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# ASICS Axes Sales Management Team



**The change in the sales management team demonstrates that it will not be business as usual at the running brand.**

**A**SICS is shaking things up. Last week, the company terminated its sales management team of VP Tracy Paoletti, key account manager Damian McCusker, and regional sales managers Mike Mitchell and Dave Wells.

The move came as somewhat of a surprise. Although ASICS has had issues in the United States, the brand was hitting its sales goals, according to sources, and the individuals on the sales man-

agement team were generally well regarded by retailers.

ASICS issued the following statement: “Our industry is experiencing a dynamic shift and we are positioning ASICS to outpace the rate of change. Through this effort we are making some significant moves including acquisitions and the hiring of new talent, as a result, several members of our sales leadership team will not be continuing with the organization. In the meantime, CEO Gene McCarthy

will oversee the sales team for the short term.”

McCarthy, who joined ASICS America as CEO last fall, has told colleagues he was not happy with the sales effort. The sales management team, rather than the sales force, paid the price for that. Several years ago, ASICS shifted from the old industry model of independent reps handling sales and sales decision making to sales being handled by an in-house sales team. Sources say McCarthy and the brand’s Japanese parent company would like to see a modern, tech savvy sales force interacting with retailers as the brand maps its course to grow beyond the \$1 billion mark it hit in 2014. ASICS reportedly has hired a SVP of sales, who will be announced shortly.

The change in the sales management team demonstrates that it will not be business as usual at the running brand, which is an important brand in the specialty channel and holds the number two overall market share. Earlier this year, ASICS acquired GPS fitness-tracking company RunKeeper.

The purchase of RunKeeper by ASICS came on the heels of fitness app Runtastic being snapped up by Adidas for \$239 million. Previously, Under Armour had purchased MyFitnessPal and Endomondo — two massive fitness platforms. ■

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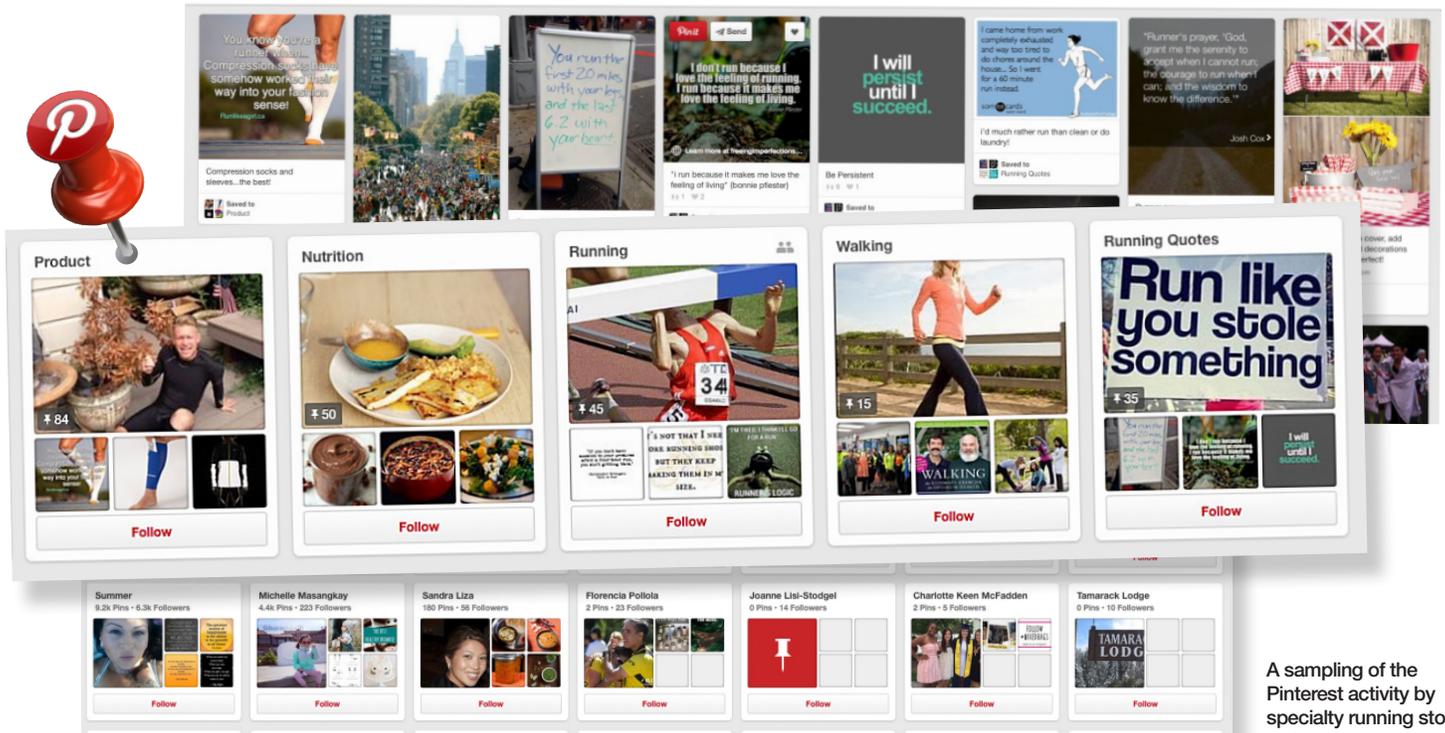
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# The Practice of Pinterest

