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sportstyle®

INSIGHT + TRENDS

TRYING NEW THINGS

HOW BRANDS ARE CHOOSING TO EVOLVE.

24/7
NEXT-GEN ACTIVE COMFORT

GOLF
SKECHERS STAR POWER

SPECIALTY SPORTS
DELIVERING FOR TEAM DEALERS

TEAM STYLE
UNIFORM FASHION SHOW



SPORTSTYLEMAG.COM



Above: *Orthofeet Nira is a hands-free athletic offering with an ergonomic sole.*
On the Cover: *Taos Star 2.0 is a classic lace-up with cushion and support.*

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THE BUZZ

Waco Shoe Company announced that **Revitalign** is now the company's flagship brand, marking a new chapter as the business celebrates its 10th anniversary. Established in September 2016 to develop and produce comfort footwear built on proprietary orthotic technology, the Revitalign brand has grown into Waco Shoe Company's strongest performer with more than 3 million pairs sold.

"A decade ago, we set out to design supportive, on-trend and stylish footwear on orthotic technology we could stand behind, and the market has responded," said Jeff Antonioli, co-owner of Waco Shoe Company. "Over 3 million pairs later, Revitalign has earned its place as our flagship brand. We own this technology, we've refined it, and we've built a line that delivers real support in the trend-forward styles people want to wear every day."

The company's confidence in Revitalign reflects a strategic expansion — where Revitalign once centered on recovery-focused footwear, the brand now extends into full lifestyle footwear, offering a broader range of colors and styles engineered for daily use. Throughout that expansion, the orthotic support at the core of every product remains unchanged.

Topo Athletic has launched its first **GORE-TEX** Footwear Collection featuring GORE-TEX Invisible Fit Product Technology. The line features three shoes: Terraventure 5 GTX, Trailventure 3 GTX, and Ultraventure 5 GTX. Together, they give trail runners, hikers, and everyday adventures a way to stay dry while enjoying the roomy toe box and secure fit of some of Topo Athletic's top trail offerings.

Minus33 Merino Wool and parent company **L.W. Packard** are expanding their roots in Ashland, NH, opening a new facility on October 27 that featured a ribbon-cutting led by New Hampshire Governor Kelly Ayotte. The newly renovated building doubles the family-owned company's manufacturing footprint as it celebrates 110 years in business, creating room to grow its Ashland team from about two dozen to 40 employees and expanding its line of American-made merino wool products.

The 15,000-square-foot houses office space and a new delivery facility, making space for additional manufacturing in their current building to support the launch of American-made merino wool hats and scarves, joining Minus33's U.S.-made socks.

Ciele Athletics, the performance running brand from Montreal, Canada, introduced its second **Woolmark**-certified collection, bringing the natural performance properties of Merino wool to technical cold-weather apparel and accessories. Built around the brand's Sorino natural fiber platform, the collection combines Merino wool and silk base-layers with a range of Merino wool headwear designed for temperature regulation, moisture management and comfort across changing conditions.

Woolly Clothing Co., the Seattle-based maker of merino wool basics, unveiled its FW2026 collection: a full men's and women's lineup of underwear, basics, everyday athleisure and lifestyle pieces built from 95 to 100 percent merino wool. The collection is built on Woolly's mantra, More Wool. Less Plastic: as much merino and as little synthetic as possible in every piece that sits next to skin.



Aviator Nation, the California lifestyle apparel brand has launched its first-ever officially licensed NBA merch collection, featuring six of the league's franchises: the Chicago Bulls, Dallas Mavericks, Golden State Warriors, Los Angeles Lakers, Miami Heat and New York Knicks. The debut lineup features Aviator Nation's signature hoodies, crewnecks, sweatpants and tees, all designed and produced in Los Angeles but reimagined through the lens of each franchise.

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THE BUZZ



ASICS and the **University of Michigan** announced the opening of AMSI Lab, a new academic research and development laboratory on the University's Ann Arbor campus. The lab supports the ASICS Michigan Sport Innovation Center (AMSI), a joint research program established through a broader research collaboration between the company and university announced in December. AMSI Lab, ASICS' first industry-academia innovation lab, is designed to create a more direct path from university research to real-world sport innovation and product development.

AMSI Lab brings together ASICS' Human Centric Science approach and product expertise with the University of Michigan's multidisciplinary strengths in science, engineering, and design to translate academic research into new technologies and product concepts for running performance, footwear, and apparel. University researchers will work alongside ASICS scientists, product developers, and athletes to prototype, test, and refine ideas with real-world applications.

AMSI Lab is partnering with six faculty members who will initiate projects spanning biomechanics, materials science, robotics, design, computer vision, and athlete preferences and behavior, with potential applications to future running footwear, apparel, and performance technologies.

Tracksmith named Jon Tappan Chief Product and Merchandising Officer, bringing the longtime Converse executive to the independent running brand as it continues to expand its product offering, with a particular focus on footwear. Tappan's 16-year career at Converse included roles in product, merchandising, ecommerce and retail. The move comes as Matt Taylor, Tracksmith's co-founder and former CEO, who most recently served as chief creative officer, has parted ways with the company.

ECCO appointed Neal Taylor as Executive Vice President, Chief Commercial Officer, and Adam Meek as Executive Vice President, Chief Product Officer. Both join the ECCO Managing Board, strengthening the company's leadership team as it pursues growth across global markets. Taylor succeeds Casper Gram Hvejsel and will lead ECCO's global commercial agenda, with Global Marketing reporting into the role. Taylor joined ECCO in 2025 as CEO / President of ECCO Americas, leading a renewed focus on consumers, product, retail partnerships and operational excellence. Meek most recently served as Chief Product Officer and a member of the Executive Committee at Dr. Martens.

Salomon appointed Jason Lewis and Clerc Bertrand as Field Sales Managers, supporting the next phase of growth for the brand's Performance category.

Lewis joins Salomon with over 15 years of experience in the performance footwear industry, while Bertrand returns to the running and outdoor industry following a career that has included collegiate athletics and leadership roles at Florida State and LSU. She began her career in specialty run and outdoor sales. The appointments reinforce Salomon's continued investment in the Performance category and its relationships with specialty running and outdoor retail partners across the U.S

Brooks Running recently signed three professional athletes from outside the traditional "running" world to its global athlete ambassador roster: NFL wide receiver Cooper Kupp, WNBA forward Maddy Westbeld, and Premier League footballer Oscar Bobb.

"As the leading performance running brand, Brooks believes running has the power to show us what we're capable of and unlock potential that extends far beyond the run itself," said Melanie Allen, SVP, Chief Marketing Officer at Brooks. "Cooper, Maddy and Oscar each bring an authentic connection to running through their sport and inspire us all to celebrate running as part of what makes us human."

