

SGB WEEKLY

ISSUE 1526
JUNE 29, 2015

THE WEEKLY DIGITAL MAGAZINE FOR THE ACTIVE LIFESTYLE





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Photo courtesy Eagle Creek

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ON THE COVER: Photo courtesy Columbia



360fly added Olympic mountain biker Todd Wells to its roster of brand ambassadors.

360FLY TO CAPTURE OLYMPIC MOUNTAIN BIKING FOOTAGE

360fly Inc., the action sports camera company said to rival GoPro, recently added Olympic mountain biker Todd Wells to its roster of brand ambassadors. As the world's only single-lens camera with the ability to capture 360-degree video, footage taken from Wells' high-adrenaline rides will be used to expand 360fly's content library. The current library stream features motocross rides with Chad Reed, surfing with champion Carissa Moore, XC mountain biking, jetpack flying, Corvette racing, NASCAR driving, zip lining and other high-octane sports taken from the athlete's POV.

Wells was impressed with the capabilities of 360fly camera equipment as his more than two-decade career in adventure sports and 14-time National Championship run are reminiscent of the growth of action cameras in the industry.

"360fly is a game changer," Wells said. "Not merely for its video format, but also the mobile efficiency to capture, edit and share video on the fly... The things I can do with it on the bike are going to be awesome."

Wells became the first male rider to win three national titles in 2010. His titles spanned four cycling disciplines, including Mountain Bike Cross Country, Mountain Bike Short Track and Cyclo-cross. Currently, Wells participates in endurance mountain biking, taking home the gold in two notoriously grueling races, the Leadville 100 and La Ruts Conquistadores.

Wells will use the 360fly camera to capture his rides; which have only recently been refined by the company, and are not yet released to the public. Preorders can be made online at 360fly.com for \$399. The company focused their efforts to create a stitchless camera "that captures everything, in all directions, without limits," according to its official website. 360fly packs HD, 360-degree video into a lightweight, water resistant device smaller than a baseball.

The tech-driven 360fly Inc. has roots in robotics, where the company first started out of Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA. 360fly released its first consumer 360 lens for iPhone GoPano Micro and 360 video sharing service, GoPano.com, in 2011.

Other news for 360fly includes the appointment of Boost Mobile Founder Peter Adderton to CEO in May 2015, after serving the same position at Mandalay Digital. "What attracted me the most to 360fly was its ease of use," said Adderton. "It's single lens, single camera patented technology was unlike anything I have seen before. You can look ahead down the trail or spin around and see who is behind or beside you, because you're capturing everything to the horizon, in a completely interactive 360-degree video. Why be tied down to just one single angle when there's 359 more?"

In regards to bringing Wells to the 360fly team, Adderton said, "As an avid mountain bike rider myself, I have followed Todd's incredible career over the years. His ability to compete at a high level for so long is something this sport rarely sees."

Only a year ago, 360fly announced a growth capital investment from Catterton, a consumer-focused private equity firm, closing \$17.8 Million in Series B round financing, with Qualcomm Ventures joining. Catterton's other investments include, Flywheel Sports, CorePower Yoga, Kettle Foods, Odwalla and more.

The expansion of 360fly from business development to world-class athletes as brand ambassadors will service the company's mission to, "redefine video capture."

360fly also announced a partnership with Chip Ganassi Racing (CGR), silver medal Global Rally Cross winner of the 2015 X-Games and plans to sponsor CGR in one round of the NASCAR Sprint Series.



MSR WATER LAB

PRODUCES MILITARY-GRADE PORTABLE WATER PURIFIER

Next month at Outdoor Retailer Summer Market, Seattle-based legacy outdoor brand MSR is debuting what it is calling the world's most advanced portable water purifier, the Guardian, \$350.

In 2009, the U.S. military selected MSR and its bio safety Level II water lab to create a device capable of keeping its service members safe from waterborne illnesses. Five and half years of R&D, engineering and funding later, MSR is unveiling the solution.

Built not just for military but now available for international travelers, outdoor recreationalists and emergency preparedness, the microbiological purifier is capable of transforming the world's most challenging water, puddles and other unsavory sources into clean, microbiologically safe, drinkable water.

Designed for U.S. military field personnel, the Guardian meets NSF Protocol P248, the U.S. military standard for removing viruses, bacteria and protozoa in water abundant with silt and particulates. Rugged design withstands heat up to 160°F, freezing temperatures, drops of up to 6 feet, and up to 300 pounds of force.

"The MSR Guardian is the safest, easiest way to purify water anywhere on earth," said Chris Barchet, MSR Hydration and Winter Products category director. "The project was funded by the U.S. military and has been in development for over five years. Designed meet the needs of a fire team, a group of 4-5 soldiers, the Guardian delivers water at 2.5 liters per minute for over 10,000 liters. Yes, we tested it. Users love the patent-pending self-cleaning system which means you never need to scrub or backflush the filter cartridge."

The pump physically removes viruses, protozoa, bacteria and particulates at a surprising 2.5 liters per minute - with no chemicals, UV light, pre-filtering, or waiting - for up to 10,000+ liters. Unlike conventional hollow-fiber technology, MSR's medical/military-grade fibers block even the tiniest waterborn pathogens from "the world's worst water sources."

