

Sports Insight

ABC

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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF SPORTS AND PLAY ASSOCIATIONS

INNER MUSCLE



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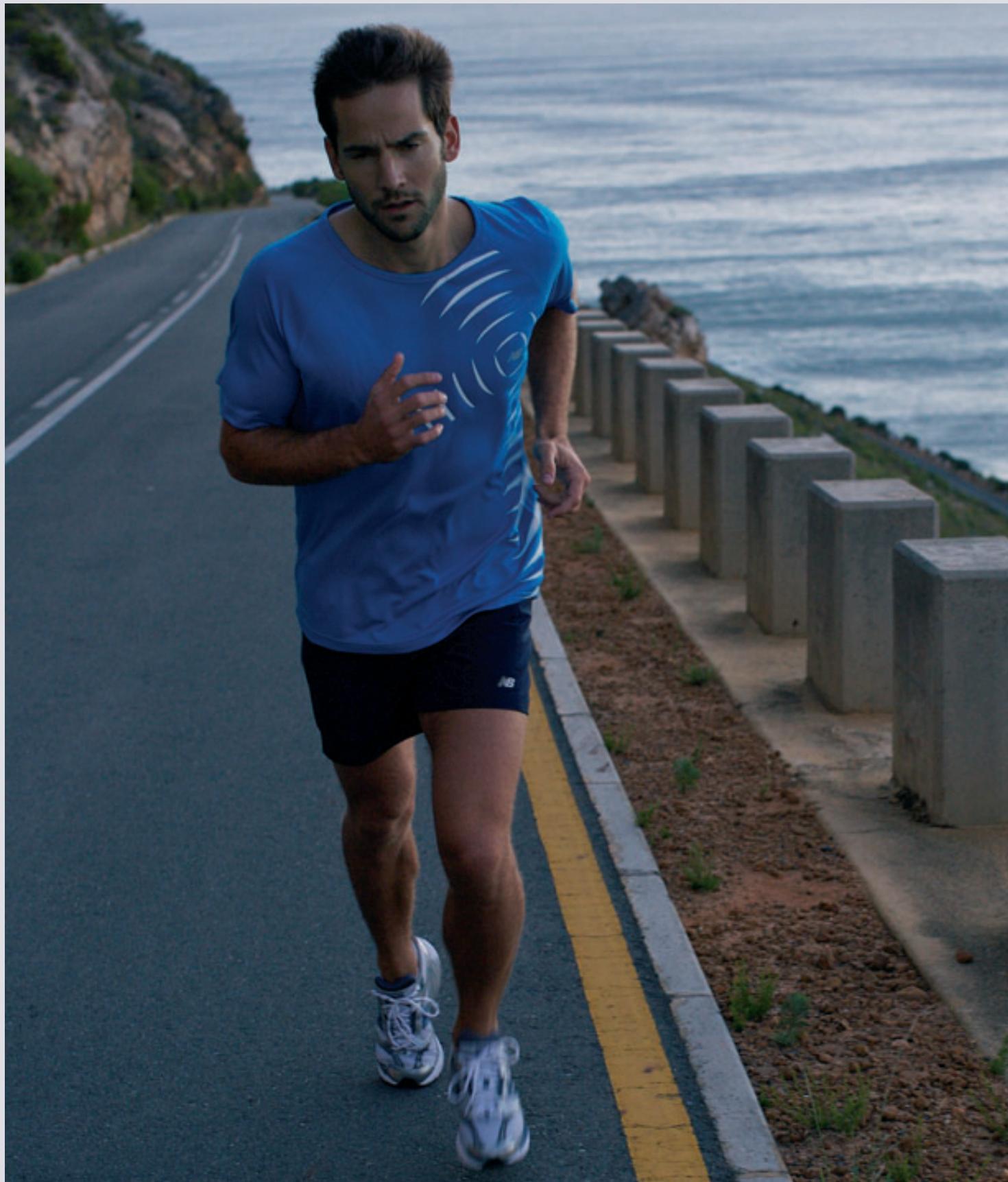
FOOTBALL FEVER
The cost of England's failure
to reach Euro 2008



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working with



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ABC Certification



Sports Insight has a current ABC certified circulation of 5,186 (audit period July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007). The Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) is an independent audit watchdog that verifies magazines' circulation figures, providing accurate and comparable data for advertisers.

ABC Certification demonstrates a media owner's integrity, in their willingness to be audited and to conform to industry standards.



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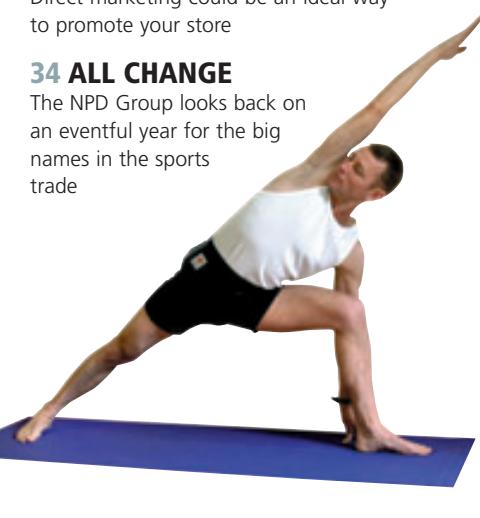
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WHAT'S NEWS

ALL THE VERY LATEST IN THE SPORTS INDUSTRY...

Send your news stories to the Sports Insight news desk at siedit@partridgeltd.co.uk or call 01273 748675

HARROD HONOURED

Harrod UK has been awarded a 'Recognised for Excellence 3 Star' certificate in its first year of entry in the UK Excellence Awards, launched by the British Quality Foundation in 1994 to recognise organisations that have excelled when measured against a 'framework of excellence'.

Says Harrod UK's managing director, Stephanie Harrod: "Back in 1996 we were the first manufacturer in our field to be awarded the Investors In People award, and to become the first in our industry to be recognised by the British Quality Foundation shows our continued commitment to total quality."

"The contribution of our 115 staff towards these achievements cannot be stated highly enough - it is their effort, support and enthusiasm that enables Harrod UK to remain market leaders."

NEW BALANCE WINS AWARD

New Balance has been honoured in a scheme that champions North West manufacturing.

The company, based in Flimby, was highly commended in the Business Improvement Award category of The Manufacturing Institute's 2007 Business Awards, which celebrate the hard work, commitment and achievements of the region's manufacturers.

New Balance has grown from a small US-based manufacturer of athletic shoes to a major force in the international footwear market. When its management team was challenged to increase turnover and meet growth objectives they originally planned a new factory. Instead, a new cellular layout and best practice manufacturing techniques were introduced into the existing works.

The impressive results include a 35 per cent productivity improvement and a 35 per cent reduction in space, which has saved the company the £1.5 million cost it had earmarked for the new building. In addition, improved process inspections have led to a matching improvement in 'first time' quality.

Sports Shorts

...JD has appointed customer experience research agency **Retail Eyes** to improve customer service in its stores. The new initiative is called 'Service 1st'... The company has also purchased the 49-store branded fashionwear chain Bank Stores in a deal

worth up to £19.5m, as well as the UK licence for Sergio Tacchini... **Umbro** has stated that it will now manufacture only one million new **replica England away shirts**, rather than the three million it had originally planned... **Sports Direct International plc** has agreed to sell its stake in **Umbro** to **Nike** and will vote in favour of the scheme of arrangement relating to the acquisition... **FIFA** has named **Brazil** as the host nation for the **2014 World Cup**... The **2007 Wimbledon Championships**, jointly managed by The All England Lawn Tennis Club and the Lawn Tennis Association, generated a surplus of £25m, all of which will be invested in British tennis... The number of police arrests for **football hooliganism** has risen for the first time in four years, according to new Home Office figures... Men's tennis governing body the **ATP** has launched a new global advertising campaign using the strapline 'Feel It', which represents the sport as a gladiatorial battle... new **Minister for Sport Gerry Sutcliffe** told the FT Sport Industry Summit that one of his chief priorities is to ensure the school curriculum includes five hours of compulsory sport week by 2010... **Bjorn Daehlie**, the most successful cross-country skier in the history of the Winter Olympics, has been awarded the **ispo Trophy**, a prize that has been given to athletes for their outstanding achievements in their chosen sports since 1971... **Aqua Sphere UK** has announced a 50 per cent year-on-year sales increase and healthy organic growth... Following the success of last autumn's Rugby World Cup, **GNG Sport** has experienced a boost in demand for its foam rugby training products that has led to a threefold increase in sales...

"Up front we played like world beaters - at the back it was more like panel beaters."

Former Wigan manager Paul Jewell on a 3-3 draw with Spurs



STAG SIGNS UP MORE BRANDS

ESPRIT, TrionZ, Rohnisch,

Coolbrands and Alpina Scotland have joined STAG's impressive portfolio of suppliers.

"Part of our success has been able to offer the diversity our members require," says Ward Robertson, managing director of STAG. "Our commitment to members is to continue to identify and recruit new leading brands, enhancing their ability to deliver what their customers want."

ESPRIT will offer STAG members one of the most sought after and fashionable women's sports collections available, while Rohnisch has just been voted 'best sportswear supplier in Sweden'.

TrionZ, one of the fastest growing companies in the sports and golf sectors, manufactures ionic/magnetic products for people with active lifestyles. The company took the US market by storm in 2006.

Cool Brands is a leader in camping and leisure accessories and boasts brands such as HiGear, Kidcool, Canyon Cycling and Serious.

Alpina Scotland has a range of sledges from top manufacturers, as well as a specialist line in plastic and timber sledges for all age ranges, including babies.

In-store gait analysis



More and more retailers use video gait analysis to help sell performance running shoes.

Mar-Systems, the agent for TEMPLO Lite, has used its buying power to put together a 'Get Started' Gait Analysis Package with everything you need, including a laptop, camcorder, software, tripod and cables, for just £999 (normal price £1,231).

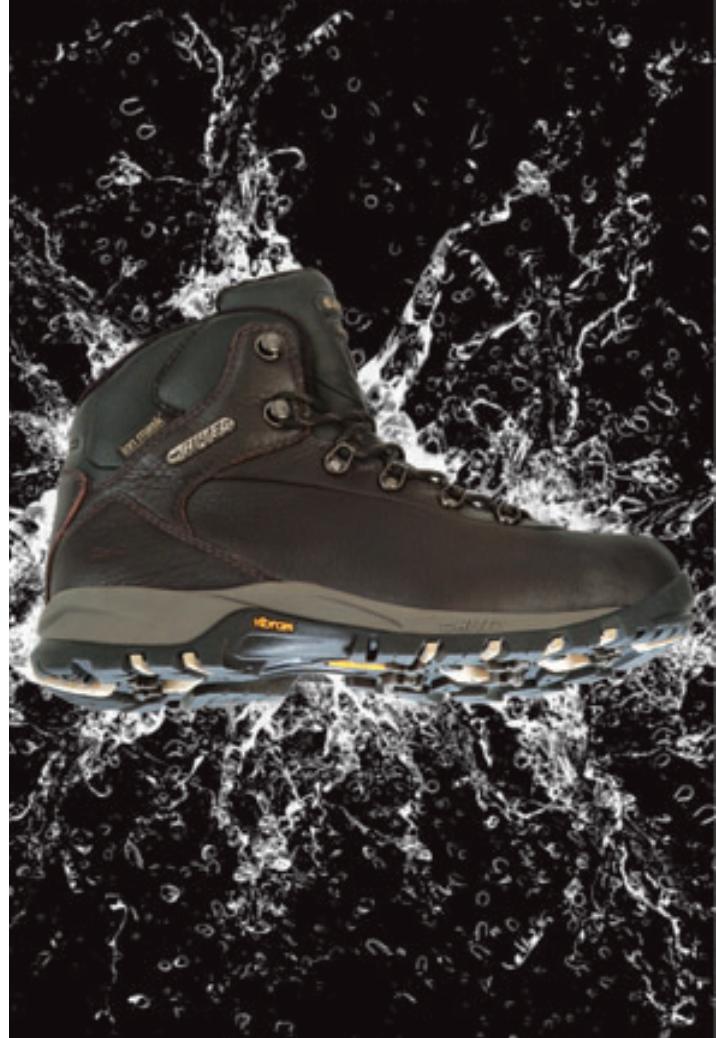
You may not be familiar with TEMPLO, but it is the choice of UK podiatrists such as Trevor Prior, Wayne Edwards, Ian Griffiths and Clifton Bradeley, not to mention Chelsea FC and Renault F1, amongst others.

TEMPLO Lite is a bespoke software program for running specialists. It's fast and simple to use and has retail-friendly 'one click', 'multi-view' and 'professional gait analysis' programs alongside a reporting structure that is second to none. TEMPLO will not only supply the software, but train you to use it.

For further information contact Danny or Jonathan at Mar-Systems on 01344 621475 or visit www.mar-systems.co.uk. Only 20 available.

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Sales/Product Manager Rehbond Sport
Phone: +46 (0)11 28 06 99
E-mail: anders.bergquist@ottobock.se
Website: www.rehbond.com



REHBOND

BOURNE SPORTS IN MUELLER FIRST

Bourne Sports in Stoke on Trent has become the first authorised Mueller Sports Injury Centre.

The shop now contains a designated Mueller space large enough to carry supports and braces as well as tapes, strapping and hot/cold packs across the Elastic, Neoprene and Hg80 ranges. The display area is supported with a colour TV showing Mueller product presentations.

Says Greg Soffe of 1000 Mile Sportswear, UK distributor of Mueller: "The impact of the display area is such that Bourne has already reported increased interest in the brand, as well as an all-important increase in sales. We plan to roll the concept out in strategic locations nationwide."

FIRMS TO FEEL THE SQUEEZE IN 2008

Escalating economic worries, higher prices and tighter spending will combine to make 2008 a much tougher year in the sports and leisurewear market, according to business analyst Plimsoll Publishing.

Says the company's senior analyst, David Pattison: "Almost every sector of British business stands at a crossroads as it prepares for the coming 12 months. With uncertainty in the economy, some will want to sit tight and do nothing radical. Others will need to cut costs quickly to weather the possible storm. But some who have built up large cash reserves will be looking at this period of difficulty to make acquisitions at a bargain price."

The average growth in the sports and leisurewear sector in 2007 has been 2.3 per cent, says Pattison: "This is pretty much in line with our predictions at the start of the year. But this growth was by no means universal. Forty-five per cent of companies actually saw their sales decline.

"It's important, however, not to confuse sales with profit. Some smaller firms, with a turnover of £3 million or less, lost out on sales but still enjoyed healthy margins. They did so by keeping their costs under control and by carving out a specialist area in the market. These firms have managed to do very nicely for themselves by trading in niche products. This trend has been an important factor since 2006, and I see no reason why it shouldn't continue.

"In general, if you're setting your budget for 2008, you should aim for a growth target of at least 2.5 per cent. Frankly, though, you should expect to beat this with a combination of imagination, forward thinking and spotting the opportunities that others have missed.

"With pressure on sales certain to come, some companies will need to cut costs in 2008. Sadly, for most the term 'cost cutting' translates into 'job losses'. My advice is to reduce costs as part of a planned long-term strategy, rather than doing so in panic mode.

"By the time you do the latter, it's usually too late. But don't be too hasty - 2007 was not a bad year overall, with margins averaging 3.4 per cent. Indeed, for some exceptional companies, that percentage was in the mid-teens - in some cases for the second year in a row.

"At the other end of the scale, those firms that find themselves in difficulty should not buy into the hype that they will be safe from takeover because potential bidders won't want to take risks against the background of a chaotic credit market. Arguably, there has never been a better time to go on the offensive, and companies with large cash surpluses will be able to make some dirt-cheap acquisitions in 2008 as others begin to fail."

"Some players have psychologists, some have sportologists - I smoke."
US Open winner Angel Cabrera

Sponsorship News

...Slazenger has signed 18-year-old **Naomi Cavaday** (pictured) on a three-year agreement that includes providing her with the company's new Quad Flex 270 racquet and a range of tennis equipment... **England Squash**



has concluded a three-year title sponsorship agreement that will see **Tecnifibre** become the headline sponsor of the **British Junior Open Squash Championships**... **Puma** has signed a new three-year kit sponsorship deal with rugby league club **Castleford Tigers**... Malaysia's world number one squash player **Nicol David** has re-signed to **Prince Sports**, extending the agreement first made with the brand in October 2005 until the end of 2010... **Asda** has renewed its deal with the **ECB** to continue as the title sponsor of the grass-roots **Kwik Cricket** programme until September 2009... **Brandomation** has been appointed to coordinate UK PR for **Speedo**... The **FINA World Swimming Championships**, to be held in Manchester in April, has announced a raft of new supplier partners for the event, including Kellogg's, Northern Rail and GMG Radio...