The athletes will appear in Brooks global storytelling and content initiatives, engage with runners, and bring their personal style to Brooks' offerings in the coming year. ■



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STAR POWER ON THE COURSE

Skechers World Champions Cup Supporting Shriners Children's Is Set for December.



Justin Leonard and Retief Goosen were in NYC to unveil the field for the upcoming head-to-head tournament.

In the golf world, the course is taking shape for the 2026 Skechers World Champions Cup supporting Shriners Children's, with European Team Captain Darren Clarke, International Team Captain Retief Goosen and U.S. Team Captain Justin Leonard unveiling star-studded rosters featuring some of the most recognizable names in professional golf.

The three teams will compete December 3-6 at Feather Sound Country Club in Clearwater, Florida, in the event's distinctive head-to-head format.

The tournament field, unveiled at an October event hosted by Skechers in NYC, showcases the depth of Skechers' presence in professional golf. Among this year's field are Skechers Brand Ambassadors Leonard, Goosen, Colin Montgomerie and Bernhard Langer, underscoring Skechers' growing presence across the global golf landscape. (The brand's golf ambassadors also include Matt Fitzpatrick, Brooke Henderson and Max Greyserman, bringing together major champions, rising stars and accomplished players from across the global game.)

European Team

Captain Clarke returns to lead the European Team alongside Jesper Parnevik and Søren Kjeldsen as vice captains, as well as Montgomerie, Langer, Miguel Ángel Jiménez, newcomer Henrik Stenson and Alex Cejka.

The European roster brings together generations of


Skechers SVP Gary Patrick.

golf excellence, including major champions, Ryder Cup legends and some of the most successful players in the history of golf. Stenson, the 2016 Open Champion, who debuted on PGA Tour Champions this summer, will make his first appearance this December.

"Claiming the title last year was incredibly special, and I couldn't be more excited to bring this European Team back together to defend in 2026," said Clarke, captain of the European Team. "There's a tremendous amount of pride that comes with representing Europe, and this group understands what it means to compete for one another. We know the U.S. and International Teams will be coming in strong, and we wouldn't want it any other way as we look to top our winning score of 230 points. We're looking forward to getting back to Feather Sound Country Club and doing everything we can to keep that trophy in European hands."

International Team

Two-time U.S. Open champion Retief Goosen will captain the International Team, with Rod Pampling and Charlie Wi serving as vice captains alongside Vijay Singh, Scott Hend, Ángel Cabrera, Steven Alker and Y.E. Yang.

Pampling and Hend will each make their tournament debuts, joining an International Team roster with extensive major championship, Presidents Cup and worldwide professional golf experience.

"Coming back to the Skechers World Champions Cup supporting Shriners Children's brings back a lot of memories from 2023, especially how close we came to winning it," said Goosen, captain of the International Team. "Finishing second by just two points stays with you, and I think everyone who was part of that team remembers how close we were. This time, I have the opportunity to come back as captain, and our goal is pretty simple; we want to finish one spot better. I'm also excited to be competing in Skechers footwear and proud to be partnered with a brand that continues to make real impact in the game. We have a great group representing countries from around the world, and I'm looking forward to leading them, competing hard, and hopefully putting the International Team's name on that trophy for the first time."

U.S. Team

Captain Justin Leonard will lead a formidable American roster alongside Vice Captains Billy Andrade and George McNeill, and players Stewart Cink, Zach Johnson, Steve Stricker, Jerry Kelly, and Boo Weekley.

Johnson, a two-time major champion and former Ryder Cup Captain, will make his Skechers World Champions Cup supporting Shriners Children's debut, adding another decorated veteran of team competition to the American lineup.



Three teams will compete for the trophy in December.


Skechers golf footwear.

"I've had the privilege of representing the United States throughout my career, and there's simply nothing that compares to competing for your country," said Justin Leonard, captain of the U.S. Team. "I know what it feels like to be a player for this event, but stepping into the captain's role brings an entirely different sense of responsibility and pride. I'm also thrilled to be competing in Skechers footwear and excited about partnering with a brand that shares our passion for the game. I'm incredibly honored to lead this group of guys, and we're coming together with one goal: to represent our country, compete for one another and bring the Skechers World Champions Cup supporting Shriners Children's back to the United States. Any time you get to wear the red, white and blue, it means something, and we're ready to make the most of that opportunity."

The tournament also uses the power and reach of professional golf to support Shriners Children's, which provides specialty pediatric care to children regardless of a family's ability to pay or insurance status. Through its healthcare system, Shriners Children's provides life-changing care to children with orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate. ■

24/7 active comfort

Feeling Fine on Your Feet, Every Day, All the Time.

By Suzanne Blecher

The next generation of comfort in footwear is on its way. And it includes performance traits designed for a 24/7 sensibility.

Mike Walker, VP of marketing at Taos, sees an evolution on the horizon in the comfort category, highlighting an enhanced focus on "purposeful support." Cue shoes with thoughtful toe room, arch support, metatarsal support, shock absorption, flexibility and stability. Straight to the point, the role of this shoe is clear: "it's performance for real life, where footwear doesn't need to be designed for a sport to perform," the exec says.

Leading brands are building their footwear with this evolving consumer in mind.

Finn Comfort designers recently crafted a clog fit for "wearing inside and out, featuring the same high level of support as its other sandal and shoe sizes" – because customers were asking for it, notes Finn Comfort CEO Justin Orrell-Jones.

Meanwhile, Clarks is "bringing our most advanced comfort technology into everyday styles," its global head of product, Dawn Porto, suggests.

ECCO designers pride themselves on building footwear around real foot mechanics, so as to feel natural in many different active situations. According to Jill Butler, director of merchandising at ECCO Americas, "people are just prioritizing how their feet feel, period. Comfort isn't a trade-off anymore, it's the whole point."

As Americans age, brand opportunity in the comfort category is ripe, explains Orthofeet marketing manager Alea Becwar. "Aging can bring changes to foot shape, foot pain, toe deformities, reduced flexibility, and changes in sensation. Traditional dress shoes and less-supportive casual footwear can become harder to tolerate. The best shoe for an older adult may increasingly look like an athletic shoe – and it's functioning as an everyday shoe for a larger segment of the population."

As "24/7 Comfort" continues to include footwear for a wider variety of activities, age groups and abilities; the range of brand offerings expands. Here, we zoom in on every day, recovery, walking and running styles.



RIEKER/ANGELA

While appearing sturdy and athletic-looking, Angela is light and pleasant to walk in, thanks to a shock-absorbing sole. An elastic shaft collar and dry sport scuba lining makes the shoe easy to slip into. A decorative zipper adds a modern twist. *MSRP $135.*

EVERYDAY EDITION

At Dansko, VP of marketing Christina Sewell observes "consumers not wanting to choose between comfort and performance, they expect both!" In a shoe that can "do it all," there should be "the right balance of support and cushioning—without feeling heavy or bulky," explains Alegria marketing manager, Nick Myers, alongside a foot-friendly shape and contoured arch support.



