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ISSUE 1522
JUNE 1, 2015

WEEKLY

THE WEEKLY DIGITAL MAGAZINE FOR THE ACTIVE LIFESTYLE MARKET





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ON THE COVER:
Photo courtesy Sunski

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Columbia Sportswear made several key management promotions. They include **Lisa Kulok** to SVP of Global Supply Chain Operations, **Steve Woodside** to SVP of Global Sourcing and Manufacturing, and **Joe Boyle** to SVP of Columbia Brand Merchandising and Design.

Foot Locker Inc.'s board of directors elected **Nicholas DiPaolo**, previously its lead Director, to the position of Non-Executive Chairman of the Board.

Galvin Green, the maker of golf apparel based in Vaxjo, Sweden, promoted **Andrew Creed** to President of Galvin Green USA.

Nikwax, the maker of aftercare and waterproofing solutions, hired **Brian Davidson** as Director of Sales for North America.

Osprey Packs appointed **Rob BonDurant** as Director of Marketing and **Kurt Metternick** to the newly created position of Web Manager.

Perry Ellis International Inc. said **George Feldenkreis**, CEO and Chairman since 1993, intends to transition from his role as CEO following the expiration of his employment contract in January 2016. **Oscar Feldenkreis**, President and COO, will succeed his father as CEO.

Sage Manufacturing, the maker of fly rods, reels, apparel, and accessories, appointed **Catie Webster** to the role of Brand Manager

Stance, which recently secured the NBA license for socks, hired **Paul Zaengle** as EVP of Global E-commerce.

Tilly's Inc. appointed **Michael Henry** as CFO.

Vibram appointed **Paolo Manuzzi**, most recently its International Sales Director, as its new Global General Manager.

Shoes.com, parent company of Shome.ca and OnlineShoes.com, appointed **Geoff Henshaw** as VP of Retail and Brand.



Evrgrn Campfire Rocker



Evrgrn 24 Pack Backpack Cooler



Evrgrn Crash Sack

REI LAUNCHES EVRGRN BRAND

REI announced the launch of Evrgrn, a new brand of gear designed for socializing outdoors. The range includes "camp chairs that rock, backpacks that keep 24-packs cool and portable picnic tables."

REI'S copy adds, "Clever spins on traditional camping gear like a tent with unobstructed views for stargazing and wearable sleeping bags make spending time outside even more fun." Overall, the brand includes 11 pieces of gear.

Designed from extensive customer research – tracking both macro-trends like urbanization and micro-insights like the campfire experience – the collection of gear serves the many young people who view the outdoors as something that starts at their front door, is part of everyday life and is best experienced with friends and family. Combining style and function for grab-and-go spontaneity, Evrgrn gear goes from the city park to the campsite to the concert, integrating well into the socially connected lifestyle of this generation.

In the spirit of REI, founded in 1938 by young friends who loved the outdoors, Evrgrn gear is made with durable materials and quality craftsmanship that is built to last outdoors.

Highlights of the collection include the Campfire Rocker, \$99, a lightweight, collapsible rocking chair with sling seat and handy stash pockets that's easily portable. The 24 Pack Backpack Cooler, \$75, fits (24) 12-ounce cans in its waterproof, insulated liner with shaped and padded shoulder straps for extra comfort. The Crash Sack, \$119, a lightweight, warm and soft sleeping bag with bottom clips that allow for walking around. Armholes let you grab what you need and inside pockets let you stash your stuff.

"At REI, we believe that an outdoor life is a life well lived, no matter where you are. Evrgrn delivers on REI's track record of quality and performance with thoughtfully designed and versatile gear so our consumers can focus on what matters most – having fun outside with friends," said Nasahn Sheppard, divisional VP of product design, REI Private Brands.

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BY THE NUMBERS

550,637

According to The Running USA 2014 Marathon Report, a record 550,637 runners finished marathons in the U.S. in 2014, up from 541,000 in 2013. There were also a record 1,200+ marathon events in 2014. Last year marked the slowest average finisher times since 2005 at 4:19:27 for males and 4:44:19 for females.

+19.5%

Shoe Carnival Inc. reported earnings rose 19.5 percent in the first quarter to \$10.4 million, or 52 cents a share. Comparable store sales increased 3.0 percent. The gains came despite over 400 days of store closures due to the snowy weather in many of its regions over the period.

+13.6%

Foot Locker Inc. reported first-quarter earnings jumped 13.6 percent to \$184 million, or \$1.29 a share. Results easily topped Wall Street's consensus estimate of \$1.23 a share. Same-store sales jumped 7.9 percent. Richard Johnson, president and CEO, noted that the period marked "the most profitable quarter in our history" and saw "strong performances across our channels, geographies, banners, and categories."

-0.9%

Hibbett Sports Inc. said comparable store sales in its first quarter decreased 0.9 percent. Net income slipped 3.5 percent to \$27.4 million, or \$1.09 a share. President and CEO Jeff Rosenthal said, "We experienced early headwinds in the quarter, with February posting a negative high-single-digit comp due to impacts from weather-related closures, port delays and a shift in the timing of tax refunds. We were pleased with our performance in March and April, and we have seen this trend improve in May."

+3.1

Brown Shoe Company raised its full-year EPS guidance about 5 percent after reporting same-store sales increased 3.1 percent at Famous Footwear in the first quarter ended May 2. Brown Shoe's net earnings rose nearly 25 percent on a 1.9 percent increase in sales compared with a year earlier.



IMPLUS CORP. ACQUIRES BALEGA SOCKS

Implus Corp. has acquired Balega Socks in a deal designed to bolster Implus' presence in the specialty running retail channel. Terms were not disclosed.

As the leading performance sock brand in the Specialty Running market, Balega develops its entire product line at its South African production facility utilizing the highest quality American-made yarns.

"The addition of the Balega brand to the Implus family adds a top level product offering and opens up new channels as we solidify our position in the Specialty Running market," said Todd Vore, president of Implus. "We're grateful to have the Balega management team stay on board with our company so that we can benefit from their expertise and they can help us explore new opportunities."

In partnering with Implus, Balega's management team will continue to play an important role in the company and will help to transition and merge the Balega brand into the Implus family of products. They will also target new opportunities for growth and development within the Specialty Running channel. Bert Pictor will continue as SVP, Chris Bevin will remain as VP of sales, and Tanya Pictor will be the VP of marketing.

