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ON TRACK AT THE NEW BALANCE NATIONALS



There's nothing like a high school track meet to make you feel good about the running business. And last weekend, The New Balance Nationals at New York's Armory delivered good feelings for more than 3600 runners from 1500 high schools around the country.

This marked the sixth consecutive year that New Balance has been sponsoring the meet with the National Scholastic Athletic

Foundation, according to Andy Downin of New Balance. "We believe this event gets better every year," Downin told *Running Insight*. "We have more attendees and more schools represented, but the competition also improves. Qualifying times are getting stricter, but even so we have more kids qualifying from all over the country." Ten national and 15 class records were set at this year's event, both all-time highs.

New Balance has also activated its sponsorship to improve on

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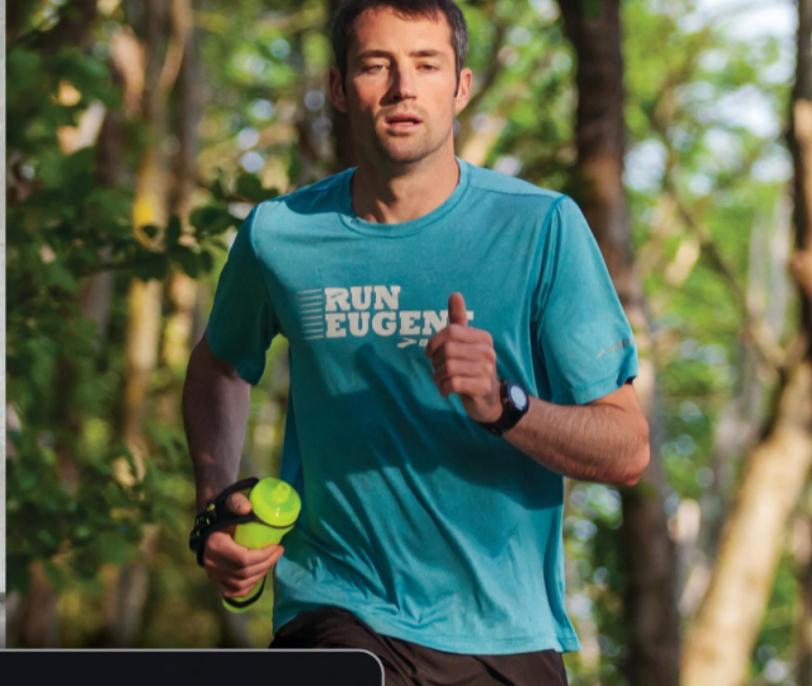
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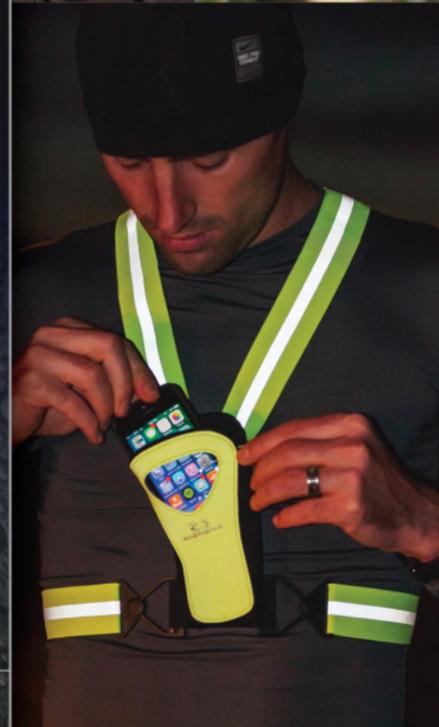
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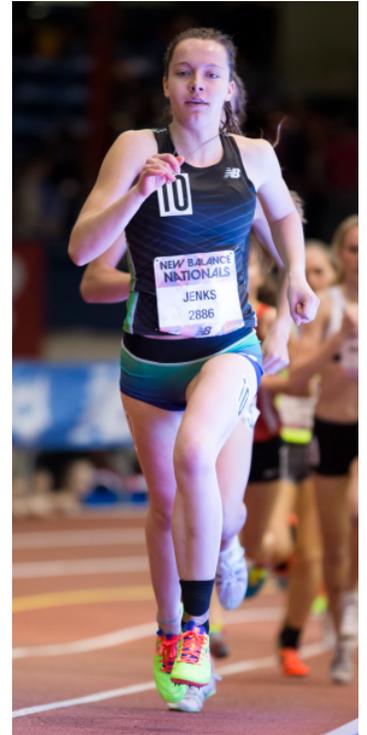