ASTRAL/LOYAK ALL WEATHER 2.0

Looking to feel more grounded? Loyak provides an entry into barefoot shoes, offering a zero-drop profile and wide toe box in an understated canvas sneaker. The All Weather 2.0 is a go-to for a messy commute, with a PFAS-free, waterproof and recycled canvas upper. *MSRP $140.*



DANSKO/RAELYNN

The Mary Jane takes a sporty turn with Raelynn. The upper is constructed of soft, high-quality leather treated with 3M Scotchgard for stain resistance. Both the lining and socklining include fabrics with anti-microbial properties for moisture control. *MSRP $135.*





ALEGRIA/JOVIE

Easy-going Jovie is designed for everyday movement. Alegria Fit keeps the natural shape of the toes in mind, perfecting a relaxed feel. The stylish side-zip shoe features a lightweight, highly flexible outsole, slip-resistant traction, and a vegan leather upper. *MSRP $100.*

TAOS/STAR 2.0

Taos designers took a classic lace-up sneaker and gave it a new engine in Star 2.0. An updated Curves & Pods removable footbed adjusts cushioning and support to encourage natural movement. Premium suede dresses her up, while translucent gum foxing and a siped outsole add flexibility. *MSRP $150.*



Rieker Shoe Corporation | 299 Rio Drive | Orlando, FL 32810 | 800-960-0050 | rieker.us | remonte.us

WALK ON

"Active Lifestyle/Walking/Running is the fastest turning category in just about every shoe store," notes Xelero national sales manager Michael Arce, with customers buying multiple athletic shoes for work, play and fitness endeavors. Sometimes it's just about choosing a sneaker "that has an athletic feel, but an all-day look," Rieker Shoe Corp president Rich Rask comments. Revitalign director of product development, Kele Leistritz, reports "tremendous traction and success in the walking category" for the brand.



CLARKS/CODE LACE

This classic premium leather trainer employs a comfort technology originally developed for performance walking. C360 Foam is engineered with dual-layer cushioning to help absorb impact, return energy and promote natural walking movement. *MSRP $120.*



REVITALIGN/FROST

The Frost Walking Sneaker is the perfect companion on those not-so-nice days. Whether it's cold, and/or wet, Frost cooperates thanks to its water-resistant materials and Stridelyte outsole featuring high-traction rubber, heel and forefoot flex-grooves and a compression-molded midsole for stability. *MSRP $129.99.*

ORTHOFEET/NIRA

This hands-free athletic offering is special thanks to the Ortho-Cushion system, complete with a removable premium orthotic insole. An included Arch Booster allows for customizing support. An ergonomic sole features a mild rocker design to relieve foot and heel pain. Each shoe comes with two fitting spacers. *MSRP $129.*



XELERO/JOURNEY
Log more miles, have less fatigue, and complete a faster recovery thanks to Xelero's motion control technology. A water-resistant upper and slip-resistant outsole provide the ability to tackle all types of situations. Journey is available in multiple widths. *MSRP $199.99.*





ECCO/RECEPTOR LT
ECCO celebrates the 20th anniversary of its Receptor technology with the release of LT. The sole is designed to flex and support the body differently through each part of your step, for a natural gliding feeling. LT comes in a variety of upper options, from breathable mesh to a weatherproof GORE-TEX construction. *MSRP $150.*

TYR/TECKNIT 2
Tecknit 2 combines advanced knit technology, lightweight comfort, and all-day performance into a versatile sneaker. Building on the original, version 2 introduces a remastered engineered knit upper for greater breathability and a newly refined fit. Forefoot flex grooves allow for flexibility with every step. *MSRP $130.*

MEPHISTO/WITNEY Both elegant and original, Witney's low-profile retro design completes an ensemble. A SOFT-AIR midsole and SHOCK-ABSORBER integrated into the on-trend gum outsole reduce shock, offering a smooth, fatigue-free walk. Crafted in Portugal, this lace-up features a leather lining and removable footbed. *MSRP $299.*



RECOVERY ROUTE

"Recovery footwear continues to grow as people look for shoes they can wear throughout the day, not just immediately after exercise," according to Velous CEO Tim Bartels. In turn, the firm is moving beyond traditional recovery sandals into more versatile designs with the same support and comfort. Jeremy Nelson, CEO of ROLL Recovery, concurs that "consumers are no longer looking for products that only serve one narrow moment. They want footwear that supports an active lifestyle, but also fits naturally into daily life."



ROLL RECOVERY/SOLACE

Slide into comfort with this premium recovery shoe featuring a SuperPlush footbed made with BLOOM algae-based foam. A proprietary Cradle-Design footbed, designed to distribute pressure and create a stable foundation, surrounds and supports the foot. A genuine suede adjustable upper offers a refined look. *MSRP $110.*





FINN COMFORT/ANTHOLZ

Fit for use inside or out, the Antholz wool felt clog is built on the same supportive, durable polyurethane sole as some of the brand's bestselling sandals and shoes. The removable, replaceable contoured cork footbed is wool-lined, while the wool felt upper is soft, durable and temperature regulating. *MSRP $235.*

VELOUS/TIMBERLINE

Cue this cozy, easy-to-wear slip-on clog for fall and winter. An engineered midsole provides cushioning and stability, while the durable outsole adds traction for outside wear. Timberline features Tri-Motion Technology, including a deep heel cup, balanced midfoot arch support and a flexible forefoot. *MSRP $129.95.*

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RUN IN PLACE

"We see strong growth across running, walking, and daily wear as more consumers take up running and look for versatile footwear that extends beyond exercise. Running shoes are increasingly becoming part of consumers everyday lifestyles from runs to walks, errands, commuting, and daily activities," says Gina Seelaus, product specialist at Topo Athletic. These run-ready options blend technical performance attributes and an active aesthetic into sneakers offering a smooth, stable ride.