"Balega is excited to be joining forces with the team at Implus," said Pictor, also the founder of Balega. "The Specialty Running channel is changing rapidly and expectations of both retailers and consumers continue to grow. With the operational and logistical resources that Implus provides – combined with Balega's quality, innovative products and established relationships in the channel – we have the makings of a great partnership. The essence of what Balega is remains. We will continue to innovate, provide excellent service and give back to the communities in which we operate. It is business as usual, only much better!"

The addition of the Balega brand to Implus is the first brand addition since Berkshire Partners' investment in Implus in April. Implus' range of brands include: Sof Sole, Yaktrax, apara, Airplus, Sneaker Balls, Sof Comfort, Little Hotties, Penguin, Perfect Fitness, ICETrekkers, FitDeck, DryGuy and TriggerPoint.



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SPORTS AUTHORITY LAUNCHES CHAMPION GEAR COLLECTION

Sports Authority introduced Champion Gear, an exclusive line of premium performance and lifestyle apparel in a partnership with Champion Activewear.

Champion Gear features seamless construction and quick-drying Champion Vapor Technology for distraction-free workouts. The assortment, to launch in July, includes tanks, tees, pants, shorts and more in exclusive patterns and colors.

"We are excited to introduce the new and exclusive Champion Gear performance apparel collection. This collection raises the bar in terms of high-quality, innovative athletic apparel. We see this as a strong complement to our existing Champion active apparel assortment," said Stephen Binkley, EVP and chief merchandising officer at Sports Authority. "We are dedicated to listening to our customers who have been asking for value oriented advanced technology and fabrications that meet their everyday needs: Champion Gear is their solution. Sports Authority has a longstanding relationship with Champion and we are proud to partner with them to bring this new collection to life."

"We are thrilled to launch Champion Gear with Sports Authority, a long-time, trusted retail partner and close collaborator," said Nadine Hall, president at Champion. "The line is built on our unparalleled heritage of innovation and is the perfect enhancement to the Champion collection already available in Sports Authority stores."

MYPACKAGE PROPAGATES PERFORMANCE UNDERWEAR TREND

MyPackage has launched its Pro Series active underwear line, with models designed for both team and individual sports. Featuring its MyDry technology, the Pro Series, \$40 to \$60, is constructed entirely from soft, wicking polyester, helping keep athletes dry by pulling moisture away from the body. MyDry is also quick drying and does not get "baggy" when wet. The fabric also prevents odor and is antimicrobial.

Even many watersports athletes are wearing MyPackage and other performance undergarments under their board shorts and wetsuits these days to avoid chaffing and add support.

Pro Series uses Cyberknit 100 percent Denier Gradient Wicking Polyester designed to provide light compression and keep athletes dry and comfortable. The line comes in solid colors inspired by team sports, available in a brief, full-length or boot cut.

MyPackage stands out with its KeyHole Comfort Technology - a "three dimensional" pouch designed to maximize fit and comfort by cradling the male "package." MyPackage says it is dedicated to making "the most comfortable and functional underwear on the planet while having the most fun doing it."



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State & Union features the first United By Blue store-in-store concept and carries the entire line of United By Blue apparel, bags, and accessories.



MADE IN THE USA

UNITED BY BLUE

Manufacturing consumer outdoor products in the U.S. is how one company decided to do something tangible to help clean up the world's oceans.

By Scott Boulbol



Many businesses and entrepreneurs are united by the almighty green. But Brian Linton, the 28-year-old founder and CEO of Philadelphia's United By Blue (UBB), wanted to create a brand that was united and motivated by something else entirely: water; more precisely, clean water.

"United By Blue will always be focused on water – it's built into our DNA and the very name of the brand: We are all united by blue, by water," he said. "I don't see us ever looking to focus on other causes because the issue we are addressing with ocean and waterway pollution is just so huge. The brand [launched in 2010] was conceived out of experiences from my upbringing in and around the ocean all throughout the world."



“Our generation will redefine business in the coming decades. Causes will be more of a forethought than an afterthought.”

– Brian Linton, CEO, United By Blue

But rather than create a business that directly works with water conservation, Linton, along with 26-year-old co-founder Mike Cangi, went an entirely different route – one that could not only help the cause, but could help spread the word about the cause far beyond his own back yard: retail consumer goods. This would allow people all over the world to support the cause through their purchases and spread the word through the products, which cover a wide array of categories from dog accessories to home furnishings to t-shirts to two of their signature products, Bison wool socks and custom wood paddles. And much more.



Mike Cangi, Co-Founder



UBB Bison wool socks
“Responsible durable goods”



While their consumers are generally young, outdoor types – typical of the outdoor industry as a whole – this unique model transcends the typical outdoor brand. “We don’t categorize United By Blue as an outdoor apparel brand because we are very much more than that. We are an outdoor lifestyle brand, and therefore, everything from shirts to oars to face wash can fit into that,” Linton explained.

“Everything we sell is united by our tagline, ‘responsible durable goods,’” said Linton. “Is it responsibly made of responsible materials? Will it be durable and long lasting? One of the most important parts of creating a sustainable product line is making sure the quality is good, so they don’t need to be replaced regularly. We make sustainable outdoor products that are designed to explore the world with you, and get better with age.”

The market seems to want these “responsible durable goods,” as UBB’s sales doubled last year, according to Linton, and will double again this year.



And they’ll soon be opening another store –right on the boardwalk in Asbury Park, NJ. This location is especially significant, said Linton, “because it will connect us with the ocean. Our flagship store is about one block from the Delaware River, so this connection to oceans and waterways is important.”

And like the others, it will house a coffee shop – another of UBB’s favorite “causes.”

How it Works

UBB bucks the typical model with respect to charitable efforts. Rather than simply donate a percentage of sales to chosen causes, the company takes a more hands-on approach – a get-your-hands-dirty approach. For every product sold, UBB removes one pound of trash from oceans and waterways through company-organized and hosted cleanups.

But they don’t just organize. The company’s 20 full-time employees actually do the work. According to UBB PR man Chris Dickey, “It’s what seems to keep them inspired and motivated to come to work every day.”



For every product sold, UBB removes one pound of trash from oceans and waterways through company-organized and hosted cleanups. "So far, we have hosted 118 cleanups and removed over 200,000 pounds of trash from rivers, streams, creeks, and beaches across 21 U.S. states."



"United By Blue will always be focused on water – it's built into our DNA and the very name of the brand: We are all united by blue, by water."

