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ISSUE 1416
APRIL 28, 2014

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to the forefront of sports medicine.

MOVERS
& SHAKERS

Amer Sports said **Bill Kirchner**, VP, U.S. Sales for Wilson Sporting Goods Co., has been promoted to the VP sales-Americas for Amer Sports. In this new position, Kirchner will add Canada and Latin America to his Wilson brand responsibilities while adding Amer Sports Winter, Outdoor & Cycle brands Salomon, Arc'Teryx, Atomic, Sunnto and Mavic.

GoMotion, manufacturer of wearable lighting systems for runners, walkers and hikers, hired **Vince Morse** as its national sales manager.

Icebreaker appointed Shana Frahm as global head of public relations in its U.S. headquarters in Portland, OR.

Kelly Kraus, former director of private brand management at REI, has been hired as vice president for **Stanley**, the 100-year-old beverage container brand.

Nike, Inc. announced that **Michelle A. Peluso**, Gilt's CEO, has been appointed to the company's board of directors.

PrimaLoft, Inc. has hired 30-year textile and apparel industry veteran **Chris Sentementes** to lead its Performance Fabric and Fleece unit. As business development manager for the unit, Sentementes will leverage more than 30 years in the industry to increase sales to global outdoor brands, some of which have shifted toward using Merino wool in more of their base and mid-layer apparel in recent years.

SKLZ announced that **Laura Wolf Stein** has been named vice president of marketing, **Brian Farber** has been named soccer product manager and **Chuck Rodrigues** has been named director of sales for the mass/club channel.

Vans named **Fara Howard** as global vice president of marketing, reporting to Vans President Kevin Bailey. Howard joins Vans from Dell.

ADIDAS

PROMOTES MARK KING TO LEAD NORTH AMERICA,
NILSSON EXITS

The Adidas Group appointed Mark King, who had been TaylorMade-Adidas Golf's CEO since 2003, as president of Adidas Group North America, effective June 1. King succeeds Patrik Nilsson, who has left the company for personal reasons and will return to his home country Sweden to become CEO of fashion brand Gant.



Mark King,
president of
Adidas Group
North America

King, who will relocate to Portland, OR, will be in charge of all Adidas and Reebok operations in the North American market. Adidas had announced in October that Nilsson, who formerly oversaw the Adidas brand in North America, would also oversee Reebok in the region. King will report directly to Roland Auschel, member of the executive board of Adidas AG, responsible for global sales.

Ben Sharpe, currently executive VP of Adidas Golf and Ashworth, will become the new CEO of TaylorMade-Adidas Golf, reporting into Adidas Group CEO Herbert Hainer.

Under King's leadership, TaylorMade-Adidas Golf more than doubled sales from €637 million in 2003 to €1.285 billion (\$1.8 bn) in 2013. King started his career at TaylorMade in the early 1980s as sales rep. He has earned a variety of professional accolades such as the golf industry's Executive of the Year and is consistently named one of the most powerful people in the business. He has been the subject of the television show "Undercover Boss" and appeared on "The Apprentice" as a business role model.

Sharpe currently holds the position of EVP of Adidas Golf and Ashworth. Prior to his current role, Sharpe spent six years as TaylorMade-Adidas Golf's managing director in Europe, where his work doubled the company's business and made it the largest and most successful golf company in the region. Before joining TaylorMade-Adidas Golf in 2006, Sharpe served as managing director at Lyle & Scott, the Scottish golf knitwear brand. Sharpe is also an acclaimed athlete, having represented Great Britain at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games as a member of the country's field hockey team.

"Mark King's appointment underlines our clear commitment to the North American marketplace," said Hainer. "Mark has a proven track record of success and leadership excellence. In turn, TaylorMade-Adidas Golf is in the best hands with Ben Sharpe who has been part of the successful TaylorMade leadership team since 2006. I am convinced that Ben will lead our golf business into the next era of growth."

Nilsson started his Adidas career in 1991 as head of sales and marketing in Sweden. In 1994, he joined Adidas' Global Marketing organization. Since 2007 Nilsson has been president of Adidas North America. Adidas noted that during his tenure, Nilsson "led Adidas America into a new period of growth and profitability."

In 2013, North America revenues across brands on a currency-neutral basis was up 2.2 percent to €3.36 billion (\$4.61 bn), with increases in both the U.S. and Canada. On its fourth-quarter conference call, Hainer noted that full-year developed lower than initial expectations in North America as "some lifestyle trends moved against us," and basketball showed lower-than-expected growth due to the injury of Chicago Bulls' star guard, Derrick Rose.

Said Hainer, "I would like to thank Patrik for his passion and many contributions to our company over the last 23 years and I wish him all the best for his professional and private future in Sweden."



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BY THE NUMBERS

+6.0%

Amer Sports reported net sales increased 6 percent currency-neutral in the quarter ended March 30, but said earnings before income taxes fell nearly 22 percent as the euro continued to rise against other currencies. The Finnish company said a mild winter in Europe hurt cross-country sales. Tennis declined as intended, largely due to cleaning up some unprofitable sales with the objective to ignite more profitable growth in Wilson. Its other brands include Salomon, Atomic, Arc'teryx, Mavic, Suunto and Precor.

+15%

Callaway Golf Company reported its first-quarter showed a 22 percent increase in sales, driven by double-digit growth in woods (+33 percent), irons (+29 percent), and golf balls (+24 percent). Income from operations increased 54 percent to \$62 million and fully diluted earnings.

+22.5%

Rocky Brands, Inc. reported first quarter net sales increased 22.5 percent to \$65.8 million. The company reported first quarter net income of \$723,788, or 10 cents a share, slightly down compared with net income of \$892,096, or 12 cents, a year ago.

+36.0%

Under Armour's net revenues jumped 36.0 percent in the first quarter of 2014 to \$642 million. Net income surged 73.3 percent in the first quarter of 2014 to \$13.5 million, or 6 cents a share, exceeding Wall Street's consensus estimate of 4 cents a share. Under Armour also slightly raised its outlook for the year. Apparel revenues increased 33 percent to \$459 million, boosted by expanded offerings in categories such as golf, hunting, training, studio, and basketball.

-1.7%

West Marine, Inc. reported net revenues were \$113.3 million in its first quarter ended March 29, a decrease of 0.8 percent compared to last year. Comparable store sales decreased 1.7 percent. The net loss in the period widened slightly to \$11.0 million, or 46 cents a share, from \$9.7 million, or 41 cents, a year ago.

INVESTOR GROUP

LED BY BERNARD MARIETTE PURCHASES LOLË PARENT

A group of strategic and financial investors led by Bernard Mariette, CEO & president of Coalision, Inc., purchased a majority interest in Coalision from Kilmer Capital Partners. This investment will enable Coalision's growing activewear brand Lolë to expand its retail and web business internationally as well as its global wholesale business.

The strategic and financial partner group includes Pelican LP, Simon Equity Partners, a group comprising André Desmarais, certain members of the Hermès family, and the Fonds de solidarité FTQ. The released note that over the past three years Lolë has profitably grown revenues by over 130 percent.

"This strategic and financial transaction represents a turning point for Lolë as it confers upon us the network, the expertise and the financial strength to compete worldwide with major players in the industry. We believe that this transaction will enable us to achieve our strategic plan," said Mariette. "We are particularly pleased that the founders of the company, Eric D'Anjou and Evelyn Trempe, as well as Kilmer Capital Partners, who acquired a majority stake in 2008, will retain a significant minority interest. We feel that our company is well rooted and will only grow stronger in the future."