DIADORA/CORSA

Weighing in at 8.11 oz., Corsa is designed for runners looking to build both mileage and speed. The look is retro and archival, digging into the brand's Italian roots and 1980's streetwear aesthetic. The sneaker has an 8 mm drop. *MSRP $155.*



TOPO ATHLETIC/AURA 2

An update of Aura enhances what customers love about the original: security and cushioning. Aura 2's Y-Frame underfoot helps support natural foot movement during jogs and walks, while the cushioned midsole helps absorb impact for a comfortable feel during extended wear, including longer runs. *MSRP $175.*



RYKA/WINDSWIFT LX

Women can run like the wind in this high-performance sneaker offering continuous support, cushioning, and power. Built with RYKA Q TECH, this shoe is made with a woman's quadricep muscle in mind and offers a narrower heel, roomier toe and contoured cushioning for stability. *MSRP $99.99.*



SKECHERS/AERO BURST

Combining the convenience of a slip-on with the cushioning, support and responsiveness necessary for logging miles, Skechers designed the lightweight Hands Free Slip-Ins AERO Burst specifically for running. HYPER BURST ICE cushioning with HYPER ARC technology and a carbon-infused H-plate promote energy return. *MSRP $165.*



LEMS/ZENSPEED+

Natural-fit footwear firm Lems promotes the ZenSpeed+ as the first road running shoe engineered with a healthy fit and low drop platform for a smooth midfoot strike for increased efficiency. A TrueFit last aligns toes and secures the foot without the added bulk of a wide toe box. *MSRP $175.*


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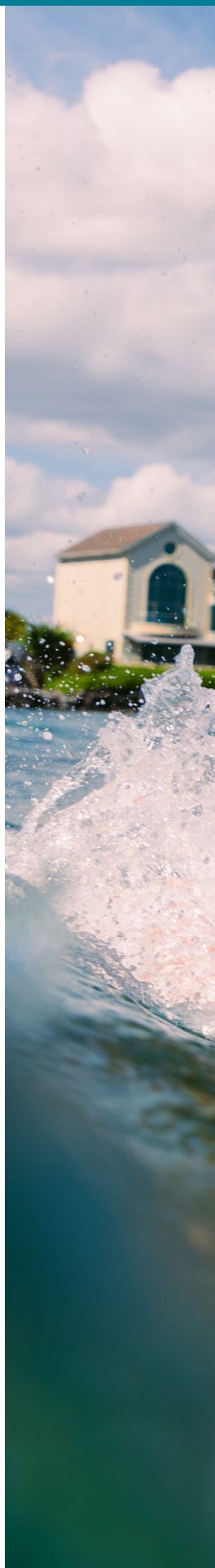
TRYING NEW THINGS

Companies Explore New Categories, Activities, and Capabilities as Avenues for Growth.

By Suzanne Blecher

Back in college, I had a business management professor tell the class that "no matter what you do or where you are in life, every month, do at least one thing that scares you." That teaching resonated over time. It is a lesson that is also paramount to firms who feel stuck in this current economic climate. At *Textile Insight*, we decided to explore what's new today – what new entities are out there, who is expanding into additional categories and where transformations are occurring in order to attract new customers. In business, and in the words of former Toyota Motor Corp. president Katsuaki Watanabe: "Being satisfied with the status quo means you are not making progress." **Here's a look at how several firms are choosing to evolve.**




The Wavebound Bikini from Free Fly.

CAPTURE A NEW CATEGORY

ORTOVOX launched the Sequence mountain bike collection in Fall 2026. While the company is known for its avalanche safety gear and performance wool apparel, USA Brand Manager Tom Mason saw an opening for mountain bike apparel and accessories, as a lot of the brand's loyalists ride in the summer. The move "makes us more resilient year-round," he said.

The Sequence GORE-TEX Jacket and Pants are its first products made in partnership with GORE-TEX and use the ePE membrane, which is PFAS-free and aligns with our chemical management standards. The Sequence Trail Shorts/Pants employ 87% recycled nylon as the main material with laser-cut ventilation, while the Sequence Trail Jersey is tailored with 100% textile-to-textile recycled polyester. Arms on the jersey are anatomically shaped so protectors can be worn under a t-shirt and seamless shoulders prevent a backpack from uncomfortable rubbing.

For Outdoor Research, the new path to mountain biking was straightforward. "Our customers led us here," explained TJ Schiller, athlete and partnerships manager for Outdoor Research (OR). "When we asked what they wear OR for, mountain biking was ranked among their top activities and they wanted better-fitting, more technical trail apparel." More than half of OR customers own a bike. OR's Freewheel MTB Ride Pant can be worn year-round and offers UPF 50 sun protection and a water-resistant DWR finish. The Freewheel MTB Long Sleeve Jersey employs heritage fabrics, stretch, UPF 30



The Trail Jersey SS, Shorts and Pants from the Ortovox Sequence Collection.

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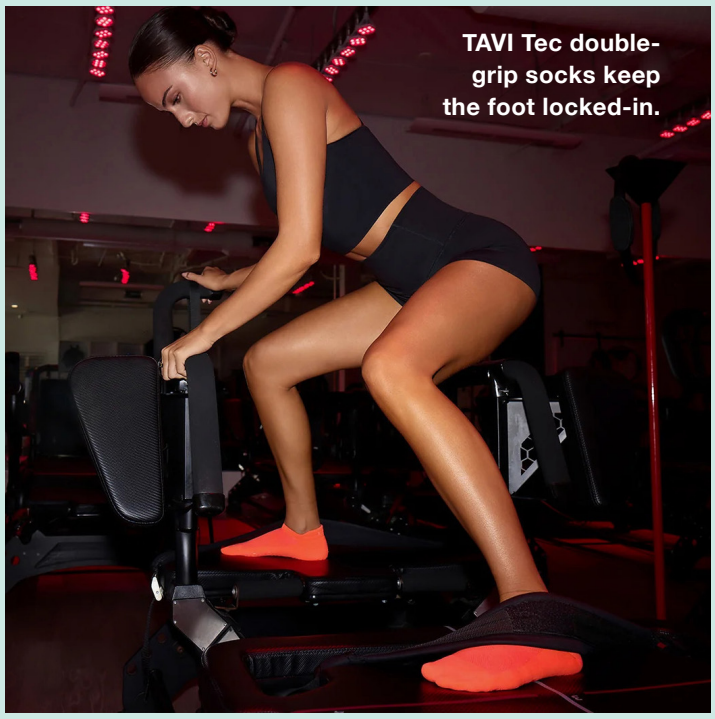
EXPAND PRODUCT USAGE

Strengthening the scenario of how and where products can be used boosts awareness.

TAVI is introducing its socks to a younger and more sport-focused customer. New TAVI Tec styles are made with a performance fabrication and feature double-grip technology, with grip on both the inside and outside of the sock. The interior grip helps minimize twisting, bunching and sliding in athletic shoes. The exterior grip helps with traction.

33 Threads Senior Marketing Manager Stephanie Turpin noted that "with TAVI Tec, we saw an opportunity to take our grip expertise beyond the studio. Moving into sports felt like a natural evolution of what we already do best: creating products that help people feel more secure and connected through movement." Rather than just separating socks between grip and non-grip for specific activities, "it's opened up an entirely new conversation for us around where grip technology can go, from Pilates and Lagree to tennis, golf, soccer, strength training and beyond."



TAVI Tec double-grip socks keep the foot locked-in.



