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THE EVOLUTION OF THE MESSAGE BALL

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CEO
Group Publisher
James Hartford
jhartford@sportsonesource.com
303.578.7004

Managing Editor
Aaron H. Bible
ahbible@sportsonesource.com
303.578.7017

Senior Business Editor
Thomas J. Ryan
tryan@sportsonesource.com
917.375.4699

Creative Director
Teresa Hartford
teresa@sportsonesource.com

Senior Graphic Designer
Péju Alawusa
peju@sportsonesource.com

Advertising Sales
Buz Keenan
Northeast
buz@sportsonesource.com
201.887.5112

Katie O'Donohue
Southeast | Midwest
katieo@sportsonesource.com
828.244.3043

Circulation & Subscriptions
admin@sportsonesource.com
303.997.7302

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Photo courtesy Smartwool

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Ralph Lauren Biometric Fitness Shirt
Photo courtesy Ralph Lauren

RALPH LAUREN LAUNCHES BIOMETRIC FITNESS SHIRT

In its first plunge into wearable technology, Ralph Lauren Corp. launched the PoloTech smartshirt, which collects a range of data including the wearer's heart rate and number of calories burned, to support training efforts.

The introduction of the PoloTech shirt coincides with the inaugural collection of an athletic-focused, broader Polo Sport brand. As its halo product, PoloTech intersects performance technology and lifestyle fashion.

The PoloTech launch also included the introduction of an adaptive workout app that uses detailed data to tailor individualized training.

"The Ralph Lauren PoloTech shirt will change the way you look at fashion and apparel. It will give you knowledge you can use to lead a better life," said David Lauren, EVP of global advertising, marketing and corporate communications. "This is a bridge between technology, fitness and style that approaches wellness and well-being in comprehensive and complementary ways. It will touch many parts of your life."

Silver fibers with sensory receivers woven directly into the fabric track a range of stats, including heart rate and variability, breathing depth and recovery, intensity of movement, energy output and stress levels, steps taken and calories burned. A "black box" collects and processes the information using five connectors and contains a 3D accelerometer that captures intensity of movement based on three g-force measurements.

PoloTech's "second-skin" fabric streams information directly to an iPhone, iWatch or iPod Touch and the app reacts based on that immediate data. The smartshirt was developed in partnership with proprietary technology from Canadian-based OMSignal. The PoloTech app workout routines were devised by Galvanized, the health and fitness media company founded by David Zincenko.

The unique bio- and psychometrics inform a series of adaptive video workouts, during which the user's performance in one exercise determines the intensity of the next, resulting in more than 10,000 possible combinations to create an optimal customized workout. The app also offers live fitness monitoring, reporting, and a unique "push rate" - rating exertion, power and effort. There are three categories of workouts customized for users in real time:

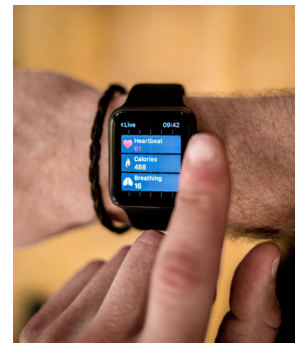
- Cardio: works core, burns fat and amps power
- Strength: puts focus on chest, back, legs, shoulders, triceps and biceps
- Agility: designed to maximize quickness, precision and speed

"The PoloTech shirt points the way to the next generation of activewear. Going beyond the digital-only experience of today's fitness platforms, it is the first product to bring advanced apparel technology and digital fitness technology together into one smart, connected apparel product," said Stéphane Marceau, CEO, OMSignal.

The technology was tested at the 2014 US Open, where Ralph Lauren acted as Official Outfitter. Top-ranked college players making their debut at the tennis event, as well as an elite squad of official ball persons, were measured for relative fitness, heart rate, recovery, time spent in aerobic and anaerobic zones, calories and distance. At this year's Open, Ralph Lauren will be hosting live demonstrations on site at the Polo Ralph Lauren store located on the lower level of Louis Armstrong Stadium. Smartshirts will be worn by live models in the window of the store with real-time biometrics displayed on an oversized screen showcasing the shirt's capabilities.



Photos courtesy Ralph Lauren



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PEARL IZUMI

ENDURE & ENJOY MOVEMENT
TAKES BACK THE SPORT



Photo courtesy Pearl Izumi

Pearl Izumi officially announced its Endure & Enjoy brand movement last week, created as a reminder for cyclists, runners and triathletes to work hard and to love the sports they practice. Although Pearl is known to serve the needs of core cyclists, the new push is made to be more inclusive of different athletes.

"The whole message of endure and enjoy, it doesn't matter if you're a hardcore athlete, we just want our athletes to love the sport and love the brand," said Pearl Izumi Product Line Manager for Run Apparel Kelly Davidson. "It's our opportunity for people to know what we stand for. People really get what Endure and Enjoy means."

Pearl Izumi said that while sport is a sanctuary for anyone and everyone who wants to sweat, sacrifice and suffer their way through, "To an extent, endurance sports have lost their way and Endure & Enjoy wants to remind people what it is all really about."

In late August, Pearl Izumi brought the new campaign to the USA Pro Cycling Challenge (USPCC) in Colorado. The brand was the official apparel merchandiser of the race and saw the event as the ideal time to launch the platform to not only athletes but enthusiastic USPCC audiences.

Pearl Izumi will bring Endure & Enjoy to life through a series of traditional media outlets, on-site grassroots marketing and social media activation. Its first ad, called "Would You Still Do It?" aired during the USPCC week between the live telecast.

Endure & Enjoy also includes an athlete "Pact," which functions as a type of salute and personal pledge. Part of the Pact reads, "I will endure. I will enjoy. I shall only partake in this crazy sport I love, because I love it. And I will quit when I quit loving it. I am a representative of this sport. As such, I will do my part to take the 'ass' out of ambassador."

Geoff Shaffer, VP of global marketing at Pearl Izumi said, "We feel very confident that the new brand position will help connect the brand to male and female endurance athletes by celebrating a universal truth about endurance athletes, and at Pearl Izumi we find joy in pushing the limits of what's possible."

The new branding will roll out in two new product collections - another duality in the Pursuit and Escape lines - to be officially revealed to the cycling category at Interbike in September.

A man and a woman are running on a rocky, uneven trail. The woman is in the foreground, wearing a bright blue long-sleeved athletic top and black leggings. The man is slightly behind her, wearing an orange long-sleeved athletic top and black shorts with a white stripe. They are both looking down at the ground as they run. The background features a vast, rugged landscape with reddish-brown volcanic hills under a cloudy sky.

