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RUNNING

FEEL GOOD TECH &
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Topo's First Carbon-Plated Race Shoe

SPECTER ELITE

RACE FASTER.



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Above: CEP Pro Run Optaspeed Bowtech is a hybrid super trainer that combines speed and stability.
On the Cover: Vitasole Allure is a lightweight, stylish and supportive sneaker with a stretch fly-knit upper.

FOOTWEAR & APPAREL

Step to It 12
Make movement a priority with high-performing, stylish sneakers.

Going Up 26
The trail category just keeps advancing.

DESIGN

The Fun Factor 20
Runners are leaning into colorful looks and feel-good tech.

TEAM SPORTS

Strength in Numbers 36
Alli Sports charts a new path for dealers in the changing team sports business.

Hoops Style 38
Ballers have to look good if they are going to play great.



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#

THE BUZZ

Lululemon appointed industry vet and former longtime Nike exec Heidi O'Neill as its next Chief Executive Officer. She will begin as CEO and join the Board effective September 8, 2026, and will be based in Vancouver at the company's global headquarters. At Nike, O'Neill spent more than 15 years directly running apparel, merchandising, design, and innovation businesses. Prior to that, she led Dockers brand marketing efforts while at Levi Strauss & Co.

Fleet Feet recently opened a fifth San Antonio location. The new store is in Stone Ridge Market, 21019 U.S. Hwy 281 N, Suite 808. The store is operated by Kim Heather, who has been the operating partner of Fleet Feet San Antonio since 2024. She first joined Fleet Feet as an outfitter in Chicago advancing through

various roles including store manager, area manager and HR director. In 2024, she relocated to San Antonio where she oversees operations at the Quarry, Rim, Forum and Culebra locations. Fleet Feet now has more than 285 locally owned and operated locations across the U.S.

CA-based activewear brand **Vuori** appointed Abercrombie & Fitch exec Carey Collins Krug as its new Chief Marketing Officer, effective October 5, 2026. At Vuori, Collins Krug will oversee brand, creative, consumer engagement, digital, retail, wholesale and integrated marketing.

HydraPak has partnered with **aventyr Group** as its newest sales agency partner to help expand its presence in run specialty from the Midwest to New England. Additionally, the brand is actively

recruiting and onboarding experienced independent run specialty sales agencies across key territories including New York, the Mid-Atlantic, Florida, and West Coast regions.

Brooks Running has promoted Marc Misiewicz to VP, U.S. Wholesale, responsible for leading channel strategy and guiding multi-year growth across the company's largest commercial business. A 26 year Brooks veteran, Misiewicz brings expertise in sales leadership and retailer engagement. In his new role, Misiewicz will oversee sales operations, cross-functional initiatives and field support programs while continuing to strengthen partnerships with retailers nationwide.

Cabot Hosiery Mills, parent of **Darn Tough Vermont**, **Wide Open** and **Cabot & Sons** sock brands, has appointed David Steel as VP of Product & Innovation. Steel's background in design, creativity and innovation includes having previously worked with prominent brands such as Under Armour, Adidas and Reebok. Steel will oversee the product journey from the ideation process to prototype to final market launch.

Allbirds, Inc. officially changed its name to Smartbird and appointed Nadia Carlsten, a former Amazon exec as president and CEO. The move came as the company moved from being a footwear maker to an AI infrastructure

firm, a shift that began in April 2025 as the public company looked to jumpstart its shares.

The Allbirds footwear brand will live on, though, as **American Exchange Group** (AEG) has acquired the Allbirds brand IP, and is partnering with **WSG Brands** as co-owners of the Allbirds brand. WSG will serve as a key operating and growth partner, while AEG will design and manufacture the footwear.

On recently launched the Cloud X 5, one of its most popular footwear styles, with a midsole featuring CleanCloud, a breakthrough technology with more than 80% lower modeled carbon impact than conventional fossil-based EVA under the LCAs credit approach. On states that this marks the first time a sportswear brand has successfully created an EVA midsole made using captured carbon emissions and scaled it to over a million pairs, and that the performance of the shoe is identical to traditional EVA.

When On first announced this initiative in 2022, the proof-of-concept had only produced five pairs of shoes, with commercial scale targeted for the end of the decade. On is scaling up the tech ahead of schedule by collaborating directly with chemical companies, and engineering a plug-and-play solution that integrates into existing chemical reactors, allowing them to scale fast without building entirely new factories from scratch. ■



South Korean pop star V of the band BTS is the star of **Champion's** new Fall campaign, "True Champion." Marking a new chapter for the brand, True Champion aims to celebrate the people shaping today's culture through their originality, perspective and enduring impact. Other celebs appearing in the campaign include Romeo Beckham, SOFI TUKKER, Kyle Kuzma, Danna Paola, Megan Keller, Bella Sims and Jaalen Best.

