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WIN!

**50 BEST STORE
PROCESS EXPLAINED**



**WOMEN'S EVENT
CHICAGO REPORT**

**ASICS TAKES FLYTE
WITH NEW SHOE**



RIO READY: Shalane Flanagan finished first with a time of **1:07:51** at the Suja Rock 'n' Roll San Diego Half Marathon earlier this month.

Photo courtesy of Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series

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JUNE 15, 2016
VOL. 8 NO. 11

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Focus Is the Key Word at Chicago Women's Event



Clockwise from top: CorePower Yoga Class; doing business at the Balega booth; Robyn Waters dishes on trends and Runner's World leads the fun run.

THE RUNNING & FITNESS EVENT FOR WOMEN

Focus, fitness and fun carried the days at The Running & Fitness Event For Women in Chicago last week. More than 200 top specialty retailers attended The Running & Fitness Event For Women at Chicago's McCormick Place last week for three days of education, networking and meetings with key brands. The event kicked off with a specialty store Merchandising Summit hosted by the Independent

Running Retailers of America that featured presentations by Holly Wiese and Andy Davis of 3 Dots Design and Mercedes Ross of Mercedes Werx, all of whom have done extensive work with running and sports specialty retailers. "In many cases, stores can do more business with less merchandise," Wiese told the retailers at the summit. "Clean, uncluttered store displays and shoe walls allow the consumers to focus and make easier, quicker buying decisions. Rick Wilhelm of Brooks, Eliza Emery of New

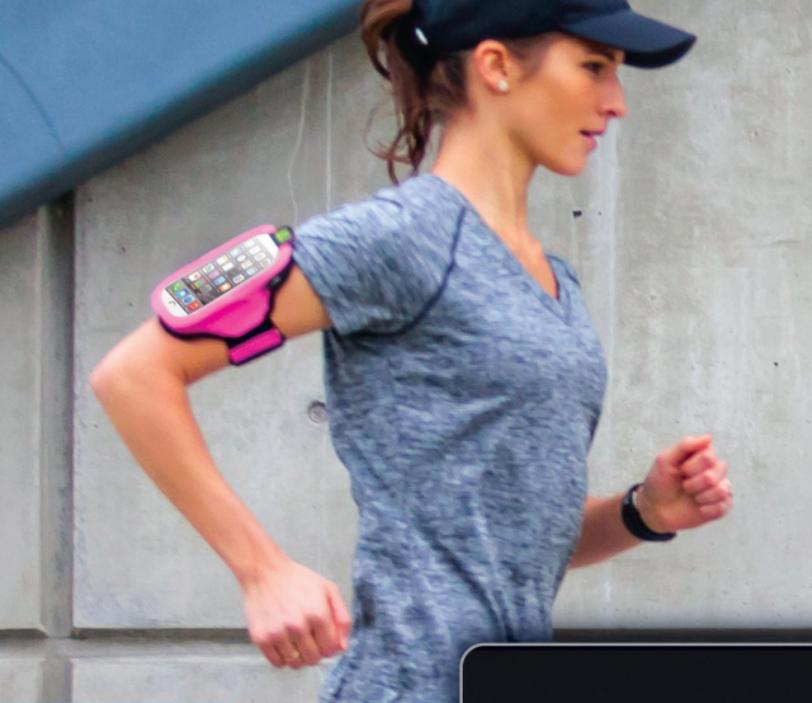
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The Running & Fitness Event For Women 2016 (continued)



Rick Wilhelm of Brooks.



Tess Roering from CorePower Yoga.



Holly Wiese of 3 Dots Design.



Eliza Emery, New Balance.

Balance and Jared Lerner of Just Live also presented.

Lerner discussed how running stores can build their own brands by offering private label apparel collections. Wilhelm led a roundtable on selling sports bras, while Emery, a former merchant at Talbot's and J. Crew discussed how retailers can use data to run a more profitable apparel business.

The following day, the specialty retailers joined with a larger group of stores to hear pre-

sentations from Griff Long of Equinox, Tess Roering of CorePower Yoga and former Target executive Robyn Waters.

On the social side, CorePower Yoga instructors led a yoga class on the Square at McCormick Place and *Runner's World* hosted a Fun Run. Girls on The Run presented its retailer of the year award to Susie Stein of Up and Running in Dayton. And retailers mixed with sponsors during an evening cocktail reception on the trade show floor.

Top Takeaways from the Event

Get social and get familiar with your consumer, conference speakers say.

By Jennifer Ernst Beaudry

Know who the active woman that is shopping your store is and give her what she wants — and make sure you're using social media to talk to her.

That's the message that speakers at The Running and Fitness Event for Women, held June 9-10 at Chicago's McCormick Place, had for retailers. Speaking to a crowd of run shop owners, fitness studio buyers and other shops looking to get a piece of the growing market of active, fitness-minded women, speakers laid out their top strategies to connect, drive sales and convert shoppers into loyal advocates.

According to Griff Long, VP of Operations at luxury fitness club chain Equinox, women are not only growing in membership numbers, they're driving change in the programming with a strong desire for group fitness classes. In the most recently opened Equinox location, he said, women made up 57 percent of members (in the 25-to-34-year-old demographic, they're 62 percent of members) and women are 64 percent of the group fitness classes. Driven by these younger women, the club has started offering more than 100 hours of classes per week. "What we are seeing is that group fitness classes, it's just leaping

off the chart," Long said.

The confluence of the athleisure trend and the popularity of HIIT classes and functional movement training have driven consumers to take a wide variety of classes, sometimes several in the same week. And "sweatworking," what Long called socializing and networking in a studio class or gym session, has made the gym experience more social than ever.

"We're having to build our clubs with a lot more social spaces because people are hanging out in them," he said.

Tess Roering, chief marketing officer for Denver-based boutique studio CorePower Yoga and former VP of marketing for Athleta, said a sense of "community" helps draw users to CorePower's 150-plus studios nationwide. Creating a strong community — and a strong brand identity — is critical as the market expands, she said: 25 percent of the health and wellness market is in the boutique fitness studio market, but an "explosion" of chains and one-offs like SoulCycle, ModelFIT, Pure Barre and more have made the market more and more competitive.

