

THE LEADING TRADE MAGAZINE FOR UK SPORTS RETAILERS, MANUFACTURERS AND DISTRIBUTORS

# Sports

## Insight



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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF SPORTS AND PLAY ASSOCIATIONS



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

A tradition of innovative excellence



**CUSTOMER LOYALTY**  
13 ways to keep them coming back for more



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



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Ashaway	KangaROOS	Samurai
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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@partridge.co.uk](mailto:siedit@partridge.co.uk) or call 01273 719900



Raising a glass: Berghaus chairman Sir Chris Bonington

## Heart rate monitors getting stylish

From the early 1990's heart rate monitors have steadily grown from being niche products for the dedicated athlete, to a commodity that is a required element of anyone's fitness training equipment. Functionality of heart rate monitors is now awesome with units around the £150 - £200 price point featuring heart rate, speed, distance and more. At the £30 to £80 price the functionality marketing has now been superseded by looks and style.

Polar have for a long time developed a look and feel all of their own. Timex have consolidated their heart rate monitoring collection with products at £30, £45 and £75 that while keeping true to functionality and quality which they are renowned for, the emphasis is very much on style and looks.

Provided that a heart rate monitor, also features a Time of Day feature, this style approach seems to make sense, how long will it be before we see heart rate monitors, with metal bracelet straps or leather straps. What functions and fashion features would you like to see in a heart rate monitor. Comments please to: [steve.raven@assist.co.uk](mailto:steve.raven@assist.co.uk)



## BERGHAUS OPENS IN METROCENTRE

Berghaus has opened the doors of its first flagship store - in the Gateshead MetroCentre. Formally opened by Sir Chris Bonington and climber Leo Houlding, the store is the UK's only outlet to stock the full range of Berghaus performance outdoor clothing, footwear, rucksacs and accessories.

Owned and operated directly by Berghaus, the store has been designed by leading retail specialist Caulder Moore, which has moved away from more traditional outdoor designs and delivered a distinctive 'footprint' for Berghaus that brings the outdoors and the brand to life through the clever use of materials and textures.

"These are very exciting times for Berghaus," says Richard Cotter, Berghaus brand president. "Berghaus' roots are in North East England and the MetroCentre has provided us with an outstanding opportunity on our doorstep to directly deliver the brand experience that we aim to promote globally."

Says Berghaus chairman, Sir Chris Bonington: "For five decades, I have been on a continuous adventure, seeking out new challenges and unexplored regions of the world. For much of that time, Berghaus kit has been my constant companion and now the company is starting a new adventure of its own."

"The store design is stunning, the people running the store are committed experts in their field and of course the products on display are outstanding. I am sure that this will be a great success."

## PRINCE BUY-OUT

USA-based private equity firm Nautic Partners, LLC has joined with the Prince management team to acquire Prince Sports, Inc from its existing shareholders.

Chris Crosby, managing director at Nautic Partners, says: "Prince is an iconic brand in racquet sports. The management team has done a terrific job rejuvenating the brand by combining product innovation with marketing and service.

"The whole organisation is focused on broadening its footprint globally, and we are ready to support their quest to be number one in the racquet sports industry."

Currently poised to break \$100 million in sales by the end of its fiscal year, Prince's recent global growth has been led by solid performance in the company's racquet category, due in large part to its award-winning line of O3 products.

In addition, Prince's footwear division also contributed to the company's growth as its new M Series line expanded its distribution base. The successful introduction of a new synthetic gut multifilament string fuelled additional growth and, most recently, the company repositioned its apparel business with the launch of Aerotech Performance Apparel - an advanced fabric and construction system designed and engineered to help players look and perform their best on court.

## Diary Dates 2007

### THE OUTDOOR TRADE SHOW 2007

OCTOBER 3-5  
Stoneleigh Park

### GOLF EUROPE

OCTOBER 7-9  
New Munich Trade Fair Centre

### SPORTS SOURCE ASIA

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JANUARY 27-30  
New Munich Trade Fair Centre

### ISPO CHINA WINTER 08

FEBRUARY 24-26  
China International Exhibition Centre, Peking

### SPORTS MERCHANDISE EXHIBITION

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Chelsea Football Club, Stamford Bridge

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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@partridgeid.co.uk](mailto:siedit@partridgeid.co.uk) or call 01273 719900

## STAG NEWS



Ward Robertson: "We are delighted to announce that STAG will be officially represented at OTS"



STAG's retail membership continues to grow. During August it increased to 410 independent businesses, with new members coming from a wide spectrum of categories, including sports, outdoor and printwear/promotions.

The buying group has also formed supply agreements with Rohnisch, Espirit and Aerobed in the last few weeks.

### OTS EMBRACES STAG

Following recent discussions between the founders of the Outdoor Trade Show and STAG, OTS organisers have announced an arrangement whereby STAG will promote and recommend the event through its communication channels with its 410-strong retailer membership.

Taking place at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire on October 3-5, OTS is the UK's premier show for the outdoor trade with over 60 leading suppliers showcasing their new product ranges for 2008. Now entering its second year, OTS has expanded by over 50 per cent to accommodate the increased demand from the trade for quality exhibition space.

Aimed at attracting independent retailers as well as buyers from the leading multiples, OTS has lots to interest anyone involved in the outdoor sports retail trade. Exhibitors will be presenting a huge variety of new products for spring/summer 08, providing an ideal opportunity to make

important decisions at one venue.

Commenting on the new partnership with OTS, Ward Robertson, managing director of STAG, said: "We are delighted to announce that STAG will be officially represented at OTS. We will recommend attendance at the OTS show to all of our 410 members. The show is the largest outdoor show in the UK and is very well organised with many leading brands represented."

Talking about the latest endorsement by STAG, OTS organiser, Alasdair Scobbie, said: "We have developed a reciprocal relationship with STAG where in return for a presence at the show, news about OTS will be communicated to STAG members via newsletters, direct mail, the STAG website and at STAG's own buying show.

"There are mutual benefits from working closely together with STAG, assisting us to actively promote the show, and we very much look forward to welcoming STAG to OTS."

**For more information on STAG, visit [www.stagbuyinggroup.com](http://www.stagbuyinggroup.com). To find out the latest news about OTS visit [www.outdoortradeshow.com](http://www.outdoortradeshow.com)**

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Liverpool fans to Colchester Utd's Dean Gerken

**Transfer Market**

... Nike has appointed **Nigel Cowman** (pictured) to the new position of general manager for Nike Ireland. Cowman will combine this with a role as Category GM for Nike's UK and Ireland running business, with both roles reporting to UK and Ireland general manager Jim Allaker. ... **Helly Hansen** has strengthened its management team with the appointment of **Peter Sjölander** as CEO and **Knut Are Høgberg** as CFO... **England Netball** has appointed current performance director **Nigel Holl** as the organisation's director of netball.



The new position encompasses not just the development and performances of the England squads and support staff, but also supervision of all elements of playing at grassroots and development levels... **Alistair Dickson** has joined the team at **1000 Mile Sportswear**, working with brands including Mueller, Maxim, 1000 Mile socks, Nathan and Compeed. Bringing with him over five years' experience in the rugby and running sectors through his previous work with Mizuno and Saucony, he is 1000 Mile's first dedicated sales rep for Scotland and the North... UK online golf equipment retailer **The Sports HQ** has appointed **Cliff Dews** as operations director...



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ISRA's website is proving popular with retailers and suppliers alike

**ISRA SHOW SUCCESS**

The Independent Sports Retailers Alliance held a very successful two-day trade show in July at the Radisson Hotel in Athlone.

In attendance were over 90 per cent of ISRA's members and over 30 suppliers representing over 60 brands from both the UK and Ireland. An attendance sheet was given to all suppliers and incentives were offered to ISRA members who attended every stand at the show.

The ISRA 'incubator' stand, where the buying group offered a shared stand to a number of new independent suppliers, proved popular.

The next ISRA trade show is to be held again at the Radisson Hotel in Athlone on January 21-22, 2008. Interest in the event is already very strong with only limited space available.

ISRA is also organising a mid-season retailers-only meeting in October so that retailers can get together without the time pressures of a trade show and explore and discuss new developments.

The ISRA website - [www.isra.ie](http://www.isra.ie) - continues to be a very active forum, linking retailers with retailers and suppliers with retailers, while the buying group's central billing system continues to be rolled out, with more retailers taking up the option of paying suppliers through this central invoicing method.

**Sports Shorts**

... The 2007 Winmau World Masters will become the richest televised two-day tournament in world darts when it is screened by BBC Sport over the weekend of November 17-18. Staged by the British Darts Organisation, it will have record-breaking prize money of £60,000 - with the Men's World Master collecting a cheque for £25,000 - and for the first time ever JJB Sports will be secondary sponsor. ... The International

Olympic Committee has launched the first element of its new global promotional TV advertising campaign in the run-up to next year's Olympics in Beijing, entitled 'The Best of Us'. The IOC's 2007/08 promotional campaign objective is to communicate the key Olympic values to a global youth audience. The campaign will be rolled out in a phased approach in the run-up to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games and beyond... Adidas has unveiled the latest instalment of its 'Impossible is Nothing' campaign, in which four New Zealand All Blacks explain the meaning behind the Haka, the traditional Maori incantation performed by the team before every game... Berghaus has signed a license and distribution agreement with E-Land Ltd, one of Korea's top four retailers, which has a consolidated turnover of \$8.5bn from its operating base of over 4,000 stores. Under the new arrangement, E-Land will have the exclusive right to license the Berghaus brand and distribute its products throughout Korea... Wembley Stadium has issued a legal warning and compensation claim against a mobile phone company that illegally projected a logo onto the side of the stadium...



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- **A wrist pedometer**
- **Dedicated products for men and women.**



The new range is available to order now from UK distributor, Burton McCall, and will also be previewed at the STAG Show in November.

**Call 0116 234 4611/4622 to place an order or for further information.  
[www.burton-mccall.co.uk](http://www.burton-mccall.co.uk)**

Burton McCall is the UK distributor for Highgear Inc., the exclusive New Balance licensee for sports monitors in the U.S. and U.K.



# 60 Seconds

**Neal Spencer,  
director of GNG Sport**

### How's business in the UK?

Never been better. The demand for our products has been growing hugely over the past few months, and long may it continue. It is undoubtedly peak season at the moment, which is largely related to the start of the Guinness Premiership season [at time of writing] and I'm sure this year's Rugby World Cup has helped raise the sport's profile.

### And exports?

Exports are continuing to grow year on year, particularly across Europe, where currently you might expect it to be strong with France hosting the World Cup. We are also seeing an increased number of orders from further across the globe, which we hope has resulted from our growing reputation, with offers from as far afield as Singapore, where the game really is beginning to take off.

### Can you tell us about the range of products you sell?

We now have a vast range of training equipment, with post protectors and tackle pads being key, although we are flexible in our approach to new product development and are confident that we are able to manufacture bespoke solutions to any request. In fact, much of what we produce has been developed by listening to some of the game's top players and coaches – the very people who use the end product.

In addition to the sports sector, we are also starting to diversify our offering and have recently designed and installed pads in supermarket car parks, primary schools and even a local police force that required riot protection equipment. These requests all originated from customers asking whether we could adapt our manufacturing technique to other areas.

### How are they marketed/sold?

As the leading manufacturer of branded equipment, our customers tend to effectively do the marketing for us. However, we still advertise to the trade by trying to attract brands that have yet to harness the power of rugby equipment as a way of advancing their own bread-and-butter sales.



### Your branded post protectors are proving very popular. Why is this?

As more and more companies strive to be associated with rugby and other sports, there is much more competition to sponsor tournaments and events, which are great platforms for generating brand exposure. As such, there are numerous branding sites that can be embraced, including protective equipment, in addition to traditional perimeter board advertising and stadium branding.

It isn't just for big tournaments where there is an increased appetite for sponsorship. Many clubs are seemingly changing shirt sponsors each season now as they use their undoubted attraction as a tool for negotiating lucrative packages, which will earn them and their sponsors a lot of revenue.

### What is the origin of the GNG Group?

The GNG Group is a manufacturer and worldwide distributor of a wide range of foam-based products. It was established in 1977 and employs 35 people generating a turnover of £4.5 million. The company operates from a purpose-built 25,000 sq ft office and manufacturing facility near Leeds.

### How did GNG Sport come about?

As a former rugby player myself, I am well aware of the strains anyone playing the game puts their body through, both during training and in a match scenario. Bizarrely, I began my commercial career making products for the pet and garden industries and was approached by my then rugby club, Sandal RUFC, to make some pads for them. This, in turn, led to me joining the GNG Group – and the rest, as they say, is history.

### Can you tell us about some of your recent projects?

I would say that 95 per cent of our trade comes from the world of sport, with the majority of work involving the provision of post protectors and tackle pads for rugby clubs. However, we are often approached by customers who ask us to provide solutions to non-sporting briefs, which is how the previously mentioned projects in supermarket car parks and school playgrounds came about.

### What projects have you got in the pipeline?

With the rugby union season underway, we are still being kept busy with orders from the clubs and sponsors themselves. In addition to fulfilling these requests, we are working tirelessly to expand our offering, both within the sports sector and beyond. Whatever the requirement, we'll have a solution. **SI**



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White-Black, Black-White, Black-Gold, Gold-Black  
Black-Red, Red-Black, Sky-Navy, Navy-Sky  
White-Green, Green-White



**Valencia** (Unisex Fit) Playing Shirt

Colours:

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Royal-White, White-Royal, Red-White, White-Red  
Maroon-White, White-Maroon, Navy-Red, Red-Navy  
White-Black, Black-White, Black-Gold, Gold-Black  
Black-Red, Red-Black, Sky-Navy, Navy-Sky  
White-Green, Green-White



**Rotterdam** Skort

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McDavid HexPad is the next generation of base layers. Combining all the recognised benefits of a compression undergarment, the Long Sleeve Pro (RRP £39.99) is the ultimate in rugby protection.

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Individual hexpads in the shoulder allow both breathability and flexibility for comfort and performance. The permanent presence of tiny silver ions gives the fabric an antimicrobial finish, inhibiting odours such as those caused by perspiration.

You can also machine wash and tumble dry the garment. Why wear two undergarments when one will do?

For further information call McDavid on 08701 188002 or email [info@mcDaviduk.com](mailto:info@mcDaviduk.com)





### Solar Power

Timex's Solar Power is available in the UK from October 2007 via the UK distributor ASSIST.

Solar power adds a new dimension to the Timex sports watch offering - battery back-up via solar power means no more annoying battery changes, and in its own way contributes to a carbon neutral environment.

With Solar Power, your Timex will just keep on ticking. The basic model has the features of a 50-lap watch, interval timers, alarms, etc, while additional models include Shock Resistance and Dual Tech technology. Prices start from £69.99.

Further information about the retail launch of Timex Solar is available for retailers from ASSIST on 01978 664743.

### EXEL Nordic Walking poles and accessories

Nordic Walking UK distributes original Finnish Nordic walking poles and accessories by EXEL.

Nordic Walking UK is the leading authority on Nordic walking in this country and is responsible for the development of the sport nationally. Nordic Walking UK has trained over 260 instructors and all Nordic Walking UK instructors use EXEL Nordic walking equipment.

