they choose." - **Shannon Scott, Senior Director of Marketing Communications, Asics America**

"We're seeing overall running participation numbers for the sport from the NSGA (National Sporting Goods Association) and SFIA (Sports & Fitness Industry Association) continuing to be strong and continuing to get better. So the overall health of the sport continues to be good. On the racing side of things, there's a little bit of a shift and a little bit of oversaturation both in terms of the number of races but also the number of races that people choose to participate in. Mud runs, trail runs, Spartan Race and things like that are creating more adventurous options for runners outside of a normal road 5K or 10K and those are eating into traditional races for sure. Some of these new races are also more socially oriented rather than being all about race times and are giving people options that didn't exist before. Millennials especially like to try new things and many are looking for more experiences and adventures with running rather than just traditional road racing. That's opened up the running horizon a little bit. With that said, it doesn't mean traditional race participation won't bounce back again over the next few years."



Richie Woodworth, President, Saucony

- **Richie Woodworth, President, Saucony**

"The true answer is the participation in people running is not down. Many people just don't consider themselves 'runners' and are not participating in normal timed running events/races. Because of this, it's making retailers think more about how they solicit the generalist consumer to shop in their store as opposed to just training groups, pub runs etc. My bet is that 2016 will be the year of more store acquisitions from the 'old school format' and the bigger groups are the one's that have the ability to structure change in how they draw new consumers to their business as well as keeping existing one's. Bottom line: people are still buying running shoes big time, just not as many are looking at themselves as 'runners' and instead as more of a fitness enthusiast." - **Ted Goodlake, North American Sales Director, On**

"Despite the very small dip in total race participation, running as a sport is very healthy. Increasing race prices have likely slowed participation, but there are more people out running than ever before. Just because people are doing slightly less races, doesn't mean people aren't actually running as much. As more people are running longer distance races, it eliminates the number of total events they can participate in. This is likely affecting the shorter distance races unfortunately. While triathlon and adventure races seem to be down, Ultra Marathons are still seeing big growth in every race we sponsor." - **Golden Harper, Founder, Altra**



Golden Harper, Founder, Altra

"We're encouraged by the overall athletic and fitness market trends. Athletic footwear and apparel sales are up. Running is and will always be here to stay, but it continues to evolve with each new generation. For



I AM...SGB

Lori Dreiling

Owner, Fleet Feet Sports Tulsa

Lori Dreiling and her husband Tim own Fleet Feet Sports Tulsa, which has two locations in Tulsa and just opened a third location in Broken Arrow. Both are graduates of the University of Tulsa and Memorial High School and have been involved in Tulsa's running community since moving back to the area in 1992. Lori ran her first marathon, the San Diego Rock-n-Roll marathon, in 2000 and has run Chicago, Marine Corp, NYC and Boston, among others. The couple opened their first Fleet Feet Sports in Tulsa in 2003.

What was your first job? Scooping ice cream at Braum's Ice Cream Store – a great introduction into dealing with customers.

When did you start running? I started running for very different reasons. I was 13 years old when I lost my younger brother to leukemia (he was 9 years old) and experienced severe depression a few years after he passed away. I was in high school struggling with depression and all those adolescent feelings when I discovered running. I vividly remember those first few runs in my neighborhood. I would run to the stop sign and stop and walk and then run to the next light pole and stop and walk. Running offered freedom and a release from all those feelings of sorrow and loss. Running was truly life changing for me and I just kept running from that point forward.

How did you get into specialty running? My husband and I owned *Oklahoma Runner Magazine*, and I noticed that there was only one running store in Tulsa at the time. We had lived in and visited other communities around the country that had running stores that were much more engaged in the community, and we felt we could bring our own unique approach to Tulsa's running community. We also had a passion to help make our community healthier since Oklahoma is always on the bottom of the "healthiest places to live" lists.

What's been the key to Fleet Feet Tulsa's success? Making every person who walks into our stores feel special and a part of our family. We strongly believe in growing our business one customer at a time. The other part of our success stems from our focus on a quality experience and approach with our races, special events and our training programs. There weren't any training programs when we opened our first Fleet Feet Store 12 years ago, and now we are proud and humbled by the fact we

have trained literally thousands of Tulsans to either run or walk 5ks, 10ks, half marathons and marathons. We are also invested in the success of our community. We work with numerous local charities to provide free shoes, free race entries, and monetary donations to help these organizations support those in need. Giving back to our local community is a huge part of who we are.