And the \$100 billion activewear/athleisure market, she said, is a mirror image. "It is a growing pie, but there are more competitors coming in than the market and the growth can sustain," she said. "You have to be pretty good

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THE VERTEX X RUNNING SERIES

The Running & Fitness Event For Women 2016 (continued)

at this to do it well: Our customer has a lot of options, so you have to stand out for her.”

The key, she said? Making the experience feel “customized and specialty.” Long agrees.

New classes developed in-house by Equinox, including an interactive cycling class that projects real-time, downloadable ride data on screens in the room and Headstrong, a “brain training” class that combines aromatherapy, mood lights, emotional preparation, high intensity interval training, pain tolerance and willpower training and

finishes with meditation, look to create unique experiences that keep customers hooked.

“How will you leverage the power of the pack? The 24-to-35-year-old females, they’re gaining power — so how will you create your own customer segments?” he said. “The more granular you can get with the data, the better a connection you can make, the more you can serve them custom content.”

And that translates directly to social media, he said. Equinox has doubled its social media followers and women make up 60



The Elliotts from Georgia Game Changers at the trade show.



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The Running & Fitness Event For Women 2016 (continued)

percent of their followers.

“These women want social — it’s not an option, it’s needed to build loyalty,” he said.

Roering cautioned that appealing to the active woman consumer on social media means taking your understanding of her and creating content that they feel inspired by — or risk alienating them.

“The worst thing you can do as a brand is to try and get followers by just offering discounts and trying to be really promotional,” she said. “They’re looking for things that fuel them and makes

their lives better.”

Tom Flierl of Hanson Dodge Creative said active women are more likely to shop online, spend big and engage digitally.

“Everything is being done on mobile — this is how shopping occurs,” he said. Hanson Dodge’s research suggests that 84 percent of consumers now shop online before making a trip to a store, and 71 percent expect to be able view in-store inventory online.

The path to purchase today, Flierl said, “is a hot mess” — with consumers being influenced by reviews online, search results, so-



Yoga Warriors during the CorePower Class.



Key products on display from Body Glide.



Preparing for the Fun Run.





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The Running & Fitness Event For Women 2016 (continued)



Great speakers at The Running & Fitness Event For Women in Chicago this week.

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Need a wide toe box, amazing fit AND spot on colors? Check out @topoathletic at the @RunFitWmn event

@charlesriverrun

62 miles, \$620 raised for breast cancer research, 1240 happy feet and counting! Thanks to The Running & Fitness Event For Women participants! #oofos

@oofos

Equinox membership is 57% women & 43% men - a large shift over the past few years - Griff Long @Equinox @therunningevent #women #health

@DowntownIsFun

We're here at @RunFitWmn booth #200 ready to show you our all new look and recovery products! Make sure to stop by!

@ProTecAthletics

cial media, brand sites and recommendations from friends and family. The influence of traditional channels, he said, is waning by the minute.

“The way people consume information is changing and changing fast,” he said. “Phones are the new TV, the new radio, the new newspapers.”

Taking advantage, he said, means leveraging your knowledge of your consumer: hyper-targeted ads and optimizing both your site and your

ad buy for local shoppers is a way to capture the shoppers who are browsing the brand sites. And Flierl echoed Roering and Long in reiterating: filling both your site and your social media channels with interesting, relevant and helpful posts and stories are a way to convert new potential consumers as well as better serve your loyal shoppers .

“There’s a lot of white space online for content yet,” he said. ■



The Luke's Locker team.



The team from Naperville Running Co. takes notes.



Christina Traband from Girls on the Run honors Susie Stein.



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Attendees enjoy the conference sessions.





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PHOTOGRAPHY BY FREDRIK WARMISATER

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Deadline for Top Stores Nominations: July 1

Consumer nominations for The 50 Best Running Store Awards will close on July 1. Running Store owners interested in having their stores nominated should encourage their customers to do so at running.competitor.com/50-best-running-stores. Stores can also nominate themselves or have their sales reps and industry colleagues do so.

Once the nominations are collected, stores will be informed that they have been nominated and e-mailed a questionnaire to fill out, providing information about their business, their employees, their community involvement and essentially what qualifies them as one of the 50 Best Running Stores in America (a list of the data requested appears on page 20).

The 50 Best Stores Awards is sponsored by *Competitor*, Gatorade Endurance and *Running Insight*. The awards are scheduled to be presented on Thursday, December 1, 2016 at The Running Event. The full list of stores will be published to the consumer in the January, 2017 issue of *Competitor* and to the trade in the December 22 edition of *Running Insight*.

There are four other awards that are also presented at the dinner to outstanding stores: **The Ubuntu Award** presented by Balega, **The Just Do It Award** presented by Nike, **the Never Stop Exploring Award** presented by The North Face and the **Canadian Store of the Year**, presented by the Independent Running Retailers of Canada and New Balance Canada.

Here are answers to some commonly asked questions about The 50 Best Stores Awards and the selection process.

How is the list of stores determined?

This is a four-step process that begins with the consumer nomination process via competitor.com

Once a store is nominated, it is further vetted through three separate steps. First, stores are asked to fill out a questionnaire that asks about business history, community involvement, outstanding employees and essentially what qualifies that store to be rated as one of The 50 Best.

Once that data is reviewed, a select number of stores are then mystery shopped by Franklin Retail, the top merchandising company in the sports retail business. Trained Franklin mystery shoppers go into the stores, buy a pair of shoes or a piece of apparel and then fill out a 20 question report, rating the stores on customer service, merchandise selection and the checkout process. The report criteria were devel-

oped in conjunction with the Independent Running Retailers' Association and are updated every year. (See pages 18-20 for detailed criteria.)

After the stores are mystery shopped, they are anonymously rated by vendors, based on their credit and their ability to partner with vendors. Any store that receives a failing grade on credit is disqualified from receiving an award. Credit scores also factor into a store's overall rating. For example, if a store does very well on mystery shopping and community involvement, but receives a low credit score, it may make the list, but not make the Four Finalists or win Store of the Year.