Nordic Walking UK supports the retailer through building direct links between local instructor and outlet. Nordic Walking UK, with its partner ASICS, promotes as the country's leading website for information on instructors and classes and EXEL and ASICS Nordic walking stockists.

Nordic Walking UK: 020 8878 8108.



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and t-shirts to your own designs as exclusives. The company also offers a range of official Champions League products.

For details of probably the most comprehensive range of Manchester United products available call/fax 0161 748 8799 or email [cds.leisure@btopenworld.com](mailto:cds.leisure@btopenworld.com)



### New accessories from HILLY

HILLY Clothing will shortly be launching a new range of accessories to cater for the runner when the weather gets colder and darker. In line with HILLY's philosophy of offering technically advanced, innovative and value-for-money products, the new range is certain to be a great success.

The new Elite glove combines function and style. Made from MAXDRY PLUS, the glove has high capacity breathability, moisture diffusion and drying ability. A towelling panel, reflective trim and contrast colour offer excellent design features, while innovative finger grips help the runner press his/her stopwatch. Retailing at £12.99, it's not difficult to see why they have pre-sold so well.

For further information call HILLY on 0161 366 8207.





**GILBERT Rugby**

GILBERT, the world's oldest rugby manufacturer, has been developing and supplying the highest quality rugby balls since William Gilbert first provided balls to Rugby School in 1823.

The continued evolution of the company's match ball technology and engineering processes has ensured that it remains in the position of market leader over 180 years later.

The modern GILBERT is, however, much more than just balls: over the past decade the company has expanded into all rugby product sectors and is now one of the few brands capable of equipping a club and its players with all of their rugby needs.

For more information call 08450 66 1823, email [sales@gilbertrugby.com](mailto:sales@gilbertrugby.com) or visit [www.gilbertrugby.com](http://www.gilbertrugby.com)

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## Street Gliders Evolution

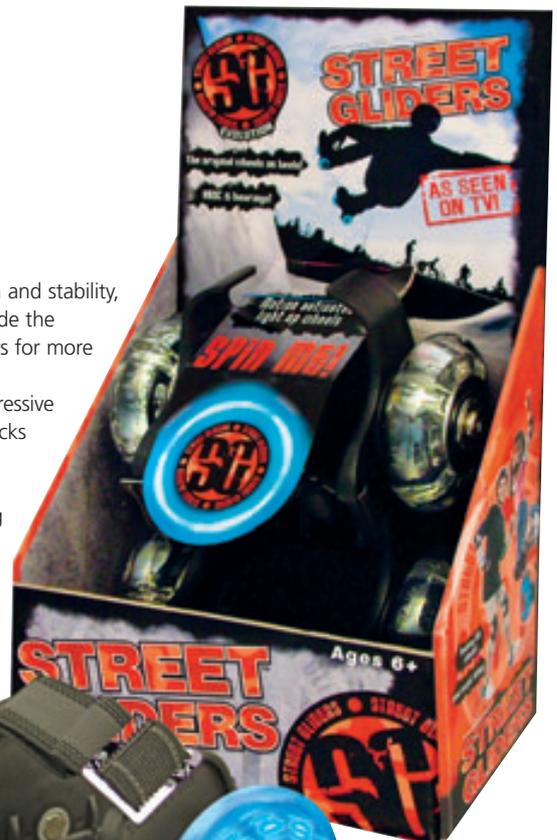
The much-anticipated Street Gliders Evolution from Hy-Pro International have arrived.

The design patented Street Gliders Evolution sport new technology, yet more strength and stability, even brighter flashing lights and an easy-adjust mechanism. The Abec 5 bearings that made the originals such a big draw for skaters will still remain, but a new wheel configuration allows for more stunts, more tricks and loads more fun.

New branding and packaging has given Street Gliders Evolution an edgier, more aggressive feel and make a great in-store display, creating an instant focal point for budding rock chicks and boy racers.

For ultra fashionable youngsters, there's Street Gliders Pink to match any trendy footwear. Licensed versions will also be available, with major licenses such as Bratz getting the Street Glider treatment, incorporating cool design features such as shoe lace covers and hub caps. Licensed safety helmets, knee and elbow pads and wrist guards will also be available.

For more information on all the new products available from Hy-Pro call 01582 670100 or email [sales@hy-pro.co.uk](mailto:sales@hy-pro.co.uk)





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Berghaus chairman Sir Chris Bonington hangs around at the opening of the new store

# Talking Shop

**Berghaus opened its first store in Newcastle's MetroCentre last month. Sports Insight caught up with the company's brand president Richard Cotter**

## Why did you decide Berghaus should move into retailing?

In recent times, there has been a big shift in the importance of brand in-store presence in the outdoor industry. Our consumers really want to be involved in the whole brand experience. Opening a Berghaus flagship store has been on our radar for some time and when it came we were delighted to take the opportunity to do that on our doorstep in the MetroCentre.

Not only will the new store be an important commercial enterprise in its own right, it also has an important role to play as we expand our international horizons.

## Can you describe the store?

The store is fairly narrow but deep and has differing segments around the perimeter walls, with dedicated areas for footwear and rucksacs. By working their way through the store, people can get a flavour of how ranges sit together across each category.

## What other features are in the store to encourage sales?

We want to give the shopper as much information as possible without having to ask for assistance if they don't want to. We're still working on this, but to start with we have two display boxes where the product is encased and features and benefits are highlighted -

something we can change regularly as new lines come in.

We've also highlighted main usage and features on special swing tags at the end of hanging arms to give the consumer more guidance and, of course, our staff have had rigorous and thorough training, all achieving Berghaus' own accreditation awards.

## What specific design factors were incorporated into the outlet?

The challenge for the store designers was to bring the outdoors and the Berghaus brand to life, but in a contemporary setting. Our designers, Calder Moore, moved away from the more traditional outdoor designs and delivered a distinctive imprint for Berghaus that combines materials and textures with stunning graphics and display areas to deliver both a clear brand message and an effective shopping experience.

## How strong is the outdoor fitness market?

The outdoor industry is mushrooming. During the next few years, outdoor participation will increase massively as, more than ever, people want to find a route of escape from everyday life. These days, the opportunity to try a wide range of 'adventure sports' is massive, making it one of the fastest growing sectors in the leisure industry.

## What do you anticipate will be best sellers?

This autumn we have some strong new products across our ranges, from core climbing and walking gear, to the all-new Ator collection (performance gear with a stylish edge). The opening weekend was just before the start of the autumn term, so our Next Generation range of kids' gear sold really well.

## What marketing strategies are accompanying the launch of the store? What will keep customers coming back?

Berghaus has a year-round programme of marketing and PR activity. We have also developed some focused activity in North East England with an integrated campaign, mixing editorial, advertorial, direct mail and events in the MetroCentre. So far, all of this has successfully driven footfall to the store and helped generate much better than predicted early sales.

What do I think will keep customers coming back? Great product, a great Berghaus brand experience and knowledgeable, helpful staff.

## Does the store have an online arm?

No. We have no plans to sell directly online and will continue to supply approved online retailers.

## What future plans do you have for Berghaus retail?

For a start, we need to walk before we run. We are confident that the store will be a success and will certainly continue to explore the potential for other standalone outlets.

## What has been the biggest challenge in this venture?

There were plenty of challenges, but many of these were due to this being new territory for us as a brand. It was a fantastic experience and, due to our desire to get it absolutely right, perhaps the team involved would say that the biggest challenge was maintaining the level of time commitment needed to keep the momentum going in the lead up to opening day.

I am sure that we will face new challenges in time, but we now have a flagship Berghaus store in a great location, and it's enormously encouraging to see the tills ringing faster than we anticipated.



Butterfly Outdoor Home Rollaway

# What's Hot

## Butterfly table tennis tables

Alan Ransome, managing director of Ransome Sporting Goods, the exclusive distributor of Butterfly and Schildkrot table tennis equipment, talks to Sports Insight about the new range of Butterfly table tennis tables.

### Butterfly has just launched a new range of table tennis tables. What is different about them?

We have improved the look for all of the models that are targeted at the home and recreation market. A bigger percentage of table tennis tables are being sold on the internet today, so that having a table that looks great in addition to playing well is important.

In particular, we are offering several of our models with a blue playing top and silver legs. The blue has been a colour approved for play by the International Table Tennis Federation for some time. Initially, there was little interest in blue in the UK, but now we feel that offering blue as well as green will expand our sales.

### Your company has a large share of the UK table tennis market. Why is this?

The Butterfly brand is the leader for table tennis throughout the world and everyone that knows about table tennis is aware of this. We have, for more than 25 years,

combined Butterfly with Schildkrot and by marketing these two together we are able to target a quality product for every table tennis requirement - Butterfly for tables and specialist equipment and Schildkrot for hobby, bats, balls and sets.

Our target is to provide the best quality and value for every need and believe that by doing this we are able to secure a large market share.

### With tables in particular, why is it that you sell such large volumes?

First of all, the quality - the bounce of the ball on our tables is particularly good. In addition, the storage systems that we use are very customer friendly and several of our models don't even need assembling before first use.

Our tables also represent real value. We have a quality table to meet every key price point. We also offer a good service - several of our staff are table tennis experts and enthusiasts and have worked for the company for many years. We carry large stocks of tables in our Middlesbrough warehouse, so we can arrange carriage the same day that we receive an order. We also keep a good supply of spare parts.

Another reason, of course, is the strength of the Butterfly brand, which we enhance by supplying tables for the vast majority of tournaments played in the UK. Butterfly tables are used for the English National Championships, all 10 ETTA Grand Prix Tournaments, all Scottish TTA Tournaments, all English Schools National Competitions, all VETTS events and many others.

carrier service. Our carriers make an appointment with the customer to deliver the table on a day and at a time that suits both parties. This seems to be working extremely well, both in terms of customer satisfaction and the very low percentage of damage that we are currently experiencing.

### What's the future for table tennis? Is it a sport that is growing?

The popularity of table tennis is increasing. Table tennis isn't a sport which experiences dramatic swings in popularity, it is much more steady than that, but there seems to be a gradual increase. The fact that table tennis will be a significant part of the 2012 Olympics will obviously help over the next few years.

Table tennis is also being promoted heavily in schools by the governing bodies and the government, and this is increasing the interest in the hobby market as well as education. It is a great sport for people of all ages to play. As well as kids playing at school, families have tables at home for their recreation and there is a very strong desire from the older generation to play table tennis, as it is one of the sports that really keeps people fit into later life. **SI**



Butterfly Compact Wheelaway



The new Butterfly Easifold Rollaway

### Damage to table tennis tables during delivery used to be a problem. Is this still the case?

We have been able to significantly reduce the number of tables that are damaged in transit by using a two-man

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# Video analysis for the perfect shoe

Differentiating yourself from your competitors is a tried and tested way of keeping your head firmly above water.

Recently we have seen multinationals (and websites) deepen the water by adding performance running shoes to their offering at vastly reduced prices. Now customers, unaware of the experience and product knowledge required to sell performance footwear, are making purchases based of price and brand alone.

How loyal will your customers be when they see the same shoes for less?

During the last decade running shoe companies have invested millions of research dollars to create innovative products; however when these products are sold without properly trained or experienced staff these innovations can be devalued.

Providing a video analysis service is an excellent way of differentiating yourself from the big boys. Not only does it



provide an insight into proper footwear selection, but gives the customers the opportunity to see what effect a shoe can have on them. It's a fabulous point of discussion for your customers' friends "Smiths Sports videoed me on a treadmill before they let me buy these" - we know how important 'word of mouth' is.

Many specialist running shops already provide video analysis in their stores and have benefited from the increased credibility it provides.

The retailer's key role is to 'Video Proof' shoe selection, observing the stability, support and cushioning that the shoe offers. Stay clear of terminology such as 'Gait Analysis' unless you have highly trained staff of a medical qualification. It is crucial that sales staff do not make uneducated assumptions on the basis of 2D video analysis programs.

Video analysis is a powerful tool but it doesn't make up for a lack of biomechanical expertise – therefore it is vitally important to 'keep it simple' and just 'video proof' your selection.

Runners can be fanatical and often run more miles than they are either fit or ready for, some may even look a for a scapegoat when injured and faced with huge physio bills. Keep it simple and video proof.

There are huge benefits of working with podiatrists, physio's etc as they can help train and educate staff as well as provide support etc. The instant report feature within software like TEMPLO Lite can help staff to refer back to podiatrists and physio's and offer the runner the best service possible from qualified professionals.

Research highlights that the complexity of generic sports software programs can hinder the sales process, especially during busier periods. It's just takes too long. Based on these findings Contemplas have created TEMPLO Lite, a video program specifically designed for retail environments, with features that simplify and speed up the motion analysis procedure.

Stefan Klippel (MD Contemplas) 'We have introduced click 'n' look programming to speed things up - you click it once and it automatically records and presents the clip ready to analyse, there is no reason you cannot video proof every running shoe'.



If you need to see two or three shoes (or even 4, 5 or 6) together TEMPLO Lite will 'auto-synchronise' these in one analysis screen. All drawing tools are available, as is an instant report button that will create store branded reports instantly, adding take-away value for the customer.



Running specialists 'Profeet' replaced all their old video software with TEMPLO Lite. Danny Orr the manager, "It's night and day compared to our old software; the automatic synchronization is an absolute godsend. I would suggest we have reduced our capture and analysis time by over 50%!"

To offer Video Analysis you will only need a camcorder, tripod, computer treadmill and TEMPLO Lite – that's all it takes.

For more details see [www.mar-systems.co.uk](http://www.mar-systems.co.uk).



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# Customer loyalty

Never has repeat business been so crucial to your success, says Tony James

**RIGHT:** When it comes to winning repeat business, no news isn't good news

Cheshire golf club boss John Masterson had dealt with the same equipment supplier for four years. The relationship ended last month when he rang the supplier with a query, to be told by a receptionist: "I don't think we have ever dealt with your company - what is the call in reference to?"

"It's in reference to all the business we continue to give you, although five of your rivals call me nearly every day," Masterson replied. Now that business, worth nearly £50,000 a year, goes to someone else.

It just shows how important it is to keep customers sweet if you want their repeat orders - and never have repeats been so crucial to business success.

According to the latest Chamber of Commerce figures, it now costs five-eight times more to attract new customers than to keep the existing ones. And apparently, 68 per cent of customers will not hesitate to go elsewhere if they feel unappreciated.

## Complaint

Indeed, according to CBI research, the most usual complaint from punters who decide to find alternative suppliers is: "They don't seem bothered whether they have my custom or not." Remember, too, that while the customer who's happy with your service will tell four others, the person who thinks he's got a bad deal can tell as many as 17.

Retail questionnaires have pinpointed two main reasons why repeat orders from valued customers are going elsewhere:

**"In Japan the customer is a god, in America he is king. In the UK he's often seen as something of a pest"**

- Indifference of staff, and particularly the boss.

- Failure to tell the client what's going on - and particularly when a job won't be completed in time. No news is not good news.

Maybe all this all sounds trivial stuff, but a recent London School of Economics study showed that good customer relations can put 10 per cent on a small business' gross income - and bad relations can take up to 20 per cent off.



