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JULY 1 2016
VOL. 8 NO.12

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Photo: Exterior of Run 816, JMC Photography

RUN 816 focuses on bringing a unique spin on running retail to the Kansas City area.

4 new running specialty stores discuss their rookie year in the run specialty game.

By Daniel P. Smith

ONE YEAR IN

In small towns like Mount Airy, NC, as well as urban enclaves like Kansas City, new blood continues entering the running retail game – sluggish industry sales figures and intensifying competition for consumers be damned. Here, four new store owners reflect on their opening year in business, including: the motivations that led them to open their respective stores; the important lessons they’ve learned in launching their concepts; and the unique ways they have worked to differentiate their businesses in an ever-evolving retail climate.

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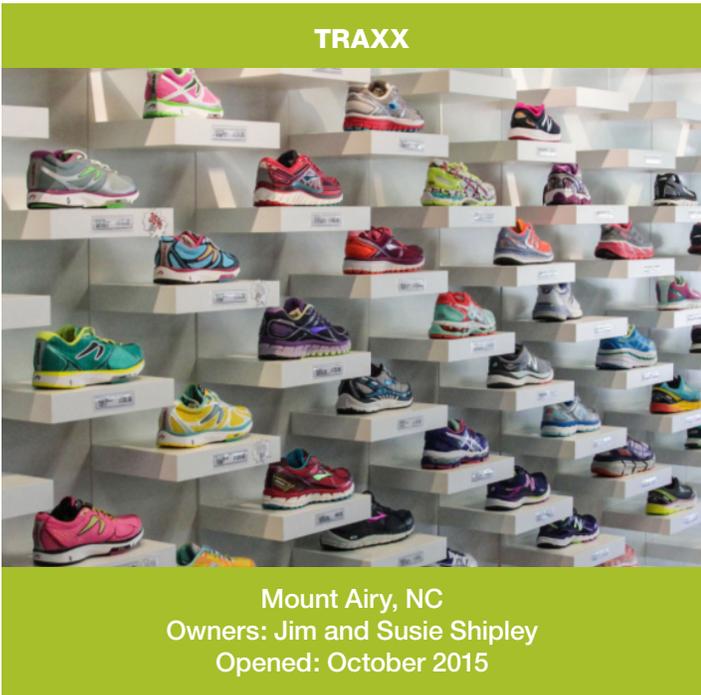


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One Year In (continued)



As told by Susie Shipley

We originally moved to Mount Airy so Jim, a podiatrist, could open his medical practice. Having been a runner for over 20 years, I enjoyed that Mount Airy, though a town of about 10,000, has a rather active running scene.

The idea of opening a running specialty store grew as Jim continued seeing runners as well as non-runners who could benefit from good footwear. The mall shoe stores were generally insufficient and the closest running specialty store was about 35-40 minutes away.

With this frequently in the back of our minds, we decided to expand the medical practice to a new building, and carved out a piece of the building for the shoe store. The two businesses have separate entrances and operate as separate entities.

The biggest challenge has been getting vendors to open us, which caught us off guard. We've had to utilize our connections in the podiatry world to find alternative avenues to provide more footwear variety. It's been a battle, but we've also received a lot of positive encouragement from vendors like Farm to Feet socks, which is located right here in Mount Airy.

There's been plenty of fine-tuning along the way, but we've enjoyed a great response from the locals. In a small town like ours, people want you to do well and they come together to give you the opportunity to make it work. ■



As told by Danny Crossett

Jackson didn't have a running store, but I never gave it much thought until I went to a 5k race in Kingsport, TN, in 2014. The local running store there held the packet pickup and I thought: If this could work in Kingsport, which is smaller than Jackson, then why couldn't it work in Jackson?

Out of the blue, Harris Magruder contacted our local Jackson running club in January 2015 – a message that came to me. At the time, Harris owned two Trails & Treads stores in Mississippi and was interested in opening a store in Jackson. The next day, I drove to meet Harris face to face, which started a whirlwind that included the opening of Performance Running in May 2015.

I came from a 32-year career with United States Postal Service and retired as an operations manager overseeing 114 post offices. I learned a lot about customer service there and emphasize listening to customers and caring about their needs at our store. You can't be in a rush to register.

The biggest challenge has been inventory management. Though Harris had experience operating stores, our shops couldn't be carbon copies of one another. Our markets and product mix are completely different. We discounted shoes so we could move on and regroup and learned not to be bullheaded about product.

