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## ***INOV-8 HITS THE TRAIL***

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# Inov-8 Promises All-terrain Focus



**Inov-8's new GM says brand wants to re-focus in the United States and make the company a "leading all-terrain brand."**



**"Inov-8 will focus on the specialty trade. Run and outdoor will be two key channels."**

JIM HOWARD, INOV-8

**J**im Howard, who has spent time at Salomon, Puma and New Balance, was hired earlier this year as general manager by inov-8's new parent, the Japanese performance ski brand Descente. "We'll focus on the specialty trade. Running and outdoor [retail] will be our two key channels," Howard told *Running Insight*.

For the past few years, inov-8 has "dabbled" in the trail, triathlon, studio fitness and obstacle course racing markets, according to Howard. "We will get back to our founder's

vision of being a strong player in trail and training."

Later this spring, inov-8 will begin shipping a series of trail shoes, which Howard says emphasizes the brand's renewed focus. The brand's X-Talon series, launched in 2009, has been inov-8's best-known shoe and the 212 model has been worn by a number of World Mountain Running Champions. For 2016, inov-8 is introducing the X-Claw 275, which Howard says is an update of the 212, and the X-Talon 225.

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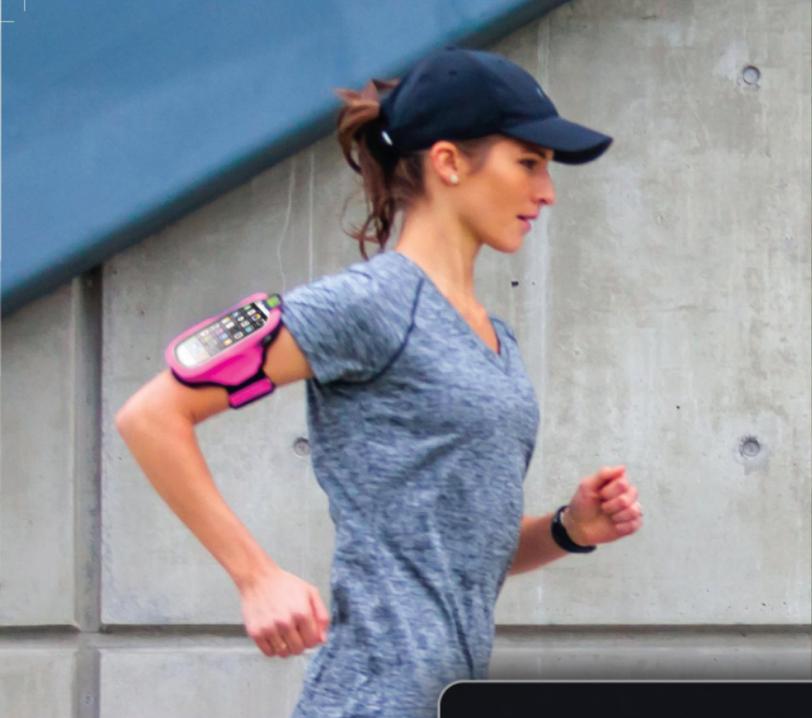
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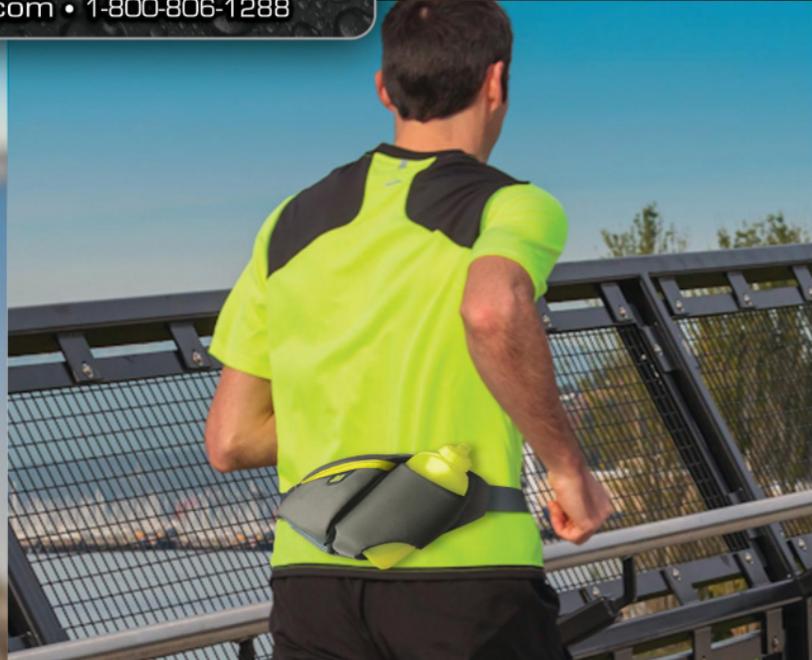
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## Inov-8 Promises All-terrain Focus (continued)