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KORA DISRUPTS APPAREL WITH YAK BASELAYER

Photo courtesy Kora

The brainchild of Founder Michael Kleinwort, Kora was established in 2013 as a technical clothing brand centered around yak wool – priding itself on efforts to support economic stability and environmental protection in the Himalayas.

The innovative technical apparel is now being introduced to U.S. markets with what it calls “the most advanced and performance-driven baselayer apparel ever made.” The company is based in London and in Hong Kong, where Kleinwort lives and works.

By primarily using yak wool, which seemingly no other outdoor apparel company is doing, Kora helps its supplying yak herders generate stable incomes. The process of developing raw wool from the mountain to final production is long and difficult, thereby making a direct relationship with its Himalayan herders/suppliers essential.

Kora is continually in dialogue with herders - checking product quality, fine-tuning development and ensuring all products are made under ethical, environmentally sound conditions. For the past three years they have worked with the Kegawa Herders’ Cooperative, a group of 80 herder families.

Kora said the material outperforms Merino and poly, quoting a study commissioned from Sheffield Hallam University’s Centre for Sport and Exercise Science on core temperature preservation. Another independent test, according to the brand, showed that Hima-Layer is 40 percent warmer, has 66 percent greater air permeability and 17 percent greater water vapor permeability than merino wool fabrics. It also features the anti-bacterial qualities associated with Merino. Kora said the difference could be credited to the environment, as yaks live at higher altitudes than

sheep and have evolved to survive harsher colds. Merino sheep typically graze at around 1,000 meters above sea level, whereas yaks live at 4,000 to 5,000 meters, Kora said.

“Having evolved over thousands of years to protect these animals in the extreme conditions of the Himalayas, yak wool is an incredibly advanced material,” said Kleinwort. “Between the high performing properties of the wool and the opportunity to support economic development in the nomadic, herding communities, the birth of Kora is a tremendous new offering in the outdoor community.”

Kora also says that yak wool is incredibly fine and therefore more comfortable, and is collected in a humane way (being plucked from the animals during molting season, not sheared). Community based harvesting methods are low impact on the animals and the environment.

Kora sources wool from a network of local agents and also buys directly from the Kegawa Herders’ Cooperative, buying at a premium over the market price to provide reliable income to the communities.

This Kegawa-sourced wool will be used in the 2015/2016 Kora baselayers, which include: ShoLa 230 Zip, \$162; ShoLa 230 Leggings, \$147; ShoLa 230 Crew, \$147; Women’s ShoLa 230 Zip, \$162; Women’s ShoLa 230 Leggings, \$147; and Women’s ShoLa 230 Crew, \$147.

Our initial testing of Fall product showed the baselayers to be extremely fine-woven and comfortable next to skin, warm compared to wool of similar thickness, and while perhaps not two-thirds more breathable, it performed extremely well during cool morning outdoor activity. Certainly something unique that, combined with its environmental story, is easy to get excited about.



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NEW SEVYLOR SUPS INSPIRED BY PRO SKI

French-born Sevylor, acquired by National Ventures in 2004, continues to market its inflatable Stand Up Paddleboards even through the tail end of summer as many regions shift gears toward fall and winter activities. With three new models of stow away, easy to transport, durable boards, Sevylor has created a quiver that bridges an array of applications from rowdy rapids to smooth paddling.

The Alamosa Board, retailing for about \$1,400, includes features such as a clear bottom window to view passing fish in tranquil waters from Cedar Key to Anguilla. The model is also equipped with two fishing rod mounts, a storage bungee and cup holder. It harkens to the easy-riding SUP angler who is ditching the boat for the board worldwide.

Second in new designs is the Andy Signature Paddle Board, at the lighter price point of \$1,250 - designed in partnership with Sevylor ambassador athlete Andy Mahre, better known as a pro skier sponsored by Evo and K2 Skis. Mahre's SUP design brings his high-thrills ski style and drive to compete to the water. Made for rougher river waves and rolling oceans, the Andy Signature has EVA footpad support, a raised kick pad, three inches of rocker in the nose; and the 9'6" length feels more like a surfboard than a SUP.

The last design is a beginner's version of the Andy Signature, named the Andy Pro Paddle Board, for novice river boarders. By adding half a foot in length, the board promotes greater stability and balance for the user. Two handles for easier transportability, along with the extra volume, and a price of \$1,300, make this one of the best beginner boards on the market.



Andy Pro



Alamosa



Andy Signature



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LOUISVILLE SLUGGER INTRODUCES 2016 BAT LINEUP

Louisville Slugger's line of performance bats for 2016 will feature the Prime 916, Select 716 and Omaha 5126. Louisville Slugger is part of Chicago-based Wilson Sporting Goods Co.

Providing hitters with "maximum bat speed, extreme power and ultimate balance," the Prime 916 is made with a patent-pending Fused Carbon Structure (FCS) composite handle and barrel, patented TRU3 Explosive Power Transfer technology and three-piece construction, which give it a lighter swing weight to ensure maximum control.

The Prime 916 has a large sweet spot with "extreme" barrel flex and dramatically reduced vibration. It's available in BBCOR, \$400; 2 3/4-inch and 2 5/8-inch big-barrel Senior League models, \$350; and a 2 1/4-inch Youth Baseball model, \$300. All Prime 916 Louisville Slugger bats feature Lizard Skins Grips. The Prime 916 Senior League 2 3/4-inch barrel is now 27 percent longer, while the Prime 916 Youth barrel is 12 percent longer, creating larger sweet spots.

Built for "driving the ball and going deep," the Select 716 combines Louisville Slugger's AC21 alloy barrel with the patented TRU3 Explosive Power Transfer technology and hybrid three-piece construction. The bat also features a massive sweet spot, dramatically reduced vibration, Lizard Skins Grips, maximum barrel flex and "an explosive trampoline-like swing." It's available in BBCOR, \$300; 2 3/4-inch and 2 5/8-inch big-barrel Senior League models, \$250; as well as a 2 1/4-inch Youth Baseball model, \$180. The Select 716 is the bat of choice among Louisville Slugger's Top 25 college teams, including Florida State, Louisville and North Carolina.

The Omaha 516 is said to be "the most proven one-piece bat and most consistent high-performance bat in baseball." Made with Louisville Slugger's new exclusive lightweight 7U1 alloy, the Omaha 516 delivers a large sweet spot, superior balance, maximum barrel flex and a lighter swing weight. The Omaha 516 is available in BBCOR, \$200; 2 3/4-inch and 2 5/8-inch big-barrel Senior League models, \$150; and a 2 1/4-inch Youth Baseball model, \$100. The Senior League models have barrels that are 40 percent longer, while the Youth models have barrels that are 25 percent longer, creating larger sweet spots.