It's all been a rewarding experience thus far, right down to the State of Tennessee awarding us its Veteran-Owned Small Business of the Year award. As a former Air Force guy, that award means a lot. ■

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THE VERTEX X RUNNING SERIES

One Year In (continued)



As told by Nick Pigg

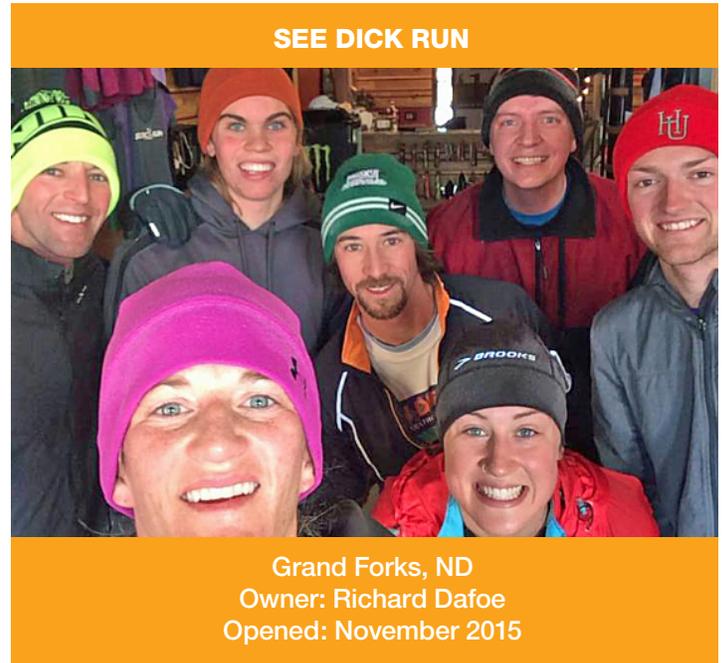
Prior to opening Run 816, we owned a running store in Galesburg, IL. When we decided to move back to Kansas City, our hometown, we sold that running shop in May 2014.

Opening another running store wasn't necessarily top of mind when we returned to K.C., but there was no running shop around the center of Kansas City – and the city deserved one.

We think of ourselves as an old-school running shop with modern twists, which plays well with our quirky Westport neighborhood. We don't get caught up in what other stores are doing, but focus on how we can be unique and create our own footprint.

We've put our focus into building a community knowing that selling of the product will follow and grow as that community balloons. If you treat people well, it usually pays off. We have a community beer fridge in the store and partner with a local coffee roaster and brewery to provide complimentary coffee or beer after a run – a great value-add for those who join us. Things like that have made our fun runs huge and we've had close to 120 people join us for a Sunday morning run.

About four months after opening, we opened a women's boutique under our roof. The back half of our building wasn't being used, which we anticipated, so Tracy runs a boutique that sells casual wear and athletic wear. The two businesses complement each other so well. A year in, we're way ahead of where we thought we would be and it's been one good thing after another. ■



As told by Richard Dafoe

When I visited Run N Fun [in St. Paul, MN] as a teenager, it was like the clouds opened and the sun shined on the Holy Grail. That launched my dream of some day opening a running store. When I came back to Grand Forks after college, I spent six years teaching and coaching at a local high school before moving into sales for a promotional products company. During that time, I also served as race director of our local half marathon while continuing to coach. The dream of opening a running store, of building my own empire versus working for someone else, seemed more real.

Our 1,400-square foot shop is located right off the interstate in one of the area's main shopping corridors. Our neighbor is a chiropractor who has made a name for himself with local runners and that's generated a lot of referral business for us.

We opened with just one shoe brand on the wall – Hoka One One – along with some women's running apparel and promotional goods. Now, we have New Balance, Mizuno and Brooks on the shoe wall as well as 361°. We had to make a case to the companies and sell the potential of our shop, which is the only running specialty store within 75 miles.

We see ourselves as a resource above all else. We're offering sound advice on training and injuries and want people to feel a part of a larger community, which is why we stream track events in our loft space and host special events like a Boston Marathon viewing party. ■