Selkirk Sport Legacy Women's Pickleball Shoe.

Smartwool is following its outdoor customer indoors, since Merino also works for indoor endeavors. This spring, Smartwool announced an agreement with Life Time to bring high-performance Merino wool socks and performance apparel, as well as brand experiences to Life Time's gyms and athletic events. The arrangement includes in-club media integration, event activations, and a role in Life Time's 30 Strong Challenge.

The mission of "pickleball-only" company, Selkirk Sport, is to support players through every aspect of their game. So last year, after three years of development, the Idaho-based firm launched its footwear line, the CourtStrike series. The latest iteration, CourtStrike 3.0, is a stalwart performance shoe carrying a six-month outsole warranty. "Many recreational players take to the court in running shoes or generic sneakers that simply weren't built for the intense lateral movements and quick pivots pickleball demands," Doug Thielen, President of Selkirk Sport commented, adding, "by engineering footwear specifically for the sport, we're keeping players safe, comfortable and playing at their best."

Footwear category success has now led to expansion of the range with the Legacy Shoe — a versatile model designed to transition from court to country club brunch with high-performance technology and a sleeker aesthetic. The exec revealed that about 40% of people who purchased shoes and apparel recently on Selkirk.com are new customers. "It's given us a wonderful avenue to introduce the Selkirk standard of quality to an entirely new audience," he concluded.

and offers a recycled polyester blend with ActiveTemp thermo-regulating technology. "For us, trying something new meant listening to our customers and building for what they were already doing, which carries less risk than chasing an unfamiliar audience," Schiller said.

With Free Fly's customer base already in the water, introducing a surf and swim collection in 2025 seemed organic. According to Harrison Lindsey, head of marketing at Free Fly Apparel, "our outdoorsy target customer doesn't focus 100% on one pursuit." The surf customer may have already been aware of the brand for its bamboo sun hoodies, but not aware of its ability to create technical apparel. The firm gathered ambassadors – from professional surfers to saltwater guides and in-water photographers to get the fit, fabric and styles just right. Rachael Tilly, four time World Longboard Champion largely influenced the design of the Wavebound Bikini. The Pinnacle Rashguard has also been a big success, noted Lindsey, with features including ear holes for drainage and boardshort attachment points.

BUILD OUT A BUSINESS

After spending more than 20 years with Schoeller, Gwen Hsu co-founded SCHOTEX Global last year with Romaine Schönenberger. "In a short time, we have made significant progress in product development, brand building, factory construction and establishing a global sales team. We are seeing growing awareness of the SCHOTEX brand and strong interest from performance and outdoor brands around the world," Hsu stated.



This Zara blouse was created with textile-to-textile recycled Circ Lyocell.

The firm now has a team of 20 employees and is built on a foundation of Swiss textile DNA. At Performance Days Munich and Functional Fabric Fair Portland shows, SCHOTEX will introduce new articles within the Terra collection that combine fine Merino wool with high-performance synthetics in double-weave constructions. Over the next five years, Hsu's ambition is for the firm to be recognized as one of the world's leading premium, innovative performance textile brands and a partner for outdoor, sportswear and lifestyle categories globally.

With the unfortunate, and abrupt, closing of Schoeller Switzerland came opportunity – and what she calls "almost a responsibility" – to reinvent. "The timing was right and I was fortunate to have a network of talented former colleagues and industry experts who shared my vision and were ready to build something special together."

According to Guy Lucas, President of Burlington, "challenging markets make disciplined innovation even more important. Customers still expect quality, reliability, speed, and competitive value, so manufacturers cannot rely only on processes that worked in the past." In July 2026, Burlington announced the commissioning of a new modernized dyehouse at its manufacturing site in Raeford, NC. The Raeford facility produces specialized fabrics used in military dress uniforms for the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy and Space Force – and is the only U.S. manufacturer producing these fabrics domestically. "The new dyehouse strengthens a critical early step in that manufacturing process by improving how wool and polyester fibers are dyed and prepared



Outfitted by the Outdoor Research Mountain Biking collection.



Burlington is investing in the future of domestic textile production.

for downstream production," Lucas commented.

The project will replace aging equipment with optimized process technology, automation, controls, and supporting laboratory capabilities to improve process consistency, shade control, efficiency, quality, and repeatability. Employees also gain better tools to manage production. "The goal is not change for its own sake. It is building a more reliable and competitive domestic manufacturing platform that can serve customers and the U.S. military for years to come," per the exec.

Grangers has been known to European adventurers since 1937, and this year set its sights on expanding the U.S. market with new representatives, public relations support and B2C/B2B platforms. Its water-based, PFAS-free, bluesign-approved aftercare products maintain outdoor and technical gear by cleaning, reproofing, and refreshing it. Products can be used on waterproof apparel, down, activewear, neoprene, and footwear. Grangers developed the world's earliest waterproofing solution in 1947 that protected gear for the first successful British Mount Everest summit in 1953.

With outdoor participation on the rise and consumers moving away from traditional detergents that can damage waterproof membranes, the time is right, according to Natasha Barwell-Jones, director of marketing at Grangers. The largest obstacles include "logistics at first, then distribution partners who understand the importance of aftercare, as there is still a lot to be done to educate." Grangers' new Xtreme Collection just launched in the U.S., providing two concentrated formulas to keep ISO

waterproof performance for up to 40 washes. The products are certified biodegradable and vegan, and come in bottles made from 100% recycled Prevented Ocean Plastic.