Should Pinterest Be a Part of Your Store's Social Media Strategy? / By Daniel P. Smith



Last fall, the six-year-old visual bookmarking site Pinterest captured headlines for surpassing 100 million monthly active users.

While Pinterest's size remains dwarfed by Facebook, which boasts 1.5 billion users, as well as Twitter and Instagram, each of which claim more than 300 million monthly devotees, the news underscored Pinterest's surging popularity.

For all of Pinterest's gains, however, many running shops continue excluding Pinterest from their social media arsenal.

But should they? After all, Pinterest has marketing promise. And the vast

majority of Pinterest users – as much as 81 percent by some third-party estimates – are women, the running industry's biggest target.

## Pinterest at Play

Unlike its social media counterparts, Pinterest has consistently hung its hat on its marketing merits and prospective ROI. According to Shopify, 93 percent of Pinterest users use the platform to plan purchases and Pinterest sports a higher average order value than either Facebook or Twitter.

"Pinterest users don't just search for specific hashtags or browse their feeds; rather, they are more likely to casually

browse the platform," explains Stefanie Parker, social media marketer at leading digital marketer WebiMax. "This type of interaction allows retailers and brands to reach users that they wouldn't typically reach on Facebook or Twitter."

Leeyen Rogers, vice president of marketing at tech company JotForm, calls Pinterest "a goldmine of opportunity waiting to be tapped into," particularly for small businesses looking to gain affordable exposure.

"You can more easily gain followers organically who will share your pins with their followers, who will then further spread the pin," Rogers says.

At San Francisco-based A Runner's Mind, Carlos Guerra leads the three-store chain's social media efforts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Foursquare and Pinterest. Among the five social media outlets, Guerra sees similarities, but not necessarily redundancies.

Guerra, for instance, appreciates how he can categorize highly visual content on individual Pinterest boards built around specific themes such as walking or nutrition. By contrast, content on a platform like Facebook is all lumped together and there's a large recency bias with the most recent content



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## The Practice of Pinterest (continued)

being the most visible.

“I think the categorization of Pinterest focuses viewers’ eyes more on a specific topic so they’re not overwhelmed so much,” Guerra says.

The distinct bulletin boards, Guerra continues, also help A Runner’s Mind paint a broader lifestyle picture.

“You can see the parts that make up the whole,” he says. “This allows us to clearly define who we are to our audience.”

### Looking Before Leaping

Given Pinterest’s visual nature, running stores have an inherent edge on Pinterest, as there’s ample opportunity to share dynamic photography showing footwear, apparel and other running gear in action.

Before diving into Pinterest, however, retailers have plenty to consider, such as their target audience, current content and potential board categories. These pre-launch considerations, Parker contends, will make it easier for a running shop to get started on Pinterest and to use the platform most effectively.

Perhaps above all, however, retailers need to assess Pinterest’s potential ROI for their specific operation. Rogers contends that Pinterest’s best value is often for those retail operations with an existing e-commerce presence.

“If you are a strictly local company that seeks to only improve foot traffic to your brick-and-mortar store, then Pinterest is probably not worth your time,” she says. “Even if a user lands on your website from Pinterest, chances are that they don’t live near your store and cannot make a purchase online, which doesn’t deliver value to you or the user.”

