

SGB

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NOVEMBER 16, 2015

WEEKLY

THE WEEKLY DIGITAL MAGAZINE FOR THE ACTIVE LIFESTYLE MARKET



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From left to right: Sugar Ray Leonard, Denise Austin and Michael Greenberg, President, Skechers at the 2015 Skechers Pier to Pier Friendship Walk.

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Nic Sims, Bike Marketing Manager Scott USA

Cover Photo
Nic Sims, Bike Marketing Manager, Scott USA



Photo courtesy Asics

MARKET REPORT

ASICS AMERICA GROUP Q3 SALES REFLECT ITS PLACE AS HERITAGE RUN BRAND

Asics America Group, which includes the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Brazil, reported net sales increased by 3 percent in the third quarter of 2015 and grew 8.5 percent on a currency-neutral basis. Asics America Corporation, which consists only of U.S. operations, showed a 7.9 percent increase in net sales.

“We’re pleased to see a third consecutive quarter of solid growth and the continued interest in Asics’ newest innovations and designs,” said Gene McCarthy, who less than a month ago became the new CEO of Asics America. “I’m incredibly excited to be on board.”

McCarthy entered the role with big plans to take Asics to the next level in the region. Projected changes will include a more-focused direct-to-consumer effort to connect with consumers, and an extensive marketing push to drive home Asics’ heritage in running.

U.S. growth was led by the running footwear category (up by 4.1 percent over the same quarter last year) and the launch of two new offerings this summer – the new GEL-Quantum 360, the brand’s most technically innovative sports performance footwear, providing athletes with 360 degrees of its GEL Cushioning; and the new GEL-Kayano 22 for distance running, which incorporates the new FluidFit upper technology, combining multi-directional stretch mesh with stretch reinforcements offering distance runners a customized, glove-like fit.

“Everything we do as a company is geared toward helping people perform their best,” McCarthy added. In a separate interview at Asics’ Manhattan showroom before the New York City Marathon, McCarthy said, “I think this (Asics) is one of the best kept secrets in the industry...It’s a very famous brand that a lot of people don’t know enough about.”

A global “refresh” of the brand will be coming in 2016, that is positioned to show the “heart and soul” of the company, according to McCarthy. One goal of rebranding will be to open an emotional dialogue with both loyal Asics runners and new users.

The U.S. market in general has experienced continued double-digit growth across the Athletic Sports Apparel category, demonstrating sustained, strong demand in the market with running apparel driving the uptick. Overall, Athletic Sports Apparel grew a notable 15.2 percent with running apparel increasing significantly at 22.4 percent.

In parallel with these increases, McCarthy doesn’t see any major changes in how Asics services the market; however, the newly run Asics America does have a fresh growth plan. “I will say it’s aggressive but not insurmountable,” said McCarthy. “But the strategy that was deployed to get Asics to this point over the last five years will not be the strategy to get us to the next plateau.” ■

“Everything we do as a company is geared toward helping people perform their best.”

- Gene McCarthy,
CEO, Asics America





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Brooks Beast Track Club
Photo courtesy Brooks

MARKET REPORT

BROOKS BEAST TRACK CLUB ADD STANFORD STANDOUT AND OSU FRONTRUNNER

Brooks Running invited two new runners to its Beast Track Club. Stanford University's Jess Tonn and Oklahoma State University frontrunner Natalja Piliusina to become the latest additions to the Brooks roster, earning the Beast's iconic neon yellow kit just in time for the beginning of the 2016 training season.



The Brooks Beast Track Club is a middle distance, Seattle-based training group formed in 2013 by Brooks to inspire a new standard for racing, team culture and spirit on and off the track.

"Both Jess and Natalja come from great teams in the NCAA, which means they already understand how working together will help them reach their potential," said Brooks Beast Head Coach Danny Mackey. "Their ability and accomplishments show the steps the Beasts are making overall toward being one of the best track teams globally."

Mackey is a former Hansons-Brooks runner and Olympic Trials qualifier, who recently took the spot as head coach and manager of the Beast. He holds a Master's Degree in Exercise Physiology and Biomechanics, which helps power the science behind the team's success, said a team spokesperson.

OSU's Piliusina brings to the group her eight All-American titles. She is the 2013 NCAA 1,500-meter run champion. Brooks Running took notice of her strength over a range of distances, evidenced by her Oklahoma State school records in the 800-meter run up through the cross country 6K. The Lithuanian athlete represents an important step for the team's mission both in the U.S. and globally, the club said.