Jim Howard  
General Manager, inov-8

For running stores, inov-8 will also emphasize its training shoes. The brand became a top shoe for CrossFitters and Howard says the brand wants to grow that position and become the “number one training brand in specialty run retail.”

In addition to the sharpened product line, inov-8 has hired an in-house sales team that Howard says will work with retailers on demos, clinics and trail runs. At press time, the brand had hired seven reps to cover the country, with plans to hire two more in the coming months. “Our goal is to service our accounts, not just sell them.”

Inov-8 experienced “huge growth” from 2010-2012, according to Howard, but in the process became “over inventoried” and struggled to serve its retail customers. With its new parent and a new management team (Ian

**“This channel is important to us and we are determined to earn our way with product and service.”**

**JIM HOWARD, INOV-8**

Bailey recently joined as managing director), inov-8 is in a position to be a strong specialty vendor, Howard says. “We have the financial stability and sourcing relationships we’ve not had for quite some time.” Howard, a two-time qualifier for the U.S. Olympic Marathon trials, began his career as the manager of Phoenix, AZ-based run specialty store The Runner’s Den. “This channel is important to us and we are determined to earn our way with product and service.” ■



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# A Chicago Trade with Fleet Feet and RAM

Two of Chicago's Major Players in the Running Business Completed a Swap of Assets Last Month.



As part of a "trade" between Fleet Feet Sports and RAM Racing, Fleet Feet gained a store.



Fleet Feet now has seven stores in the Windy City market.

**T**rades are common in baseball, not so much in the running business. But two of Chicago's major players in the running business completed a swap of assets last month that they say will pay dividends for the city's runners.

Fleet Feet Sports traded its race management division to RAM Racing in return for its Deerfield Running Away Multisport store.

The "trade" means Fleet Feet Chicago now has seven stores in the market and its first in the Northern suburbs, where it had been looking to expand for a while. The 5,200 square-foot Deerfield store was a true multi-sport store whose product offering includes bicycles, so

Fleet Feet is now in the bike business, too.

Meanwhile, RAM now takes ownership of the Soldier Field 10 Miler, The Big

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**The "trade" means Fleet Feet Chicago now has seven stores in the market and its first in the Northern suburbs.**

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10 10K, Rudolph Ramble, Magnificent Mile Half Marathon, Pumpkins in the Park and Ravenswood 5K. Mark Colpoys, who managed the races for Fleet Feet, has joined RAM.

The move also consolidates retail in the Chicago market

and allows both parties to focus on their core businesses, while maintaining an alliance. Dave Zimmer, owner of Fleet Feet Chicago, says his stores will remain heavily involved in the RAM Racing series as an "official" sponsor.

"This strengthens the relationship between RAM and Fleet Feet and is also a big win for the runners of Chicago," Zimmer said. "It gives them more resources for shopping, training, racing and a better registration process."

RAM Racing is best known for its 14 city Hot Chocolate 15K/5K series. In the Chicago market, RAM produces a series of races including 5 milers, 5Ks, half marathons and triathlons. ■

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# Online Education at Your Fingertips

How Retailers Can Find Business Education and Inspiration Online. By Daniel P. Smith