Can I see my mystery shopping scores?

Yes. We encourage stores to review their scores and they are made available each year for a fee of \$150 after the



Consumer Nominations for The 50 Best Running Store Awards Close on July 1, 2016



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50 Best Running Stores in America (continued)

awards have been presented. Many stores like to reward employees who did well and helped the store make the list. Stores also say they learn from where they did not score so well and work to improve.

I have multiple stores. Can I request that a specific location be shopped?
Yes. This year on the survey you complete, you can request that a specific location be shopped.

Do I need to advertise with Competitor to win an award?
No. Stores that win the award receive special rates to advertise with *Competitor* to promote their awards, but it is not a requirement. Only 10-15% of all the 50 Best advertise with *Competitor*.

I feel these awards are biased toward the IRRA. Must I be an IRRA member to win an award?
No. The IRRA membership includes more than 200 stores, many of which are good stores and have been in business for many years, so many IRRA members make the list. But each year there are 12-15 non IRRA stores that make the list.

I feel too many Fleet Feet stores make the list. Why is that?
There are about 1300 running stores in the United States, 164 of which are Fleet Feet Stores (that number has grown by about 40% over the past five years) so by mathematical logic, Fleet Feet should have about five stores on the list every year. Fleet Feet stores

are subject to the same analysis as any other stores. The franchisor lands an average of 8-9 stores per year on the list. Fleet Feet has many long time operators who have been doing this for a long time and are highly regarded and that is reflected in the list each year.

My store is great, everyone says so. Yet I have never won the award. How can that be?

There are many reasons a store doesn't make the list. First of all, you may not be nominated, so encourage your customers, sales reps and industry colleagues to do so. And send us a thorough report when we request it. Secondly, you may have had a bad mystery shop or received a bad credit rating from a vendor. There are many great stores out there. Your store may indeed be great, but according to our analysis it may be the 51st or 60th best store in the country. It is extremely competitive to make what is designed to be an elite list. You may run a PR of 2:20 in a marathon, but if 50 runners finish ahead of you, you'll come in 51st place.

I believe that the awards are fixed, that they go to friends of TRE and Competitor. Is that true?
If after reading all the answers to these questions you still feel that way, we can probably never change your mind. Suffice to say, we take a great deal of pride (and spend a fair amount of money) in trying to create a list that is objective. There are plenty of "top store lists" out there. We want ours to have meaning and value.



A Snail's Pace



Gazelle Sports



Jacksonville Running Co.



Potomac River Running

Why only 50 stores? Why don't you add more?
We want this list to focus on the top stores and the list of 50 essentially narrows it to the top three percent of all stores in the country. We believe that if we expanded the list to 200 or 250, it would lose meaning and be more like a participation medal than a meaningful recognition. This year, we are working with the IRRA and looking at the idea of creating a new classification called America's Best Running Stores, which would recognize stores beyond the 50 Best that score very well on the criteria.

What else do Competitor and Running Insight do to support the running channel throughout the year?
Competitor helped create the Lace Up Local campaign for running stores and donated its time and creative resources to develop a campaign designed to get its audience to support locally owned independent running stores. Over the past three years, Competitor has donated more than \$250,000 in free media to this initiative and supporting the independent run channel.

Formula 4 Media, the publisher of *Running Insight*, is the largest financial contributor to the IRRA. In addition to its financial contribution, F4M has also sponsored and paid for a Summer Internship program at an IRRA member store. F4M and its key sponsors, through The Running Event, also provide more than \$125,000 in annual scholarships for retailers to attend the trade show and conference.

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50 Best Running Stores in America (continued)

Stores are Recognized for Community Service & Leadership

In addition to the Store of the Year and the 50 Best Stores Awards, four other major awards are presented as part of the 50 Best Store Awards: The Ubuntu Award for outstanding community service; the Never Stop Exploring Award for encouraging sports participation; The IRRC/RBIC Canadian Store of the Year and The Just Do It Award presented to an outstanding woman in the run specialty business.

The Ubuntu Award

The Ubuntu Award is presented annually by Balega Sports. Balega makes its

socks in South Africa and The Ubuntu Award takes its name from Nguni Bantu term roughly translating to “human kindness.” It is an idea from the Southern African region, which means literally “human-ness,” and is often translated as “humanity toward others,” but is often used in a more philosophical sense to mean “the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity, according to Wikipedia.

The Ubuntu Award carries a \$5,000 donation to the charity of the winning store’s choice.

The Never Stop Exploring Award

The Never Stop Exploring Award recognizes the specialty

2015 AWARD WINNERS

IRRC/RBIC Store of the Year:
Rackets & Runners
Vancouver, BC

The Never Stop Exploring Award Presented by the North Face:
Fleet Feet, West Hartford

The Just Do It Award Presented by Nike:
Christi Beth Adams,
Fleet Feet Nashville

The Ubuntu Award Presented by Balega Sports:
Big River Running, St. Louis

running store that demonstrates dedication to encouraging and enabling outdoor exploration within the community.

The NSE Award comes with a \$5,000 grant to support activities getting more people outside.

The IRRC/RBIC Store of the Year

The Independent Running Retailers of Canada’s Store of the Year Award is presented annually to the outstanding specialty store in that country each year.

The JDI Award

Each year, Nike presents the Just Do It Award to a woman in the run specialty business for outstanding leadership.

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50 Best Running Stores in America (continued)



How Is your Store Rated?

These are the questions and point values used by mystery shoppers from The Franklin Group to come up with scores. Shoppers purchase items in the stores as part of the process and spend an average of \$130 per store.