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On Track at the New Balance Nationals (continued)



“This year we’re seeing more of our spikes on the runners and that’s exciting.”

ANDY DOWNIN, NEW BALANCE

the experience for all the athletes attending and build awareness of the brand with young runners. “When we first started sponsoring this event, the only place you’d see the New Balance brand was on the sponsor sign on the Jumbotron above the track,” Downin said. “This year we’re seeing more of our spikes on the runners and that’s exciting. We’re looking forward to tracking the progress of the brand with

these runners over the next five years.”

Runners get a New Balance backpack (seen above) which has become a coveted item among high school runners. Attendees can have the pack customized onsite with their name and event. This year for the first time, NB also offered spike customization. Runners filled out a sheet indicating their color and design preferences and dropped their spikes at

the customization studio, which hummed with activity. When a runner’s spikes were ready, he or she would receive a text informing them that their shoes were ready for pick up. More than 100 athletes had their spikes customized, according to NB execs. “Our goal is to give these kids a great experience,” Downin said. “When you do that, the business usually follows.” ■

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Flipping the Script



Brooks Launch 3

Challenges and Opportunities at Retail as Footwear Gets More Colorful. By Daniel P. Smith

For years, if not decades, running shops have touted their knowledge and experience as a point of differentiation, often nudging any conversation of aesthetics aside.

“You can’t pick a running shoe based on color,” many a shoe peddler has opined.

Increasingly, however, that’s becoming a tough battle to wage as consumers – from the hard-core runner and the teen harrier to the fitness walker and the yogi – revel in variety and manufacturers hustle to quench their collective thirst.

A decade ago, the Brooks Adrenaline, the Mizuno Wave Rider, the ASICS Nimbus and, well, pick your popular model from one of the major players,

might have come in three different color options for the model’s entire annual cycle: a base color for the entire year coupled with one additional option for the fall and spring, respectively.

Today, however, it’s a different game as footwear colorways mount. The Brooks Adrenaline 15, for instance, one of the industry’s hallmark technical shoes, was available in five colors last fall on the women’s side alone. Throw in limited-time offerings and special editions and the options further climb.

“Everybody is trying to tell color stories right now,” says Boots Boutillier, who owns three Fleet Feet stores – two in Rochester, NY, and one in Buffalo, NY – with his wife,

Ellen.

Many retailers lament losing a sale because a customer rejects the on-hand color, preferring instead an option he pulled up on his smartphone or an altogether different – and perhaps suspect – model that better appeased his personal taste.

“And if you can’t provide it to them quickly, they’re just going elsewhere,” Boutillier says. “If a customer walks because they can’t afford a shoe or don’t like the fit, I think we can all live with that, but none of us want to lose a customer because of color.”