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THE BUZZ



The New York Knicks' NBA championship run was a hit for **Skechers** as the brand's endorser OG Anunoby starred on the court in a limited-edition SKX Nexus "NYC Blue" Player Edition shoe. The brand made the colorway available online and saw the \$120 release quickly sell out following its exclusive July 1 launch on Skechers.com. The shoe was worn by Anunoby during his unforgettable Game 4 buzzer-beating tip-in on the way to a championship.

BUSINESS

Retail Sales Up Again in July

July marked the 10th consecutive month of gains for U.S. retail sales, according to the CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor, released on August 10 by the National Retail Federation.

"Retail sales maintained their steady upward momentum in July as consumers kept shopping despite ups and downs in other economic indicators," NRF

President and CEO Matthew Shay said. "Supported by a low unemployment rate and steady wage gains, households remained budget conscious but took full advantage of midsummer sales and early back-to-school promotions to stretch their dollars. Retailers helped balance budgets by remaining committed to affordability, ensuring that everyday products remain

accessible for American families."

Total retail sales, excluding automobile dealers and gasoline stations, were up 0.32% seasonally adjusted month over month and up 5.15% unadjusted year over year in July, according to the Retail Monitor. That compared with increases of 0.33% month over month and 9.41% year over year in June. ■

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THE HYBRID FOOTWEAR RACE IS ON



Nike Hybrid RN.



On Cloud X Tempo Pro.



PUMA Activate TR HYROX.



More and more running brands are eyeing the growth of hybrid fitness and HYROX, with several new shoes targeting the fitness market being unveiled.

Hybrid fitness is a broad training style that mixes strength and endurance. HYROX is a specific, standardized global fitness race. A HYROX fitness race includes 8 kilometers of running, along with 8 workout stations. Footwear for hybrid fitness and HYROX needs to be designed to fully support both running and strength training.

Puma is the official global apparel and footwear partner of HYROX. They extended their long-term partnership through 2030, serving as the title partner for the World Championships and providing specialized training and racing gear. Puma's new \$140 **Activate TR HYROX** shoe is built to support the strength, conditioning and running work that forms the foundation of HYROX training. It is designed as a training companion to the previously released Deviate Elite HYROX raceday shoe. The Activate TR HYROX has increased stability through a wider outsole, lower stack height, TPU heel counter and a slightly firmer NITROFOAM midsole. The wider forefoot allows the toes to splay naturally for stability during HYROX movements such as wall balls and sandbag lunges.

Adidas is also focused on everyday training with the recent release of its **Adizero Dropset Pro**, which brings together technologies from adidas' speed-focused Adizero line and strength-training Dropset franchise to deliver speed, stability, control and grip in one shoe. The \$150 style is built for everyday training for athletes at all levels as the go-to shoe for training and competition preparation.

On is also entering the space with the **Cloud X Tempo Pro**, a \$250 shoe that features a full-length carbon Speedboard to drive powerful takeoffs and extra speed, paired with a dynamic rocker shape for enhanced energy return. For support and stability, it features a high-performance Missiongrip outsole to ensure optimal grip and controlled transitions across all racing surfaces. To handle demanding, heavy-load stations, the upper is engineered with a supportive midfoot cage and an integrated strap.

Nike recently teased the launch of **Nike Hybrid**, a new Nike Training footwear system "built for the unique demands of hybrid training and racing." Shoes in the line will include the **Nike Hybrid Fly** and **Nike Hybrid RN** — designed to help athletes move seamlessly between running, lifting and dynamic movement without sacrificing speed, stability or traction. The Nike Hybrid RN will release in China on September 24 before becoming available globally on October 8. The Nike Hybrid Fly will launch globally in April 2027. ■



Adidas Adizero Dropset Pro.



STOKE FO-MO

Stoke's flagship offering is built specifically for men with wide feet, offered in both wide (E/2E) and wider (3E/4E) constructions built on a true wide last. A BIG BALL GIRTH toe box offers room for toes to splay naturally and a MANSPLAY MIDSOLE provides lateral stability for a wider stance. **MSRP \$85.**



STEEP TO IT.

BY SUZANNE BLECHER
**MAKE
MOVEMENT
A PRIORITY
WITH HIGH
PERFORMING,
STYLISH
SNEAKERS.**

Back in the 1830s, canvas shoes with rubber soles were created to walk on sand. About 30 years later, croquet players began wearing rubber-soled shoes. With innovators catching on to the idea into the 1900s, sneakers were adapted to multiple sports including basketball, running and tennis. Through it all, interest in healthy feet and ease of movement has remained intact.

