

# SGB WEEKLY

ISSUE 1504  
JANUARY 26, 2015

THE WEEKLY DIGITAL MAGAZINE FOR THE SPORTING GOODS INDUSTRY





A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark brown parka with a fur-lined hood, a blue turtleneck scarf, blue jeans, and blue gloves, is walking a husky dog in a snowy field. The husky has black and white fur and its pink tongue is hanging out. The background is a soft-focus snowy landscape with some bare branches.

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Cover photo courtesy Madshus



## BY THE NUMBERS

-14% to 15%

**Smith & Wesson Holding Corp.** said it expects sales in its third quarter ended January 31 to range between \$124 million and \$126 million, representing a decline of 14 to 15 percent. Excluding special items related to its acquisition of Battenfeld Technologies, EPS is expected to reach between 15 to 16 cents a share, down from 35 cents a year ago.

+1.6%

**Unifi, Inc.** reported net income jumped 46.9 percent in its second quarter ended December 28 to \$9.4 million, or 52 cents a share. Revenues grew 1.6 percent to \$163.1 million.

7.9%

**Luxottica Group** reported the appreciation of the dollar and strong performance in North America drove net sales up 13.4 percent, or 7.9 percent in currency neutral terms, to €1.87 billion in the fourth quarter.

+8.1%

**Jarden Corporation** expects net sales of at least \$2.4 billion for the fourth quarter, up 8.1 percent versus the prior year. The owner of The Coleman Co., K2, Marmot, Rawlings and two dozen other sporting goods brands also expects adjusted earnings-per-share to meet or exceed the current Wall Street analysts' consensus estimate, with strong sales counterbalancing the significant negative impact of foreign currency in the quarter.

+47%

**Performance Sports Group, Ltd.** reported revenues climbed 47 percent in its second quarter ended November 30 to \$172.3 million, or up 51 percent on a currency-neutral basis. The gains were boosted by its acquisition of Easton. Organic revenues grew 10 percent with hockey revenues ahead 9 percent. The parent of Bauer and Maverik Lacrosse lost \$2.6 million in the period after charges but adjusted net income was ahead 49 percent.



## PAY-TO-PLAY KEEPING KIDS ON THE SIDELINES

The cost of school sports keeps many kids from participating, according to the latest University of Michigan Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health.

Many schools charge fees for students who participate in sports at the middle or high school level, often called "pay to play" fees. In this month's poll, parents of children 12 to 17-years-old nationwide were asked about participation fees for school sports.

The poll found that although 42 percent of parents said at least one of their middle or high school children participated in school sports during the 2013-2014 school year, there were substantial differences in participation based on household income.

Only 30 percent of lower-income families (those making less than \$60,000 per year) have a child playing school sports, compared to 51 percent among families earning more than \$60,000 per year, according to the poll, said Sarah Clark, M.P.H., associate research scientist at the Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit at the University of Michigan and associate director of the National Poll on Children's Health.

Notably, among the 58 percent of parents whose child did not play school sports at all, 14 percent cited cost as the reason for non-participation.

"Participation in school sports offers so many benefits to children and teens, from lower dropout rates to improved health and reduced obesity. It is significant to have one in seven parents of non-sports participants indicate that cost is keeping their kid out of the game," said Clark.

The poll found the average school sports participation fee was \$126 per child; while 38 percent paid \$0 in participation fees - some receiving waivers for those fees - 18 percent paid \$200 or more.

In addition to the participation fees, parents in the poll reported an average of \$275 in other sports-related costs like equipment and travel.

"So the average cost for sports participation was \$400 per child. For many families, that cost is out of reach," Clark said.

The income disparity in this poll was similar to the results of a May 2012 C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health on the same subject. Sports participation among lower-income students decreased by 10 percent from the 2012 report.

And surprisingly, among parents in households earning more than \$60,000 a year, nearly 10 percent said their child had decreased sports participation because of cost - twice as high as reported in 2012.

"Many schools base participation fee waivers on eligibility for income-based programs like Medicaid or free and reduced lunch. That could exclude working families who earn too much for a waiver but may not be able to afford the additional cost of sports fees, and that's what we see in these findings," Clark said.

"School administrators struggle to balance the budget for school sports without creating obstacles to participation. This poll shows the need for schools to continue to work on options for both low-income families and families that don't qualify for waivers but still may need financial help, because the risk of kids dropping out of sports is very real."

*Note: To view the full report, please log on to <http://mottnpch.org/>*





## '47 BRAND PARTNERS WITH U.S. SOCCER FEDERATION AND MLS

'47 Brand, "the fan apparel brand," is teaming up with the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) and Major League Soccer (MLS) to create branded headwear, apparel and accessories.