MYSTERY SHOPPING CRITERIA

- 1. How promptly were you greeted? *(4 points is the best score)*

- 2. Were you greeted with a smile when you entered the store? *(2 point question)*

- 3. When trying on shoes, did the sales associate(s) measure/access your foot? *(2 point question)*

- 4. Did the sales associate(s) analyze your gait for specific needs (over pronation, under pronation, etc.?) *(5 point question)*

- 5. How many choices of items in your size and price-range did they bring you to try on? *(3 point question)*

- 6. Do you feel you were offered a fair selection? *(4 point question)*

- 7. Did the sales associate(s) help you try on your shoe on? *(5 point question)*

- 8. Did the associate recommend a specific shoe? *(5 point question)*

- 9. On a scale of 1-5 (1=rude and 5=enthusiastic) please select the level of professionalism (polite & respectful) of the sales associate(s) that helped you. *(5 point question)*

- 10. Did the sales associate(s) offer additional information such as running classes, events, and nutrition, beyond your questions? *(5 point question)*

- 11. Did the sales associate discuss apparel or other products while you were in the store? *(5 point question)*

- 12. On a scale of 0-5 how knowledgeable and helpful was the staff OVERALL (0=not helpful and 5=enthusiastic and super helpful). *(5 point question)*

- 13. How would you rate the sales associates on their attire? Was it appropriate? Was the staff easily identifiable? *(3 point question)*

- 14. Were you thanked and/or asked to return? *(2 point question)*

- 15. Was the store well-lit and easy to maneuver? *(3 point question).*

- 16. Was the merchandise presented in a way that was easy to understand and shop? *(4 point question)*

- 17. How inviting and comfortable was the store? *(4 point question)*

- 18. Was the fitting room for apparel comfortable, well-lit and clean? *(3 point question)*

- 19. Did the associate ask for your name and email address? *(5 points question)*

- 20. Were try-on socks available AND clean? *(3 point question)*

- 21. Rate the assortment of accessory products (ie-socks, insoles, water bottles, hats, etc.) *(4 point question)*

- 22. Rate the assortment of apparel products (i.e.-shorts, bras, outerwear, tops) *(4 point question)*

- 23. Was the check-out procedure easy and intuitive? *(3 points)*

- 24. Rate the quality of the bag the merchandise was placed in. *(1 point question)*

- 25. Was the store return policy explained and posted? (What happens after a few weeks if you do not like running in the shoes?) *(3 point question)*

- 26. How would you rate the overall experience? *(5 point question)*

- 27. Would you refer a friend to this store? *(10 point question)*



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50 Best Running Stores in America (continued)



Nominated Store Profile

The questionnaire below shows the type of information that is requested from each nominated store as part of the 50 Best Running Stores in America selection process.

DATA REQUESTED FROM EACH NOMINATED STORE

1. Store Name
2. Number of Locations
3. Please list the address for each of your location.
4. If we were to secret shop your store, which location would you prefer us to shop?
5. What shoe brands do you carry?
6. What apparel brands do you carry?
7. What accessory brands do you carry?
8. How many employees do you have?
Full time? _____ (30+ hours per week) _____ Part time? _____
9. What is the average number of years each employee has worked at your store?
10. What is the total number of years each employee has worked at your store?
11. Please give us one example of when an employee of yours went above and beyond expectations in providing service to a customer or the community.
12. What employee benefits do you offer? (ex. Health Insurance, 401K, Vacation etc)
13. Please check off the store services you provide.
In the space provided, give us details on how the service is done in your store.
 Runs _____
- In Store Clinics and Events _____
- Training & Coaching Programs _____
- Other _____
14. How many races do you sponsor per year?
Tell us about the most popular race your store sponsors.
15. What charity groups is your store involved with?
16. What is the most important single aspect of how your store makes a difference in its community?
17. Tell us about an event your store sponsors that are unique to your store. Please limit your response to 3-4 sentences.
18. Please check off which outreach methods your store uses.
 Blog / URL
 Newsletter
 Email blast campaign
 Other
19. Facebook URL _____
Number of likes _____
20. Twitter URL _____
Number of followers _____ Number of tweets _____
21. Instagram URL _____ Number of followers _____
Number of posts _____
22. Yelp URL _____
Number of stars in overall rating _____
Number of reviews _____
23. Store Website URL _____

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Marching to a DIFFERENT BEAT



In State College, PA, Anthym represents a new kind of running specialty store.

By Daniel P. Smith

Five years ago, veteran running retailer Bryan Mahon of Philadelphia Runner was working a vendor booth at the Philadelphia Marathon expo when he struck up a conversation with a thirtysomething woman readying for the event's half-marathon.

In the course of a few minutes, Mahon learned the woman lived within miles of his downtown Philadelphia store and had completed numerous half marathons. She was Mahon's target customer – a committed runner in his own backyard.

"So have you ever been to Philadelphia Runner?" Mahon asked.

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Marching to a Different Beat (continued)



“Oh, I’d never go there,” the woman replied.

The woman’s bluntness shook Mahon and he quickly assumed the worst: that the woman had visited one of his four Philadelphia storefronts before and endured a less-than-stellar experience. Mahon graciously pressed for more details: Why hadn’t she ever visited Philadelphia Runner, a now-12-year-old business with a solid reputation in the City of Brotherly Love?

“Well, I’m not a runner,” the woman countered. “I’d be intimidated to go there.”

The moment hit Mahon like a lightning bolt, a shrill awakening to the evolution of the running world and, even more, his store’s place in it.

“This was nuts to me,” Mahon says. “Here’s my absolute target customer and I couldn’t get her into my store.

That’s insane. But then I got it: she doesn’t identify with us.”

That discussion – and many others just like it – ignited the idea for a new kind of running specialty store, one that would better appeal to the rising number of consumers who see running as one piece of a larger fitness puzzle, not the epicenter of their universe.

Five years later, Mahon and his Philadelphia Runner cohorts have their result: Anthym, a Philadelphia Runner spin-off that opened one year ago in State College, PA.

“With Anthym,” Mahon says, “we’re trying to change the game.”

The Birth of Anthym

When Anthym was but the seed of an idea, Mahon courted opinions from trusted industry insiders, asking if he should open another Philadelphia

Runner or pursue a more lifestyle-centered spin-off, a run-infused version of lululemon?

The replies were adamant – and unanimous.

“One after another, I was told that Anthym represented the future,” Mahon recalls.

New Balance run specialty channel manager Kevin Adams told Mahon he loved the idea because the norms needed to be challenged.

“I give Bryan and his team a lot of credit for having the courage to test and learn through obsessing about the consumer experience,” Adams says.