"Your greatest source of new customers will always be existing customers," says Jay Conrad Levinson, author of eight books on marketing. "Nine-tenths of the formula for getting repeat business is common courtesy and common sense. Something as minor as a pleasant chat and a cup of coffee is sometimes all that's needed to convince a customer to stick with you, rather than go elsewhere."

But consultants stress that getting repeat business is not just a matter of smiling at people. There are proven ways of increasing the chance of customers coming back. For instance:

- Get personal - organisations don't buy goods and services. People do. So establishing a good relationship with a buyer is a first priority. Learn about customers and their lives. Notice what they hang on their walls and place on their desks - and comment on them.

Put the customer at ease. Problems that, to him, may seem insurmountable may be commonplace to you. Reassure him that between you, you can sort things out. But be credible - don't exaggerate your abilities just to impress.

- Anticipate customer needs - by keeping in touch and checking if you can be of help. Think ahead to what the market will be demanding next year and working out how you can improve products or services.

- Set realistic targets - and either meet them or beat them. Clients always want it yesterday, but if you know a repeat order can't be done that quickly speak up right at the beginning. It's better to set a realistic deadline and beat it than accept an unrealistic one and make the client wait.

- Stay competitive - and that means keeping a close eye on your competitors, what they are charging, new services they offer, improvements 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," says Jay Conrad Levinson. "You'll get dated and stale, and customers will lose confidence."

- Listen to customers - if that seems obvious, it's worth knowing that a



recent London School of Economics study showed that nearly 60 per cent of bosses reported poor communication with goods and services suppliers.

"Too many businesses regard customers as a necessary nuisance," says retail business consultant 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 improve that so-important communication and make customers feel special:

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

While discussing a customer's requirements and problems, confirm that you're actively listening by:

1. Asking them to clarify key points.
2. Asking questions that extract new information.
3. Describing how you have dealt with

similar situations and problems.

4. Insisting on clarification of what's been discussed. Dr Tom Eddison warns: "It's surprising how often client and salesman part without confirming what has been agreed. Something should be sketched out on paper before they part."

5. Admitting mistakes, and putting them right.

Remember that of customers who complain, nearly 70 per cent will do repeat business with you if you admit the error and remedy it. The percentage jumps to 85 per cent if you resolve the problem quickly and pleasantly.

When there's been a monumental foul-up, use this simple five-point plan:

1. Listen - to the exact nature of the problem.
2. Ask - what the customer wants you to do.
3. List - the possible solutions.
4. Act - immediately on an agreed solution.
5. Follow up - to make sure the client is satisfied.

When you're dealing with the problem, don't argue or claim you're in the right. Be polite and stay friendly. But don't be too bright and breezy - that may give the impression you're not taking the matter seriously.

■ Make returns easy - the customer who gets a faulty item may buy from you again if they know that replacement isn't going to be a hassle.

■ Honour your commitments - it's easy to promise the earth and then have second thoughts when the customer's in the bag. So keep your side of the bargain, no matter how small the account.

Avoid the temptation to give potential customers priority. Your obligations are to your existing clients. Customer care can be expensive and inconvenient, but without it you'll lose repeat business faster than you'll gain new clients.

■ Take care of customers - don't promise more than you can deliver. A let-down customer will probably never trust you again. Make it easy for customers to reach you with repeat orders via phone and email.

■ Respond promptly - studies have shown that customers expect to hear from you within four hours at best and 24 hours at worst. Any longer and your chances of getting repeat orders will plummet.

■ Stay in touch - this isn't rocket science. To get repeat orders you have to constantly remind people that you're in business. So choose marketing

methods you can afford and stay in touch with customers on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis.

Try newsletters, emails and even postcards. And what about special invitation cards, a clipping of some interesting trade development or an up and coming industry event? The ways and reasons to stay in touch are endless.

Follow up a delivery with a phone call next day asking if everything is okay. Send a feedback form that customers are asked to complete - thus you will be alerted to any problems before you lose the customer.

■ Go wide and deep - that's the latest jargon for offering complementary products and services so that your customers get pretty well everything they need from one source, and so increase your chances of getting repeat orders.

■ Thank customers for their loyalty - by giving them something they weren't expecting. If you give business to your customers it will show how much you value them. And connecting one customer with another is surely the ultimate thank-you.

When they have put in repeat orders, send a handwritten thank-you note. Any personal touches will make you stand out from the competition.

■ And finally - remember, it's the little things that can really make a difference when you're looking for repeat business.

If you go beyond the standard customer service offered by most companies, you should, with luck, get customers coming back to buy from you again and again. ❏

**BELOW:** It's better to set a realistic deadline and beat it than accept an unrealistic one





# Store security

With shrinkage continuing to be a major problem for all retailers, store security should be high on your agenda. Dave Howell reports

**ABOVE:** The UK continues to have one of the highest shrinkage rates in Europe

**The latest figures from the European Retail Theft Barometer puts total losses due to retail crime at €32 billion, which equates to €70 per head for every person in Europe. So having a robust and reliable security installation for your store is essential.**

Says John Smith, vice president of retail sales for ADT Europe, Middle East and Africa: "Every retailer faces a unique set of security challenges. There is no single technology or one-size-fits-all approach that works for everyone. Increasingly though, leading retailers in Europe share a common goal when it comes to their security strategy - they want their investment in technology to go well beyond loss prevention."

## Stemming the tide

The UK continues to have one of the highest shrinkage rates in Europe, but retailers are stemming the tide of theft by innovating with technology to protect their stores and merchandise. Technology alone, however, can't offer complete protection, as a more integrated approach is needed to tackle the diverse range of attacks that could befall your store. What is clear is that more needs to be done by all owner-managers to ensure they are doing all they can to protect their assets.

The past year has seen major innovations in store technology that utilise existing platforms in new,

innovative ways. One example is combining CCTV with point of sale technology. One problem that retailers consistently have is analysing sales data to try and identify any shrinkage that is taking place and who is perpetrating the theft. One good example is BT's Redcare digital CCTV network, which integrates CCTV and POS transaction data.

"What retailers are looking for is one box that controls their alarms, CCTV and EAS to reduce maintenance and service costs and for ease of use," says Alex Vincent, group business development manager at ID Technology Group, a company that supplies electronic security solutions.

"RFID is being trialled by our industry, but is a long way off from being implemented and we feel it will not significantly impact how electronic security systems work. It is more for distribution and auditing to keep a track of stock getting onto the shop floor. It cannot help with shrinkage figures and is more of a buzz phrase at the moment."

Electronic article surveillance systems offer good front-line security for all retailers - a statement that Laurence King, managing director of ORIS Group, a company that specialises in retail loss prevention, agrees with: "Correctly used and managed properly, EAS can be a cost-effective technology to use. Costs will

vary depending on size and style of outlet and product, but retailers implementing EAS for the first time can realistically look at a 50 per cent reduction in their shrinkage attributable to public theft."

## Human factor

Outside of technological systems, the human factor still has a very real and useful part to play in store security. Larger retailers in the sports sector still maintain their high-profile security guard contingent as a deterrent to opportunist crime.

The Federation of Small Businesses' research indicates that 20 per cent of all crime is committed against small businesses. The retail sector suffers the highest level of intimidation or threatening behaviour of any business sector - a third of small firms have been the victim of such crime in the past year. The sector alone loses £1.5 billion per year to crime. Shopkeepers often live above or near their business, which means that even when they're not working they can continue to be victimised.

Says FSB policy chairman, John Walker: "The local shop is often taken for granted. It's always there when we need it and so it is taken as a given. However, one in three small shops has been the victim of intimidation or threatening behaviour in the past year.

We often hear of shopkeepers being assaulted or even murdered in their stores.

“The government is rightly keen to regenerate deprived areas of the country. However, they cannot do so if local businesses are closing to move elsewhere. The route to success in local regeneration lies in defeating crime. Businesses can then prosper - providing employment to youths who are currently disaffected and taking them off the streets. Economic growth will then regenerate areas in a more effective and sustainable way than any government-funded programme could achieve.”

Says Steve Boyden, group managing director of Securiplan, a manned guarding provider: “Security officers provide a vital deterrent so long as they are of a high calibre and have been given the right retail-specific training. It’s simply not enough to employ people who will just stand at the entrance to a store.

“You need proactive, alert officers who have been trained to a high standard and will make a real difference to the retailer. At Securiplan we’re now developing market-leading initiatives, which see our officers effectively managing stock-loss programmes for our blue-chip retail customers. These new initiatives have been proven to greatly reduce stock losses.”

## Tech to the rescue

A more integrated and holistic approach to store security is gaining pace across retail chains. With figures indicating that retailers in Europe spent €7.6 billion on store security in 2005 alone, the market for innovation is certainly present. Improvements like smart safes are now being used to focus security attention on the till environment. Smart safes can detect counterfeit notes as they are deposited, alerting staff, who can then challenge the customer. Deposits can also be

tracked with a PIN number to reduce potential staff shrinkage.

Helen Wylde, marketing director at ADT, says: “Retailers are increasingly turning to technology to enhance their security and help reduce losses. The key technologies that are available include electronic article surveillance and source tagging (the application of concealed EAS labels during the manufacturing or packaging process), digital closed circuit television, intruder alarms and access control systems. Increasingly, retailers in Europe want their investment in technology to go well beyond loss prevention and to deliver valuable business intelligence.

“Retailers are being driven by strong competition to gather increasing amounts of data on store operations and customer behaviour. In turn, they are seeking greater intelligence and

## “New systems like advanced CCTV and RFID are on the horizon and will debut in larger stores soon”

analytics from their technology systems to help capture the data and deliver the insights that will increase sales, improve operational efficiencies and even anticipate losses, whilst at the same time meeting evolving customer demands. For sports retailers who are also involved in the fashion market, EAS is an ideal solution.”

A robust EAS system is a must for all sports retailers, but more flexible systems that integrate with other aspects of store management are coming online. What has been somewhat of a piecemeal approach to security is converging. Looking further into the future, it’s clear that technology will continue to develop.

ADT is in the early stages of combining EAS and RFID technology to create an integrated solution. This kind of convergence is inevitable as suppliers see the commercial benefit that these technologies could offer

retailers from the supply chain to the shop floor. It’s early days yet, but over the next five years expect to see solutions on sale that seamlessly integrate your entire supply chain, stock control and POS systems.

## Protecting assets

As a sports retailer, balancing your need to merchandise stock and keep it secure can seem like an almost impossible task. Locking high-value items away has always been the preferred means of security, but a study from GfK Custom Research indicates that consumers want free access to the goods they want to buy.

Any barriers to this access severely curtails the buying decision, with 84 per cent of Europeans surveyed stating that they want full access to a product before buying, while 93 per cent say

they want full access before buying clothes and shoes.

“The findings indicate that consumers want invisible security systems as a high priority,” says Marie-Christine Jean, manager at GfK Custom Research. “Not only are they effective against shrinkage, but they are also transforming anti-theft systems into purchasing facilitators.”

Says ADT’s Helen Wylde: “EAS is, and continues to be, the most robust in-store theft prevention technology. Beyond this, high street retailers are looking for their systems to deliver valuable business intelligence.

“Analytical software tools that integrate with existing security systems can collect data, process it to make it more intelligent and useful to end users and retailers can then deliver this ‘actionable information’ anywhere in the organisation - to individual stores, out in the field for regional managers via PDAs, for example, or to the corporate head office. Internet-based technologies are also making the deployment and availability of information increasingly viable.”

New systems like advanced CCTV and RFID are on the horizon and will debut in larger stores soon. This technology will become more cost-effective over the next few years, bringing it within reach of even the smallest store. Every retailer needs to take their store’s security seriously, but it’s easy to get carried away with the latest technologies. It’s important to look closely at your needs and buy the system that delivers reliable security at an affordable price. **51**

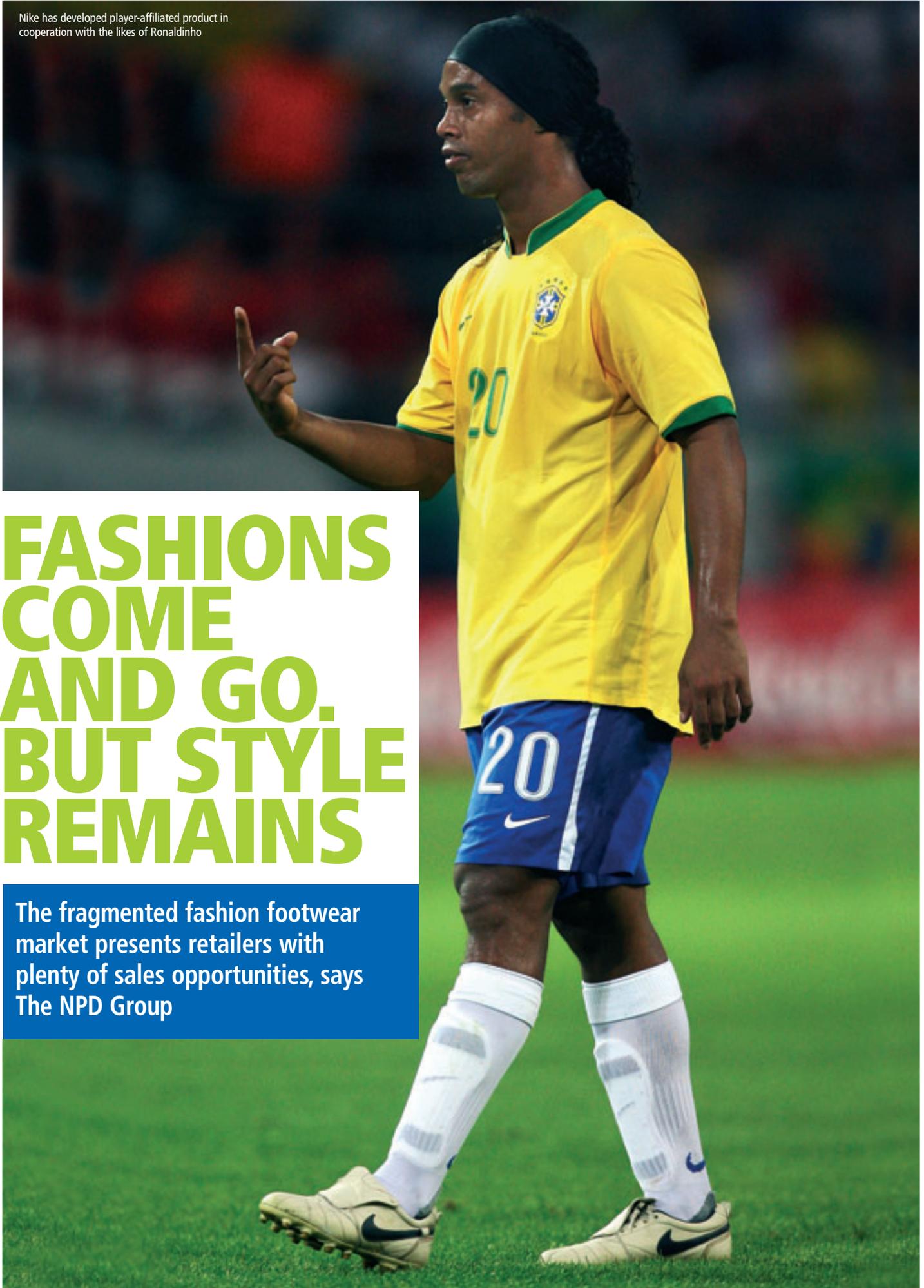
**LEFT:** Smart safes can detect counterfeit notes as they are deposited



Nike has developed player-affiliated product in cooperation with the likes of Ronaldinho

# FASHIONS COME AND GO. BUT STYLE REMAINS

The fragmented fashion footwear market presents retailers with plenty of sales opportunities, says The NPD Group



The last few years have seen the fashion trainers market become more fragmented as an increasing amount of brands enter the sector. K-Swiss and Lacoste are the current heavyweights squaring up to Nike and Adidas to fight for space amongst the key retailers, including the likes of JD, Schuh and Office.