BRG SPORTS

AGREES TO SELL EASTON CYCLING

BRG Sports, Inc. has agreed to sell Easton Cycling to cycling industry veteran Chris Tutton. Tutton has long worked as an independent sales representative for Easton Cycling's OEM business and he also owns Race Face Performance Products, a company that has been designing and manufacturing leading-edge performance cycling components, clothing, and protection for more than 20 years. The terms of the deal were not disclosed and it is expected to be completed in the next 60 days.

"We are very pleased that the Easton Cycling unit will be under the leadership of an accomplished industry veteran and business professional like Chris," said BRG Sports Executive Chairman and CEO Terry Lee. "We have enjoyed a long-standing relationship with him both in business and in our shared passions for cycling, and when he put forth an attractive offer, we felt the timing was right to proceed with a deal. We are confident that Chris and his team are the best candidates to create a bright future for the Easton Cycling brand."

Recently, BRG, which owns Bell, Giro and Blackburn, sold the Easton Baseball/Softball business to Bauer Performance Sports. The company is also continuing to work towards an agreement with a third party for the sale of Easton Hockey.

CONFLUENCE

ACQUIRED BY J.H. WHITNEY

Confluence Watersports, parent company to eight market-leading paddlesports brands, has been acquired by J.H. Whitney Capital Partners, LLC, a private equity firm based out of New Canaan, CT. The company's operations will remain in Greenville, SC.

"We are very pleased to be brought into the J.H. Whitney family," said Sue Rechner, Confluence's president and CEO who will continue her role with the company. "Confluence has always been an active and invested member of the outdoor industry, and we are fortunate that our new partnership with J.H. Whitney will enable us to build upon our success in paddlesports as a platform for future expansion."

Paul Viganò, senior managing director at J.H. Whitney, said his firm has "had our eye on a partnership with Confluence for years. The company has been such a significant and flourishing player in this space, and we have an immense respect for Sue and her team."

Its brands include Bomber Gear, Wilderness Systems, Perception, Dagger, Wave Sport, Adventure Technology, Mad River Canoe, and Harmony. J.H. Whitney, privately owned, is currently investing its seventh private equity fund, J.H. Whitney VII L.P.

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NFINITY MAKES A CHEERLEADING MOVIE

On April 10, the Nfinity Champions League Cheerleading Event premiered in more than 650 select movie theaters around the country through Fathom Event's Digital Broadcast Network. Amazingly, the one-night event was compiled from a three-day cheerleading competition that ended just four days earlier.

The Nfinity Champions League, held in Atlanta, as well as the movie, was the vision of Tate Chalk, the founder of Nfinity, the female focused athletic brand based in Atlanta. The company makes shoes, apparel and accessories for women's basketball, cheer, and volleyball.

The Nfinity Champions League brought together a select group of 30 elite cheerleading teams with competition across all divisions and several formats. The teams competed for awards, including Senior All-Girl team champion, Co-Ed team champion and overall Grand Champion. The Grand Prize will be a donation to the winning team's charity of choice.

The film's directors featured industry veterans with over 75 years of experience. Mark Ellis, director, has been honored with nine ESPY nominations for "Best Sports Movie of the Year" including three award winning films for *The Rookie*, *Miracle* and *Semi-Pro*. The producer, Jim Jordan, launched the "Hard Knocks" series on HBO and coordinating programming for NFL Network and eventually went on to do similar work for NASCAR.

SGB interviewed Chalk about the movie and cheerleading's' growing appeal:

How did you come up with the idea? I was watching a movie when a preview for "Drum Corps" came on and it was like a lightbulb moment where I instantly thought, 'What better medium could there be and what better audience for cheerleading than on the big screen?'

How did the three-day event go? The live event, the first weekend in April, was spectacular. We wanted to make it a weekend full of fun. Most of these teams traveled to Atlanta so we wanted to give them something to enjoy, along with the competition. On Friday night, we hosted a Champions League prom. It was the first of its kind and we created it because, with competitions every weekend in the spring, these athletes never get to go to a prom of their own. We wanted to create a special night for them to have fun and also recognize the fact that they often miss out on some of the events their peer's experience. This was a weekend packed with fun for all of the all-star teams participating. Following the prom on Friday night, we held rehearsal Saturday and that evening through Sunday, it was down to business as the teams from across the country competed to win. In the end, the most important thing is that the kids enjoyed themselves, which is the number one reason we created this event. If the measuring stick is, 'Did the kids enjoyed themselves?,' then it was a success.

How was the response to the one-night movie? We don't have the final numbers yet, but from early reports, this was the number one movie in America that night in regard to the number of viewers per screen. Even bigger than Captain America.

Can you talk about the charity aspect of the event? Over 15 separate charities were represented throughout the Champions League event. Each team selected a charity to benefit. Over \$40,000 was raised. The most interesting thing about this is that the kids were the ones who originally thought of supporting the charity. A young man named Kyle from ACE suggested that instead of 'rings or jackets,' they compete for something greater. I thought the tag line 'the best compete for something greater' was appropriate.

What's next? With all first year projects, the list of 'things to improve upon' is long. The sky is the limit on what we can do. What we will do for sure is develop a series with Fathom Events, the company we partnered with on this inaugural event. They were thrilled with the success of this first event, and we will only be able to build off of this success. We also know that next year, we will give ourselves more than the 35 hours of editing time we had this year. The live event took place and played in cinemas less than a week later. For next year, we are planning on at least a week to edit. The live event for 2015 will be the weekend of March 27-29 at the Mandalay Bay Resort in Las Vegas, NV.

Can you talk about how the sport of cheerleading has developed over the years? There are different aspects – there is how the sport has changed

and then also how it is being perceived differently for athletes, as well as the growing spectator appeal. Over the past 15 years, the sport has grown past JUST a sport to a performance sport. The best of Broadway, Circe Du Soliel and contests all in 2:30 of routine. I believe it has evolved past its current mediums to a grand scale that has yet to be tapped. This is why we think that the big screen is the next big thing.

What do you think the team dealer and sporting goods community has to understand about the cheer opportunity? The first thing is understanding the teen demographic. Most retailers sell to that demographic but don't understand what it means to have a relationship with them. They want to be understood and related to, not just sold. You cannot overtly sell to them. What must be done is offer a solution to something that needs a solution and just leave it there...to be discovered. You can't just say 'Here look at this.' You have to allow them to find it themselves. And, ultimately, this is a serious sport. These kids are not just cheering on the athletes. They ARE the athletes.

Nfinity also competes in the basketball and volleyball space. How does the cheer work alongside these other activities for girls? Cheerleading is the quintessential team sport. All individual and ALL team, all at once. What we hope at Nfinity is that more people will find the common ground, rather than how they are all different. A few things we all know - every person wants to be taken seriously in their sport, each person believes that they deserve the best and each person regardless of sport wants to be understood. At Nfinity, we understand our athletes. ■

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Skechers Takes Boston

Meb Keflezighi, Skechers star athlete, crosses the finish line in first place.

By Thomas J. Ryan



Skechers USA, Inc. last Tuesday reported a blowout first quarter, with worldwide strength across divisions driving its second highest quarterly revenues in the company's 22-year history. But a potentially much bigger development came from a road race the day before.