And as the running specialty channel’s sales figures continued to slump, Mahon pushed to make Anthym a reality. “We just can’t keep doing the same things and expect different results,” he says.

Embracing a heavier focus on lifestyle, apparel, accessories and yoga, the 5,000-square foot shop in the shadow of Penn State University touts “a running-inspired life,” calling running a cultural movement that transcends finish lines, PRs and short shorts. Yet more, the store acknowledges – internally as well as externally – that “the life of a runner follows many paths.”

Every decision was a calculated one to broaden the store’s appeal. There are group runs and free yoga classes. There’s product from the usual run specialty suspects – Nike, New Balance, Brooks and Mizuno, to name a few – as well as upstart brands like ALO Yoga, JIVA, Territory Run Co. and Vuori.

There’s a shoe wall packed with run specialty models, but also about 100 mannequin forms that elevate the boutique feel of Anthym beyond that of a traditional running specialty store.

And there’s the name, a decided departure from the “(Insert Town Name)Running Company” moniker commonplace in the industry. The Anthym title is inclusive, even intentionally vague to corral anyone interested in fitness and lifestyle prod-

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Marching to a Different Beat (continued)



ucts, not just running.

“Anthym hits at our wider view of the world here,” Mahon says.

Adams credits Mahon and the Anthym team for creating an environment and experience that attracts consumers with a focus on apparel, one that could broaden a trail for others to follow.

“Anthym is a great example of the thought leadership needed to evolve the retail experience at run specialty because [Anthym leadership] recognizes the need to evolve with the consumer,” Adams says. “It’s not business as usual.”

Into the future

A year in, Mahon is pleased with Anthym’s early returns, though he acknowledges a learning curve.

In the typical running specialty shop, the customer service process revolves around the shoe wall and trying to educate the consumer on other elements of the store, such as apparel and accessories. Anthym breaks from that shoe

wall-centric mold by placing apparel front and center.

“People come in and they think lululemon,” he says.

On the plus side, that focus has helped Anthym score significant apparel sales. In fact, apparel represents more than half of the store’s revenue, a remarkable tally nearly every running store in America would envy.

Yet, selling shoes has been “a tougher nut to crack,” Mahon admits.

“We thought the formula would work well: that we would sell just as many shoes [as Philadelphia Runner] and just that much more apparel, but it hasn’t worked out that way because people don’t trust us on shoes yet,” Mahon says. “It’s been amazing how different the customer perception has been, but I have to remind myself we are, in many ways, creating a new category here.”

New Balance’s Adams sees Anthym’s early returns as “inspiring and exciting,” especially given that the storefront exists

in a footprint characteristic of many other running specialty stores. The visual merchandising is different and unique and caters to customers who do not consider themselves runners.

“From the look and feel of the store to its name, they’ve done a great job of branding the store to be inclusive of a broader community and are setting the benchmark for what apparel sales can be in our industry,” Adams says.

Furthermore, Adams credits Anthym’s leadership for acting with a spirited and daring focus, evolving the retail experience so that customers are engaged and inspired to return.

And that’s the mission Mahon and his colleagues continue pursuing as Anthym now enters its second year. The Anthym team, Mahon confirms, is committed to pushing the envelope and making Anthym its own brand, even to the point of potentially manufacturing its own products.

“We’re not ruling anything out,” he says. ■

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TECHNOLOGIES

Run Industry Crew Crosses Country, Two-Wheel Style. By Jennifer Ernst Beaudry

Racing Across America

Left to Right: Keith Kelly, Kris Hartner, Jim Kwasnicki and Matt Helbig.



A team of run shop owners and industry insiders are set for an epic bike journey.

The route from Oceanside, CA to Annapolis, MD runs 3,000 miles and through 12 states. A committed driver making no stops could theoretically cover the distance in 40 hours — but this Saturday, June 18, a team of eight run shop owners and industry insiders are setting their sights on covering the distance by bike. As part of the legendarily grueling Race Across America, the team has a hoped-for finish time of six and a half days of 24-hour-a-day relay-style riding. “It should be a great adventure,” team member Robb Finegan said.

The crew, called “Team Velorunners” was born last summer, during a New Balance-hosted bike ride for a group of store owners around Colorado’s USA Pro Challenge bike race. No one



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Racing Across America (continued)



Robb Finegan

seems to agree on who actually came up with the idea, but what they do agree on is that Big River Running Co. owner Matt Helbig suggested the group do some sort of cross-country

Despite Team Velorunners' rookie status, Hartner said they have ambitious goals. "We wanna crank it."

ride, that someone suggested RAAM and that Naperville

Running Co. owner Kris Hartner made it official, putting the almost \$13,000 group entry fee on his credit card that night.

The final team lineup is Hartner, former Fit Right NW owner and current MBT sales and marketing rep Finegan, Helbig and Skinny Raven president Daniel Greenhalgh, along with New Balance area managers Jim Kwasnicki and Colin Ingram, New Balance marketing manager Keith Kelly and Brian Laiderman, a St. Louis-area chiropractor and a friend of Helbig's. The riders range in age from 31 to 50, and all of

them are first-time RAAM riders.

Despite Team Velorunners' rookie status, Hartner said they have ambitious goals. "We wanna crank it," he said. "We're not planning to win it, but we do want to be one of the top few teams."

Posting a good time, or even just completing the ride, is a logistical tour de force. Team Velorunners will be supported by a six-person crew driving three separate passenger vans. The riders will divide into two teams, with each four-man team alternating rides of 10 miles (or so, depending on terrain) for 12 hours before handing off to the other team and driving up the road to the next hotel to hopefully sleep a little and prepare for the next leg.

"You cannot wing this. There a lot of mistakes you can make and I know we'll make a bunch, but we're trying to be lean, mean fighting machines," Hartner said. "It's gonna be hard, but at the same time, you get to know people well and it'll be a really good experience." ■

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New ASICS DynaFlyte Shoe Aims to Unlock Speed

Think light. And think fast. That's what ASICS is doing with its latest shoe. On June 14, ASICS held a global launch event in New York City for the DynaFlyte, the brand's new lightweight cushioning shoe. ASICS athletes Ryan Hall and Candace Hill were in attendance, along with company execs and a group of media

and "influencers."