Tonn's personality and drive were also seen as the perfect match for the Beast, according to Brooks. Her speed over the longer end of the middle-distance spectrum was thought to complement the talents of her teammates. Tonn's 5,000m PR of 15-minutes, 18-seconds is one of the all-time bests in the NCAA. Plus, she is a seven-time All-American.

Their addition to the team spotlights the continued growth of the organization and its upward trajectory heading into what Brooks Running anticipates as a milestone year for the team and the sport. ■

"Both Jess and Natalja come from great teams in the NCAA, which means they already understand how working together will help them reach their potential."

- Danny Mackey, Brooks Beast Head Coach



Photo courtesy Finis Inc.

The second-generation music player, The Neptune, was a progression-driven product technology, which brought increased storage capacity and a more functional design. This Finis product earned a Red Dot Design Award in 2013.

“The Duo is our third underwater MP3 player, and is our best one yet,” said John Mix, CEO of Finis. “We focus on bone conduction audio transmission because earbuds are not ideal for underwater due to the inner ear wax produced during swimming. While this wax protects the inner ear, it also prevents sound from fully entering the eardrum. The Duo provides a solution to this problem and offers impeccable sound that makes for a more enjoyable swim experience.”

Finis stays true to its track record of adapting the latest MP3 tech. Duo is the result of a lighter design, faster syncing, cleaner sound and simple, reliable usability. Featuring a seven-hour rechargeable battery, the capacity to store more than 60-hours of playback, and a simplified interface that supports MP3 and WMA files (and is fully compatible with iTunes).

“It’s no secret that music plays an important role in motivating us to go further and faster and improve our performance in sport,” said Grant Turner, Finis European marketing manager and British Olympian. “I love using the Duo on those long aerobic swimming workouts because I can push it to the limit and before I know it, I’ve completed a six km workout.”

The IPX8 Certified player includes an integrated clip that secures to goggle straps for a comfortable and streamlined fit so as not to interrupt the mechanics and rhythm of your stroke. The Duo was released November 3 and is available in two colors. ■

MARKET REPORT

FINIS INC. PUMPS UP SWIMMERS WITH THIRD GENERATION UNDERWATER MP3

Finis Inc., a global company founded in 1993 by John Mix and Olympic Gold Medal swimmer Pablo Morales, strives to improve the world of swimming through tech-driven innovation. The first Finis products introduced to the tri community were waterproof MP3 players. Now, the company is introducing the Duo MP3 player, designed to give swimmers monotony-breaking music. This underwater MP3 player will help swimmers find more enjoyment in the pool and be able to train longer, allowing them to experience music underwater.

When Finis first emerged on the underwater electronics market in 2005, its SwiMP3 took the spotlight in the category. SwiMP3 offered a patented and innovative bone conduction audio transmission that sent sound waves through the cheekbones to the inner ear to deliver high quality audio to pro and recreational swimmers. Time Magazine called it one of the top sporting goods items of the year.



Duo MP3player



Photo courtesy Implus

MARKET REPORT

IMPLUS LLC ADDS FUELBELT INC. TO THE FAMILY

Implus LLC, athletic, fitness and outdoor accessories brand, has acquired FuelBelt Inc. Financial details of the deal were undisclosed.

Founded in 1997 by seven-time Ironman World Champion participant Vinu Malik, FuelBelt is a pioneer in multi-bottle hydration belts, low profile handheld bottles and running accessories. FuelBelt will join the Specialty Category of Implus alongside Balega, TriggerPoint and Sof Sole. The Implus family of brands encapsulate Sof Sole, Yaktrax, apara, Airplus, Sneaker Balls, Sof Comfort, Little Hotties, Perfect, TriggerPoint, ICETrekkers and Balega.

Prior to the acquisition, FuelBelt's latest product introduction included the Helium Collection -the lightest the brand has designed - consisting of hydration belts with two to four bottle options. Other products from the Helium line include super-stretch waistpacks and the brand's popular handheld bottles.

Malik said of the acquisition, "The Implus roster of Specialty brands is impressive and we are proud to have FuelBelt join such an expansive

company that is continuing to grow its product offerings and be part of a team with cutting edge development and vast resources." He added, "We are excited about the future for FuelBelt."

"FuelBelt continues to add depth to the Specialty Category at Implus while increasing our offerings for our retail partners," said Tanya Pictor, vice president of the Specialty Category at Implus. "We are pleased to welcome such an established brand to the Implus umbrella that allows us to continue to lead the way in this endurance sport market."