ISRA
www.isra.com

During a recent internal online survey 77% of ISRA members who responded reported an increase in turnover for the 12 months up to November 2007 over the previous 12-month period.

The ISRA group has just completed its full first year in 2007. It has been a very successful year for the group as many of the projects set down are now up and running. ISRA is the first recognised group of independent sports retailers in Ireland.

Commenting, Tom Foley of ISRA says: "We are very happy with the progress to date, the group are continuing to work well with an ever-increasing number of preferred sporting goods and service suppliers.

"Suppliers are benefitting from the ISRA trade shows, central billing, the use of the www.isra.ie website and the general goodwill attached with being a preferred supplier.

"Retailers benefit from the same features but are also seeing the great potential of networking with each other, sharing ideas and advice and learning from best practice .

"Our show in Athlone on January 21st and 22nd will be the biggest sports show in Ireland and is exclusive to ISRA members. Suppliers are embracing the idea and are offering better deals and discounts to members. Retailers are responding, with the spend at the show expected to increase by about 20%.

"Going into 2008, we plan to develop new projects, including a high-level retail management programme geared towards owner managers with the focus on sports retailing. The course, which covers 9 modules over six months, will be given by consultants from the UK and Ireland specialising in a number of key areas in best retail practice. Ten ISRA retailers are participating in the first course. The course will also plug into the National Framework of qualifications.

"ISRA have been invited to join the ISPO retailer programme and ISPO will be hosting a delegation of members at the upcoming ISPO winter show in Munich. This will allow members to view new product categories, suppliers and ideas.

"We plan to advance ISRA on a number of fronts and are looking forward to the challenges and opportunities that this presents."

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February 17 - 19



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Diary Dates 2007

ISRA SHOW

JANUARY 21-22
Radisson Hotel
Athlone, Ireland

ISPO WINTER 08

JANUARY 27-30
New Munich Trade Fair Centre

SLIDE 2008

FEBRUARY 17-19
Manchester Central

PRINTWEAR UK

FEBRUARY 17-18
Cranmore Park, Solihull

BETA INTERNATIONAL 2008

FEBRUARY 17-19
NEC, Birmingham

ISPO CHINA WINTER 08

FEBRUARY 24-26
China International Exhibition Centre, Peking

SPORTS MERCHANDISE EXHIBITION

MARCH 3
Chelsea Football Club, Stamford Bridge

SENI08

APRIL 26-27
ExCeL, London

ISPO SPORT & STYLE

JUNE 29-JULY 1
New Munich Trade Fair Centre

OUTDOOR TRADE SHOW 2008

SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 2
Stoneleigh Park

Transfer Market

... Sport England has appointed **Thomas Godfrey** as its first-ever commercial director... **Roelof de Leeuw** has been made sales director for Crocs Europe...**Blacks Leisure Group plc** has appointed **Neil Gillis** as chief executive. Gillis, 42, was most recently chief executive of Esporta. **Keith Fleming**, who has been acting chief executive and finance director since June, will continue as deputy chief executive and finance director... **Hi-Tec chairman, Frank van Wezel**, has announced the promotion of his son **Edward** to general manager. **Chris Mole** has also been announced as **Hi-Tec's group sourcing director**, while **Helen Durant** has been promoted to **group PR manager**...



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- Internal webbing support cradle
- Blown Ionic cmEva midsole for superior cushioning
- Outsole with lightweight midfoot torque control system
- Internal Ignite heel cushioning system for maximum shock absorption and forefoot propulsion



For more information call
 01580 880 357 or email
sales@grays-int.co.uk



ASICS Gel 3000

The all-new Gel 3000 supports the parts other running shoes simply don't reach! The ASICS Gel 3000 is a high mileage shoe suitable for the moderate to strong overpronator, and is particularly suitable for the runner who overpronates not only in the midfoot, but through to the forefoot.

With a forefoot overpronator, the foot has difficulty re-supinating and creating a rigid lever for efficient propulsion. Instead, propulsion will often occur through the inside edge of the big toe, which can waste a lot of energy and create inefficient muscle firing patterns.

The Gel 3000 uses the ASICS technologies, particularly Duomax and the

Dynamic Forefoot Cradle, to help guide the foot through in a more neutral manner, all the way through to propulsion. The Dynamic Forefoot cradle is a second piece to the midsole that helps create more rigidity through propulsion, where the natural biomechanics of the mid-forefoot overpronator fail to do so.

ASICS: 01925 243360 or email info@asics.co.uk

TIMEX IRONMAN* Triathlon 75 Lap HI-TI

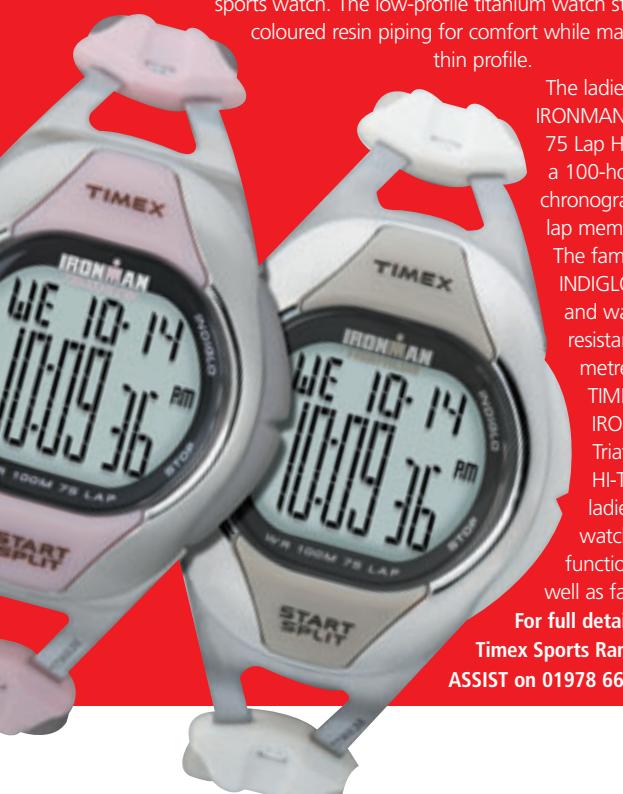
ASSIST has announced the launch of a brand new sports fashion collection for 2008 that features Hi-Ti technical functionality, new materials and great style.

The ladies' TIMEX IRONMAN* Triathlon 75 Lap HI-TI blends delicate good looks with the high specification you would expect from a TIMEX sports watch. The low-profile titanium watch strap features coloured resin piping for comfort while maintaining a thin profile.

The ladies' TIMEX IRONMAN* Triathlon 75 Lap HI-TI features a 100-hour digital chronograph with 75-lap memory recall.

The famous TIMEX INDIGLO night-light and water resistance to 100 metres make the TIMEX IRONMAN* Triathlon 75 Lap HI-TI the perfect ladies sports watch for functionality as well as fashion.

For full details of the Timex Sports Range call ASSIST on 01978 664743.



NORDIC



Nordic Walking pole sales hit seven million

Exel has developed an all-year-round Nordic fitness sports concept that offers fitness enthusiasts an easy and fun way to enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle.

Part of the concept is the best-selling Exel Nordic walking poles, distributed by www.nordicwalking.co.uk

With over 7,000,000 pole sales since its launch, Nordic walking is now the fastest growing participation activity in the world.

To find out how Nordic Walking UK and www.nordicwalking.co.uk will drive customers to your store to buy Exel Nordic walking poles and increase secondary sales of clothing, footwear and accessories, contact Nordic Walking UK on 020 8878 8108.

Rucanor Thermals

With the winter season comes the colder weather - and what better way to capitalise on this than by stocking Rucanor's comprehensive range of thermal underwear.

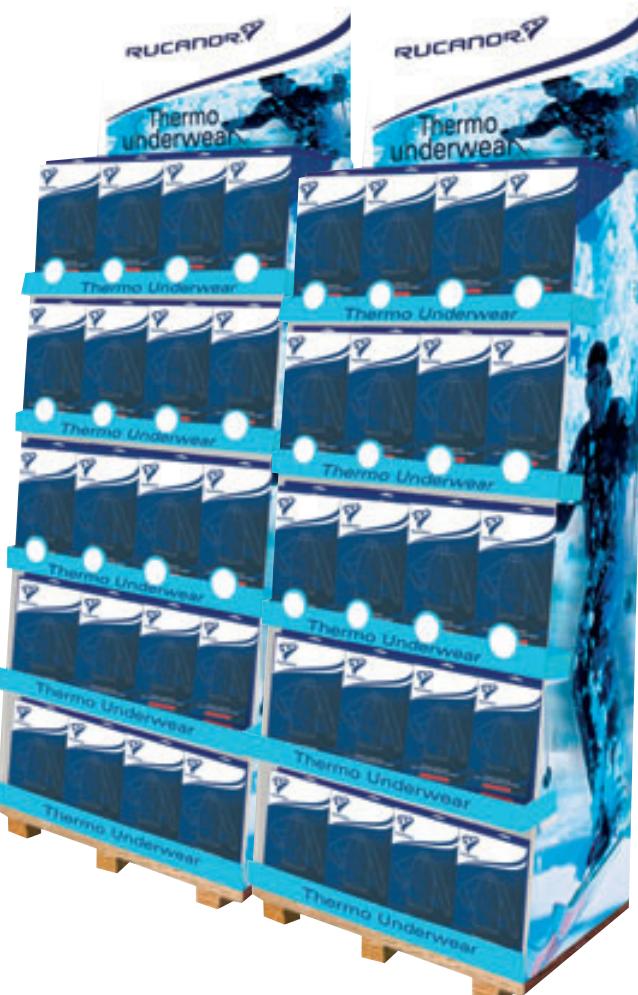
Specifically designed for enthusiasts of outdoor sports and activities, the range comprises crew-necked shirts in both long and short sleeves, a long-sleeved zip-neck shirt and long johns. Also available is the option of buying either of the long-sleeved tops together with the long johns as a set - representing a considerable cost saving.

All products have limited stocks and are available in adult and junior unisex sizes in white, black or shark grey and are neatly boxed with technical information about the thermal and wicking properties clearly displayed on the back. They are easy to display on eurohooks or, better still, you can achieve the full effect by ordering a filled display.

With trade prices from £3.50 for the long johns in junior sizes, through to £7.90 for the zip-neck and long johns set in adult sizes, and suggested retail prices ranging from £7.99 to £22.99, there is plenty of margin available.

All of the above are available to order for immediate delivery from stock, either from the sales office, your local agent or online at Rucanor's retailer-only website.

For further information on these or any other products from the Rucanor range, log into your online account at retail.rucanor.com or call the Sales Hotline Number: 0845 2300147.



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dita.co.uk

Fashion in hockey is now an important factor

Dita. have had good success with their female orientated products. The Cross Turf (Ladies) shoe is now well established in the European market and although it was initially launched in Blue it now sells well in Pink and White. **Dita.** had to have four pink sticks in their range to cater for players matching shoes with sticks. The three shown over the range from Olympic level to kids.



Terra - Maxx 6
 M.R.R.P. £150.00

Pro - Tekk 425
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Pro - Tekk 315
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The company also has a comprehensive Manchester United Champions League range. For details of probably the most comprehensive range of Manchester United products call/fax 0161 748 8799 or email cds.leisure@btopenworld.com

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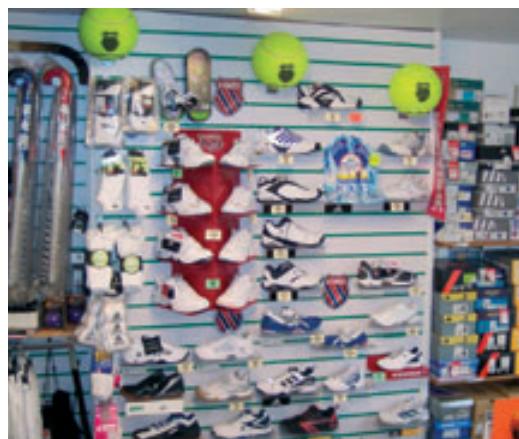
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*Average bra sales uplift over accounts fitted with brand enhancements 2007



Talking Shop

David Vaughan runs County Sports Hagley, near Stourbridge in the West Midlands

Why and how did you decide to get into sports retail?

I have worked in retail since leaving school and moved into sports retailing when a local specialist sports shop came up for sale almost three years ago. The shop is fairly small, but situated in a busy village high street only 10 miles or so from the centre of Birmingham and the Black Country.

The shop was well known throughout the area and, although it had recently declined a little, still had a good reputation. I run the shop myself Monday to Saturday, and have been able to retain one of the sales assistants who works two days per week. I have always loved playing tennis and the chance to work in a shop that specialises mainly in tennis was an added attraction.

What do you stock?

The shop specialises in racquet sports, cricket, rugby, and hockey, but also caters for many other sports such as table tennis, darts, netball, running and so on. We stock over 700 racquets - mainly tennis - and also shoes for all the above specialist sports.

The layout of the shop has been mainly dictated by its size, although seasonal changes are made to emphasise a particular sport. Racquet restringing is a major part of the business, and all stringers have been professionally trained to the highest standard.

What is the strongest sector of the market?

Tennis is our major market sector with racquet and shoe sales growing year on year. Space is at a premium, so we do not try to be all things to all people. We do try, however, to be the

best at the sports that we specialise in. Tennis racquets and tennis shoes have always been our best sellers and sales have more than doubled over the past two years.

How has trade been in the past 12 months?

Trade has been growing steadily over the time I have owned the business, but the past 12 months has seen a larger growth, especially in tennis.

What is the area like for sports retailers?

We have the usual group of large sports retail shops such as JJB, Sports World and Decathlon, but they tend to be more fashion stores than serious sports equipment retailers.

How could independents improve?

Without doubt, the only way forward for independents is to provide their customers with a first-class professional and friendly service, wide knowledge of their chosen sports and demonstrators available to ensure customer satisfaction. These are the tools that only an independent has, and if used correctly should be more than a match for the large retailers.

We also work together with our local independents and will swap stock around to help each other out. Also, we have formed close links with our local clubs and coaches, providing support at open days and tournaments. A good coach is an extension to the shop and it is important to have a good working relationship.

How do you keep customers coming back?

A wide range of quality stock at competitive prices is a good starting

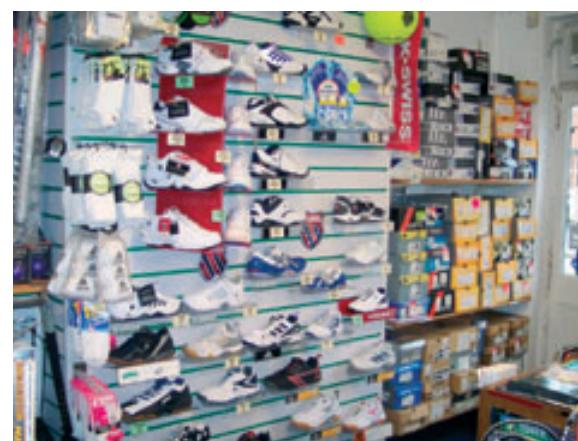
point, and if this is backed up by a good knowledge of the products and a pleasant manner you are a long way to winning customer loyalty. It is also about going the extra mile for your customers.

What is the biggest barrier to doing business?

Probably the perception in people's minds that the large retail stores or the Internet offer better value, when in fact I can match their prices, offer the customer advice and provide a demonstration racquet to ensure the customer purchases the correct product.

What do you like most and least about the business?

I like working in an environment based around sport. I do dislike the pre-ordering of stock; sometimes you get it right and sometimes you get it wrong, resulting in you having to sell it off at a loss. As I have progressed, the right decisions are becoming more common and the wrong decisions less so, but we still make a howler from time to time. 



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Best wishes to all our customers for 2008



60 Seconds

Alberto Landi, marketing and communication director of Lotto Sport Italia

How has business been in the UK for Lotto?

Lotto's objective for 2007 was to achieve sales of 300 million euros internationally, while the sales business in the UK market is worth 6.5 million euros.

For 2008 we expect to achieve significant growth, particularly in the UK market, due firstly to the implementation of an important team business project that during 2007 has supplied kits to over 1,000 amateur teams, and secondly to a revised commercial distribution policy within the UK focusing entirely on independent sports retailers.

How has the Zhero Gravity boot performed?

Within football the Zhero line continues to be our top line, with the Zhero Gravity model as the world's first laceless football shoe. The boot is performing very well in speciality stores, with an international sales volume of 50,000 pairs per year.

We are also implementing a comprehensive grass-roots programme that allows us to present the Zhero Gravity project to a younger target consumer, who is more attracted to such a model and more receptive towards revolutionary technologies.

What is your best-selling product in the UK?