As part of its license agreement with U.S. Soccer, '47 Brand will offer U.S. Soccer-branded adult headwear and apparel, non-soccer socks and gloves through multiple channels in the U.S. and abroad, including boutique apparel stores, department stores, athletic footwear stores, specialty apparel stores, military stores, kiosks, sports specialty stores, sports stadium retailers, and more.

In partnership with MLS, '47 Brand will provide league-branded apparel for both adults and kids, including headwear, scarves, and gloves. Retail channels will include a variety of specialty apparel stores.

As part of the brand's aggressive international growth strategy for 2015, '47 Brand has identified soccer as a significant opportunity to expand their licensed products across one of today's most popular sports. The brand plans to leverage growing passion for the sport, by launching the multi-platform partnership in time for the excitement of the upcoming 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada, taking place in June and July.

"Passion for soccer continues to permeate worldwide and we're excited to get in the game and parlay the success we've had making premium sports apparel, headwear, and accessories across other sports franchises into the world of soccer," said '47 Brand's co-owner Steven D'Angelo.



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## MOVERS & SHAKERS

**Deckers Brands**, which owns Ugg, Teva, Sanuk, Ahnu, and Hoka One One, has shifted General Counsel **David E. Lafitte** to the role of Chief Operating Officer, effective February 2. Lafitte replaces Zohar Ziv, who retired from the company on January 16.

**Icebreaker** announced that **Bill Redford** would join the brand as national sales manager for Canada.

Baltimore-based **STX, LLC** signed a multi-year contract with all-time Euro Hockey League top scorer **Jeroen Hertzberger**.

**Kamik** appointed **Patrick Chevallier**, Vice President of International Sales and promoted **Catherine Cook**, previously VP of Marketing, to the new role of VP of Marketing and Strategic Planning.

**Mad Dogg Athletics** announced that **Aerin Shaw**, formerly at Nike and Walt Disney, has been named Chief Operating Officer.

**Notogroup, Inc.**, a boutique search firm specializing in consumer products recruiting, promoted **Genevieve Emery** to Partner and Recruiting Director.

**Pete Augustine**, President **New Era Cap, Inc.** will leave the company after nearly 25 years of service with the privately held headwear company. CEO **Chris Koch** will assume a more active role.

**Reebok** announced a partnership with UFC Featherweight Contender, **Conor McGregor**.

**SealSkinz** added the **Adventure Marketing Group** in the Southeast and Cascade Group in the Northwest to its sales team.

**SOG Specialty Knives & Tools** hired the **Dunkin-Lewis Group** to take over sales representation duties in a dozen states, primarily in the Midwest U.S.

**Sunice**, maker of outerwear, apparel, and accessories for golf and snow activities, appointed **Jean Cloutier** as its CFO and COO. Cloutier had previously worked for Outdoor Gear Canada and Jupa Sports.

**Thule Group** promoted **Schuyler Horton** to the position of Vice President of Sales and Service for its outdoor and bags business in the Americas. Horton replaces **Tripp Wyckoff**, who is leaving the company to take a CEO position outside the industry.



## CHAMPION ATHLETICWEAR LAUNCHES EXCLUSIVE URBAN OUTFITTERS COLLABORATION

Champion Athleticwear launched Champion Select, a line created exclusively for Urban Outfitters, in partnership with three directional designers curated by the Capsule Show.

The collaboration is a modern interpretation of the Champion brand as envisioned by three prominent independent fashion designers - Timo Weiland from New York, Craig Green based in London, and Wood Wood from Copenhagen. This is the latest designer project by Champion, which has established itself among key fashion influencers for its limited edition collaborations.

The Champion Select collection includes elevated, fashion-forward active wear looks for men and women utilizing heritage Champion fabrications and branding. Each of the designers began their process by visiting the Champion archives for inspiration, and selecting their favorite fabrications to use for their capsule collections. The resulting looks are inspired by the designers' own memories and interactions with the iconic brand - whether it was wearing Champion as a kid or seeing classic imagery and advertisements from the past.

The Champion Select collection will be available January 26, 2015, in select Urban Outfitters stores, Space Ninety 8 in Brooklyn, as well as [Urbanoutfitters.com](http://Urbanoutfitters.com).

"For over thirty years, Champion has introduced creative and innovative designs for athletic wear, from performance to lifestyle, starting with the first sports bra and the iconic reverse weave hoodie," said Ned Munroe, chief global design officer, Champion Athleticwear.

"It has been a pleasure to collaborate with three of the hottest designers from around the world to create these limited edition pieces that embrace Champion DNA, interpreted through the individual designer lens," said Carla Mota, design director, Champion Athleticwear.