In introducing the DynaFlyte, Paul Miles, ASICS Sr. GM, global marketing, explained that its design attributes came about as a result of brand research indicating that among running consumers' biggest desires were to both be faster and "feel" faster. "We found that a lot of people, of course, want to be faster, and they also want the 'feeling' of speed," said Miles.

"This technology will allow them to do that."

Miles pointed out that many of the shoes in the market in the speed category are "geared towards the elite athlete." The DynaFlyte, he said, is "not just for Olympic hopefuls, but also for regular runners, too." The three key attributes, he said, are that the shoe is lightweight, is cushioned and offers the "potential to unlock your speed."



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DynaFlyte (continued)

“It feels like you are running on clouds and I like that feeling.”

CANDACE HILL

The shoe will be available on July 1 with a suggested retail price of \$140. The DynaFlyte shoes feature a full-length FlyteFoam midsole. A patented, lightweight and responsive cushioning technology, FlyteFoam was first used in the brand’s MetaRun shoe that launched in November, 2015. The DynaFlyte weighs 9.3 oz for men and 7.8 oz for women.

The FlyteFoam tech is the result of about three years of development and over 300 prototypes tested at ASICS Institute of Sport Science in Japan.

Hill, the recently retired U.S. marathoner, added some levity to the proceedings in a Q&A session at the shoe

launch event. Explaining that he has put on a few pounds since he retired from elite racing, Hall noted that the new lightweight, cushioned DynaFlyte shoe is something he is very happy to have.

“I’m so grateful ASICS came out with these shoes when they did because since retiring from running I’ve put on like 25 pounds and gotten into weightlifting and now I need a shoe with cushioning. I’m like ‘man, running really beats you up when you weigh 165 pounds instead of 140,’” he said with a laugh. “I want to feel good when I run. When I put on flats I trade the cushioning for the lightweight shoe. Now ASICS is marrying lightweight and cushioning together. The shoes

feel amazing. I can actually run fast in these shoes. Most of the time you put on a cushioning shoe and you are trading being fast. So this is a fun shoe to have on and it’s awesome for me to feel a little more support and cushioning.”

Hill, the record-setting 17-year-old sprinter with high hopes for this summer’s Olympics, said of the shoe: “It gives me good support when I’m training and working out and it is so comfortable. It feels like you are running on clouds and I like that feeling. It makes me feel fast and free and light on my feet. Also the style—it is sleek, but it has bold colors. I like the bold colors. It is girly but powerful at the same time.” ■

When did you realize you were fast?



Candace Hill: “Growing up I would always run in neighborhood races and try to beat the boys. In middle school I tried out for the track team. Originally I wasn’t the fastest on the team. Then the more I got into the sport, I understood how to focus on technique and form. And I practiced. I got better and better. In high school I broke two state records as a freshman and that was unheard of in Georgia because those records had been set by seniors who were fast and went on to be professionals. So breaking those records made me realize that I really had a future in this sport and that if I continue to work hard good things will come. Ever since then I’ve gotten faster and faster.”



Ryan Hall: “I don’t know if I truly consider myself fast sitting here next to Candace, but I can run a long way. I think I first knew I was quote unquote fast when I was playing baseball as a little kid growing up and wanting to play Major League Baseball just like every other American kid and I remember just loving to run the bases. That was my favorite part of practice and I was always like ‘can we run the bases?’ I loved sprinting as fast as I could around the bases. But I still didn’t really enjoy traditional, long distance running until much later on. I was like every other kid in America in PE class, every time I had to run a mile I was like ‘no I don’t want to run today.’ Then I fell in love with it when I was 13 and started training Rocky style in the mountains in Southern California. That lasted for 20 years and I’m super grateful for what being fast has given me the opportunity to experience. Coming to events like this, wearing amazing shoes, I’ve been to the research center in Kobe, Japan... I’ve had shoes specifically designed for me. All these amazing experiences. And I’m going to France next week to run the Beat the Sun relay race around Mont Blanc. Being fast has a lot of really nice perks. Candace is going to find that out pretty soon. The rest of her career she is going to have amazing experiences ahead of her.”

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Running Shorts

Altra Founders Make 40 Under 40 List

The three founders of Altra Running were named to *SGB*'s list of 40 under 40, made up of influential figures in the sporting goods industry who are under 40-years old.

Golden Harper, the brand's creative director is 34; Jeremy Howlett, director of marketing is 36, and Brian Beckstead, the current VP of Sales is 37.

Others in the running business who made the list were:

Kathy Dalby, the CEO of Pacers, 38; Claire Woods, senior product manager of New Balance Footwear, who is 35; and Wendy Hofstetter, senior director of digital for JackRabbit, who is 33.

The six were all featured in the current issue of *SGB* and will be honored in person on Friday, August 5th at a reception in Park City, to be held during the Outdoor Retailer Summer Market.

Karhu's Premium Casual Apparel Line

The Finnish brand Karhu has launched a line of running apparel. Karhu Running Wear, currently available to consumers on Karhu.com, is based on Premium Casual Tech, a concept that the brand says "blends a casual look with premium fabrics and fit for a highly functional construction." The collection has an embroidered blue logo that celebrates Karhu's 100th anniversary.

The line was designed in Italy and aims for unique styling, quality fabrics and

"a look that is acceptable before, during and after the run."

The collection for men and women consists of seamless tops, t-shirts, shorts and a breathable, waterproof jacket.

Swiftwick strengthens B2B commitment with Dealer Free Shipping Program

Performance sock company Swiftwick, furthering its commitment to the independent retail community, is launching a Free Shipping



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Running Shorts (continued)

Balega's "Proudly American" sock.



Program. The goal behind this new program is to give dealers the opportunity to maximize turns, minimize stock-outs and increase revenue by eliminating a barrier of frequent reorders.