PICK A PARTNERSHIP

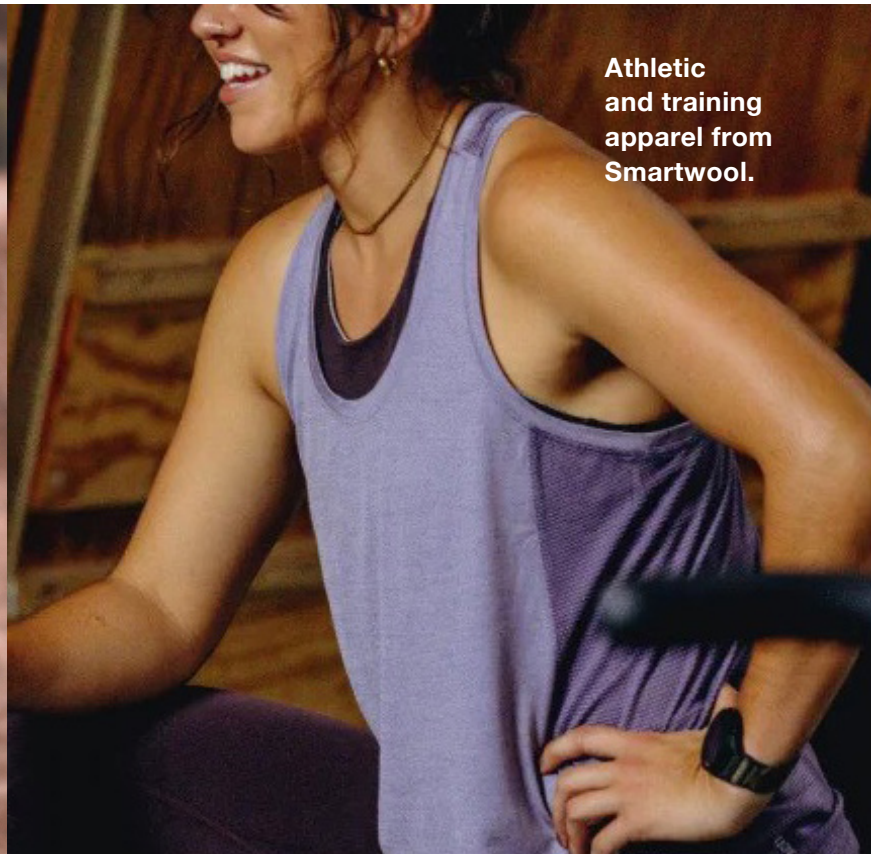
Earlier this year, CORDURA Adventurer was launched in hopes of simplifying the decision-making process for designers and product developers. "Rather than asking teams to navigate an increasingly complex performance fabric landscape on their own, CORDURA Adventurer offers a curated collection organized around specific outdoor applications and end-use requirements," described Ryan Castanet, Director of Business Development for CORDURA.

Applications range from lightweight wind layers and insulated jackets to waterproof shells, technical outdoor pants, and accessories. The collection was curated to support the performance, durability, protection, and comfort that outdoor consumers want. In August, Atextile was selected as the first official CORDURA Adventurer mill partner for its strong technical capabilities and expertise in outdoor performance fabrics. "In challenging economic environments, innovation becomes even more important because the cost of making wrong decisions increases. Brands need partners that help reduce risk, provide clarity, and build confidence," Castanet commented.

Designed to spur workforce development and modernize facilities to increase the competitiveness of the U.S. textile industry, FutureTEX brings together industry, government, university and non-profits collaboratively. FutureTEX



The Freewheel MTB Ride Pant and XT Bike Gloves from Outdoor Research, topped with a Vesper Insulated Hoodie.



Athletic and training apparel from Smartwool.

is a 10-year, $480 million national Manufacturing Innovation Institute launched by the U.S. Department of Defense that was awarded in August 2026 to core partners including Drexel University, Gaston College, Georgia Tech, ISAIC and NC State University. Industry partners are being recruited to be part of the project, with organizations including SEAMS, The Nonwovens Institute and North American Linen Association having signed on. Currently NC State and Gaston College representatives are working together to establish a nonprofit organization to take on administrative duties related to the initiative.

In efforts to make recycling scalable worldwide, Danville, Virginia-based Circ announced in October plans to build a multi-phase textile-to-textile recycling site in China. In partnership with spandex producer Huafon, Circ's technology will be used to recycle polycotton back into raw materials for new textiles. "For Circ, growth means deploying recycling facilities globally, especially in places where textile waste and textile manufacturing already sit side by side," noted Conor Hartman, president of Circ. Adding reassurance, "Huafon is investing directly in the project alongside us, and that shared commitment matters when you're building something new," he said. ■



An AGI Denim jacket incorporates Circ Lyocell.

SPECIAL EFFORT

While the Big Four of football, basketball, softball/baseball and soccer are understandably the core of any team dealer's bottom line, the revenue generated by the so-called "specialty sports" are just as vital. And with the continued growth of travel and club teams in volleyball, wrestling, track and lacrosse outside of the traditional high school season, many of these sports are generating revenue for 12 months a year. Let's take a quick look.

THE 'SPECIALTY SPORTS' REMAIN VITAL TO A TEAM DEALER'S BOTTOM LINE YEAR-ROUND. BY MIKE MAY



SPIKE IN VOLLEYBALL SALES



SFIA reports that there has been a significant increase in participation in court volleyball since 2020. Back then there were 5.4 million participants, of which 3.2 million were core participants (those playing the sport 13-plus days/year). By 2025, overall participation was 7.8 million people, with 3.7 million core participants.

In the opposite of the wrestling trend, much of the growth has come from the boys' side — it's now played by both boys and girls in high school and college.

At the high school level, court volleyball is played by both girls and boys,, although girls still rule. NFHS reports that girls' high school volleyball is the third most popular high school sport in terms of participating schools (17,213) and second in terms of participants (502,056).

Not surprisingly, girls' volleyball is played in every NFHS state association, while boys' volleyball is in 31 states.

According to **Davis Whitfield**, new executive director of the **NFHS**, court volleyball is a rising star on the high school athletic scene.

"Volleyball continued its rise in popularity and topped 500,000 participants for the first time," Whitfield points out. "The top fall sport for girls moved to number two in 2024-25, supplanting basketball, and now is only 7014 behind outdoor track and field for the number-one spot."

Team dealers are benefitting from this participation resurgence and report that rarely does a week go by where they don't receive a volleybal order year-round.

Al's Sporting Goods has both a retail division and a team division that sells volleyball, according to Hart.

"We have a strong volleyball business with a big volleyball club here in town as well as many schools," says Hart, who has nearly 60 years of sales experience in the sporting goods industry. "We also have a strong retail business selling shoes for volleyball."

On the team side, Hart sells uniforms, socks, net systems, three different brands of shoes (Nike, Under Armour and Adidas) and two different brands of volleyballs (Tachikara and Wilson). Wilson is the official volleyball for Delaware high schools.

Down in Vero Beach, FL, **Dave's Sporting Goods** has a solid volleyball business that has exploded to include beach volleyball.

"Volleyball is so popular in my area that I have 12 different types of volleyballs on the wall," reports owner **Dave Whipp**.

Whipp's volleyball inventory includes uniforms, nets, knee pads, arm sleeves, volleyballs and three different types of shorts – two-, three and four-inch inseam. Many of the more conservative schools specifically order the four-inch seam shorts for their girls. Whipp also does not sell volleyball shoes.

"The volleyball footwear business is too specialized and I cannot stock enough inventory, so they buy their shoes from Internet websites."

Volleyball is anything but a minor sport for Kratz Sporting Goods in Indiana. "We do pretty well with volleyball," says Krebbs. "We sell everything from head to toe on and off the volleyball court."

For years in Indiana, high school volleyball has been the exclusive domain for girls, but that's no longer the case and now the girls are playing the fall and the boys in the spring.

"Boys volleyball is catching fire," adds Krebbs. "It has grown exponentially in the last four to five years."