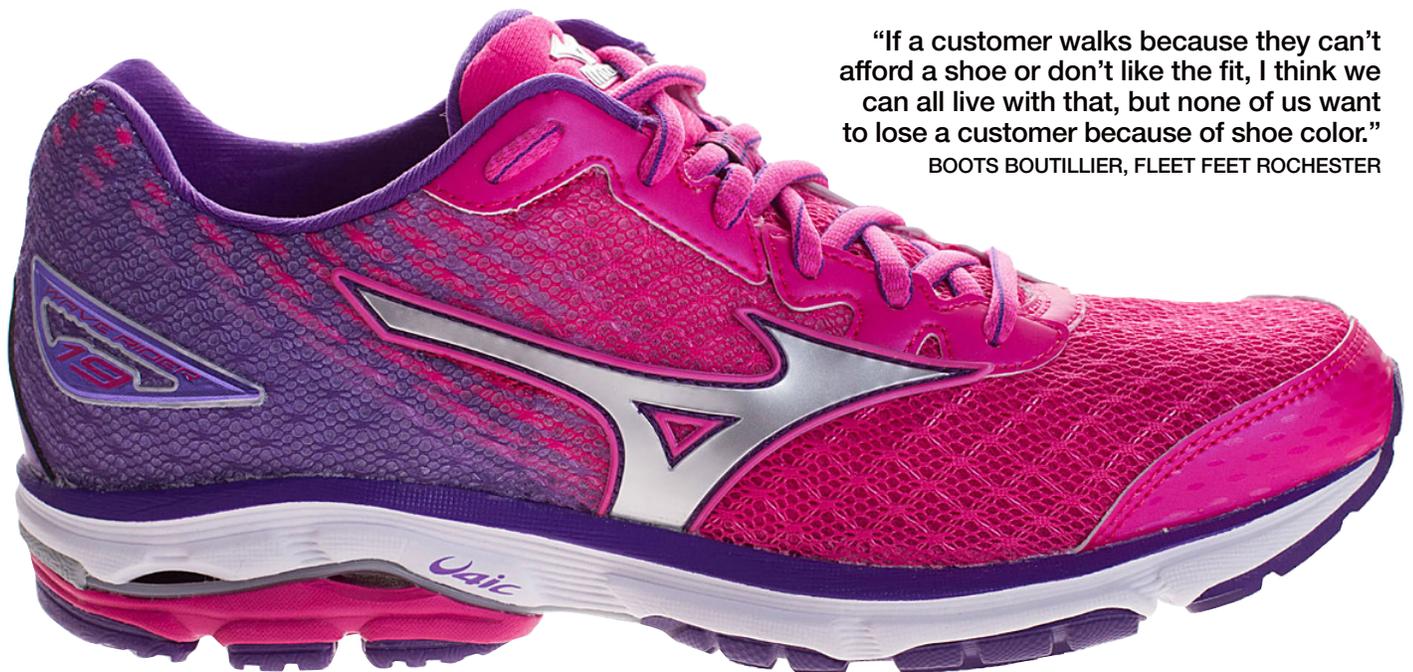
Brands Embrace Color

While many retailers bemoan the rising number of footwear colors, the brands view color from a different lens: as an

opportunity to move product, gain fans and honor today’s accelerating consumer trend for fashion footwear.

After all, “Variety is the spice of life,” says Shane Downey, global director of heritage at Brooks.

Beyond offering more colors of some of its prime models, Brooks also boasts its Tempo Collection, which delivers multiple assortments each year. In 2015, that included four special collections – Saturation, Kaleidoscope, Aurora and Urban Jungle – that added additional colorways of various models, such as the Ravenna and Ghost, to the marketplace. The second installation of the Kaleidoscope collection with a limited edition shoe featuring prints inspired by movement and the



Mizuno Wave Rider 18

“If a customer walks because they can’t afford a shoe or don’t like the fit, I think we can all live with that, but none of us want to lose a customer because of shoe color.”

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Flipping the Script (continued)

WHAT'S NEXT?

4 TRENDS TO WATCH

Toned-down color:

After years of some shoes resembling the contents of a Crayola box, both Brooks' Shane Downey and Mizuno's Charles Hauck predict a return to a more classic athletic look and a sleeker use of color. On the men's side, in particular, expect gray and white uppers with more subtle pops of color.

Bleached tones:

On the women's side, Hauck forecasts a rise in bleached tones, such as pastel blue or lilac, sometimes mixed with a bolder accent color or still-resonating florescent hues.

Next-gen materials:

Downey predicts the continued evolution of materials, led by knits and no-sews, in particular.

Runway presence:

As the lines between fashion and function near, retailers have an opportunity to pounce if they select and market some striking options just right. "The sneaker is now a thing of choice," Downey says.

ever-changing shape and color of a kaleidoscope is out now. The brand has plans for more releases like this later this year.