Fashion shoe brands like FlyLondon are also more prevalent, with crossover products blurring the boundaries between casual shoes and trainers. This emerging style of footwear is becoming more acceptable, with wearers gaining access to bars and clubs where trainers were once forbidden.

In addition, virtually all fashion brands have developed their own ranges of branded sports-style footwear, a strategy designed to gain additional sales from brand-loyal consumers. Diesel expanded into footwear on the back of its strong growth in jeans and were immediately able to charge £60+ at retail, something that is not easy for many brands to pull off.

### Tipping point

Some of the niche brands have the appeal that they are not as well known as the major players, and help to

**“As the smaller brand increases its presence in the multiples, the average selling price can suffer as retailers come under pressure to sell the product”**

highlight a person’s individuality. Trendsetters who inspire youth culture help to kick-start the growth of such brands as they become the shoes to be seen in. However, they may drop the brands they’ve inadvertently promoted as it becomes too mainstream.

As the smaller brand increases its presence in the larger multiples, the average selling price can suffer, as retailers come under pressure to sell the product through. Increasing competition in key selling periods can force retailers to reduce prices. It can therefore be argued that there is a downside to being stocked in the large retailers. Do fashion-conscious youths really want to be seen in a shoe that costs less than £30 and is stocked in discount retailers like Sports Direct?

Many consumers do not want to see everyone else wearing the same shoes as them, giving brands the conundrum of trying to balance the buyer’s individuality within a finite range.

Puma’s foray into ‘sport and fashion’ fusion seemed just what the market was after, and the company continued to launch its shoes in a wide variety of colourways from a variety of designers. In retrospect, this seems like a natural diversification for sports brands to move into, as it gave them access to a much broader target market and its importance should not be downplayed.

Nike and Adidas are experienced in situations like this, having withstood the rebirth of Puma. Product ranges incorporating sports-inspired, retro, classics and limited re-issues, as well as developing new technologies including Shox and player-affiliated product (for example, Nike’s Ronaldo trainers), have equipped them to fight on more than one front.

### Interest

The smaller players whose only line of business is fashion footwear have to keep the public interested with new and exciting product and advertising, or quickly diversify into other arenas and decrease their reliance on this fickle market. Trends can change overnight and brands can fall out of favour as quickly as they came in. A brand with a multi-category approach is more likely

to be able to absorb any downturn that arises from one area.

K-Swiss and Lacoste may well be the current ‘must-have’ brand, but it looks like a mismatch to expect them to stand toe to toe with the goliaths of the sports industry. Whoever comes out on top, the consumer will always win as competition will only drive the market forward.

Sports Tracking Europe® (STE®), from The NPD Group, is the premier source for European sports industry point-of-sale (POS) and consumer panel data. For more than a decade, STE has been at the forefront of athletic footwear, sports apparel and sports equipment tracking. It provides critical information to the industry’s top manufacturers and retailers and others vested in the sports market.

The UK sports team can be contacted on 01932 355580. ☎





# Kick Off

Football will be garnering much media attention over the coming months to Euro 2008, benefiting all those in the sector, says Catherine Eade

England coach Steve McClaren will be under intense pressure during the forthcoming qualifiers for Euro 2008, but it's all good news for the football brands gearing up for another strong season.

Following the World Cup market-boosted strength of last year, it may seem like a hard act to follow, but for certain football brands sales over the past 12 months have been rising steadily.

Mitre is one such company, with marketing director Nicki Lesirge able to say: "We are seeing growth against our 2006 figures even though 2006 was a World Cup year, which

generated a large amount of revenue for the brand on sales of England-badged footballs. Mitre has also experienced phenomenal growth within the educational supply business, which includes schools, colleges, universities and local educational authorities."

## Strong sales

Nomis is another company achieving strong sales, expanding into new premises recently due to the success of its range of innovative football shoes. Nomis managing director Alistair Woodhead is bullish about the current state of play.

"Year on year we are doubling our turnover," he says. "We now have distribution in 300 shops, and the key task is training staff members to understand our brand. Where we have done this, the sales are outstanding.

"We still feel that football is a booming sector of the sports market, despite retail slowdowns over the last year. We have seen growth year on year with our sales in the football sector and this year is no different. Although retail sales have slowed down, there are many other distribution channels that are experiencing steady growth, especially sales over the internet."



Meanwhile Kelme, a family owned company based in Spain, also reports a pleasing start to the season. David Small, managing director of Tuff Sports, Kelme's UK distributor, says: "Despite a general retail slowdown within the sports trade due to the poor weather this summer and other economic factors, football seems to mostly fare well in such times. I guess this is why it's the country's favourite sport.

"In a highly competitive market our sales growth has been positive. We believe that specialising in making high-quality performance products is the right way to go and we are finding that more and more people appreciate this. There is certainly a growing demand and awareness for more brands like Kelme.

"Also, we are the UK distributors for HO Soccer, the UK's fastest

growing goalkeeper brand, which has recently added England keeper David James to a growing list of sponsored professionals."

### Euro 2008

The next big event for the beautiful game is, of course, Euro 2008, and a raft of exciting qualifiers now and over the next few months have already got fans hooked. Lesirge points out that the sort of sales increase a football brand could expect from the Euro 2008 tournament is largely dependent on successful campaigns for the home nations.

Says Lesirge: "At this stage we are still waiting to see whether England, Wales or Scotland will do enough in the group stages to secure their places in the tournament finals, and this will play a large part in the type of sales figures we are looking at for this period.

"If all three nations make it, we will expect to see a significant rise in country-specific product, including balls, body flags and accessories. Retailers should be thinking about their Euro 2008 purchases as soon as possible. To guarantee timely deliveries they really need to have placed their orders before the end of 2007."

Kelme's David Small backs this up: "Every company involved in football will be hoping for increased sales during 2008 and we will be no different, so 2008 will be a very important year. The best advice for retailers is to plan ahead and find the right balance of brands and products to cover demand. Also, it's always a plus to have a few quality football brands in stock that do not directly compete with brands stocked by the larger multiple stores.

"The best time to place orders will be between October and January. Our advice is to be confident when booking stock but not to overbook, as people will be watching Euro 2008 as well as hopefully being inspired to play more football. Also, the second half of 2008 should be a great time for retailers - and even better if England do well, of course."

### New boots

So what new products are coming onto the market now and for next year? Mitre's 2008 football range has been given a brand new look and feel, with design innovations spearheaded by its new 'Revolve' football and football boots.

Says Lesirge: "This year the brand new Revolve ball has been developed for the 72 clubs in the Football League, with the 24 clubs within the Championship playing with their own club coloured and badged balls.

"A lot of work and development has also gone into a new range of goalkeeping gloves, which can compete aesthetically and technically with any other product on the market. There are also a number of brand new products in the 2008 range, including generic training and benchwear. This allows smaller clubs to buy off-the-shelf apparel that boasts professional design and performance. Also new is a full range of training equipment that provides everything that a football club could require for training and matches, including hurdles, cones, free kick dummies and training bibs."

David Small says technological advancements such as improvements within textiles with regard to moisture management technology and undergarment supports and protection are becoming more popular, while





football boots are also becoming lighter each year.

The Kelme boot range includes the Poron-based FLOT System, a cushioning technology located in the heel that disperses shock and provides extra comfort and support, plus the TRX2 outsole, a biomechanically engineered cleat placement technology designed to provide excellent traction and surface contact.

“At Kelme we have continued to receive an excellent response to our shark skin football boots. We believe they offer many unique benefits over other boots,” says Small. The Kelme Shark boot is the first-ever football boot to be made from untanned shark skin, which features a matrix of tiny overlapping and hard tooth-like structures called ‘dermal denticles’.

They are built on the same engineering principles as the most durable of man-made compounds such as fibre glass and reinforced concrete, and due to their unique microstructure the denticles are almost as tough as granite and as strong as steel. Shark leather is one of the strongest leathers known to man and by various calculations it has been assessed to be from seven to 11 times stronger than conventional leathers, says Small.

Meanwhile Nomis managing director Woodhead says his brand

focuses on three elements: comfort, performance and injury prevention. The best-selling boot in the Nomis range is the Glove, a snug-fitting boot that incorporates wet control and ‘Nomud’ technologies.

The Nomis sponsorship portfolio continues to expand, with the latest signings of Jamie Peacock and Mark Regan adding to a growing list of devotees to the brand, which is still not yet three years old.

“As a new brand we are very lucky, we have new technology coming out all the time, such as Nomud soleplates and other injury prevention features, and these are not ‘me-too’ products,” says Woodhead. “Nomis, without being biased, is focusing on the injury prevention side, whilst other brands often chase the fashion with more lightweight boots.”

### New players

And on the subject of fashion, no football feature would be complete without mention of the fashion icon and highest paid footballer in the world. But has Beckham had his day? What new football heroes are coming through for UK supporters to get behind?

Says Lesirge: “Beckham is still a fundamental part of the England football team, and this was

proven by his recent absence from the squad and the poor results England were achieving during this period.

“But I think there are a number of youngsters coming through as England players of the future, but specifically the current U17 England squad have displayed some excellent promise and I hope to see some of them make the first team squad in World Cup tournaments of the future.”

Kelme’s Small adds: “Although Beckham’s best playing days are behind him, he can still play a positive part in Euro 2008 if he stays fit. Either way, there are plenty of other exciting players coming through such as Matt Jarvis, David Young, Ashley Young and, of course, we have other established stars such as Rooney and Gerrard.”

FIFA recently unveiled research that states that 270 million people, or four per cent of the world’s population, are regularly involved in football in some capacity worldwide, so it is no surprise that the market sector enjoys strong and continuous growth.

Let’s just hope that the home nations can perform as well as the football brands over the coming months. **51**



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No matter how fit or athletic you are, everyone runs the risk of some kind of injury and these packs are ideal for the treatment of soft tissue injuries, sprains, bumps and bruises. The compact size of the Koolpak Sport Instant Ice Pack makes it perfect to carry in your first aid kit or kit bag and a perfect alternative to carrying ice from the freezer.

Koolpak is widely regarded as the UK market leader in sports injury therapy products.

All products can be viewed at [www.koolpak.co.uk](http://www.koolpak.co.uk) or call 0800 1804 285 to request a brochure.

# Football

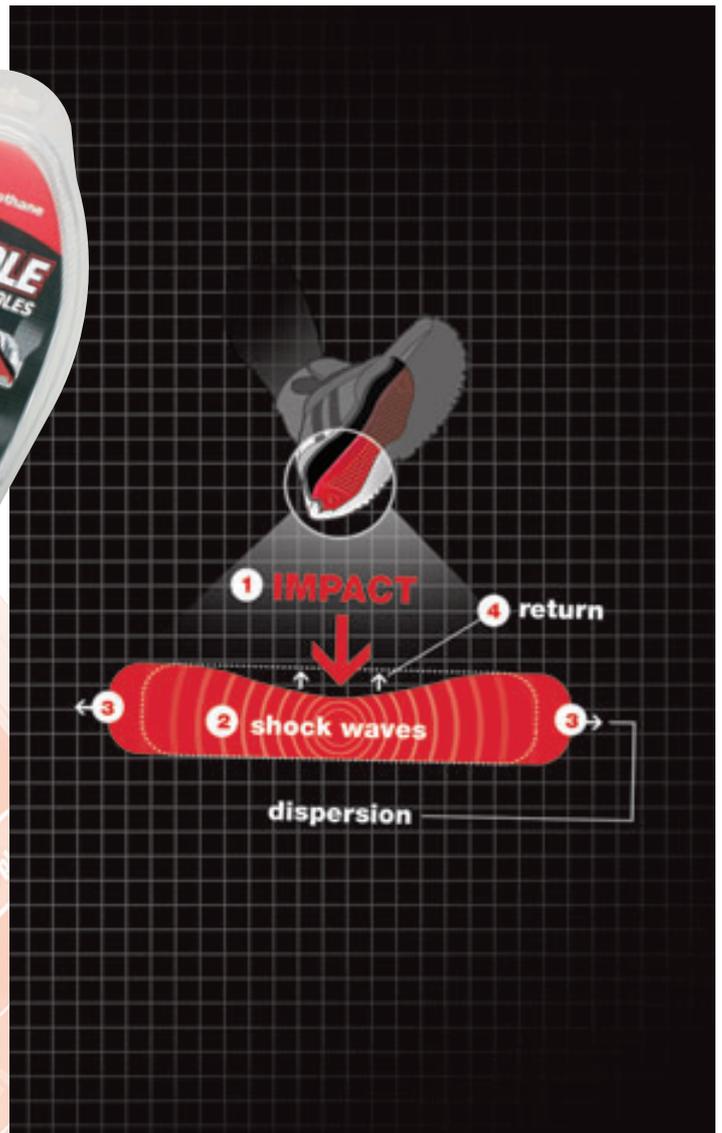


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## "It's time for change"

Under this banner, the Nomis boot range continues to develop and innovate. For 2007 the kids range with no take downs has become a key part of the range, with injury prevention, comfort and the unique Nomis 'grip technology' - as in the men's products - a key selling feature.

What is most rewarding is that consumers who purchased Nomis boots last year are looking to re-buy the brand in 2007. Where retailers have embraced Nomis' training programme, the sell-through results have been very encouraging. For more information email Steve Lee: [Steve@nomissports.co.uk](mailto:Steve@nomissports.co.uk)



# Football

## Reusch



While it's a specialist goalkeeping brand, Reusch does not just make gloves. Every need of a goalkeeper is catered for by the company, which is why international players like Argentina's number one Roberto Abbondanzieri put their trust in Reusch products.

It is the attention to detail that makes Reusch products so popular among goalkeepers, and the fact that every product in the range is designed with goalkeepers in mind. Whether it is gloves, glove wallets, shinpads or apparel, Reusch has a full range for both training and playing requirements.

The new Premium 011 goalkeeper shirt has all the technical features you would expect from a top-of-the-range product. A soft and comfortable fabric, it features a moisture management system to help keep the player dry.

It also has UV protection to keep out harmful rays, Duraguard kevlar elbow padding to provide extra protection and the new Pro Tube system to keep the elbow protection in place - even when diving. Most of all, it just looks good.