Recreational users no longer need to be intimidated by field maintenance, product vulnerabilities and user error thanks to its patent-pending, self-cleaning design. It will never require users to back flush or to scrub filters.

MSR's acclaimed in-house microbiology lab for water testing gives the company an advantage when it comes to knowledge, quality and reliability in water purification. The 1,336-square-foot lab has an EPA-registered bio safety Level II certification and is operated by five scientists who have more than 55 combined years of water treatment experience, including hands-on research with more than 65 different water treatment technologies currently available.

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RinseKit Portable Shower System offers a quick freshwater spray-down before packing up to drive home.

RINSEKIT BRINGS PRESSURIZED WATER INTO THE FIELD

“RinseKit was created because it was something that I needed,” said Chris Crawford, inventor of the new, portable, pressurized washer that will debut to the outdoor industry in August.

Crawford created RinseKit as a multiuse product for surfing, mountain biking, dirt biking, scuba diving, shore fishing, spearfishing, lobster diving, hunting and camping, as a way to clean up the sweat and grime.

“I’ve always tried to make it a point in my life to arrange my career around my lifestyle,” said Crawford, a self-proclaimed outdoorsman.

Crawford took his frustration with the lack of shower and cleanup options available on the market and invented his own solution. He credits the invention to his experience working in pool service, design and construction in 2003, where he learned about hydraulics and systems of storing pressurized water.

The first RinseKit model was created from PVC pipes and miscellaneous parts found in Crawford’s pile of pool service equipment. This prototype evolved into the compact shower/clean up system sold today by Crawford’s company OutSol, founded in 2012. “From day one we knew that RinseKit could be a great starting point but more ideas could come to life. We came up with the concept of OutSol (outdoor solutions) so we would have a way to launch other ideas even if they had nothing to do with RinseKit,” said Crawford in an interview with SGB. “I think it’s always important to think several steps ahead and make sure you’re not limiting yourself when establishing a brand.”

Before taking RinseKit to production, Crawford worked through many variations of design, only showing the prototypes to family members. Once he was confident with the product, it was time to source funding.

“I had a pool service customer that had become a good friend, and I knew he was an investor in the stock market. He ended up investing and helped me get the company started. We used the money to get IP and set up an assembly line in my garage.” The company sold roughly 500 RinseKits from garage production alone. Crawford and his wife sold their pool company and enlisted financial support from friends and family to continue growing the business. The final step was speaking to investors. “This phase brings a whole new type of fear to your life, the fear of someone stealing your idea,” Crawford said. “I remember my attorney telling me that it costs around \$500,000 to try and protect a patent in court.” So far, RinseKit has not faced any issues.

Crawford’s system works by connecting the RinseKit hose to an outside water spigot and filling the eon two-gallon pressure container. RinseKit says the process takes less than half a minute. Water can then be stored and transported from the eon pressure chamber - a box the size of a travel carry-on. The transportable eon chamber holds pressure for two months, at 65 psi (pounds per square inch), or the same pressure as a standard home shower. Crawford’s design is patented and, “can be filled with hot or cold water an infinite number of times,” the website says.

No batteries or charging methods are needed, since water pressure is generated while RinseKit is being filled. Ordinary household spigots work best; however, filling the eon with still water isn’t an option since the product runs on spigot pressure. Crawford is currently working on the newest RinseKit product, the Field Fill Kit, which he hopes will pressurize still water using a regular bike pump.

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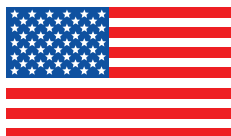
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Photo courtesy Vans.

GIVING BACK

VANS HOLDS SIXTH ANNUAL VANS CUSTOM CULTURE COMPETITION

Vans named Carlsbad High School of Carlsbad, CA as grand-prize winner of the sixth annual Vans Custom Culture design competition and awarded a \$50,000 donation toward the school's arts education program.

By Thomas J. Ryan

At the final event held on June 9 at Industria Superstudios in New York City, a panel of notable judges including actress Victoria Justice, celebrity baker Amirah Kassem, musician Bea Miller, artist and author Dallas Clayton and Vans professional surfer Joel Tudor selected the winning custom Vans shoe designs among a talented group of top five finalist schools. For the remaining finalists – Circleville High School (Circleville, OH), Foothill High School (Henderson, NV), McCracken County High (Paducah, KY) and Parker High School (Parker, SD) – Vans awarded each with \$4,000 toward their arts programs.

Each year over the last six years, Custom Culture has challenged high school students to create their own unique pairs of Vans for a chance to fund art education at their school. Nearly 3,000 high schools – the most in competition history – participated in this year's event, designing four pairs of blank Vans based on four themes: Action Sports, Art, Music and Local Flavor. The winning design has the opportunity to be produced and sold in select Vans retail stores, as well as online at Vans.com.

"The Vans Custom Culture design competition started out very organically with one of our sales reps who had a friend who was an art teacher at one school," said Kevin Bailey, VF Action Sports Coalition and Vans President, in an interview with SGB at the event. "The next year it quickly grew to 300 and now we're at nearly 3,000."