Mizuno, which has increased color options on many of its marquee models over the years, seeks a something-for-everyone approach with its color options, working to satisfy three buckets of consumers – trendsetters, early adopters and followers.

"With a shoe like the Wave Rider, a popular model that fits so many different types of runners, we try to have something that embraces each

"To some extent, we're all shoe geeks in this business," admits Eddie Johnson of A Snail's Pace, a four-store operation in southern California.

Challenges and Opportunities

Shoe colors are fun, but they present a business challenge given the space limitations and cash considerations running stores face.

"We all need to figure out a way to play the game that works best for our respective businesses," Boutillier says. "If

to drive sales.

For single-unit operators, however, it's not so simple and might require some out-of-the-box thinking, such as aligning with other retailers to leverage a larger purchasing base or inventory trading relationships. Otherwise, retailers might sit at the mercy of what's immediately available from each manufacturer or will need to lean heavily on the responsiveness of their sales reps to satisfy customers.

Boutillier also touts disciplined ordering. With the Nike Pegasus, for instance, Boutillier always stocks the core color that Nike presents for the shoe's entire 12-month run and then bounces back and forth between other colors as they become available.

"With so many colors, I think we all have to look at purchasing more holistically and with greater sophistication," he says, adding that as a Fleet Feet franchisee he does benefit from the ability to leverage the company's e-commerce platform to fulfill customer requests for colors he might not have on hand.

And much like the brands, Boutillier doesn't think retailers should be afraid of embracing the opportunities color affords. He has strategically used LTOs from Brooks, Saucony and Nike to spur interest and attract more customers, publicizing such differentiated offerings with a launch event, social media posts or in the store's e-newsletter.

"So many of us want to run away from all these colors, but we can also use color to build excitement and grab sales, too," Boutillier says. ■



of these categories and different tastes," says Charles Hauck, assistant business unit manager for running footwear at Mizuno.

Furthermore, when Mizuno only had one color for a particular shoe in the past, Hauck acknowledges it could influence retailers' decision to order the product or consumers' resolve to purchase it.

The proliferation of footwear colors can give retailers added variety and flexibility as well as an opportunity to think like a boutique, especially by pairing footwear alongside apparel to create dynamic merchandising visuals. Yet more, the variety of colors can create a sense of fun in running stores.

you're trying to control inventory and be fiscally conservative, then playing the game might not be for you, but if you're trying to create consistent energy in your store, then you have to figure out a way to get your hands on more of these colors."

In his two larger stores, Boutillier might carry two or three colors of his top-selling models; in his smaller Rochester store, he might just carry one color, and he'll swap stock among the three stores to service any customer request in quick time. Johnson similarly trades stock among his multiple stores; in some cases, he will even display every color available for a given model on his shoe wall

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Adidas Building on BOOST Franchise

Run Specialty to Play Vital Role in Brand's Strategy to Expand BOOST Concept in Running.



“We always want to try and help grow the running market rather than play a share game within the segment,” says Chris Brewer, Adidas North America’s category director for running.

Last month, Adidas Group’s senior management hailed running as a key focus area

in 2016, citing BOOST as the segment’s driver. More than 10 million pairs of BOOST shoes were sold last year, helping increase overall Adidas running sales by 6 percent in 2015. The company did not breakout any specifics about the category’s North American business.

Brewer says the company is in the early phases of creating

a franchise for Ultra BOOST and subsequently extending it via different looks on the same platform.

BOOST made its market debut in 2013, followed up two years later with Ultra BOOST. The key to the technology lies in a BASF-developed compound exclusive to Adidas that uses 2,500 to 3,000 tiny capsules of TPU in each

midsole for responsiveness.

Adidas Group CEO Herbert Hainer believes BOOST “has the power to make EVA, the industry’s synthetic material standard for 35 years, obsolete.”

Consumer demand will ultimately decide that.

But Brewer points out that the brand’s commitment to BOOST and Ultra BOOST gives Adidas “a unique selling proposition” and “opportunity to have an ongoing conversation with its consumers.”