## Building a Personal Brand by Gary Vaynerchuk

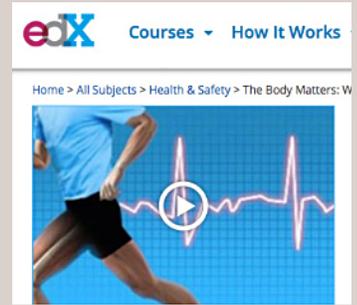
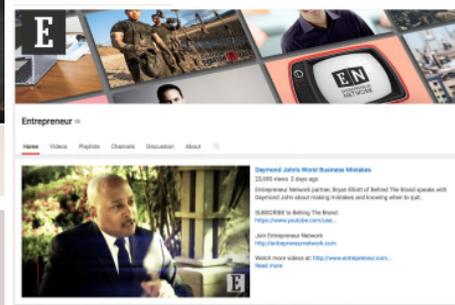
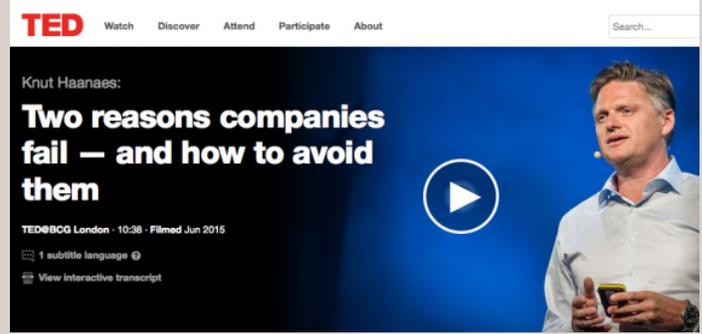
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In today's digital age, education is at our fingertips. Lessons learned from a wide range of online content can be applied to run retail marketing and business tactics.



**S**ucceeding in the running specialty business is no easy feat, especially amid the stagnant sales record of the last two years.

Retailers are managing inventory and people, navigating trends and shifting consumer habits, dealing with the whims of customers and the ever-increasing intrusion of the Internet, and planning for the future while extinguishing any number of daily fires with customers, staff, vendors or business associates.

Professional, or even personal, self-improvement frequently falls to the background and the status quo dominates. Survival becomes the chief objective and some potentially impactful steps to improve efficiency or profitability all too often sit on the sidelines.

A little education, however, can help leadership and staff fill skills gaps and deepen its knowledge base. And fortunately in today's digital age, education is as close

as your pocket. The World Wide Web hosts rich, insightful content running retailers can apply to their lives and businesses in a convenient and economical manner.

Running shop personnel who learn and then apply new skills to their marketing, operations, human resources, purchasing and other business areas then better position themselves to thrive in a competitive and challenging marketplace and reach their true potential.

### MOOCs

The name might be funny, but MOOCs, or Massive Open Online Courses, deliver a serious education.

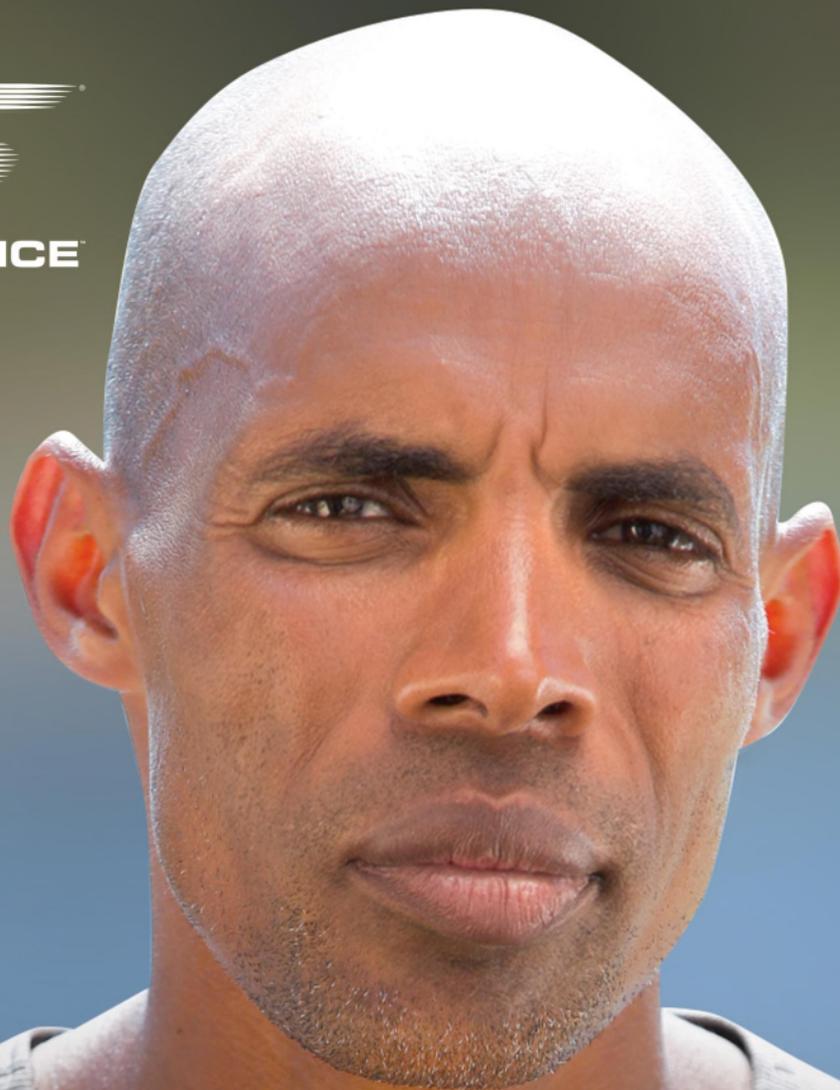
Created to bring higher education to the masses, MOOCs are open-enrollment online courses taught by instructors from elite universities such as Stanford, Harvard, Duke and Northwestern. Many courses are free, though some carry a small fee in the neighborhood of \$100.