The best-selling products have been the football shoe collections and, in particular, the Stadio Vento KL boot, which has been an outstanding sales success.

Also, the new spring/summer 08 tennis collection received fantastic feedback from retailers, due in part to the fact that the Kontakt Collection received exceptional visibility with Spanish player David Ferrer at the Tennis Masters Cup.

How has the Leggenda spring/summer fashion collection been received?

Lotto Leggenda is a very important project for the company. We are talking about a limited sports-inspired, fashion collection, with selected distribution through exclusive top fashion retailers.

The latest collection received very good feedback for two main reasons. One being the theme, which highlights the 'Italianism' of the collection due to the graphic symbols of the main Italian cities that runs through the entire collection and, secondly, the use of up-to-date materials in line with the latest fashion trends.



What new product launches have you got planned ahead of Euro 2008?

Lotto presents for Euro 2008 a new and structured footwear project where design and technology achieve perfect unison.

The initial impact will be achieved with the colour selection of products incorporating the highest level of technology, which will be worn by Lotto's sponsored athletes. The performance colours that will make the Lotto brand stand out on the pitch will act as a strong message for consumers, who will immediately identify the Lotto product worn by an athlete on the pitch.

The Zhero line represents the top performance segment of our new football shoe collection and combines the Red & White colour concept with the new and revolutionary Twist'ngo technology.

Can you tell us about the new Twist'ngo stud technology?

The technology was created by a collaboration between Lotto and Ergovisionlab, an Italian laboratory of excellence in the research of ergonomics and biomechanics.

Twist'ngo is the fruit of 15 months of intensive studies and laboratory tests. The starting point came from observing the behaviour of players during football matches. It was discovered that the majority of movements take place very quickly and across short spaces of 5-10 metres.

This requires great effort from the players as they have to overcome the foot/ground friction and inertia/momentum caused by acceleration and deceleration. Lotto wanted to find out more about the ergonomic stresses for players when changing direction, as this movement could cause particularly harmful injuries if not performed correctly.

It emerged that the critical point for the balance and thrust of the athlete in changing direction is found under the base of the first metatarsus, and this is exactly where Lotto wanted to introduce this important technology.

Twist'ngo is thus a brand new feature consisting of a swivelling aluminium stud inserted into a high-quality sole design in line with the base of the first metatarsus, which is the rotation or pivot point. Made up of 11 traditionally fixed conical studs, the sole has a 12th rotating stud that allows the boot to accompany the rotation movement, all of which brings these important advantages:

■ **Speed:** the rotation is quicker than with a traditional stud. The foot/ground friction is reduced, thus saving energy and improving performance.

■ **Prevention:** the foot maintains its own axis during rotation. The quality of movement improves, therefore reducing the risk of injury.

■ **Stability:** the balance is maintained and improved during the rotation. The stud acts as a pivot and allows the support point to be kept stable.

What marketing and general support do you offer your independent retail customers?

We believe that a well-structured and integrated communication plan is a must. The promotional campaigns with club and players, as well as the advertising campaigns in the most important international sports magazines, are some of our tools, but we think that the key to success for the product requires the active collaboration of retailers, thus creating a partnership with our company.

As a result of this collaboration, we have produced various POP materials, which will catch the attention of the consumer. It allows us to transfer a strong message, which will be a determining factor during the purchasing process. ■





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WHAT'S HOT

Rehband sport range

Sales and product manager Anders Bergquist talks us through the offering

Can you give us some background on the brand?

Rehband is an old and well reputed Swedish brand within orthopaedic orthoses. We are part of the Otto Bock group, which is one of the world's greatest manufacturers of medical aids such as electronic prostheses. Rehband is the leading brand for both medical and sport braces in Scandinavia and we cooperate with most of the major teams and federations such as the Swedish Football Association.

Our sport range is divided into three groups:

- Basic Line, which is a range of basic products with good function and quality and with which we hope to gain footing within the general market, eg people who exercise once or twice a week.
- Core Line is a more advanced range of products intended for serious athletes, from 'club' level to the elite. It includes products for all parts of the body, as well as a number of products especially adapted for certain sports. Core Line also includes a range of insoles designed specifically for athletes.
- Tech Line is the top of the range and comprises new and innovative products

for those who want the latest and the very best.

What are the key features and benefits?

Our products have been developed together with athletes, physiotherapists and doctors. We want to combine perfect function and modern design. For example, the Core Line range is made in a unique, patented, 3D construction that ensures optimal fit.

The construction also makes the brace stay in place during exercise. There are also five braces especially designed for women, with optimised fit. We believe our experience, along with the medical competence within the Otto Bock group, gives us an expert knowledge of how this kind of product should work. Together, we have turned this knowledge into real products.

Why has the range sold so well?

The success factors vary for each local market, but in general we feel that we have been successful thanks to:

- The company's knowledge of orthoses, which is the basis for developing a good product.
- Our customers' confidence in our brand and products. They know they

are of a high quality and have the right functions.

- Our cooperation with doctors and physiotherapists.
- The company's cooperation with different federations, teams and athletes all around Europe.
- The investment in the education of store personnel.

Who is it aimed at?

All who live an active life. The Rehband sport range suits all active people, from the occasional jogger to the elite athlete, in most sports. The big advantage with this type of product is that they can also be used as a preventive measure. If you want to avoid and prevent injury, using Rehband products is the best way to do it.

How is it marketed?

We haven't launched the range yet in the UK, since we are looking for a new distributor. We look forward to adapting the marketing together with the distributor - combining local market knowledge and our experience.

Looking at other markets, we have invested a lot over the years in sponsoring and cooperation with teams and federations. It has been a win-win situation, resulting in both positive marketing and product development. In our largest market, Scandinavia, we have been successful through a broad and well-functioning distribution channel, especially in retail.

We also have a very nice and informative website (www.rehband.com), where you can learn more about the products, injuries etc.

What is the most effective way a retailer can market the range?

The products, boxes, brochures, website and marketing material are all designed as a concept. They are nice, good-looking products and have a new and modern design. There is a whole new range being introduced in 2008 and we will continue developing during the coming years.

Naturally, a lot of the marketing is dependent on the agreement with the new distributor. In other sectors we have successfully marketed the concept by focusing on one or two products especially important for the particular sector.

We are also happy to work with sports icons and local sports celebrities. We believe in being dynamic and open-minded and we strongly believe in our products. ■



RIGHT: new member
Bruno Broughton is to
represent angling on
the FSPA board

FSPA FOCUS

The latest news from The Federation of Sports and Play Associations

The FSPA said goodbye to Mark Hammersley, chief executive of Zoggs International, at a board meeting on December 6.

Hammersley is stepping down after more than 12 years on the Federation board. He says: "The Federation has changed greatly since I first joined the board. I think it has adapted well to the changing size and shape of our industry. I want to wish all of the staff at the Federation the very best of luck for the future, which I will be watching from the perspective of a regular Federation member."

The membership team at the Federation would like to take this opportunity to warmly thank Mark for his commitment to the board over the last 12 years and his continued support of the Federation.

Three new members were appointed to the board at the same meeting and were warmly welcomed by existing board members:

■ Representing play - Mark Hardy, executive vice president - Europe of PowerPlay.

■ Representing golf - David Wells, director of Peter Millar International and BGIA chairman.

■ Representing angling - Bruno Broughton, angling consultant.

INNOSPORT consortium to be awarded euro millions

The UK INNOSPORT project came to a climax in the UK with a workshop held at Loughborough University's

state-of-the-art Sports Technology Institute recently.

Aimed at reducing the gap between research and industrial development through relating their joint interests, the workshop was attended by The Federation of Sports and Play Associations, Gill, Umbro, Zoggs, Speedo and Ronhill as well as academics from Loughborough, Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam and Portsmouth Universities. Innovation opportunities put forward by the UK group were in nano-technology and 'intelligent sportswear'.

The INNOSPORT project will culminate at a conference held in Eindhoven, Holland, on March 12-14, 2008 where the focus will be on the development of sport and innovation, the economic power of sports, sports and society, winning and innovation, trend watching and the vision for 2015.

Vision 2015 forms the starting point in the development of a road map based on sports needs, chances for companies and knowledge available as a means to set the agenda and stimulate market-driven research and development.

Following on from the conference, it's been confirmed that five million euros will be awarded to a consortium of multinationals, SMEs and research institutes. The consortium will target research in sport and technology through an emphasis on end-user and industrial demand, providing information for the formulation of future European R&D programmes.

Golf Share

For more information contact David Pomfret on 02476 414999 or email david@sportsandplay.com

EGIA forges new relationship

Closer cooperation between golf course owners and operators and the European golf trade association was achieved at the recent European Golf Business Conference in Amsterdam.

The European Golf Course Owners Association (EGCOA), hosts of the conference, and the European Golf Industry Association (EGIA) established a cooperation agreement that will see the two influential bodies united in moving the sport forward in Europe.

Dirk Vinken, chairman of the European Golf Industry Association, was in Amsterdam to sign the agreement. He said: "One of our primary objectives as an association has always been to initiate closer ties with governing bodies and other industry organisations. So an agreement like this is at the core of our ethos.

"We will continue to work together with our members to promote the industry across Europe and this cooperation offers both parties a platform from which to develop further the sport of golf."

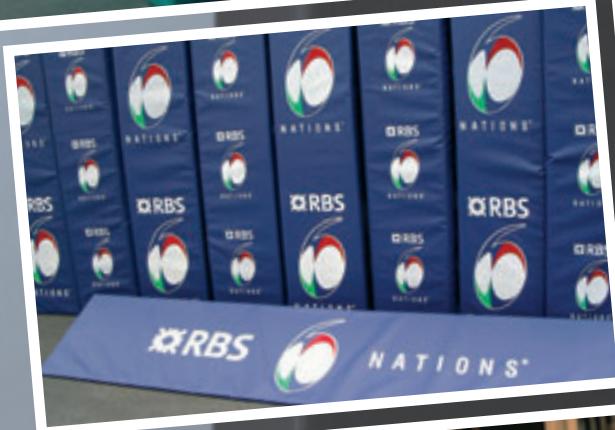
Lodewijk Klootwijk, a director of the EGCOA, said: "This is all about working together towards a common goal - in this case, growing the game of golf. This is what binds our two organisations together and I think it will be hugely beneficial, not just for the two parties involved, but for the industry as a whole."

Golf course owners and operators in the UK are also set to benefit from a new Federation initiative in 2008. GolfShare has been established to provide support and information to proprietary golf course owners and operators, initially through an online forum.

It is estimated that there are now over 800 proprietary golf clubs in the UK and it is intended that GolfShare will also offer a benchmarking service specific to this sector of the industry, as well as other benefits and services. ■

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MUNICH CALLING



Looking for the latest cutting-edge product? Then don't miss ispo winter 08

The world's biggest showcase of sporting trends, developments and innovation awaits visitors to ispo winter 08, the 68th installment of the event, which takes place at the Munich trade fair grounds on January 27-30.

The exhibition area covers 180,000 square metres, broken down into 16 different halls. One of the most significant developments at this year's event is the increase in size of outdoor_ispo. Last year the 'segment' took up two halls - this year it's doubled in size, taking up Halls A5-A6 and B5-B6 - a reflection, says the show organiser, of the level of demand in this area.

Separate entrance

This part of the show also has its own separate entrance (East) and will feature some of the biggest players in

the market, including Berghaus, Columbia, Helly Hansen, Hi-Tec, Nike ACG, Patagonia, Regatta, Sprayway and Timberland.

Hall A6 will house a number of British companies making the trip under the banner of the Federation of Sports and Play Associations. These include DB Leisure, Sub Zero Technology, Terra Nova Equipment, Trekmates, Storm Waterproofing and KuSan Accessories.

Also part of outdoor_ispo is the Outdoor Fashion Show, which takes place three times a day and features the latest trends and styles for the ski and outdoor scene; the Snow, Ice and Rock Summit, which includes the DAV Boulder Cup; and presentation and panel discussions on topics such as wearable technologies, trail running and outdoor navigation. Directly outside the outdoor_ispo halls is the tent area.

board_ispo is the next biggest part of the show (Halls A1-A3), while sourcing (C1-C2), sportstyle (B1-B2), ski (B3-B4) and performance (C3-C4) take up two halls each. ispovision is in Hall A4.

ski_ispo embraces the entire spectrum of the sport, from skis, bindings, boots and poles, to accessories and tuning and service devices. Running, triathlon, fitness, teamsports and racquet are grouped together under the banner of performance_ispo, which you can access directly from the North Entrance of the trade fair grounds.

Innovation

And if you're looking for innovative product, BrandNew (the world's largest start-up competition for the sporting goods industry), NewBiz



"The exhibition area covers 180,000 square metres, broken down into 16 different halls"

(featuring former BrandNew participants) and ispo newcomers (progressive and young brands) are must-see components of ispo winter.

The FSPA's second company group can be found in Hall C3, which comprises Glide Ride Sports Systems, Trans-Global Sports, Primo Play, Samurai, Nodor International, Harrows, Harrod UK, Opro and HD Sports.

Winmau and Nodor will be showing their full ranges, while Harrod UK will have on its stand a mini version of its 3G Stadium Goal, which the company has supplied to Wembley Stadium, The Millennium Stadium, as well as a host of Premier, Championship and League clubs. It will also have a VDU set up to show the company's full product range.

Opro will be launching the Oproshield at ispo, a new range of 'self-fit' mouthguards that feature the company's OPRO-fin patented technology that provides excellent fit and overall performance. The range is unique in that it's the only one available that has full CE-type certification and comes packaged with its own mouthguard container and mini CD fitting instructions.

The world's most colourful darts player, Wayne 'Hawaii 501' Mardle, recently joined the Harrows darts promotional team - and Mardle's signature darts will be launched at ispo, along with a wealth of other new products and promotional items.

ispow has updated its website (www.ispo-winter.com) for the event and if you have access to the internet, this impressive site provides a wealth of information on the show. It now includes a searchable exhibitor list broken down by hall and sector, as well as a travel and hotel booking service. You can even download a colour copy of the hall plan in advance of your trip.

As STAG did last year, ispo will be hosting a visit from Allied Partners retail members in 2008. The buying group has around 31 members with a total of 54 shops.

Says Adrian Pointer of Simply Sports, a member of Allied Partners Buying Group: "As a retailer, I am always looking for new opportunities in business for my own business and the group, so there is no better place than ispo for finding new products and suppliers.

"The atmosphere is friendly and professional in a first-class venue - a great place to do business. As a buying group with many varied business requirements, Allied Partners members see ispo as the only show that caters for so many of our needs."

So with the cost of travel and accommodation relatively cheap and up-to-the-minute online information at your fingertips to ensure your time at ispo winter is spent effectively and profitably, can you afford not to attend? **SI**



ION-MASK UNVEILED

In November, members of the UK press were treated to a demonstration of a new waterproofing technology being pioneered in the sports trade by Hi-Tec.

The brand is set to launch a range of footwear featuring ion-mask technology, a post-production treatment that applies a protective layer, imperceptible to the naked eye, over the entire surface of a shoe by means of an ionised gas. The process not only nano-coats the surface, but also the inside, between and around the individual fibres of the shoe.

The first shoe to feature this treatment is Hi-Tec's V-Lite Altitude Ultra Waterproof, which will be launched at ispo (Hall B6). You'll also be able to see a demonstration of the short chemical process the shoe goes through on Hi-Tec's stand. Trust us, it's definitely worth a visit.

Originally developed for the military to protect soldiers from chemical attack, ion-mask permanently alters the surface of fabric at a molecular level to repel water and other liquids, which are forced to bead and simply run off.

According to P2i Ltd, the company that developed ion-mask, the layer is molecularly bound to the surface of the shoe and will not leach away. Extensive evaluation at three leading footwear test houses has already confirmed the treatment offers unprecedented levels of super-hydrophobicity and breathability.

"For years the industry has been looking for a way to make sports shoes non-water absorbent and truly breathable, but without adding weight - and this is it," says Hi-Tec's global brand president, Tony Linford. "ion-mask will first appear on a lightweight, waterproof shoe for AW08 and other designs will follow soon after."

ion-mask also helps to keep footwear clean longer and the process required to apply the chemical is environmentally friendly.

"We're delighted that ion-mask is debuting on such a high-profile brand," says P2i Ltd's business development director, Dr Ian Robins. "The treatment is already well known in industrial applications such as laboratory disposables and filtration media, but this is the first time the public will be able to see what all the fuss is about."

Hi-Tec is describing the launch as a quantum leap in terms of waterproofing systems. Get yourself along to the company's stand in Munich and make up your own mind.



Recipe for success

220 individual businesses and 85 brands contributed to another successful STAG Buying Show

**the sports 07
buying show**
18th-19th Nov

The annual STAG Buying Show has always been a knock-out affair - and the latest show was no exception. Not only was it an exceptionally successful event to conclude 2007, it capped an incredibly successful year with increased profiling for sports, outdoor and promo-wear earning STAG mass appreciation from independent retailers and brands alike.