At the 118th Boston Marathon, Skechers' star athlete, Meb Keflezighi, won the Boston Marathon. Wearing the new Skechers GOMeb Speed 3 Shoe, Keflezighi broke his personal record with a time of 2:08:37, and was the first American male to win the Boston Marathon since Greg Meyer in 1983, and the first American since 1985. Keflezighi, who turns 39 next month, was also the oldest men's champion in Boston since 1931.



Wearing the new Skechers GOMeb Speed 3 Shoe, Meb Keflezighi broke his personal record with a time of 2:08:37 at this year's Boston Marathon

" WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE SKECHERS PERFORMANCE DIVISION BY MY SIDE EVERY STEP OF THE WAY, TODAY I HAVE WON FOR THE CITY OF BOSTON, AND FOR THE ENTIRE U.S."

- Meb Keflezighi

Beyond those historical accomplishments, Meb's win puts an American touch on the world's grandest running event, one year after the terrorist bombing marred the storied race. Invoking the names of the Red Sox, Aerosmith and Martin Richard, Keflezighi became "Boston's Favorite Son" for the day, according to ABC News.

"A year ago I decided I wanted to win the 2014 Boston Marathon for the people of Boston and for the U.S.," said Keflezighi. "When the Red Sox put the World Series trophy at the Boston Marathon finish line during the victory parade last year, I was inspired more than ever to come back and win. With the support of the Skechers Performance Division by my side every step of the way, today I have won for the city of Boston, and for the entire U.S."

But the win could also become a breakthrough moment in the running category for Skechers, which only formed its Performance Division in 2011 when it launched the its GOrun line in a bold break from its lifestyle roots. Skechers' website on Monday, April 21, quickly featured a banner-width, black-and-white photo of the runner with the tagline "Congratulations, Meb!" and was also seen as a significant part of healing after.

One of the many story lines around Meb – who's biggest prior feats were winning the 2009 New York City Marathon and earning a silver medal at the 2004 Olympic marathon – was that Nike had dumped him as an endorser because he was too old.

"We are extremely excited, first for Meb and his family," said Rick Higgins, VP of merchandising & marketing for the Skechers Performance Division, in an interview with Sports Executive Weekly. "Meb and our design/tech team have worked hard over the past few years to build great shoes for runners with our mid-foot strike technology. It's a great validation for the Skechers Performance Division as many people were initially skeptical about our seriousness entering the performance category. Meb achieving another new PR in Skechers Performance shoes, is icing on the cake!"

"The support we have had from so many top specialty running shops around the world keeps creating more brand awareness and that helps to increase legitimacy within the overall brand."

- Rick Higgins, VP of merchandising & marketing for the Skechers Performance Division

Since joining Skechers, Keflezighi has won more than five key races, including the U.S. Half Marathon Championship in Houston in January 2014, and the U.S. Olympic Trials in Houston in 2012. This past fall, Keflezighi extended his contract with the Skechers Performance Division through 2016.

Skechers running shoes have also earned over 20 awards and various mentions and awards by many of the critical running magazines. Most recently it received the Runner's World 2014 Best Buy Award for the



"Meb and our design/tech team have worked hard over the past few years to build great shoes for runners with our mid-foot strike technology. It's a great validation for the Skechers Performance Division..."

- Rick Higgins, VP of merchandising & marketing for the Skechers Performance Division

Skechers GOrun Ride 3, Competitor Magazine's 2014 Best Value Award for the Skechers GOrun 3 and Triathlon Plus Magazine's 2014 Peak Performer and Gold Awards for the Skechers GOrun Ultra.

This year Skechers marked its first year as the official footwear and apparel sponsorship of the Chevron Houston Marathon, its first sponsored marathon. It also sponsors local grassroots events - from marathons to 10k's - since starting Performance Division to directly reach the running community. Said Higgins, "Watching consumers engage, try on and then run a marathon or half marathon in your product really highlights the acceptance and validation of the brand."

Skechers overall running assortment has continued to expand. This season Skechers is offering updated generations of its GOrun platform, which will include GOrun 4 and GOrun Ride 4, and it's adding a new neutral cushioned shoe called the Skechers GOrun STRADA. In the fall, it will be introducing the Gomeb Speed 3, the shoe worn by Meb. Meb will continue to appear on its efforts on the marketing side, an area where Skechers is known for its expertise over its 21-year history.

"Our focus right now will be to keep Meb in the forefront and continue to educate and advertise the mid-foot strike performance technology with TV, print, and our new custom YouTube channel, skechersgorun.com," said Higgins.

Overall, Higgins said the running channel continues to gain a better understanding of Skechers focus on keeping its lifestyle business separate from the performance side while also noticing its commitment to the category.

"It just keeps growing," said Higgins of its running push. "The support we have had from so many top specialty running shops around the world keeps creating more brand awareness and that helps to increase legitimacy within the overall brand."

On the company's first-quarter conference with analysts, David Weinberg, COO and CFO, said Skechers' key product sales drivers were broad-based and came across its men's, women's, and kids offering, and included both lifestyle and performance products. Other successful newer platforms working include Skechers GoWalk, Relaxed Fit, Skechers Sport, and Skechers Kids Footwear.

"We actually have a lot of platforms that are working very, very well," said Weinberg. He further noted that the improvements were achieved

despite Easter falling late in April and the “extreme cold weather” experienced in most of the U.S. throughout the quarter.

Domestic wholesale revenues rose 20.7 percent, or \$39.9 million, in the period, with a 14.8 percent increase in pairs shipped and a 5.1 percent gain in average price. Double-digit gains were seen in men’s and women’s and “very high single-digit” increases in kids. The increases came from its men’s and women’s Skechers USA, sport and work lines, as well as its BOBS from Skechers and sport active lines for women.

International was ahead 26.3 percent in the quarter across its subsidiary, joint venture, and distributor sales. Europe saw a “strong rebound,” with Skechers seeing “demand for our brand is at an all-time high across nearly every region where we directly distribute



“We actually have a lot of platforms that are working very, very well,” The improvements were achieved despite Easter falling late in April and the “extreme cold weather” experienced in most of the U.S. throughout the quarter.

- David Weinberg, COO and CFO, said Skechers

our product,” according to Weinberg. Its Southeast Asia joint ventures were up 18.7 percent combined, led by more than a 50 percent hike in China.

At its owned retail stores, revenues grew 15.9 percent in the quarter. Domestic sales were ahead 10.7 percent and international grew 48.8 percent. Comps increased 5.8 percent domestically and 5.6 percent internationally.

Weinberg said that given its retail growth trajectory, accelerating backlogs and incoming orders for April and at-once business, which remains at the same levels as last year, Skechers remains comfortable with current consensus estimates for earnings in the second quarter, “though there may be some upside in the revenue forecast.”

He added, “Our April incoming order rate and revenues are very strong and our backlogs have accelerated since year-end. The reception from our key accounts to our new product offering gives us the confidence and the strength of our business.” ■



CONGRATULATIONS TO MEB KEFLEZIGHI AND SKECHERS

ON WINNING THE 2014 BOSTON MARATHON

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Playing With Heart

Blind and visually impaired athletes showcase athleticism, communication, and teamwork when playing beep baseball. For those unfamiliar with the sport, learning about the game and its players is inspirational.

By Fernando J. Delgado

It has long been said that one of the hardest things to do in sports is to hit a baseball or softball. But imagine closing your eyes and trying to hit a ball pitched to you without actually seeing it. Some might say it would be an impossible task. But that's exactly what happens in beep baseball – aided by sound, the blind and visually impaired play a variation of the national pastime without needing to see the ball. For anyone that plays beep baseball, the sport is a passion rooted in athleticism and communication.