Bailey said such events help Vans connect with "youth culture," which he says has been the key to recent success. He said the company began its recent turnaround in 2002 by refocusing back on classic footwear to reestablish the brand with its core skate audience. But Vans management at the team in the early 2000s also recognized that the reason skateboarders were choosing Vans was because the brand was "about expressing themselves creatively." That recognition helped Vans reach a wider audience of kids looking to find themselves in their transformative teen and college years.

"We opened up the universe a little more," said Bailey. "Skateboard is the center of the universe but the bigger universe is skate culture."

Closely related to the program was the launch, in 2004, of a "Customs"



Award-winning custom shoe designs



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feature on Vans' website, whereby customers could log on and design their own pair of Vans slip-ons, mid-cuts or high-tops.

Bailey said art has become an integral part of a teenager's life. "Everyone has a smartphone," he said. "Everyone is on Instagram. So everybody's becoming an art photographer. Art in our mind is important and trying to encourage people to participate in the creative arts, whatever it may be, is important. These are our shoes designers of the future."

Indeed, Bailey said the major payoff of the Vans Custom Culture program is raising awareness for funding in arts education. Over all the years, the program has involved 91,494 students across 5,082 schools, raising \$432,000 for the arts.

Said Bailey, "With arts education budgets continuing to suffer across the nation, Vans is thrilled to provide a platform to help talented youth find their creative voice and express themselves through art and design. Vans hopes that Custom Culture will inspire others to take up the cause of underfunding of public school arts education and further provide opportunities for creative expression."

Vans Custom Culture partners Truth and Journeys also provided participating schools with an opportunity to raise funds for their art programs. Journeys selected the display that best represents the "local flavor" theme from the top five finalists.

James Estepa, President & CEO, Genesco Retail Group, which includes Journeys, told SGB at the event that Journeys has supported the Vans Custom Culture program for the past four years.

"It's an opportunity to give back to the local high school and support art programs have lost funding over the years as well as the music programs," said Estepa. "Supporting music and arts in high school is really a top priority for Journeys. It's been a part of our core competency and core values for years."

The nation's most successful and longest running youth smoking prevention campaign, Truth, inspired the 50 semi-finalists with the fact that in 2014, only eight percent of teens still smoked. That's down from 23 percent in 2000. Truth challenged the students to customize a skate deck by imagining what it looks like when smoking is finished for good. Carlsbad High School from Carlsbad, CA won \$10,000 and \$15,000 from Truth and Journeys, respectively, to benefit its arts education program. ■

TECHNOLOGY

Fitmoo: The Next-Generation Fitness Community

How an internet start-up plans to organize, unite and boost the fitness industry.

By Jahla Seppanen

Photo courtesy Fitmoo

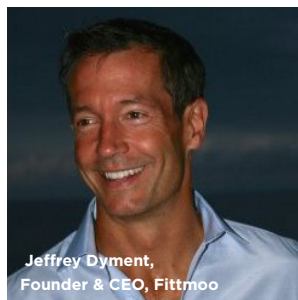
Fitmoo, Inc., out of New York City, NY, launched what it believes will be a revolutionary social commerce platform, created to organize, aggregate and monetize the scattered resources of the fitness community.

Built on top of a social framework inclusive to everything from Map-MyRun, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Google and other social and fitness tracking apps, Fitmoo considers itself a new breed of online distribution.

"We're a technology platform," said Jeffrey Dymant, founder and CEO at Fitmoo, in an interview with SGB. "Integration of other social media into Fitmoo is one of our core objectives."

Fitmoo thereby places itself at the starting point of one's fitness journey, recording, tracking and sharing progress regardless of the hardware being used. In uniting the fragmented accounts, sites and presences of the social fitness journey, enthusiasts in any category of sport are able to build community and document their passion using Fitmoo.

Dymant said he is incorporating individual's fitness passions into the ethos of Fitmoo. The start-up capitalizes on the pure love of sport with an endorsement feature - allowing any person to become an "Influencer" on the site. "Anyone can come to the site, for free, and instantly become an affiliate and representative of anything and everything on the platform," said Dymant.



An Influencer can affect anywhere from two people to 2 million, in a referral-type process where inspiring others to purchase a certain piece of gear or enroll at a particular gym directly remunerates a portion of earnings from the retailer and into the Influencer's bank account. Athletes without endorsement deals can turn their following into a business.

Influencers with large social followings become Fitmoo Ambassadors, like CrossFit athlete Christmas Abbot, whose exclusive Fitmoo post garnered 3,500 new registers, 14,000 site visitors and over 50 t-shirts sold over the span of 12 hours.

The process works the same for everyday athletes. Dymant gave the example, "If members are able to bring one more person to a class, that is significant to the profits of a whole gym. Then multiply that times five million and you have something." The idea is that an individual's enthusiasm can boost overall business for everyone.

Although Fitmoo is currently in a phase-one launch, after two years of planning and five months of beta testing, the platform plans on evolving into a social networking, shopping, distributing and selling space. The company hopes to reach 500,000 registers by September 30, 2015.