"This year's STAG Buying Show was the biggest and best to date," says

STAG managing director Ward Robertson. "We hosted 220 individual businesses - 400 people - which was a 15 per cent increase on the previous show, along with a staggering 85 brand exhibitors and all that entails.

"We're still getting reports on the amount of business actually done, but by all accounts it far exceeded expectations - and expectations were high."

Deals

STAG's Buying Show has traditionally been an annual event where hundreds of retailers enjoy two days of hospitality and the opportunity to broker some of their best buying deals all year. Savvy exhibitors booked early to ensure they could showcase their offers, forcing STAG to increase the venue space, which saw more brands than ever attend from the sports, outdoor, shoe, promo-wear and lifestyle and leisure sectors.

Part of the success of the STAG Buying Show is that it is exclusive to STAG Buying Group members, who

attend with the express purpose of doing business at the event, creating an unprecedented business opportunity for the heady array of leading exhibitors, including the likes of Canterbury, Asics, Puma and Speedo.

Ward Robertson told us: "It's taken dedication and time to build our show into the phenomenon it's become. When we started out, our goals were focused. We wanted to give our retailers exposure to deals they wouldn't get anywhere else, and we wanted to give our brands the opportunity to broker significant business with nominal overheads. It takes more work each year, but the results speak for themselves."

STAG is the leading sports retail buying group in the UK and 2007 saw a number of new initiatives that are increasingly positioning STAG as the buying group of choice across a range of sectors. The 2007 STAG Buying Show, with an outstanding sports retail line-up, including a powerful presence from Canterbury, additionally included 23 leading outdoor brands and a higher profile for promo-wear, shoe and leisure and lifestyle brands.

"It makes a difference to include luminaries in the outdoor sector including Merrell, Jack Wolfskin,



Timberland and Cool Brands," says Ward Robertson. "Success is a two-way street at the show. Brands are successful because they bring the right offers to retailers, and retailers come back because they get the right offers."

It's certainly a recipe for success. Hilary Mills of Summitreks enthused about the STAG Buying Show: "You see things at the STAG show you may not otherwise order." Derek Barnard of Barnard Sports says: "It's the perfect time to book orders," adding that the show was: "very professionally run".

Brand exhibitors agree. Paul Hendry of Trion:Z says of his first experience of a STAG Buying Show: "Just about everyone who has visited the stand has bought. I would say we have had a 98 per cent success rate. "The figures certainly stacked up for Maria Aries of Sunwise Sunglasses: "The number of visitors who came to our stand increased by 44 per cent. This has brought in 25 per cent more sales orders than last year."

Impressed

Edward van Wezel of Hi-Tec was impressed: "We wrote 2,500 pairs of football boots, so it was worth the trip. Ward, Ricky and their team have done a fantastic job in building STAG to a

professional organisation, but as they've said, there is still potential to be even better."

And better is the order of the day for STAG. Not just with extraordinary gains in sports and outdoor, but also in promo-wear, which has been a keen new focus for STAG and seen new suppliers, including Esprit, attend the show.

Carole Lerway of Initially Yours says: "We joined STAG for a number of reasons, but critically to continue to provide a consistent and reliable supply of high quality stock to our customers at competitive prices. We're looking forward to offering a wider range to customers, including some of the top labels across the board, all beautifully branded to their specifications by our expert teams."

Evidence of the increased demand for promo-wear comes from Tina Jones of UKL, distributor for the Alo Brand, the name derived from air, land and ocean, which offers a collection of performance clothing that promotes healthy living while minimising the impact on the environment. She says: "We have been attending the STAG Buying Show since we joined four years ago and have always found it particularly successful." Certainly,

SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

- 15% increase in attendance by members at the 2007 STAG Buying Show
- 85 leading brands from sports, outdoor, shoe, promo-wear, lifestyle and leisure sectors exhibited
- Exclusive special offers only available to STAG members
- Two days of writing business and quality networking held in luxurious surroundings
- Completely free to STAG members

UKL's stand benefited from increased interest and business.

Opportunities

Says Ward Robertson: "We know that the future for our retailers lies in accessing the latest opportunities at the best possible prices. In the current economic environment, our members deserve and demand every effort to help them stay competitive in a tight market. We can't afford to rest on our laurels with what we've achieved so far. We have to bring the right deals and competitive insight to our members to ensure their ongoing success."

But all work and no play...Ward Robertson laughed: "The weather over the weekend was poor and it even snowed on the Sunday night, but believe me, not even snow could dampen spirits. The STAG party roared into gear and everyone had a great time - relaxing, networking and catching up with old faces."

STAG is a new breed in the retail market - savvy, innovative and committed. Says Ward Robertson: "It's a challenging time to be in sports retail right now, but our commitment to the independent retailer is 100 per cent.

"The opportunities are there for people to look at lifestyle choices and there's more support than there's ever been for active sporting involvement across the board.

"The lead-up to the 2012 Olympics is going to give us new challenges and increase demand. Our job is to ensure our members get the lion's share of the opportunities."

What we can say for sure is that 2008 looks set to be another very successful year for STAG and all its members. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on STAG visit www.stagbuyinggroup.com



ABOVE: No home nation will be locking horns with the likes of Ronaldo this summer

In the summer time...

Alistair Phillips examines the fallout of England's failure to reach Euro 2008

At the very peak of competitive sport, the difference between winning and losing depends on one or more small but defining moments. One tiny mistake or one moment of inspired genius is the difference between success and failure.

Forget the 'they wanted it more' cliché that we hear pundits and fans perpetually spouting - that's an irrelevance. Take football. You can blame England's failure to qualify for this year's European Championship on Steve McLaren's ineptitude, players failing to play to their potential, or even bumbling Brian Barwick and his buddies and you'd have a good case.

Mistake

But the fact remains that had Gerrard not squandered a sitter against Russia, had Carson not fluffed that shot against Croatia, had that divot been six inches either side of where it was on the pitch when the ball bobbed over it and Paul Robinson's foot, England would have still have qualified for Euro 2008. One goal, one miss, one mistake can not only make a nation sing, it can break its heart. It can also cost a lot of people a lot of money.

Mike Ashley must still be grinding his teeth after England's failure. No one can say how much he'll be out of pocket, but one thing's for sure: it's a substantial amount. The Sports Direct founder had a Midas touch for so long,

but the result against Croatia was something beyond even his control.

Even a man with pockets as deep as his must have felt the blood draining from him at the final whistle when he realised that not only was he experiencing the despair all football fans feel on such occasions, but he was also facing an estimated £75 million dip in sales from Sports Direct stores.

A statement issued by Sports Direct stating that profits were "likely to be below that achieved last year" appears to be something of an understatement. To compound Ashley's disappointment, he will have woken the next morning to the realisation that he also owns 30 per cent of England kit-maker Umbro.

Shares went tumbling like Joe Cole in the penalty area after the defeat. Sports Direct's dropped 15 per cent, JJB's 3.77 per cent and Umbro 2.44 per cent. It's not just the sports trade that suffered either. One company we spoke

to had just done a deal with a well-known gents' cosmetics company, not even official sponsors of England or the tournament, to run a promotion around the championships. The deal went out of the window with England's chances that night to the tune of €200,000.

Bookies, travel firms and pubs will be hit hard too - bar owner Regent Inns being one particularly sorry example, losing nine per cent off its share price.

With many of these companies, perhaps we shouldn't worry too much - they are probably big enough to withstand such a hit in the long term, particularly if results pick up again under a new regime. It's a sobering thought nonetheless that the British economy could lose out to the tune of around £1.5 billion while England players will be sunning themselves on beaches rather than working up a sweat in Austria and Switzerland next June.

Hard hit

It's not just the multiples either. Umbro obviously will be hit hard, having put most of its eggs in the Team England basket in recent times, and that potentially means trouble too for Nike, currently in the process of acquiring the football brand.

While Nike's decision to try and buy Umbro was one made on the basis of long-term business goals, rather than on the hope that England would qualify, it's not good news for the sports and footwear giant. While Nike waits to see if shareholders (including Mike Ashley and his good friend at JJB, Chris Ronnie) decide to accept Nike's offer, Umbro sales look like being pretty flat to say the least.

Nike's spokesperson Charlie Brooks is, however, surprised by comments made by some analysts, who have suggested the move was badly timed and ill thought out, taking into account the uncertainty over England's future at the time of the bid.

Brooks told 'Sports Insight': "The short-termism of some people has been a little surprising. The decision to make an offer was made after months of planning and everyone knew there was a good chance England wouldn't qualify; all of this was factored in.

"You can say that next summer there won't be as much energy around football in this country as there would have been if England had qualified, but the

domestic season runs into early summer with the Premiership reaching its climax, the Champions League final stages and the FA Cup as well, so there will still be a lot of interest in the game.

"If all goes well and the acquisition is completed, we plan to operate two distinct football brands, each with their own identity and place in the market." It will be fascinating to see how that works out in the long term.

If you take out the obvious victims of this scenario, there are others also operating within the sector that will surely feel the pinch. Take The Old Fashioned Football Shirt Company (TOFFS). Surely the market for classic England kits of the past will suffer too?

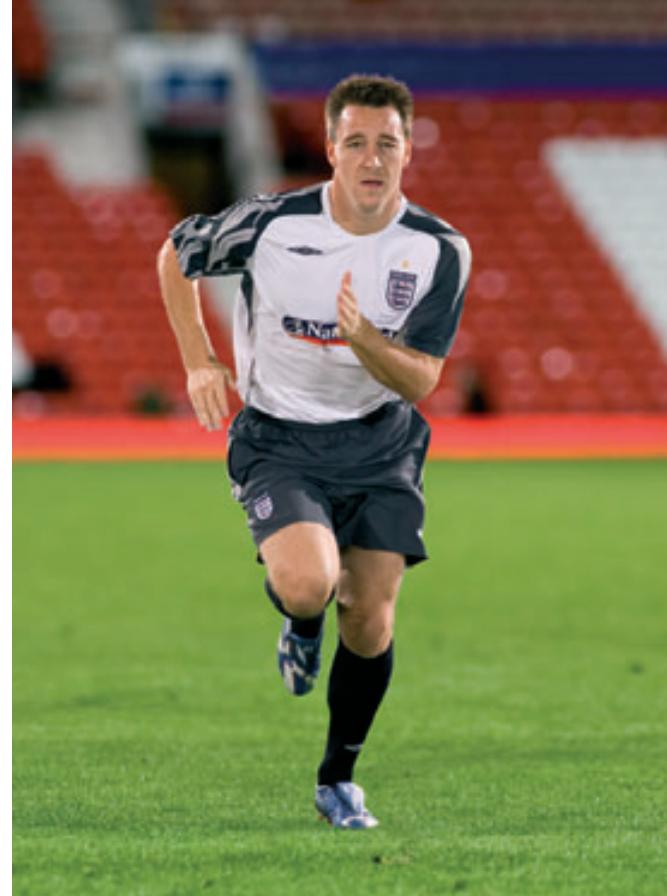
Company founder, Alan Finch, remains pretty optimistic. He is convinced his business will not suffer to any great extent. Finch's old-fashioned kits sell steadily year round and while there are peaks and troughs at various times, including around major tournaments, he doesn't feel nearly as vulnerable as Umbro must feel with warehouses full of current kit. He also resisted the temptation to order much from Umbro because he didn't believe England would qualify.

Finch expects good sales of retro Holland and Italy shirts in particular as the tournament approaches. He told 'Sports Insight': "I don't think we'll suffer any serious damage. Last year we had a surge in sales of Italy shirts in the build-up to the World Cup Final and also immediately afterwards, so we should do pretty well next summer anyway."

Not profitable

For smaller retailers, England kits have not been profitable in recent years with the multiples selling shirts at a loss to drive people into their stores. Many smaller operators have either abandoned this part of the market or been forced to price match and hope they too can drive people in and sell other products.

One retailer, who wished to remain anonymous, told us that while he sells some England shirts at a loss because he has to match the nearby multiples' prices, he does pick up some additional sales from people coming in for shirts and would probably expect to see a slight dip in sales to these customers. It's hard to gauge exactly how badly



ABOVE: Umbro will be hit hard by England's no-show at Euro 2008

this will affect independents, but the likelihood is it won't be too significant.

Ward Roberson, managing director of STAG, agrees that if there is any effect on independents it will be minimal. He says he hasn't received a single concerned call from any of his 400-plus members following the Wembley debacle - indicating how the football market, particularly where Umbro is concerned, has developed at retail level.

Robertson says his members have been doing less and less business with Umbro in recent years as the brand has aligned itself more closely with multiples and made its terms hard for smaller retailers to adhere to. Whether Umbro's attitude to independents changes if and when the Nike deal is finalised remains to be seen, but history suggests it's unlikely.

While the full impact of England's failure to make the finals will not be known for sure until after next summer, it seems the companies worst hit will be large organisations able to take the hit. Sports Direct and JJB will suffer, but ultimately one suspects pull through, albeit scarred by the experience.

Mercifully it seems, for once, independents will feel the impact to a lesser degree, although there will be some, tempted by the hope of a short-term cash injection on the back of England's success (and who can blame them), who will have speculated and ultimately had their fingers burnt. ■

Get the tills ringing

What is more likely to make customers buy from you? Trevor Johnson investigates

RIGHT: In theory, the buying process is a sequence of five steps

What will make customers buy from your shop rather than the rival down the road? The chances are not even the punters can give you a precise answer to that.

The truth is that only three out of every 10 people visiting your store know in advance exactly what they want and will buy it if you stock it. Another three will probably spend money with you - if you have something that takes their fancy.

In fact, over 65 per cent of people who come through your door can be persuaded to part with their cash or credit cards if the conditions and the sales strategy are right, according to researchers at the University of Florida.

Agony of choice

There's also what's known as 'the agony of choice'. Studies at the London School of Economics have shown that customers face four basic types of often-stressful purchase decisions:

- Minor new purchases - not a priority in the customer's mind in terms of need, value or status.
- Minor re-purchases - routine brand-loyal buying, made without much thought about other product options.
- Major new purchases - can be very important to consumers, but also worrying to them because it is a new experience and can involve an extensive decision making process.
- Major re-purchases - important, but the customers feel more confident because they have purchased the product in the past.

Explains Bristol Business Link retail consultant, Nicola Bradley: "There are many factors involved as a person works through a purchase decision and it's important to tailor marketing techniques to different purchasing decisions."

Research has shown that in theory the buying process is a sequence of five steps: recognised need, search, option evaluation, purchase and post-purchase.



Says psychologist Dr Catherine Waters, author of 'Consumer Buying Behaviour': "Whether the customer carries out every process depends on what they're buying. For instance, when making a brand-loyal purchase a consumer might skip several steps.

"On the other hand, when making a major new purchase the process can extend for days, weeks or months."

So what is more likely to make customers buy from you? Here are some proven ways of starting the tills ringing:

Offer bargains

Studies show that nothing is more likely to make an impression on potential customers than apparently getting something for - almost - nothing.

For instance, a study in Manchester supermarkets recently showed that at least five out of every 10 customers who got a bargain or a free gift came back and bought something more expensive. Bargains make sales but, more important, they bring customers back again and again.

So just why are shoppers so attracted to bargains? "Because they're fun," declares consumer consultant Pam Danziger of Unity Marketing. "And the more fun retailers can make shopping, the more successful they'll be."

"Having studied this passion for bargain hunting among shoppers,

most of whom could afford to pay the full price, we found that discount shopping is regarded as exciting. It makes people feel good when they find a bargain. They get a thrill out of apparently beating the system and getting something for less."

Encourage impulse buying

Other research has shown that few customers are able to resist the occasional impulse buy, if conditions are right.

For instance, a study involving over 500 US sports goods stores showed that multi-shelved trolleys crammed full of sports clothes and equipment seemed to create a sense of urgency that encouraged impulse shopping.

One researcher explained: "People assumed that the goods were only temporarily on sale and if they didn't buy now they would miss out.

"It seems that a mixed display of articles arranged randomly implies a bargain, whereas straight rows of identical products are less of a good buy. We are mystified by the logic of this phenomenon, but we repeatedly came across it."

Other impulse buy lures included large colourful labels, 'discontinued lines' or 'cancelled export order' stickers.

Strangely, price rarely triggers impulse buying. "The more exclusive something seems, the more



likely it is to be snapped up on impulse," says Pam Danziger. She cites the case of a range of exclusive swimwear that sold well at full price, but stayed on the rails when prices were reduced to clear.

Even colours can affect impulse buys. A chain of garden centres recently reported sales increases of up to 15 per cent when green carpets were laid in plant sections and brown in departments selling non-gardening items.