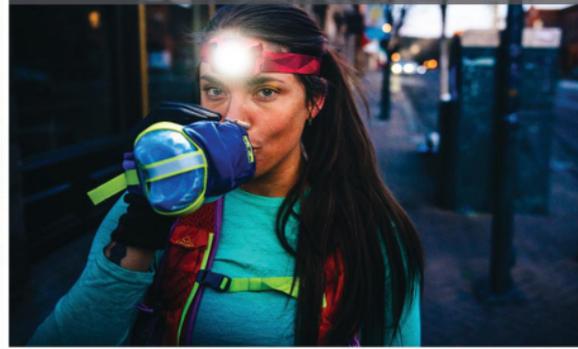


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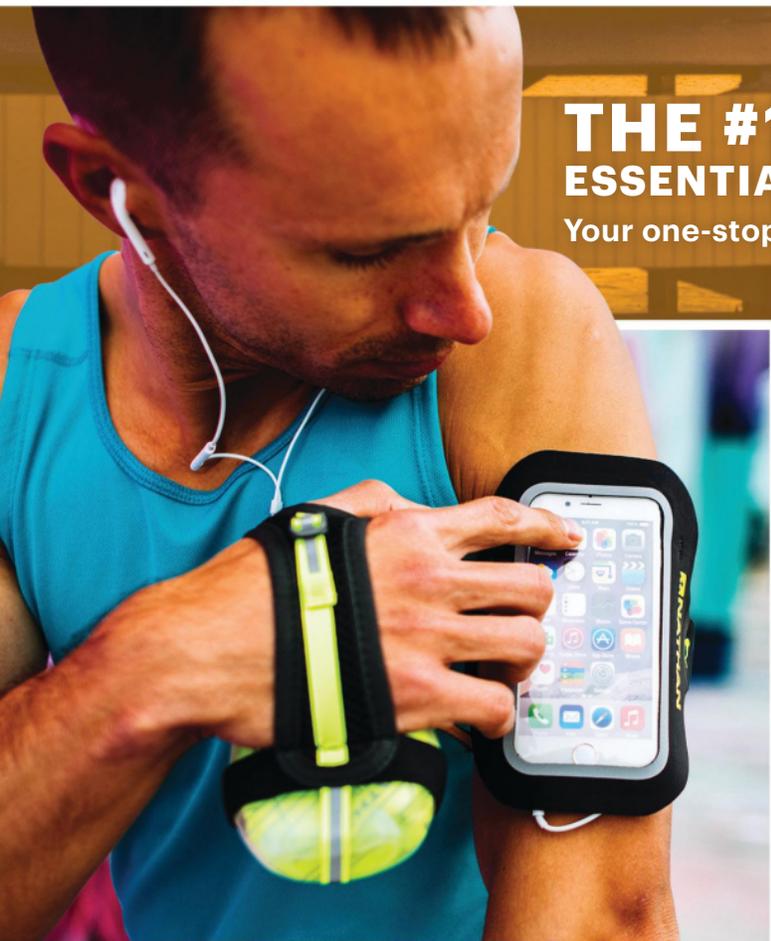
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Fleet Feet Sports Celebrates 40th Anniversary

Highlights from the Franchisor's Annual Summer Conference.



J.D. Denton, co-owner of the Fleet Feet Sports in Davis, CA, addresses the audience about the store's 20th anniversary as his wife and store co-owner Chris looks on.

“It’s a true testament to what Elizabeth and Sally began 40 years ago in Sacramento that we were able to have close to 800 people, including owners, vendor partners, staff, and friends, take part in that celebration with us,” says Jeff Phillips, CEO and president of Fleet Feet Sports.

ASICS introduced the DynaFlyte Fleet Feet Sports 40th Anniversary Edition, which retails for \$140 and is available now exclusively in Fleet Feet stores and online at fleetfeetsports.com.

The franchisor also awarded 11 Scholarships of Achievement, a recognition that has helped more than 160 young people associated with Fleet Feet Sports pursue their educational goals and career aspirations. ■

A documentary, business sessions and the introduction of a shoe exclusive to the franchised chain were the highlights of Fleet Feet’s annual summer conference last week in Huntington Beach, CA.

The conference was attended by 800 running industry executives, including representatives from 150 Fleet Feet locations and 94 vendors. Eleven stores received grants totaling nearly \$28,000 to support charitable efforts in their respective communities at the group’s annual awards banquet.

The awards banquet also

served as the premiere of the brand documentary, which chronicles the founding of the brand in 1976 through 2016, and includes interviews with

co-founders Sally Edwards and Elizabeth Jansen; former CEO, president, and chairman Tom Raynor and other figures in Fleet Feet Sports’ history.