Said Urban Outfitters Chief Executive Officer Ted Marlow, "With the importance of active sportswear in today's wardrobe, working with an iconic athletic brand such as Champion, and the design teams served up by Capsule, couldn't have come at a better time as far as our customers' closets are concerned."





## ZUKE'S PARTNERS WITH USDAA

Zuke's All Natural, Healthy Dog and Cat Treats is partnering with the U.S. Dog Agility Association (USDAA). Zuke's will be attending as many as six USDAA Regional Championships in 2015, as well as USDAA's marquee event, the Cynosport World Games October 21-25, in Murfreesboro, TN.

During each USDAA sanctioned event, Zuke's will be handing out free samples to anyone who stops by their booth. Zuke's products are made in the USA and New Zealand.

"Partnering with Zuke's is a great fit for USDAA," said Zuke's President Kenneth Tatsch. "Our competitors and their dogs are highly trained athletes who work hard to stay in top physical condition. Rewarding the dogs for a job well-done with a natural, healthy, and nutritious treat makes perfect sense."

"Our first USDAA event, the Wild West Regional, this month was a great success," said Stacey Praizner, events and sponsorship manager at Zuke's. "Zuke's has always had health and wellness for pets as a priority, and we are looking forward to being a part of future USDAA events."

USDAA is the United States' largest independent canine sports authority. Its events strive to promote the sport of dog agility as a recreational, family sport that fosters responsible pet ownership.

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\*Carbon footprint claim based on testing which demonstrates that treated products require lower wash temperatures and 40% less drying time.  
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# Brand Strength Report 2014

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**LONNIE DUPRE**  
FIRST TO SOLO DENALI IN JANUARY

PrimaLoft, Inc. announced that Lonnie Dupre, one of its athlete and world-renowned mountaineer, summited Denali on January 11, 2015. After three attempts in 2011, 2012 and 2013 that ended due to weather conditions, he is the first to solo summit the 20,320-foot peak when winds over 100 mph and temperatures below -50 degrees Fahrenheit are common.

Dupre pulled a five-foot sled with 165 pounds of supplies on the lower elevations, and then switched to backpacking supplies on the steeper parts. Dupre also carried 175 bamboo wands to mark his route, increasing the chance for a safe return.

"This amazing feat adds to Lonnie's long list of accomplishments, and we are honored he chose PrimaLoft to protect him on his journey," said David Newey, director of global marketing for PrimaLoft. "Lonnie trusted the brand not only to keep him warm but also to keep him alive in the coldest and darkest time of year on the mountain. We are inspired by his hard work and eager to support him again in the future." Throughout the expedition he wore the PrimaLoft Mountain Equipment Citadel Parka and the Mountain Equipment Fitzroy Pant, both insulated with PrimaLoft Gold, as well as the Black Diamond Hot Forge Hoody with PrimaLoft Gold Insulation Down Blend. His sleeping bag, the Mountain Equipment Matrix 3, was lined with PrimaLoft Silver insulation.

Dupre's accomplishments include being the first to circumnavigate Greenland by non-motorized transport, and reaching the North Pole in two separate expeditions.



A person wearing a red jacket, black pants, and an orange helmet stands on a glacier, looking up at a large, irregular opening in the ice. The opening reveals a bright white sky. The person is holding a long metal pole. The glacier's surface is textured with various shades of blue and white ice.

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## 120 SPORTS

INAUGURAL MILLENNIALS'  
ATHLETE INDEX

In its extensive research, including a partnership with Ranker and leveraging its own viewership trends, 120 Sports surveyed over 1,400 Millennials (defined as 18 to 34-year-olds) to choose the professional, Olympic and collegiate athletes that matter most to them. Athletes representing eight different major sports, including basketball, football, baseball, soccer, golf hockey, tennis and action sports were represented within the Top 40.