Krebbs also sells girls' volleyball to travel clubs, which makes the entire volleyball category one of his biggest annual revenue generators. ■

TAKING IT TO THE MAT

According to the Sports & Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA) most recent participation studies, overall participation in wrestling is increasing, but "core" participation levels are on the decline. In 2020, there were 1.9 million wrestlers in the U.S. By 2025, that number had risen to 2.2 million wrestlers.

But the number of those core wrestlers (those participating 26 days or more a year) dropped from 692 thousand in 2020 to 515 thousand in 2025.

According to the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), high school wrestling is the eighth most popular sport for boys in terms of the number of schools that sponsor a wrestling team (11,829) and the sixth most popular in participation (295,259). For the girls, high school wrestling is the 10th most popular high school sport in terms of the number of programs.

Participation in girls' wrestling increased 19.9 percent from the previous year. Since the return to activities from the pandemic, the number of schools offering girls wrestling has jumped from 4802 to 8853 and the number of participants has increased from 31,654 to 88,771. In addition, all states are now reporting some participation in girls' wrestling, and 40 state associations are now conducting state championships.

The proof is in the sales for team dealers.

"I've never sold so many girls' singlets for wrestling as I have in the last year," reports **Joel Dunn** of **Allied Sports** (formerly Baker's Sports in Jacksonville, FL).

In Indiana, **Coaches Corner** manager **Doc Claussen** has a unique affiliation with the sport of wrestling. He sells product during the day and during the wrestling season in Indiana he's inside high school gymnasiums as a certified high school wrestling official. He's been a wrestling official for more than 25 years.

Coaches Corner sells everything to do with the sport, except for footwear.

"We are no longer selling wrestling footwear since because we would have to carry so many SKUs in inventory and we don't know what styles, colors and brands that the wrestlers prefer during any given year," says Claussen, pointing out that wrestlers are buying their shoes online. However, the sport remains key for his business, especially with the girls.

"During the last five years, the growth of women's wrestling has been pleasantly surprising," Claussen says. "It's growing so quickly that a high school coach contacted me recently asking if we could build an online store specifically for girls' wrestling. He told me that he had around 25 girls on his wrestling team."

Meanwhile, down in Clarksville, IL, **Kratz Sporting Goods** owner **Allen Krebbs** reports that his wrestling business has picked up in recent years, largely because of the growing number of girls taking up the sport.

"The Indiana High School Athletic Association has now approved girls' wrestling with a state championship," Krebbs reports.

An outlier in the business can be found in Wilmington, DE, where **Al's Sporting Goods'** owner **Bob Hart** tells *Team Insight* that all of his wrestling customers are male. ■

IN 2020, THERE WERE 1.9 MILLION WRESTLERS IN THE U.S. BY 2025, THAT NUMBER HAD RISEN TO 2.2 MILLION WRESTLERS.



LACROSSE STICKS TO IT

Participation in lacrosse has been stagnant since the COVID pandemic — since 2020, participation has been fluctuating between 1.9 and two million participants each year.

NFHS reports that 32 states play varsity lacrosse for girls and 30 for boys. In all, there are 98,300 female lacrosse players and 112,50 males.

Interestingly, the states with the most girls' high school teams don't necessarily have the most participants. For instance, the top five states with the most programs are New York, California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. But the top five states with the most players are California, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

The same goes for the boys, where there is also no direct correlation between states with the most teams and those having the most participants. For instance, the top five states with the most programs are New York, California, Massachusetts, Florida and Pennsylvania, while the top five states in terms of numbers of players are New York, California, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania.

Lacrosse is a bit unique in that the main retail outlets are split between local team dealers, big-box sporting goods stores, slightly used retailers such as Play It Again Sports and specialty vertical retailers such as **Lacrosse Unlimited**.

The latter is a good example of a retailer with an in-depth product inventory in lacrosse. Store manager (in Marietta, GA) **Melissa Vaughn**, points out that Lacrosse Unlimited has a strong physical brick-and-mortar presence in 60 locations around the U.S., as well a strong online sales portfolio.

"We sell sticks, cleats, shoulder pads, balls, protective gloves, socks, chest protectors and, of course, uniforms," Vaughn says, pointing out that for the retailer it's always lacrosse season.



"In the fall, there's recreational lacrosse. In the spring, colleges and schools are playing. And, in the winter and summer, we are selling to travel teams," she says.

Vaughn feels that Lacrosse Unlimited is uniquely qualified to garner a major percentage of the lacrosse business. "Our strength is our customer service and our staff's very thorough product knowledge."

When you take into account flat participation and steep competition from multiple retail outlets, it's understandable why a team dealer such as PJ's Soccer/Lacrosse in Bethesda, MD, is experiencing lackluster lacrosse sales.

"Our lacrosse sales have been somewhat flat for about five years," reports owner Phil Galipo, who says that most of his sales have been to travel clubs and to individuals, starting as young as five years old.

"We sell lots of lacrosse uniforms, as well as all the gear," he says. "We don't sell too much lacrosse gear to high school lacrosse teams as they are going online. But individual players do buy from us throughout the year."

At Kratz Sporting Goods, Krebbs says his location – just across the Ohio River from Louisville, KY – helps his meager lacrosse business.

"Here in southern Indiana, lacrosse has not hit our pocket of the state, but there is interest in lacrosse in nearby Louisville," he reports. ■

TRACK MAKES A RUN FOR IT



Fun fact: Only in the U.S. is the term "track and field" used to describe what happens when athletes run around a track or throw a javelin. To the rest of the world, it is simply known as "athletics."

Whatever it is called, track and field is an interesting category for team dealers. As popular as the sport is in the U.S., many of the top Americans leave in the spring, summer and fall to compete in the big European meets. Track and field stars may be born and raised in the U.S., but they blossom and mature in Europe. As a result, it's not easy for young participants to be influenced by their American superstars.

Nevertheless, according to the NFHS, track and field remains one of the most popular sports at the high school level for both boys and girls. For boys, track and field is the second most popular high school sport in both the number of participants and number of schools.

For the girls, it is the second most popular high school sport in terms of the number of schools, but track and field takes the number one sport based on the number of athletes — 509,070.

And although the sport requires little in terms of uniforms and equipment, simply because of the big participation numbers track and field remains a key category for many team dealers. According to Whipp, of Dave's Sporting Goods in Florida, the sport brings in steady cash flow during the spring track season by selling compression shorts and track shoes.

"I'm always selling track shoes throughout the year for $50," Whipp explains. "I have a permanent sign in my store window that promotes the sale of track shoes for $50. I sell quite a few every year."

Dunn, of Allied Sports, reports that his the track and field business is filled with positives and negatives.

"On the plus side, the sport, especially on the equipment side, is filled with a number of equipment needs such as starting blocks, hurdles, padding for high jump and pole vault pits, a discus, a shot put, batons for relays, stop watches, a javelin and different types of spikes for sprinters, long distance runners throwers, and jumpers," he says, although one of the downsides is that schools don't need to buy those same items every year.