Beep baseball's origins can be traced back to St. Paul, MN in 1975, when a newly designed beep baseball inspired a group of blind athletes to play a game and establish a preliminary set of guidelines known as the "Minnesota Rules." Despite being based on the principles of traditional baseball, the sport of beep baseball, otherwise known as beepball, features a few key noticeable differences. The game itself generally lasts six innings instead of regular baseball's nine innings. And instead of eight fielders and a pitcher facing a batter, beepball consists of six fielders, a pitcher, a catcher, one or two spotters, and the batter from the other team. Each team also includes a designated fielder and designated hitter. Spotters call out numbers to signify which part of the field batted balls are hit towards. The fielders and batters must be blindfolded, while the pitcher, catcher, and spotters are not blindfolded and are typically sighted. Unlike baseball, the pitcher, catcher, and batter are all on the same team.

The key to beep baseball, of course, is sound. The ball itself emits an intermittent beep, making it an aural target for players to hit and field. The first and third bases have built-in sounding units that produce a buzzing sound when activated (there is no second base in beep baseball). An operator activates the sounding unit once the ball is put in play; the hitter does not know which base will be activated. After putting a ball in play, hitters listen for the buzzing from the activated base, run towards it, and make contact with the base by running into it.

A run is also scored differently in beepball than in traditional baseball. The moment a batter hits the ball, a base operator turns on one of the two bases – either first or third – for the batter to run towards. There is no running from first to third base. If the batter touches the activated base before a fielder can pick up the ball, the offensive team scores a run. Instead of a batter striking out after 3 strikes, it takes 4 strikes for a batter to be out in



beepball. If the ball goes beyond the two base lines or doesn't travel at least 40 feet, it is considered foul and counted as a strike unless it is the potential fourth strike, in which case the batter can swing again. The fourth strike must be a clean miss for a batter to strike out. If a batted ball travels at least 170 feet in the air over fair territory before landing, it is a home run.

The National Beep Baseball Association (NBBA) was founded in 1976 and is the sport's leading organized body. Every year, the NBBA organizes local, state and regional tournaments, including the World Series, which is held every August. The first World Series was held in 1976 in St. Paul and was won by a team from the host city. Since then, participation and interest has steadily grown.

NBBA Secretary Stephen A. Guerra believes that players enjoy the sport so much because it opens doors for them. "Players are drawn to the game of beep baseball because they love the ability to adapt the game of baseball-softball with a medium of sound that enables them to have no barriers," said Guerra. "When a batter gets up to the plate and hits a pitched ball that's beeping, and then they have to run to the base that is beeping, there aren't any obstacles that are in their way for doing that. They're given all the tools, and they're seizing that moment. They're taking those tools – the beeping ball and the beeping bases – and they're enjoying the sport of baseball. They want to be there. They're going to practices twice a week and they're capturing their childhood dreams of the players they grew up listening to on the radio in a baseball game."

The key to beep baseball is communication. Even though pitchers never field or bat, they are extremely important to the flow of the game. After a catcher sets a target where the batter normally swings, the pitcher attempts to place the ball on the hitter's bat from a distance of 20 feet. By rule, a pitcher must clearly verbalize two words: "ready" just before the ball is about to be released, thus alerting all players that the ball may soon be hit, and "pitch" or "ball" as the ball is actually being released. Unlike traditional baseball, good pitchers in beepball allow their team to score as many runs as possible, and high ERA's are considered the mark of a good pitcher.

Playing defense is perhaps the most challenging aspect of the game for experienced players, and communication again plays a key role. Whenever a ball is hit, a spotter must instantly call out a number indicating the general direction the ball is traveling. Fielders react and move according to the called-out number, and verbally communicate with each other to secure the ball as quickly as possible.

The skills that define outstanding beep baseball players are no different than those of athletes who have sight, and people who succeed in daily life outside of sports. "Common traits that make a great beep baseball player are great agility, endurance, and athleticism," shared Guerra. "A great beepball player is a person who can perform on both sides of the ball, both offensively and defensively, to unspeakable levels. And they also do this in addition to their daily lives, whether they have children or whether they're working full time. And they're taking the time to train themselves and keep themselves in tip-top shape, so they can contribute to their team and their team's success. When you have that one individual, the team then starts to acclimate around that one individual and start to do the same thing. What makes a great beep baseball player is not only someone that dedicates themselves to their work and their family, but also someone who improves themselves by doing what it takes to become a more well-rounded athlete."

Sighted players are also integral to the sport. They act as pitchers, spotters, and catchers, and they can also blindfold themselves and bat and play in the field. When sighted players try playing beep baseball for the first time, they frequently find it daunting. By being blindfolded and losing

their sense of sight, hitting and fielding a ball becomes exceedingly difficult. "Sighted individuals who try the sport for the first time are really fearful," observed Guerra. "They can take a bat, and they can swing a bat, and they can hit a pitched ball blindfolded, but when they go to run towards the base, they run about 20 feet and they say, 'Am I crazy?' For a blinded or low-vision individual, they run at full-tilt at the base. A sighted individual can see what's in front of them normally. But when they put on that blindfold during a beepball game, they don't have that ability, and it's a whole different ballgame. Their fears get the better of them."

"Sighted players have a respect for the players of beep baseball because they see these players diving across a field of grass for a ball, they see the players communicating with each other to pick up a ball in the field defensively, they see a batter swinging a bat with every ounce of their might to make contact, and they see them running without a care in the world towards the base so they can score a run for their team," Guerra continued. "They see an unwavering ability to play the sport as it's meant to be played, and they gain a greater respect for athletes who are competing that way."



In order to grow awareness and participation for beep baseball, the NBBA has taken to social media. The organization maintains a presence on Twitter and Facebook. And for this year's 2014 World Series, the NBBA will introduce a social media specialist. That person will be responsible for making the scores of the week long World Series games available as they happen on Twitter and on Facebook. The NBBA will also offer an SMS text distribution list for players and fans to get scores from other games.

According to Guerra, the NBBA's membership has grown from a level of 269 members in 2008 to 450 members in 2013. The NBBA hopes that beep baseball teams will eventually be formed in every state, and it also hopes that the game grows internationally. "The organization has been up and down since its inception in 1976," he observed. "There were eight teams at the first competition. Since then, it's steadily grown. Growth is really dependent on people participating. If people see or play in the games, they get that itch. They want to start their own team."

The increasing popularity of the sport is reflected in the all-time high registration for the 2014 World Series, which will be held in Rochester, MN from August 3 -10. "We have 30 teams registered for this year's World Series,

whereas previously we had a high of around 20 teams attend the World Series,” stated Guerra. “In 1986, when the World Series was in Palo Alto, there were 22 teams that came to the World Series that year. After that, we didn’t come close for a while. From 2000 to 2012, we’ve hovered between 13 and 16 teams. And in 2013 we had 20 teams. In terms of growth, participation, and overall success over the next few years, we’re hoping that the NBBA will grow to levels that we’ve never seen before, which is hopefully a membership of 750 people plus. Simply through social media and by word of mouth, we’ve experienced growth. People are realizing that beep baseball is one of many different avenues of athletics that people in the blind-and-visually-impaired community can participate in.”

For anyone interested in learning about the game and starting their own team, Guerra suggests taking a trip to the sport’s premier invitational tournament. “We encourage anyone new to come to the World Series,” he said. “That’s the best way to get your feet wet and learn about beep baseball.”