Provide an attractive environment

Customers must get the impression that the place is humming and everything under control.

For instance, make sure that staff are smart, friendly and helpful and that promotional material is attractive and well displayed, complete with up-to-date phone, fax and email numbers.

Keep a close eye on competitors

What they are charging, new services they offer, improvement in old services, marketing promotions and so on.

Make sure you're offering the best value for money - that doesn't necessarily mean lowering prices, but convince customers you are worth what you charge.

Keep abreast of all new developments in your field. If you're

not improving yourself, it's going to show in the long run. You'll get dated and stale and customers will lose confidence.

Listen to customers

If that seems obvious, it's worth knowing that recent CBI studies showed that nearly 60 per cent of retailers reported poor communication with would-be punters.

"Too many businesses regard customers as a necessary nuisance, says the study's author, Dr Tom Eddison. "In Japan, the customer is a god, in America he is king. In the UK he's often seen as something of a pest."

Here's how to make would-be customers more likely to buy:

- Be courteous. Impress on staff how important it is to be pleasant and helpful.
- Be receptive. Remember that customers are interested in your business, so why not ask them if your service can be improved?
- Be appreciative. One sports goods company that docked 10 per cent from bills of new customers found that half of them then recommended the business to friends.

Update your retail image

Are your window displays, shop decor and marketing themes pretty much as they were five or even 10 years ago? If so, maybe you need look no further if customers aren't buying.

Shop window clutter went out with the era of 'Open All Hours' when everything you sold was crammed into public view in the hope that there was something there that someone wanted!

Now it's been found that a minimalist themed presentation, changed regularly, is often the most effective way of attracting customers. A sports retailer recently proved the point with a stark display of ski equipment against an empty white background lit by laser beams, giving a feeling of what was described as "The emptiness and grandeur of mountain skiing and the challenge it presents".

Customers seemed to agree: the number of inquiries and sales were nearly double last year when the shop put on a much more conventional display.

Image consultants urge retailers to change window displays at least every three months, preferably to coincide

with major sports seasons, and to make some significant decor or presentation change every six months.

Provide customer relations management

Developed in the US five years ago, CRM is, basically, a strategy used to learn more about customers' needs, usually by building up a database in order to develop stronger relationships with them.

If CRM works as it should, a business can:

- Provide better customer service
- Cross-sell products more effectively
- Help close deals faster
- Simplify marketing and sales processes
- Discover new customers
- Increase customer revenue

But many UK businesses still have a lot to learn where CRM is concerned. Latest surveys show that 75 per cent of customers who close their accounts with small or medium-sized UK companies usually do so because of lack of CRM.

And the most frequent complaint? "They're not bothered if they have my business or not."

Remember that CRM should be involved in everything you do. For instance:

- Don't keep customers waiting. It's frustrating and makes them feel they've lost control. If you can't avoid a delay, keep them posted. If you're doing your best most people will understand.
- Don't make rash promises just to defuse the situation. A client let down twice will never forgive you.
- Don't make it hard for people to find you. Advertise, take entries in directories and send out mailshots containing a simple map.
- Don't rush things. If customers want a friendly chat do your best to oblige, even when things are hectic. If necessary, get help. It's always worthwhile in the long run.
- Don't forget the people who have done business with you. Make follow-up calls to check your service was satisfactory. Remember a customer's name, what they bought last time and a few useful personal details.

Lastly, and vitally, keep a strict stock check. 'You can't sell what you ain't got' is still probably the best bit of retailing advice of all.

CUSTOMERS DIRECT

With a recent resurgence and new digital channels to exploit, direct marketing could be an ideal way to promote your store. Dave Howell reports

32 per cent of consumers responded to direct mail at least once in the past 12 months.

Encouraging

If you want to attack the business-to-business market, the statistics are even more encouraging, with 70 per cent of business managers opening direct mail, nine per cent redirected to colleagues and a massive 20 per cent filed or responded to. The average overall response rate for business-to-business direct mail is 8.4 per cent, with the best-performing B2B campaigns being for events and exhibitions, which have an average response rate in excess of 20 per cent - great news if your store regularly exhibits at trade shows.

If you're new to direct marketing, pay a visit to the Business Link website (<http://tinyurl.com/2l9t5b>) where you'll find a clear and concise overview of the industry and what it could offer your business. What is important to remember is that you must be prepared to work at the campaign you are mounting and generate the list data that will ensure its success. The better the information about your target audience - be they consumers or other businesses - the better response your direct marketing campaign will receive.

"British businesses pour billions of pounds into their sales marketing campaigns, but staggeringly many do not take the time to learn about

the companies they are targeting," says Andrew Harris, managing director of Marketsafe UK, a business information provider.

"There is an attitude, particularly with direct marketing, to target as many businesses as possible and wait for the two per cent to reply. Investing more time and money in developing 'customer intimacy' can help firms get more from their sales and marketing activity, maximising the value of their investment."

Choose a channel

Direct marketing doesn't just mean mail sent to the homes of your customers. Today DM has gone digital and if you want to ensure your store is using the latest direct marketing techniques now is the time to investigate how your business's marketing messages can be communicated via email and mobile phone, as these two channels are increasing their share of direct marketing spend year on year.

This year sees the first report that will track the trends in the mobile phone direct marketing sector. Unsurprisingly, the study shows that SMS is still the dominant mobile marketing format, with the majority of mobile service providers reporting substantial year-on-year increases.

Almost 15 per cent of MSPs send over 100 per cent more messages than the same time a year ago. This reflects the findings of the DMA Economic Impact report, which illustrated that spend on mobile marketing is doubling

When was the last time your store contacted its customers with a direct marketing message? If you don't contact your existing customer base and potentially generate new business you'll be missing out on your share of a very lucrative market. Sales attributed to direct marketing activity total £107 billion each year, £67 billion of this from consumer sales and £40 billion resulting from business-to-business direct marketing.

According to the latest research from the Direct Mail Information Service, the average consumer spends approximately £577 through direct mail per year. And direct mail doesn't just go straight in the bin - 67 per cent of consumer direct mail is opened and



each year and currently accounts for 0.7 per cent of the total £16.4 billion industry expenditure.

Says Nick Fuller, chair of the DMA Mobile Marketing Council: "Marketers are increasingly aware of the ubiquity and importance of mobile. However, they're also looking for solid guidance on how it should be used and what results can be expected.

"We therefore believe that this first study meets a very real need in justifying the use of mobile within budgets. This initiative builds on our work in education and development, as well as on the DMA's long-established Email Benchmarking Survey. We're grateful to those participants who made it possible and we look forward to this becoming a regular planning tool over the coming years."

Many businesses see email marketing as a way of slashing their advertising budgets. A wholesale move to email marketing should, however, be avoided as email marketing should only be one thread of your overall marketing campaign. Even if your business operates solely on the internet, you should still have offline advertising channels as part of your marketing strategy.

If you do decide that email is a channel you want to use to promote your store, then a recent DMA report highlighted the quality of the addresses on the lists you buy for your campaign to be of paramount importance. The DMA National Email Benchmarking Report for the first quarter of 2007 considered list quality and selection as the most important factor in the success of an email marketing campaign.

The data and its selection accounted for over half of a campaign's success, according to the report. The creative and offer are still considered significant, while timing is viewed as having the least impact, accounting for just 10 per cent of the success of an email campaign.

Says Richard Gibson, chair of the DMA Email Marketing Council's Benchmarking Hub: "As the growth in email marketing demonstrates, email is a flexible and effective marketing channel that really is available to all businesses. However, to maintain its effectiveness, it is vital that relevance - both with regards to

who is being targeted and content - is vital to cut through inbox 'clutter' and maintain the credibility of the medium."

The channel you choose for your direct marketing messages is an important component of your campaign. The burgeoning SMS mobile market is certainly attractive, but ask yourself if the customers you want to reach will respond positively to this kind of contact. Would email or even good old printed material be much more effective?

Email campaigns are attractive as they can be very cheap, but with overzealous spam filters now installed on every PC getting into the bunker that consumers have built around themselves can be problematic. Viral email campaigns can be effective, but speak to your email service provider for advice before implementing one.

Contact

What is clear is that direct marketing still suffers from the stigma of junk mail. But recent research has illustrated that well-targeted campaigns based on sound customer profiling can be highly successful.

Today, direct marketing can be a great asset, but too many businesses ignore this highly effective channel. "I think businesses do dismiss direct marketing too quickly - but I can't blame them," says marketing consultant, Leon Edwards. "You have all sorts of experts mentioning response rates of between 0.5 per cent and two per cent. It's no wonder they see it as expensive when they plan a mailing on these returns.

"The truth is that it is still one of the best methods to contact a large number of known potential customers. The only way to make direct mail work, and therefore be very cost-effective, is to start with a very well-defined list. The more time and effort you put in upfront, the more successful you will be."

"The direct marketing industry has some passionate critics and the shoddy practices of the few who send junk mail that is scooped from our doorstep straight into the wastepaper bin and clog our PCs with spam have damaged the reputation of the reputable majority," says Ray Jones, public relations manager at The Chartered Institute of Marketing.

"Bombarding consumers with irrelevant messages in the hope that



eventually they will be bullied into buying is not direct marketing - it's just being a nuisance. But good direct marketing allows the small business to open a conversation and create a relationship from which both the business and the customer benefit. Market positioning and segmentation have never been so important if maximum return on marketing investment is to be achieved."

As the sports retail sector is highly specialised and can be fashion driven, direct marketing can be an effective tool if handled correctly. As you are selling to, in some cases, an expert audience, it's imperative that you pitch your marketing material at the right level. Again, this is where the detailed knowledge of your customer base comes in handy. You can then mount several low-cost campaigns to target these groups that will give you the maximum response possible. In the sports retail sector general blanket email, postal or even mobile SMS marketing isn't effective.

The key to an effective direct marketing campaign is to plan carefully and understand who your message is aimed at and what you want to say. Direct mail isn't just about the hard sell of products or services, it can also be about supporting customers. Marketing messages can be about supporting your business's brand to bolster loyalty and reach new potential customers.

At first glance, the direct marketing method of promotion can seem expensive, time-consuming and ineffective. Nothing could be further from the truth when a campaign is handled professionally. Try a small campaign first to promote a new line in your store and see how effective this type of promotion can be. This time next year you'll be a seasoned direct marketing professional with the sales to prove that it can a highly effective marketing technique. ■



running category that has been showing the most value gains recently. Nike's premium Plus ranges have been instrumental in driving this value back into the running market.

Nike's bid for Umbro has experienced its share of controversy. And with a potential investigation into Sports Direct and JJB Sports' share purchases of Umbro on the horizon, this may mean the takeover may not go as smoothly as Nike had hoped.

It is clear, however, that difficult times lie ahead for retailers as a result of England's failure to qualify for Euro 2008, with Sports Direct posting a profit warning the day after the England-Croatia game.



JJB's apparel and footwear market is in single digit decline (although JJB's recent figures show a turnaround in the latest six months), highlighting that there is still some way to go to catch Sports Direct, which is continuing to show growth.

Sports Direct is continuing along its acquisition and volume growth path, but is also showing signs of change - it's now introducing 'store-within-store' concepts, the first of which was unveiled in its flagship Lillywhites store in London last month. Of the top sports retailers, this

ALL CHANGE

The NPD Group looks back on an eventful year for the big names in the sports trade

The sports market has continued to evolve over the past year with profit warnings, senior management changes, brand acquisitions and share buy-ups just a few of the key events that have shaped the market place.

According to recent NPD figures*, the apparel market is worth £2.6 billion and showing sharp declines in both value (-6%) and volume (-6%). Prices continue downwards for the key categories such as tops, with the average price for total apparel now at £12, driven by the likes of Sports Direct and, to a lesser extent, Primark, M&S and the supermarket giants, where people pick up cheap items to use for their preferred sport or gym activities. Private label continues to gain ground and currently accounts for around 19% in value and 26% in volume, with an average price of £8.

Footwear

This is in contrast to the footwear market (£1.4 billion), which has for the first time started to show an upturn in price (+5%), with the average price now at £27. This has started to slow the value decline to -2% with volume declines of -6%. It has generally been the leisure and football categories driving this trend, but on a quarterly basis it is the

Retail

The retail environment continues to change, with Sports Direct showing strong growth despite a difficult trading period. There is change ahead for JJB, which appears to be going down a similar route to the one Sports Direct followed over the past few years with a private label and volume strategy at its core. JJB's chief executive, Chris Ronnie, has already implemented changes with a view to increasing private label presence (an agreement with Champion is already complete). This is a move away from the old JJB model, with the emphasis on differentiation and branding now a distant memory.

Current NPD figures show that

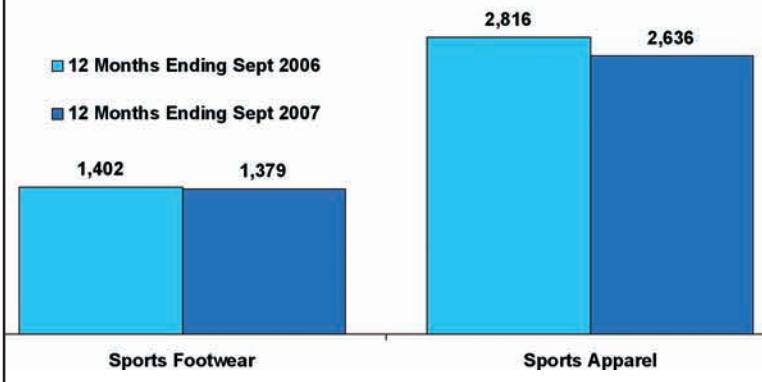
leaves JD as the key differentiator and recent success story. The company is remaining focused on the youth branded fashion market, which has resulted in significant double-digit growth in the latest year.

Only time will tell whether JJB morphs into Sports Direct and whether Sports Direct will change its 'pile it high sell it cheap' strategy, but one thing is for sure - it will be an interesting and challenging year ahead for both brands and retailers alike.

*All figures are 12 ME September 2007 unless specified.

Data was sourced from The NPD Group's POS and Consumer Panel services. For further information contact The NPD Group sports team on 01932 355580.

**Great Britain Sports Footwear And Sports Apparel Market Size
(Source: NPD Group Consumer Panel)**



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Thriving sector

Teamwear no longer simply means a strip for the local football club, says Catherine Eade

Teamwear can provide retailers with a lucrative and reliable way to increase turnover for their business. The ranges on offer these days encompass training gear such as tracksuits, bags and wet weather gear and embroidered items for college and school events, club crests and logos on shirts, jumpers, ties, caps and more.

Team sports itself is a difficult sector to analyse. It is currently a story of mixed fortunes, with some reports indicating a widespread decline in team sports, while others point to increases in participation from females boosting the sector. Football is still the most widely played team sport, and it's not difficult to see why.

The school/youth sporting sector as a whole is challenged by the usual culprits of video games, TV and the internet, but as schools secretary Ed Balls recently pointed out, the government's aim is to radically increase the amount of sport played within the education sector.

Government drive

Before he left office, Tony Blair hosted a reception at 10 Downing Street to highlight the importance of

sport, and then education secretary Alan Johnson was behind a major drive to increase sport in schools. Balls has taken up where he left off.

"85 per cent of schools now offer two hours of sport a week, up from 25 per cent five years ago, and the government's aim is for five hours a week by 2010," says Balls. But he admits: "Kids are much less likely to do sport in secondary schools, with teenage girls the least likely to participate."

"Some schools are bucking this trend and getting more girls involved by getting rid of embarrassing gym kits and introducing new sports to the curriculum that will be specifically targeted at people who don't enjoy highly competitive, physical sports.

"Many girls love playing football, netball or hockey. But for many others trampolining, yoga or frisbee are an alternative way to get fit. Secondary schools now offer on average 21 different sports during the school week."

With all the different types of sports now on offer in schools across the UK, it is little wonder that certain team games such as racquet sports are on the decline. But there is clearly a

strong market for school sport equipment and clothing. 97 per cent of schools hold an annual sports day and schools have been banned from selling off playing fields unless they can prove they are not needed by either their pupils or the local community.

Teamwear market

Sports Insight spoke to Jamie Warner, managing director of leading licensed teamwear and equipment supplier Touchline Sports, based in Stowmarket, about the current state of the market.

How strong is teamwear as a sector of sports retail?

Sports teamwear demand is growing as clubs, schools, colleges, universities and various organisations want to be wearing specific branded teamwear in training and match play. This raises their sporting profile, giving them a professional appearance and the important factor of everyone looking like a team. For independent schools and colleges or universities with a strong sporting history, image and performance is paramount as part of their prospectus.

What is the market value of teamwear in the UK?

Teamwear is a multi-million pound business and a growing factor for most sports manufacturers.