Today's everyday sneakers have evolved tremendously. Packed with innovation, they are still built on the same premise of delivering performance and comfort. "People want a lightweight construction, responsive cushioning, and all-day wearability that supports movement without feeling technical," explains Nick Myers, marketing manager, **Alegria**. The exec says that the current expectation is for "invisible performance." But that doesn't

STEP TO IT.

mean that customers don't care about technical attributes. The biggest demand that Liam Bourke, president of **Comfort Co.**, is responding to is energy return. "Customers are increasingly knowledgeable. They've heard the language of EVA and foam compounds, and they want to know what their shoe is 'giving back' to them."

While "athleisure silhouettes" are still desired, it's also about "something that fits how he/she lives now, versatile enough to wear most places, but doesn't lose the orthotic benefits along the way," comments Kele Leistritz, director of product development at **Revitalign**.

The ballet sneaker trend remains compelling. Scott McCabe, director of omni channel merchandising and brand experience at **Mephisto**, says the brand finds that ballet sneakers appeal to women seeking something both refined and comfortable, offering soft leathers, lightweight soles, and a flexible fit.

"We tie in fashion through cleaner profiles, thoughtful material mixes, and a more elevated casual point of view, so the shoes feel versatile enough to wear well beyond active settings," says Jill Butler, director of merchandising for **ECCO**.

And at **Xelero**, Michael Arce, national sales manager, notes that "not all athletic footwear is created equal." Consumers may need some coaching on what's right for their feet and their lifestyle.

Rick Blackshaw, co-founder of wide-foot-friendly **STOKE Shoes** puts it simply: men want a shoe that fits. "It's not a shoe with a QR code or a carbon fiber plate or one engineered for a four-minute mile. They want a wide toe box that doesn't crush them by noon, a midsole that handles eight hours on concrete, and a price point that doesn't feel like a punishment for having wide feet." Stoke claims that up to 75% of men have wide feet, but only 25% wear wide width shoes. The bottom line for Blackshaw is, "if your feet hurt, you don't move."

Here, brands share some of their standout new sneakers for men and women. ■

1. ALL-DAY ACTIVE

Rieker President Rich Rask is getting the most interest in his Hobart offering, "which is built for effortless movement – it's a lightweight style and agile all-rounder, combining natural comfort with performance driven-features

for everyday wear." Meanwhile, **Xelero's** "athletically-inspired casuals" have features like a slip-resistant outsole, are orthotic-friendly and offer enhanced stability, **Xelero** CEO Dan Werremeyer comments.



TYR TECKNIT 2

This versatile trainer features advanced knit technology, lightweight comfort, and all-day performance in a sleek, sporty silhouette. Whether training in the gym, traveling, recovering, or simply navigating everyday life, the Technit 2 is built to move seamlessly with the modern athlete. **MSRP \$130.**

XELERO JOURNEY



Built on the importance of foot health and wellness, Journey offers Xelero's patented technology that makes walking easier. Four colorways are available for men and women, along with multiple widths. Journey features a slip-resistant outsole and water-resistant upper. **MSRP \$199.99.**

TOPO ATHLETIC SPECTER 3



This June, the brand launched the Pro Series, designed for runners seeking responsive, lightweight performance across every mile. Topo Athletic's new ATPU-based RevFoam midsole delivers a lightweight, energetic ride in the Specter 3. Directly underfoot, an ATPU footbed offers increased rebound. **MSRP \$170.**

SKECHERS SLIP-INS AERO BURST



This hands free running shoe is engineered for comfort, even for distances, thanks to dual density HYPER BURST ICE cushioning. HYPER ARC technology promotes smooth transitions and a Goodyear Performance Outsole offers traction and longevity. **MSRP \$165.**

RIEKER HOBART



Available for men and women, Hobart includes a breathable upper to ensure optimal airflow and removable insole for individual comfort. An integrated cushion layer delivers soft, yet responsive, support. This shoe is designed for all-day wear and active lifestyles. **MSRP \$145.**

2. RETRO REVIVAL

In 2015, the original “Taos Star was the first classic canvas sneaker to combine timeless styling with a removable, anatomically designed footbed with arch support and all-day comfort,” notes Mike Walker, VP

of marketing and ecommerce for **Taos**. After a decade of consumers and retailers asking for an update, the new Star Collection brings a premium leather Co-Star, a suede Star 2.0 and the soccer-inspired MegaStar.