THE FOLLOWING FLEET FEET SPORTS FRANCHISE LOCATIONS RECEIVED GRANTS:

- Augusta, GA**, for its Hope for Augusta 5K training and education program, courtesy of Nike.
- Baltimore, MD**, for its work with Mission FIT Baltimore, which provides gym resources for impoverished kids, courtesy of Investors Management Corp.
- Ft. Wayne, IN**, for its work with Turnstone program to train athletes with disabilities, courtesy of Balega.
- Greensboro, NC**, for its work with Fleet Feet Pickle to support Backpack Beginnings and Comfort Back Pack, courtesy of ASICS.
- Monterey, CA**, for its work with the VetFit 5k program for veterans, courtesy of Mizuno.
- Mt. Pleasant, SC**, for its work with Girls with Sole, 5k training program, and as a Global Running day beneficiary, courtesy of Superfeet.
- Richmond, VA**, for its work with the Cameron Gallagher foundation, supporting mental health and wellness for suffering teens, courtesy of Saucony.
- Savannah, GA**, for its work with Rape Crisis, courtesy of Hoka One.
- Tucson, AZ**, for its work with Community Kicks, courtesy of Brooks.
- Tulsa, OK**, for its work with Zoomerangs, youth running program for Title I schools, courtesy of adidas.
- Winston-Salem, NC**, for its work with Mission Feet First, courtesy of New Balance.



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What's Next for the IRRA

A few weeks ago the IRRA and our partners at Formula4 Media provided scholarships to 110 of our retail members to attend the IRRA Merchandising Summit in Chicago, in conjunction with The Running & Fitness Event For Women. The two-day event was kicked off with a store branding presentation by Jared Lerner from Just Live, followed by Eliza Emery from New Balance, who showed the audience how analytics can increase apparel turns and take the category to a new level of profitability. Rick Wilhelm from Brooks then engaged the group in a lively sports bra merchandising workshop.

Day two of the summit featured our keynote presenter, Holly Wiese from 3 Dots Design. Holly and her team inspired the attendees with colorful examples of cutting edge stores and innovative merchandising tips, along with some great ideas on how best to create an impactful shopping experience. Holly even provided a glimpse into the



Terry Schalow,
IRRA Executive Director

future of customer engagement with a video of a holographic 'try-on' mirror, which was truly amazing. Those who attended provided such enthusiastic feedback that the IRRA is planning to provide more merchandising content to our members in the coming months.

The collaborative effort between retailers and vendors at the Merchandising Summit is a great example of what we're trying to accomplish as we move the IRRA forward. There is clearly much to do beyond the merchandising topic, and this will be an ongoing process. However, creating Member Value in a collaborative fashion with our vendor partners will be the driving force behind

each new initiative.

We're also excited to let you know that the platform the IRRA will use to promote engagement and provide content will come in the form of a new website. The project is currently in the early stages of build-out, with a goal of unveiling a new site in the third quarter that will provide a much higher level of functionality.

The idea is to create a "hub of conversation" that enhances the connections between our retail members, vendors, and our strategic partners. The content currently found on our site, like the retail dashboard and marketing planner, will remain, but will be much easier to view and access. The plan is to consistently add new content—from a variety of sources—on a myriad of topics.

Our goal is simple: If a particular topic is relevant to our membership, we'll do our best to provide content. Best practices, advocacy efforts, vendor tech data, market data, member exclusives, marketing collaborations, and whatever else is

meaningful to our members will all be provided. This won't happen overnight, but we'll be consistently adding new value-added functionality, and we'll be sure to let you know what's new so you can go to the site and check it out.

This advancement would not be possible without our vendor members who've supported our efforts through their membership investment. Our thanks go out to ASICS, Brooks, New Balance, On, and our partners at Sports Marketing Surveys, all of whom have been instrumental in funding this initiative. We look forward to working with even more vendors who are on the cusp of coming on board to support the continued evolution of the organization.

As always, we thank all of our members for your support, and we invite your constructive feedback. We also invite non-members to join and explore what membership in the IRRA can do to support your business.

Thanks to all, and stay tuned for more exciting news from the IRRA. ■

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New Balance Opens U.S. Flagship



At the new store, NB 574's are made in person.

Anearly 6,600 sq. ft. global flagship store has opened at Boston Landing near New Balance's Brighton, MA corporate headquarters. Celebrating the brand's 110-year heritage and distinction as a domestic manufacturer, it marks New Balance's second such store. The first opened in Gangnam, South Korea earlier this year. Additional global flagship locations are slated

to debut in San Francisco, London, Milan and Tokyo later this year.

In the store's center is the "Made.Boston" demonstration and shoe assembly area where consumers can see limited-edition 574's made before their eyes. Meanwhile, as a nod to New Balance's history of manufacturing in New England, the wall behind the cash wrap is made of metal fire doors from the brand's Skowhegan,

Maine factory where some of the brand's Made in the USA footwear is produced.