Ultimately, beep baseball will flourish because of the love the players have for the game itself, and their desire to share the experience with teammates. “Once a new player comes into the league, and I tell you this from personal experience, you get injected with anticipation, eagerness and excitement. Because once you start playing the sport, you want to spread the word,” said Guerra. “It’s like you found a pot of gold. It was true for me back in the 1980’s when I learned how to play, and it’s true today. When one person starts to play, they love the game and they share it with others. It starts to spread by networking. Anyone who plays is a good ambassador for the sport, and everyone benefits from people sharing information. The NBBA is growing, and the sport is growing, and it’s only going to get better as time goes on.” *Note: To learn more about beepball, visit nbba.org.* ■

BEEP BASEBALL EQUIPMENT DEFINED

Beep baseballs and bases are made by the Denver Beepball Group. Balls are \$34 each, and come with a rechargeable battery. Single ball chargers cost \$9, while multi-ball chargers are \$45.

A full set of bases costs \$300. A set of bases includes two “towers”, which are 46 inches high and 7.5 inches in diameter. Each base tower is made of foam covered with reinforced vinyl tarp and velcro fasteners.

Blindfolds are also available through the National Beep Baseball Association (NBBA) website, and cost \$7 each.

According to NBBA Secretary Stephen A. Guerra, the weight of a bat is important for beep baseball players and as such; players tend to buy their bats used. “A beep baseball weighs 16 ounces,” he explained. “And the belief is that you need to have a bat that weights at least 32 ounces or more to really move that ball, because the ball is heavier than a regular softball.

“We have maximum requirements for bats. Bats cannot weigh more than 38 ounces, and they cannot measure longer than 32 inches. Manufacturers of baseball bats today are making bats lighter. So the bats that are used today for beep baseball tend to be older bats. They’re not brand-new, off-the-shelf bats, because the manufacturers aren’t making those larger bats anymore. Beep baseball players will often find older bats at a used sporting goods store like Play It Again Sports. They also try to find those kinds of bats online.”

Balls, bases, and blindfolds are easily acquired through the NBBA’s Equipment Page.

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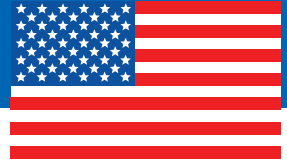
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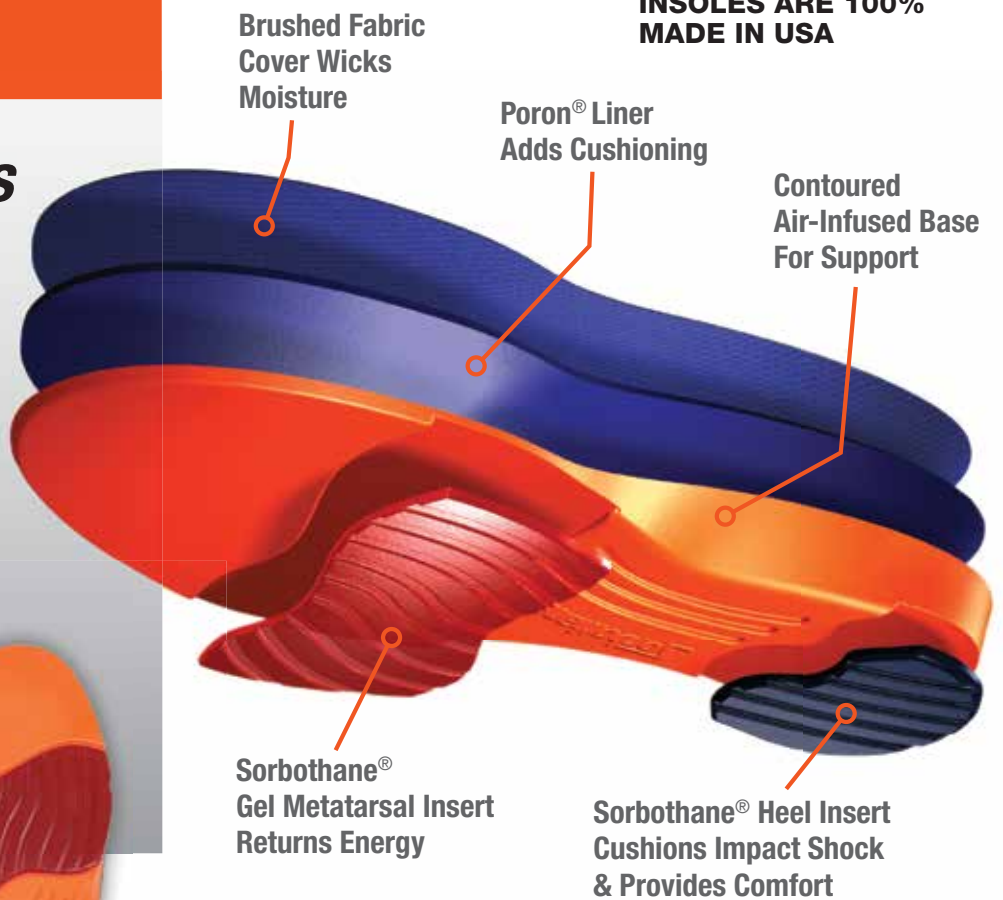
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SGB
TEAM

What's Up Your Sleeve?

Style, performance and comfort have risen to the forefront of sports medicine. *SGB* examines the evolving, growing sleeve category and other sports medicine accessories.

By Fernando J. Delgado



There's no two ways about it – sleeves are extremely hot right now in the sports medicine market. What started out just a few years ago as a very limited market has exploded into a profitable accessory that an increasing number of manufacturers have made an effort to tap into. More and more athletes, young and old alike, are using sleeves. And their reasons for doing so vary, ranging from fashion statements to necessary therapy and injury prevention - oftentimes both.

Retail data provided by SportsScanInfo shows that in 2013, the Sports Medicine category was up 5.6 percent in total dollars and year-to-date in 2014 it is up 8.4 percent in total dollars.

Neil Schwartz, VP market & consumer insights at SportsOneSource indicated that the increased demand for sports medicine accessories is rooted in a combination of trends in key demographics and in product improvements. "There are three reasons why these things are happening," explained Schwartz. "One is that Baby Boomers are getting older. While we want to continue to try to play and be active, our bodies are just not letting us do the things we used to do, and that's creating more injuries. Number two is that more adults, especially the Gen X age group, and to a lesser extent Gen Y's, are taking part in more extreme activities, like Tough Mudder, Warrior Dash, and the Spartan Race. These activities allow people to test themselves. And what happens when people test themselves? They get injured."

Schwartz also credits new technologies and product improvements for the growth of the Sports Medicine category. "The other factor is that sports medicine equipment has gotten so much better that it has allowed people to play longer more extensively," he continued. "There's so much variety and we've learned so much more about all these different injuries – sports medicine products are able to keep people playing longer. You also have new products, like compression sleeves for legs and arms, which have really come into their own over the last few years. People now understand the benefits of compression product. For instance, compression sleeves for team sports are up 71 percent so far this year, and up almost 37 percent from last year. This is a category that didn't really exist four years ago. Sports medicine has introduced a number of products that have allowed athletes - and not just elite athletes - to stay on the playing field longer and participate more frequently."