"Over the past year, our team has worked very hard to become a more dealer-centric organization," said Chuck Smith, president of Swiftwick. "Our goal is to enable the success of local independent retailers who are supporting their local running, cycling and outdoor communities. We believe this new program is a great way to leverage our domestic manufacturing commitment to help our dealers win with Swiftwick."

Since its founding, the company has been committed to crafting all of its products completely in the USA. Swiftwick is able to leverage its domestic manufactur-

ing to eliminate minimums and huge pre-season commitments, which allows the company to be more responsive to frequent reorders throughout the season. By taking advantage of ordering more frequently with free shipping, independent retailers will be able to optimize stocking levels of the most popular styles, colors and sizes to increase success.

Dealers automatically qualify for the program by ordering every 30 days or less and can rejoin at any time. Swiftwick launched this program February 15, 2016, and is receiving positive feedback from its retailers.

Balega Releases 'Proudly American' Ultralight No-Show Sock

Sock brand Balega has introduced the newest style to its "Ultralight" collection, the limited-edition Proudly

American sock. Like all of Balega's Ultralight offerings, the Proudly American socks are made entirely in North Carolina from U.S.-sourced yarns. Sporting red, white and blue, this new sock aims to deliver ultimate comfort for runners looking to show their American pride.

"Balega is proudly an American and South African brand so creating the Proudly American sock ahead of the Summer Olympics seemed like a natural fit," said Bert Pictor, Senior Vice President – Specialty Implus. "Our supply chain (in both the U.S. and South Africa) is a point of pride for Balega. Our Ultralight collection has been manufactured in North Carolina since 2015, and we are especially thrilled to introduce the Proudly American sock in an Olympic year."

All Balega Ultralight socks are individually developed and

inspected in Balega's factory in Hickory, North Carolina.

The socks feature Drynamix moisture management fibers and Balega's rapid moisture evaporation system. Balega's seamless toe prevents abrasions, the rear tab stops slipping, and thin reinforced cushion at the heel and toe enhance support and durability.

Implus Acquires South African Distributor

Implus, provider of athletic, fitness, and outdoor accessories, announced the acquisition of the assets of MCN Solutions CC. Based in Cape Town, South Africa, MCN previously operated as a distributor of Implus and other branded sporting goods products in the region. MCN's key stakeholders, Marc Smith and Rebecca Laird, will remain in management roles with the newly formed Implus Africa. With the acquisition, Implus gains a vertical operation on the African continent, a region it had historically serviced through a variety of distributors across its brands.

UA Launching Sportswear Brand this Fall

Fashion designer Tim Coppens, widely known for his work on his namesake collection, has been named executive creative director of UAS, Under Armour Sportswear. Coppens will oversee creative direction for the new brand from Under Armour launching in Fall 2016.

According to the company, the new UAS line will feature-fashion-driven performance sportswear. It is designed to "capture the existing opportunity of a collection that goes



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Running Shorts (continued)

beyond the comforts of casual active wear and the trusted functionality of innovative athletic wear.” UAS will aim to blend these elements with Coppens’ aesthetic direction.

SVP of sportswear at Under Armour, Ben Pruess, describes the line as being for “the Beyond Ambitious generation – the young and determined professional. UAS is optimized for their life, helping them rise above the variable conditions of every day.”

Initial retail distribution channels for UAS will include UASportswear.com, select fashion retailers and Under Armour Brand Houses in Chicago and New York. In Fall 2016, UAS will include men’s and women’s apparel,



Pro-Tec X-Trac



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footwear and accessories.

New Products from Pro-Tec

Among the new Pro-Tec Athletics product highlights are: Pain Relief Roll On/ Spray On, X-Trac dual strap knee support and PF Foot Sleeve.

The Pain Relief Roll On/ Spray On is a Recovery Cold Therapy product. It offers fast acting, deep penetrating pain relief from: muscle tightness and strains, joint pain, tendonitis, arthritis, sprained ligaments and bruises. It contains the active ingredient Menthol for effective cooling and pain relief and uses several all natural ingredients to expedite recovery and reduce

inflammation including; Arnica, Boswellia, Nitric Oxide, Illex, Hyaluronic acid, MSM, Eucalyptus and Yucca Root. It comes in a “spray on application” and “roll on application” that is portable and easy to apply.

The X-Trac knee support is designed to stabilize the patella, improving patellar tracking. Its X shaped wrap applies compression above and below the knee. It offers support for recovery from patellar and quadriceps tendonitis as well as patellar tracking disorders that may cause chondromalacia and patella femoral pain.

The PF Foot Sleeve is an open toe foot sleeve for plantar fasciitis. Its advanced stitching provides targeted

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Running Shorts (continued)

stabilization for the arch, heel and Achilles and it includes specialized compression zones for arch and heel support.

Headswears Supports U.S. Adventure Racing Champion Team Tecnu

Headswears, manufacturer of performance headwear for runners and athletes, has renewed its sponsorship of the Tecnu Extreme Adventure Racing team. Now in the sixth year of its partnership with Team Tecnu, Headswears will provide headwear for the six-person team as they tackle the most extreme adventure races across the U.S. and the world.

Currently the top adventure racing team in North America, Team Tecnu is the three-time defending United States Adventure Racing Association National Champion, and has been ranked as high as third in the world. This year's team consists of Alex Provost, one of Canada's top adventure athletes, ultramarathoners Greg and Denise McHale, 2010 adventure racing World Champion Ben Medina, long course orienteering National Champion Brian Mayer, and US mountaineering ski team member Jon Brown.

Team Tecnu started off the 2016-17 racing season with a victory at the Olmitz Miner, a 300-mile adventure race in Ottumwa, Iowa, and is hoping to earn a fourth straight USARA National Championship in October.

New from Timex

The new Timex Ironman Sleek 150 is available in a variety of bright colors with a suggested retail price of \$79.95. It features touchscreen technology that controls the stopwatch and timers. It has a lightweight design and an easy-to-use menu based system. The stopwatch has a 150 lap memory, interval timer, target pacer and hydration alerts. The 100-meter water resistant watch also features an Indiglo Night Light.