To find out more about the full range, contact Bob Fidler at BF Sports on 0161 439 4383 or email [b.fidler@reusch.com](mailto:b.fidler@reusch.com)





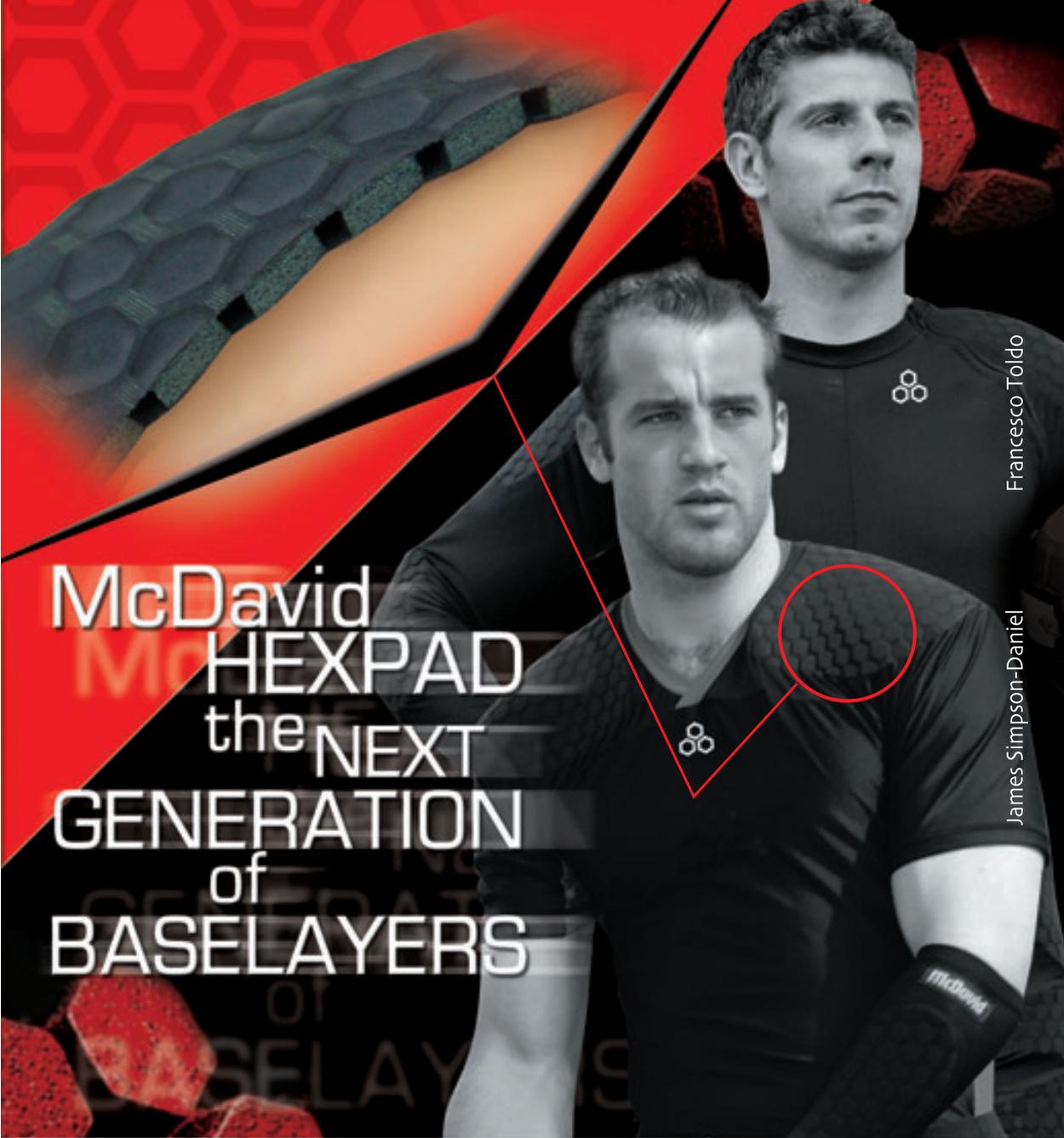
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# Football Fever

Summer tournaments boost football sales significantly. But what do brands do when there isn't one? Alistair Phillips investigates



Next summer, assuming all goes well on the football field in the next few months, England will be awash with the cross of St George. It will be on flags, t-shirts, pencil cases, alarm clocks – you name it, slap it on anything and it will sell.

A recent survey by Mintel revealed that no fewer than 30 per cent of UK residents bought an England flag last year and 17 per cent bought England-related clothing of some sort.

When there's a major football tournament and England is taking part, the country goes totally bonkers.

## Summer sales

England shirts sell in vast quantities at such times, but what do Umbro and other football brands do when there's no major summer tournament? What do all the big kit sponsors and brands that make money from related products do when their teams and players aren't battling it out to become world or European champions?

And then there's Scotland. At the time of writing, the Scots were still handily placed in the qualifying group of death with a decent chance of still making the European finals next summer. Can you imagine the demand north of the border if they do?

Credit must go to Diadora – it appears to be well prepared for all eventualities. Sponsorship & promotions manager Jon Usher says everything is in place to react appropriately, however the autumn's fixtures pan out. "With all the excitement about the qualifiers, it's still been a very busy summer for us," he says. "We will be launching a new home kit next year, but it's all about the timing and the results.

"The away kit we launched in March this year has been the best selling ever and has exceeded all the expectations of the SFA. The team's revival has sparked a great deal of interest and demand and we've been able to hold plenty of stock and replenish orders from some of our retailers on a weekly basis."

While football fever only comes around every other year in international terms, from a European perspective (the African Nations Cup and Copa America don't have quite the same global viewing appeal) football never really leaves the public conscience. That's why even a multi-sports brand like Nike, a major player in so many different sectors, keeps its eye very much on football, even at times when the game, in theory, is experiencing a downturn.

Nike's head of corporate communications, Charlie Brooks, is keen to convey his brand's ongoing focus on the beautiful game. "Nike is a football brand and we communicate that message to consumers all year round," says Brooks. "We are constantly launching new football products and new ranges to the market – we don't just shut up shop on football every two years. There's a constant stream of product, most of which doesn't rely on a big tournament to sell."

These days, the media keeps football in the hearts and minds of the UK population at all times. A fact not lost on Nike. Says Brooks: "Football's media profile is high 365 days a year these days. The tabloids can't get enough football, even in the close season. While there might be a slight drop-off in product sales in the summer, we still sell plenty of it and all year round."

So Nike chooses to keep its football focus, but what about brands that have no choice in the matter? Umbro's business success is so inexorably linked with the England team, surely every other year its balance sheet must look relatively unimpressive because there's no major tournament.



Umbro, once the brand that appeared to have unbreakable ties with Manchester United (it's other major source of revenue), needs England to succeed more than ever because (now Nike supply United) it has a substantial number of its eggs in the Team England basket.

In 2006, for example, sales of the red England away kit helped boost Umbro's sales by 41 per cent year on year to £247 million. That's hugely significant and while it must be great for Umbro when England qualify for a major tournament, the down years have been a bit of a struggle recently and the lack of a tournament to boost England sales has been cited more than once in the company's financial statements as reasons for below par performances.

It seems though that this over-reliance on England is finally being tackled in an effort to give the brand a stronger presence at club level, as Duncan Thomson, Umbro's director of FA division, international football development, explains: "Our 2007 strategy has been to uplift our presence in the Premier League. We've increased the number of teams we supply from one to six this season, which is part of a long-term strategy.

"But the timing also fits in well this season, when there's less happening in terms of England. We have focused more on the club side and also on our individual players like John Terry, Michael Owen and Deco. There's been a shift more towards domestic football for Umbro this summer.

"We will have a big new brand campaign for 2008 following on from our 'One Love' campaign, which was so successful. That will launch in January to peak next spring, but we've obviously been working on it for some time."

## Retailer's role

But what role has the humble retailer to play in the great England replica scenario? With multiples in high season selling England shirts as loss leaders, is there any point in an independent trying to make the most of the clamour for shirts when big tournaments come around?

The big problem, as we all know, is trying to compete with the discounters. Ward Robertson, managing director of the buying group STAG, sees little point in his members doing so.

He explains: "It's not usually a problem getting hold of the kit, but when the likes of JJB, Sports Direct, even Asda and Tesco, are discounting

the England kit, it's very difficult for an independent to compete on price. They sell it for less than the smaller retailers can buy it in for.

"Some retailers are persisting with it and make some money on printing services, but generally speaking, an independent specialist will sell boots locally and kits to local teams and make most of their money that way. JJB and Sports Direct weren't making any money on the shirts; they destroyed the margins on something they can sell hundreds of thousands of. It doesn't make any sense. But that's what happened."

Nigel Conway, managing director of Soccer Scene in London, sells a wide range of replica kits. He agrees with Robertson that it's a tough business to be in. "Price is a bit of a dirty word in replica," he says. "We have to be competitive with the multiples and because we specialise and sell so many shirts, we can be. But for a smaller independent shop, I think they shy away from replica, particularly England, because they can't buy the volume and can't make any margin."

Umbro's Duncan Thomson does however believe that things are looking just a little brighter for independents in this category. "The share of the market is predominantly with the multiples, though there is room for some independents who do a great job with licensed product," he says. "Obviously we don't and can't set the retail price, that's their prerogative, their call. I know there has been a lot of competition on price, but I really do think that's levelled off now."

## Risk factor

Nigel Conway has to take risks when ordering product because the volume of shirts he will sell depends so much on factors beyond his control.

He explains: "I'll be doing my buy for the England kit for next summer this week (late August). We have to assume various teams will qualify when we do our buy, but there is a risk. Umbro have assured me England will qualify, so I'll take their word on that.

"They have to make a shout and so do we. We'll do all of our quarter two buying in the next month – it can be very hit and miss – we have to look closely at all the teams. Poland and Italy will be very big sellers for us if they qualify. We try to stock every team that qualifies and as we have to order now it can be a very risky business."

Conway remembers only too well how in 2004 Adidas didn't bring out a new Greece kit, and then they went on to win the tournament, surprising the football world in doing so. Conway, whose London store is easily accessible to thousands of the capital's Greek community, still rues the missed opportunity to add thousands to his bank balance.

Margins are poor, certainly when it comes to England kits, but still there must be a temptation for any sports retailer to have a flutter on England when next summer comes around. Surely the clamour will be so great that even smaller general sports retailers will receive some enquiries from the public about whether they have an England shirt or two come the big build up next summer, particularly if demand outstrips supply, as it has in the past.

It remains a temptation, but football boots, balls, team kits and accessories seem to offer the better bet. Even the bigger brands, which invest huge sums in sponsoring national teams, realise that as a long-term strategy and for year-round sales this is where their businesses can profit 365 days a year, every year, rather than for a month every two years.

When it does all kick off, there's no reason not to jump on the bandwagon, to take a short-term opportunity if it's there, not necessarily in terms of kits but anything associated with England or possibly Scotland, too. Who knows, you might even be able to shift a pencil case or an alarm clock or two. **31**





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# A fair innings

Cricket sales remain strong, despite England handing the Ashes back to Australia at the start of the year

The last few years have seen the interest in cricket rise to new heights, and despite all the wet weather, 2007 seems to have been another good year for the game. Sports Insight spoke to Richard

Gray, sales and marketing director of Gray-Nicolls, Gunn & Moore marketing director David Broughton and Kookaburra's cricket brand manager Stuart Waterton about the cricket sector.



### How has 2006/2007 been for the cricket sector in general?

**Richard Gray:** Feedback suggests that the trade has enjoyed another good year, fuelled by the excitement generated by the Ashes and World Cup, although the poor summer has not helped repeat sales.

**David Broughton:** Pretty good overall.  
**Stuart Waterton:** Cricket continues to be an excellent performer in terms of retail sales, with the major growth area continuing to be the junior market. The weather has obviously had an effect upon the amount of cricket however, despite this Kookaburra and Readers have both shown excellent growth over the past year.

### How long did the boom last around the Ashes series and what was the effect of Australia's win in terms of England support and sales?

**RG:** The boom in media coverage coincided with the traditional sell-in period for cricket and therefore provided the market with a significant boost. Perhaps surprisingly, England's performance did not seem to have any adverse effect on sales and we found that Gray-Nicolls' sales were actually boosted by the outstanding performances for Australia by Hayden and Symonds, which of course continued on through the World Cup.  
**DB:** The Ashes result definitely depressed demand for junior equipment.

**SW:** The impact of TV coverage of cricket has made the game even more global than ever before. The sport is always on the TV and this means that it is constantly in the public eye. It would obviously have been excellent from a patriotic viewpoint if the England team had been able to retain the Ashes - however, the result did not dampen the spirits of either the cricket playing public or the multitude of young players who had taken up the game as a consequence of the win in England. From a company standpoint, Kookaburra players in the shape of Ricky Ponting, Michael Hussey, Justin Langer and Damien Martyn were successful, which acted as an excellent showcase for the brand.

### How have sales been during the past 12 months?

**RG:** We have enjoyed another record year overall, despite the effect of the recent poor weather, with top-end senior and junior bats in particular proving very popular.  
**DB:** Again, very good overall, but

following an excellent sell-in and a good start to the season, the weather since May has had a big impact on repeat business.

**SW:** We have enjoyed record sales across all of our product groups, not just cricket but also Kookaburra hockey. Readers continues to be the predominant cricket ball within domestic club cricket, whilst the Kookaburra Turf is the ball of choice in the majority of test cricket and all ODIs.

Personal equipment sales have been excellent, with Kookaburra selling an ever-increasing volume of both English willow and Kashmir willow - not to mention the other protective products that every player requires.

### Has the amount of cricket media coverage, such as Bob Woolmer's death and Australia regaining the Ashes, had much impact on interest in the game/sales do you think?

**DB:** Both have undoubtedly had a less-than-positive impact.

**RG:** On the contrary, I feel that the 'no publicity is bad publicity' principle applies here. Whilst the events were certainly not good news for the long-term good of the game, and the World Cup in particular was badly hit, I think cricket is still seen as 'cool' and has raised the bar in terms of exposure and popularity.

**SW:** The death of Bob Woolmer obviously tainted an overall successful tournament, but at the same time stimulated interest among non-cricketers, particularly as speculation grew as to the details of his passing. However, the cricket playing public are a fairly committed group, and as such it does not appear that this had any real effect either way in terms of either participation in the sport or purchasing of equipment.

### How will the ICC Twenty20 in South Africa affect sales in the UK?

**RG:** It can only help maintain the momentum, coming as it does at the start of the trade sell-in, and will be bound to create excitement.

**DB:** I have no idea, but logically I would expect that a good England performance will do no harm at all, and if the competition itself produces some close and exciting action, that would also help.

**SW:** It is clear that Twenty20 has captured the imagination of the

general public and allowed club players to identify more closely with the international game, as this format has been the lifeblood of club competitions for many years. It will be intriguing to see how the professionals apply themselves and take the game to new heights.

### Is support growing for the Twenty20 format? What is the widespread feeling about matches?

**SW:** Most club players will have played in a 20-over game long before the concept was rolled out into the professional game. The atmosphere at a game has drawn a new cricket watcher to the game, which is excellent, although we must be careful not to exhaust the concept with too much of the same style of cricket - as a purist, all forms of the game have attractions which spectators can enjoy.  
**DB:** Feedback continues to be very positive for the Twenty20 format.  
**RG:** The Twenty20 format has been instrumental in introducing cricket to a whole new audience by making the





**“Cricket continues to be an excellent performer in terms of retail sales”**

game more accessible and user-friendly. Without it, coming as it did with the Ashes victory, I wonder where the county game would be now.