While some business MOOCs cover

more global, enterprise-level topics well beyond the needs of a small business owner, leading MOOC platforms like Coursera and edX do offer a number of classes relevant to a running retailer. On Coursera, for instance, the University of Washington oversees courses on networking and negotiations, while Michigan State University hosts a class on strategy. Among its many offerings, edX includes an "Introduction to Marketing" class from the University of British Columbia.

**Check Out:** "Brand Management: Aligning Business, Brand and Behaviour" (Coursera); "Digital Branding and Engagement" (edX); "The Body Matters: Why Exercise Makes You Healthy and How to Stay Uninjured" (edX)

- [coursera.org/course/brand](http://coursera.org/course/brand)
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## Online Education (continued)



### Running Specialty 101

Though 3point5.com is rather well known in the running and outdoors industry now, it bears a mention, particularly given how relevant the platform is to the running specialty marketplace.

On 3point5, a name harkening to the distance between a consumer and a sales associate on the showroom floor, running store staff can learn directly about product and company background from more than 600 brands like Brooks, Saucony and Mizuno and earn rich discounts on gear along the way.

Helen Langan, spokesperson for Experticity, 3point5's parent company, says the site's interactive lessons "provide information tailored specifically for buying conversations on the sales floor" and this knowledge has a direct impact on results. A study of 63,500 retail associates by Experticity and the Wharton Business School at the University of Pennsylvania found that individuals certified on a brand sell 87 percent more of that brand than their peers.

### Peer-to-Peer Online Learning

While MOOCs are tied to academia, leveraging the insights of thought leaders, researchers and other university-connected personnel, peer-to-peer online learning platforms exist as a hardscrabble, boots-on-the-ground counter to academia's sometimes ivory tower view of the world.

Leading peer-to-peer education sites like Udemy and ALISON offer classes taught by real-world practitioners – fellow entrepreneurs, business leaders, educational organizations and more – and the courses tend to be more focused on nuts-and-bolts, introductory-level business practices related to areas such as accounting, marketing, operations, customer service, staffing and more.

ALISON, for example, hosts classes such as fundamentals in business law, growth strategies for business and customer service training, a course that can refresh retail leaders on customer service basics or even serve as an online training program for staff.

**Check Out:** "Accounting – Control and Monitoring of Cash" (ALISON); "Building a Personal Brand by Gary Vaynerchuk" (Udemy); "Master the Shopper Experience to Build Your Retail Business" (Udemy)

- [alison.com/courses/Accounting-Control-of-Cash](http://alison.com/courses/Accounting-Control-of-Cash)
- [udemy.com/building-a-personal-brand-by-gary-vaynerchuk/](http://udemy.com/building-a-personal-brand-by-gary-vaynerchuk/)
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### YouTube Channels

YouTube isn't just a place to find music videos, sports bloopers and pranks. The globe's foremost video-sharing website hosts a wealth of information to help small business owners improve their performance, including a number of YouTube channels bringing actionable tips, subject matter experts and relevant small business information to the forefront.