Implus is headquartered in North Carolina's Research Triangle Park and is majority owned by Berkshire Partners, a Boston-based investment firm that has invested in more than 100 middle market companies since 1986. These investments were made via eight private equity funds with aggregate capital commitments of more than \$11 billion. FuelBelt represents the third brand addition to the Implus portfolio since Berkshire's investment in Implus in April 2015. ■

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JOHNSON HEALTH TECH LOOMS AS FITNESS GIANT WITH 2ND WIND ACQUISITION

Johnson Health Tech (JHT), owner of the Matrix, Vision and Horizon fitness equipment brands, announced its acquisition of 2nd Wind Exercise Equipment - a leading specialty fitness equipment retailer with 58 retail locations throughout 11 states.

Jason Lo, CEO of JHT, said, “2nd Wind is the undisputed leader in specialty fitness retail in the United States...It has built its success by providing the industry’s best trained staff to deliver outstanding customer solutions.”

With this acquisition, JHT will become one of the world’s largest specialty fitness retailers with more than 200 stores worldwide. 2nd Wind will continue to operate as an independent business unit with its existing management team.

“We’ve had a strong partnership with Johnson Health Tech for nearly 20 years, and we’re excited to officially join the group,” said Dick Enrico, CEO of 2nd Wind. “Like 2nd Wind, JHT believes that its people are at the root of its success because of their ability to deliver outstanding customer experiences. Together, with our shared passion and commitment to our customers, we’ll continue to shape and grow the specialty retail market.”

2nd Wind got its start in 1992 when Enrico began renting and selling used fitness equipment in St. Louis Park, MN. Within three years, the business was thriving and Enrico began working with leading manufacturers to source new equipment to meet booming demand.

Today, 2nd Wind is the largest specialty fitness equipment retailer in the U.S., serving both the retail and commercial fitness segments.

At the same time, JHT is among the world’s largest and fastest-growing fitness equipment manufacturers, making an assortment of fitness equipment for both commercial and residential use, including treadmills, elliptical trainers, exercise bikes and strength training gear. JHT’s global management headquarters is based in Taichung, Taiwan, with global product development, marketing and engineering based in Cottage Grove, WI.

Nathan Pyles, president of JHT, North America said, “Together, Johnson Health Tech and 2nd Wind will continue to grow and shape specialty retail.” ■