In February, Adidas rolled out the Pure BOOST X for women, which has resonated well with its target consumers in its first weeks.

With work moving forward on new BOOST versions for Fall/Winter ’16 and Spring/Summer ’17, including dual-gender, premium-priced apparel offerings, Adidas management contends the company will maximize its reach with BOOST and Ultra BOOST without oversupplying the market with product. Instead, there will be allocated programs and distribution by channel will be carefully weighed. The current retail price ceiling on Ultra BOOST styles is \$180, but Brewer says Adidas reserves the right to retail price future, limited-edition models at \$200 or higher depending on what feature or technology is being added to the version. ■

– Bob McGee

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IRRA to Host Merchandising Summit in Chicago

Seminar Will Coincide with The Running & Fitness Event For Women.



MERCHANDISING SUMMIT

Wednesday / June 8th
1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Thursday / June 9th
8:00 am - 12:00 pm



THE RUNNING & FITNESS EVENT FOR WOMEN

Thursday / June 9th
Friday / June 10th

The Independent Running Retailer Association will host its second annual Store Merchandising Summit June 8 and 9, 2016 at The Hyatt McCormick Place in Chicago. “We believe merchandising is an area where running stores can compete and win against other channels of distribution,” said IRRA Executive Director Terry Schalow. “This seminar represents a major effort by the IRRA to help its member stores sharpen their focus in this critical area of their businesses.”

3 Dots Design team members Andy Davis and Holly Wiese will partner with Merchandising Werx owner, Mercedes Ross to present a comprehensive, thought provoking training session to inspire retailers and

teach them merchandising and store design knowledge that will be invaluable back in their retail environments, Schalow said.

For the first 60 IRRA member stores that register, the registration fee will be waived. Included in these first 60 store registrations are one complimentary hotel room for two nights as well as admission to The Running & Fitness Event For Women conference and trade show, which takes place June 9 & 10 at McCormick Place. Registrations include two executives per store. IRRA member Stores who don't grab one of the coveted first 60 spots will be able to attend The Merchandising Summit by paying \$175 per person, which includes admission to The Running & Fitness Event For Women

The IRRA Store Merchandising Summit will begin June 8 at 1 p.m. and run until 5 p.m. that evening.

The session will continue on June 9 from 8 a.m. to noon. After that, attendees will be able to attend The Running & Fitness Event For Women conference, which begins June 9 at 1 p.m.

Registration for The IRRA Merchandising Summit will be announced later this month on the IRRA list serve. Retailers with any questions should contact Schalow at tschalow1@gmail.com

Confirmed sponsors include: Saucony, Balega and Salming.

Any company interested in sponsoring the Summit should contact Mark Sullivan at Formula 4 Media at msullivan@formula4media.com ■

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RUNNING INSIGHT

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Can you tell us a little about Gatorade Endurance?

Gatorade Endurance is an elite line of sports nutrition products for endurance athletes who have specific fueling needs and performance goals. Grounded in years of hydration and sports nutrition research conducted by the Gatorade Sports Science Institute, these products help deliver fluids and nutrients endurance athletes need for training or racing.

As a brand, Gatorade Endurance is dedicated to fueling endurance athletes' performance through passion, commitment, science and innovation from the start to the finish line.

What has Gatorade Endurance been up to recently?

Gatorade Endurance has a longstanding commitment to the endurance community and it's been exciting to continue evolving how we serve endurance athletes through product innovations, retail, partnerships, race activations and more.

In 2015 we expanded to IRONMAN® race courses in the U.S. This partnership was a natural progression in our continued effort to be where our athletes train and race, with Gatorade Endurance now being



Andrew Hartshorn, Senior Director, Gatorade Endurance, talks about the brand's commitment to the endurance community.

served on more than 300 endurance race courses nationwide, including the Boston Marathon, Bank of America Chicago Marathon, TCS New York City Marathon and the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series.