TAOS MEGA STAR



Get set to be a Mega Star in this slimming silhouette offering arch and metatarsal support. Taos’ signature Curves & Pods removable footbed delivers support, cushioning and stability. Available in caramel, dark blue and tofu hues for understated luxury and ability to match any ensemble. **MSRP \$180.**

ECCO JUNE



June is a retro-inspired silhouette with a soft textile lining, removable dual-fit comfort foam insoles and a soft premium leather upper. ECCO FLUIDFORM Direct Comfort Technology offers lightweight comfort and flexibility. A mixed-lace detail adds a touch of fashion. **MSRP \$170.**

CAMPER PELOTAS SOLLER



This shoe pays homage to Camper’s Mallorca heritage. The upper of Pelotas Soller is a vision in nubuck/ pigskin leather, while the lining contains 55% recycled polyester. The sneaker includes an OrthoLite Recycled footbed which uses at least 98% recycled post-production waste. **MSRP \$165.**

DR. SCHOLL'S TIME OFF



This lace-up low top style has a retro-inspired toe cap, a minimalist silhouette, and athletic two inch sole. An anti-odor insole offers anatomical cushioning, comfort and arch support with 15% plant-based BLOOM foam. Easy Clean Repellent keeps outsoles looking fresh. **MSRP \$75.**



2026 Vendor
of the Year



3. MATERIAL INTEREST

Textile innovation can add to the fashion quotient of a comfort shoe. Finn Comfort's Ikebukuro offers a "premium vegetable-tanned upper with a full leather lining that forms to the foot over time for a customized

feel," notes Justin Orrell-Jones, CEO of **Finn Comfort**. A removable/replaceable, contoured insole is crafted from cork, jute, latex and leather.

REVITALIGN LEXI



Lexi is designed using nylon ripstop and finished with suede trim on the toe, collar and heel for a sporty, yet modern look. A Stridelyte platform supports the body's natural motion. Articulated flex grooves in the heel and forefoot allow for the shoe to bend with you. **MSRP \$199.99.**

ALEGRIA DEMMI



Set for Spring 2027, rose gold Demmi is crafted with a stretch vegan upper that's perforated for enhanced breathability. This lightweight, everyday slip-on is designed to reduce foot fatigue and includes a pull tab for easy on/off. A non-marking outsole keeps the look clean. **MSRP \$100.**

FINN COMFORT IKEBUKURO



As the brand's customers seek wider, deeper and more accommodating toe boxes and oblique toe designs; Finn Comfort innovates. Ikebukuro is built on an anatomical design philosophy with a Finnamic outsole crafted to enhance a natural walking motion. **MSRP \$425.**

VITASOLE ALLURE



Allure is politely put-together in a stretch fly-knit, while offering strong support. The shoe gently wraps the foot while allowing airflow throughout. Allure has built-in arch support and a removable insole, for the flexibility to personalize your shoe. A mule version is on tap for SS27. **MSRP \$119.95.**

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**Snow Peak
Alpha Direct
Vest** showcases
the versatility of
this innovative
performance
active insulation
material that
can be worn
next-to-skin as
a standalone
garment.

A new twist on the “fun run” has emerged this season as even super-serious runners are seeking ways to “run fun.” Caroline Bermel, product marketing and GTM manager, Fleet Feet noted in a recent webinar how individuals want a fun shoe to run in. “They are looking for a shoe that is not just runnable but wearable,” said Bermel. Other run specialty retailers and running brands agree: In Summer 2026, appearance matters.

A vibrant shoe wall at Coastal Running in Scarborough, ME, includes a fun take on performance with footwear category descriptions like “Squishy” and “Speedy.” Store owner Alex Archambault, remarks, “Customers will say, ‘I’m not fast, so I can’t buy a fast shoe,’ and we say, ‘buy the shoe that gets you excited to run.’”

As a lifelong runner, Steve Moore, owner of Run Moore, a specialty run shop in Westminster, MD, remembers going to specialty run shops as a teenager when “fun” was not necessarily a main focus for runners and run shops. “Now with people coming in asking for different colors of shoes, it just blows my mind,” says Moore, who adds, “Color and the look are increasingly important characteristics.”

Blue Benadum, head of R.A.D Running, a Portland, OR-based brand, whose performance shoes are both technical and eye-catching, explains, “We believe that going ‘full send’ in sport doesn’t mean sacrificing joy. Our passion is creating footwear for athletes that enables them to perform at the highest level and express themselves in ways no other brand can. Our design and color stories capture the imagination by breaking the mold and drawing inspiration beyond sport.”

Finding the Fun in Functional

Today’s trend of runners seeking more expressive looks has taken shape as performance tech has become a given. Runners expect footwear and clothing to be functional, whether that’s supercritical foam cushioning and carbon plates or tech tees that promote

RUNNERS LEAN INTO COLORFUL LOOKS & FEEL-GOOD TECH

BY EMILY WALZER

UPPING
THE FUN
FACTOR

MATERIAL AND DESIGN

advanced wicking and sun protection properties. It's not surprising then, that runners these days have turned their attention to aesthetics. But unlike the hi-viz hues and the "all-white" styles of seasons' past, right now bright colors, bold designs, novel materials and whimsical prints lead the way.