What's your favorite part of your job? Helping someone reach his or her personal goals. There is nothing more satisfying than watching someone who has never run before complete their first 5k. They will never forget that moment and for many that moment is life changing. Providing a path for our customers' success is what keeps us going. I also enjoy watching our staff grow as individuals and professionals. Our industry provides something not many other industries can – we have the ability to grow future business owners. We are currently watching one of our previous staff members manage two running stores in a different market with the plan for him to one day own both those stores in the very near future.

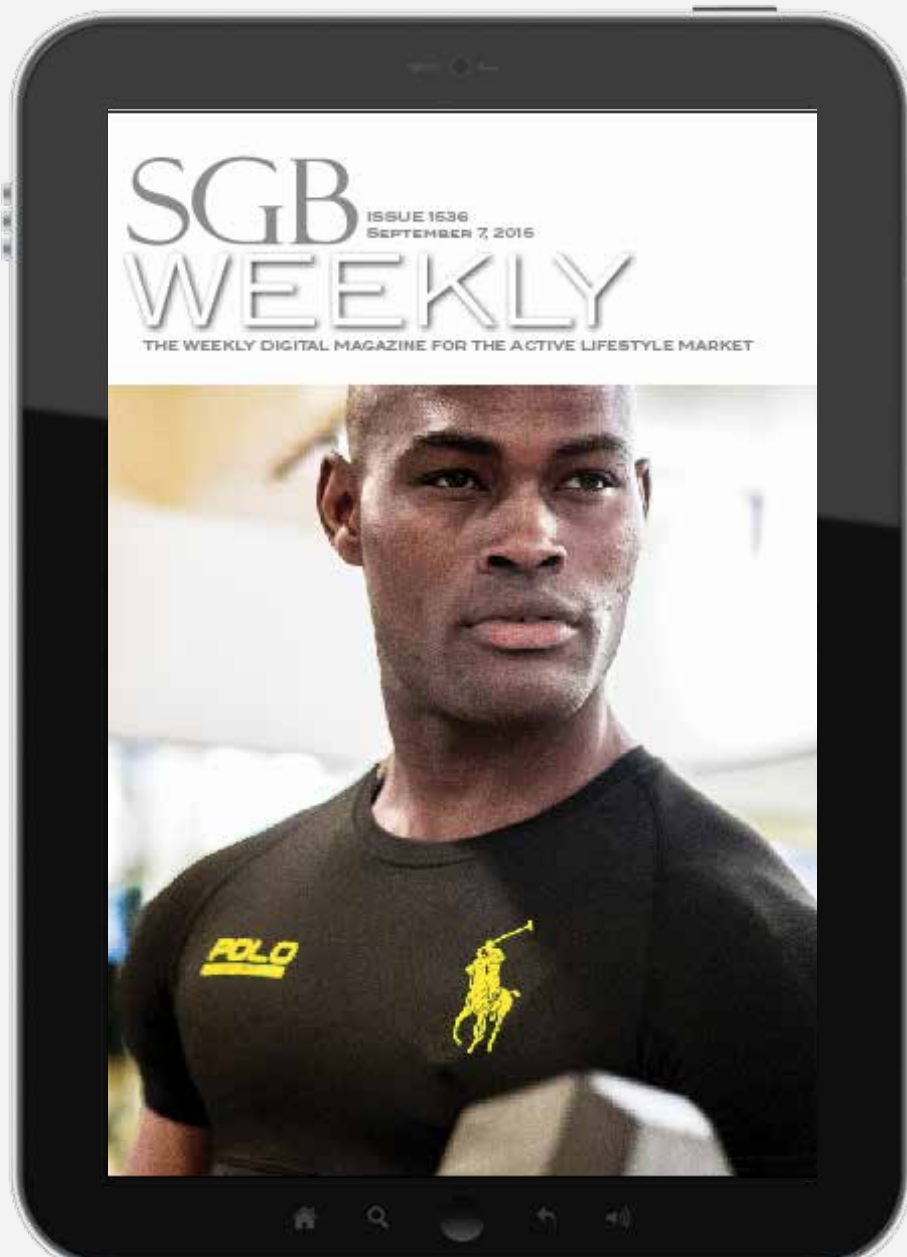
Favorite motto? "Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not: nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not: unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not: the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent." - Calvin Coolidge