As Gatorade Endurance continues to broaden its reach at races, it's all the more important for us to ensure endurance athletes have access to our products so they can train with what's on course. If they can practice their nutrition plan ahead of time, they're setting themselves up for success on race day, which is why we were excited to launch GatoradeEndurance.com for sports specialty retailers in September 2015 and directly to athletes, as of March 2016.

We've also recently welcomed two professional triathletes to the Gatorade Endurance roster: IRONMAN® Champion, Beth Gerdes in late 2015, followed by eight-time IRONMAN® Champion and 2nd place finisher at the IRONMAN World Championship in 2013, Luke McKenzie, as of March 2016. These two have an unparalleled commitment and drive to be better at their sport and we could not be more thrilled to help them on their journeys. Luke, in particular has struggled with his nutrition, especially at the 2015 IRONMAN® World Championship. In the year ahead, he and Beth will work closely with Gatorade Endurance and the Gatorade Sports Science Institute to develop a nutrition plan that meets their personal fueling needs.

Can you talk a little bit more about GatoradeEndurance.com?

GatoradeEndurance.com is a one-stop-shop for retailers and athletes, with Gatorade Endurance product for purchase, educational information and

content geared towards the endurance community.

At GatoradeEndurance.com, retailers have the ability to order direct from Gatorade Endurance at wholesale prices. We recognize the value that retailers bring to athletes and wanted the opportunity to manage those relationships in order to better serve them and their customers. The easy-to-use portal offers retailers 20% off the first order as well as rewards and incentives throughout the year.

What's in the future for Gatorade Endurance?

Just over fifty years after Gatorade was born at the University of Florida, our innovation pipeline is stronger than ever and we're proud to continue expanding our offerings for the endurance community and their very specific fueling needs. Later this year, we'll not only introduce a new product to the Gatorade Endurance portfolio but Gatorade will continue to push the limits by delivering new sports fuel, equipment and services to athletes. ■

For more information on Gatorade Endurance or to get product to sell in your store, email GatoradeEndurance@pepsico.com, visit GatoradeEndurance.com or check us out on Facebook at [Facebook.com/GatoradeEndurance](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradeEndurance).



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Virginia Retailer Wins Great Store Makeover

Runner's Retreat of Winchester, VA is the winner of The Great Store Makeover for 2016.

THE GREAT STORE MAKEOVER

Runner's Retreat of Virginia was selected from more than 30 entries of running stores who requested to have their stores made over by 3 Dots Design in a special promotion sponsored by Balega, Nathan Sports, Superfeet, Greneker Mannequins and *Running Insight*.

Runner's Retreat will have its store made over starting in March with the store update completed by April in advance of the spring-summer selling season. With the support of the sponsors, the store will be made over at no-charge to owner Mark Stickley. As part of The Great store Makeover, there will be a grand re-opening this spring that will showcase the store design to the Runner's Retreat community.



"Our store is outdated and in dire need of an upgrade," said Stickley. "We have made a few attempts at re-arranging and re-styling but are not sure which way to go at this time. We are anxiously awaiting a new floor and hope that it is in the works this winter. Our store cat, Max, was embarrassed to be seen in the video we submitted as part of the makeover application, so went into hiding, but he is also anxious for an upgrade."

The store has been in business for almost 14 years and last upgraded its look in 2013.

Holly Wiese of 3 Dots Design, who will be overseeing the makeover, says the store's relatively small 1,100 square foot size will make for an exciting and challenging project. "We should be able to accomplish a great deal without spending a lot of money in this store," she says.

The makeover will be captured on video and the makeover process will be available for viewing online at runninginsight.com. Stickley will also take part in a presentation at The Running Event later this year in Orlando and share results of the Great Store Makeover.

This is the second year for the Great Store Makeover. In 2015, Independence Run & Hike in Carbondale, CO was the winner. "We believe strongly in this idea and thank our sponsors for their support," said Mark Sullivan, editor of *Running Insight*. "Running stores are facing competition from all channels of retail and we hope by showcasing affordable store makeovers we can inspire them to make their stores look great."