- 1) Stephen Curry, 26, NBA
- 2) Mike Trout, 23, MLB
- 3) Russell Wilson, 26, NFL
- 4) Kevin Durant, 26, NBA
- 5) Madison Bumgarner, 25, MLB
- 6) Aaron Rodgers, 31, NFL
- 7) J.J. Watt, 25, NFL
- 8) Andrew Luck, 25, NFL
- 9) Lionel Messi, 27, La Liga
- 10) Odell Beckham Jr., 22, NFL
11. Alex Morgan, 25, USWNT
12. Damian Lillard, 24, NBA
13. Marcus Mariota, 21, NCAA
14. Calvin Johnson, 29, NFL
15. Cristiano Ronaldo, 29, La Liga
16. Clayton Kershaw, 26, MLB
17. Jonathan Toews, 26, NHL
18. Patrick Kane, 26, NHL
19. Tom Brady, 37, NFL
20. Tim Howard, 35, USMNT
21. Anthony Davis, 21, NBA
22. LeBron James, 30, NBA
23. Rickie Fowler, 26, PGA TOUR
24. Tim Duncan, 38, NBA
25. Marshawn Lynch, 28, NFL
26. Rob Gronkowski, 25, NFL
27. Giancarlo Stanton, 25, MLB
28. Shaun White, 28, Action Sports
29. Steven Stamkos, 24, NHL
30. Maria Sharapova, 27, WTA
31. Henrik Lundqvist, 32, NHL
32. Buster Posey, 27, MLB
33. Bubba Watson, 36, PGA TOUR
34. Felix Hernandez, 28, MLB
35. Sidney Crosby, 27, NHL
36. Alexander Ovechkin, 29, NHL
37. Klay Thompson, 24, NBA
38. Russell Westbrook, 26, NBA
39. Peyton Manning, 38, NFL
40. Tiger Woods, 39, PGA TOUR

Source: 120 Sports

TOP NFL JERSEYS  
2014/2015 SEASON

1. Peyton Manning
2. Andrew Luck
3. Luke Kuechly
4. Russell Wilson
5. Tom Brady
6. Johnny Manziel
7. LeSean McCoy
8. Eli Manning
9. Joe Flacco
10. Cam Newton

Source: Dick's Sporting Goods  
Jersey Report

## FOOTBALL'S

## EDGE WITH U.S. FANS SHRINKS

Pro football is the top pick among 32 percent of sports fans, while baseball only garnered "favorite" status among half as many Americans (16 percent), according to a Harris Poll of 2,255 U.S. adults. However, baseball enthusiasts can feel good that their sport of choice has managed a two percent point increase from last year's 14 percent, while football saw a three-point decrease from 2013's 35 percent.

Men's college football comes in as America's third favorite sport, with 10 percent of adults supporting its claim, though, like its professional counterpart, this sport has also seen a narrow decrease from last year's 11 percent. The next two top sports have maintained their same fan percentages, with auto racing at 7 percent and men's pro basketball, part of a three-way tie at 6 percent with soccer and ice hockey.





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## WORLD PREMIERE OF “FAR FROM HOME” SNOWBOARD DOCUMENTARY AT THE SANTA BARBARA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

The world premiere of the snowboard film documentary, “Far From Home: Uganda to the Tetons,” will take place at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival (SBIFF).

Far From Home documents Uganda’s Brolin Mawejje’s inspiring journey from his home country to the U.S. in search of a better life, competing in the 2018 Winter Olympic Games, and following his dream of becoming a medical doctor. “Far From Home” is an independent film documentary that retraces the journey of Mawejje from his childhood in Uganda, to his struggles in America, and is an embodiment of what so many of us strive to find - our true potential.

The 11-day celebration takes place January 27-February 7 at several theaters in downtown Santa Barbara, CA. “Far From Home” was selected to be the only film spotlighted at the Arlington Theatre during the festival on February 2.

“It is an honor to be premiering “Far From Home” at such a prestigious festival,” said Phil Hessler, producer. “We are amazed and excited with the festival response we are getting, and could not be more excited to be the spotlight film of the festival.”

The SBIFF presents a diverse selection of more than 200 films to over 85,000 film enthusiasts. For more information about the SBIFF and to purchase tickets visit [sbiff.org](http://sbiff.org) and [farfromhomemovie.com](http://farfromhomemovie.com).

## HIGH SIERRA ELEVATES PRESENCE IN BACKCOUNTRY MARKET

Addressing the growing interest in out-of-bounds snow adventures, High Sierra is launching **three new ski and snowboard packs** in the Symmetry Series. The new collection includes one resort pack and two backcountry packs (12, 18 and 22 liters respectively).

The Symmetry 12, \$70, is designed for in-bound resort adventures. The Symmetry 18, \$80, and 22, \$90, are built specifically for backcountry excursions. Symmetry 18 and 22 have webbing for vertical snowboard carry and diagonal ski carry. Symmetry 12 provides for diagonal ski carry only.

“We’re seeing a growing consumer demand for streamlined ski and snowboarding packs that offer high-volume hauling without adding weight or excessive straps and pockets,” said Dawn Sicco, VP and GM of High Sierra.

All symmetry packs have panel-load compartments to hold and organize shovel, probe, and other avalanche rescue tools. A shoulder strap mounted removable pocket can hold a beacon, two-way radio or smart phone for quick access. A separate compartment along the back panel holds a hydration reservoir. Insulated zippered sleeve on a shoulder strap



has a heater pack pocket to keep the hydration tube and bite valve from freezing. A tricot-lined pocket keeps goggles and accessories scratch free.