Fitmoo hopes its "next-generation" social distribution strategy will begin to correct discrepancies blocking the current system of goods and services distribution from reaching new customers and thriving to its full potential. According to Dymant, the pre-Fitmoo method of delivering fitness goods and services has left gaps negatively impacting the industry and its users. Everyone from the 5 a.m. cycle instructor to the small run specialty storeowner suffers under the current model, the company asserts.

Dyment said the existing model results in unsold inventory, unnecessary expense and limited exposure to new customers. Examples cited include: the estimated \$5.8 billion left on the table annually from unsold spots in fitness classes, the estimated \$7.3 billion spent on wholesale distribution of fitness apparel, gear and products, and the \$19.66 billion turned over every year of gym memberships. Dyment hopes Fitmoo will realign these discrepancies for both big and small retailers, events, gyms and athletes.

"The fitness industry is littered with small players with limited resources," Dyment said. "There are 200,000 fitness classes going on today, right now, and 90 percent are not filled."

"It is very expensive to target the market, either through retail or direct-to-consumer services," Dyment said. "I've got a running magazine in front of me. At least 60 percent of this magazine is advertising." Add to the marketing muddle Facebook promotions, boosts, Google ads, traditional marketing and YouTube ads, and you've got a lot of targeting going on at once, he explained.

"It's all guesswork at the end of the day," Dyment said. "You're competing for eyeballs from a thousand different angles to make a purchasing decision." Dyment's thought process: Aggregate the clutter and even the field. "Fitmoo is simply connecting everyone with a technology platform that allows connections to result in sales and earnings."

For the hundreds of thousands of fitness instructors, athletes, stores and average Joe's and Jane's with a passion for a particular apparel brand, nutrition product or activity, Fitmoo provides a platform to engage and grow. "Commerce is front and central," Dyment continued. The idea behind Fitmoo is democratization of distribution. Fitness brands can distribute through their most loyal customers while social influencers engage and activate their networks in new ways.

The platform itself, however, is brand-neutral. "Directly and through



Welcome to Fitmoo, your all-in-one fitness social platform and marketplace. Use the links on this page to learn more or click here to login and get started building your profile whether you are activating your fitness lifestyle or taking it to the next level.



social influencers, fitness brands and providers can target and incentivize without having to build elaborate or expensive technology solutions themselves," concluded Dyment.

The success of Fitmoo's multi-level social platform will depend on a "see-saw strategy" where Dyment and his team increase registered users and merchants at an even, leveled pace. As with all social media platforms, users pick and choose their level of involvement based on usability and interface, and the best way to judge Fitmoo is to try it.

Anyone can create a free Fitmoo login by visiting the site or by downloading the Fitmoo app from the AppStore or GooglePlay. Merchants can also apply to sell on Fitmoo by going to the site. ■

DISCOVER

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SSI DATA

SportsScanInfo Data Dive

Foot Care and Shoe Care Essentials

While much of the attention at retail goes to the shoe wall, several thriving complementary categories are helping consumers make their footwear last longer, look better and even just work.

On the retailer side of the equation, foot care and shoe care essentials continue to help build margins and improve the bottom line as retailers stress with their staffs the importance of these categories with every footwear sale.

The foot care and shoe care essentials category, as tracked by leading active lifestyle industry information firm, The SportsOneSource Group, includes a host of niche items such as insoles, rain/water repellants, shoe liners, traction aids and heel cups, among others.

The largest segment of this business by a wide margin is Insoles, which accounts for a little more than half of dollar sales in the Foot Care and Shoe Care Essentials category, according to retail point-of-sale data compiled by SportScanInfo (SSI Data), which is managed by The SportsOneSource Group. Shoe Care & Cleaners comes in second, at about 20 percent of sales in the Foot Care and Shoe Care Essentials category; followed by shoe laces, about 8 percent; and Rain/Water Repellents and Traction Aids, which each contribute around 5 percent of sales to the Foot Care and Shoe Care Essentials business.

The Insoles business grew approximately 8 percent in Fiscal 2014 but is only up less than 0.5 percent in the Fiscal Year-to-Date period through May 23 (Fiscal YTD), according to the SSI Data. With a variety of newer niche models designed to fit certain foot types as well as to address the specific needs of unique sports and activities, the category has been helped over the years by steadily rising average selling prices.

The flattish growth in the Fiscal YTD period was impacted by a rare category decline seen in both January and February that can be traced to this year's extended winter. Insoles sales peak in March just as runners start hitting the road and are quieter during the chillier months when many runners hibernate. Sales also suffer as consumers shift to sandals in the summer.