"We also thank all the stores who submitted their creative applications to this year's competition," Sullivan said. "We could only pick one store, but I hope they submit again next year. Runner's Retreat submitted an application two years in a row and their persistence was a selling point for sure. ■"

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Zensah Continues To Broaden Reach

While running remains the core focus of this 11-year old, privately held Miami company, Zensah has extended its brand into golf and tennis in recent years as its products have become regularly demanded by professional basketball, baseball and football players.

Currently offering approximately 40 products overall, Zensah's newest additions include a plantar fasciitis sleeve, which began shipping in November 2015, seven new tights (three for men and four for women) and an updated collection of six seamless bras. The bras are line extension of The Gazelle, the company's first seamless, high-impact bra that was introduced in late 2015.

The plantar fasciitis sleeve is available in black, pink and white. The Made in the USA product utilizes 3-D Geo-ribbing to provide relief on the arch for wearers. Re-order rates on the \$24.99 retail product have been strong since it was first shipped in November. ■



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Running Shorts



Industry Vets Launch New Specialty Only Insole Brand

Can two entrepreneurs make a living selling insoles exclusively to independent specialty stores?

Jonathan Koops and Karen Henry are ready to find out. The pair, who worked together at Sole and are currently the Canadian distributors for Addaday, are launching Kneed Footwear with a line of insoles that they say will be sold only through independently owned running and footwear stores.

The Kneed insole line features two main products: The Kneed2Run is a full-length insole designed to replace the foot bed that comes with branded running shoes and The Kneed2Be is a ¾ length insole designed for every day footwear.

“We are strong advocates of local independently owned and operated footwear dealers,” says the company on its website. “The footwear industry is at a crossroads right now where footwear brands have put exceptional strain on those shops in our

communities. You can buy anything from anywhere, and footwear is no exception. Companies (including footwear brands) are looking for growth for growth sake without adding value to the customer experience. Brands are continually being launched and developed inside independent shops only to then become a commodity sold everywhere.”

Koops told *Running Insight* that independents are “the source of innovation, service, and giving to their communities,” adding, “They are so much more than just a fitting showroom for national chains and online dealers. They are the place where you ensure your shoes fit. They are where you kids get shoes they don’t trip in. They are where you connect with other professionals as your life needs change. They are the ones who collect and drop off shoes to the local shelter.”

Koops says of independent retailers, “We want to support them and believe we can build a business doing so.”

The Kneed Insoles feature a biomechanically shaped moldable base that Koops says ensures support from heel to ball of the foot. The insoles also feature a heel cradle that Optimizes the heel’s natural cushioning without causing slippage. All products use Poron, which Koop said was “the best performance cushioning for impact absorption.”

The Kneed2Run insoles will sell for \$49; The Need2Be series will retail for \$29.

Further details can be found at kneedfootwear.com.

Skechers Performance Inks “Official Shoe Deal” with Ironman Europe

Skechers Performance has signed on to become the Official Running Shoe Sponsor of the 2016 IRONMAN European Tour.

Beginning with the IRONMAN 70.3 Pays d’Aix event in May, Skechers Performance will be on site at 26 of the 43 races in the IRONMAN European Tour. The brand will have a presence in the expo village and will be featured in event

marketing—including race and event signage as well as media and digital extensions. The European tour includes stops in Switzerland, Austria, Germany, the UK, Ireland, Spain, France, the Netherlands and Denmark.

Over the last five years, Skechers Performance has been an increasingly active player in the running space, signing athletes such as marathoner Meb Keflezighi, who recently qualified for his fourth Olympic Games, and who in 2014, ran to victory in Boston wearing Skechers GOMeb Speed 3 shoes.

Skechers Performance also sponsors U.S. elite marathoner, Kara Goucher and European athletes Anja Beranek and Nils Frommhold. The brand was also the title sponsor of the Los Angeles Marathon.

New Brand Campaign for Merrell

Merrell is kicking off a new brand platform under the tagline “Do What’s Natural.” The platform will debut with an integrated marketing campaign, including traditional advertising and consumer activation



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Running Shorts (continued)

through social media, brand ambassadors, and partnerships.