Many run specialty shops are tuned into this trend. At Coastal Running, for example, the store has an upbeat vibe that extends from eye-catching cheerful displays of Janji apparel and Skida headwear to a robust shoe wall loaded with footwear showcasing every shade of the rainbow. Brands include Brooks, Altra, New Balance, Mount to Coast, Hoka and newcomer Veloci. Archambault explains the Veloci shoe's appeal is the combination of a wide toe box with high drop, whereas many wide toe box models are zero drop. "We want to be open-minded about bringing in new lines and willing to take a chance on something new and different," Archambault tells us.

On the morning that we visited Coastal Running a steady flow of customers stopped by to share running experiences with Archambault, who had recently completed an Ultra 100 event. The store opened in 2024 and offers two run clubs and a book club and serves as a hub where health, wellness and self-improvement thrive. "Community comes first. It is the number one driver," says Archambault. "It's about running for the enjoyment and the adventure, and for getting to know people."

Run Fashion... Really?

The rise of run clubs, and the strong social aspect of these gatherings, also plays a role in runners' interest in adding more personal style and expression to a run wardrobe.

Steve Moore expands on today's run culture: "We're in an industry that straddles the line between health and performance and a functional shoe for walking around in. We have to understand both sides of that equation and are trying to flow with how customers are evolving." Currently Moore finds himself asking "What's the goal? To get over your foot injury or to look fashionable?"

Moore recalls a recent run with a customer who knew the shoe he was wearing was wrong, but bought it anyway because the color made him "look good." On the apparel side, Moore offers the popularity of the run apparel brand ChicknLegs, known for its bold, fun prints, as an example of what customers are drawn to this season. Moore states, "I've been shocked by how many units have sold. And not just to high school kids, but all ages." He adds, "I ran collegiately and back then if I showed up in ChicknLegs people wouldn't run with me."

Run Moore is one of only two U.S. run specialty retailers currently selling Kiprun footwear. "It's helping us locally and outside our zip code," notes Moore, who shares that Kiprun's parent company Decathlon reached out to him in the summer of 2025, based on his YouTube shoe reviews, and explained that the French company wanted to come to the U.S. but didn't have a U.S. store. Moore said that during his subsequent trip to France to meet management and learn more about the new brand, Decathlon held an event that mimicked a fashion show, complete with announcers introducing the latest styles of Kiprun "coming down the runway."

How's that for fun? ■

Unknown Runner Courser Collection women's tank features an ultra-lightweight performance merino wool system designed for hot, variable conditions.

**UPPING
THE FUN
FACTOR**



UPPING
THE FUN
FACTOR



Astral TR1 Sensi HT shoes are designed for light hikes and road-to-trail tempo runs. The shoes feature hemp, a natural fiber that has inherent performance properties including durability, odor-resistance, and breathability.



R.A.D. UFO Super Trainer provides a lightweight, highly cushioned platform built for runners logging serious mileage and able to handle daily training and faster efforts.



CEP Pro Run Optaspeed is engineered to maximize speed and stability with a redesigned upper for enhanced fit, comfort and breathability.



Roark Men's Bless Up Camp Collar shirt, constructed with a 4-Way stretch, microperforated nylon/poly blend fabric, is a technical trail top that can also serve

NAILING THE FUN AESTHETIC

Execs from three innovative brands share their design approach to creating performance shoes and garments that feature both style and substance.



Coastal Running stands out for its colorful displays, fun atmosphere and great community spirit.

TORRIE JACKSON

Vice President
CEP

“As runner preferences continue to evolve, we’re seeing more demand for products that combine technical performance with modern design and individual expression. That’s why we’re embracing bolder colorways like neon coral and lime. They bring more energy and personality to the collection while staying true to the compression technology and sports science that define our brand.”

MIKE ANDERSEN

Brand & Marketing Director,
Snow Peak USA

“Each season, Snow Peak utilizes a range of fabrics and materials in pursuit of one goal: to design apparel that performs functionally and visually. For SS26, Alpha Direct was chosen to fill an essential role as a mid-layer for transitional weather days. Its versatility makes it easy to layer under water or wind-proof outerwear, or it can be worn as a standalone layer on warmer days. Snow Peak’s apparel design philosophy centers on the duality of apparel. Our designs move with the wearer between environments.”

COOPER LAMBLA

Head of Brand + Marketing
Astral

“There’s something profound about a shoe that doesn’t just run on the earth, but is made from it. Add in a zero-drop and wider toe box shape, Astralite supercritical foam, G.15 Rubber and an optimal stack height on our new TR1 Sensi HT shoes, and you have something that truly activates your senses on any terrain.”