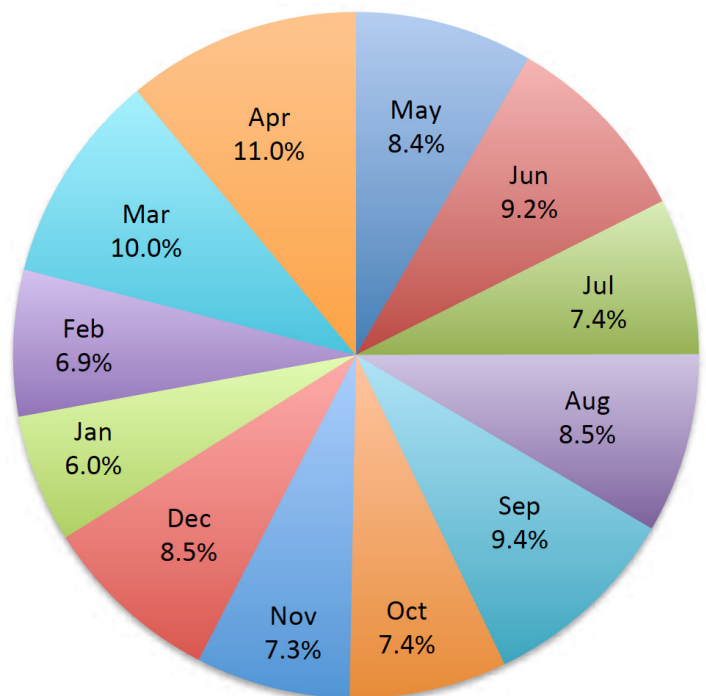
The market share leader in Insoles is Sof Sole, which controls over 40 percent of the category in the channels tracked in the SSI Data*. Superfeet, with some of its models such as Green and Orange commanding a premium sticker price, is the second-largest insole brand and tends to dominate in the specialty retailer channels, according to the SSI Data. Spenco is a strong third.

By channel, the biggest growth in Insoles last year came via the Internet (+27 percent) and Family Footwear (+31 percent). The Fiscal YTD growth has been boosted by double-digit increases at Running Specialty retailers (RSRs), Chain Specialty retailers and the Family Footwear channel.

"The mid-teens growth seen in the insoles is the running specialty channel is the most intriguing piece in the Fiscal YTD story," offered Andy Annunziata, VP, retail solutions at The SportsOneSource Group. "The RSR channel saw Running Footwear sales fall in double-digits for the 16-week period through May 23 but still posted growth of nearly 15 percent in insoles. The consumer is apparently willing to purchase their shoes on the Internet but must still see the need to get fitted properly for their insoles."

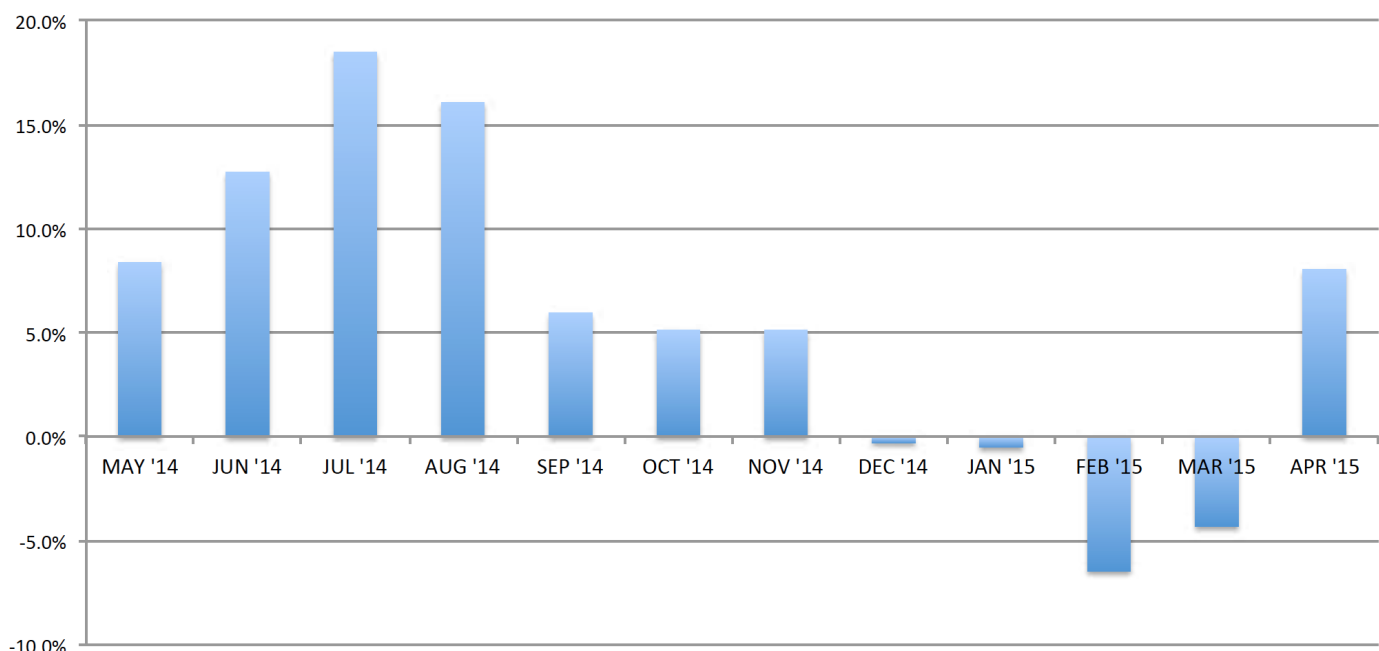
The broad Athletic Specialty/Sporting Goods retail segment (including Athletic Specialty, Full-Line Sporting Goods and Big-Box Outdoor) dominates sales in the insoles category, accounting for about two-thirds of sales. The segment is responsible for the dismal start to the 2015 fiscal year, with sales down in the mid-single-digits. (See Chart.)