Shoes at the flagship store will be made to order based on size, and consumers have three colorways to choose from. The store's design features natural and industrial materials throughout such as wood, concrete and metal, which provide a neutral backdrop designed to allow the products to stand out.

Separately, New Balance

opened a 165,000 square foot distribution center in St. Louis to help support the brand's rapid, global e-commerce business. The facility will process up to 60,000 orders of footwear, apparel and accessories monthly for NewBalance.com customers in the U.S. The website was founded in St. Louis in 1990 by the Deck Family, acquired by New Balance Athletics, Inc. in 2008. —*Bob McGee* ■

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Hoka Aims to Reimagine the Track Spike



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“We worked closely with silver medalist Leo Manzano to make sure we didn’t miss any details.”

JEAN LUC DIARD, HOKA ONE ONE



Designed to address the “left turn” imbalance.

Hoka One One is turning left with its latest product intro. The brand’s new asymmetrical Speed Evo R track spike is designed to address the fact that 60 percent of a track athlete’s race is spent making left turns.

Hoka One One’s approach to the track spike category reflects a commitment to addressing that “left turn” imbalance. The Speed Evo’s spikes are strategically placed for support and traction when rounding a turn. Stability while cornering is addressed by a medial midsole wrap, and a spike plate that supports the foot through the turns. A layer of EVA complements the breathable lightweight upper to deliver a cushioned, yet fast shoe. It is designed for races from the 800-meters up to 10,000-meters. The Speed Evo R weighs 4.1 oz. (men’s size 9) and 3.6 oz. (women’s size 7).

“Our goal is to always make running faster more fun. We re-examined the track spike and took nothing for granted. We refined the spike plate, spike configuration and midsole support and cushioning,” says Jean Luc Diard, the brand’s co-founder and VP of innovation. “We worked closely with silver medalist Leo Manzano to make sure we didn’t miss any details, and we are excited to cheer on all our incredible athletes racing in the upcoming U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials as they race in these new spikes.”

The spike will be worn by Hoka athletes at this week’s U.S. Olympic Trials for Track & Field in Eugene, OR.

The Speed Evo R will be available to consumers in a limited release nationwide in February 2017. MSRP is \$130. ■

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Running Shorts

GLUKOS Signs Haskins

The GLUKOS Company has expanded its roster of brand ambassadors by signing professional triathlete Sarah Haskins. Haskins joins All-Pro Wide Receiver Antonio Brown, 2016 Rio Marathoner Jared Ward and Ironman Champions Mary Beth Ellis, Liz Lyles and T.J. Tollakson as brand ambassadors.

Haskins is among the winningest short course female US professional triathletes. With 44 career wins, Haskins has switched her focus from Olympic distance to long course racing over the past

year. Of the six Ironman 70.3 competitions she has raced to-date, she has placed first in five and second in the other. Haskins will use GLUKOS Energy, which the brand says provides consumers twice the energy in half the time of leading energy products on the market, to optimally fuel her body.

This past April, GLUKOS introduced protein bars and powders. GLUKOS' protein bars and powders utilize Glucose – the “good” sugar – and contain no sucrose, high fructose corn syrup, artificial sweetener, color or flavoring.



PRO Compression Signs Stephanie Bruce

Compression sock brand PRO Compression has signed Stephanie Bruce as a Brand Ambassador. Bruce is the first professional athlete to join PRO Compression's team of Ambassadors that includes over 100 runners throughout the U.S.

Bruce, also a top marathoner, is aiming to make the 2016 U.S. Olympic Track & Field team in the 10,000 meters. She will be competing in the 2016 Track & Field Olympic Trials at the University of Oregon July 1-10th.



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RUNNING INSIGHT

Running Shorts (continued)

New from OS1st

Sports medicine and performance brand OS1st has released the newest product in its Brace Layer System, the AF7 Ankle Bracing Sleeve. It contains patented Compression Zone Technology for graduated medical grade support. The ankle sleeve features K-Zone Technology, a first-of-its-kind fabrication technique and gel application that eliminates the use of plastic or metal for stabilizing the ankle.



Independent Retailer Month kicks off in July

Just in time for Independence Day on July 4, two groups are collaborating to promote their Fifth Annual Independent Retailer Month as part of an annual movement “to celebrate independent retailers in local communities that help build our economy.”

Throughout a range of in-store, online and community events and promotions Independent Retailer Month encourages consumers to shop at independent retailers. Independent retailers are welcome to join the campaign and access a range of free, downloadable marketing materials.