TRAIL

**THE TRAIL
CATEGORY
JUST KEEPS
ADVANCING.**

The North Face Offtrail Ultra This lightweight, highly responsive trail runner has a dual-density DREAMBOUND nitrogen superfoam midsole system for high rebound and long-distance comfort. MSRP \$190

GOING UP



Trail running is among the strongest growth categories in sports and fitness, according to the Sports and Fitness Industry Association. Participation in trail running has nearly quadrupled in the U.S. since 2008, growing from 4.5 million participants to more than 17 million today. Additionally, data from fitness tracker app Strava also reflects a trail surge, with the number of athletes uploading trail runs doubling over a three-year period.

“A lot of factors are contributing to the trail running participation increases,” says Lance Taylor, GM at LOWA USA. “Some of those include escapism and connecting with nature – we all yearn either consciously or unconsciously to ground ourselves with nature and escape the demands of everyday life like our constant notifications on our phones, distractions, and overstimulation of modern life... Another reason is community. Bonding doing hard things really brings people together and group runs provide this, along with the majesty of the scenery the outdoors provides to all of us.”

The best new trail offerings reflect the growth of the category, ranging from new franchises aimed at making the trail fun, to more high-end shoes packed with midsole and material tech for the toughest terrain and longer distances.

A Trail Mix

ASICS has the everyday runner in mind as the brand launches a new trail running franchise focused on bringing “a fresh sense of energy, fun and versatility to the trails.” The BLAZEBLAST shoe combines responsive cushioning, wearable trail features and a trampoline-inspired ride. Developed for a new generation of trail runners, the BLAZEBLAST shoe aims to deliver an approachable trail experience without compromising on performance.

“As we spoke to consumers, we kept hearing the same thing: they loved the bounce and

fun of our road running shoes and wanted that same feeling on the trails,” states Magdalena Gassebner, global product manager, performance running footwear, ASICS. “Rather than developing another highly technical trail shoe, we focused on creating an energetic, confidence-inspiring experience that feels approachable from the very first run. For us, it’s an exciting opportunity to welcome a new generation of runners into the trail category.”

Meanwhile, Mount to Coast’s new M1 is a long distance, high-stack mountain running shoe designed to maintain its cushion and responsive feel over many training and racing miles. “We built the M1 for runners who choose to add an extra summit to their run or choose to explore a new canyon instead of heading to the trailhead. These runners need a shoe that will keep their feet comfortable no matter how many miles they run,” said Mount to Coast co-founder and head of product Yeti Zhang.

The North Face is focused on adventure with the launch of its all-new Offtrail Ultra this month. The lightweight, highly responsive trail running shoe is engineered for speed, precision, and confidence across technical terrain. “Adventure running continues to evolve, with athletes pushing deeper into technical terrain and demanding footwear that can move as fast and as confidently as they do,” says Brett Rivers, senior global merchandiser of performance footwear, The North Face.

And Merrell just launched the MTL SpeedARC Peak, a technical trail running shoe built for elite runners. The SpeedARC midsole system is engineered for all-terrain performance through a three-layer design that delivers efficiency and comfort. John Sanregret, PLM, Merrell, says the shoe “was built with one purpose in mind: to enable athletes to compete at the highest level. Every detail was scrutinized and refined to deliver maximum speed, control, and confidence on race day.” ■

Ciele TRLCapMRPH

This hat in the brand’s Paradis capsule features breathable COOmatic | PLUS MIKRAMesh knit that is cooling, moisture-wicking, and anti-odor. Built for the run, and everything in between.



NEW
STANDOUTS
FOR THE
TRAIL

La Sportiva Endure Short

The brand's Spring 2027 Mountain Running apparel line is led by the Endure Short, which brings advanced Kintech construction into a storage-focused piece for the trail.





Oboz Anabatic Wind EVO

The performance trail brand is introducing two trail running styles for Spring 2027, including the lightweight, cushioned Anabatic Wind EVO.



Merrell MTL SpeedARC Peak

A technical trail shoe featuring a PEBA foam midsole, carbon fiber FlexPlate for propulsion, and Vibram MegaGrip Elite outsole. **MSRP \$290.**

NEW
STANDOUTS
FOR THE
TRAIL



INOV8 TRAILFLY PRO

Engineered for natural performance with a NATURALFIT shoe shape and outsole cutaways for flex. The midsole is featherlight TPEE foam.