High Sierra uses Nylon mini-Hex Ripstop and Nylon Micro-Dobby fabric to minimize weight without sacrificing durability. Packs have tuck-away straps that stow when not in use. High visibility colors offer added visibility.

A division of Samsonite, LLC, High Sierra designs feature-rich, affordable, versatile outdoor lifestyle gear, founded in 1978. High Sierra is also the Official Bags supplier to the U.S. Ski, U.S. Snowboarding, and U.S. Freeskiing teams.





## AUTHENTIC SNOWBOARD APPAREL MEETS SPORTS LICENSING

686 Technical Apparel, considered the oldest and one of the last remaining rider-owned and independently operated companies in the snowboard outerwear industry, is taking snowboarding to the stick and ball market for Fall 2015 through a collaboration with '47 Brand, one of the leaders in sports licensing for apparel and accessories.

At the SIA show in Denver, 686 is showcasing for the first time their collaboration with '47 Brand, debuting branded outerwear and accessories representing Michigan, Texas, BYU, Colorado, Dartmouth, Harvard, Boston University, Nebraska, Vermont, Wisconsin, Yale and Cal.

The Collection will hit select retail stores mid-August, just as the school year and college football season is getting underway. The collection for each team will include two different technical outerwear jackets, two face masks, three shirts, one hoody and two hats made from 686's InfIDRY outerwear fabric. One of the jackets in the collection will be the new **686 Flight Jacket Insulator**, part of 686's original 3-in-1 system, ideal for layering, street wear or in the stands watching the game. The new **Victory Jacket** is a highly functional technical outerwear piece built to withstand elements encountered on the slopes.



## SWEET PROTECTION'S NEW HIGH-END GRIMNIR HELMET

Sweet Protection is unveiling the **Grimnir**, \$449, possibly the most advanced and most expensive freeride snow sport helmet to come to market. The Grimnir is Norwegian professional snowboarder Terje Haakonsen's pro model and incorporates some of the most advanced materials and impact protection available.

The shell is made from Carbon Fiber Reinforced Polymer (CRP) to provide incredible strength and advanced EPS Impact Shields to distribute pressure and more efficiently absorb impact. This helmet also features the unique Multi-directional Impact Protection System (MIPS) technology that reduces rotational forces on the brain caused by angled impacts by up to 50 percent, according to the manufacturer.

Threaded fasteners hidden in the carbon shell and two different included mounting brackets make the Grimnir fully POV-camera compatible. The Grimnir will also be the only helmet on the market designed, tested and certified to protect users who crash while wearing a GoPro or Contour POV camera, due to carbon fiber reinforcement in key areas.

The Grimnir features 26 vents, has a removable and washable Coolmax liner, and features an "OcciGrip" system to customize fit. Ear pads are removable for riding in warmer weather.

## DYNAFIT AND SCOTT UNVEIL FIRST GORE-TEX SKI MOUNTAINEERING BOOTS

At Outdoor Retailer Winter Market 2015, W.L. Gore & Associates revealed the first Gore-Tex thermo-moldable ski mountaineering boots in partnership with Dynafit and Scott. These boot models are engineered systems specifically targeting mountain guides and hardcore enthusiasts undertaking longer ski touring trips.

In recent years damp feet have become even more of a problem due to the fact that more inner boots are being made with thermo-moldable, non-breathable, non-waterproof foams. Selected Gore-Tex footwear laminates combined with thermo-moldable foams with perforations or breathable patterns are attempting to solve this problem for the growing segment.

Sweat produced during an uphill climb can evaporate in the form of moisture vapor through the Gore-Tex lining from the inner boot and cannot return due to the Gore-Tex membrane. Because of the hard plastic outer shell, most of the sweat remains inside the shell – however, thanks to the waterproof membrane, feet remain dryer with less risk of blisters.

"The challenge was to engineer a system to allow an inner boot to be durably waterproof and simultaneously breathable enough for sweat to escape through evaporation while still leveraging moldable foams. This is exactly what we have achieved with Dynafit and Scott. Different Gore-Tex footwear lining laminates were specifically chosen to ideally match the requirements of the inner boots - elastic Gore-Tex footwear laminates for the tongue area, also used in running shoes, combined with insulated Gore-Tex laminate constructions, typically used in technical mountaineering boots."

Dynafit achieves the high breathability of the inner boot through multiple perforations in the thermo-moldable foam, whereas Scott uses highly breathable patterns in defined areas.