– Brian Linton, CEO, United By Blue



"By associating a concrete environmental action with every business transaction, we are able to have a measurable impact on this important issue," the company's website says.

But they don't do it alone. These cleanups become community events – lead by UBB staff. Social media and web-based event sign ups are coupled with recruiting from more than 400 stores nationwide, and in two UBB brick and mortar stores, plus one they don't own, that carry their goods.

"We accomplish our mission by continuously organizing and hosting ocean and waterway cleanups across the country, bringing together thousands of volunteers to help us pick up things like plastic bottles, tires, cans, appliances, and everything else that makes its way into the aquatic world," according to their website. "So far, we have hosted 118 cleanups and removed over 200,000 pounds of trash from rivers, streams, creeks, and beaches across 21 U.S. states."

Their efforts have not gone unnoticed. The Philadelphia-based brand has just been recognized by B-Lab – a non-profit that serves a global movement of entrepreneurs using the power of business to solve social and environmental problems – as a "B-Corp Best for their Community" brand, awarded to companies creating the most impact for a better world.

Linton hopes the recognition they're receiving – and more importantly the work they're getting done – will help drive other young entrepreneurs in this direction. He sees his model as representative of what will be the next wave of socially responsible outdoor brands.

"Our generation will redefine business in the coming decades. Causes will be more of a forethought than an afterthought," he said. "This change has already begun and is evidenced by many of our peers running other exciting and successful ventures.

"But it's only just beginning, and it's an exciting time to be involved in what we are doing. I credit United By Blue's success to having an incredible and talented team that is making great product with meaningful stories," said Linton. "That's what people want. Great product, great stories."

That, and abundant, clean water. ■

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Photo courtesy
Smith Optics

What's Trending Now *Sunglasses*

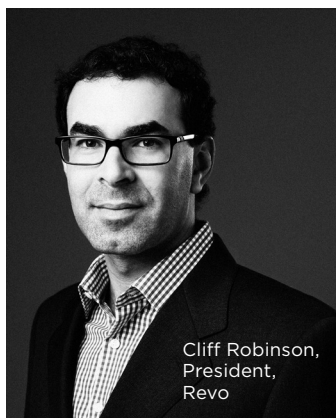
Fashion... Meet Function
This year's sport and outdoor
eyewear trends aren't just about
being trendy

By Scott Boulbol

As the sun makes its long-awaited return each spring, outdoor athletes turn their attention toward sunglasses; especially sunglasses that will help them perform in their outdoor pursuits. But more than ever before, those sunglasses look more like their lifestyle cousins.

Many remember – and perhaps even rocked – the iconic Oakley Bladez Greg Lemond wore during some of his most successful years as a cyclist in the 80's. While these may not have been the first sport sunglasses, they're certainly among the most renowned. The gigantic, goggle-shaped frames covered much of his face while wrapping around the cheeks to block the elements – they even featured adjustable temples and nosepieces.

While wearing these today would be seen as ironic, many of the features persist in the sport models today. But along with these technical functions, brands are more conscious than ever now to incorporate some of the latest styles brought over from the fashion world – the nerdy “Wayfarer” style has been huge for several seasons and isn't stopping, along with “Aviator” shapes and multi-color frames made famous in the 70's ski scene with brands like “I-Ski.” So while true sport glasses, like the old-school bladed wraparound models, are still available, consumers have ever-increasing choices if they want to get away from that sporty look.



Cliff Robinson,
President,
Revo

Cliff Robinson, president of iconic sunglass brand Revo, calls these “athleisure” models, borrowing a phrase from the apparel industry. And he should know a thing or two about this trend, as some credit Revo as one of the original athleisure brands, with popular styles, especially for winter sports, in the 80s and 90s. “We see athleisure as an important trend in the industry right now. The sport people want to be more fashionable and the fashion people want to get more sporty,” he

says. “We pride ourselves on creating frames that people want to wear for both sport and for everyday life.”

Smith Category Manager Joe Snyder won’t go so far as to suggest that the typical sport glasses will disappear – they’re still more technologically advanced for the most active pursuits – but he does see fashion models becoming more sporty. “At Smith the two categories are separated by vastly different feature sets and silhouettes. Our performance collection is designed to perform for both top end athletes and enthusiasts alike,” said Snyder. “That said, we do see a trend in the active/lifestyle segment. This is an area where traditional lifestyle models incorporate features to help increase performance.”



Joe Snyder, Category Manager, Smith

“Consumers are finding an appreciation for the functional elements of spring hinges, rubber nose pads, temple tip designs that can keep the product on their faces,” said Costa’s John Sanchez, VP of product development for one of the industry’s fastest growing brands. “The consumers naturally want to look great and eyewear is a fashion accessory, but we are seeing more and more that they want to be able to look great and go for a walk, short bike ride, or kick the ball around the backyard with the kids, and not feel like they have to worry about changing out their eyewear.”



John Sanchez,
VP Product
Development,
Costa

Along with the features Sanchez mentions, athleisure sunglasses often feature softer, lighter and more flexible frames than their pure lifestyle counterparts. Lenses are often interchangeable to allow for varied or changing light conditions, or feature polarized or photochromic lenses. Many are treated with hydrophilic material so water and sweat runs off quicker and cleaner. Nose pieces and temples feature hydrophilic rubber that stays in place better, especially when wet, and can also be flexible for different fit options. Some even feature rubber or silicone around the frames to seal off the lens from sweat and prevent light from sneaking in around the frame, as well as improved airflow to prevent fogging. But

what they all have in common – unlike so many of the “classics” – is their fashion-forward designs.

Another trend is less about vanity and more about sustainability: Brands are increasingly incorporating “greener” materials, production practices, and missions into their sunglass businesses. There have been some significant advances in recent years, so more brands are already doing this or looking into it in the near future. Whether using bamboo or other sustainable woods, or non-petroleum based plastics, and even biodegradable resins, brands are more conscious about what happens to their products when no longer needed by the consumer.

One of the biggest proponents is Zeal Optics, whose entire line is made with “sustainable” materials. “All plastics in our sunglasses are bio resins and contain no petroleum,” said Mike Lewis, Zeal Marketing/Team Manager. “This includes not just our frames, but also our lenses. Additionally, a select group of our sunglasses are made from a cotton and wood-based acetate that are the first certified biodegradable sunglasses out there. Drop them in an anaerobic (oxygen-free) environment like the bottom of the lake or a landfill and they’ll be gone in 18 months.”