For more information on Independent Retailer Month: www.indieretailermonth.com

Finish Line Sees ‘Trend Shift’ to Running

Senior management at Fin-

ish Line, which is working with key vendor partners to strengthen its merchandise assortments, says its business is “well positioned to capitalize on the renewed excitement in running” and the strong trends in casual and retro footwear during the back-to-school and holiday selling seasons.

Finish Line’s first quarter running sales increased low-single digits, helped by retro running, in the period ended May 28. Retro iterations of Nike’s Huarache, Max Air, Presto and the newest version of the Nike Free fueled the running segment growth.

Sam Sato, Finish Line president cited innovation in the Nike Free, strong “early reads” on Free styles which have hit retail since April and the upcoming Rio Games as factors that may help escalate the retailer’s running business in the second half. Finish Line is also bullish on Adidas’ retro, casual and running products.

JackRabbit Revenues Down; Will Work on Inventory Woes

The 71-door Finish Line running subsidiary JackRabbit, despite posting a low-single digit comparable sales increase for a second consecutive period led by digital, is still facing an



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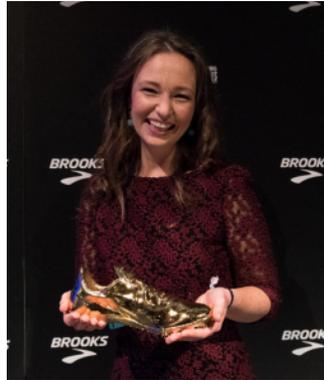
Running Shorts (continued)

excess inventory situation. It hopes to have merchandise better aligned with sales after the back-to-school selling season after experiencing margin headwinds in the second quarter. JackRabbit revenues declined 2.2 percent to \$23.5 million on five fewer stores in the period ended May 28.

Brooks Names Wiles Inspiring Coach of the Year

Brooks Running has honored Ashley Wiles—and her work to inspire youth—with the Brooks 2016 Inspiring Coach of the Year award.

Wiles found the tools she needed to navigate the oft-awkward and occasionally



difficult pre-teen years by lacing up shoes and logging miles. Recognizing the power running had in her life during that time, she now pays it forward through Sole Girls, a program she created for young girls that teaches life skills through running. ■

IMPLUS ACQUIRES SPENCO

Implus, the North Carolina conglomerate known for its Sof Sole insole line, has acquired the Spenco insole and 2nd Skin medical adhesive assets of Spenco Medical Corporation. The Spenco portfolio of insole assets includes the Total Support, Spenco RX, and Polysorb brands. Implus now has a second major insole line to sell to retailers in the competitive footbed marketplace.

The acquisition is the fifth for Implus since April 2015. Implus, which is backed by Boston-based private equity firm Berkshire Partners, has acquired some of the top brands in the footwear accessory space including Balega Sports hosiery, Fuel Belt and Trigger Point.

“We’re excited to offer a multi-branded strategy to our retailer customers as we continue to build on our ‘one-stop-shop’ approach for all accessory needs,” says Todd Vore, president of Implus.

Spenco’s insole business will be integrated into Implus’ current portfolio of insole products which includes the Sof Sole, apara, Airplus, and Sof Comfort brands. In conjunction with the transaction, Implus will assume Spenco’s Canadian operation based in Mississauga, Ontario. The remaining Footwear and Silicore divisions of Spenco were sold to the existing management team and will continue to be run out of Waco, Texas. Spenco will operate as a subsidiary of Implus, the company said. ■

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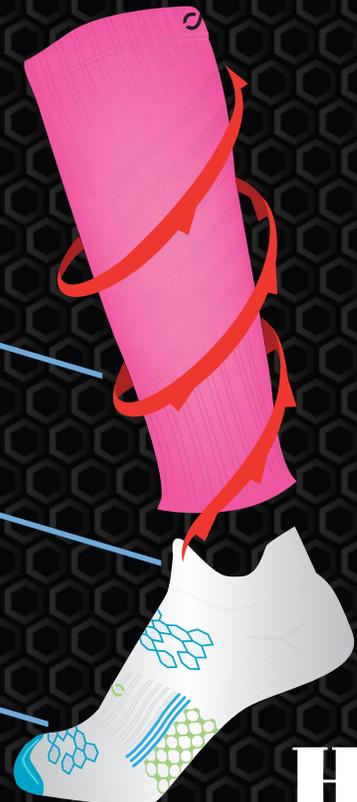
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