**Are there more cricket 'heroes' coming to the fore? Who is going to be big over the coming seasons?**

**RG:** It is always difficult to predict as so many factors come into play, but I have been hugely impressed by Alistair Cook. If he continues as he has started, I am sure he will become an even greater batsman for England than he has been to date.

**DB:** Undoubtedly, but as we are in the midst of exciting negotiations at the moment, I would rather not say.

**SW:** Kookaburra has a well-established professional support programme - we have seen the likes of Owais Shah, Jamie Dalrymple, Ed Joyce and Michael Yardy break into the England set up over the past 18 months. I am sure that the undoubted qualities that these players have will ensure that they will firmly establish themselves at the top level.

**What is your company doing to sustain growth in terms of marketing, products and sponsorship?**

**RG:** Product innovation has been at the heart of our strategy for over 150 years and we continue to focus on keeping our

products at the forefront of the game - better meeting the needs of today's players - which helps ensure that we retain our excellent profile all around the world and at all levels of the game. We are confident that the new Nitro range will help us to continue this tradition.

**DB:** We have new bats, new protective ranges, new luggage, a new shoe and a new helmet for 2008. We are in negotiation with several new players, and if all our plans come to fruition we will spend a record amount on marketing and sponsorship in 2008.

**SW:** The Kookaburra range for 2008 is our most exciting one to date - the graphics are fantastic and the technical innovations in the products will certainly be appreciated by the players. Our role is to provide the best equipment that we can to allow players at all levels to perform at their best, and we will certainly continue to follow this route.

**With no Ashes until 2009, how will cricket keep its profile high over the forthcoming years?**

**DB:** Cricket is a 12-months-of-the-year game with a worldwide tournament programme and media coverage 24/7. Of course, the Ashes are a periodic highlight, but there

are an awful lot of other very interesting and exciting things going on in between.

**RG:** There seems to be an appetite for cricket, which I feel will continue through to 2009, providing the national team do their bit. In the light of the increase in demand, we have experienced in the last three years, we have invested heavily in our bat willow planting, felling and processing programme at Robertsbridge - unique to the industry - to ensure that we guarantee a consistent flow of the key raw material for our craftsmen to work with.

**SW:** The Ashes has obviously been excellent. However, the England team has full international programmes every year as follows:  
**September to December 2007** - England in Sri Lanka  
**January to March 2008** - England in New Zealand  
**Summer 2008** - New Zealand in England and South Africa in England  
**November 2008** - England in India  
**February 2009** - England in West Indies

Hence, there will be plenty of cricket to be seen, which will undoubtedly capture the imagination of players and spectators alike.



## New for 2008 The Bicentennial Collection

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### Gray-Nicolls Nitro bat/Ice Xp Shoe

Designed and developed in conjunction with its international stars, Gray-Nicolls introduce the Nitro. Unique shoulder and toe contouring gives the Nitro an impressive look and feel. Its steep spine running from splice to toe allows an imposing profile full of power. A natural bow gives every player the control they strive.

New for 2008 - the Nitro continues to enhance the Gray-Nicolls reputation for bat making and is successfully endorsed by Ramnaresh Sarwan.

Over the past 10 years Gray-Nicolls has become a leading force in the development of cricket shoes. Cricket, with its vast range of explosive movements, requires footwear specifically designed to cater for the rigorous demands that the modern game places upon players.

In keeping with Gray-Nicolls' reputation for continuous innovation and improvement, it has produced a new range of shoes suitable for the playground to the Test arena.

Designed to meet the needs of serious cricketers, the Ice Xp shoes feature a performance PU upper with revolutionary new outsole, a top quality lightweight synthetic PU upper, Venti-Mesh, Dura-tech toe protection, an Internal Ignite heel cushioning system for maximum shock absorption and forefoot propulsion, an outsole with midfoot torque control system and a blown ionic dual density cmEVA midsole for superior cushioning, while a Rhenoflex heel counter provides custom fit and shape retention.

For more information call 01580 880357, email [sales@grays-int.co.uk](mailto:sales@grays-int.co.uk) or visit [www.gray-nicolls.co.uk](http://www.gray-nicolls.co.uk)

# Cricket Equipment

### Slazenger cricket

Slazenger's new 2008 range will see three new Slazenger bat profiles - the Pure Blade, Power Blade and the Pro Blade.

All three models have endorsements at the highest level - Slazenger's England International Brand ambassadors ODI Captain Paul Collingwood, Ian Bell and Matthew Prior all use Slazenger as their bat of choice. Only the optimum materials have been used to ensure explosive performance and light pick up.

Innovation is at the forefront of Slazenger's new protective range, with the new X-TEC leg-guard and glove range designed to deliver outstanding protective performance. Throughout the range there are also new additions in personal protection, keeping and footwear.

For information on the complete Slazenger series call 0870 333 9400.



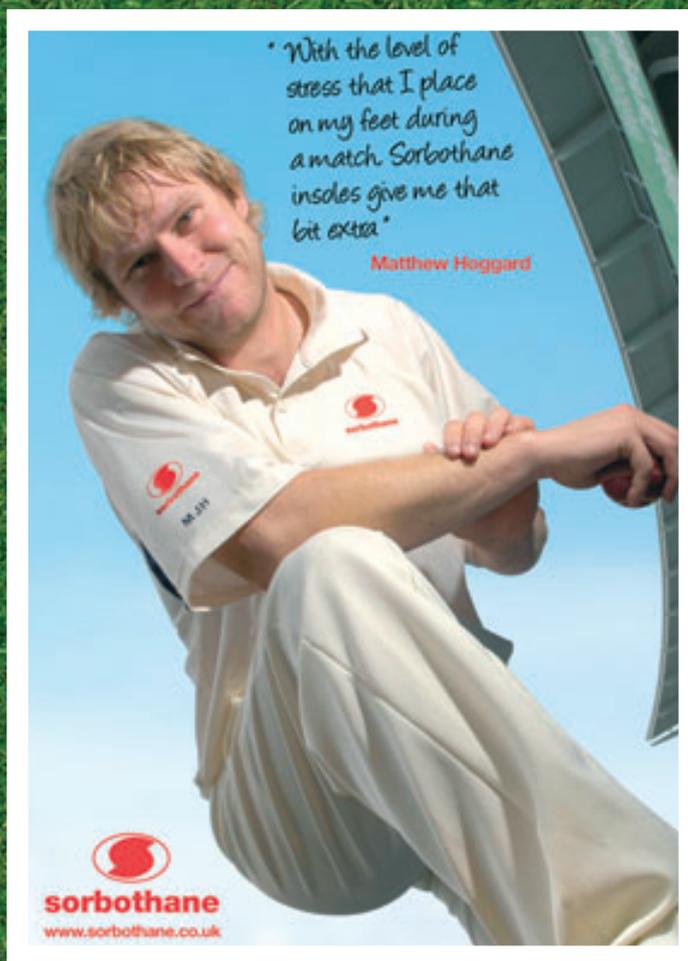


### Sorbothane Double Strike insole

Sorbothane's Double Strike insole allows players to hit the track hard in their delivery stride and push off for that quick single with greater confidence. The shock absorbing insoles help combat the demands of high impact activity by reducing muscle fatigue, protecting weak joints and easing the strain on ligaments and tendons.

Sorbothane is regularly put through its paces by international cricket star Matthew Hoggard. Matthew requires an insole solution that is strong, reliable and trusted - and Sorbothane fits the bill to perfection.

Sorbothane is constructed with an advanced visco-elastic material scientifically proven to continuously absorb up to 94.7 per cent of harmful shockwaves. Its unique compound design is built to last longer than other standard foam insole products. For more information about Sorbothane visit [www.sorbothane.co.uk](http://www.sorbothane.co.uk) or call the sales hotline number: 0161 626 8339.



### Kookaburra 2008 - dominate the game

Kookaburra has built its reputation upon high-quality, technically innovative products and innovative graphics, together with endorsement by many of the world's leading players. The New Kookaburra Collection has a new look with striking new graphics.

Kahuna (endorsed by ICC Player of the Year, Ricky Ponting), Beast (the choice of Kumar Sangakkara) and Ice (Mike Hussey) are joined by the 'Blade' - a revolutionary shape in a lightweight specification from 2lb 6oz to 2lb 9oz.

A revolutionary luggage range makes Kookaburra the only choice for functional and eye-catching bags. The New 'Pro' Collection offers professional specification and features, whilst the 'Kooka' range offers value for money.

Kookaburra also has an exciting range of clothing - 'Active' - Test Match quality in state-of-the-art fabrics, and 'Predator' - superb value for money.

For more information call 01536 209210 or email [sales@kookaburra.co.uk](mailto:sales@kookaburra.co.uk)



# where tradition meets innovation

New for 2008! The Nitro continues to enhance the Gray-Nicolls reputation for Bat making. Designed in conjunction with our International stars, Gray-Nicolls introduce the Nitro Bat. Unique shoulder and toe contouring gives the Nitro a very impressive look and feel. Its' steep spine running from splice to toe allows an imposing profile full of power.

The unique design of the Nitro Pro Performance Pad reiterates the Gray-Nicolls philosophy. Tradition meets Innovation. The High density foam makes this pad extremely light and whilst offering the ultimate protection at an International level.

The Nitro Pro Performance gloves Tri flex grip allowing optimum comfort and protection to any batsman that wears the . Unique knuckle design to the high impact area and Pastizote casing make this glove the choice of professionals.

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## SLR Cricket Company

SLR Cricket Company is dedicated to serving the needs of schools and clubs at all levels.

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As well as supplying 'off-the-shelf' items, from spring back stumps to a set of mobile cricket wicket covers, SLR Cricket Company specialises in all types of made-to-measure scoreboards for cricket at all levels. Manual and electronic systems are available, with a full design and installation service. From initial contact, through site inspection, design, quotation and installation, SLR offers a full-service solution for all scoring requirements.

Using a range of score systems, including simple manual digits, electro-mechanical indicators and LED display, SLR will design a scoreboard specifically to match your requirements. The electronic scoreboard systems include radio remote control via a state-of-the-art console with backlit mimic display - enabling use of the control console in any location on the sports field.

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## GM cricket range 2008

### BATS

All new graphics and two new models:

Purist II is a masterpiece reworked - as one of GM's lightest models, it now has GM's Super Powerarc Blade and contoured edges. With enhanced perimeter weighting, it's THE bat for controlled power.

Cannon has a handcrafted concave profile, GM's Super Powerarc Blade, strong parallel edges, a flatter toe and weight reduced flatter shoulders for outstanding pick up power.

The hugely successful Catalyst and Hero models are unchanged.

### ACCESSORIES

The pad, glove and luggage ranges are all completely new, plus there is also a new entry price shoe, new personal protection and a new helmet.

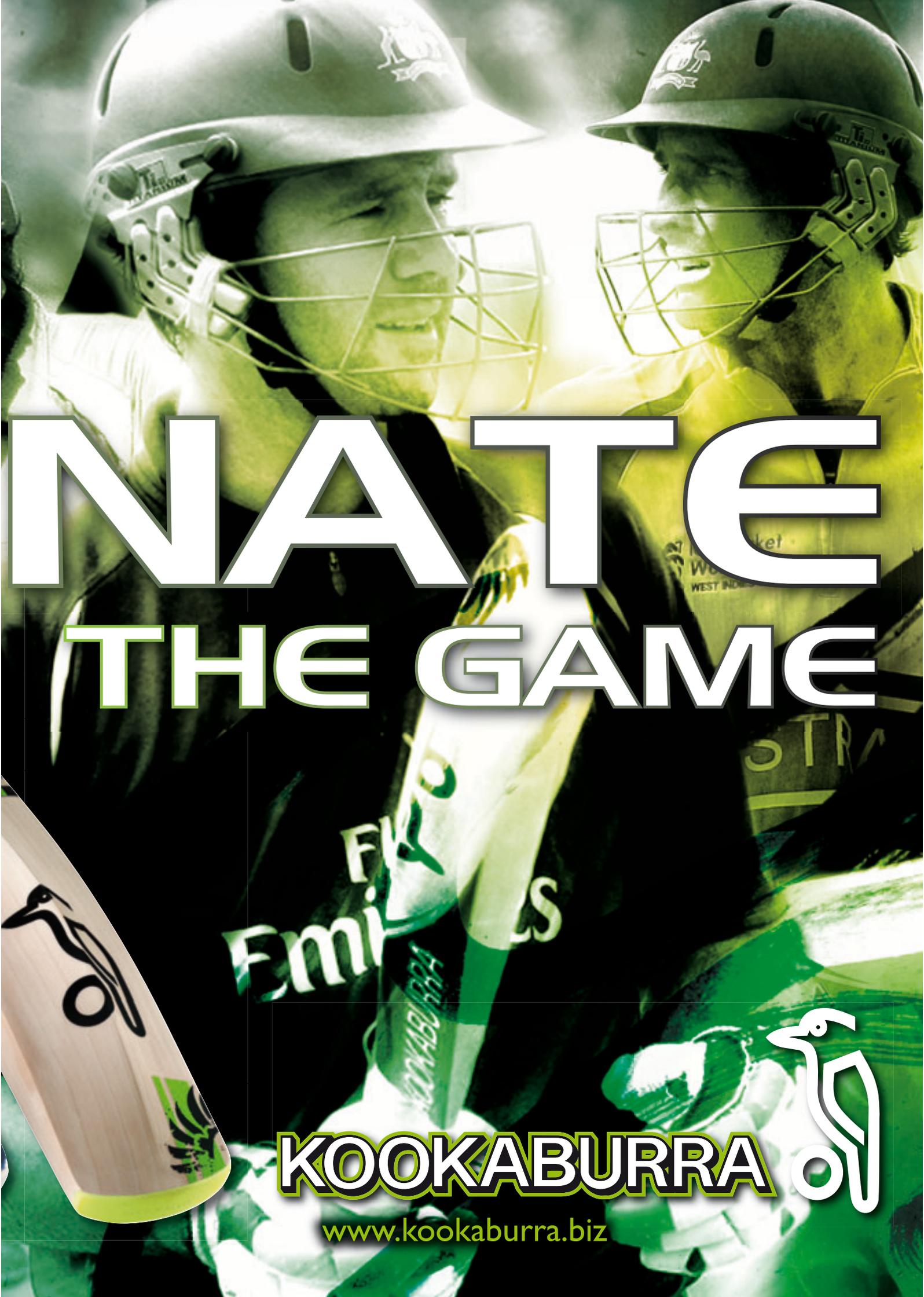
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# NATE THE GAME



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# Mitre Cricket Gear Promotion

Mitre is pleased to introduce its new range of pads, gloves and bats for the forthcoming season

Last season saw Mitre's successful return to Cricket market, after announcing a 5 year partnership with legendary Australian cricketer Shane Warne just in time for the 2007 Ashes Series, where Shane was a fundamental part of the winning Australian team with his sure-footed bowling and accuracy, all the while wearing Mitre equipment.