"The key to success at the plate is finding a bat that feels comfortable because comfort translates to confidence," said Louisville Slugger bat research and development director Jim Earley. "We've created three uniquely different and innovative performance bats that help hitters with different swing styles have the confidence to be their best every time they step to the plate."



Omaha 5126



Prime 916



Select 716



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SmartWool Performance Socks Set American Made Benchmark

The wool sock category leader has a story much deeper than its dominant position on retail shelves.

By Aaron H. Bible



John Ramsey, Director of Development, SmartWool

When people think of the iconic and category-leading wool sock and apparel brand SmartWool, made in the USA isn't necessarily the first thing that comes to mind – but it could be.

Those familiar with the company's roots and who follow outdoor industry manufacturing trends know that the Steamboat Springs, CO-based outdoor lifestyle brand has manufactured its socks in partner mills in the Southeastern U.S. for the entirety of its 21-year history.

And given the fact that SmartWool, according to the SportsOneSource Group SSI Data, makes up 57 percent of outdoor market socks sold in outdoor specialty retail, and 44 percent of outdoor socks in overall retail, the brand may be producing as much product or more on U.S. soil than anyone else in the industry.

Every pair of SmartWool performance socks, and more than 95 percent of its lifestyle socks, are made in just two partner mills in North Carolina and Tennessee. The only socks made offshore, in Korea, are a sprinkling of small volume "cut-and-sew" low-cut lifestyle socks.

But that's not to say the skills and manufacturing capabilities, at least surrounding sock production, ever left U.S. soil in the first place. In fact, according to John Ramsey, SmartWool director of development, sock manufacturing in the U.S. is "alive and growing," with more commodity sock manufacturing (versus specialty socks, designed for a purpose such as "hiking socks"), returning to the U.S. every year.

And Ramsey should know. Having worked for SmartWool since 2001, he is a fourth-generation hosiery manufacturer, personally overseeing a team of six, as well as an internal lab in Chattanooga, TN. Ramsey's imprint can be seen across the PhD, performance and lifestyle sock collections, and he was deeply involved in building the new PhD Run socks, which have been tremendously successful for SmartWool in 2015. "I've lived it and breathed it my entire life," he said.

The key to success, Ramsey said, is a deep relationship with the manufacturing partners, as well as the inter-generational manufacturing families and his team of sock technicians that possess highly sought after skill sets. Together, Ramsey's team has pushed technological innovations moving the entire performance sock market forward.

From its founding in 1994 up until 2001, SmartWool had one manufacturing partner in Tennessee that it worked with exclusively. Utilizing Ramsey's background and expertise, the company expanded into two mills that invested together with the brand in machinery, primarily from Italy, "not just for growth but also in technology that allows us to innovate on a daily basis," Ramsey said.

"We're always pushing the limits of man and machine," he continued. "We're trying to come up with something new every day, and we definitely learn something every day."

Investments in technology in the mills, an area in which the U.S. has always excelled when it comes to manufacturing, have been a key factor to SmartWool's sock success, which still makes up at least half of its overall business.

"The U.S. sock manufacturing base really pushes the envelope when it comes to the latest and greatest technology," Ramsey said. "So for the specialty sock market, that's one of the reasons we win. That, and the drive and passion of the sock technicians to push the limits of the machine and to create new and innovative product." To physically build these innovative products, Ramsey and his team of technicians work closely with material spinning partners as well as the SmartWool design team. Not to mention the relationship with spinners is the same type of close knit – pun intended – relationship SmartWool has with its mills.



Working with supplier partners (responsible supply chain management is a huge source of pride for the brand, even winning them recognition from PETA in the 2000s for an initiative to stop mulesing at its New Zealand merino suppliers), along with feedback from the SmartWool Fan Field Tester program, and its durability testing partner in North Carolina, SmartWool is constantly looking for ways to increase durability via collaboration. “Nothing lasts forever, but we try,” said Ramsey.

Apparently those efforts are paying off, as the company boasts a return rate of just one in every 10,000 pairs, and stands by its PhD socks with a 100-percent guarantee. In-line PhD socks featuring ReliaWool are said to be 33 percent more durable in third-party testing than competitors.

When it comes to designs, “We don’t ever turn anything away,” said Ramsey. “We work very closely with the design team. They draw beautiful pictures and it’s our job to bring that to life in a sock.” He said if they can’t do a design 100-percent, his team works with the designers to find a happy medium.

“In general I think a lot of people felt like sock manufacturing had left the country,” Ramsey told SGB. “But it’s definitely not dead and gone.” And when a legacy brand like SmartWool invests so heavily in U.S.-based production, with two decades of success, it provides a real window into the potential for “Made in the USA.”



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Proof Co-founder with local community member

Proof Eyewear Rolls Up Sleeves for El Salvador Projects

For the family-owned and inspired Proof Eyewear,
giving back means more than giving money —
Proof owners put in the man-power.

Proof Eyewear, the in-the-family wooden sunglasses company founded in 2010, teamed with 501(c)(3) HELP International to donate, time, money and man-power to underserved communities in Guatemala and El Salvador.

A collaborative team of Proof and HELP volunteers formed The El Salvador project—the umbrella name for a slew of different initiatives completed this summer as part of Proof's Do Good Program. The team hosted a school education camp, lent a hand to a home reconstruction site and community center build, planted trees on a farm, donated funds for microfinance loans and a girl's orphanage and safe house, and got inspired by the natural beauty of the colorful country.

Six major project stops split between El Salvador and Guatemala made up the trip. The team stopped in Guatemala City, Antigua, Lake Atitlan, San Salvador, Amatecampo and San Miguel. En-route to each major project, the team performed small acts of giving back, from roofing to library improvements, and even purchasing soccer equipment for youth teams.

The venture came to fruition after Proof released a special edition sunglass collection, where the colorful print on the brand's classic wooden frame was inspired by the internationally renowned Salvadoran artist, Fernando Llorc Choussy. Proof enlisted the partnership of HELP, a nonprofit devoted to empowering people to fight poverty through sustainability and life-changing programs, and the plans were set to make way south of the border.



Proof's new wooden sunglasses

All proceeds from the Choussy design collection were donated by Proof to the El Salvador Project, and each frame within the collection was handcrafted using a complete skateboard deck with the printed El Salvador Project graphic.

This tradition of using wood as the primary material for Proof eyewear is at the heart of the brand.

Although a fairly new company, Proof's origins date back to the 50's,



Proof brothers, Tanner, Brooks and Taylor

when Bud Dame, the grandfather of the three Proof brothers - Tanner, Brooks and Taylor - started a sawmill in rural Idaho. Thanks to Bud, the brothers grew up in a haze of sawmill and nature, exploring the Idaho outdoors while learning the woodwork trade.