It’s considerations like that – and the pure time that social media management demands – that appears to have pushed Pinterest aside for many running retailers – at least for now.

“We haven’t put all our marbles into Pinterest just yet, but we do think there’s value there,” Guerra says. “It’s just a matter of putting in what it takes and being consistent, which is really the key with any social media.” ■



If you decide to play in the Pinterest sandbox, social media experts offer seven tips to make the most of the social media platform.

- 1 Prioritize high-quality imagery:** Pinterest is a highly visual platform where compelling visuals matter. Running shops will need to capture attractive photos themselves or score professional assets from brand partners.
- 2 Be mindful of beating your own drum:** Overdoing it on the self-promotion is never a good strategy for driving engagement, increasing followers or securing a tuned-in audience. Share top-notch content, even if it means directing traffic elsewhere. “Pin user-friendly content that your target market will find useful,” Parker says. “Don’t try to be salesy; it will not work here.”
- 3 Engage:** As with other social media channels, retailers cannot simply put out content and expect positive interaction to ensue. Rather, like pins and re-pin, reply to comments and genuinely participate in conversations.
- 4 Team up:** Building relationships with other pinners, namely complementary businesses, can prove mutually beneficial. “People follow Pinterest accounts that are perceived as trustworthy and expert curators, and are more receptive to product pins that are interwoven into a mix of interesting products spanning different types,” Rogers says. “This can keep the quality content flowing and help each business grow its audience.”
- 5 Download the Pin-it Tool:** When creating an account, Pinterest will suggest the Pin It Button. Use it. “This tool will make pinning useful images and articles more efficient in a way that the act will become like second nature, which will increase engagement over time,” Parker says.
- 6 Leverage Rich Pins:** Rich Pins are pins that include extra information directly on the pin itself, such as real-time pricing, availability and where to buy information.
- 7 Have the right follow up in place:** Part of having quality content is the entire user experience, Rogers says. She urges retailer to link to something useful, while any retailer’s website should be mobile optimized, especially since Pinterest reports that more than 75 percent of its usage occurs on phones and tablets.



**Social Media Experts**  
Tips for using Pinterest



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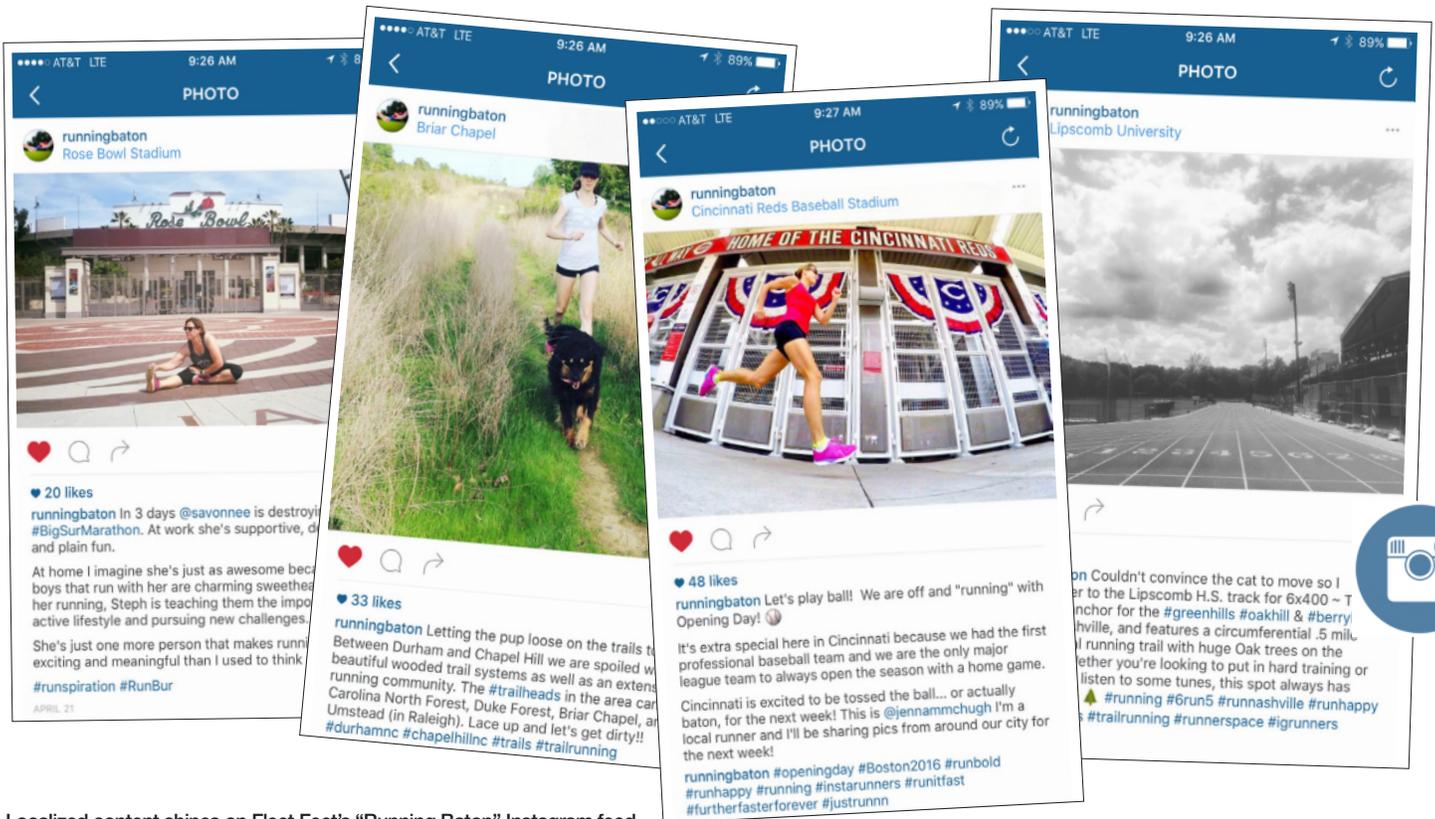
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# Fleet Feet Passes the Baton on Instagram