To wit: the U.S. Small Business Administration's YouTube channel features a diverse assortment of informative videos and webinars for small business owners, including content on social media marketing, business plans, SBA loans and resources for women and veterans; Google's Small Business Channel delivers a Google AdWords Education Video Series as well as content related to topics such as customer loyalty, social media and the work-life balance; and Entrepreneur Media offers an assortment of pithy videos with practical advice on time management, productivity, creating a marketing plan and even sleep habits.

- Check Out:** Google Small Business; Entrepreneur; U.S. Small Business Administration; James Wedmore
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  - [youtube.com/user/jameswedmore](http://youtube.com/user/jameswedmore)

### TED Talks

Once limited to a cult following, TED Talks enjoy a mainstream existence today with thousands of short talks aimed at spotlighting innovation, providing inspiration or pushing thought in new directions.

While a good number of TED Talks are more entertainment than educational, at least in the traditional academic sense, there are a number of presenters whose honest programs about motivation, leadership and transformation deliver spirited insights running retailers can apply to their own businesses or, at the very least, will prove thought provoking enough to encourage a change in mindset or outlook.

**Check Out:** "The Puzzle of Motivation" by Daniel Pink; "Try Something New for 30 Days" by Matt Cutts; "Why the Best Hire Might Not Have the Perfect Resume" by Regina Hartley

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# New Balance's Trayvon Bromell Wins 60M Gold



**T**rayvon Bromell, the fast-rising 20-year old sprinter, became the youngest athlete to capture the gold in the 60 meters at the World Indoor Championships earlier this month in Portland, OR. He was wearing New Balance SD200v1 spikes.

Bromell, who was the first high school athlete to break 10 second in the 100 meters, signed with New Balance in October 2015. He is currently finishing his degree at Baylor University where he trains under Coach Mike Ford.

In 2015, Bromell ran 9.84 seconds at the U.S. Championships in Eugene, OR, becoming the youngest U.S. runner to qualify for the World Championships. He followed up that performance by winning a Bronze medal at the World Outdoor Championships in Beijing, China, also in 2015.

“We are so happy to have Trayvon Bromell as part of the New Balance family. To have two world championship sprint medals, one of them Gold, before the age of 21 is an incredible feat,” says Tom Carleo New Balance VP of running. “As a person, Trayvon has fit in so well with the New Balance family, truly becoming part of who we are. The future is bright for the Trayvon and New Balance relationship. This summer will be a lot of fun.”

Currently, including Bromell, there are 32 runners on Team New Balance. The squad features 10 Americans. Among them: Jenny Simpson and Cory McGee (1500 meters), Vernon Norwood (400 meters) and Emma Coburn and Steph Garcia (Steeple). ■

## JackRabbit Will Not Open New Stores This Year

**T**he Finish Line-owned running specialty banner JackRabbit Sports may close up to five more locations after shuttering four unprofitable locations over the last 12 months. The 72-door chain ended its recently completed fiscal year on a stronger note with low-single digit comp sales growth in the fourth quarter versus flat same store sales on a 25 percent revenue increase to \$20.4 million. JackRabbit's full-year sales were 29 percent higher at \$89.9 million with an improved bottom line but still operating at a loss.

Finish Line's current annual forecast for the running unit calls for a low-single digit operating loss on revenue expansion of 5.7-11.2 percent to \$95-100 million.

“I am pleased that the business is progression against the key milestones we have mapped out for the next year,” Finish Line CEO Sam Sato said of JackRabbit. “But there is still a lot of work to be done to improve the bottom line before we are comfortable re-accelerating our expansion plan.” ■





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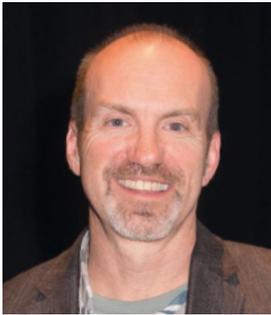
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**A LETTER FROM THE IRRA:**

# Plans for a Broader Scope



Terry Schalow,  
IRRA Executive Director



John Benedict,  
IRRA Board President



In early March, the IRRA board gathered in Boston for what may have been the most pivotal meeting in the organization’s history. The goal was ambitious: create a refreshed vision of the organization’s purpose and build a strategic plan that will position the IRRA to effectively lead the channel forward.