The rapid growth of sleeves is fascinating, and a fairly unique trend in sports medicine. Looking back at the timing behind the surge in the category provides a better understanding of the current level of demand. "Sleeves is definitely an evolving category," shared Bill Best, vice president of product development at Shock Doctor. "What started out as a niche product that had a specific use by a small group of users has grown dramatically in the past few years. Going back to the beginning, sleeves were used by triathletes and runners, and in the arm area by basketball players. The expansion of its use into baseball was one of the areas that started to get arm sleeves recognized more and used in team sports. That rolled out into more awareness of other team sports athletes, like how it showed up

in football, where players were using the sleeve not only for compressive but also to protect their arms on the field. The interpretation for what the use of a compression sleeve is has developed rapidly, and it's also still finding its way relative to all these other options. It was originally used under the premise of compression and warmth for muscles, enhancing blood flow, and so forth. But the compression sleeve has continued to evolve to other uses outside of that. Lots of different brands have their version of the sleeve, or they have different types of sleeves. That's great, because it provides more choices to the consumer, and it's also created a more competitive marketplace for products that are making their way to retail."

Sports medicine sleeves and accessories have also provided consumers with a much-needed alternative for injury treatment and prevention in a difficult economic environment. "Trend-wise, there's definitely a trend towards non-doctor visit self-care, we'll call it," said Craig DiGiovanni, vice president of Medi-Dyne, the parent of sports medical device manufacturer Cho-Pat. "Budgets are squeezed all the way around; from personal budgets to health care through the schools and the teams. School athletic budgets have been slashed the past several years. And they just don't have a lot of money to throw around. They may have an athletic trainer, but their budgets are so limited that there's not a whole lot left over for good products. So we're seeing a big shift in the market towards people looking for quality products on their own. That's a trend that's just going to continue, especially because the amount of players is increasing."

A Hot Hardwood Trend

Unlike other sports medicine trends, a driving factor behind the rapid growth of sleeves in team sports can be attributed primarily to style and the influence of professional athletes. While the use of other sports medicine products by the pros can certainly lead to increased demand by younger athletes, no other trend has been as heavily influenced by professional stars to the degree of the arm sleeve in basketball.

The start of the trend can be traced back to a single basketball player – the now retired NBA All-Star Allen Iverson. Iverson first started wearing an arm sleeve during the 2000-2001 season in an effort to alleviate the effects of chronic bursitis. At the time, very few basketball players wore arm sleeves. His sleeve stood out to fans and opposing players, and he gradually became synonymous with it. Eventually, fans of Iverson took to wearing sleeves, and over the next decade other star players such as Carmelo Anthony and LeBron James wore sleeves. A trickle-down effect occurred as more NBA players started wearing them with college players and NBA players quickly following suit. Today, you can't watch an NBA or NCAA game without seeing at least a few players wearing sleeves. Youth players now wear them regularly, something that was almost never seen at school and playground courts even five years ago.

"When sleeves really started to be recognized by pro athletes was about three to four years ago," observed Shock Doctor's Best. "As far as really arriving at retail, and getting the attention of retailers and seeing a

lot of choices pour into the market at general sporting goods stores and larger retailers, that's happened more in the past two or three years. In the specialty channel – calf sleeves for running, for example – sleeves have been around a while. But they were more niche brands and products that weren't widely distributed."

The fact young players have been imitating star players in the NBA by wearing sleeves is not lost on leading brands. In many cases, fashion and feel outweigh hard science when it comes to its popularity. "I think there's a lot of influence by style and the usage of sleeves by professional athletes," added Best. "There's not a lot of documented data that says what a sleeve is doing for one athlete or another. There is a lot of enhanced sensation of performance, and athletes have a preference for the feel or fit of a sleeve. But there's not a lot of data supporting that. Once someone gets used to the feel and the fit, they are also making a statement as to how they perceive themselves in relation to other athletes. That's where fashion and the mental aspect of using sleeves come into play. A product that can provide enhanced performance – whether it's shown through real data or the mental aspect of it – is good for the athlete and the market. For a brand like Shock Doctor, we see an opportunity where we can introduce sleeves, or more choices of sleeves, going forward. If the athlete likes it, and they prefer to perform wearing it, then it's a good thing."

Sleeves and Accessories - What's In Store

Several key items highlight product lines of the leading sports medicine and sports performance therapy brands. The common theme throughout is improved technology, comfort and fit, and enhanced performance.

MCDAVID ARM SLEEVES



McDavid's 6500R Hex Shooter Arm Sleeve leads the way for the red-hot trend of arm sleeves for basketball players. It packs multiple technological features in a sleek, highly functional design for \$20. The predominant feature is the sleeve's 9mm Hex Technology, positioned at the elbow. The sleeve keeps players cool and dry due to hDc Moisture Management Technology, while its arm compression maintains muscle warmth and prevents abrasions and scratches.

"Compression sleeves are nothing new in the NBA or other professional sports, and they have been around for decades," said Mary Horwath, McDavid's vice president of global marketing. "That said, McDavid really invented the category of protective apparel that players wear most often today. Unlike basic compression sleeves first worn by former NBA stars like Allen Iverson, McDavid's HEX technology offers more advanced padded apparel. The compression sleeves are built with a pad that is broken down into dime-sized hexagonal pieces spaced 2mm apart and laminated to stretch fabric. It gives the impression of one large pad, but really its dozens of smaller pads all joined together. This arrangement of the foam offers more breathability and flexibility as the pad bends and forms to a joint." With five color options available for the Hex Shooter, basketball players can

express their individual style on the court while feeling comfortable and protected.

McDavid will also have the 8837R mmHg Arm Sleeve, \$30/pair. Arms benefit from increased blood circulation as a result of Targeted Compression Technology, and its specialty yarns are quick drying and antimicrobial for added comfort. In addition to the Black color option, with advanced booking customers can purchase the sleeve in Gray/Scarlet, Red or White.

Technology permeates the construction of the 6572 Compression Leg Sleeve at \$25/pair. Leg muscles stay warm and active as a result of compression technology, while the sleeves protect the skin from abrasions. hDc Moisture Management Technology prevents uncomfortable moisture from building up. The sleeves feature 50+ UV skin protection and six-thread, flat-lock technology for strength at the seams.

Sports therapy remains the cornerstone of Shock Doctor's approach to sleeves and accessories. One of the brand's leading items is the 772 Core Compression Sleeve for \$15, which provides compression support for athletes in a variety of team sports. Available in bold colors, the sleeve supports muscles with form-fitting compression. Its Performance Fit sleeve pattern contours with the arm for comfort through full range of motion. The combination of performance and fit is further realized with the sleeve's non-slip silicon grip on the bicep hem and its wicking properties with integrated antimicrobial technology.



Another key item for Shock Doctor this year is the 865 Knee Compression Sleeve for \$20. The pre-curved compression fit sleeve, designed with open patella coverage, stays firmly in place while the breathable mesh window adds comfort. The sleeve provides light support for minor pain, sprains and strains on a daily use basis for an extended period of time. Users experience free range of motion as a result of the anatomical pre-curved design, and N-Tex airflow neoprene material creates moisture wicking and therapeutic warmth and healing.

Cho-Pat's emphasis on technology, comfort, and fit is evident in two of its leading compression sleeves for 2014 - the Dynamic VE Ankle Compression Sleeve, \$38, and the Dynamic Knee Compression Sleeve, \$65.