Once the brothers finally took Proof to the public, it had an explosion of popularity amongst outdoor fashion/function users with an eye for sustainable and eco-aware materials. At a media event at Outdoor Retailer Summer Market, Proof stood tall next to accomplished brands such as Mammüt, Petzl, Stanley, Sea to Summit and Stanley.

Proof works carefully to make all handcrafted products from sustainable materials, including FSC certified wood, cotton-based acetate and repurposed skateboard decks.

Along with heritage and sustainability, the last ingredient in the ethos of Proof is, "Giving Back." The company released its exclusive footage and photos from the El Salvador project, along with a meticulous Travel Journal outlining the projects and communities the over \$12,000 donations were given.

However, despite the positive influence of monetary funds donated by the sunglass brand, the El Salvador Project really found its power in the personal interaction and physical labor of lending an actual hand. Money is great, there's no denying that, but experiencing the cause tends to make a greater impact. By focusing on cultural emersion, as shown through Proof's photos and journaling of historical and natural landmarks, local fare, and personal exchange with locals, Proof and HELP were able to give back in an unimposing and unique way, providing long-term solutions as opposed to quick Band-Aids.



Simply look to the Proof logo of a bird with a wind-up key to see that the brand is more concerned with interactive helping than blind donation. Proof COO Tanner Dame said, "The bird logo represents the belief that everyone has wings to fly, some just need a little help."

Since its founding in 2010, Proof's Do Good Program has encompassed philanthropic work from tsunami relief in Japan, child-soldier rehabilitation in Africa and reforestation in Haiti. In early 2015, the brand started donating funds to build eye clinics in India. In the short time frame following the El Salvador project, Proof donated \$12,000 to The Nature Conservancy in Idaho.

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2016 Trail Running Contenders Duke It Out

Brand creators unveil the newest models while playing tour guide
to bring you the trails that inspired their designs.

By Scott Boulbol

As with so many growing categories, trail running shoes have gone through drastic evolutions since they became a major player in the industry back in the 1990s. We've seen them adapt from basically pared-down hiking shoes with bulky toe bumpers and stiff outsoles to a sort of running slipper with only a thin layer of foam underfoot - some with separated toes - to the most recent iterations being a hybrid of all of the above.

The trail running shoes of today, along with next season's promising models, seem to have arrived at equilibrium of the often-radical innovations within the category. The contemporary trend that changed the game is the maximum cushioning movement, led by brands like Hoka One One. Many models boast up to 30mm thickness and are made almost entirely of superlight EVA foam.

"The industry as a whole is being driven by cushioning," said Mike Nesladek, vice president of marketing for Newton Running, a brand that has completely resisted the max temptation in lieu of other innovations. "However, we at Newton are more aligned with a 'trampoline' metaphor for our shoe technology. An athlete will be at his or her best while retaining the natural spring in his or her step."

While maximalism enjoys continued popularity with consumers, retailers and brands alike, the design can be a bit too squishy for many runners, especially those who adapted to the previous trend of minimalist running. Worlds apart, it is almost comical these trends followed one another. The shift speaks to the bombastic nature of the trail running category, and perhaps, the personality of its users.

Minimalist runners prefer more "trail feel" as well as a lower profile and better universal flex. Many also prefer the zero-to-minimal drop profiles the natural running shoe movement brings to the scene. Another selling point is a more biomechanically accurate toebox, which allows for natural toe splay.

Golden Harper, founder of Altra, sees benefits in both. "It seems many are striving for balance in shoes right now - getting the shoe to balance front-to-back makes it more stable and agile. A lot of the best shoes are finding balance between the responsiveness and lightweight of minimalism and the squishiness of the max cushioned trend," said Harper. "Balancing cushion and responsiveness gives most runners the best chance for success. While both ends of the spectrum have their applications and types of runners they work for, too much of either tends to cause problems for the average runner."

At the same time, average heel-to-toe drop has come down from earlier days when most shoes had a visible tilt. And while brands like Newton, Altra and Treksta have long championed the wider toe box, other brands seem to at least be widening this part of the shoe, if not changing the shape entirely.

We've put together a list of key upcoming models, some on shelves now but with carry over into 2016, that best represent the progression of min/max trends in the category.

And since trail running offers athletes such a vast array of terrain, from simple dirt roads to alpine ascents, we've asked brands to share some of their favorite trails on which these models excel. Often these are the same trails by which the models were inspired, tested or where sponsored elites rack their miles.

ALTRA running remains completely committed to the zero-drop design and their trademark FootShape extra-wide toebox. They've been incorporating max cushioning for a few years now, in select models. The multi-purpose Paradigm 1.5, \$100, zero-drop 34mm, M9 9.7oz., W7 8oz., just launched last month. Though not originally designed as a trail-specific shoe, the first iteration quickly gained favor with many of Altra's sponsored athletes, like Jason Schlarb, who uses the Paradigm for his 100-mile-and-more races on nasty terrain.

The whopping 34mm of EVA is plush, flexible, and lightweight. The outsole swallows rocks - no need for a plate here - and the lugs provide just enough grip in most conditions. But they also bounce off pavement and hardpack with a cloudlike feel. Not all runners will be comfortable with this level of cushion, however, and many will also need to adjust to the zero-drop profile. This is not an ideal shoe for traditional heel-strikers or those looking to feel the trail underfoot. Also the wide toe means some lateral movement on uneven descents, unless laced extra tight.



Altra Paradigm 1.5

A more typical trail shoe, the Altra Lone Peak 2.5, \$120, zero-drop, 26mm, M9 10.6oz., W7 8.5oz., has been redesigned and will launch this summer. With a lower profile and more aggressive tread than the Paradigm 1.5, this shoe is more reminiscent of traditional trailrunners,

but the ride is definitely softer and more forgiving. Plus, unlike some max shoes, this one feels stable underfoot in part to the wide outsole platform - and the zero-drop design seems less prone to ankle twists. A rockplate protects underfoot and a wide synthetic toe reinforcement adds some protection along with the small bumper. The upper mesh is quite breathable, but again there's only minimal lateral support in the toebox. If the gusseted tongue isn't enough for your rocky runs, there's a built-in gaiter attachment on the heel.



Altra Lone Peak

Altra's Lone Peak Neoshell, \$150, zero-drop, 26mm, M9 11.5oz., W7 9.2oz., offers the same features, but boasts Polartec's Neoshell weatherproof fabric upper, which they call "better than waterproof." While typical waterproof barriers are inside the outer shell of the upper, allowing that outer section to still get wet and heavy, this one blocks moisture from ever adhering to the upper at all.