Mike Lewis,
Marketing/
Team
Manager,
Zeal Optics

The market has also seen an influx of small startup brands, who often offer younger, more trendy looks and colors, and sometimes lower price points, with basic technical features. They’re a strong option for those who want stylish looks and at least some tech, like rubber nose and temple pieces, or polarized lenses. Crowd sourced startups are beginning to make a mark in the industry, like Sunski, which used Kickstarter to fund its launch in 2012. While small brands like Pop-ticals and Switch offer unique and innovative options: foldable but sturdy frames for more convenient storage and magnetic lens interchange for easier swapping.

Finally, prescription (RX) sunglasses, especially in the sport realm, are increasingly available throughout lines, rather than just a select few models as in years past. Whether it’s a full-blown cycling blade or a casual Wayfarer style, brands are making wide varieties of models RX-able. The traditional clip-on variety is still an option, but more brands are simply making the lenses RX ready, so there’s no bulky, sometimes unsecure clip on lenses to deal with. Some even offer non-RX “reader” inserts, so you can more easily see your computer, or read a map, etc. And like your high-end eyeglasses, these are of course also available in polarized or photochromic options, and also feature strong anti-scratch coatings and hydrophilic treatments as well.

Rudy Project

On the athletic side is an Italian brand ubiquitous in the running, cycling and triathlon worlds. Rudy Project has long been renowned for its hardcore sports glasses, and while they’re not giving up on that niche, they too have adopted more stylish looks and casual styles, with much of the tech borrowed from the athletic models. The new Proflow (\$275 and up) is



Rudy Project Proflow

a top-end model, using features from some of the company's previous flagship models. The new Suspended Hinge Geometry feels strong and secure, and the CarbonCore Chassis may not be the lightest, but it's built to last. The RX photochromic lens offers outstanding clarity, sheds dirt and water well, and is quick to darken/lighten in changing conditions.



Rudy Project Rydon

Its popular Rydon (\$200 and up) is back and is still light and comfortable - and highly adjustable via a flexible nose piece and temple tips. It's a bit smaller than typical cycling wraparounds, so there's a fraction less coverage, but function doesn't suffer and it's perfect for smaller faces. Both models are available with their ImpactX-2 lens, which is among the toughest, clearest and fastest-adjusting photochromic lenses available - 25 percent faster, they claim, than the previous Impact-X version. RX options include progressive, bi-focal and even a variety of reader magnifications.



Rudy Project Sensor

But even Rudy has a casual side, and the new Sensor (\$150) offers the high-quality lens Rudy is known for, with a fresh, trendy look. While it lacks some of the aerobic-sport features, the Sensor would work fine for skiing or watersports, and with the multiple trendy color options, wearers won't feel "underdressed" on the pub or coffee shop patio. All casual frames are RX-able.

XX2i Optics

Among the best values for 2015 come from RP domestic distributors: XX2i Optics offers high-performance models at much lower prices than its Italian cousins, or most comparable products for that matter. The France2 (\$60) is a traditional sport design offering many of the same fit and lens options like polarization, flexible rubber nose and temples, and hydrophilic coatings, plus Grilamid lenses (a common material in higher end products offering good flexibility and strength). But it's the reader option (three levels of magnification) that sets them apart - even without an RX, wearers with vision issues can read a map or a computer without having to take off their glasses. Multiple bold color options are offered.



XX2i Optics France2

For a more fashionable look try the USA1 (\$130). Every XX2i pair comes with a dual-sided screwdriver to keep the frames tight, two cleaning cloths/carry bags, plus a 365-day money back guarantee and a lifetime frame and lens warranty - even against scratches.

Oakley

Even though they still offer models reminiscent of the classic Bladez design, Oakley is also known for its fashion influence. The Jawbreaker (\$200-\$280), features trademark sharp angles and edges and a bold, futuristic aesthetic. The technology is cutting edge, beginning with Oakley's proprietary "Jaw" interchangeable lens system - among the most secure and user-friendly in the industry. There's a lens for every possible condition, along with photochromic options for changing conditions. They even borrow the adjustable-length temples from the Bladez, albeit a more advanced version. They're among the largest frames in the category, and not the lightest, but this means a huge area of protection and outstanding peripheral vision, plus ventilation for anti-fog.



Oakley Jawbreaker



Photo courtesy Bolle

Bolle

For the serious outdoor athlete who needs RX lenses, longtime sports brand Bolle has a strong offering that launched in late 2014. Rather than retrofitting an existing model for RX lenses, the 6th Sense (\$600 single vision; \$775 progressive) is designed exclusively as an RX sports model, designed for high performance cyclists, runners, nordic skiers, etc. Twenty different lens configurations, with a wide range of prescriptions, mean the perfect setup for most consumers. They're relatively lightweight, and highly adjustable. And the Bolle lens' clarity and durability are always excellent.



Bolle 6th Sense

Their new Diamondback model (\$90-\$110) boasts a more stylish design, with a wide, wraparound, full-frame construction for extensive coverage from sun and wind, plus good peripheral vision, although unfortunately



Bolle Diamondback

there are no polarized or photochromic options. The fit is snug and comfortable, especially for its large profile, and the shield style makes them good for skiing, cycling, and other speed sports. But as a lifestyle model, they also offer a definite rock-star look, for those bold enough to rock them, especially with the bright color options.

Serengeti

Another venerable brand, more known for its lifestyle models – and excellent lenses – is Serengeti. Their Sport line offers choices for casually active, and more fashionably conservative wearers who want great clarity and light weight, but a little added performance if they head into town on a bike or go for a hike, etc. The Sestriere and Bormio models (\$170) feature photochromic and polarized lenses – a rare but desirable combo in many outdoor pursuits. The nylon frames and Trivex lenses are very light and flexible, and it's easy to forget they're even on.



Serengeti Sestriere

Revo

Revo's new Straightshot (\$200) is an excellent all around model, with contemporary, wide temples, bold graphics and squared off frame, plus non-slip features and Revo's renowned 8-base Polarized Serilium lens for clear, precise vision in a wide variety of light. Its wrap style offers full protection, despite its lower profile design, and good peripheral vision. With the RX lens availability this is a true do-everything model.



Revo Straightshot (top) and Phoenix (bottom)

For a more urban, trendy look, the comfortable and retro-chic Phoenix (\$280), offers 6-base polarized lenses for excellent contrast and clarity. Its modern aviator shape belies its abilities as a solid choice for snow and water sports, and it can be worn all day because it's light and comfortable. But while the lenses look large, the frame is actually better for women or men with narrow faces.