When Gore started the development of its ski mountaineering boot system, special data loggers were developed to measure heat and perspiration build-up on testers' feet during ski touring. The performance of the testers was monitored using portable ergospirometric devices. Dr. Hans-Herbert Vater, director of the Institute of Sports and Sports Sciences (IfSS) at the University of Kassel, Germany, headed the research group. The data helped the development team learn how a Gore-Tex boot liner should be constructed to make it breathable and waterproof in order to keep feet dry and comfortable.

Both Dynafit and Scott have positioned their Gore-Tex ski mountaineering boots at the top of their ranges: Dynafit with "Winter Guide GTX," Scott with "Superguide Carbon" and "Orbit II Carbon."

Dynafit has opted out of SIA this year, choosing instead to focus more on the outdoor specialty market the company feels is more of its core consumer.





# Trending for 2015 Nordic Skis and Boots

By Scott Boulbol

Nordic skiing has literally been around for centuries, but it's been mainly over the last half century that it's steadily gained popularity in the U.S. - originally as a means of experiencing the joys of backcountry exploration during winter months and now as a serious fitness regime, as cross training for warmer weather aerobic pursuits, and as a recognized and growing competitive sport as well from youth through collegiate and Olympic levels.

Photo courtesy Atomic



The trend gained even more momentum as the relatively new discipline of Skate skiing boomed in the last couple decades. Between the two (Classic and Skate), more than three million Nordic skiers hit the snow during the 2013/14 season according to Snowsports Industries America (SIA).

Recent trends suggest that the Classic discipline has regained popularity over the last few years. And while Skate continues to grow as well, it's this rebirth of Classic that is driving much of the innovation in the industry.

Nick Castagnoli, who handles communications and PR for Rossignol USA said, "Classic experienced a rebirth three to four years ago and has been steadily growing with more entry-level participants using Classic as a way to cross-train for cycling and running. To address that, we now offer a more performance-level Classic ski with a waxless, patterned base."



Nick Castagnoli,  
Communications and  
PR, Rossignol USA

"One major trend is the move back to Classic Nordic skiing and making equipment to facilitate that," agreed Isaac Wilson, AmerSports' Nordic commercial manager for Classic is seeing a resurgence in the community and the more convenient solutions are spurring that growth."

And this trend is not just in the recreational groups - Classic is gaining momentum with the high-intensity crowds as well, who had favored the notorious rigors of skating, as they realize that this can also be an outstanding full-body workout. But while skating is almost exclusively a highly aerobic pursuit, Classic can also provide a more relaxed outdoor experience. Plus it's less technique-intensive, and more readily accessible

than skating, so it can be far more attractive to the enthusiasts who just want to get on the snow and go.

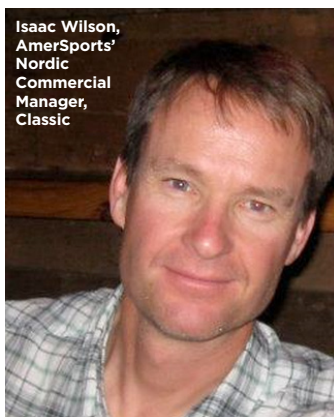
While downhill skis have undergone radical overhauls in their design over the past 25 years or so - with the shaped-ski revolution yielding skis that are hardly recognizable compared to traditional shapes - the evolution of Nordic products has been a little less severe and rapid. That's not to say the technology behind these products hasn't improved dramatically, just that it's less noticeable to the naked eye.

Once you actually ski on these new Classic and Skate skis and boots, however, there's little comparison, even to just five years ago. Of course they're considerably lighter, as shaving grams is always on the top of designers to-do lists, but they're also much faster and more responsive. And these improvements not only help experts tear up the race course, they're also more forgiving for the tired enthusiast whose technique may suffer on hills or toward the end of a long workout, and beginners just trying to learn the ropes. And innovations in base materials and skins have made it much easier to handle various or changing conditions without having to re-wax every time.

With skis, these innovations have been pretty much across the board, with the exception of basic shape: materials, core designs, base structure, flex patterns, and to a lesser extent camber, while improvements in boots have been primarily achieved with

materials and cuff designs. The use of carbon fiber has heavily influenced both categories of late and especially in the 2014/15 season. Full carbon boots, for instance, are slashing typical weights and adding a lot of lateral stiffness, overall support, and power.

And when used in ski construction, it again dramatically cuts weight, but also adds snappy, responsive performance and powerful energy return.



Isaac Wilson,  
AmerSports' Nordic  
Commercial  
Manager,  
Classic

Base materials are more wax-friendly than ever before meaning they'll not only accept the wax quickly but will last longer on the snow. And while overall bases can handle a wider range of temperatures and conditions, some brands are making temperature-specific bases for skiers who usually ski in specific conditions like the cold, dry snow in Montana.