Why and when was Touchline Sports set up?

Touchline Sports was formed in 2003 due to my own poor experience when ordering teamwear for my local rugby club. Product choice and information, advice on customisation and 10-12 week delivery timescales made it a difficult, time-consuming and in most cases disappointing exercise.

We became a teamwear supplier for KooGa Rugby and promoted the range to local clubs. Within three years we have grown to be one of the leading UK independent teamwear suppliers for rugby, football, hockey, netball and all other team sports.

What are the top-selling teamwear items for your business?

All the leading brands have realised the market potential for promoting teamwear ranges and we are now the leading UK supplier for KooGa and promote rugby brands Canterbury, Nike Rugby and Gilbert, football manufacturers Nike, Jako, Hummel and Stanno and hockey ranges Mercian, Dita and Reece.

How cyclical is the market. Is it reliable year on year?

Teamwear is becoming increasingly competitive. We are now signing supply agreements with larger customers to give us some stability and help with forecasting, but constant marketing and positive 'word-of-mouth' from satisfied customers is key to teamwear success.

Is teamwear a lucrative option for independent retailers?

Customisation is the key to being a successful teamwear provider, and this can be complicated. Attention to detail is paramount, as once the customisation is completed in most cases it cannot be changed.

The origination and embroidery of club and school crests, the use of the correct materials for the heat application of sponsorship and numbering and working to acceptable timescales is the most important part of teamwear sales and this requires experience, knowledge and big investment.

We have invested nearly £100k in the last 12 months on the latest

embroidery machines and laser cutting and heat printing equipment, allowing us to be in total control of the customer's order at all times. Although we have a fully-equipped showroom, the majority of my time is spent visiting potential customers, especially clubs, in the evenings.

What other services are offered by Touchline and do they link in with supplying teamwear?

Touchline Sports offers a trade embroidery and printing service for retailers wishing to provide local clubs, schools and associations with teamwear by giving advice and carrying out all required customisation.

Our Club-Shop Partnership Scheme gives customers the opportunity to set-up a 'shop' where people can order endorsed leisurewear and training kit. We provide a sample range, which people order from and receive within 10 days. This reduces any capital outlay and customers being left with unwanted stock and, more importantly, promotes their club and helps raise funds.

This year we have also introduced a unique facility through our own website where we set up and manage an online store, most recently for Cambridge University RUFC.

Have recent government objectives to get more children playing sport had any impact on business?

Certainly junior sections at most sports clubs have seen an increase in



numbers, but this could also be relevant to current success at international level in certain sports. We recently have set up a partnership with Team Ipswich, the Council Sports Development Sector, and we offer support and discounts to junior clubs.

Touchline Sports are more than happy to talk to any retailer who is interested in discussing possible teamwear sales, or to those already offering teamwear that require a specialist teamwear customisation service.

How has trade been over the past year? What is the busiest time of year for you?

Touchline Sports is growing significantly and this year our sales have increased by 40 per cent. With football and rugby being our main sports, July to September are extremely busy, but with clubs and schools touring throughout the year this brings in a steady flow of constant business. **31**



A large, dynamic photograph of a man in outdoor gear climbing a steep, rocky mountain. He is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, dark trousers, and a harness. He is gripping a thick, dark rope with one hand and a rock with the other. The background is a clear blue sky.

OUT DOOR OPPORTUNITIES

Want to get a slice of the outdoor action? Read on for expert top tips on how to do just that

A recent study of the global sports market conducted by The NPD Group revealed that there are considerable opportunities for growth in the outdoor sector. But how do sports retailers, eager to boost sales in this direction, grab a slice of the action without putting a strain on cash flow?

'Sports Insight' spoke to a number of key people in the outdoor trade to get their views.



Outdoor seems like a natural area for a sports retailer to move into. What would your advice be to a retailer considering this route?

Alasdair Scobbie, managing director of Media Contact Services, which specialises in outdoor sports and leisure: there is indeed a lot of synergy and crossover between the two markets and for a sports retailer to offer some outdoor products in-store would seem a likely progression for someone wishing to grow their business.

It would make sense to offer outdoor leisure-type products that would appeal to existing customers, bearing in mind that it's easier to sell more to existing customers than attract new ones. Employing a member of staff who is passionate and knowledgeable about outdoor activities and equipment would also be crucial to ensure the selection of appropriate products and guarantee expert advice in-store.

It would also be worth researching the local outdoor stores to see if there was a niche sector or point of difference that could be established, rather than trying to sell a similar range of products.

Ian Cameron, Hi-Tec European outdoor director: research the market thoroughly and look for a niche that complements your business, such as

expanding technical road running into off-road running and adventure sport-type product.

Expanding into this type of product has close synergies with sports independents selling technical product. The number of people participating in outdoor sport and leisure is growing and retailers can take advantage of this huge opportunity.

Sarah Gowans, Buffera marketing: there are many products that offer the sports retailer an opportunity to extend their brand offering, whilst also meeting the needs of their existing customer base, without necessarily needing any specialist knowledge.

I think, therefore, that a simple widening rather than a complete change of offering might be preferable.

How can a retailer new to outdoor compete with the established outdoor specialists?

Alasdair Scobbie: it would be quite difficult initially for a sports retailer to immediately establish a reputation for outdoor products. Outdoor types would favour shopping in an outdoor environment where specialist advice and a wide range of products are already available.

The sensible thing for a sports retailer to do would be to look at crossover sports-type outdoor products, taking advantage of existing consumers who already visit the shop. By nature, they are already sporty types and may have an interest, or could be tempted to buy some outdoor equipment or clothing.

A sports retailer with an already established reputation in, say, sports footwear could easily extend this specialism into outdoor footwear using the same level of expert advice on model selection, fitting, foot comfort and footwear modification. By building a reputation in one area, the retailer could then easily capitalise on this strength by extending their product offering to suit.

Ian Cameron: by focusing on a particular part of the market that fits in with the existing sports business. Many consumers coming into sports shops will also be outdoor enthusiasts

The sensible thing for a sports retailer to do would be to look at crossover sports-type outdoor products, taking advantage of existing consumers who already visit the shop.

Best-sellers

Buffwear

■ While this company has a range of products designed to meet the needs of extreme sports people, its best seller remains Original Buff (pictured), which at £10.99 meets the needs and pockets of most consumers.



■ **POS/training/support offered:** a range of POS is available, from simple stickers, posters and display equipment holding as few as 40 units, through to three different units that utilise a demonstration video and carry between 100-288 units.

■ Buffwear offers training in-store or at trade shows. The company's DVDs, used to sell to the consumer, are also an excellent training device.

Hi-Tec

■ The company's V-Lite Hiking range is extremely strong, with styles such as V-Lite Fasthike WP offering technical excellence, high performance, durability and true value, but with minimal weight.

■ Adventure sport styles such as Radar eVENT perform well at the more technical end of the market, where footwear is expected to perform in a variety of environments and for a multitude of activities.

■ With the onset of the cold weather, St Moritz, a waterproof and insulated lifestyle ladies' boot, is also selling well.

■ **POS/training/support offered:** nationwide coverage with four technical reps and a wide range of POS to suit every size of store. Says Ian Cameron: "Our tech reps are an essential service to our customers as they support sell-through with staff training and merchandising displays."

and comfortable with technical product.

The sports buying group STAG is also expanding into the outdoor market and can offer expert advice to independent retailers.

Sarah Gowans: I think any new retailer would need to have a very clear idea of who his target audience is and provide a comprehensive range of products suitable for that market that offer both value for money and excellent quality.

He would also need to be well versed in their application and hopefully have first-hand experience of them in use.

Is there a specific area of the outdoor sector that has significant growth potential?



Alasdair Scobbie: there appears to be opportunities for growth in some of the adventure sports areas like scrambling, mountain marathons/adventure racing, geocaching and the like. Nordic walking is becoming increasingly popular and products sit equally well in an outdoor or sports shop environment.

Family camping is also a growth area, but fiercely competitive with the likes of Halfords, Argos and the supermarkets all wanting a slice of the market. It's best to steer away from trying to compete with these outlets and establish a unique reputation for specialist brands, expert personal advice and customer service.

Ian Cameron: the adventure sport area is a rapidly growing market, and with the technical expertise available in a good sport independent there is a natural fit. Indeed, the growth in this market has been seen by many outdoor sports shops, which now stock road running product.

Outdoor product such as footwear, apparel and backpacks have moved on massively over the last few years in terms of design, technical spec and shelf appeal, and you are as likely to see consumers wearing outdoor product on the high street - as well as the mountain - as you are sportswear.

The sports multiples have also largely ignored the outdoor market and offers an independent another point of difference. ■

OUTDOOR TRADE SHOW

■ "A visit to this show would be essential for someone interested in entering the outdoor accessory market," says Alasdair Scobbie, who is not only managing director of MCS, but also the organiser of the Outdoor Trade Show.

■ "It's the ideal place to see loads of products from the leading suppliers under the one roof at the one venue."

■ The second Outdoor Trade Show took place at Stoneleigh Park last October and had an attendance of 900. The show is an initiative originally conceived by six main outdoor suppliers, who recognised that there was a need for a trade show in the autumn, giving retail buyers the opportunity to place orders for pre-Christmas delivery and to preview spring/summer ranges.

■ In 2007 86 outdoor suppliers, manufacturers and distributors supported the show, with products on display ranging from torches to stoves and outdoor furniture to sleeping bags and rucksacks.

■ Now firmly established as the main UK outdoor show, OTS will take place again at Stoneleigh Park on September 30-October 2.

■ Says Scobbie: "This year promises to be just as successful, with continued interest from the trade in developing a national trade show." www.outdoortradeshows.com



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Outdoor

IN SEASON OUTDOOR



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For enquiries contact Inside Sales on Freephone 00800 46732667 or visit www.gorerunningwear.com

Outdoor

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The Satmap Active10 is designed with the user in mind. This easy-to-use revolutionary design benchmarks a new level of GPS without complication. Unique, simple, effective design - and no computer needed. These all make it a must-have for all levels of user.

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Mapping supplied on SD cards means you just plug and play. Maps contain powerful pan and zoom features, allowing you to enlarge map detail by up to five times or zoom out for planning. Personalise and annotate maps, add personalised data including multimedia POIs, and customised mapping available, each supported by Ordnance Survey.

No other unit currently available is comparable to this. RRP £299.99.

Call Burton McCall on 0116 234 4611.





BRIDGEDALE

Bridgedale, the market leader in the manufacture of technical, outdoor socks, has taken expert advice from high performance athletes and independent research into footwear developments to create a sock range specifically for faster and lighter sporting activities.

Fast and Light socks are designed to wear with lighter more breathable footwear in warmer conditions and during faster-moving activities. Comprising X-Hale, Ventum and Active, each utilise Bridgedale's unique features, including WoolFusion technology, setting them apart from the remaining sock market.

RRP from £8.99. Contact Burton McCall Ltd on 0116 234 4646.



SIGG

SIGG, the brand leader for comprehensive, high-quality drinking systems in the aluminium bottle market for leisure and sports use, has pioneered the legendary tradition of Swiss quality.

The SIGG lock-and-seal mechanism in the active bottle tops provides the highest level of drinking comfort, making drinking easy - even when you're moving about.

Extrusion-pressed from a one-piece aluminium disc, the result is a tough, seamless bottle that should last the owner forever. Its inner coating alleviates odours and contamination and is shock and leak-proof, even with carbonated drinks. These are just some of the unique patented mechanisms within SIGG products.

RRP from £8.99. Call Burton McCall on 0116 234 4611.

BUFFWEAR

Established over 10 years ago to distribute Buff® multifunctional headwear in the UK and Ireland, Buffera now also distributes, from the USA, Hides® multifunctional eyewear necessities.

Focussing on high-quality, desirable, functional and fun sports accessories, Team Buffera endeavours to offer a fast, efficient service to keep its customers well stocked, plus a range of proven point of sale and merchandising materials.

Its consumer marketing programme is designed to raise brand awareness whilst focusing on grassroots events and athlete sponsorships to drive consumers into stockists. Buff is now one of the fastest selling accessories in many outdoor stockists.

For more information call 01707 852244 or email sales@buffwear.co.uk



HYDRON

The Teva Hydron (SRP £75) is a speciality off-road running shoe brimming with technology, comfort and style.

Based on a stable, low-profile platform, the Hydron integrates Teva's patented 360° Wraptor Fit System for total support and security. Perfect for all conditions, the quick drying and quick draining shoe incorporates a shoc pad in the heel and a spider rubber XC outsole for superior grip and durability.

It also includes a high-density forefoot web to provide push through protection.

Available in both a men's and women's version, the Hydron fuses technology and practicality, resulting in the ultimate trail running shoe.

Stockist information: 01475 746000. www.teva.com



The body politic

Yoga and pilates have been popular for several years, and there's no sign that this will change any time soon, says Catherine Eade

Yoga has hit the mainstream. No longer the domain of hippies or the grow-your-own-yoghurt brigade, this ancient system of development for mind, body and spirit tops many of the popularity polls in health clubs worldwide.

Fitness First, the largest fitness operator in the UK and Europe, reports that its 'Mind and Body' category has moved up the chart to second position over recent years, and shows no sign of slowing.

The beauty of this form of exercise is that it can be done by young and old alike, and it is also a discipline that many people take up later in life - even if sport is something they have never dabbled with before.

Yoga is a Sanskrit word for 'union', describing the experience of oneness or union with one's inner being. The practice of yoga makes the body strong and flexible and improves the functioning of the respiratory, circulatory and digestive systems. No wonder there are so many enthusiasts.

Sports Insight spoke to David Elliot, managing director of Yoga Mad, about why yoga is such a strong sector.

What are your best sellers?

Yoga mats are undoubtedly the most popular line in yoga, as almost every yoga practitioner uses one. That said, like training shoe, there are many different varieties offering different thicknesses, widths, materials and characteristics to suit different styles of yoga.

There is an increasing trend in the yoga equipment market towards more environmentally sound products, and our natural rubber 'Tree Mat' has become one of our fastest growing lines in the past two years. After yoga mats, the best-selling lines are yoga belts or straps that help one extend reach and yoga blocks and bricks, which are used as supports to aid the less flexible.

Are there any new trends in yoga that retailers should be aware of?

Yoga is now taught in most health clubs in the country. And being many thousands of years old, it would seem set to stay! As well as an activity in its own right, yoga is often taken up by people recovering from injuries and is often used in conjunction with other sports to keep the body supple, aligned and less prone to injury.

Is yoga's popularity subject to seasonal fluctuations?

A lot of yoga is still taught in town and village halls and through adult education. This means that yoga is often offered in terms along the lines of the school term, meaning that there are peaks in September, January and April. December is also busy due to Christmas.

What are the benefits for retailers in stocking yoga/pilates gear? Are yoga enthusiasts repeat buyers?

Pilates is one of the fastest growing activities in the UK and is hot on the heels of yoga in terms of popularity, so retailers should not overlook this growing area that could attract a new kind of customer to their store.

Many sports people who play football, tennis, rugby or who run

are recommended to practice either yoga or pilates, and it makes sense to offer these customers the products they need. Also, like running shoes, yoga mats do not last forever and some users change their mats once a year or even more, so there is plenty of repeat business to be had, particularly if the customer is offered a reasonable choice.

What yoga kit should sports retailers be stocking and in what quantities?

A good range of yoga mats, preferably including a choice of thicknesses and materials, rather than simply a colour choice. A 4mm mat such as the Warrior mat, a 6mm mat like the Warrior Plus and a PVC-free mat such as the natural rubber tree mat would cover most options.

Also essential are yoga blocks (one customer will buy two-four per time), bricks (one sale will usually be one-two) and a good quality 2.5m cotton yoga belt. Yoga mat bags are also a good idea, as firstly yoga mats will not fit in most sports bags and, secondly, if your mat is

wet when you get to class it will be slippery, making it dangerous and unusable.

What pilates kit should sports retailers be stocking and in what quantities?

A selection of mats from 6mm to 15mm thick. The best mats are 15mm x 60cm x 180cm or 140cm long. However, thinner 6mm or 10mm mats are popular as they are more portable. Other key pilates props include resistance bands, pilates rings and Swiss balls in 55cm, 65cm and 75cm.

What new products are coming through at the moment?

One of the good things is the range of commonly used yoga and pilates props is not that large, so it is possible to provide a good range without using up too much valuable retail space. In addition, the products are, in the main, well established and there are few faddish products, so little fear that such lines will go out of fashion.

What effect is the increasing interest in eco-friendly/organic products having on yoga and pilates gear?