Poc

The Swedish brand Poc has been turning heads in sports like cycling – where the wide, rounded frames and wraparound design stood way out from the usual shields and blades that have dominated the sport for decades – and skiing, with their bold, untraditional design aesthetic, but it's the functionality that keeps them from becoming just a style brand. The Do Flow (\$170) definitely makes a statement out on the town, but it's every bit a fully functioning cycling or skiing sunglass, with a tight, wrapped fit for maximum protection, and just enough ventilation to keep the fogging



Poc Do Flow (left) and Want (right)

down. Injected Grilamid frames are light and flexible, while Ripel anti-sweat and water treatment keeps the nylon Carl Zeiss lenses clean and dry. While not photochromic or polarized, the clarity and color is still impressive, and multiple lens options are available. All are RX-able.

The less sports-oriented, highly stylized Want (\$150) will satisfy trendy consumers, and it can handle casual outdoor activities too. Best suited for larger faces.



Photo courtesy Zeal Optics



Zeal Optics Memphis



Zeal Optics Tracker

Zeal Optics

Virtually every product Zeal Optics makes – including lenses and frames – is non-petroleum and nature-based. From castor oils to cotton, their plastics are less harmful and often biodegradable.

But they're not necessarily designed for highly active endeavors. So for folks more into sustainability than hard-core athletic performance, models like the new Memphis (\$170) – frame made from 100 percent cotton and their proprietary e-lume lens made with no petroleum products – are just the ticket especially if you can rock the look of the many musicians who populate the namesake city! The frames are very light and flexible, but without feeling flimsy, with a polarized lens and 5-barrel hinges.

More active wearers can opt for the Tracker (\$120-\$140) or slightly less masculine Idyllwild (\$120) instead. The Z-resin frames are produced from castor oils, and they also have e-lume polarized lenses. But these are more flexible and also feature more wrap, sportier looks and sticky contact points.



Zeal Optics Idyllwild

Costa

Costa is also among the brands leading the sustainable materials charge. "All of our plastic frames today are bio-based resins. The data we are given is amazing on bio-based resins," said Sanchez. "The quality of the material is better functionally. Costa's bio-based materials can stand the test of time in a larger range of temperatures than traditional plastics. I believe that not just our industry, but as a whole we will see more and more industries migrating to bio-based resins. Castor plant based resins have been vetted and proven to be an amazing first step for us, but we aren't stopping there. We have in development materials that will bio-degrade 12 months if buried, or if they are at the bottom of the lake or ocean."

While well known on the water sports side of the sports sunglass industry, their recent models can be sported in many outdoor pursuits, with or without water, although perhaps not the more aggressive sports – the glass lenses may not be ideal for those, but they do provide the best clarity of any material. The new Cortez (\$170-\$250) is marketed for fishing, but the wrap profile, tough co-injected nylon construction, linear venting system and outstanding lenses would be great in the mountains, too. They're definitely for larger faces, and sport a decidedly masculine look.

For the outdoorsy female who refuses to sacrifice the latest runway styles, the La Mar (\$150-\$170) features a stylish, retro, cat-eye look without compromising on performance. The integral hinges and non-slip nose pads and temple tips offer a durable, comfortable fit, while the same Costa polarized lenses offer the same clarity and precision.

No one would mistake these for sports sunglasses at first glance, but the Pawleys (\$200-\$280) definitely perform. A snug, unshakeable, uber-comfortable fit belies the retro-chic look of these classic "nerd-looking" glasses, with sticky rubber temples and nosepieces. And while they don't offer a lot of protection, the lenses are excellent, especially for snow and water. The Tour-de-France may never see a pair in the peloton, but your fellow bike pub-crawlers will be jealous of your look.



Top to bottom:
Costa Cortez, La Mar and
Pawleys

Smith

Smith is another brand that has always been ahead of the curve melding fashion with function. And lately they're also leading in the sustainable movement: their Evolve Collection – comprised of the majority of their non-metal frame models – is the largest eco-friendly sunglass collection in the world, they claim. Frames are constructed from a 53 percent bio-based material, derived from non-GMO castor plants.

The new Outlier XL (\$120-\$210) is one of those models, and also a great example of a hybrid. With an oversized Wayfarer look, plus sticky temples and nose, lightweight construction, oversized cam hinges and of course Smith's renowned ChromaPop polarized lens (optional), this is one of the best overall hybrids in our group. Though a tad heavy, due to its large frame, it stays put, providing excellent clarity and contrast, and offering plenty of protection, even along the sides. It may not be the go-to pair for pure athletic use, but there's little penalty for choosing this over those shields.

Smith chose to keep the traditional clip-on style for its latest RX lenses, the RXODS2 insert (frame \$50, RX lens \$100) for its PivLock line. It's similar to their previous model, but with a complete nylon frame for better retention. The lenses are very clear with no visible distortion, and the unit is surprisingly lightweight, although it definitely makes for a bulkier package when inserted into one of the many frames that can accommodate it.



Smith RXODS3

new ones, no need to get a new RX lens.

Spy

Another brand to embrace sustainable and biodegradable materials is the hip skate and ski brand Spy. Select sunglasses, like the ones below, are made with 100 percent biodegradable Plantate – an all-natural plant polysaccharide material, and a portion of every sale goes towards The Keep A Breast Foundation and its mission of informing, educating and inspiring young people to choose non-toxic products to help reduce instances of breast cancer.

The SPY Cutter (\$220) is what they call, "the most fashion-forward and technologically advanced performance sunglass SPY has ever dreamed to create." The interchangeable lens option, includes their polarized "Happy Lens," and a ventilation system helps eliminate fogging when used for active pursuits. But the look is definitely not athletic or shield-like, but much more trendy and fashion-forward, with a flat brow and Wayfarer style. A similar hybrid, the Rocky (\$100-\$150), has many of the features of the Cutter plus small temple openings for leash attachment at a much lower pricepoint.

Devised for shaving off ounces and seconds, the Daft is a traditional, oversized rimless shield with an interchangeable 7-base lens, and rubber nose pads and temple tips to keep them in place (\$150). Made from Grilamid, this is a pure performance model, and will only be fashionable in the peloton.