AVERAGE MONTHLY SHARE OF SALES* INSOLES



*Three-Year Average Share
Source: SSI Data

YEAR-OVER-YEAR MONTHLY SALES VARIANCE INSOLES



Source: SSI Data



Another segment that posted strong growth last year in the Foot Care and Shoe Care Essentials category is Shoe Care & Cleaners, which grew more than 25 percent in Fiscal 2014 but is also flat for the Fiscal YTD period.

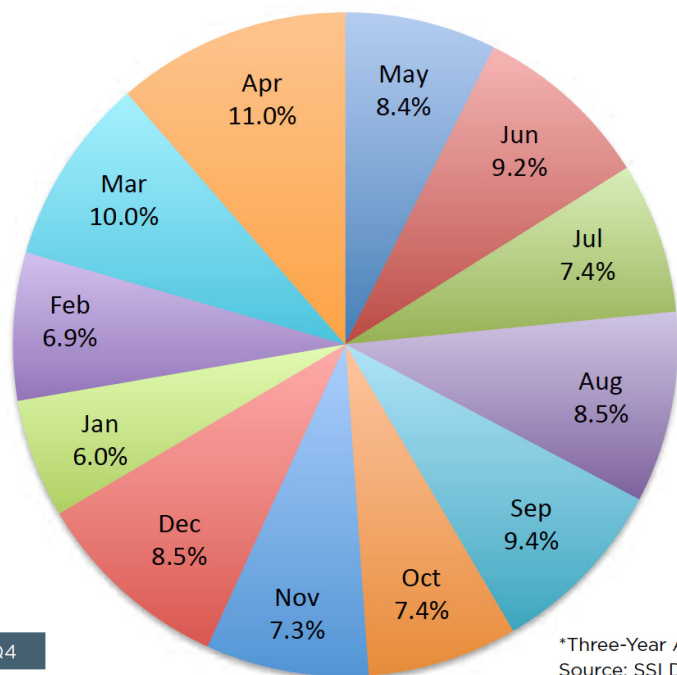
“The Shoe Care & Cleaners category has benefited from the casualization of America with many consumers now wearing Casual Athletic footwear and Casual Outdoor shoes for social, work and even more formal occasions,” explained Annunziata. “Many of the products remove dirt and stains from athletic shoes with a few specializing on water-based or oil-based stains and some focusing on treatments such as suedes, nubucks or real or fake leather.”

The category also includes staples for waterproofing and other protection, conditioning treatments and controlling foot odor. But the sub-category driving the Shoe Care & Cleaners business recently has been Shoe Cleaners, followed by Disinfectant and then Polish.

Sof Sole again dominates the category with its share growing significantly after it acquired Penguin Brands in 2013, according to the SSI Data*. Kiwi is the second largest seller in the category with Hickory Brands coming in third.

Seasonally, sales of Shoe Care & Cleaners are fairly steady throughout the year although greater consumer demand can be found during the summer and fall months. The Athletic Specialty/Sporting Goods channel again dominates the business with Discount Stores coming in second and Family Footwear, third in the channels tracked in the SSI Data.

AVERAGE MONTHLY SHARE OF SALES* SHOE CARE & CLEANERS



*Three-Year Average Share
Source: SSI Data

FOOT CARE AND SHOE CARE ESSENTIALS Category Share by Quarter*

	FY Q1	FY Q2	FY Q3	FY Q4
Insoles	54.0%	57.0%	52.3%	42.7%
Shoe Care and Cleaners	17.5%	22.1%	23.2%	17.8%
Shoe Laces	7.1%	8.4%	8.9%	6.7%
Rain/Water Repellants	5.7%	3.3%	4.5%	8.0%
Heel Cups	1.8%	2.0%	2.0%	1.5%
Traction Aids	4.1%	0.6%	1.3%	13.2%
Other Footwear Essentials	9.9%	6.7%	7.9%	10.1%

* Category as Percent of Overall Essentials Business
Source: SSI Data

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The Traction Aids category jumped 36 percent from 2013 versus 2012, but saw a modest decline last year as a warm December crushed sales in the critical gift-giving season.

The leader in the space is Yaktrax, a brand that is also owned by Implus, the parent of Sof Sole. Kahtoola came in second. Not surprisingly, the traction category peaks during the icy months. December accounts for about one-third of sales with most of the rest conducted in November as well as January and February.

“The Traction Aids sub-category differs from insoles and shoe care in that nearly half of its sales are done in Chain Specialty,” observed Annunziata. The Chain Specialty channel includes retailers with more than 15 storefronts that sell footwear, apparel and hardgoods specific to a particular market such as footwear, outdoor, sportsman's or running. The Internet has also emerged to become a major seller in the Traction Aids category as well. “We find the Internet posting solid growth in categories, brands or products that are not widely distributed,” continued Annunziata. “This may indicate an opportunity for brick & mortar retailers that do not currently carry the category.”