IDEAL TRAIL: LONE PEAK, WASATCH MOUNTAIN, UTAH

"The Lone Peak shoe was designed for, well, Lone Peak. The trail up the mountain offers the most vertical gain of any peak in the Wasatch, with the trailhead at about 4,500 feet and the summit at close to 11,300 feet for a vertical gain total of 7,000 feet in just six miles. You start in the desert landscape, climb up the insanely steep Jacob's ladder, grasping at shrubs, and finally into pines as you get higher. Soon you are in an area covered with white granite rock that looks like something from a different planet before you are surrounded by the massive 1,500' Lone Peak cirque you must go around to get to the summit - a slab of rock with 1,000' drop-offs on three sides. You get to experience just about every kind of trail condition from smooth dirt, to gravel, to alpine meadows, pure rock and granite scrambling," said Golden Harper, founder and product development, Altra Running.



the legendary Pacific Crest Trail. “I love the trail in many different parts but especially as it goes through Big Bear Lake (where I grew up) and Crystal Cragg, which is near Redding where I now live,” he said. “This section seven and a half miles one way, consisting of small, windy, beautiful, often mountainous single track, but with lots of flat too for speed work...I can get buried in the PCT and run for hours without feeling like I’ve been out for more than minutes. Peaceful. Tranquil. Scenic. And rooted in a deep history, so when I run on it I know I am on the same trail that many hikers before me have traveled an epic journey on.”

BROOKS PureGrit 4, \$120, 4 mm drop, 19-15mm, M9 10.1oz., W7 8.2oz., is another shoe balancing better trail feel with soft, responsive cushioning. This shoe slips on like a glove and the 3D printed upper is seamless and



Asics
Gel-FujiEndurance



Asics
GEL-FujiLyte

out clean. Well-spaced but tough lugs and a rock plate should handle the intended terrain well, and the brand’s gel padding in the heel always provides a durable, well-padded landing. Plus a too-often-omitted lace garage keeps them tucked away.

For a lighter and more responsive option, the GEL-FujiLyte, \$110, 4mm drop, 14-10mm, M9 8 oz., W7 6.5oz., replaces the popular FujiRacer as a race-ready, speed-oriented trail shoe. Showing the continued strength of the shallow-drop trend, this is Asics’ first 4mm-drop trail shoe, a 2.5mm reduction from the Racer, and comes down considerably in stack height at toe and heel. It should be even more flexible with the shorter height, but still has a rockplate for forefoot

support but close fitting all around. The Nav Band – an elastic strap from instep to outsole that hugs over the midfoot – and ergonomic support, completes the package. While definitely low to the ground, the BioMoGo DNA midsole is enough to handle a light heel strike, but excels with a midfoot landing, and the shoe strides naturally and feels quick and agile. There’s a rock plate and lots of tiny hex-shaped lugs, which offer excellent traction in varied conditions. However, these shoes may feel a bit squirrely on paved or very hardpacked surfaces.



Brooks PureGrit 4

For those who prefer a more traditional design, with near max cushioning, the Cascadia 11, \$120, 10mm drop, 27-17mm, M9 11.8oz., M W7 10.1oz., will release in January 2016 and delivers a well-cushioned, well-protected and balanced ride for serious off-road training. Trail-specific technologies add a layer of protection to your run, including a four-point pivot system, at the outside edge of the metatarsals and heel, which they say acts like a suspension system on tricky terrain. Add to that a burly thermoplastic forefoot rock plate. A tough mesh and synthetic upper offers lots of lateral reinforcement, while a high layer of water resistant material keeps water out but remains sufficiently breathable. This shoe could easily double as a speed-hiker.

IDEAL TRAIL: WHITE MOUNTAINS, NEW HAMPSHIRE

“We tested the models in a variety of locations, but two of the main areas were the Fells Reservation about a half hour outside Boston - over 2,500

ASICS will release two new trail shoes in January 2016, one more traditional and one with a more minimal feel. The Gel-FujiEndurance, \$180, 8mm drop, 18-10mm, M9 11.9oz., W7 9.9oz., is the beefier shoe designed for heel and midfoot strikers who tackle gnarly trails and sloppy conditions. It features a new, patented technology called PlasmaGuard – Asics said you can literally dip this shoe in mud and the upper will come

protection and a slight toe bumper. The mesh and a perforated insole should also help with breathability and drainage. And again, there’s a lace garage.

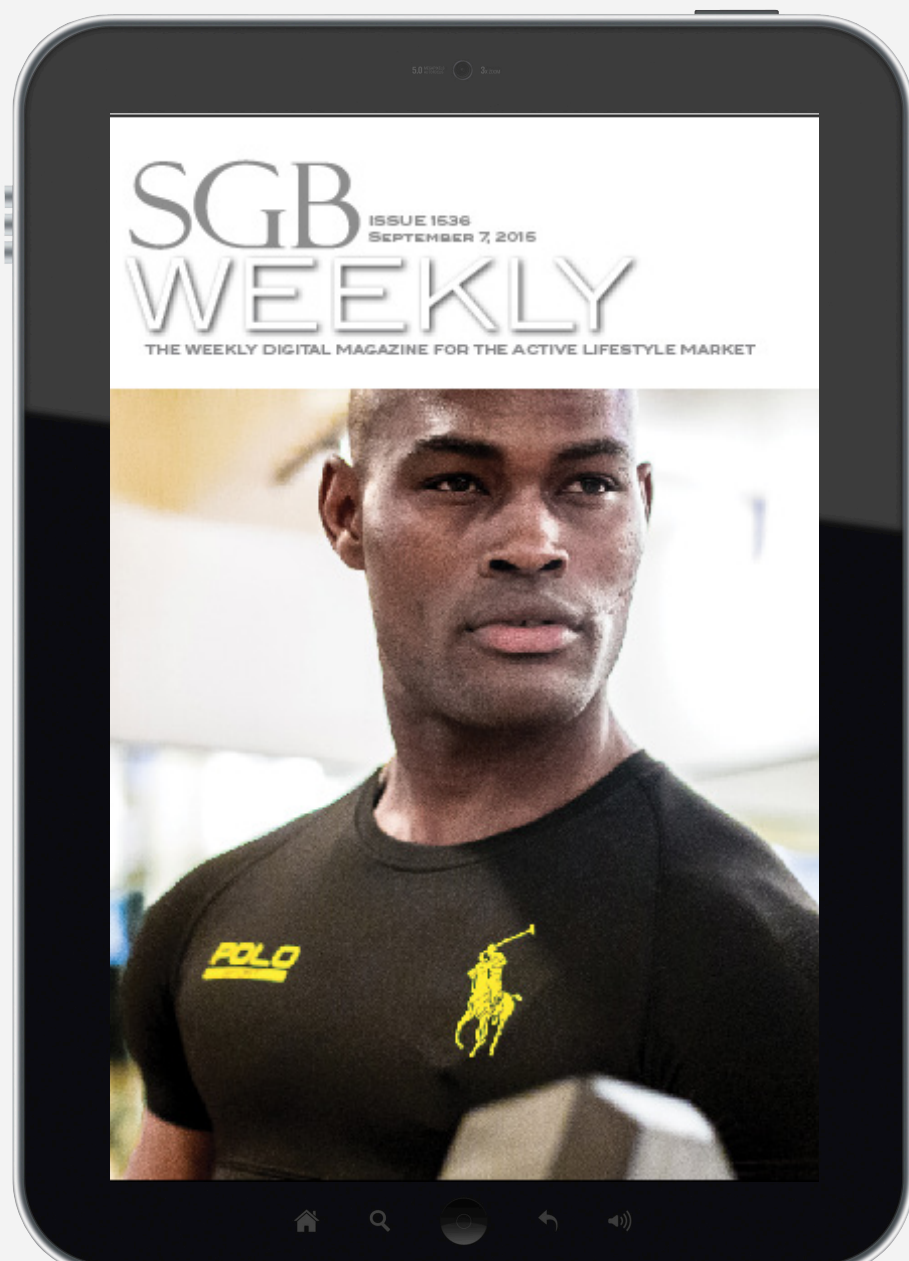
Even speedsters like Ryan and Sarah Hall enjoy the peacefulness and softer surfaces of trail running. One of Sarah’s favorite trails is the dirt road going up to Mt. Entoto in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It’s a rocky dirt road, eight miles one way, taking runners from 9,000 ft. up to 10,500 ft. in elevation. “The views of the valley and eucalyptus forests along the way are spectacular,” said Sarah Hall. “You pass several historic churches, and often crowds of people walking in their white church robes. I was invited once to sit and eat injera with some locals, who fed me by hand, and then I continued on my run.”