As we took our places at the conference table to begin the first day’s agenda, a man unknown to any of us walked in and took a seat at the table. It turned out that he was supposed to be attending an investment training seminar in the room across the hall. When informed of his mistake, the poor embarrassed guy got up and left without a word. When one of our members spotted him in the hallway the next day, we invited him to take a group picture as an “honorary” member of the IRRA. He was a good sport and joined us for the photo, and after shaking hands with everyone, he clearly felt a lot better about his gaff. While it may not have been

apparent at that moment, we had symbolically accomplished one of our most important new goals: Create an organizational culture that makes everyone feel welcome.

The premise that the organization must have a broader scope for membership is a key pivot point for the IRRA. This does not mean that the focus will shift away from meeting the needs of our retail members. To the contrary, the effort to assist our retailers in their efforts to attract and retain customers will remain critically important. That said, we believe strongly as a board that an expanded membership structure is equally important. We must stand together as a community of retailers, vendors, and service providers, and work collaboratively to build the foundation for a healthy, vibrant channel. The IRRA is in a unique position to foster that spirit of community, and this will form the core of our mission going forward.

In the coming weeks, the IRRA will be undergoing some major changes that will

literally change the face of the organization. We’ll be excited to showcase our new look, but that will only be the start of our efforts. In the coming months we’ll be offering new value propositions, creating strategic alliances, engaging our vendors and service providers, and encouraging non-members to join us. Regardless of each initiative, every step we take will be aligned to addressing the significant challenges that are affecting the health of the specialty running channel. We intend to be very transparent in this process, so members and non-members alike can check our progress and provide us with feedback.

We’re looking forward to this important new chapter for the IRRA, and we welcome all businesses in the Specialty Running Industry to join us in the effort. ■

**John Benedict,**  
IRRA Board President

**Terry Schalow,**  
IRRA Executive Director



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# Running Shorts

## Moehl Signs with Ultimate Direction

Ultimate Direction has signed top female ultrarunner and race director Krissy Moehl, to its team of professional athletes for the 2016 season. The brand's new crew of sponsored athletes will include top runners Nikki Kimball, Ashley Erba, Jessie Young, Devon Yanko, Kristina Pattison and Hillary Allen.

Moehl is a veteran in the ultra-scene, having run more than 100 races over her 15-year career and claiming 55 wins. In 2005 she became the youngest woman to complete the Grand Slam of Ultrarunning and in 2007 she set the women's record for the Hardrock 100. Her ultramarathon wins have included 1st place female at the HURT 100 in 2007, Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc in 2003 and 2009, and the Ultra-Trail Mt. Fuji in 2013.

Most recently, Moehl set the women's supported fastest known time of 47 hours, 29 minutes, for the 175-mile traverse of the Tahoe Rim Trail. Moehl has just penned her first book: "Running Your First Ultra: Customizable Training Plans for your First 50k to 100 Mile Race."

## Jackson Signs with Rudy Project

Rudy Project, the Italian manufacturers of sunglasses, helmets, goggles, prescription eyewear, and triathlon bags, has signed an endorsement deal with multiple IRONMAN triathlon champion and Top American Female Finisher from the 2015 IRONMAN World Championships,



Ultrarunner Krissy Moehl

Heather Jackson.

Born and raised in Exeter, New Hampshire, Jackson gained her competitive spirit playing hockey from a young age, which eventually led her to earn a spot on Princeton's Division I women's team for four years. In 2007, her focus shifted from ice hockey to triathlon after competing in a few local races and realizing she had some real potential in the sport.

Heather's first professional win was at the 2012 Wildflower Triathlon, which she has since won two more times. Her top accolades include a fifth place at the 2015 IRONMAN World

Championship (Top American Female Finisher), 2013 Escape from Alcatraz Champion, IRONMAN Coeur D'Alene Champion, and two-time IRONMAN 70.3 Oceanside Champion.

## A New Combo

Sweet Spot Skirts and Run Pretty Far combined forces. Sweet Spot makes skirts, panties and tights, and Run Pretty Far makes active tops.

Sweet Spot got its start in 2009 when founder Stephanie Lynn spontaneously threw on a "disco" skirt while taking photos for her real estate job.

She received great feedback on her look and launched the brand in the bike market in 2010. The company sources all its product in the United States.