As specialty retailers continue to have issues this spring and summer with performance running and outdoor footwear sales an additional investment in the Essentials business could be a

TRACTION AIDS
Sales Share by Quarter by Channel*

	FY Q1	FY Q2	FY Q3	FY Q4
Total Market	20.0%	2.7%	6.8%	70.5%
Outdoor Specialty	12.7%	3.2%	10.2%	73.8%
Run Specialty	39.2%	0.6%	0.6%	59.6%
Chain Specialty	22.0%	2.1%	6.4%	69.5%
Internet	20.7%	4.6%	7.9%	66.8%
Ath. Specialty/Sporting Goods	15.1%	1.5%	5.1%	78.3%
Discount/Mass	23.7%	20.2%	24.6%	31.4%

* Quarterly Contribution of Full-Year Sales by Channel
Source: SSI Data

good move. There are more options than ever to supplement fall/winter boots sales with add-on items like traction aids and retailers no longer have to rely on just the socks category for incremental sales volume. ■

SSI Data does not currently project sales or market share for Walmart, Kmart, Target, Better Department Stores or Footwear Specialty.

A man with a beard and dark hair, wearing a teal t-shirt and black climbing gloves, is climbing a thick rope. He is smiling and looking up. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with dry grass and trees.

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VENDOR PROFILE

EAGLE CREEK TURNS 40

The mom-and-pop SoCal pioneer of adventure travel luggage reflects on modest beginnings and joining the ranks of one of the outdoor-industry powerhouses.

By Jahla Seppanen



The founders of Eagle Creek - Steve and Nona Barker - have a lot to celebrate this summer. This year marks the 40th anniversary since the couple first started Eagle Creek in the San Jacinto Mountains of Southern California, where they built and tested backpacks by hand.

"It seems like a lifetime ago that Nona and I started building packs," said Steve Barker. "Ironically, we really didn't have a long-term vision for travel when we started Eagle Creek."



Steve and Nora Barker founders of Eagle Creek in Fairbanks Alaska

Small Beginnings

Eagle Creek created the category of "adventure travel gear" five years after the start of their journey in the luggage industry. By then it was 1980 and the first travel-specific backpack was created and offered to consumers.

"We had to work really hard to get others to believe in two young people, in the future of travel as a category, and our mission of making products that make people happy," said Steve. "Sourcing was a big challenge, as there was no one place to go to for fabrics, webbing, buckles... Back then, there was no real backpacking industry yet."

Jump forward two years to 1982 and Eagle Creek saw the need for organizational panels in backpacks, and double-needle seam stitching to amp product durability. Steve reminisced, "We used upholstery fabrics, shoes findings, sailcloth, anything we could find that would allow us to build the designs we wanted with the quality we needed."

Another two years (1984) and Eagle Creek unveiled a security category called, The Undercover, consisting of money belts and neck wallets designed to keep valuables safe.

In 1989 and 1991 the company focused on sharing tips and solutions to travel-related problems, and began advocating "Responsible Travel" to encourage globetrotters to support local economies and environmental initiatives while en-route.

Into the 90s, Eagle Creek spearheaded the first backpack on wheels, The Switchback, which truly revolutionized travel. Eagle Creek's updated Switchback Max ES with a zip-off daypack was awarded 2015 Gear of the Year by *Outside Magazine*.

Eagle Creek's consistent trend of travel gear innovation paired perfectly with the soaring popularity of the global adventure travel market. According to an August 2013 survey conducted in partnership with The Adventure Travel Trade Association and George Washington University, 26 percent of international travelers engage in adventure travel activities. The survey measured soft and hard adventure travel growth rates from 2009-2012, finding hard adventure increased 62 percent each year for all regions and 17percent in soft adventure travel. These numbers are

astounding when compared to the 4 percent growth in mass travel during that time. The 2013 ATTA study concluded the adventure travel market is a \$263 billion industry.

Joining the Powerhouse

In light of modest expectations, Eagle Creek withstood the test of nearly half a century, aided by its large-scale acquisition in January 2007 by VF Outdoor Inc., a subsidiary of VF Corporation, putting the mom-and-pop shop next to companies like The North Face, Vans, JanSport, Reef, Lucy, Timberland and SmartWool.

"Our outdoor brands all share several key attributes," said Dave Gatto, president of VF Outdoor at the time of the acquisition. "They are managed by experienced leaders supported by talented associates, they are authentic brands that have global appeal within their target markets, and they are growing both domestically and internationally."

Roger Spatz, current president at Eagle Creek and president at the time of the 2007 acquisition, said in an interview with SGB that, "the sale of the brand to VF was not due to a distressed situation. Eagle Creek was purchased at a point of strength that could be accelerated with greater resources."

Spatz added, "VF is really good about letting its brands figure out their path to growth. They do not dictate how our brand is run, but instead focus on providing stable platforms."

Another arena where Eagle Creek has benefited from being added to VF's "A-List brands," as Spatz referred to the company, is in leveraging the corporation's Sustainability and Responsible Sourcing. "VF's size and high-level commitment to these initiatives creates significant influence in the market. At Eagle Creek, we see this as a significant point of alignment with our heritage and DNA," said Spatz.