The coming season will see great improvements to the Mitre range after the brand has carried out an extensive research and development process that has culminated in some momentous design innovations. Two excellent examples of this are the Ultralite Wicket Keeping Pad, with its hinged knee section, soft feel back padding and hard wearing woven cover this pad offers superior comfort. There is also the Elite Batting Glove which is made from a full grain leather palm and comfort fit lining. This glove has two part PU padded finger rolls and leather finger end tabs for added protection. An airflow gusset allows moisture reduction and therefore increased comfort.

There are several top quality new products in the 2008 range, including a cutting edge bat and apparel range. The top cricket bat, the Revolve DX is made of air seasoned 'Grade 1 Plus' English Willow, and is manufactured in the UK to the highest specification with professional players in mind. With a knocked in blade, bow profile and a deep profile spine, this bat offers explosive hitting power, a larger sweet spot and

extended pick up. The oval profile handle and octopus rubber finish gives the ultimate in feel and grip. For players who prefer a lighter blade the Revolve MX possesses the same enhanced graphics and technical features as the Revolve DX but with a medium profile spine.

New to the range in 2008 is cricket apparel, two key products in the range are the Strike Long Sleeve professional performance polo shirt and the Hook Straight Leg performance pant. The shirt is made from 100% polyester pique and offers excellent all day wear and comfort for professional cricketers. With a collar and button fastening and black piping down the sleeves, it also has a Mitre branded taping around the neck and Shane Warne logo on the sleeve. The 100% polyester pique Hook Straight Leg professional

performance pant provides excellent all day comfort for the professional cricketer. With an elasticated and fully adjustable drawcord waist, zip at front fly and stitched permanent crease, these trousers also have front and back pockets (the front pockets with black piping). The pants also have an open hem for self length adjustment. The garments also carry the professional Shane Warne logo



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# Rugby

## Optimum is on fire with its new rugby boots

Optimum has always been a brand that players trust to provide them with top-quality products and high specification materials. The company has recently launched its new rugby boot range, combining lightweight uppers with stability controlled sole configuration.

The BLAZE (juniors - sizes 13-6, low cut, six stud) and INFERNO (seniors - sizes 7-15, low cut, eight stud) are available in white/red and black/red.

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## Rugbytech

Rugbytech launched the Guinness Premiership Gloucester kit in August and the sales reaction has been very good.

The whole kit range was designed with the players at the club, while a leisure range for men, women and children has also been added. The focus has been on technical fabrics, fit and quality, covering a full age spectrum from infants upwards.

Rugbytech also launched the London Irish kit, another Guinness Premiership side, in the early part of August.

For more information email Steve Lee:  
[Steve@nomissports.co.uk](mailto:Steve@nomissports.co.uk)



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## **OPRO** launches self-fit mouthguard range

OPRO, the world's largest supplier of custom-fitting mouthguards, is launching a range of self-fit mouthguards - OPROShield - which is available online and at leading retailers. It utilises a unique, revolutionary patented design involving internal fins and multiple materials.

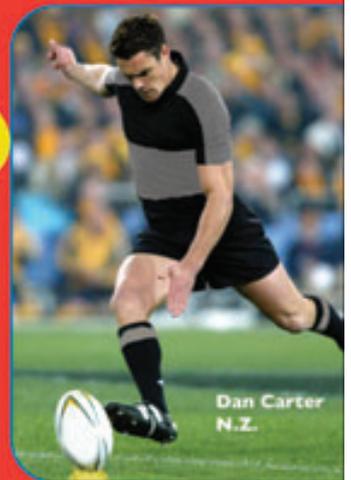
Dr Anthony Lovat, managing director at OPRO, explains: "OPRO has previously refused to enter this market place. It is only now that we are confident that we have the design and technology right to produce a self-fit product which we are happy to bear the OPRO name."

Tel: 01707 261261 or visit [www.opro.com](http://www.opro.com) for more information.



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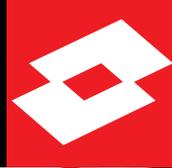
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### Karakal Rakpak is a real hit for kids

Giving kids what they want and what's good for them is not always easy. But Karakal's new mini tennis bag, Rakpak, is proving a real hit.

Developed in response to requests from parents, Rakpak allows children to keep everything they need to play mini tennis in one bag. A 'one-size-fits-all' bag can hold 19", 21", 23" and 25" frames, whilst an integral racquet compartment with velcro fastener holds the handle in place. This backpack also features two side mesh pockets, one holding a Karakal water bottle and the other two LTA-approved transition tennis balls.

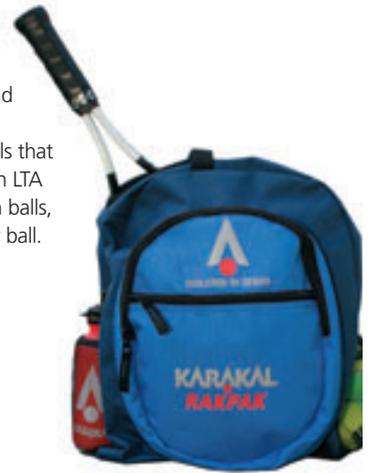
As a charter partner of LTA Mini Tennis, Karakal is helping to nurture a whole new generation of tennis players with its growing range of youth tennis products.

Karakal's Coach junior racquets are designed to conform to the LTA Traffic Light Scheme, with the (red zone) Coach-19 and Coach-21 for beginners, through to (orange zone) Coach-23 for the intermediate player and the (green zone) Coach-25 for the more advanced.

All of the Karakal Coach Series racquets are made from 7000 Series aluminium, with a parallel 'O' beam and feature a midsize head.

Karakal also supplies a range of coloured tennis balls that match the racquets. The Mid Green, LoBo Orange (both LTA approved) and Solo Red are all low-pressure transition balls, while the Mini Red 80mm is a moulded foam starter ball.

**For more information contact Karakal on 0117 982 9057, email sales@karakal.com or visit www.karakal.com**



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## Tecnifibre



### Tecnifibre

Tecnifibre has continued to increase sales of its range of overgrips and replacement grips.

Overgrips are now available in neat resealable tubes, each containing three grips. The best-selling Player's Wrap is available in white, yellow or red. Pro Level, a dry, velvety, highly absorbent grip, comes in red or blue.

For ultra tackiness, try Contact Wrap in red or black. Best value is Soft Wrap, also available in a tub of 48. A counter top display unit will be available soon.

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\* February 2007 Delivery.  
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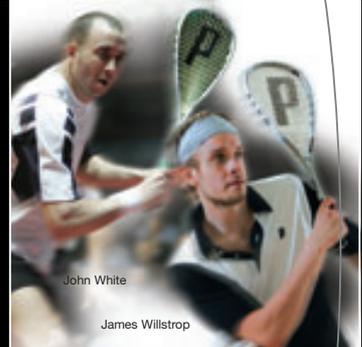
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# Ladies Fitness Collection

# KARAKAL

Keeping cool and feeling great is essential when you're in the gym or on court. Our new 'Ladies FIT Range' of clothing is made from Karakal's Stretch Cooltec which draws moisture away from the skin and transfers it to the outer layer. This helps regulate body temperature providing optimum comfort when you need it most.



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## Reports

Full or short reports can be printed with your shop logo and contact details – ideal viral marketing tool!



### Jakabel's Swimsafe Floatsuit

Endorsed by the Royal Life Saving Society, the Swimsafe Floatsuit is the number one choice floatsuit for kids again in 2007.

The Swimsafe Floatsuit is not only guaranteed not to tip over, it's also comfortable to wear and has 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 2007 means that kids will love wearing the range and they'll look great too.

Despite all the sun, keeping kids warm in the water can still be a challenge. Jakabel's range of children's wetsuits not only look great and keep kids warm, they also give high level sun protection too.



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

# Swimming



### Fashy

To satisfy customer demand, Fashy has again increased its ranges of swimwear, swimhats, Aqua-sport 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 Aqua-sport range now features many new products aimed at aqua-fitness, including:

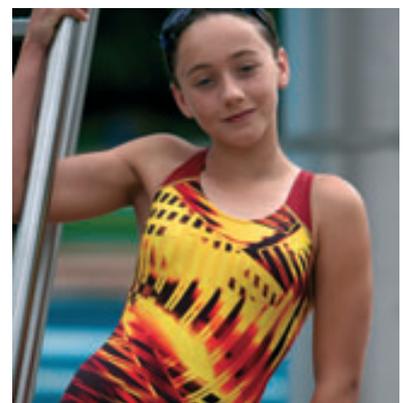
- Pool and aqua-fitness socks - these are copper lined and slip-retardant, ideal for aqua-aerobics and aqua-cycling.
- Aqua-trainers - perfect footwear for in and around the pool.
- Aqua-walking sticks - developed from Nordic walking, they offer an enjoyable alternative in aqua-fitness sessions.
- For beginners and children, swimming aids and accessories are all featured in the full-colour catalogue, which also includes the full selection of swimcaps, turbans and shower products.

Pool and swimshoes are now becoming a must-have for regular swimmers. Fashy shoes have been developed to offer protection, safety and comfort. All pool shoes are anatomically designed and are 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, swimcaps and shoes. Full-colour catalogues are available.

For more information call 01202 515251 or email: [sales@fashy.co.uk](mailto:sales@fashy.co.uk)



## Rucanor swimming

Rucanor has eight pages of swimming and watersports product in its 'Never out of Stock collection 07/08' catalogue, ranging from the basics such as nose clips and earplugs through to a semi-professional diving mask.

There are eight models of goggle, starting at an SRP of £4.99 for a junior model with silicon seal and anti-fog lenses. There are also models with a one-piece silicon construction and a top model with integrated head strap, silicon seals and anti-fog carbonate mirror-coated lenses.

Also included in the catalogue are six different styles of swim hat, plus snorkels and masks (either in sets or singly), flippers, armbands, swimwear, aquasocks and pool slippers - all available from stock and with colour-coordinated packaging.

There are further models of goggles, masks and snorkels available from the summer 2008 catalogue, with some great forward order quantity discounts available.

**For further information on these or any other products from the Rucanor range call the Sales Hotline Number: 0845 2300147.**



## "One of the finest suits we've tested"

Aqua Sphere's Mexico performance swimsuit was recently awarded 9/10 in 220 Triathlon magazine's Test Centre report.

220 wrote that the Mexico offers 'a fantastic feeling of quality, speed in the water and carefully designed construction...The oft-used cliché of feeling like you're slicing through the water is strangely apt when you're wearing the Mexico, and its quality and hold mean you could use it for racing as well as training. Overall, one of the finest suits we've tested.'

The Mexico is from Aqua Sphere's new Aqua X Power swimwear line, which offers high chlorine resistance, excellent shape retention, great muscle control and is quick drying. The brand is proud that these claims have clearly stood up in this independent test.

**To find out more visit [www.aquasphereswim.com](http://www.aquasphereswim.com) or call 01254 278873.**



## Maru

Maru, the UK's most fashionable active swimwear and equipment brand, offers from stock all its ranges from the autumn/winter 2007 collection.

Maru's sought-after Pacer range, developed for its durability and fabric memory, is crammed with new styles, designs and colours, including the Zany Vault Back in blackberry, with overprinted orange and yellow.

The Aqua classic range lives up to its reputation as flattering low leg swimwear with great bust support. The Aqua leisure range has a high sport fashion edge for men and women.

Finally, Maru offers a full range of kids' swimwear, from back-to-school through to bold funky prints.

**To find out more contact Maru swimwear on 01159851212 or email [sales@maruswimwear.co.uk](mailto:sales@maruswimwear.co.uk)**



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# Netball

## Sure Shot

Netball is a fast-growing sport in the UK, with a large number of girls and women playing the sport in schools, clubs and recreational leagues. Despite this, there are a limited number of outlets from which netball equipment is available.

Sure Shot produces a range of netball units from junior to full size, in ground and portable models.

The Sure Shot 802 Easistore Transportable Netball Unit (RRP £89.99) is an ideal unit for the retail market. It is full size, the steel ring can be set at three heights and the base is compact and stable. The whole unit comes in a single box that includes ballast, as the main pole breaks down into three sections for easy storage and transport.

Sure Shot products are available from Ransome Sporting Goods. Contact Lewis Tovey on [lt@rsgsport.com](mailto:lt@rsgsport.com) or call 01642 224444.



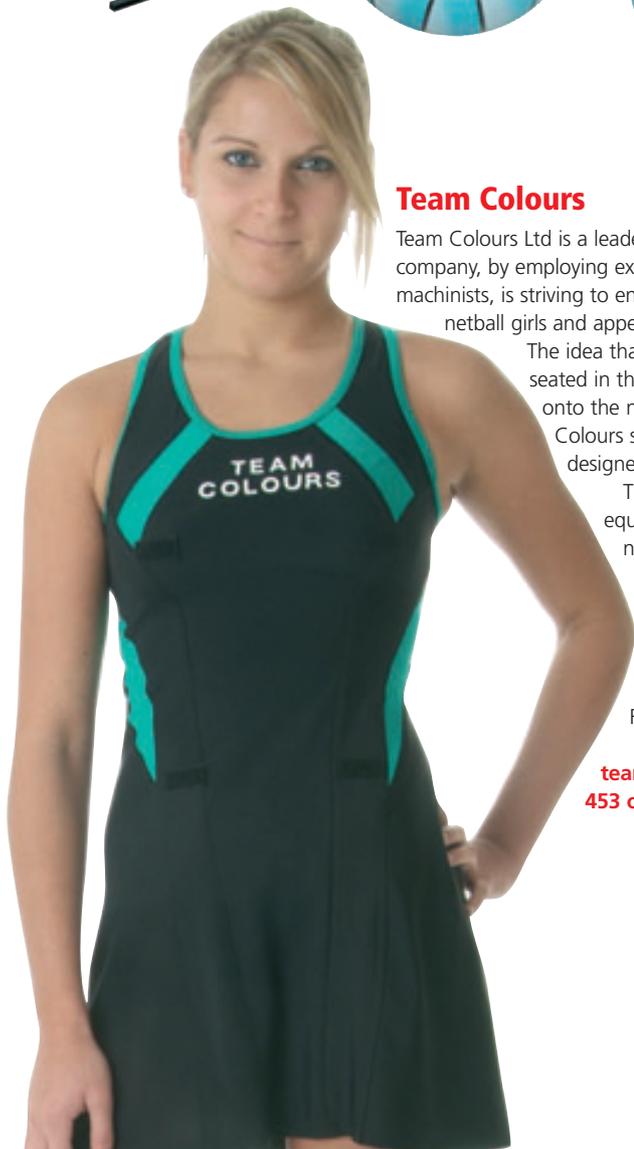
## Team Colours

Team Colours Ltd is a leader in custom-made team kit for netball. The company, by employing experienced and innovative designers and machinists, is striving to encourage the demise of the old gymslip image of netball girls and appeal to a much more fashion conscious clientele.

The idea that if you look good you will feel good is deep-seated in the female psyche, and translates very effectively onto the netball court. Perform at your best, Team Colours says, by looking your best in a beautifully designed outfit in your team colours.

The phrase 'custom-made' is usually equated with 'expensive' - but that does not apply to Team Colours. "We like to work closely with our customers to bring about a cost-effective, quality product which both parties can be pleased with and proud of," says Team Colours' director and netball enthusiast Rosemary Carter.