IDEAL TRAIL: PACIFIC CREST TRAIL

Husband Ryan Hall’s ideal trail is closer to home. He loves to run sections of

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acres and over 100 miles of trails; we did routes with up to 2,000 feet of vertical change - and the White Mountains in New Hampshire,” said Brooks Senior Product Manager Brendan Murray. “These two locations are incredibly technical trails that provided an excellent proving ground for testing the prototypes. We always want to find locations that offer, in a sense, the worst-case scenarios of rocky, slick, roots and single-track terrain, so if it passes we know it will be great on mild fire roads or groomed paths that make up many trails around the world. It is one of the nice benefits of testing in New England, as the trails here are known for being so technical.”

Borrowing some basic design from its speedy and popular max-cushioned road cousin, the Clifton, the Hoka One One 2016 Challenger ATR 2, \$130, 5mm drop, 28-23mm, M9 8.6oz., W7 8.6oz., features a more aggressive tread and more supportive upper for trail use. Hoka said they’ve updated the latest version with a more supportive fit through the midfoot, while also increasing comfort across the top of the foot. It’s still amazingly light for the size of the overall package, and offers one of the plushiest rides available, thanks to the pillowy but ultralight full-EVA midsole. The Meta-Rocker midsole geometry offers a smooth ride and natural transition from mid to forefoot, but is not too severe to handle heel striking. Runners new to the brand, or max cushioning in general, may feel a bit unstable in these high-profile shoes.



Hoka One One Challenger ATR 2

Another shoe based on a previous model is the new Speedgoat, \$130, 5mm drop, 31-26mm, M9 9.7oz., W7 8.6oz. Inspired by ultrarunning legend Karl Meltzer and the popular Rapa Nui shoe, the Speedgoat was built to tackle highly technical terrain. The no-sew upper is designed to provide smooth support through the forefoot, and a ground-rubber toecap provides increased toe protection. Hoka sourced the traction experts at Vibram for the sticky rubber outsole with 4mm lugs. Running down both sides from toe to midfoot are trail-specific outsole flex grooves, which provide grip and stability, even when landing on uneven trails. These traits, however, make the shoe not as road or hardpack-friendly.



Hoka One One Speedgoat

IDEAL TRAIL: SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS, CALIFORNIA
A shoe inspired by multiple Western States 100 winner Karl Meltzer has

to excel on that rugged, mountainous and brutal trail. Hoka One One athlete Mike Wardian said the unpredictable and technical terrain, which runs through California’s Sierra Nevada Mountains, requires a shoe tough enough to stand up to unrelenting climbs and blistering descents of the famously unrelenting course. The trail runs just over 100 miles from Squaw Valley to Auburn, CA, climbing over 18,000 feet and descending almost 23,000 feet along the way. Much of this is remote, rocky, loose single track. It’s also notorious for its hot and dry conditions in the summers.

With a lightweight mesh upper, overwrapping tongue/closure, aggressive mid- and outsole and old-school drop profile, La Sportiva The Mutant,



\$130, 10mm drop 26-16mm, M9 11.3oz., W7 9.5oz., which recently hit shelves, might be the quintessential hybrid between new and old. The upper is entirely made from four-way stretch mesh, with minimalist anchor laces (reinforced with plastic) attached to the outsole for lateral support. And it’s all one piece, with the tongue as a continuation of the upper and a clever lace garage. It hugs every contour, almost like the minimalist “barefoot” shoes of a few years back. But the bottom is all business, with huge sticky lugs over firm, durable injection-molded EVA and a TPU stabilizer underfoot.



La Sportiva The Mutant

IDEAL TRAIL: FOUR PASS LOOP, ASPEN, CO

“The Mutant was tested on Aspen’s Four Pass Loop,” said Cory Lowe, who handles PR for La Sportiva. The 28-miler crosses four 12,000 foot passes – hence the name – for a total of over 10,000 feet each of climbing and descent. “The loop can be run in a day or explored at a more leisurely



pace over multiple days. The Mutant provides ample protection for long miles and good traction for the off camber and loose sections of the trail above treeline. The burly lugs handle muddy stream crossings and the shoe excelled in all the conditions the trail has to offer.”

NEWTON, a once diminutive startup from Boulder, has always done things a little differently. Their new Boco Sol, \$130, 3mm drop, 9.6 oz., is another example of the innovation that has put them on the map. Again striking a balance between old and new, the shallow drop still allows for a traditional heel or midfoot strike, but with a relatively low stack height and short drop. They also keep the foot flat and low to the ground, allowing excellent trail feel – although as with all Newton shoes, runners new to the brand will need a few outings to get used to their pronounced Action/Reaction system – suspended lugs under the ball of the foot that depress and recoil during gait.