Into the Future

Today Eagle Creek keeps its sights on outfitting the world traveler, with the ongoing goal of combining travel functionality with high quality product standards.

"In those first years we were innovating before innovation became a buzzword," said Steve. "We were

simply looking for new solutions that weren't out there yet. From the very beginning we focused on function, quality and product longevity, and while we'd love for everyone to buy more Eagle Creek bags, we love seeing people still walking around with styles that are 15 to 20 years old."

Spatz added, "40 years spent focusing on the travel needs of consumers gives us special insight and depth of understanding." Looking to the next 40 years, Eagle Creek will dedicate energy to research and development for product design, new technologies and heightened durability and versatility for existing and new consumers.

The likely result will be an expansion of their product line. More importantly, Spatz said, "We envision an evolution of consciousness, to where collecting experiences outweighs collecting material things." ■



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Columbia Looks to Reinvent Rainwear

By Thomas J. Ryan

For Spring 2016, Columbia Sportswear is introducing OutDry Extreme, which it touts as the biggest breakthrough in the rainwear category since Gore-Tex introduced conventional waterproof breathable construction more than 40 years ago.

In an interview at its New York City showroom, Blaine Perrin, director of product marketing for Columbia, said OutDry Extreme basically brings OutDry, which has been used in footwear and gloves, to rainwear – ultimately bringing both protection and breathability to the category.

OutDry features a patented lamination process that bonds a waterproof membrane directly to the garment's highly breathable outermost layer. Water is sealed out at every entry point, giving OutDry gear a superior fit that breathes and insulates better. The technology promises to make up for the shortfalls of traditional bootie construction, in which water and debris often stagnate between layers, making the shoe or garment feel cold and heavy.

But bringing OutDry to rainwear proved to be a challenge. Overall, Perrin noted that technology advancements have moved much slower in rainwear than outerwear, footwear and other outdoor categories.

The rainwear category started nearly 200 years ago with the invention of the rubber rain suit. Said Perrin, “The main benefit was they keep you dry in a pretty harsh environment. But the obvious downside was that it was heavy, un-breathable and uncomfortable.”

The next big innovation came in 1969 when Gore-Tex ushered in waterproof, breathable jackets. Columbia was the first brand to use Gore-Tex in a parka in 1975. In the decades since this introduction, many new membrane technologies have been introduced by various brands, but fundamentally the conventional waterproof breathable construction approach hasn't changed.

The traditional approach to waterproof breathable shells is to take a thin waterproof membrane, cover it with a durable fabric treated with DWR (Durable Water Repellent), and line it with another fabric next to skin. Layers of fabric sandwich the waterproof membrane for durability and for comfort.

The downside to typical waterproof products is that light abrasions, dirt, and even body oils degrade the DWR, especially when the jacket is wet. The DWR coating must be maintained and retreated. The other issue is that, once wetted out, the multilayered approach to rainwear restricts breathability and becomes clammy.

The brand a few years ago brought some of its own innovation to the rainwear category with Omni-Dry. While it



Men's OutDry EX Diamond Shell



Men's OutDry EX Platinum Shell



Women's OutDry EX Gold Trench

was lightweight, Omni-Dry still used the traditional construction method (membrane on the inside, protective textile on the outside) for waterproof breathability. With Outdoor Extreme, a patent-pending technology, the breakthrough for Columbia's PIT (Performance Innovation Team) was moving beyond thinking about the membrane and focusing on construction, said Perrin.

The waterproof membrane is moved to the outside of the jacket to actively repel moisture and rain. The big benefit of Outdoor Extreme, according to Perrin, is that by putting an abrasion-resistant membrane on the outside where it's in contact with the rain, there is virtually no risk of the jacket "wetting out" like others do when their DWR wears off, noted Perrin.

But the big surprise to Columbia's various testers is that the jacket is also highly breathable.

Columbia has over 600 "beta testers" – including guides, professional outdoors people, and ordinary outdoor enthusiasts - across the world that test product. OutDry Extreme was wear-tested over the last six months by about 150 of them, including testers in New Zealand, across parts of Europe and the U.S. A major focus was having employees who work at Washington's Olympic National Forest, which receives more than 200 inches of rain a year, test product. Said Perrin, "They have zero tolerance for stuff that doesn't work."

Perrin said observing the seam taping and other features reminded many of the testers of early un-breathable rubber rain jackets. OutDry Extreme is highly breathable thanks to microscopic perforations in the membrane that allow moisture to escape. The interior lining is a wicking textile that enables even more breathability and next-to-skin comfort, as opposed to a plastic-feel next to skin. Said Perrin, "They all felt they were going to get hot and clammy but were truly surprised."

The OutDry Extreme range will all be branded by Columbia's Titanium logo and will be featured across Columbia's three performance tiers: Gold, Platinum and Diamond. The collection features 19 styles of jackets and pants in several colors, priced from \$150 to \$400.

The collection will sit under the OutDry family because of its focus on waterproof. Said Perrin, "We now have a full head-to-toe OutDry story, which we think will hopefully lift all boats and help OutDry be seen even more as a premium waterproof technology." ■



Men's OutDry EX Platinum Pant

INDUSTRY CALENDAR

JUNE

- 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

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