Spy Rocky (top) and Daft (bottom)

Vuarnet

The legendary French brand Vuarnet (\$195-\$248) brings back one of the original sport styles – ubiquitous on the slopes and beaches and at the crags a few decades ago. The new OO2 is a classic cat-eye shape, but the optics are anything but dated. The brand's mineral lenses are renowned for clarity, precision and durability with no distortion like some plastic lenses. And they've added a mirrored coating for more flash, plus a polarized option for added contrast.



Vuarnet OO2

Native

Native's 2015 Flatiron is light and built for comfort. But with the polarized lenses, hydrophilic contact points and cam hinges, they can easily handle some moderate activity. But the sophisticated flat-brow style will excel all over town after the activities are done and the fun begins.



Native Flatiron

Sunski

Generating their original funding on Kickstarter in 2012, the small startup Sunski has carved out a solid niche, with a decided focus on young – the owners are both under 30 – trendy styles, and just enough performance to make the products useful to their fashion-forward but also outdoorsy clientele. But it's their story – one that seems to be catching on in the industry – that stands out most.



Sunski Dipsea

"We were fortunate because crowdfunding granted us immediate access to the end customer long before we brought Sunski to the [outdoor] industry," said Co-Founder Tom Stewart. "When we first came to the Outdoor Retailer show, shortly after our Kickstarter campaign ended, we brought a fair bit of momentum which I think proved critical."

"We felt an immediate connection between work and play, he added. "The brand almost evolved on its own before our eyes, and now has grown to be basically a pure celebration of nature and time spent outside."

Julbo

French brand Julbo began making mountain eyewear in the 1880's, and they're still going strong offering quality at low prices. They, too, are bringing the fashion trends into sport models like the Megeve (\$70), a reissue of one of their 80's styles. They now have NXT polycarbonate lenses in them, known for their toughness and easy cleaning.

The Coast (\$110-\$200), another new style from Julbo trends towards a wayfarer style but was designed for water sports. It employs Julbo's Octopus lens, a hydrophobic, polarized lens that's great for sailing, SUP, etc., plus an integrated detachable cord to keep it out of the water.



Julbo Megeve

Optic Nerve

Optic Nerve's Variant (\$50, 65, \$90) is a strong value for a sports-specific model that just might squeak by as an aggressive lifestyle piece. It's available in single lens, 2-lens interchangeable, and photochromic options. All have their lightweight, flexible TR90 frames with adjustable sticky nose piece and sticky temple piece, plus polarized, injected polycarbonate lenses

On the trendier side, the new Kincaid (\$65) has the sophisticated look of higher-end fashion models, while the materials and polarized, hydrophobic lens lend themselves well to light activity.



Optic Nerve Variant (top) and Kincaid (bottom)

Arnette

Another of the more trendy brands is Arnette, and while they don't focus on high performance for sports, many models will still do the trick, while always keeping the wearer on the cutting edge of fashion. Customization is one of their trademarks recently, with the A.C.E.S. (Arnette Creative Exchange System) collection featuring interchangeable temples and fun lens shades, to mix and match colors.

"It doesn't matter if you're doing a sport or just hanging out with your friends, sunglasses that look good make you feel good, said Joe Freitag, Arnette's Global Brand Director. "There are a lot of people who don't always want styles that have a particularly aggressive or sporty look, or want frames that reflect their personal style, so offering sporty frames with some lifestyle flavor makes a lot of sense."

Their new Tallboy (\$100) is a good example. Its wide profile and tall lens offers strong protection for active sports, but the look is decidedly trendy. Grilamid construction keeps them light and flexible. And of course there are lots of color and lens options to make them your own.



Arnette Tallboy

Popticals

The brand with the most-clever name in the bunch, Great Britain's Popticals has just launched in the U.S., and their foldable frames make them perfect for the active consumer. It's also another good example of the small startup with a niche' product.

"The inventor, David Porter, was tired of not having a place to put his sports sunglasses, and was unimpressed with how flimsy folding sunglasses were. So he invented the FL2 Micro-Rail System to accommodate those who wanted to wear sports sunglasses but also have a compact, easy place to store them," said Popticals' Social Media & Online Content Manager Preston Porter.

The Popgear (\$180-\$200), like all their models, employs the rail system to fold up the frames for easy storage in smaller spaces, like a shirt pocket. They also feature a smooth and slightly broader frame, with a tight wraparound style and curved lenses. Wide temples will also protect from dust, debris, and stray light entering through the sides. The lenses are double treated for scratch and impact resistance. While too bulky for more active sports, these will work well for outdoorsmen and women and on the water, and if you don't mind the slightly "terminator" look, they'll work fine around town too.



Popticals Popgear

Switch

Another small, family owned startup (albeit under larger parent company, Liberty Sport) with a unique product line is Boulder, CO-based Switch, which began about four years ago when, as CEO Anthony P. DiChiara puts it, "My uncle, who has been in the optical design and engineering field for almost 50 years, mocked up a prototype with magnets inserted into the lenses. From there we spent almost two years developing the initial styles and marketing strategy." Now they have full lines of sport models, mostly focused on water sports and two-wheeled vehicles, all of which feature their proprietary magnetic interchange system,

The new Lycan (\$120, \$180) features a full wrap, wide temples and large lenses resulting in a very tight fit to keep the elements at bay – best for sports where the wind and sun are at their fiercest. The set comes with two lenses, a polarized and a low-light rose. The Switch system is one of the easiest lens-swap systems – just push the lens out from the inside, and pop the new one in – yet the lenses seem solid and secure (although fingerprints are an issue).

For a more traditional cycling/running style, the new H-Wall (\$130) allows more airflow to keep the fogging down, but a much lighter, sleeker design. The two interchangeable lenses slide up into the bridge on these, again using magnets, and again it's super quick and easy. Although for



Switch Lycan (top) and H-Wall (bottom)



Photo courtesy Zeal Optics

serious athletic endeavors, the profile may be too slim for larger faces – these would be better for women and smaller guys.

Under Armour

With a strong presence in the hunting and fishing side of outdoor, Under Armour is widening their more casual lifestyle lines, and offers solid options for more active sports, too. But Under Armour's biggest news for 2015 is the new Storm polarized lens, with they said quickly repels sweat, salt, oils and even sunscreen. The new Captain is a nice blend of both, with an overall outdoorsy look, but a more modern, trendy shape, combining a wrap fit with a Wayfarer-ish frame. They're impressively light, made from titanium and Grilamid, which also means strength and flexibility – good for sportsmen, watersports and lighter aerobic pursuits.