Newton Boco Sol

The outsole is rugged but stealthy, covered with lots of multidirectional nubs for great grip even when wet. The shoe also features a large toe bumper. They’re highly breathable even with a DWR coating on the upper. A gusseted tongue keeps out debris and stays in place. There’s a green story here too: the laces, upper mesh, outsole and box are all 100-percent recycled. The shoe also comes in an all-weather model, the Boco AT, \$130, 3mm drop, 9.6 oz., which sports a closed-mesh upper with DWR and added synthetic mesh for improved water and debris resistance.

IDEAL TRAIL: SWITZERLAND TRAIL, BOULDER, CO

Professional long-course triathlete Rachel Joyce adds some off-road adventure to her miles by donning her Boco shoes and heading to Boulder’s Switzerland Trail. The 8.5-mile rail trail climbs about 1,600 feet, almost all above 8,000 feet in altitude, heading west from the Boulder foothills toward the Indian Peaks. “The terrain is a little rocky, but I love the gentle gradient, and the vistas on the way up are enough to take my mind off the

climb,” Joyce said. She added that she’ll do snowy winter runs in the Boco AT and summer runs in the Boco Sol.

Newton athlete Tyler McCandless prefers to take his Boco Sols to another local favorite. “Betasso Preserve in Boulder is my favorite trail,” McCandless said. “It’s a rare, single track dirt trail in Boulder, at about 6,500 feet, that’s challenging yet completely runnable. The views of downtown Boulder and the Continental Divide are breathtaking and an hour run goes by like it was ten minutes.”

NEW BALANCE updated the 910 trail shoe, with its 910v2, \$110, 8mm drop 23.5-15.5mm, M9.5 10.8oz, W7 8.9oz., that launched this summer. This is more of a high-mileage trainer than ultralight racer, and is reminiscent of more classic styles favoring heel-strikers, and offering responsive overall performance for varied terrain. The wide and well-padded midsole offers a stable landing pad, but with plenty of plushness, and New Balance said they updated it with an improved fit and enhanced flexibility in the forefoot. The shoe also boasts an improved rock plate and toe protection plus a gusseted tongue. The knobs on the outsole are low profile and the synthetic and mesh upper is quite breathable and offers solid lateral support.



New Balance 910v2

New Balance also updated its popular 980 with the new Fresh Foam Hierro, \$115, 4mm drop 21.5-17.5mm M9.5 11.4oz., W7 8.7oz., launching in Fall 2015. Considerably lighter than the 910v2, this shoe offers a smaller drop and better ground feel with a faster, more agile ride. The full EVA outsole is soft and plush with good flex all around, and the outsole is super grippy with loads of well-designed, multi-directional lugs that angle rearward in the front for push-off traction and forward in the rear for breaking and landing. The multidirectional lugs can make the ride feel a tad squirrely on pavement. Mid and toe-strikers will enjoy the lower drop, but there’s ample padding for heel strikers as well. All will enjoy the breathability of the light, airy upper.



New Balance 980 Fresh Foam Hierro

THE NORTH FACE Ultra Endurance, \$125, 8mm drop, 17-9mm, M9 11oz., W7 9oz., is new for Spring 2016, designed for European multi-day stage races like the legendary Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc. The North Face (TNF) decided to launch the shoe domestically after positive feedback from local pros. Despite its low profile and relative lightweight feel, it’s designed to handle long runs and load-bearing runners. The high drop definitely favors heel-strikers. Landing is soft, thanks to full, single-density EVA outsole, but it’s made for speed, not plushness. There are beefy TPU overlays along the sides for lateral support, and a large toecap. Toe and underfoot rock plates protect the feet while the Vibram outsole offers excellent traction.

The North Face is also launching Litewave TR, \$100, 6mm drop, 19-13mm, M9 8.1oz., W7 6.3 oz., for 2016 - a multi-purpose runner/light hiker, which is also road-compatible.



The North Face Ultra Endurance and Litewave TR



Switzerland Trail

With multiple cutouts, the outsole should offer good flex throughout and the lugs look small enough to grip without a squirrely feel on hard surfaces. Compression-molded EVA does great withstanding high mileage.

IDEAL TRAIL: LA PETITE TROTTE, LYON, FRANCE

“La Petite Trotte in Lyon, France, is a high alpine, multi-day trail race starting in Chamonix. The Ultra Endurance shoe was specifically requested by European athletes who are much more likely to participate in multi-day stage races carrying light packs,” said Jessica Hollister, public relations manager, The North Face. “The race circumnavigates Mont Blanc in a 293-kilometer loop with 78,000 feet of gain and another 78,000 feet of descent, in only 182 miles. The route is often technical, requiring ropes, and there’s no aid, other than what can be bought in the few villages racers encounter.”

Hollister’s favorite local spot to take The North Face shoes for a drive is the renowned Mesa Trail in Boulder, CO. Running 6.7 miles point-to-point



La Petite Trotte Trail

between Boulder and climbing mecca Eldorado Canyon, the trail rolls gently along the foothills, with intermittent smooth and highly technical sections and a few steep climbs and descents. Locals will often run it out and back for a weekend long run, bagging over 3,200 feet of climbing along the way all above 5,000 feet. But don’t be alarmed if someone flies past you like your going backwards – it’s just another ubiquitous Boulder elite out for a trot.

SKECHERS has made huge strides in the running community, especially since landing Boston Marathon winner Meb Keflezighi, and they’re beginning to do the same in trail running. The new Gorun Ultra 2, \$90; 4mm drop, 27-23mm; M9 9.3oz., W7 7.3oz., is a max cushioned shoe with super plush ride, neutral outsole and what has become one of the brand’s trademarks, a bargain pricepoint. While not ultralight, it boasts a supportive upper with highly stretchable toe box mesh and substantial arch support plus a gusseted tongue feature and reinforced toe and small bumper. The inside is lined with a mesh that’s breathable but soft, so sockless runners take note.



Skechers Gorun Ultra 2



Skechers GoRun Ultra 2 Climate

Skechers also offers GoRun in an all-weather version, the GoRun Ultra 2 Climate, still only \$90; 4mm

drop, 27-23mm; M9 10.3 oz., W7 8 oz., which adds a three-layer moisture management upper they say keeps the elements out but still wicks well.

IDEAL TRAIL: BLUFF CREEK TRAIL, OKLAHOMA CITY

“These shoes are fun to wear on the twisty, rooty and rocky Bluff Creek Trail by my house in Oklahoma City,” said Camille Herron, Skechers performance elite athlete. The 3.5-mile loop is located just on the north edge of the city, along the Lake Hefner shoreline, and features tight, wooded turns and some technical sections. “I can hop around the terrain and fly downhill. I share the trails with mountain bike enthusiasts, so I



Bluff Creek Trail

think of my Ultra 2’s as being like their bike tires! I get great traction with them on winter snow and the soft cushioning is nice on longer road runs.”