ASICS BLAZEBLAST

This accessible trail shoe has an engineered woven upper, 2.5mm lugs and a high-stack platform and lightweight construction. **MSRP \$150.**



Topo Athletic Ultraventure 5

The brand's most popular road-trail option is a high cushion style with a ZipFoam midsole and Vibram XS Trek EVO outsole. **MSRP \$155.**



Mount to Coast M1

A long-distance mountain running shoe, the high-stack M1 uses resilient JETCELL material to maintain cushion and responsive feel. **MSRP \$195.**

NO CAPE REQUIRED

***Ultra Thin Carbon Fiber Matrix
High End Velocity & Propulsion
Explosive Energy Return
Superior Arch Support
Heel Shock Absorption
Unrivaed Stability
Injury Prevention***



***Maximum
Power in
Every Step***



www.kratos-insoles.com



Altra Olympus 7

Features Vibram MegaGrip and TractionLug with increased outsole coverage and durability. And new Altra EGO MAX foam is lighter and softer, for a cushioned ride. **MSRP \$195.**



Brooks Ghost Trail

This versatile shoe is a hybrid delivering cross-terrain features for trail and road. It boasts soft and dynamic cushioning as well as 3mm outsole lugs for off-road confidence. **MSRP \$150.**



Teva Aventrail Road-2-Trail Shoe

Combines the traction needed for dirt with the comfort runners expect on pavement. Built with Teva's W Strapping System, responsive cushioning, foot-on-foam comfort, and trail-ready traction. **MSRP \$150.**



LOWA Paceterra Pro

Designed for competitive trail runners who prioritize speed, precision, and a lightweight setup, the Spring 2027 shoe features a supercritical TPEE midsole for high energy return with greater stability. **MSRP \$210.**

8

TRAIL TRAITS

We asked brands which traits consumers are asking for in their trail running gear. Here's what we heard:

1. VERSATILITY

The surge in hybrid road-to-trail shoes reflects runners wanting shoes that transition seamlessly from pavement to packed dirt.

2. CUSHIONING & COMFORT

Underfoot cushioning and energy return are the top attributes consumers are looking for in their running shoes.

3. STABILITY

This is one of the main differences in a trail shoe from a road shoe. The trail shoe needs to be more adaptable to a three-dimensional environment.

4. PROTECTION

Underfoot, as well as on the toe bumper and sidewall of the upper.

5. TERRAIN CONFIDENCE

Grippy, aggressive lugs, and a locked-in fit eliminating heel slippage.

6. MATERIALS

Temperature management and breathability lead the list in apparel.

7. PURPOSEFUL DESIGN

Every detail needs a reason to be.

8. WEARABILITY

Performance is a must, and so is aesthetic attractiveness.



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

A CONVERSATION WITH ALLI SPORTS AS IT MERGES FOUR DEALERS INTO ONE UNIFIED BUSINESS

Rhett Johnson (left) and Josh Baker believe their business is stronger now that four team dealers are operating as one entity – and it is a path other dealers may want to follow.

Alli Sports is charting a new path for dealers in the changing team sports business. By Michael Jacobsen

Earlier this year four of the team sports industry's dealers – Baker's Sports (Jacksonville, FL), Johnson-Lambe (Raleigh, NC), First Team Sports Center (Greenville, SC) and Midwest Sporting Goods (Tulsa, OK) – entered into a merger agreement to form what is now called Alli Sports. The combined industry alliance is operating under the leadership of CEO Josh Baker and COO Rhett Johnson. Each company is maintaining its individual identities and Alli Sports will remain a partner of the Sports, Inc. buying group. We caught up with Rhett Johnson recently for insight into the formation of Alli Sports, how it will operate under the structure and its plans for the future.

When did the concept of Alli Sports first come up and who was involved?

Rhett Johnson: Josh (Baker) had the idea and reached out to me in November, 2018 at a Sports, Inc. show in Las Vegas. An introductory discussion quickly grew into the genesis of what is now Alli Sports.

Why did the concept come up?

It grew out of mutual frustration over decisions in the industry and the options being presented on a path forward. We knew together we could create a better future.

What is the exact organizational structure?

The most important piece of the structure is "team dealer-owned and team dealer-operated." There is no outside influence. We have created a new industry model led by Josh Baker as CEO and myself as COO.

Please give us the "elevator pitch" on exactly what Alli Sports is all about and what you hope it will accomplish.

It is all about creating a new and better team dealer model. To the vendors, it is the strength of one. To the customer, the service of local.

What has been the biggest challenge so far?

Taking the time to get it right. It is the biggest asset as to how we are doing this, but as with most things we want to get there fast.

Where will warehousing and management be located? And how will be purchasing be handled?

The Baker's facility in Jacksonville, FL, will be our headquarters and warehouse hub, with satellite

warehouses in North Carolina and Oklahoma. Sole purchasing is funneled through the Jacksonville office.

Where will any growth for Alli come from?

It will be measured and selective. It will be the right growth in the right places with the right people.

What is your message to your vendors and independent sales reps about Alli's goal?

As always with us, this is a partnership. Our vendor partners are a huge part of how we got here and where we are going. Our goal is to grow through our partnerships and strengthen both sides.