## New National Run Sales Manager at Swiftwick

Performance sock company Swiftwick announced that Mark Castrillon is the company's new national run sales manager. Castrillon has 20 years of experience in professional sales leadership in footwear, apparel and accessories.

"We are pleased to add Mark to the Swiftwick team," said David Fitzgerald, Swiftwick's vice president of sales. "His strong analytical skill set as well as his natural ability to create lasting partnerships with independent run retailers will be an asset to Swiftwick as we continue to grow our brand."

Castrillon joins Swiftwick after serving as east regional sales manager at Nathan Sports. In this role, Castrillon led a team of 18 independent representatives where he developed and implemented a strategy that supported independent run specialty dealers, while increasing inventory turns.

Prior to that, Castrillon held various sales roles at Deckers Outdoor Corporation, ALTAMA Footwear, Wolverine Worldwide and Timberland Company where he gained extensive experience in sales leadership, sales planning and forecasting.

## Re-brand Roll-out from Pro-Tec

Beginning in April, Pro-Tec Athletics is rolling out a



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## **RUNNING INSIGHT**

### Running Shorts (continued)

rebranding of packaging and premium product upgrades. The visual component of Pro-Tec's packaging has been upgraded to better fit the progressive market, the company says. And it coincides with a change to "pillow packaging." These packages are made of durable, recycled plastic to provide better protection during shipping and merchandising. Pillow packs allow customers easy access to open packaging of braces, allowing customers the option to try on supports. Pro-Tec maintains the reputation of educating customers on injuries and related products with informative packaging content. Newly designed recovery and instruction guides are also included within Pro-Tec products.

Pro-Tec has made significant

product upgrades to an assortment of best sellers. These upgrades involve top of the line neoprene and knit materials, combined with high end contoured EVA pads to provide targeted compression. The EVA foam increases comfort and stabilization for supports such as the IT Band compression support, Achilles tendon support, Shin Splints wrap, Arch Pro-Tec, and more.

Pro-Tec has streamlined its branding across all marketing efforts, including tradeshow presence, print ads, updated imagery, a newly designed website to launch in April, as well as new in-store merchandising options for retailers.

Pro-Tec Athletics was founded in 1991 by former professional volleyball player Jeff Rodgers. The company began



# WHO IS YOUR PRO?

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## WHY YOU WANT A PRO:

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PRO JOB DESCRIPTION



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RUN LONGER.

nathansports.com

#runlikewater



## Running Shorts (continued)



VIEW THE BOA VIDEOS AT:  
[TransformYourExperience.com](http://TransformYourExperience.com).

with a knee patellar tendon strap and has developed a full sports medicine line, which includes braces, supports, tape, hot and cold therapy and skin protection.

### Anzures Partners with XX2i

Canadian runner and 2016 Rio hopeful Natasha LeBeaud Anzures has signed a sponsorship deal with XX2i Optics. She is a member of the Canadian National Team and was a qualifier for the 2015 Canadian Pan American and World XC Teams. LeBeaud Anzures is also the co-founder of the youth non-profit, 2nd Recess, in San Diego (CA) County that inspires youth and their families to be active

through running.

### Boa Launches Customer-Centered Video Series

Boa Technology, Inc., is celebrating the milestone of taking its Boa Closure System to more than 300 brand partners and 33 countries, with over 64 million dials powering product across the globe.

The Boa Closure System offers a fast, customizable and comfortable fit. Products utilizing the Boa Closure System can be found in the running, golf, snow sports, utility, safety, cycling, outdoors, medical and protective equipment categories. The company has also



experienced growth in recent years. The employee headcount increased by 47 percent from 2015 to 2016 and the company now has offices in six countries.

Boa Technology recently

launched a video series highlighting the Boa Closure System and how, as the brand describes it, it “allows users to experience freedom of movement and oneness with their gear.” ■

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## STORE MERCHANDISING SUMMIT

JUNE 8-9, 2016

Andy Davis and Holly Wiese of 3 Dots Design will partner with Merchandising Werx owner, Mercedes Ross to present a thought provoking session to inspire retailers and teach them about merchandising and store design. The seminar also includes presentations on key fashion trends and other topics relevant to run specialty stores.

Summit Registration Fee: \$175  
Seats are limited.

**REGISTER HERE**

**FOR SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION:**

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(or your account representative)