TREKSTA, a small brand made a name for itself designing light and fast hikers with their unique NestFit toebox, being one of the first brands to mimic the shape and width of a typical foot around the toe of their shoes. The Sync trail runner was the second running model from the brand and is still going strong. For 2016, they’ll offer the Sync II, \$140; 6mm drop; M9 11.2oz., W8 9.6oz., and Sync Boa, \$140; 6mm drop; M9 10.5oz., W8 9.3oz., with lighter uppers. They’re relatively low to the ground but still offer some good cushion, with an excellent fit and trail feel thanks to the NestFit shape and 3-D printed upper. The Boa model features a ratchett-dial closure system that can be quickly tightened and micro-adjusted at the turn of a dial, for a snug, well-dispersed closure.

New for 2016 is the Wave series: the Mega Wave, \$125, 6mm drop; 24-18mm, a highly cushioned and breathable shoe designed for the long distance trail runner. It features Treksta’s new Hyperfoam dual-density EVA midsole for a plush, cushioned ride and their Speed-Lacing System with lace garage.



Treksta Mega Wave

The new HGL two-part outsole improves traction and stability on varied terrain, while the stitchless upper should help alleviate hot spots and blisters.

The Trail Wave, \$120, 6mm drop, is a new lightweight performance trail running shoe for committed runners whose routes may vary, combining good bite on loose trails and a soft, comfortable feel on pavement. Mesh uppers with synthetic leather reinforcement provide added protection while allowing good breathability. Angular notches in the heel midsole promote a rounded flex of the midsole/outsole and smoother roll from heel strike to midfoot.



Centennial Cone Trail

IDEAL TRAIL: CENTENNIAL CONE, GOLDEN, CO

“For the Sync Boa, the Centennial Cone trail near Golden, CO, is the perfect trail. It’s a relatively new singletrack trail and on weekends they rotate runners and cyclists. It’s a magnificent 12-mile rolling loop, mostly up around 8,600 feet, with add-ons that can give you additional miles, up to 16. The scenery is gorgeous throughout, and the trail offers everything including long meadows, rocky grinds, tough climbs, descents, magnificent views – all a perfect fit for this shoe’s quickness, padding and great grip,” attested Peter Downing, PR and marketing, Treksta U.S.A.

UNDER ARMOUR will introduce the Verge Low GTX, \$140, 8mm drop, 16-8mm, M9 12.7oz., W7 10.7oz., trail runner, as well as a mid-height version, the Verge Mid GTX, \$140, 8mm drop, 16-8mm, M9 13.1oz., W7 11.1oz. This is definitely not for the most weight-conscious runner, but it’s a bomber shoe designed to run through anything. Both versions feature a full GoreTex membrane for weatherproofing, plus a seriously rugged and sticky Michelin outsole and dual-density midsole with ample rearfoot padding. There’s also a TPU shank for added heel support, plus a full rock plate. The Mid version adds a well padded, above-ankle cuff that wraps high around the front of the leg for ankle protection, but stays low in back for added flex.



Under Armour Verge Low GTX

IDEAL TRAIL: DOG MOUNTAIN, COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE

“The Verge was made for those unpredictable Spring Oregon days. It could be sunny and 70 in the morning and then 40 and blowing sideways rain by the afternoon. It’s perfect for cruising up Dog Mountain in the Columbia



Dog Mountain Trail

River Gorge. Climbing 2,800 feet from the Columbia River just 60 minutes east of Portland, the seven-mile main loop - with steep climbs and often rough, technical footing - is a lung and leg burner. It is directly across the river from Mt. Defiance, the highest point in the Gorge. Three route options will get you to the top, but the “Way Of The Samurai” is the shortest and most brutal. From the summit on clear days, you can see Mt. Hood. Mt. Adams and St. Helens,” said Steve Metcalf, director of marketing, Outdoor Performance.

VASQUE introduced the Pendulum II, \$120; 6mm drop, 19-13mm; 10.2oz., Spring 2015, which will carry over for 2016. This lightweight shoe designed in the style of traditional trail shoes, is between max and minimal. The completely bonded upper helps eliminate issues such as hot spots and blisters, and the midsole is designed to conform to a runner’s



Vasque Pendulum II

foot for a lasting custom fit. The outsole, surprisingly burly for its weight, and TPU rock plate should handle rugged and loose terrain with ease. There’s also a GoreTex version, \$150; 19-13mm; 10.9oz., with GoreFlex construction for a natural, conformable fit in a

waterproof/breathable all-season shoe.

IDEAL TRAIL: BARN BLUFF, RED WING, MN

The Vasque team, as well as their parent company Red Wing, often hit the Barn Bluff trails near Red Wing MN, offering bird’s-eye views of the Mighty Mississippi and Sorin’s Bluff in Memorial Park. While not very



Barn Bluff Trail

long, the trails offer some steep inclines, loose rocks and varied terrain for good testing ground. “The 4mm lug height and aggressive lug geometry give excellent traction on these trails, with light overall weight,” said Julie Quinn, Vasque marketing manager. “The GTX version is perfect in the colder, wetter weather - which we have a good part of the year in Minnesota.”

INDUSTRY CALENDAR



Photo courtesy Proof Eyewear

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

NOVEMBER

- 4-6 NBS Athletic Show
Ft. Worth, TX
- 22-24 Sports, Inc. Athletic Show
Las Vegas, NV

DECEMBER

- 1-3 MRA December Lansing Market
Lansing, MI
- 2-4 FFANY
New York, NY
- 8-9 MRA December Cincinnati Market
Cincinnati, OH

JANUARY 2016

- 4-6 ASI Orlando
Orlando, FL
- 5-7 Archery Trade Association Show
Louisville, KY
- 6-9 CES Show
Las Vegas, NV
- 11-13 MRA January Novi Market
Novi, MI
- 12-15 NBS Winter Show
Ft. Worth, TX
- 14-16 Surf Expo
Orlando, FL
- 17-20 NRF Retail Big Show
New York, NY
- 19-22 SHOT Show
Las Vegas, NV
- 20-23 Outdoor Retailer Winter Market
Salt Lake City, UT
- 22-24 Imprinted Sportswear
Long Beach, CA
- 24-26 Sports Licensing & Tailgate Show
Las Vegas, NV
- 27-29 PGA Merchandise Show
Orlando, FL
- 28-31 The SIA Snow Show
Denver, CO

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