Is Alli Sports involved with or in a special relationship with any of the online team portals?

We currently work with both OMG and Chippily as we have a strong history with both.

Speaking of relationships, how will Alli Sports work within Sports, Inc.? And what is your relationship with the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) going forward?

We are very proud to be a part of Sports, Inc. and would not be here today without them, so we plan to work to grow that partnership as we grow Alli. We are also proud members of NSGA and expect that to only strengthen as we move forward.

How did the impact of BSN, brands selling DTC, importers, United Team Dealers, etc., figure into your thinking?

Every industry piece affects who you are and what you do, but our focus is Alli. I am a big believer that you can't worry about keeping up with the Joneses — just focus on doing what you do and you will become the Joneses.

Do you think other team dealers across the country will follow your model?

Yes, we are already seeing it.

Many people feel this type of "consolidation" is vital to the future of the team business. What would your message be to other team dealers in your same situation?

Truly evaluate your individual position in the industry — what happens if you do act and what happens if you do not. Then evaluate your options. If one of those options is consolidation, then reach out and let's start a discussion.

Finally, when we touch base again a year from now where do you want Alli Sports to be? And what is it going to take to accomplish those goals?

We are building something different. On our terms, at our pace. The goal is to be stronger as a company, stronger as a brand and stronger with our partners. What that looks like is TBD. We are not here to check boxes — we are here to get it right. And, we will. ■

A MESSAGE FROM CEO JOSH BAKER

The formation of Alli Sports represents a defining moment for our industry. By bringing together Baker's Sports, Johnson-Lambe Company, First Team Sports and Midwest Sporting Goods, we have created an organization with operational depth, geographic reach and market relationships to deliver at a level none of us could achieve independently.

Each of these companies has earned a strong reputation over many years with customers, with vendor partners and within their respective markets. Alli Sports is the natural evolution of that work. We are not starting over. We are scaling up, with the infrastructure, the talent and the strategic alignment to compete and win at the highest level.

Our commitment to our customers remains unchanged: exceptional service, strong

partnerships and the expertise they have come to expect. What changes is our capacity to deliver on that commitment consistently, across every market we serve.

We are confident in what this organization will become and we are ready to get to work.

Baker's Sports, Johnson-Lambe Company, First Team Sports and Midwest Sporting Goods are four organizations that refused to sit still, refused to settle and refused to stop competing. Today, we stop competing with each other and start competing together. As Alli Sports.

We have the people. We have the markets. We have the relationships. And now we have the platform to do something none of us could do alone — go take this industry by storm. Let me be direct: This is the moment we've been building toward. ■

TREND-RIGHT LOOKS & FASHION-FORWARD



**NO FASHION FOULS
ON THE HARDWOOD**

CURATED BY BY MICHAEL JACOBSEN



MOMENTEC BRANDS CLUTCH PLAYER

The Chromagear Clutch reversible basketball jersey from Momentec Brands is a premium sublimated uniform made from 100 percent heavyweight polyester mock mesh. It features a modern scoop neck, breathable performance fabric, full-color sublimation and an exterior locker label for a professional finishing touch.



CHAMPRO FORWARD THINKING

(Left) Peak play. Peak style. That's what Champro's Forward basketball jersey and short offer from the top down with two-color rib tape trim on the neckline, armholes and leg openings. Light, breathable Micro Pique fabric keeps athletes playing cool and free. Together, the straight-bottom jersey and short with adjustable waist deliver enduring coverage and swagger.

SANMAR SPORT-TEK FRIENDLY RIVALRY

(Right) The Sport-Tek Rival collection offers moisture-wicking and odor-resistant technology in a uniform constructed from 4.7-ounce, 100 percent polyester closed-hole mesh. Rival features PosiCharge technology that prevents fading and dye migration, so teams look sharp, game after game.





UBIX
DOUBLE REVERSE

Ubix basketball uniforms offer full custom sublimation in a two-play reversible crew or V-neck jersey and short. There's no ghosting and an interlock fabric provides fit and durability.



27 SPORTS HOOP DREAMS

27 Sports' basketball collection takes a Eurostep forward with an expanded line, including its Single Ply Reversible Jerseys and Shorts. The bench player is wearing a 27 Sports Hooded Long Sleeve T-shirt for warm-ups and post-game.



CHAMPRO QUITE A STRETCH

Suit up in winning looks with the Champro Stretch Woven basketball jersey and 7-inch short. The jersey's V-neck collar and band-finished armholes, along with the short's sharply detailed waist and notched side seam, maximize comfort and style. Fully customizable with Juice sublimation.



A4 STEP BACK SHOT

The Step Back is a new lightweight, single-ply uniform made with A4's 5-Star fabric for performance and breathability. The sleek color-blocking design adds a fresh, modern edge that commands attention.



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