Their new Igniter 2.0 (\$90-\$160) is more of an aggressive sports model, ideal for running and cycling, etc., and also offers the Storm lens option. The co-molded rubber temples are flexible, secure and very comfortable, and the wrap offers solid peripheral vision – although the lenses may not come down far enough for larger faces – and the cam hinges feel sturdy and tight. And there are lots of bold colors to satisfy your need to make a statement. ■



Under Armour Captain (top) and Igniter 2.0 (bottom)

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Ortovox Mountainwear Comes To America

By Aaron H. Bible



Photos courtesy Ortovox

SGB was first exposed to the latest in Ortovox mountain apparel after Outdoor Retailer Winter Market in January in anticipation of its fall launch into the U.S., and we finally had a chance to sit down with Ortovox U.S. Brand Manager Tom Mason to gain a better understanding about what this apparel means to retailers, to end users and to the U.S. outdoor market. Sit back and enjoy this conversation on one of the most technical and forward-thinking brands coming across the pond for Fall 2015.

For the last several seasons we've reported on the influx of European mountaineering brands into the U.S. Why now for Ortovox? From roots in avalanche rescue equipment, Ortovox set out to create apparel designed for backcountry skiing, freeriding and mountaineering and Ortovox Mountainwear has experienced exceptional success in Europe with the growth of the backcountry market. The backcountry market is also growing rapidly in the U.S. We believe the same things that made Ortovox Mountainwear a success in Europe will propel its adoption in the U.S. - unique and innovative material combinations and well-made, highly functional styles designed specifically for the backcountry user.

Tell us a little about the history of Ortovox apparel. In 1980 Gerald Kampel and Jürgen Wegner developed the first double-frequency transceiver and distributed it under the Ortovox brand name. It was the

first of its kind and quickly became the best selling transceiver and the industry standard. Three years later Ortovox introduced backpacks and shovels for ski touring. In 1988 we began making touring jackets, sweaters and accessories with wool integrated into every style. Ortovox was a pioneer with the use of natural fibers then as it is now. Today Ortovox Mountainwear is distributed widely across Europe and includes all the apparel you need to safely explore the mountains from hats and gloves to base- and mid-layers to shells and insulation.

I was told in January you've had 400 percent growth in Mountainwear/Apparel in the last three years. Can you explain that number a little bit? We've steadily built a loyal customer base that has come to rely on the performance of our gear. In recent years we've experienced exceptional growth with the introduction of new markets and the expansion of our line. This year Ortovox developed a new line of low profile ski packs for resort and ski touring to compliment our already available line of ABS packs.

How will you differentiate yourselves against the North American mountaineering brands like Patagonia, Marmot or Arc'teryx? What are people looking for that they aren't getting? There are many brands that offer competitive products. Ortovox is unique in that it is committed to using wool - Tasmanian merino and SwissWool (from Schoeler) - as the



material of choice for its unique and versatile performance qualities. Every piece of Mountainwear, from base-layers and accessories to shells and insulation, features wool as a principal component of construction or utilizes wool in a unique way. We are true wool experts. In addition to wool, Ortovox Mountainwear uses top-quality technical fabrics from Schoeller, Dermizax, Lenzing, Pertex and others.

How will you market to U.S. consumers? Ortovox has deep roots in avalanche rescue equipment in the U.S. Those familiar with our brand know Ortovox is synonymous with safety on the mountain and Mountainwear is an extension of that message. Those new to Ortovox will appreciate our high quality and functional equipment in both hard goods and clothing. Ortovox offers the complete system for a shared safe experience in the mountains. We intend to use traditional marketing channels and our established network of sales representatives to get Ortovox on the sales floors of specialty retailers in key markets.

Will having your apparel in North America help grow your hardgoods business; or is it your notoriety in beacons and snow safety tools that you hope will inspire North American customers? Both, to separate degrees. Our history in avalanche rescue equipment is a healthy launching pad and serves as a solid introduction to the Mountainwear line. At the same time, Mountainwear is an easily accessible part of the Ortovox brand and will help introduce Ortovox's long-standing mountain safety and avalanche awareness message to those who might not be aware of it.

Will all North American dealers have access to the entire European catalog? And how many doors will you open this Fall? Do you have to be a Deuter dealer to get Ortovox product in North America? Yes, all U.S. dealers have access to the entire European product selection. Currently, we have 11 Mountainwear dealers for the Fall/Winter 2015/16 season, including specialty retailers and large online retailers. They do not need to be Deuter dealers.

Tell us a little bit about your "Made in Europe" story and why that's important to you? Ortovox has always made a commitment to quality, whether in our rescue equipment, backpacks and also in our Mountainwear line. We're cognizant of the global supply chain in all that we do both in sourcing and manufacturing. Ortovox's European manufacturing is a statement of quality. It is a commitment to process that matches our commitment to sourcing the best available wools and performance fabrics. We're also interested in lessening the environmental impact of doing business. Shortening the distances the materials and finished products travel are part of that mission. The results of our Made in Europe program are: products of uncompromising quality, designed to perform, constructed with the utmost care and the best available materials.

Where does Ortovox source wool and other materials from? For wool we use SwissWool as insulation and Tasmanian merino for baselayers and other unique uses. Ortovox's wool program is more than the benefits of the fibers for performance purposes; it is a commitment to sustainable and traditional agricultural structures. In the case of SwissWool, Swiss sheep farmers were nearly driven out of business because second-shearing wool cannot be woven directly and therefore did not attain competitive pricing in global markets. It is, however, best used as a high-quality natural insulation material. The use of SwissWool in this way led to fair prices for farmers, stimulation of a regional economy and modern products with regional origins. Our merino wool comes from Tasmania, where Merino sheep have been bred for over 180 years. We source merino from four carefully selected farms that not only produce the



highest quality merino, but have earned recognition for sustainable and ecologically friendly farm management practices. We are proud to support both the Swiss and Tasman agricultural heritages.

You said Ortovox created the first Merino hard shell (possibly in the world) two years ago. Have you looked at what any of the other brands in the space are doing with Merino outerwear such as Icebreaker or Voormi? Of course we pay attention to what others are doing, but we remain focused on how we can produce the best functioning equipment in a responsible fashion. The Guardian Jacket and Pants, the only Merino lined hard shell on the market, exemplifies how Ortovox's unique and innovative approach to material combinations leads to better performance and design. The Guardian was in design for four years before coming to market. The result is a performance hard shell with the broadest comfort range on the market.