The yoga practitioner is often particularly keen on eco-friendly

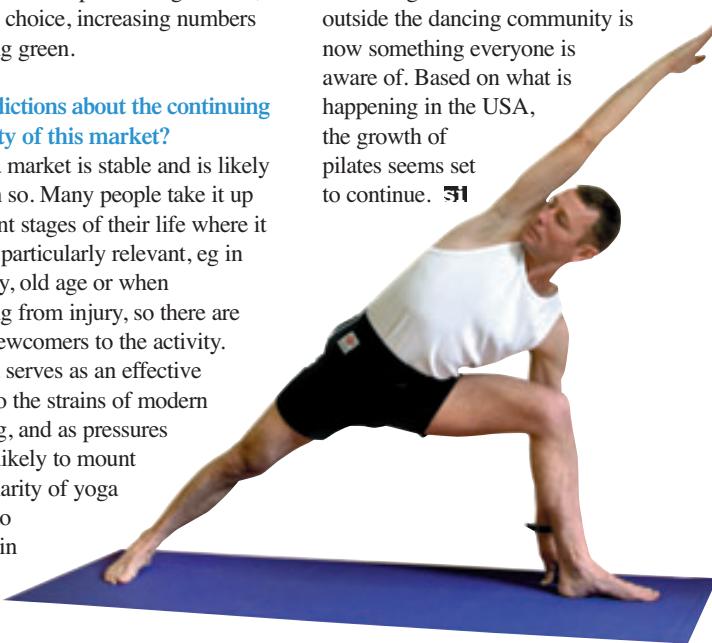
products due to the holistic nature of the practice. This has given rise to numerous natural or more environmentally friendly products such as PVC-free mats and cork or wood blocks. Despite the higher cost, given the choice, increasing numbers are buying green.

Any predictions about the continuing popularity of this market?

The yoga market is stable and is likely to remain so. Many people take it up at different stages of their life where it becomes particularly relevant, eg in pregnancy, old age or when recovering from injury, so there are always newcomers to the activity.

Yoga serves as an effective counter to the strains of modern day living, and as pressures are only likely to mount the popularity of yoga is likely to continue in

tandem. Pilates has become the darling of therapists and more and more people are referred to it, so this, combined with the increasing availability of pilates, means that something that was little heard of outside the dancing community is now something everyone is aware of. Based on what is happening in the USA, the growth of pilates seems set to continue. **ST**



"The beauty of this form of exercise is that it can be done by young and old alike, and it is also a discipline that many people take up later in life"

YOGA STYLES: A GUIDE FOR RETAILERS

While all yoga styles seek to balance the body, mind and spirit, they go about it in many different ways. No one style is better than another; it is simply a matter of personal preference. Retailers can best advise customers to find a teacher they can relate to and a form of yoga that is appropriate for each individual's level of fitness, goals and medical condition.

The most popular forms of yoga currently are:

Ashtanga. This is commonly called 'power yoga'. For those who want a serious workout, ashtanga yoga offers a fast-paced series of sequential poses - including exercises such as push-ups and lunges.

This physically demanding yoga builds strength, flexibility and stamina and may be appropriate for those who have successfully rehabilitated from a back injury, are looking for a more strenuous practice, or people who are already athletic, such as runners and

cyclists, who want to add flexibility, balance and concentration to their exercise routines.

Bikram. Be prepared to sweat during this one. Bikram class temperatures range anywhere from 85 degrees to 100 degrees. In this hot and steamy environment, students perform 26 poses designed to cleanse the body from the inside out.

A vigorous workout, it's not appropriate for those with cardiovascular disease because of the strain placed on the body.

Hatha. Nearly all yoga styles are rooted in hatha yoga, yoga's physical discipline that focuses on developing control of the body through 'asanas' or poses. Hatha represents the duality in life - yin and yang, masculine and feminine, darkness and light. It leads the way to balancing these opposing forces. It is the yoga of physical well being.

Kundalini. Once a guarded secret in India, kundalini yoga arrived in the west in 1969 and is designed to awaken kundalini energy. Kundalini mixes chanting, breathing practices and yoga exercises with the emphasis on chanting and breathing.

Iyengar. This type of yoga focuses on proper alignment and precise movements. Props such as blocks or straps are often used for those who are not as flexible or to compensate for injuries. Because of this attention to detail and the modification of poses, iyengar yoga is often a good form of yoga for people with back or neck pain.

Scaravelli. Based on the work of Vanda Scaravelli, this form of yoga works with the natural movement of one's body in relation to gravity. It's a form of yoga where you'll be asked to 'give your body to the ground', with the focus on breath, the spine and the ground.



Rucanor fitness and yoga

Rucanor has been supplying the sports trade with a wide selection of fantastic value fitness products for a number of years, and will be adding further products in its soon-to-be-released 'Never out of Stock Collection 2008/2009' catalogue.

Best-selling items are gym balls, exercise gloves, exercise mats, dumbbell sets (0.5kg-5kg), skip ropes and the great-value Step Profi. The yoga sets are also good value and there will soon be a promotion with new mats available in a range of colours.

Also available is a range of cast-iron dumbbells, bars, and loose weights, plus benches, a sit-up board, aerobic and exercise bands, hand grips, etc, all of which are presented in colour coordinated packaging to make an attractive display.



All of the above and more are available to order for immediate delivery from stock, either from the sales office, your local agent, or online at Rucanor's retailer-only website. Please log into your online account at retail.rucanor.com or call the Sales Hotline Number: 0845 2300147 for further information.

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Inner Muscle is the result of extensive research by the ASICS Institute of Sports Science, this unique technology allows the inner muscles of the body to be worked at optimum capacity supporting your efforts to achieve the ideal body through the wearing of technologically advanced clothing. The garment construction helps to train specific muscles groups not significantly worked during normal exercise, thereby allowing athletic movement and posture to be improved.



Inner Muscle Training Top:

The support and training mechanism of the inner muscle training top covers the whole width of the upper back. It stabilizes the shoulder joint, around the upper arm bone and the scapula, allowing the muscles to move the upper arm and scapula more smoothly and with less energy. This allows the arms to be lifted higher and with more control. Tests have shown that the muscular activity required to move the scapula decreases by 25% when wearing the Inner Muscle Training Top and that the rotation angle increases by some 10 degrees. The Diamond Back on the Inner Muscle shirts puts pressure on the bottom of the shoulder blades and sets them in the right position. This provides a smoother and stronger running arm swing and throwing motion. As a result, sports performance is increased.

The inner muscles set the shoulder blade in the ideal position. However with increasing age and lack of exercise, the balance is disrupted and the position of the shoulder blade is not aligned properly. This causes poor arm movements, weary shoulders, pain, and malfunction. The shoulder is responsible for the efficient movements of the arms. Out of all the joints in the body, the shoulder joint has the widest range of motion and you are able to touch almost every part of your body with your arms.

The Inner Muscle Training Shirt solves many shoulder-related problems and helps improve athletic performance.

Advantages

- The top stabilizes scapula movement, provides higher upper arm lift and saves energy
- Loosens shoulder joint, improving arm movements in athletes of all ages
- Shoulder blade alignment corrected in older athletes

Benefits

- Improved posture decreases injury risk
- Wider range of arm movement improves biomechanical efficiency
- Reduces weary shoulders, pain and malfunction
- Ideal for training
- In short Inner Muscle shirts can improve sports performance

*For more information or to order
this product please call 01925 243 360
or e-mail info@asics.co.uk*


sound mind, sound body

■ IN SEASON RUGBY



Samurai

Mito Board Shorts: an incredibly successful board short that will be included in the Samurai retail range for 2008. With Ottoman fabric and its excellent colourfast properties, this short will be offered in a selection of new colour options in the early part of this year.

Quebec Hoodie: this is a popular choice and has become a real trendsetter, with its highly technical contrast mesh-lined hood and under-arm vents. This product will be offered in a variety of colours, including navy and sky. A heavyweight 330gsm brushed fleece fabric completes this aesthetically pleasing garment.

To find out more visit www.samurai-sports.com

Rugby

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GILBERT apparel range

The GILBERT 2008 apparel range combines technological progress and consolidation. The core training range remains largely unchanged from 2007, enabling clubs and retailers to keep a consistent appearance without changing 100 per cent of their kit.

New technical performance polos and t-shirts have been introduced to complete the offer, as well as more colour options in the best-selling lines (storm jacket and undershirts). 2008 also sees the introduction of a complete leisure range designed to cater for the off-field needs of the brand's expanding portfolio of clubs.

For more information contact your sales representative or call 08450 661823.





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ASICS is bringing its expertise in injury prevention and high performance shoe technology and applying it to the world of Rugby. Featuring the HG10mm technology, a heel gradient that drastically alleviates stress and strain through the lower limbs, especially on the achilles tendon and ankle.

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please call 01925 243 360 or e-mail info@asics.co.uk*

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The **GILBERT** footwear collection for 2008 sees classical styling married with cutting edge technology and design. The range offers lightweight yet durable performance boots that provide stability and support and have been designed to meet the demands of all rugby players. The range is endorsed by some of the world's top international players and focuses on technological advancements, which will benefit players, whatever their level.

The Synergie Elite is designed to meet the demands of top-level rugby. With a traditional centre-lacing layout and a full premium leather upper, the Synergie delivers outstanding comfort and fit. The boot utilises the new XSP outsole, an innovative new design with Pebax shank and chrome support unit for superior lightweight responsiveness. The internal torsion support system supports strategically positioned studs for superior weight distribution and outstanding balance. Further technological advancements have been made to the Elite Protex foot bed. Through heel cushioning, mid foot stability and breathable memory foam, it offers ultimate all round performance

The Viper Pro is an all round performance boot with amended styling and superb technical features making it the ideal choice for the serious player who demands that bit extra from his or her boots. The upper is made from nappa leather for outstanding comfort with functional chrome branding offering dorsal protection.

GILBERT have developed a range of boots designed for rugby covering all playing positions, and the hugely successful Vanguard is designed to cope with the demands of playing in the pack. It utilises a lightweight protective carbon heel wrap and wide fitting last to provide enhanced protection and fit. **GILBERT** prides itself on developing Rugby boots for Rugby players and as such is one of an ever-decreasing number of brands to offer a serious performance shoe in the mid cut category. The Vengeance Mid hard toe boot is designed for support and protection with the additional ankle support.

When it comes to value for money **GILBERT** excel with outstanding options in the Saracen and Sidestep X2. A new option for 2008, the Saracen is a durable boot for players of all levels, offering comfort, style and durability. **GILBERT**'s success story, the Sidestep has received cosmetic updates for the 2008. A classic black and white option is available in a variety of models, including junior, senior, hard toe, Hi Cut hard toe and a hard ground moulded sole unit option. Following the success of the Sidestep in recent years the red black option will continue to supplement the stylish new black white option.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON GILBERT'S BOOT RANGE, OR TO ARRANGE TO SEE SAMPLES, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL SALES REPRESENTATIVE OR ALTERNATIVELY CALL 08450 66 1823.





Optimum - new for 2008

Optimum continues into 2008 at the forefront of design and innovation with the introduction of the Pulse Pro Rugby Boot. Being at the top end of the company's new Pulse range, the Pulse Pro provides a quality, technologically advanced boot at a great value price - just what you expect from Optimum. Available in size 7-13. RRP £49.99.

The best-selling shoulder protection top from Optimum in 2007 was the Five Pad Tribal Long in navy/silver, which again continues into 2008 with the introduction of a brand new colourway of black/gold.

At RRP £24.99 for juniors and £29.99 for seniors, and with an exciting new selection of matching products coming soon, the Optimum Tribal range will continue to be at the forefront of body protection.

For more details call Optimum on 01942 497707.



Rugby



The Force

The Force from Nomis is a boot designed specifically for rugby. It incorporates Dual Control technology combined with a nomud outsole, thicker leathers and a toe cap for added protection.

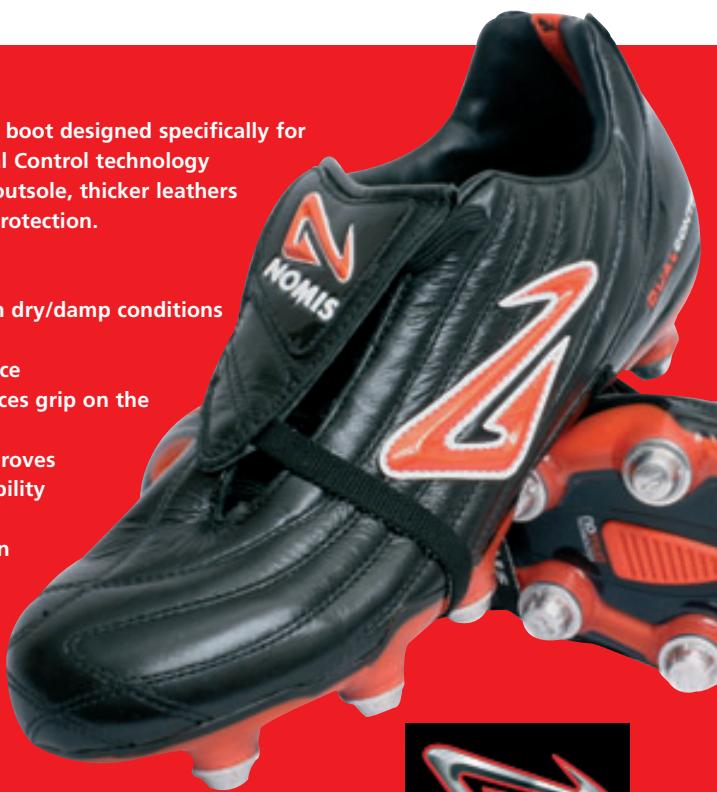
Dual Control technology:

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nomud technology:

- Reduces mud and grass build-up on outsoles
- Helps retain good ground traction
- Keeps boots light
- Aids cleaning

For retail information contact Steve Lees:
steve@nomissports.co.uk





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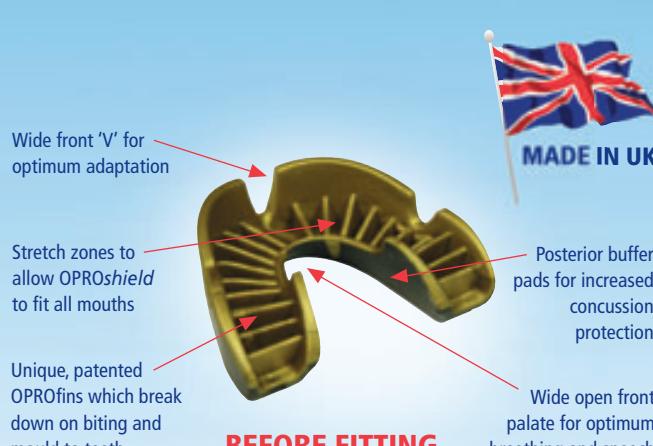
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Saucony sees growth of 11 per cent exclusively through the specialist market

2008 will see Saucony build on another record-breaking 12 months, with additions to both footwear and apparel line-ups boosting its forward order book to new highs.

Product wise, new for spring 2008 is the Type A2 (pictured), an update to Saucony's top-selling triathlon and road racing shoe the Fastwitch, and a comprehensive spike range from £40 to £70 (Endorphin LD pictured) with multiple offerings for sprinting and distance events.

Fresh from overtaking Nike to claim the number-one spike spot in the US sales charts (led by the Kilkenny Cross Country Spike), the Saucony brand has regenerated itself to younger consumers with the line-up aimed squarely at the junior and university markets where the majority of spike sales fall.

For further information on the Saucony range call 023 9282 3664 or visit saucony.co.uk



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Sorbothane launches new improved Shockstopper+ insoles

New Improved Sorbothane Shockstopper+ insoles are scientifically proven to absorb harmful shockwaves associated with foot strike, ensuring that all sports enthusiasts can do what they love to do for longer.

The advanced new range from the market-leading insole brand is designed for even greater shock dispersal and has been developed with a new lightweight streamlined construction.

Sorbothane is an established market leader of shock absorbing insoles in the sport medicine sector. Its injury prevention range is regularly recommended by leading medical, sports and occupational health practitioners.

Scientifically engineered to be a natural extension of your foot, Sorbothane ShockStopper+ insoles transform feet into shock-absorbing, energy returning running machines. For more information on Sorbothane insoles call 0870 990 1357 or visit www.sorbothane.co.uk

Evolution Running: run faster with fewer injuries DVD

Efficient runners run faster with less energy and fewer injuries. Let renowned coaches Joe Friel and Ken Mierke teach you how to run the way the human body was designed.

What is your goal? If it is peak performance and the desire to save every second in order to reduce your triathlon race time, if you are new to the sport and want to get a jump-start on excelling in triathlons, then Triathlon Racing Faster is the edge you need.