Localized content shines on Fleet Feet's "Running Baton" Instagram feed.

Anyone who spends time on social media knows that #running is a popular topic to post about. Runners share quips and photos of everything from the distance they are running to the time they have achieved to sunset views and shoes.

**R**unning stores, many of whom have impressive, community-focused social media feeds, can both benefit from and add to the online #running community.

Fleet Feet's new "Running Baton" Instagram feed (@runningbaton) reflects this community vibe. The Running Baton Instagram feed, which launched last month, will feature contributions from Fleet Feet stores across the country, with the feed aiming to "showcase the running community across the United States."

A simple concept, each week

one Fleet Feet Sports store will "hold the baton" and showcase the running community in their area through Instagram posts. At the end of the week they "pass the baton" to the next store. Some stores have the owner "hold the baton," while other stores select an employee or community runner to take their leg.

The Running Baton feed has one rule – no promotional posts! You won't see any posts about store sales or new product.

Running Baton is designed to showcase the communities and experience of being a runner in each city.

Fleet Feet Sports Nashville and Fleet Feet Sports Cincinnati are among the stores who have taken part so far.

## Don't Market, Just Connect

"We're always exploring new ways to connect with runners, and this seemed like an approach that hadn't really been tackled before," says Frank DeJulius, operator, Fleet Feet Sports Cincinnati. "Most social media communication or messaging is siloed by brands or community or event. Here, the only connection point is just the actual love of



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## Fleet Feet Passes the Baton on Instagram (continued)

running, which is pretty cool.”  
“Every time I scroll through Facebook or Instagram, I’m reminded that runners are a very curious and social group,” says Christi Beth Adams, owner, Fleet Feet Sports Nashville. “We love to experience new races or discover a new route and tell the world! So supporting something that not only highlights running, but highlights new places, communities, and things related to the culture of running was a pretty easy decision.”

Posting on the Running Baton feed, the stores focus in on community, which in turn helps to connect with customers.

**It is really about connecting these communities and experiences in a way that is authentic and genuine.**

“I think it helped us focus on and highlight some of the things we take for granted as runners living here,” says Adams. “Once you step back and think about capturing the things a national running audience will find interesting or might not know, you’re reminded of all of the amazing things we have access to that makes Nashville so special and unique.”

“When our ambassador was ‘holding the baton’ there was a sense of interest and pride in our town from our customers and the running community,” says DeJulius. “I think that’s what’s cool – it will bring out city pride from runners who live there, and also introduce things to runners who don’t.”