What do Americans still need to learn about the high alpine backcountry? How is the market and access different in Europe? The Ortovox mission has always been to help facilitate safe mountain adventures. There is a large gap in avalanche awareness and practice in the U.S. as well as in Europe. Ortovox has worked to close the gap in awareness by providing retailers with our Safety Academy Lab materials. These materials serve as a starting point in avalanche awareness and the beginning of the education process for backcountry customers. We've also partnered with and support AIARE and their education efforts as well as the goals of Project Zero.

What are a few of your personal favorite Mountainwear styles or technology innovations for Fall 2015 we should be looking forward to? I think

the U.S. market will be interested in seeing how Ortovox integrates wool in a way others are not. From insulation and hybrid construction to merino softshells, Ortovox offers a fresh perspective on the use of wool. It's much more than a next-to-skin material. Some of the styles we think will be best received in the U.S. market are:

Piz Palu - A hybrid touring jacket made for high-exertion cold-weather pursuits. The torso is Pertex Microlight insulated with SwissWool. High motion areas including armpits and sleeves are NatureTec Light, Ortovox's proprietary performance soft shell merino blend.

Lavarella / Piz Boe - Pertex Microlight and SwissWool combine for insulation on the coldest days. Stretch underarm Merino NatureTec Light panels for dexterity and breathability. Hooded design and pockets for quick access to accessories.

Piz Grisch / Piz Cartas - SwissWool insulated vest with reversible design for different colorways.

185 Rock-N-Wool base layers - Ortovox's full line of 185g/m2 merino base layers for both men and women in funky and bright color-blocking style. The line includes underwear, boxers and sport bras, cropped and full-length pants, short sleeve and long sleeve tops.

Pro Lobster Glove - The German-engineered luxury car for your hands. Merino lining for comfortable microclimate interior, high loft SwissWool insulation for warmth, Breathtex waterproof membrane, goat skin palms for dexterity and durability. ■

A high-action photograph of a male surfer in a black wetsuit riding a red surfboard on a blue wave. The surfer is looking towards the camera with a determined expression, his right arm raised. The water is splashing around him, creating a dynamic and energetic scene.

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INDUSTRY CALENDAR

Photo courtesy Costa

JUNE

- 2-4 FFANY
New York, NY
- 9-11 Licensing International Expo
Las Vegas, NV
- 12-14 SGB 2015 40Under40 Awards
Huntington Beach, CA
- 16-18 EORA Summer Early Show
Greenville, SC
- 16-18 EORA Summer Early Show
Somerset, NJ
- 16-18 MRA June Lansing Market
Lansing, MI
- 22-26 Fleet Feet Franchise Conference
Pittsburgh, PA
- 23-24 MRA June Cincinnati Market
Cincinnati, OH
- 23-25 EORA Summer Early Show
Manchester, NH
- 23-25 EORA Summer Early Show
Lakeland, FL
- 25-27 Sports, Inc. Athletics Show
San Antonio, TX
- 26-28 NRFtech 2015
Half Moon Bay, CA
- 28-29 NRF Retail Advocates Summit
Washington, DC
- 29-July 1 NBS Summer Athletic Market
San Antonio, TX
- 29-July 1 The Running & Fitness Event For Women
Chicago, IL

JULY

- 8-9 Agenda Long Beach
Long Beach, CA
- 10-12 ADA Spring Show
Minneapolis, MN
- 14-17 ASA-ICAST International Sport Fishing Expo
Orlando, FL
- 15-18 European Outdoor Trade Fair
Friedrichshafen, Germany
- 15-16 EORA Summer Market
Ellicott City, MD
- 15-16 EORA Summer Market
Manchester, NH
- 19-21 Project New York
New York, NY
- 20-21 Agenda New York
New York, NY

AUGUST

- 4-6 FFANY
New York, NY
- 5-7 BCA International Billiard & Home Recreation Expo
Las Vegas, NV
- 5-8 Outdoor Retailer Summer Market
Salt Lake City, UT
- 13-15 Sports, Inc. Outdoor Show
San Antonio, TX
- 16-18 EORA Greenville Summer Market
Greenville, SC
- 17-19 MAGIC Show
Las Vegas, NV
- 17-19 Agenda Las Vegas
Las Vegas, NV
- 20-23 NBS Fall Semi-Annual Market
Ft. Worth, TX
- 24-26 EORA Killington Primary Expo Show
Killington, VT
- 26-29 Eurobike
Friedrichshafen, Germany

SEPTEMBER

- 1-3 WDI Worldwide Fall Show
Reno, NV
- 8-10 SFIA Industry Leaders Summit
New Orleans, LA
- 10-12 Imprinted Sportswear Show
Orlando, FL
- 10-12 Surf Expo
Orlando, FL
- 16-18 Interbike International Trade Expo
Las Vegas, NV

OCTOBER

- 5-7 OIA Rendezvous
Seattle, WA
- 5-7 Shop.org Digital Summit 2015
Philadelphia, PA
- 8-9 The Retailing Summit
Dallas, TX
- 15-17 Imprinted Sportswear Show
Ft. Worth, TX
- 27-30 NASGW Annual Meeting & Expo
Reno, NV
- 29-31 ADA Fall Buying Show
Baltimore, MD

TRADE ASSOCIATIONS BUYING GROUPS

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Melbourne, FL 32935
t 321.254.0091
athleticdealersofamerica.com

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11 Mile Hill Road
Newtown, CT 06470
t 203.426.1320
nssf.org

National Sporting Goods Association
1601 Feehanville Drive I Suite 300
Mount Prospect, IL 60056
t 847.296.6742
nsga.org

Nation's Best Sports
4216 Hahn Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76117
t 817.788.0034
nbs.com

Outdoor Industry Association
4909 Pearl East Circle I Suite 300
Boulder, CO 80301
t 303.444.3353
outdoorindustry.org

Sports & Fitness Industry Association
8505 Fenton Street I Suite 211
Silver Spring, MD 20910
t 301.495.6321
sfia.org

Snow Sports Industries America
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snowsports.org

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t 413.739.7331
snowsportsmerchandising.com

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sportsinc.com

Sports Specialists Ltd.
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Victor, NY 14564
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sportsspecialistsltd.com

Tennis Industry Association
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Hilton Head Island, SC 29928
t 843.686.3036
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