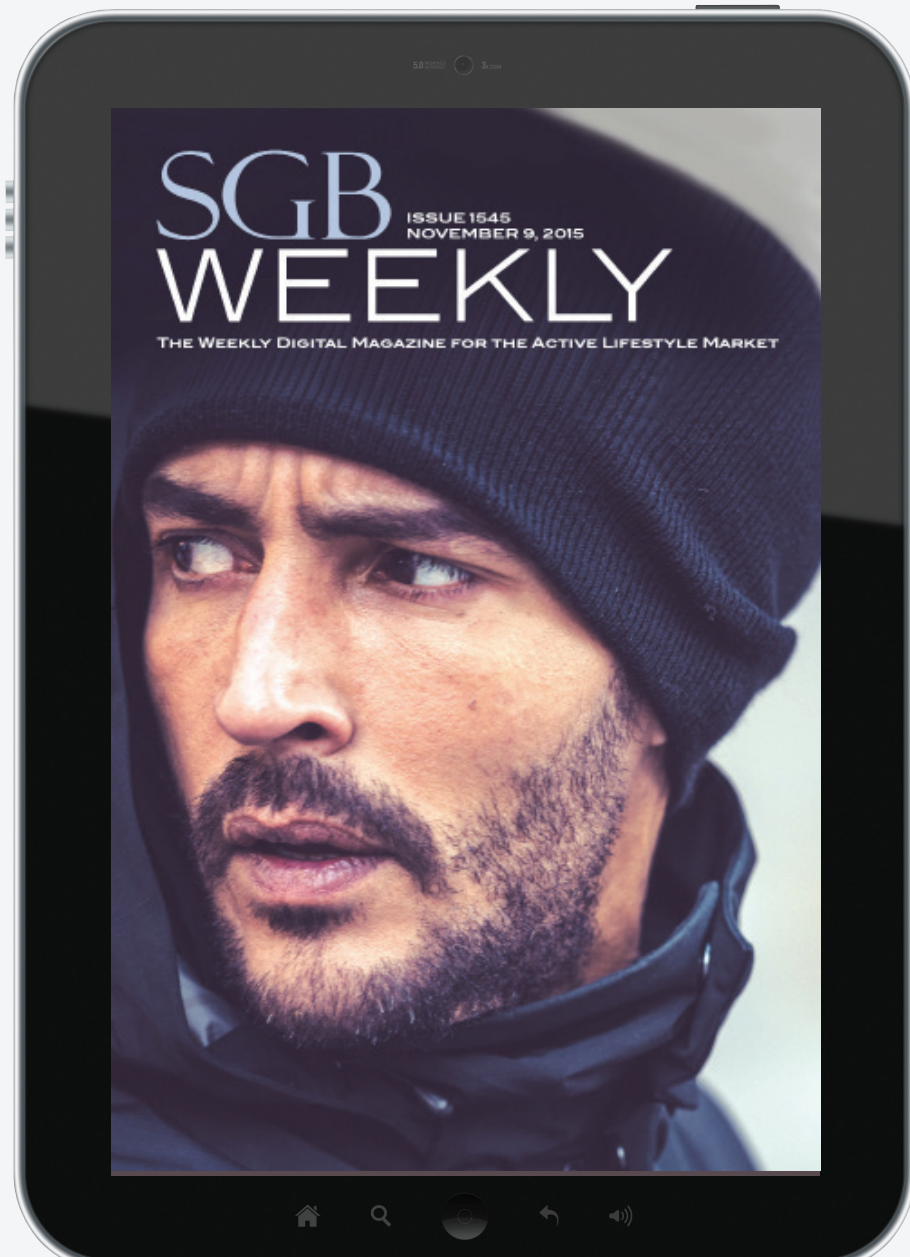


Today, 2nd Wind is the largest specialty fitness equipment retailer in the U.S., serving both the retail and commercial fitness segments.



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Photo courtesy Skechers

GIVING BACK

SKECHERS PIER TO PIER FRIENDSHIP WALK RAISES \$1.4 MILLION

In its seventh year, the 2015 Skechers Pier to Pier Friendship Walk surpassed its \$1.2 million goal to raise more than \$1.4 million. The event, which took place October 25 and is organized by the Skechers Foundation, helps children with special needs and education.

By Thomas J. Ryan

Co-sponsored by Nickelodeon and elevated by the support of sponsor events like Steel Partners' #P2PSteelSports Selfie Challenge donation pledge, the Pier to Pier Friendship Walk drew more than 12,000 participants, and continues to reach new attendance and donation highs annually since its 2009 launch. The 3.4-mile route begins at the Manhattan Beach Pier, traveling to the Hermosa Beach Pier and back.

"The wave of support that climbs year after year in honor of our kids is incredible," said Michael Greenberg, president of Skechers. "When we

started the Skechers Pier to Pier Friendship Walk seven years ago, 1,800 of us hit the beach to raise \$220,000 – and since then, our walkers have grown six-fold – with more than \$5.5 million donated over the years, all dedicated to enrich and inspire our children."

Now one of the largest events in Southern California supporting children with special needs and education, the Skechers Pier to Pier Friendship Walk supports The Friendship Circle, an organization that assists children with special needs and their families through one-on-one peer



“...This Walk and everything that it gives is a wonderful legacy – one we will share for years to come.”

- Michael Greenberg, President, Skechers

to grow into inspired, enlightened, confident adults – and over seven years, we’re already seeing its long-term effects: from the lessons our kids have learned in classes that would have been shelved, to friendships that will last a lifetime. This Walk and everything that it gives is a wonderful legacy – one we will share for years to come.”

Beyond co-sponsor Nickelodeon, other sponsors included Wells Fargo, Steel Sports, South Bay Vein and Laser Group, The Claudette and Ethan Rickett Care Foundation, Ross, Zappos.com, Tour de Pier, DIRECTV, United Legwear & Underwear Co., Body Glove, Kids Foot Locker, United Legwear, JAKKS Pacific, Marshalls, Cushman & Wakefield, Caskey & Caskey, Siltanen & Partners Advertising, Continental Development, Northrop Grumman, Equinox and Chevron. ■

From left to right: Sugar Ray Leonard, Michael Greenberg, President Skechers, Brook Burke-Charvet, Tommy Lasorda and Robert Greenberg, CEO, Sketchers



mentoring and social recreational programming – as well as funding education foundations to retain vital academic programs, maintain smaller class sizes, improve libraries and upgrade school technology.

A number of celebrities turned out to support the Skechers Pier to Pier Friendship Walk, including boxing legend Sugar Ray Leonard, the brand’s new ambassador, in his first appearance at the event, as well as TV personality Brooke Burke-Charvet, fitness expert Denise Austin, and Hall of Fame baseball manager Tommy Lasorda, who have all made multiple appearances throughout the event’s history. Ray Leonard said, “When you say ‘kids’ to me, I’m there. This is my first, but believe me – this will not be my last.”