According to Ellen Donahue, director of marketing, Fleet Feet Sports, the idea behind the Running Baton concept is part of Fleet Feet’s focus on exploring “marketing ideas and initiatives from the perspective of the runner.”

“We know social is a big part of the running experience, and that things are happening in individual running com-

munities that other runners would find interesting if they knew about them,” says Donahue. “So the Running Baton is really about connecting these communities and experiences in a way that is authentic and genuine because it’s from the viewpoint of the runners living in those communities.”

She adds, “We believe by creating a vehicle that celebrates the overall running culture and isn’t limited to a specific region, event, brand, or point of view other than the runner’s, we can create more runners, more interest about running, and more passionate runners in general, which benefits us all.” ■

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# Change Underfoot at Nike, Adidas

Nike's chairman and co-founder Phil Knight is expected to retire after 50 years in the business, this June.

The adidas Group is preparing for the arrival of Kasper Rorsted, who will join as CEO, to replace the retiring Herbert Hainer.

**A**head of its new fiscal year in June when chairman and co-founder Phil Knight is expected to retire after 50 years in the business, Nike has made a number of changes in its executive suite, and subsequently urged shareholders to reject an unsolicited "mini-tender" offer by a private Canadian investment company.

At the adidas Group, which is preparing for the summer arrival of Kasper Rorsted, who will join the Executive Board in August ahead of his Oct. 1 appointment as CEO to replace the retiring Herbert Hainer, the company

says it generated "strong brand momentum" in its first quarter.

Adidas Group's operating profit jumped 35 percent to the equivalent of \$552.8 million in the period ended March 31 on 22 percent currency-neutral revenue growth to \$5.42 billion. With the announcement, ahead of official first quarter results May 4, Adidas upped its annual profitability growth forecast from continuing operations to a 15-18 percent increase versus a prior projection of a 10-12 percent gain.

At Nike, where the company remains focused on \$50 billion in annual revenues by 2020, former Polartec and Converse senior

executive Michael Spillane is the new president of product and merchandising. He is replacing Jeanne P. Jackson, who is retiring May 31.

Elsewhere, Elliott Hill is moving to president of geographies and integrated marketplace with responsibility for wholesale and direct to consumer, and Heidi O'Neill shifts to president of direct to consumer from her prior role as president and GM of Nike Women's. At Converse, Davide Grasso moves from chief marketing officer to president and CEO of the wholly owned subsidiary with Greg Hoffman becoming the new CMO. ■





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# The Spirit of Community



Terry Schalow,  
IRRA Executive Director



John Benedict,  
IRRA Board President

**W**hen you look up the word “community” in Webster’s Dictionary, you’ll see two definitions. The first and most common use of the word defines community as “a group of people living in the same place.” This certainly means a great deal to the running specialty channel, as a focus on engaging customers in communities around the country is what drives our channel. The second version says that community is “a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.” This definition quite accurately represents the renewed focus of the IRRA and what we’re building to support the channel.

To that end, the IRRA board has created several working groups that are focused on key community building blocks. Our Membership Committee has undertaken a critical assessment of current value offerings for both retailers and vendors, and is developing new value propositions to support and enhance the membership experience. Our Vendor Relations committee is focused

on developing the communication process between vendors and retailers, and working with vendors for solutions to distribution challenges. There’s also a new Strategic Alliance Committee, whose aim is to engage key partners within the industry, including other running organizations, industry media, service companies, and market research firms.

Branding the IRRA is a key focus, so we’ve established a committee to ensure that our organization remains at the hub of the conversation and is in the position to let the industry know what we represent. We recognize that education is critical, so we’ve established a working group focused on topics like operational best practices, emerging trends, and introducing new competitive platforms. Finally, our Event Committee is working closely with our partners at Formula4 Media to ensure that our industry trade show, The Running Event, maintains relevance and offers value to attendees.

Recall that sharing was the keyword within the definition of community, and that means several things. Sharing ideas and

content fall within that context and the IRRA will provide the platform for both. Perhaps the most transformative example of sharing that is gaining momentum quickly within the channel is the concept of sharing POS data. This will enable both vendors and retailers to take a giant stride toward removing the guesswork from inventory planning and will create efficiencies in account management. In addition, high levels of data sharing will provide greater insight in to product trends, and overall market data accuracy will be enhanced. We’ll be talking much more about data sharing in the coming months, but suffice to say this will be an important business development platform for ensuring the future health of the channel.