“We believe this platform captures who Merrell is as a brand,” says Linda Brunzell, Merrell’s chief marketing officer. “We’re about performance, but also pleasure and play.”

Brunzell says the overall marketing effort which will include messaging, content, and product will be focused on “our belief that nothing should get in the way of enjoying active outdoor adventures.”

Merrell’s campaign also shows how brands are going about targeting consumers

today. The campaign features print and digital advertising, but its social media component also encourages consumers to engage with the brand. “The goal is to engage consumers in conversation,” Brunzell says. “People want to tell their stories and share it with others and we hope this campaign inspires them to do it.”

The campaign coincides with Merrell’s sponsorship of The Tough Mudder adventure racing series, which was announced late last year. “The Tough Mudder series is a great fit for us because those races are not so much about winning



The SKECHERS Foundation celebrated its seventh annual SKECHERS Pier to Pier Friendship Walk with a check presentation ceremony at Shade Hotel in Manhattan Beach, California. The Foundation presented its largest donation totals in the history of the walk: \$434,000 for The Friendship Foundation – a non-profit organization that assists children with special needs and their families – and \$932,000 dedicated to six education foundations. Skechers Execs Michael Greenberg and David Weinberg pose with Denise Austin and Sugar Ray Leonard.

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Running Shorts (continued)

or posting a time as they are about having an experience and sharing that experience with friends.”

Brooks Signs Heptathlon Champ Taiwo

Brooks Running Company has added 2015 U.S. Indoor Track and Field Heptathlon Champion Jeremy Taiwo to its growing roster of sponsored athletes. Taiwo’s accomplishments include his gold medal from last year’s indoor season, a second-place finish in the decathlon at the 2015 U.S. Outdoor Track and Field Championships and a third-place finish in that same



event from 2013. Taiwo lives in the greater Seattle area—Brooks’ hometown—and competed for the University of Washington. He will do some of his running workouts with the Brooks Beasts team.

New Spartan Race Series to Air on NBC and NBCSN

Spartan Race is launching The Spartan U.S. Championship Series, stand-alone series, which will showcase all three of Spartan Race’s core race types: the Sprint, the Super, and the Beast. The Spartan U.S. Championship Series will crown both individual race winners and an overall series champion based on cumulative points across the five U.S. series races.

More than \$100,000 in cash and prizes will be awarded, with the top five men and women of each race receiving their share of a \$10,800 cash

payout, with \$3,000 going to the first place men’s and women’s finisher.

Nuun Says it Will Hydrate a Million Athletes in 2016

Nuun says it plans to hydrate one million athletes as part of its major sponsorships in 2016. The sports hydration brand will be providing on course support at two of the largest running series and 10 major cycling and running events in the United States and Canada. The company says the sponsorship commitments more than triple its event presence in North America over the previous year.





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Running Shorts (continued)

New Marketing VP at ASICS

ASICS America Corporation has named consumer marketing veteran and California native Roeya Badri Vaughan as Vice President of Marketing for its largest region, which encompasses the United States, Canada, Mexico and Brazil. Vaughan brings nearly 20 years of experience to ASICS and a proven track record of driving awareness, topline revenue and consumer engagement for some of the country's biggest brands.

In this role, Vaughan will help drive the vision

and strategy for the ASICS America region. She will be responsible for developing and executing a comprehensive and compelling new marketing, branding and communications strategy to increase visibility and drive the growth of the ASICS America business.

Vaughan most recently served as VP, Global Sun at Oakley, where she was responsible for driving global market leadership and revenue growth for the \$1B sunglasses business unit.

Prior to that, she served as Executive Director and Vice

President of Marketing for Dr. Sears Family Essentials, where she worked to drive awareness and sales of the doctor-formulated, kid-approved line of 100 percent all-natural snacks, beverages, and supplements. As the head of product marketing at Arbonne, she spearheaded the re-launch of their flagship anti-aging skincare line; she also played a management role at Mattel, Inc. where she led product development and marketing efforts for several brands within its portfolio, including Barbie.



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