The Dynamic Ankle Compression Sleeve features a wide adjustable front entry making it easy to slip on and off. The sleeve is anatomically contoured for comfort and effectiveness and includes four-way stretch material for support and breathability. Gel pads cushion and protect the ankle with a Velcro hook and loop closure for a stable fit. Cho-Pat's Dynamic Knee Compression Sleeve combines compression, breathability, support and warmth to reduce pain and promote healing. A gel insert stabilizes the knee cap and reduces wear to the undersurface of the kneecap, while the sleeve maintains proper position without rolling or bunching via flexible stainless steel stays inserted at the medial and lateral aspects of the sleeve.

CHO-PAT



Technological innovation is at the core of Cramer Sports Medicine's approach to sleeves. New for 2014 is the ESS Calf Sleeve, \$25, with a



Photo courtesy Shock Doctor



Cramer Sports
Medicine ESS Calf
Sleeve

reflective design intended to provide safety for runners. “This style is constructed from a medical grade compression fabric which provides improvement in circulation for faster recovery through more efficient removal of lactic acid from the muscles,” said Ed Christman, VP, marketing, Cramer Sports Medicine. “Compression provides a performance enhancement benefit, and mild muscular support.”

At Zamst, an advanced understanding of the medical field forms the basis for the brand’s engineered support technology. “The bracing

and support category is showing significant year-over-year growth with the aging baby boomer population as well as a higher awareness of injury prevention,” commented Zamst’s Marketing Manager Laura Cleveland. “The overall technology for this category is lighter weight for performance with enhanced stabilization. Athletes are looking for products that won’t weigh them down, and that provide full range of motion while stabilizing and supporting the area in need.”

Zamst’s ZK-7 Knee Brace is the strongest knee support for moderate to severe sprains



Zamst
A2-DX
Ankle
Brace

of the ACL, PCL, MCL and LCL for \$80. Exo-Tech Qaud construction provides four-way ligament support with resin stays for medial and lateral stability, and x-strap and parallel straps for anterior and posterior stability to the ACL/PCL. For moderate to severe ankle sprains, Zamst is offering the A2-DX Ankle Brace for \$65. The A2-DX is made with i-Fit and a-Fit technology for an anatomically (right and left) correct fit, and its Exo-Grid is a dual exterior molded support structure with Grip Tech that prevents the ankle from rolling inward and outward.

Compression technology is the heart and soul of Zensah, and the brand’s standout sleeves for 2014 are excellent options for runners and team sports participants. Zensah’s Compression Knee Sleeve, \$25, is moisture wicking and antimicrobial, providing pinpoint compression to support the knee muscle and IT Band. Zensah’s lightweight design and targeted comfort blend for full range of motion and support. For ankle injuries, including plantar fasciitis, Zensah offers its Compression Ankle Support at \$15. The Support is highlighted by an innovative thin design while offering full range of motion in the ankle. Made of 75 percent nylon and 25 percent spandex, the sleeve helps to treat plantar fasciitis by providing support and stabilization to the plantar fascia.



Zensah
Compression
Ankle Support

In addition to sleeves, manufacturers are offering several other sports medicine accessories for athletes to alleviate and prevent pain.

Available this year to help athletes combat plantar fasciitis is Pro-Tec’s Soft Splint for \$18. The Soft Splint alleviates pain and tightness in the arch and Achilles tendon by combining the benefits of a compression sock with the stability of a traditional night splint. The Splint’s stimulating



Zensah
Compression
Knee Sleeve

helping to reduce pain on the outside of the knee. The band's compression pad provides targeted compression to stabilize the Iliotibial band and reduce rubbing and irritation on the femoral condyle.

Cho-Pat's newly patented Dual Action Knee Strap, \$26, is for athletes with painful and weakened knees. The strap applies pressure to the patellar tendon below the kneecap to stabilize and tighten the kneecap; which improves patellar tracking and elevation and reduces patellar subluxation. It also strengthens the kneecap by applying pressure on the tendon above it.



Cho-Pat
Dual
Action
Knee
Strap

Cho-Pat is also offering a solution for symptoms of Achilles Tendonitis. Its patented Achilles Tendon Strap, \$19, helps alleviate pain and discomfort and was developed in cooperation with the Mayo Clinic. Almost any athlete can use the strap who is susceptible to Achilles Tendonitis.

Even with the rise of the compression sleeve, taping still plays a part in the daily routine of athletes. Every athletic trainer has tape in his or her bag. Shock Doctor's Kinesiology Tape 1870 for \$13 is ideal for muscles strains and for the prevention of injuries. Kinesiology tape provides support and stability for joints and muscles without affecting circulation and range of motion. Wearable for up to five days, the tape is 100 percent latex-free and hypo-allergenic.



Shock Doctor
Kinesiology
Tape 1870

Under Armour's entries into the compression sports medicine category revolve around the UA Recharge line and the Men's UA Recharge Compression Socks, \$40, and the Men's UA Recharge Energy Leggings, \$90. The Socks incorporate a Signature Moisture Transport System that wicks moisture and dries quickly. The socks also use ArmourBlock Anti-Odor technology to prevent the growth of odor-causing microbes, while an embedded arch support aids in the increase of blood circulation and helps conform to the shape of the foot. The Leggings offer a more comprehensive approach to compression therapy. They are worn for 24-hours after an intensive workout to target, compress, and stabilize lower body muscles to help repair them and to heal faster for shorter recovery time.



Under
Armour Men's
Recharge
Compression
Socks



Under
Armour Men's
Recharge
Compression
Leggings



Zensah Smart
Running
Gloves

For runners, Zensah offers its Smart Running Gloves for \$30, available online at their website and in specialty running and sporting goods stores. Thanks to Zensah's advanced fabric technology, the gloves keep fingers warm while still allowing runners to operate touch screen cell phones or iPods. The gloves also feature reflective stripes for increased visibility and a four-way proprietary stretch fabric for breathability and comfort.



Pro-Tec Soft Splint



Pro-Tec IT Band
Compression Wrap



Cho-Pat Achilles
Tendon Strap

massage targets the calf and Achilles tendon with breathable compression. It also incorporates a firm insole for stability to hold the foot in place while an athlete stretches.

Pro-Tec, which recently re-launched its brand, will also offer the IT Band Compression Wrap, \$18, to alleviate the effects of Iliotibial Band Syndrome, the painful knee injury common to runners, cyclists, and hikers. The Iliotibial band - which is worn during activity to reduce strain - runs along the outside of the leg from the hip to the knee,

The Future of Sports Medicine

Even with sleeves and accessories showing strong sales figures and growth in demand for product, the future is hard to predict. So how can manufacturers and retailers drive awareness and sales of sports medicine products and keep it on an upward trajectory?

According to SportsOneSource's Schwartz, the answer is innovation and education. "Manufacturers need to continue to invest in new technology and continue to do product-oriented research and development. That really ties them to a lot of things. In some cases, it ties them with growing market share, it ties them to growing their total revenue, but it also ties them to increasing their retail distribution."

"For retailers, I think it's a different story. Retailers need to engage in more education and especially at the point-of-sale. When you walk into most big box sporting goods stores, there's very little attention paid to sports medicine. When you go into a store to buy golf clubs, somebody's going to be all over you. If you walk in to buy fishing equipment, or firearms, there's going to be someone there to help you, or give you advice in most cases. But when it comes to sports



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medicine, there's very little education. Do I buy this one, or that one? Will this product protect me more, or will that one? That's really what retailers need to focus on."

Shock's Doctor's Best agreed with the need for increased education in the form of information and an attentive customer service experience at retail. "If you walk into Walmart or Target, you're never going to get the kind of education or the kind of attention for sports medicine products that you can get at a sporting goods store," he said. "But big box sporting goods stores and specialty stores can give you that attention. And that is one of the things that can continue to drive people into the stores. Because you get good education."