Tifosi Kicks Off Summer Sales Promotion

To kick off the summer selling season, Tifosi Optics is launching a Summer Sales Sweepstakes promotion that kicks off today. The sweepstakes has a grand prize of a luxury resort beach vacation for two. The promotion targets retail sales associates with a simple idea: every associate who sells a pair of Tifosis gets a chance to win. Associates will receive an entry for each pair they sell.

Associates can receive

three entries by logging on to www.myagi.com, Tifosi's new video-based training platform. While visiting the site, Tifosi encourages further viewing of targeted sales tips videos, to increase sales and more chances to win. Sales can be logged on Tifosi's web-based registration page, which includes an opt-in weekly newsletter that contains:

- Leader Boards
- Selling Tips
- Winner Announcements
- Prize Details

Tifosi has teamed up with five industry brands to provide prize packages of equipment and accessories, including: Osprey, FitLetic, Leupold Range Finders, Datrek Golf Bags and Pactimo Ultra Lite Jackets.

Each participant has the chance to win one of eight different prize packages, including five bi-weekly prizes.

The top prizes, including the grand prize, will be announced at the end of the sweepstakes in early September. The Grand Prize winner will receive a 5-day, 4-night Luxury Resort Beach Vacation for two*!

The Tifosi Summer Sales Sweepstakes ends on August 31, 2016. Retailers will receive email notifications and promotional flyers for details of participation. For more information, retailers can contact their Tifosi inside account manager at (866) 310-0996. ■



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Big River Takes on Equity Partner

Big River Running, the Saint Louis based owner of four stores, has taken on a new equity partner, according to its founder Matt Helbig. The new partner has a background in the retail business and has worked with Helbig and the Big River team to overhaul the business. “It helps to have some more capital in the business,” Helbig told *Running Insight*, saying the money has been used to re-model Big River’s flagship in Manchester, MO with all new fixtures and upgrade store operations. Big River no longer uses the flagship as a central receiving depot. Now vendors drop ship to the four locations.

Since these changes have been implemented, Big River’s average transaction has jumped to \$100 from \$80, Helbig says and he’s confident the store will be more profitable.

Helbig says he and his wife Katie remain heavily involved with the retail business, but will also be able to devote more time to The Big River Race Management business, of which they own 100 percent. ■



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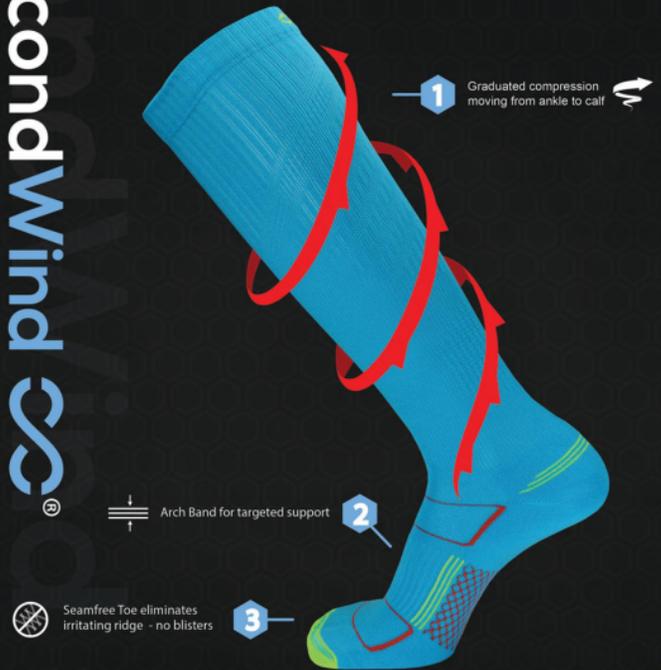
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Rio Ready Flanagan Runs Blazing Time in San Diego



Shalane Flanagan

Shalane Flanagan and **Amy Cragg** are close U.S. Olympic team members, but they were competitors at San Diego's Suja Rock 'n' Roll Half Marathon earlier this month. The two each ran their own race that day—and it was impressive, particularly for Flanagan.

The 34-year-old Flanagan won the women's race in **1:07:51**. It smashed her personal-best in the half marathon, and was the second-fastest half run by an American this year (behind Molly Huddle's 1:07:41 at the NYC Half in March).

Cragg, who beat Flanagan at the U.S. Olympic Trials marathon in February, finished two minutes behind Flanagan on Sunday, but still ran a personal-best **1:09:51**.

Suja Rock 'n' Roll San Diego will be the pair's only race between February's Olympic Trials and the Olympic marathon in August. At the Trials in Los Angeles, the two ran together for the first 25 miles, until they split up when Flanagan started having trouble with the heat. Cragg won the race, and Flanagan finished third—both securing an Olympic bid along with Desiree Linden.

The two have trained together throughout the entire year, including going to Rio together in April to familiarize themselves with the Olympic marathon course.

On the men's side, **Scott Smith** won the half marathon in a time of **62:35**, ahead of **Daniel Teklebrhan (63:38)** and **Jeffrey Eggleston (63:48)**. ■

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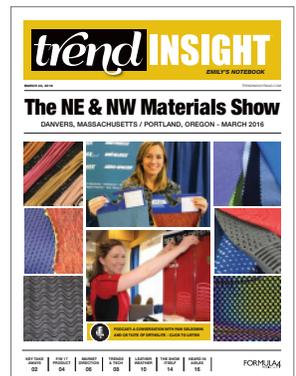
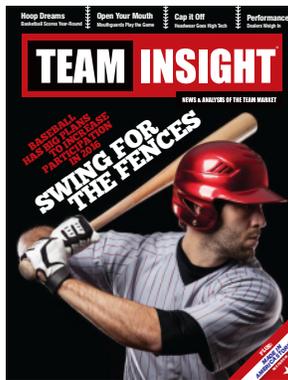
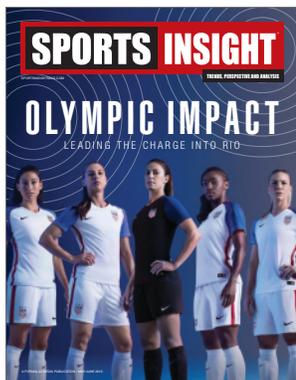
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