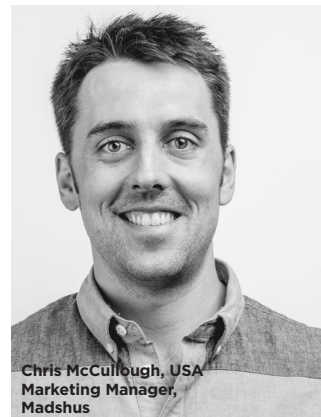
Finally, even this ages-old industry can't avoid the ubiquitous influence of the digital world.

Brand new for 2015, the oldest brand in the industry, Madshus, offers the most space-aged innovation in the industry, albeit one that doesn't directly affect the performance of the ski. Its Empower technology embeds chips in select skis that can immediately tell the consumer or dealer precise information on stiffness, sidecut, flex pattern, etc., with the scan of a code.

"The goal behind Madshus Empower is to enhance the appeal of Nordic skiing for new participants while offering our most seasoned, competitive consumers with a resource that will enable them to train more efficiently and get more from their skis' performance," said USA Marketing Manager Chris McCullough. "It transforms the retailer and customer experience by making a more precise and true fit to one's skiing ability. The embedded NFC chip, once scanned, provides retailers with instant ski selection capabilities, heightened inventory management, and streamlined customer service. Within minutes, individuals are matched with their perfect ski."

And yes, there's an app for that! "The free app ... will provide individuals with an on-the-go resource to better customize their skiing performance through changing snow conditions, while also providing them the ability to log and store their workouts, ski inventory, and wax history."

The Empower technology is offered in 10 models. The top-end Redline Carbon Classic Plus and Redline Carbon Skate Plus skis, (\$750; sidecut: 44/43/44, and 44/42/44), both offer triaxial carbon construction which places extra carbon weave around the core to enhance torsional stiffness liveliness. 3D construction shaves material while channeling stiffness to key areas.



Chris McCullough, USA  
Marketing Manager,  
Madshus





The Classic model features the Black base and the Skate uses a transparent base, but both are recommended for warmer temps and dirty snow. Both are also offered in the Cold model for sub-freezing temps and drier snow.

The Empower technology is not just for serious racers – it's also offered on the lower-end Hypersonic Carbon Skate and Hypersonic Carbon Classic Skis, (\$475, 44/43/44, and 44/42/44), which are still billed as racing skis but are also great for enthusiasts seeking to improve their overall performance. Both maintain the triaxial carbon construction of the Redline but with a slightly heavier, less lively core. The Skate model features medium-high but a flexible camber line to help with edge-to-edge quickness and comes in four base options for various conditions. The Classic features a long, low camber and new tip shape with a slight splay in the tip and the tail to ensure minimal snow resistance while improving glide. It's best in sub-freezing temps.



Madshus  
Super Nano  
Skate Boot



Salomon  
Carbon  
Skate Lab

Madshus' top-end Super Nano Skate Boot, (\$760, TKTkg), is incredibly light and stiff. The 3D-molded carbon base is a one-piece design they say better cups the heel and matches the contours of the foot while minimizing the amount of material between your foot and the ski for better power transfer. And a flexible, softshell upper allows plenty of knee flex and range of motion.

Salomon is also offering a full carbon shell boot with its Carbon Skate Lab model, (\$900, 860g), that Wilson calls "a game changer, with a 360 degree monocoque frame, 3D pre-shaped liner, and Custom Fit Lab liner." Add to that a ratchet instep closure and two separate lacing areas, (forefoot and upper), and the fit on this boot may offer the most customizable fit on the market. Plus all the parts that wear, including cleats and buckles, are replaceable so you can feel a little better about the price tag!

Salomon's sister company under the Amer flag, Atomic, brings some backcountry tech to the groomed

Madshus Hypersonic Carbon  
Classic Skis



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trails with its Sport Skintec Classic Skis, (\$565; sidecut: 43-44-43mm). They feature Atomic's unique Skintec technology – short, glue-on skins made of mohair that are just longer than the boot bottom. This provides powerful kicking in any condition from powder to ice and glides surprisingly well. This is perfect for the enthusiast who just wants to grab his skis and go – no waxing to deal with no matter the conditions. And they borrow their SDS Construction from its top-end Redster line (also available with Skintec); which they say helps keep the kick high during glide phase but stays easy to compress during the kick.