Medi-Dyne's DiGiovanni also believes that the value of education cannot be emphasized enough. More so than benefitting from advancements in technology, a well-educated consumer will help themselves the most by being knowledgeable about the products they buy. A sports medicine item can't help, after all, if it doesn't fit the athlete, or if the consumer isn't aware of how to effectively address their pain. "In the short term, I think we can expect to see some minor modifications and improvements, but the future isn't in just the products themselves," DiGiovanni explained. "Educating the consumer on what they really need and why they need it will be driving the value proposition. It will be the providers that are able to deliver on more than just temporary pain relief that ultimately win the trust and business of the consumer."

In order to accomplish the goal of better educating customers, Medi-Dyne's Cho-Pat brand, which is distributed nationwide through a vast network of team dealers and specialty sporting goods stores, has implemented merchandiser displays at the point-of-sale. The merchandiser displays include comprehensive information regarding products, including instructions for finding the right sizing and fit and directions on identifying the causes of pain. "We've built a whole display so that consumers can easily go up to it and easily identify what they're problem is," shared DiGiovanni. "Step 1 is to take the pain away, and Step 2 is how to get rid of the problem." In addition to its new 2Step Program, Medi-Dyne's website also offers a Pain Solution Center with comprehensive information regarding many common sports-related injuries.

Zamst is also stepping up its efforts to increase awareness through better information. "We offer our retailers a full interactive digital marketing strategy that starts with our Zamst iPad App that we have now extended to an iPhone App," said Zamst's Cleveland. "Zamst is the first in this category to ever release an App to educate and help the consumer and we think this is the most beneficial way to sell our product. We also authenticate our product with grassroots strategies through orthopedic surgeons and long distance runners who have validated our technology and products."

Shock Doctor's Best believes that the future of sleeves and other sports medicine accessories looks good. But manufacturers have their work cut out for them in order to stand out in a market filled with tough competition. In the end, the consumer benefits from improved products and a greater variety. "It's a competitive marketplace for sure," he concluded. "The uses and technologies of sleeves are going to continue to grow. It's hard to see where it's going to go, because it seems that with each passing year, the awareness of them and the usage of sleeves for more sports seem to keep evolving quickly. I'm interested to see where it goes from here." ■



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CALENDAR

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Beep Baseball

APRIL

27-30 N.S.G.A. Mgmt. Conference
 Indian Wells, CA

JUNE

11-12 Atlanta Shoe Market
 Atlanta, GA

17-19 Licensing International Expo
 Las Vegas, NV

26-28 Sports, Inc. Summer Team Dealer Show
 Nashville, TN

JULY

8-11 NBS Summer Market
 Austin, TX

10-13 European Outdoor Trade Fair
 Friedrichshafen, Germany

15-17 ASI Chicago
 Chicago, IL

18-20 A.D.A. Spring Show
 Reno, NV

AUGUST

6-9 Outdoor Retailer Summer Market
 Salt Lake City, UT

14-16 Sports Inc. Outdoor Show
 Nashville, TN

SEPTEMBER

3-8 NBS Fall Semi - Annual Market
 Fort Worth, TX

4-6 Imprinted Sportswear Show (ISS)
 Orlando, FL

10-12 Interbike International Trade Expo
 Las Vegas, NV

16-17 SFIA Industry Leaders Summit
 Chicago, IL

OCTOBER

7-9 OIA Rendezvous
 Asheville, NC

NOVEMBER

15-16 A.D.A. Fall Show
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23-25 Sports, Inc. Fall Team Dealer Show
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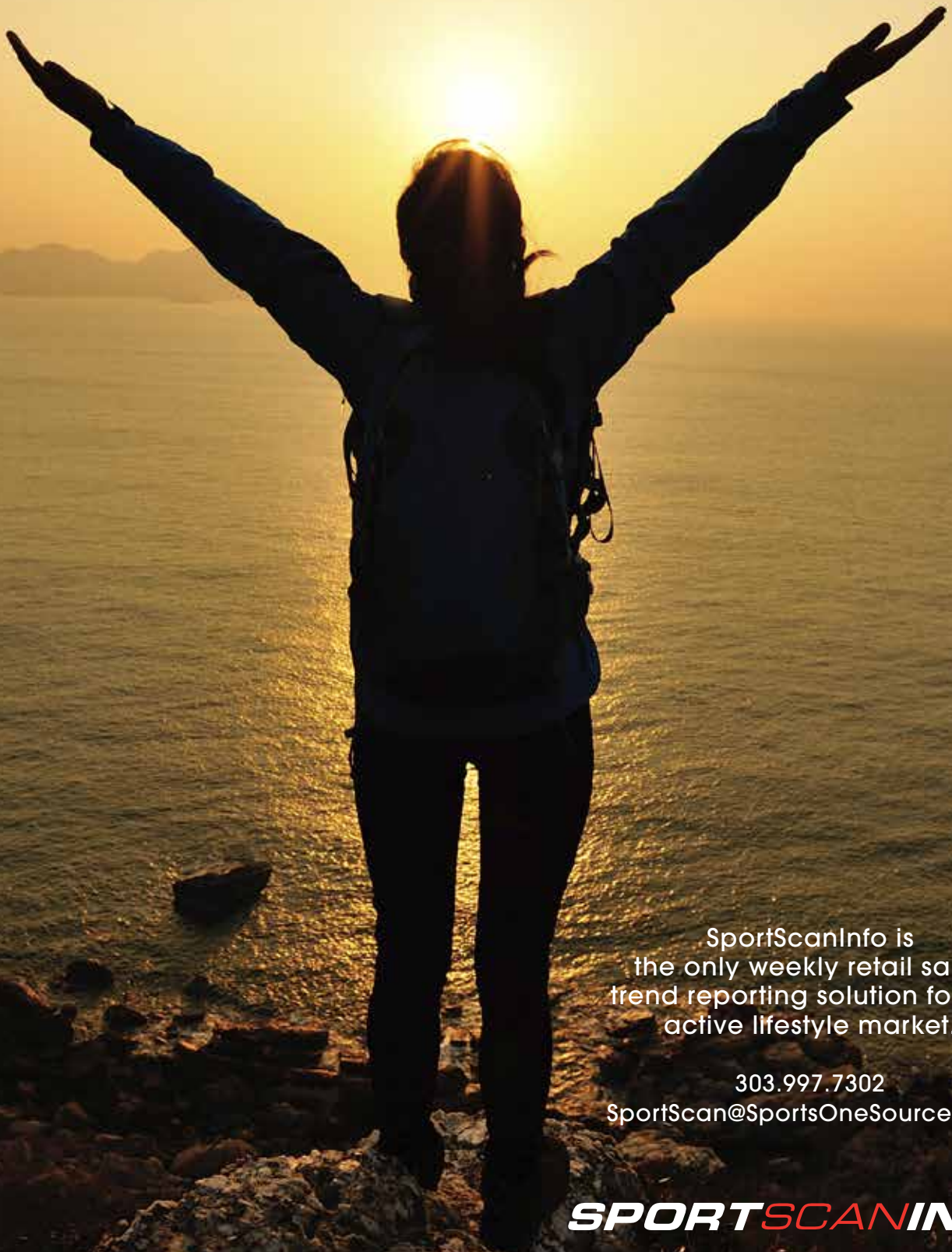
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