As always, the IRRA invites your comments, feedback, and suggestions as we move toward our goals. The running industry is evolving, and the organization will work diligently to stay ahead of the curve and support the businesses of our members and non-members alike. By staying focused and involved, we’ll help everyone succeed. ■




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**RUNNING INSIGHT**

## Running Shorts



Honey Stinger Snack Bars.

### Honey Stinger Gets into Snack Bar Category

Honey Stinger, manufacturer of honey-based energy food, is introducing a new, low sugar snack bar line to its roster of energy foods. The new Snack Bars are made with gluten free ingredients such as organic honey, organic apples, nuts and seeds, all of which are GMO free.

Honey Stinger Snack Bars are available in four flavors: Peanut Butter and Jelly, Super Fruit and Ancient Grain, Cran-Apple and Walnuts, and Nuts, Seeds and Roasted Serrano. Snack Bars are available in boxes of 15 (MSRP \$25.35).

Snack Bars are the third new product line from Honey Stinger this year. In January, the company introduced new Gluten Free Waffles in flavors Salted

Caramel, Cinnamon, and Maple, and Protein Chews in flavors Raspberry, Juneberry and Cherry-Lime.

### New Owner at All3Sports

Atlanta's triathlon store All3Sports has a new owner. Atlanta triathlete and entrepreneur Matt Cole has taken over ownership of the All3Sports retail store from Morgan Clark Schnur.

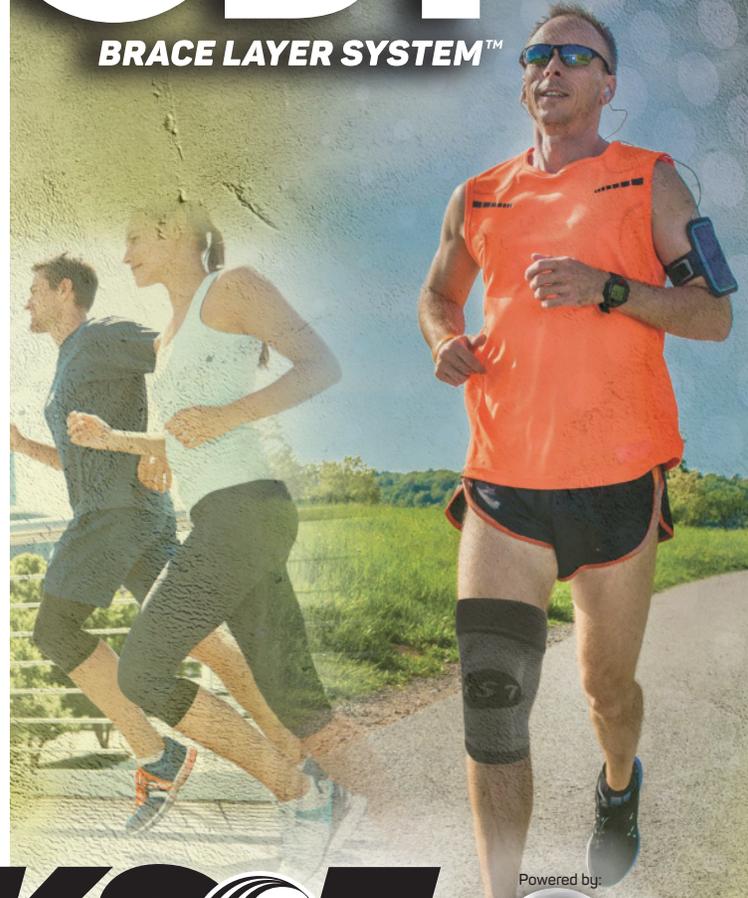
Cole will operate the business concurrently with Podium Multisport, the retail operation he founded after serving as a long-time manager at All3Sports.

Founded in April 2002, All3sports opened its retail doors as both an internet-based ecommerce retail business and a destination retail store in Atlanta, Georgia. The store has been recognized as a Top 10 Triathlon Retailer by *Triathlon Business International*.



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## Running Shorts (continued)

Usain Bolt will endorse insoles by ENERTOR.



### Bolt Endorses New Insole Brand

Six-time Olympic Games Gold Medalist and 11-time World Champion Usain Bolt will endorse insoles made by ENERTOR, a new sport insole brand that says its products help to improve performance and reduce injury.