**You are invited to get the best for your team. Enquiries to Rosemary on 01920 871 453 or email [info@team-colours.co.uk](mailto:info@team-colours.co.uk)**



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**MASITA**



# COMMUNITY 2.0

With the rise of social networking sites, online business now understands the commercial viability of digital communities, says Dave Howell

**ABOVE:** Chatrooms and online forums are among the most popular online communities

**One of the foundations of the Web 2.0 revolution that is taking place online is the development of digital communities. Content is being mashed up from text to video to create new forms of information that are disseminated across the web's community portals. At first glance, online communities don't seem to offer commercial websites much of a return on their investment, but nothing could be further from the truth.**

Communities can form the basis of an online business, as is the case with eBay, but increasingly for smaller businesses, setting up a community on their website enables them to not only talk directly to their customers, but gain valuable insight into their customers' needs.

Hosting your own community was once a horrendously complex undertaking. The good news is that today you can have your own

community up and running in a matter of minutes. You can see a host of useful hints and tips for building your own community at <http://tinyurl.com/25ofz>. There is also some excellent advice on the O'Reilly Network website at <http://tinyurl.com/2z6dpq>

## Decision time

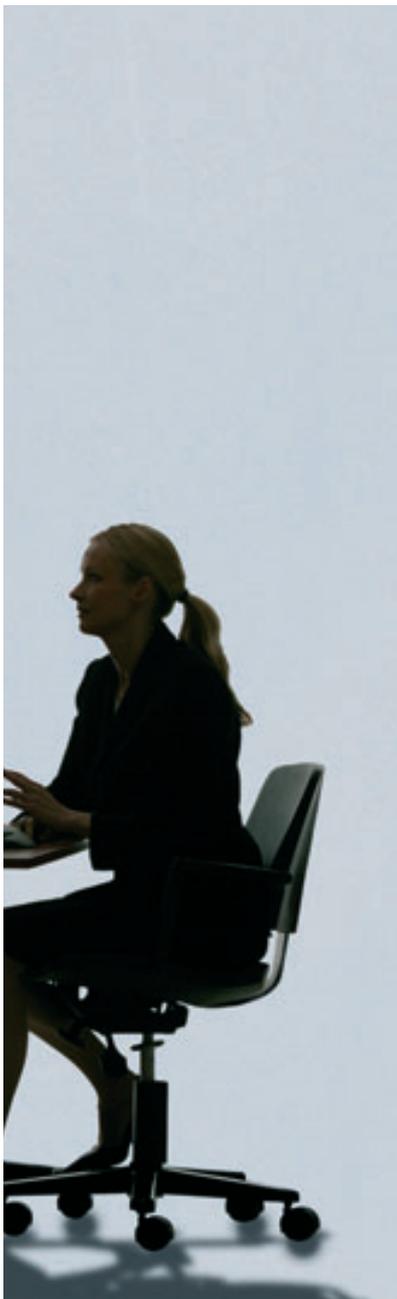
Your first step is to decide what kind of community you want to host on your website, and what you hope to gain from maintaining and developing it over time. Communities don't just mean sites like YouTube, Facebook, Bebo and MySpace. You can build a community with nothing more than your favourite email program.

If you don't already contact your customer base regularly, an e-newsletter is a cost-effective means of keeping them informed about your business' new products and services. It also enables you to gain valuable

feedback. A simple, text-only email can kick-start your community, or you can investigate more sophisticated services such as Newsweaver ([www.newsweaver.co.uk](http://www.newsweaver.co.uk)), which offers an automated system for generating and sending professional HTML newsletters.

More refined communities that you can set up come in a variety of formats. It's important that you take your time to choose the right community platform for your business. You also need to consider the technical aspects of hosting your community, so consult with your ISP before making any decisions.

Chatrooms and online forums are among the most popular online communities. Giving your customers a space where they can ask you questions and comment on your goods and services, as well as communicate with other customers, is a superb way of generating a positive response to



## “Customers can log on and ask you or your staff a question in real time. This immediacy is one of the true powers of online retailing and can increase sales and conversion rates significantly”

or your staff a question in real time. This immediacy is one of the true powers of online retailing and can increase sales and conversion rates significantly. Good systems to consider include BoldChat ([www.boldchat.com](http://www.boldchat.com)), Liveperson ([www.liveperson.com](http://www.liveperson.com)) and Velaro ([www.velaro.com](http://www.velaro.com)).

Don't forget that the community you start will need some input from you. A level of monitoring is required to ensure that your community is behaving as you expect. Interaction on messageboards and chatrooms will show that you are active and interested in what your customers have to say. And if you decide to use live chat, you must have staff available to respond to queries. Don't forget response is supposed to be in real time, so ensure you have the staffing resource to run this kind of community efficiently.

### New kid on the blog

Customers not only want to interact with each other, they are increasingly interested in what the businesses they patronise have to say about themselves. The corporate blog has now established itself as not only a means for customers to gain insight into the businesses they buy from, but it's also a way for businesses to speak directly to existing and potential customers.

Creating a blog for your business is now very simple. Platforms include Blogger ([www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)), WordPress (<http://wordpress.org>) and Moveable Type

([www.sixapart.com/movabletype](http://www.sixapart.com/movabletype)). All offer a simple-to-use interface that can get your blog up and running in minutes. With the rise of YouTube, video has become king of the internet. You can also have a videoblog on your site. More information about the tools you need to get one up and running can be seen on the Wikipedia entry at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vlog>

The key to a successful blog is to look past its commercial applications and write about your interests as well as your business. If you're passionate about your business this will come across in your blog. If you are a

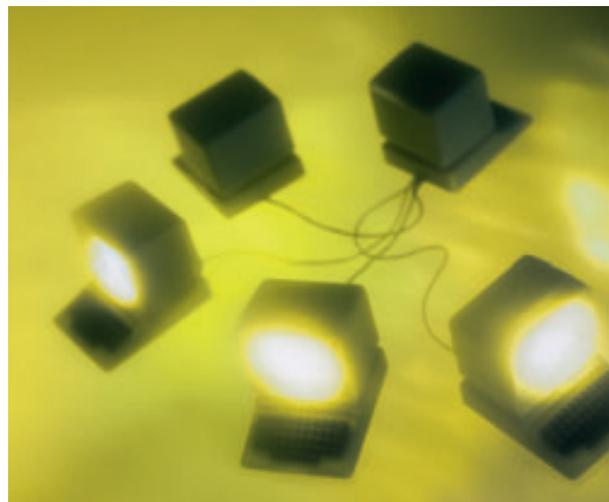
specialised sports retailer, then you can speak directly to like-minded individuals, who will instantly recognise a kindred spirit. From this basis, you can build a relationship with your customers that no amount of advertising can buy.

Lastly, as many of your customers will be part of the iPod generation you could investigate developing a regular podcast that they can download from your website. You can read an overview of how to create a podcast on the Yahoo! website at <http://podcasts.yahoo.com/publish>. Treated as a magazine format, podcasts can be a cost-effective means of reaching your customers in an innovative way.

Whatever platform you decide is right for your business, creating a community will not only give you unprecedented insights into your customers' preferences, desires and dislikes, it can also offer a captive audience that you can speak to.

Consumers want to feel close to the businesses they buy from. Gaining their trust and confidence can be achieved with a well-run community. But remember, there is a fine line between utilising the information that your community can give your business and exploiting the participants. If you run your community with sensitivity you can gain lifelong customers, who will ensure the long-term sustainability of your business. ❦

**BELOW:** A successful online community can help you gain an insight into customers' needs



your business. Generally, though, you need to choose between newsgroups, chatrooms and messageboards for your community.

You are spoilt for choice if you decide a forum or messageboard is ideal for your business. Most are hosted systems these days, which takes the headache out of setting them up. Good examples include ActiveBoard ([www.activeboard.com](http://www.activeboard.com)), Ikonboard ([www.ikonboard.com](http://www.ikonboard.com)) and Community Server (<http://communityserver.org>).

Chatrooms still remain as popular as ever with online communities. Good examples of these platforms include DigiChat ([www.digi-net.com](http://www.digi-net.com)), AddonChat ([www.addonchat.com](http://www.addonchat.com)) and RealChat ([www.realchat.com](http://www.realchat.com)). One additional aspect of chatrooms that more businesses are now using with great effect is live chat with their customers.

Customers can log on and ask you

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# FIT FOR PURPOSE

England's leading football referees and match officials have received a fitness boost, thanks to Precision Training



Precision Training, the UK's brand leader in the supply of specialist sports training aids, has signed an official partnership agreement with the Professional Game Match Officials (PGMO).

The PGMO is the governing body of elite referees and match officials in England and supplies officials to all games in the FA Premier League, Football League and FA Cup. Under the agreement to become official suppliers of specialist training aids, Precision Training will supply the PGMO and up to 70 officials with a wide range of its specialist equipment.

## Specialist kits

All the PGMO's 19 elite referees and a further 50 officials will receive

specialist training aids kits for personal home use. These fitness packs include a speed ladder, resistance parachute, adjustable hurdles and training cones. And the PGMO will also be using the aids for its fortnightly fitness group sessions with referees.

Says Keith Hackett, general manager of the PGMO: "We are delighted to be partnering with Precision Training. The fitness of our referees is now higher than it has ever been and Precision Training will help our sports science team maintain these standards.

"Personalised training aids kits for each official will be a major asset in helping our officials with the extensive home training programmes they have to undertake."

Says David Sanderson, national sales manager of Reydon Sports, which owns the Precision Training brand: "We are extremely excited about our relationship with the PGMO.

"Our training aids are designed to benefit athletes across all sports and PGMO football referees are now some of the fittest sports people in the country. Statistics show that, on average, a referee in the Premiership covers more ground in a game than the vast majority of all the players.

"Adding the PGMO to our portfolio of professional partners reaffirms Precision Training's philosophy of benefiting elite athletes from all sports, as well as being used by literally thousands of people at grass roots level."

## Strategic partnerships

Precision Training has formed a number of strategic sporting partnerships with leading sports governing bodies and clubs throughout the UK. It is official kit supplier to Notts County, the world's oldest football club, and is also official supplier of specialist training aids to Nottinghamshire CCC, Preston North End FC, Leicester City FC and national ladies' hockey champions Leicester.

The official brand ambassador for Precision Training is the former England national football manager Graham Taylor.

For more information call 0115 900 2340 or visit [www.precisiontraining.co.uk](http://www.precisiontraining.co.uk)



# The Directory

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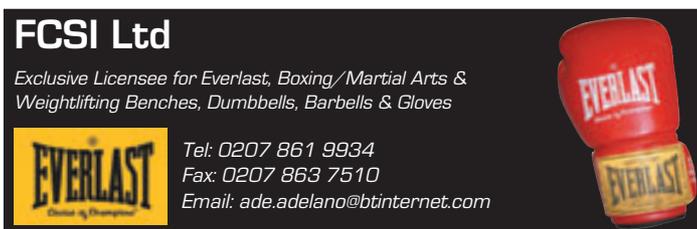
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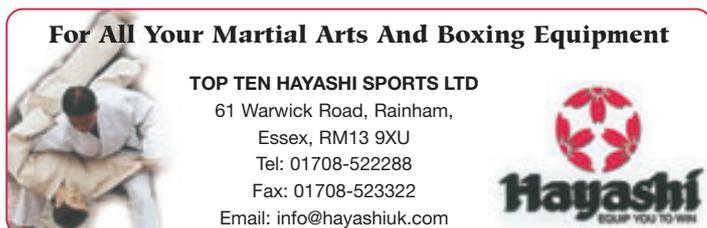


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# Under the counter

A sideways look at the world of independent retailing

My friend Joe has been selling sports and leisure footwear since the days when he was called a commercial traveller, drove a company Ford Anglia, wore a snap-brim trilby and carried his samples in a fake crocodile-skin suitcase.

Nowadays he drives a Ford Focus estate, stays in Travelodges and tots up sales on a laptop, but still has all the tiresome bounce and optimism of a man who, against all the odds, loves his job almost more than life itself.

So it was a bit of a shock when, at the end of his monthly visit and after failing to sell me the latest running shoes (which incidentally cost more than my first decent car), he accepted a cup of tea in the back office and said he was thinking of taking retirement.

"They've made me quite a good offer and the wife's set her heart on touring Devon and Cornwall in a camper van," Joe said. "There's always plenty to do in the garden and the kitchen guttering's been leaking for ages. There's more to life than work, you know."

## Cheer up

I've seldom seen a chap look so down in the mouth. So when a small order of

old geezers snuff it only months or even weeks after they get their clock or garden vouchers.

All those hobbies, socialising car cleaning, decorating and Lions Club lunches are just more than geriatric flesh and blood can stand.

The truth is that if you want a quiet life, stay at work. I'd rather you kept this to yourself, but the truth is that personally I have bags of time, always have had, and so has nearly every small shopkeeper I've ever known. That's probably why we became self-employed in the first place.

Of course, it does help to have someone like my devoted assistant Norman, who's always in first in the morning, which means I can avoid the worst of the rush hour and enjoy a cappuccino when the coffee bar's empty. Need I go on?



welcome after a busy morning of strategic planning and, after that, it's not too long before Norman goes out for the afternoon cakes. Then it's just a matter of winding down until closing time.

Someone recently gave me an electronic organiser, which told you how far it was to the Straits of Hormuz and the date of your next dental check. "It will save you an awful lot of time," he said. I couldn't be bothered to explain that I don't actually want to save time. I just want to spend it doing nice things.

Sometimes, while listening to

**"A leisurely lunch is always welcome after a busy morning of strategic planning and, after that, it's not too long before Norman goes out for the afternoon cakes"**

odourless insoles, offered purely out of compassion, did absolutely nothing to cheer him up, I didn't feel too bad about cancelling it the next day.

To be honest, the spectre of retirement has also been hovering around this neck of the woods lately, ever since leaflets on stairlifts and prostate problems began dropping through the letterbox, along with offers for ride-on mowers and your dog's head carved on a walking stick.

I've found myself reading articles in magazines about exit strategies - a euphemism for selling your business to the first gullible twerp who comes along and scarping to a timeshare in Cyprus. But my real fear of retirement is that, compared with work, it's, well, too much like hard work. No wonder so many poor

## Simple life

In the interests of the simple life, I've given my mobile phone to my son and moved the landline out of the office and into the shop next to Norman. That way you can stay in the office with the door shut and read the paper. If the phone rings when Norman is at lunch, making the tea or buying the elevenses doughnuts, I might look at the answerphone to see if there are any important messages - like whether I've been picked for the pub pool team.

I may look at my emails on the computer when I take a break from playing solitaire, but usually they're special sales offers for hearing aids and can be safely left in electric limbo for the next year or two.

A leisurely lunch is always

employee friends saying how frazzled they always are, I have actually feigned exhaustion just to be one of the boys. And on those rare occasions when I do find myself genuinely pressed, I feel a warm glow of social acceptability and a sense of belonging at last to a rush-rush world. But a quick lie-down behind the football boot cabinet and thankfully the feeling soon goes away.

I was a bit worried about Joe's retirement, but happily the problem's been resolved. His wife has run off with a double-glazing salesman and has forgotten all about camper vans. So Joe is staying on at work. He thinks he can find time in the evenings to fix the guttering and keep the garden tidy. I think he'll find he's made a very wise decision. 51



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