"Once purchased, all of those items have a fairly long shelf life," he points out.

Dunn says that sales of track singlets vary from year to year, depending on a school's annual turnout and how many from the previous year are still in good enough shape.

At Kratz Sporting Goods in Indiana, the track and field business continues to expand, says Krebbs, who is selling equipment and new uniforms every three or four years."

In Terre Haute, IN, the business fills a brief window on the annual sales calendar for Coaches Corner.

"Track and field is a short seasonal category for us," explains Claussen. "We have a steady business of track uniforms – singlet tops and shorts," although he points out that while track and field has a number of equipment requirements – hurdles, high jump padding, pole vault padding, batons, a discus, a shot put, a javelin, stop watches, pole vault poles and cones – these items don't have to be replaced every year. ■

IN A PICKLE

Pickleball is expanding in so many different ways in so many cities that it is hard to keep track.

The most recent participation figures from the SFIA reveal an amazing rate of growth— in 2020, there were 4.2 million pickleball players, ages six and above participating at least once a year. By 2025, that had risen to 24.3 million players.

Of those, 7.5 million of them are "core" players – those playing eight or more days a year. Of those, 57 percent are male, nearly 26 percent are older than 65 and 60 percent are from households whose income is at least $100,000 a year.

In other words, there is money to be made in pickleball and, in fact, the way it is growing pickleball may soon pass golf in popularity, especially among seniors.

Unfortunately, sales of pickleball gear are following the path carved by lacrosse towards specialty, vertical outlets – many of them online retailers or facility stores – that have popped up especially in large cities in the warmer climates. One such example is Premier Racquet Sports in Atlanta, a longtime tennis retailer that has added pickleball big time.

Co-owner **Ellen Li**, says **Premier Racquet Sports**, which is a full-line brick-and-mortar retailer that sells pickleball paddles, shoes, bags, weighted lead tape and three different colored balls for pickleball, is considered one of the ten largest retail outlets in the country for pickleball and is poised for strong growth.

"We have a wide selection of product and a super knowledgeable staff within the store," Li tells Team Insight, pointing out they have been selling pickleball alongside its tennis inventory for almost three years now.

Another unique service provided by Premier Racquet Sport is its Demo Program, where customers can check out as many as two paddles at a time for as long as a week to see what they like. "At the end of the week, you must return the racquets or buy them," says Li. "Our customers like this program."

This philosophy is reminiscent of the old Sports Authority slogan of "Play Before You Pay and Try Before You Buy." The late, great Jack Smith would nod in approval.

In Vero Beach and throughout Indian River County, which is located along the Atlantic Ocean in central Florida, pickleball is exploding in popularity with seniors, young adults and school children, according to Dave's Sporting Goods Whipp.

"A number of municipal tennis courts were sold by the city of Vero Beach to a private organization, which has turned them into 12 pickleball courts," he says. "It's called Pickleball University and you must join the club to get access to the courts. The courts are always being used.

"Also, many oceanside residential communities in our area have added pickleball courts in their own developments and they are always filled with players," he adds.

"Schools are also adding pickleball. We have a good pickleball infrastructure within Indian River County."

As a result, Dave's Sporting Goods stocks 15 types of pickleball paddles and a number of balls.

According to Whipp, the average age of pickleball players in his area is getting younger.

"When people first started playing pickleball, most of players seemed to be in their 70s and now the average age is easily 20 years younger than that," Whipp reports.

At Kratz Sporting Goods in Indiana, customers can buy paddles and balls used in pickleball. According to Krebbs, pickleball is quickly growing in popularity in southern Indiana.

In West Palm Beach, FL, at Berean Christian School pickleball is now one of the many activities. According to Luke Schartner, head of the school's physical education department, pickleball gets equal billing alongside basketball, flag football, dodge ball, soccer, whiffle ball, capture the flag and other activities — and is becoming just as popular. ■



SPECIALTY SPORTS UNIFORM FASHION SHOW

WHAT WILL STAND OUT ON FIELDS AND COURTS IN THE COMING SEASONS?

SPECIAL LOOKS

THE MAJOR UNIFORM AND APPAREL VENDORS TO TEAM DEALERS KNOW SOMETHING SPECIAL WHEN THEY SEE IT.

CURATED BY MICHAEL JACOBSEN



MOMENTEC
NOTHING UP ITS SLEEVE

Momentec's Ladies Setter Series sleeveless volleyball jersey is made with moisture-wicking polyester/spandex fabric and breathable mesh inserts for comfort and performance. The compression shorts are made with moisture-wicking, odor-resistant polyester/spandex fabric for comfortable performance. It features a wide flat waistband, U-shaped gusset, flatlock stitching and a three-inch inseam.



27 SPORTS
SINGLED OUT

27 Sports wrestling singlets in men's, youth, women's and girls' sizes are made of a durable poly-Lycra. These fully sublimated singlets will give teams a great look and feel – and are budget friendly.



A4
READY TO RUN

Premium cut-and-sew sublimation made with Ultratek fabric for maximum mobility and air flow, A4's sublimated singlet jersey and track shorts are available in dozens of designs available in men's, women's and youth sizes.

STARTER
OLD-SCHOOL MEETS MODERN

The vintage brand of Starter has entered a new chapter – one where old-school identity meets elite athletic engineering. Its new lacrosse uniforms combine classic style with technical precision. Every jersey, reversible, short and box-cut silhouette is crafted with fabrics, modern fits and the durability from classic school jerseys to modern performance cuts as Starter blends heritage design with technical execution.





CHAMPRO
YOUR SERVE

Volleyball players can serve up high-powered energy on the court in this fully custom jersey and short set. Made with Pin-Dot Mesh inserts for maximum ventilation, the Juice Sleeveless Jersey's reinforced, curved back offers full, lasting coverage. Pair it with the Juice Compression Shorts that blend a secure waistband and double-ply gusset for stability and unrestricted movement.



REVO
SERVING UP THE BLITZ

The Blitz Volleyball Kit from Revo features V-neck or crew neck jersey styles with a choice of coordinating Blitz shorts. For a volleyball-specific women's fit, pair the Blitz jersey with its Strive Volleyball Short. Fully sublimated for bold, durable color and built for speed, Blitz delivers pro-level performance with a tailored fit.



CLIFF KEEN
LADIES GOT GAME

In 2026, the first-ever sanctioned Collegiate Women's Wrestling Championships reshaped the sport and those elite women are helping carry that momentum into every room in the country. Cliff Keen has backed women's wrestling from the start, standing with the athletes and the dealers who outfit them for success. To every competitor who took the mat and helped shape this moment – congratulations.