Launching in summer 2016, ENERTOR uses patented D3O technology. The “smart material” made by D3O is designed to cushion the foot when moved slowly, but it locks together on impact to absorb and disperse energy, before instantly returning to its flexible state.

This characteristic provides enhanced shock absorption and gives proven energy returns of up to 36 percent, according to the brand. For more information, visit: [enertor.com](http://enertor.com).

### Brooks Rolls Out Run Signature

Brooks has officially launched Run Signature, the brand’s new fitting method that it says “utilizes leading-edge technology to assess the way a runner’s body wants to run and recommends the right shoe to fit their run.” Run Signature premiered at the Brooks Running Booth at

the Hynes Convention Center on Boston Marathon weekend last month.

Through Run Signature, Brooks aims to empower runners to choose the experience they want from their run, based on the data they gather about how their body moves. The company has unveiled what it feels are more intuitive footwear categories that take into account running experiences and support. The Brooks categories are Cushion, Energize, Connect and Speed, which the brand feels will resonate with runners of all abilities and make it easier for them to find a shoe that

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fits the biomechanics and experience of their run.

The company is kicking off a Run Signature Mobile Tour to reach runners across the country. The tour is hitting the road running this month, visiting key events across the country.

Run Signature is the result of years of research Brooks conducted in partnership with Professor Dr. Gert-Peter Brueggemann, Director of the Institute of Biomechanics and Orthopedics at the German Sport University of Cologne, and Prof. Dr. Joseph Hamill,



Amby Burfoot packed the house at Kelley's Pace in Mystic, CT last week where he signed copies of his latest book, "First Ladies of Running." Burfoot was joined by Patti Catalano Dillon and Julia Chase Brand, who are featured in the book. "Patti & Julia gave great inspirational messages on women and running, they then signed copies of Amby's book 'First Ladies of Running' for hours," said Kelley's owner Jeff Anderson. Another great female runner was there in spirit. Deena Kastor sent a cake that was presented to Amby. "Kelley's Pace was honored to celebrate Amby's new book and bring its inspiring message to the Mystic Community," Anderson told *Running Insight*.



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## Running Shorts (continued)



Spartan Race has launched the “Spartan Pro” initiative.

Director of the Biomechanics Lab at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Additional details about Run Signature can be found online at [brooksrunning.com/RunSignature](http://brooksrunning.com/RunSignature).

### Spartan Race Launches Spartan Pro Initiative

Obstacle race company Spartan Race has launched the “Spartan Pro” initiative—a group of Spartan’s top 10 men and 10 women athletes

who will represent Spartan Race throughout the season and in the five U.S. Championship Series races and 2016 Reebok Spartan Race World Championship in Lake Tahoe, CA, which will be televised on NBC Sports and NBC respectively.

The roster is headlined by reigning 2015 Reebok Spartan Race World Champion Robert Killian, 2013 Spartan Race World Champion Amelia Boone, and 2012

Spartan Race World Champion Cody Moat.

*The 2016 Spartan Pro Team roster:* (Men) Robert B. Killian Jr., Cody Moat, Brakken Kraker, Ryan Kent, Matt Novakovich, Glenn Racz, Chad Trammel, Isaiah Vidal, Kevin Donaghue and Ian Deyerle; (Women) Amelia Boone, Kate Ripple Cramer, April Hartwig, Orla Walsh, Becca Clifford, Alyssa Hawley, Jackie Rust, Faye Stenning, Cassidy Watton

and Alex Roudayna.

The Spartan Pro athletes will make their collective television debut in July when the Spartan U.S. Championship Series premieres on NBC Sports Network.

### Darn Tough Vermont Appoints Mark Yardley VP of Sales

Sock manufacturer Darn Tough Vermont announced that Mark Yardley has joined the brand as Vice President of Sales. Yardley joins Darn Tough from W.L. Gore & Associates where he was tasked with strategic business development for 15 years.

In his new role Yardley will be responsible for all aspects of the sales organization from planning, monitoring and reporting, to recruiting, training and managing. In addition to maintaining and growing key customer relationships, Yardley will be developing strategy to expand Darn Tough’s market share within both domestic and international markets. ■

Photo: [spartan.com/en/community/blog/pro-team](http://spartan.com/en/community/blog/pro-team)

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