Also borrowing skin technology, Fischer is offering probably the closest thing to a true hybrid between track and touring skis with its new, metal-edge S-Bound 125 Crown, (\$390; 125/95/120mm). While its not recommended getting this ski if you're usually skiing in groomed track, it would be a great option for those who generally do light touring but would like to have a little groomed kick-and-glide fun now and then. Just be careful because it barely fits into the track grooves. The waxless ski has cutouts that allow for the innovative Easy Skin system to slip through the body of the ski and attach to the ski top, just in front of the binding, for easier installation - this means just enough under-foot coverage to get into the wilderness easily while exposing enough base to maintain a smooth glide.

At the other end of the spectrum, Atomic also offers an ultralight, full-carbon boot, with its 2015 RCS Carbonlite Skate Racing Boot, (\$850; 910g). It's one of the lightest boots available, and very stiff, and it fosters a more forward position in keeping with the latest trend in Skate technique. The minimalist design means there's no instep buckle, but the lacing system keeps the foot snug. But they didn't leave out the antimicrobial liner so go ahead and hammer!

And their Speedmax Classic Skate, (\$750; 41/44/44mm), is equally cutting-edge, featuring a narrow front end and cutout tip, lowering swing weight at the tip when the skier pulls the leg forward after a kick. And the base is constructed using a cold pressure bonding process rather than the usual heat pressure technique; which, they said, minimizes susceptibility to temperature and improves wax absorption for better performance across temperature ranges and less reliance on the perfect wax.

L to R: Atomic Sport Skintec Classic Skis, Fischer Speedmax Classic plus, and Fischer S-Bound 125 Crown



Fischer Speedmax Classic Skate

Another trend in the industry especially over the past couple years, according to Rossignol's Castagnoli, is more call for higher-end performance and a lower price point than the usual top-end racing products. So like other brands, they responded by bringing some of the most innovative tech down from their renowned X-Ium World Cup line to a new non-WC line of X-Ium Skate and Classic Skis, (\$575; 40/44/43mm and 44/44/44mm). Both share their construction method and pairing process with their top-end cousins, and both feature a two-part Active Cap with multi-directional fiberglass at the core, that they said maximizes flex through the tip and tail while adding torsional rigidity throughout. All that's missing is the carbon fiber, which adds some weight but widens the sweet spot in the flex and brings the price down considerably.

The Skates are offered in the S2 featuring a narrower tip to save swing weight and a universal flex and camber height for varying conditions. The Classics feature a straight sidecut and are offered with a C2 waxable base for varying conditions and the AR waxless base for grab-and-go convenience. The non-WC version is also offered in the X-Ium Boots for both disciplines, (\$520; weight not available).

In keeping up with another recent industry trend, Rossignol continues to offer a wide range of women's-specific products like their new X-10 FW Skate Boot, (\$290; weight not available). This



Rossignol X-10 FW Skate Boot (left) and X-8 Pursuit Boot (right)

expert-level boot features a 3D composite heel and a 3D injection cuff for lightweight and strong torsional rigidity. But they said the entire unit is based around the specifics of a woman's foot and lower leg for a better fit and more power and control. There's even a Thermoformable inner that molds to the foot when heated for a customizable fit and double lacing for independent closure around the forefoot and instep.

Much of the same construction process is employed on the slightly lower-end X-8 Pursuit Boot, (\$210; weight not available), but at a lower price point for the more intermediate-level female skiers. There are fewer performance features but more emphasis on comfort and user-friendliness with features like an offset zipper and a single lacing system with Speedlace closure. ■

Rossignol X-Ium Skate



A person wearing a plaid jacket, a knit hat, and carrying a snowboard is walking away from the camera up a snowy mountain slope. The sun is low in the sky, creating a bright, hazy glow behind the person and casting long shadows on the snow.

# Outdoor Brand Strength Report

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## INDUSTRY CALENDAR

### JANUARY

29-Feb 1 SIA Snow Show  
Denver, CO

### FEBRUARY

2-3 SIA On-Snow Demo Ski-Ride  
Fest & Nordic Demo  
Copper Mountain Resort, CO

3-5 FFANY  
New York, NY

5-8 ISPO  
Munich, Germany

8-12 Worldwide Spring Show  
Reno, NV

18-21 Sports Inc. Outdoor Show  
Phoenix, AZ

18-23 NBS Spring Semi-Annual Market  
Fort Worth, TX

### MARCH

3-4 SFIA National Health Through  
Fitness Day  
Washington, D.C.

13-15 Imprinted Sportswear Show  
Atlantic City, NJ

### MAY

3-6 NSGA Management conference  
and Team Dealer Summit  
Austin, TX

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nsga.org

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Outdoor Industry Association  
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sfia.org

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snowsports.org

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tremendous success for  
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We look forward to continuing our conversations over the next  
few months as we prepare for an even bigger 2015.

**See you at Outdoor Retailer Summer Market 2015!**

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