If money were no concern, what would you be doing? I would donate my time working at an orphanage in another country. I love working with kids and our son is adopted from South Korea, so to be able to give back to kids who don't have a home yet would be a personal life goal.

What's your advice to someone looking to get a job in the run industry? Demonstrate a great work ethic; be humble in your approach; be honest in all of your dealings; and be patient. If your end goal is to own your own running specialty store, you can't become a successful business owner overnight. Don't be afraid to take risks (sometimes you have to try something to see if it will work), learn from your mistakes (because you will make a bunch of them as an owner) and the more experience you have (no matter the industry), the more value you will bring to your company and to your people.

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nssf.org

National Sporting Goods Association
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Mount Prospect, IL 60056
t 847.296.6742
nsga.org

Nation's Best Sports
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nbs.com

Outdoor Industry Association
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Boulder, CO 80301
t 303.444.3353
outdoorindustry.org

Sports & Fitness Industry Association
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Silver Spring, MD 20910
t 301.495.6321
sfia.org

Snow Sports Industries America
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McLean, VA 22102
t 703.556.9020
snowsports.org

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Springfield, MA 01104
t 413.739.7331
Snowsportsmerchandising.com

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Lewistown, MT 59457
t 406.538.3496
sportsinc.com

Sports Specialists Ltd.
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Victor, NY 14564
t 585.742.1010
sportsspecialistsltd.com

Tennis Industry Association
1 Corpus Christi Place I Suite 117
Hilton Head Island, SC 29928
t 843.686.3036
tennisindustry.org

Worldwide
8211 South 194th
Kent, WA 98032
t 253.872.8746
wdi-wdi.com

SEPTEMBER

- 1-3 WDI Worldwide Fall Show
Reno, NV
- 8-10 SFIA Industry Leaders Summit
New Orleans, LA
- 10-12 Imprinted Sportswear Show
Orlando, FL
- 10-12 Surf Expo
Orlando, FL
- 16-18 Interbike International Trade Expo
Las Vegas, NV

OCTOBER

- 5-7 OIA Rendezvous
Seattle, WA
- 5-7 Shop.org Digital Summit 2015
Philadelphia, PA
- 8-9 The Retailing Summit
Dallas, TX
- 15-17 Imprinted Sportswear Show
Ft. Worth, TX
- 27-30 NASGW Annual Meeting & Expo
Reno, NV
- 29-31 ADA Fall Buying Show
Baltimore, MD

NOVEMBER

- 4-6 NBS Athletic Show
Ft. Worth, TX
- 22-24 Sports, Inc. Athletic Show
Las Vegas, NV

DECEMBER

- 1-3 MRA December Lansing Market
Lansing, MI
- 2-4 FFANY
New York, NY
- 8-9 MRA December Cincinnati Market
Cincinnati, OH

JANUARY 2016

- 4-6 ASI Orlando
Orlando, FL
- 5-7 Archery Trade Association Show
Louisville, KY
- 6 Outdoor Retailer Winter Market Demo Day
Salt Lake City, UT
- 6-9 CES Show
Las Vegas, NV
- 7-10 Outdoor Retailer Winter Market
Salt Lake City, UT
- 11-13 MRA January Novi Market
Novi, MI
- 12-15 NBS Winter Show
Ft. Worth, TX
- 14-16 Surf Expo
Orlando, FL
- 17-20 NRF Retail Big Show
New York, NY
- 19-22 SHOT Show
Las Vegas, NV
- 22-24 Imprinted Sportswear
Long Beach, CA
- 24-26 Sports Licensing & Tailgate Show
Las Vegas, NV
- 27-29 PGA Merchandise Show
Orlando, FL
- 28-31 The SIA Snow Show
Denver, CO

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