Through the guidance of co-hosts Wes Hobson, a former top professional

triathlete, coach and author, and Michelle Blessing, the USA Triathlon National Team Coach, Racing Faster features some of the world's top ranked triathletes, including 2007 Ironman Champion Chris McCormack, Olympians Barb Lindquist and Ryan Bolton, Tony DeBoom and legendary coach Joe Friel.

From novice to elite, Racing Faster serves as a unique and pragmatic guide to racing smarter and faster in triathlon competitions. Contact o-donnells to receive its extensive DVD and apparel catalogue.

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For further details contact 0800 3280180



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shock
stopper+
insoles

Sorbothane®, an advanced visco elastic material, is recommended by leading physios worldwide and is scientifically proven to continuously absorb harmful shockwaves ensuring that all sports enthusiasts can do what they love to do, longer. For more information on Sorbothane call 0870 990 1357.

new lightweight construction

even better shock dispersal

streamlined design for perfect fit



GEL-3000
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Size: 6-12, 13, 14

A new entrant into the structured cushioning category, this debutant is anything but shy. The latest innovation in premium, high performance running shoes. Includes technologies specifically designed to guard against forefoot over pronation.

*For more information or to order this product
please call 01925 243 360 or e-mail info@asics.co.uk*

asics



Jakabel's Floatsuits, UV wear and pool toys

Endorsed by the Royal Life Saving Society, the Swimsafe Floatsuit is the number one choice floatsuit for kids again in 2008.

The Swimsafe Floatsuit is not only guaranteed not to tip over, it's also comfortable to wear with a UPF50+ sun protection rating - kids just love to wear it all day long.

Developed in Australia, the Swimsafe Floatsuit's patented design has built-in flexible foam buoyancy panels around the body and a unique foam neck ring that keeps the child's head above water - leaving arms and legs free to practice strokes or just splash around safely.

Who said fashion and sun protection wear don't mix? Jakabel's new sun protection range for kids just got funkier. Made from easy-to-wear lightweight nylon lycra, with a protection of UV50+, new bright designs for 2008 means that kids will love wearing the range and they'll look great too.

Try some funky pool toys and games from Jakabel's unique and interesting ranges. From Fish-shaped kickboards to Toypedos you play catch with underwater, there are many interesting designs, functions and colours to choose from

To view the complete Jakabel range or to find out details about your local stockist, visit www.jakabel.com, contact Josu Shephard on 020 8715 2385 (office) or 07957 541 406 (mobile) or email josu.shephard@jakabel.com



Swimming



Fashy

To satisfy customer demand, Fashy has again increased its ranges of swimwear, swim hats, Aquasport and pool shoes.

Chlorine resistant and water repellent sports costumes are now available, alongside an extensive choice of swimwear for all age groups. For children and babies, the range includes swim-nappies, UV protection suits and a sports range - all at excellent prices.

The Aquasport range now features many new products aimed at aqua-fitness, including:

- Pool and aqua-fitness socks - these are copper lined and slip-retardant, ideal for aqua-aerobics and aqua-cycling.
- Aqua-trainers - perfect footwear for in and around the pool.
- Aqua-walking sticks - developed from Nordic walking, they offer an enjoyable alternative in aqua-fitness sessions.

For beginners and children, swimming aids and accessories are all featured in the full-colour catalogue, which also includes a selection of swim caps, turbans and shower products.

Pool and swim shoes are now becoming a must-have for regular swimmers. Fashy shoes have been developed to offer protection from fungal infections and are anatomically designed and extremely hardwearing.

Goggles, diving masks, snorkels and diving rings are also available to give a comprehensive choice for retailers to order from one source all year round.

Fashy can also manufacture branded and corporate swimwear, swim caps and shoes. Fashy delivers direct from Germany and is able to supply small orders all year round.

For more information call 01202 515251 or email sales@fashy.co.uk





Fashy

Fashy has the largest range of swimwear and accessories for all age groups, including swim nappies and swimming aids for babies, swimwear and pool accessories for children and sports swimwear for both men and women.

The company also has a range of swim turbans and full-coverage costumes for the mature swimmer. Short-sighted? Fashy even supplies dioptre goggles.

Full-colour catalogues are available for all ranges for year-round deliveries.

For more information call 01202 515251 or email sales@fashy.co.uk

Maru launches vibrant new collection for spring/summer 2008

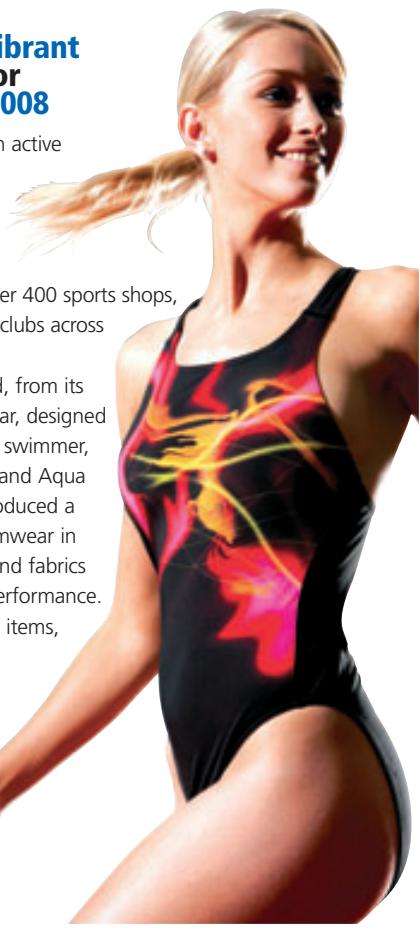
Maru, the UK's most stylish active swimwear and equipment brand for men, women and children, launches its new 2008 spring/summer collection this month in over 400 sports shops, online retailers and health clubs across the UK and Ireland.

Right across the board, from its core Aqua Sports swimwear, designed for the competitive/fitness swimmer, to its sporty Aqua Leisure and Aqua Kids range, Maru has introduced a range of striking new swimwear in vibrant colours, patterns and fabrics developed for optimum performance.

New swim equipment items, from must-have children's quick-release goggles to brightly coloured, short training fins, have also been added.

To find out more or request a brochure call Maru

Swimwear on +44 (0)115 985 1212, email sales@maruswimwear.co.uk or visit www.maruswimwear.co.uk



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Black Pearl 2008: wet control technology

- Increased grip in wet conditions
- New red colourway on soleplate
- Low water absorption
- Excellent sweat resistance

Nomis Black Pearl

The latest design upgrade to emerge from innovative boot brand Nomis is the nomud Technology on the soleplates of the wet control Black Pearl. Previously one of the biggest selling boots in the Nomis range, it now incorporates even more technology to create an unrivalled boot in its price range.

nomud reduces the amount of dirt, mud and grass that is collected during normal game play, reducing weight build-up and retaining great ground traction.

nomud technology:

- Reduces mud and grass build-up on outsoles
- Helps retain good ground traction
- Keeps boots light
- Aids cleaning



For retail information contact Steve Lees: steve@nomissports.co.uk

Football

Molten - the world's leading manufacturer of footballs

The Molten brand is synonymous with quality because of the world-renowned innovation and advanced technical know-how that the company brings to all its products, including its wide range of footballs.

The FIFA APPROVED Molten ACENTEC Vantaggio Soccer Ball is the ultimate professional football and is the match ball for most high-profile world events.

Just launched is the new Molten International Match Ball. Manufactured using ACENTEC technology, but in a high-gloss yellow polyurethane leather, it is of International Match Ball standard and retails at a very competitive price. It is proving very popular with a wide range of leagues and clubs in the UK.

For further information contact Molten Sports on 0800 298 8217, email info@moltensports.co.uk or visit www.moltensports.co.uk





Reusch

They're back - even better than before

Launched for the sponsored goalkeepers at the 2006 World Cup, Reusch's top-of-the-range glove, the Goalinator Pro Ortho-Tec, has proved a major seller over the last two seasons, completely selling out in both 2006 and 2007.

Worn by top professional players and enjoyed by keepers at all levels of the game, the Goalinator Pro Ortho-Tec has undergone a few changes to improve the performance of the glove even further, and the new 2008 version will be back in stock and available for delivery from March 1, 2008.

New features include Advanced Shockshield, offering 30 per cent more protection to the knuckle area, a wider wrist strap for more support and new Catch Control latex that provides more cushioning and improves catching ability. Don't miss out on any further sales - place your order today.

For more information about the full range of Reusch products contact Bob Fidler at BF Sports on 0161 439 4383 or email b.fidler@reusch.com



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For further details contact 0800 3280180



MITRE'S LATEST FOOTBALL SERIES

As the world's oldest and leading manufacturer of Footballs, Mitre is proud to launch the newly designed Revolve series of football equipment, including footballs, shinguards, goal keeping gloves and football boots.

The Revolve football, as launched at the start of the 2007 football season is being played with by all 72 clubs of the Football League, with the Championship clubs using their own club coloured and club badged version of the ball, and is the most technically advanced football on the market. The outer layer is made of Micro Fibres which offers exceptional player control in all weather conditions, and the perfectly round shape is achieved by Mitre's patented panel pattern and cincap lining.

The revolutionary design has also been applied to Mitre's professional football boot, aptly named the Revolve Pro. Ritchie Barker of

Hartlepool is Mitre's first professional player to trial the boots, and says "These are such comfortable boots, they are really lightweight but I still feel protected and I love the one piece velcro lace closing at the front, as it gives me a completely clean striking zone which can only help me score more goals".

High praise has also been given to the Revolve goal keeping gloves by Ipswich Town's Shane Supple "I love the feel of these gloves on my hands. They fit me perfectly and provide me with all the protection and handling I need to do my job to the best of my ability". The Revolve AFP Glove is made of super soft latex which extends onto the back hand to reduce seems, which in turn minimises errors when collecting and releasing the ball. The finger protection technology provides increased stability, and can be completely removed to suit your needs and preferences.



For more information visit
www.mitre.com or email enquiries@mitre.com

SEARCH & FIND

The search engine is still king when it comes to finding goods and services. But how do you optimise your website? Dave Howell explains

It's a fact that most customers who shop online locate the goods they want to buy with a search engine. This is invariably Google, which has over 300 million people each day using it to search the web. For online businesses search engines, and Google in particular, have become as important as their physical shopfronts. Without a website that can be found by all the major search engines, your business may as well not have a website at all.

If you already have a website or are in the process of building your first, read on to learn some simple techniques that will vastly improve your site's page ranking on all the major search engines, and especially Google.

Inside search

Google and its brethren may look like complex pieces of computer code, but they rely on just one highly intelligent program called PageRank. Google uses PageRank to evaluate the content that its 'spiders' find. Spiders are a sort of digital mystery shopper that crawl over the web looking for new content.

Loading your website's pages with keywords, or meta tags to give them their proper name, doesn't actually help with your site's page ranking on Google. This is because Google is looking for sites that have been tried and tested by other websites and have plenty of links to and from them, indicating that the site is popular.

The key, therefore, to a high page ranking on Google is to make your

website as good as it can be. Think about your visitors and what they want from your site. If you put in the time and effort to create a website your visitors want to regularly return to, Google will notice this traffic and reward your site with a high page ranking.

Unscrupulous search engine optimisation companies have in the past set up dummy websites to simply link back to the site they want to promote. Google is now very good at evaluating the quality of the links back to a site it is ranking, so this technique is now redundant. Google will also punish any site that tries to manipulate its spiders with a low page ranking.

Optimising your site can seem like a daunting task, which is why the search engine optimisation industry has rapidly expanded as the web became more popular as a place to shop. Many companies will claim they can get your site to the top of Google in no time at all, and of course charge you thousands of pounds for the privilege. In reality, you can make some simple changes yourself and save some money into the bargain.

The spiders that the search engines will send out will firstly look at your site's URL. Does it accurately describe your business? Also, because Google's spiders are looking to provide their searchers with the best sites on its index, they look for websites that are well laid out and easy to navigate. Have you included a site map? If not, set one up, as they are one of the best ways to improve your site's page ranking on keywords.

Content

Look closely at the content on every page of your site. Is it well written? Is your target audience taken into consideration? Google even looks at the relationship that words have on a web page. If you're not that good at writing for the web, hire a writer.

Also, don't fall into the trap of loading each page with links. Google recommends a maximum of 100 per page. And don't forget to add 'alt tags' to every image on every page of your site. Google indexes these and looks favourably on sites that have taken the time to add them.

Many commercial websites use Flash animation. Google can index these, but not the actual text that appears in the Flash movie. If you intend to use Flash on your site, it's best embedded in a standard HTML page so you can add the title tags that Google will index. Many Flash sites have become popular and, therefore, have a high Google page ranking because lots of sites link back to them. Google recognises this and rewards popular sites.

There are no real shortcuts to search engine optimisation. Great content and an understanding of your site's target audience are the key components to getting your site a high page ranking on the world's search engines. Impressive graphics or Flash movies alone won't give your site a high page ranking. Animation and Flash movies that people want to watch and link to will.

The more work you put into the content of your site, the higher it will rise on page rankings. Content is still king when it comes to search engine optimisation. ■

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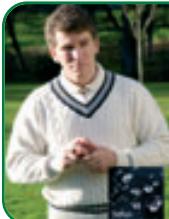
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Under the counter

A sideways look at the world of independent retailing

A friend recently sent me a court report from his weekly paper about a sports shop owner who arrived at his local football club just as the team were about to take the field for a Screwfix League semi-final, filled the dressing room door with his considerable bulk and asked: "Where do you think you're going in them boots?"

It transpired that the club had bought their kit from the retailer six months earlier and failed to pay for it. Now he wanted his boots back, and had brought an even larger mate along to ensure that he got them.

Wellies

As a result, the team appeared on the pitch in a motley array of footwear, including sandals, plimsolls and bedroom slippers. The goalie was wearing wellies and they lost 7-1.

The shopkeeper got his money and was bound over to keep the peace for six months. His mate, who was on an ASBO at the time, had to attend an anger workshop and got a long weekend rock climbing in the Peak District.

You can't really take the law into your own hands, I suppose, but any independent retailer will know how the shopkeeper felt. Debt collecting, is to my mind, the most

Sadly, quick payers have long since joined the ranks of shorthand typists, cheese wires on grocers' counters and people who sharpened scissors as an extinct species. Indeed, evading payment for as long as possible now seems to have become a respected art form.

Fed up as I was with having to wait for my money, I couldn't but admire the smooth-talking cove who told me: "I'm afraid the finance director is out of the office this morning and has taken the cheque book with him. He's gone to pay the bail for our sales director."

But this sort of perverse ingenuity is getting increasingly common, according to Barclays Commercial Services, which actually collects the weird and wonderful excuses from slow payers.

My favourite has to be the excuse from a debt-beleaguered sports shop



essential on all cheques, is a familiar component of the 'can't pay, won't pay' syndrome. "You'll have to wait three weeks," one creditor was told when he rang up to chase an overdue cheque. "The MD has broken his leg skiing in America. The doctors won't let him fly home until then."

"That's funny," said my friend. "I've just seen his double sitting in a blue Merc in your car park."

Honesty does occasionally surface during these tense encounters - as when a creditor was told by a Norfolk car repair firm: "We're a bit strapped

"The absence of managing directors, whose signatures seem essential on all cheques, is a familiar component of the 'can't pay, won't pay' syndrome."

horrible aspect of running your own business - and we're all spending more and more time doing it.

Indeed, according to the latest figures, 80 per cent of small retail businesses now have problems with customers not coughing up and over 1,000 companies a month are actually being murdered by cash starvation.

If I seem to be taking the matter personally, I am. For the first time after 30 years of running a shop I've had to take a customer to the small claims court for non-payment of £800. I hated doing it, but when you're on your own you simply can't afford to lose that sort of money, can you?

My dad, who had the shop before me, hated owing money. He had been known to catch bills in mid air as they fell through the letterbox and have his chequebook out before the postman had closed the garden gate.

in the North East, who reported: "The building was ram-raided last night and our accounts records are under a Ford Escort parked in the water sports department."

Creative

And how about this creative excuse from a small Welsh retailer who couldn't pay for a consignment of Cardiff City football shirts: "A goat got into the building and ate all the invoices and our cheque book"? Or this from a small London winter sports shop: "Only the managing director can sign cheques and he's abseiling down the building for charity. Can you call back tomorrow?"

The absence of managing directors, whose signatures seem

for cash at the moment, mate. What do you say to a car respay to the value of your invoice? Brighten it up a bit."

"Thanks, but no thanks," was the reply. "We've only got a hearse and you'll pay for your mother's funeral like everyone else."

Sometimes you think you're going to have to admit defeat. "I'm sorry, there's no one here," I was told when I recently rang to chase a long-overdue invoice owed by a squash and badminton club. "I'm just the contractor. The building is being pulled down this afternoon."

Even this cloud turned out to have an unexpected silver lining. I never got paid, but I got a nice load of stone for the rockery. ■

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