Added Burke-Charvet: “The Skechers family has had a vision, and it keeps growing. It is so amazing to see everyone come out. Together, we make a difference and we increase the power of community.”

“I have a deep appreciation for our volunteers, our celebs, our community, and our incredible sponsors like Nickelodeon, Steel Sports and so many amazing corporations with a conscience who come together year after year to make the world a better place for our children,” continued Greenberg. “This event means that kids with special needs and students from kindergarten to high school are getting the care, support and nurturing they need



ONE-ON-ONE



SGB DIVES INTO THE STORY BEHIND THE RUNNING SPECIALTY GROUP NAME CHANGE WITH FRANK PRUITT, SVP BRAND STRATEGY AND EXPERIENCE.

By Thomas J. Ryan

Running Specialty Group (RSG), the running chain owned by The Finish Line Inc., in October said it would rebrand all its banners to JackRabbit over the next two years. “Based on extensive research, we found that this name will resonate well with a broad audience of U.S. consumers, and will generate strong brand loyalty over time,” said Glenn Lyon, chairman and CEO. The announcement garnered a lot of attention and some controversy on social media both from shops and customers. Last December, Finish Line admitted it was exploring shifting to one banner across nameplates. Here, Frank Pruitt, SVP Brand Strategy and Experience, RSG, discusses the reasons.

What Drove The Decision To Shift To One Banner? We evaluated every aspect of our brand assets to determine which direction would most benefit the customer and achieve our future brand goals. Our customer wants something they can relate to, be inspired by, connect emotionally to and be a part of locally. We want our brand to be more than a store. We want to create captivating experiences in our communities unique to JackRabbit that are grounded by expert knowledge and appeal to a broader definition of “why I’m passionate about running.”

RSG Has A Portfolio Of Great Banners. Why Jackrabbit? JackRabbit speaks to our core competencies as experts in running as a vibrant and distinctive name that evokes an active lifestyle. Aligning on this one distinctive name allows us to take our vision and anticipated customer experience to the next level.

In What Ways Does Shifting To One Banner Help RSG? With JackRabbit, we rally around one purpose and story while connecting with a broader audience within active lifestyle. JackRabbit provides a consistent blueprint

for our brand experience and personality that is scalable and still preserves a strong presence of the local running scene. By creating a clear, consistent message across our fleet, it supports loyalty and digital efforts and elevates our customer and community experience at every touch point.

To our customers, the local JackRabbit team offers a familiar face in their community and a trusted resource. When traveling and they go on a run, they have comfort in knowing JackRabbit still has them covered. While the face may be different from their local JackRabbit, they have confidence in the service and expertise knowing our team will connect them to the local running scene during their visit – it’s the same core brand experience with a unique community tie.

Does Run.com Or Boulderrunning.com Become Jackrabbit.com? We recently launched JackRabbit.com as the primary digital experience hub for the brand. As we transition our family of shops to the new branding, the site experience will grow with more localized content per community.

I’m Sure Some Store Associates And Customers In Local Markets Are Disappointed, Or Will Be Disappointed, To See The Banner Change. Are You Addressing This? Some customers are unsure of what the JackRabbit brand position will mean for them or how it will impact the service they receive. With a gradual rollout planned, the branding has yet to transition to JackRabbit for much of our fleet. The service, expertise and community presence that our customer’s value remains very much at the core of who we are and what JackRabbit stands for. Our vision is to embrace our heritage, which is deeply rooted in running and heighten the overall experience. We will work hard to communicate with our customers and community partners to ensure they are aware of the changes coming, know what to expect as we move forward with the JackRabbit brand and how it will positively impact their experience. **What Are The Details On The Rebranding Plan?** We’re going to gradually rollout the JackRabbit brand by market centered on local running events over the next two years. We kick-started the rollout in the NYC market leading up to the NYC marathon this month.

Earlier This Year RSG Shifted From Expansion To Focus More On “Operational Excellence.” Can You Update Us On Any Progress? Our JackRabbit re-branding initiative focuses on operational excellence and delivering a consistent, high level of service for the customer. It’s about



Frank Pruitt SVP Brand Strategy and Experience

evolving as a brand by aligning with a clear, singular vision to further cultivate strong ties to each of our local communities.

Will You Start Expanding Again Soon? We continue to be focused on our current portfolio of great locations. Our mission continues to be clear and that’s to provide FIT solutions to our local communities by delivering personalized service, curated product and captivating experiences. ■

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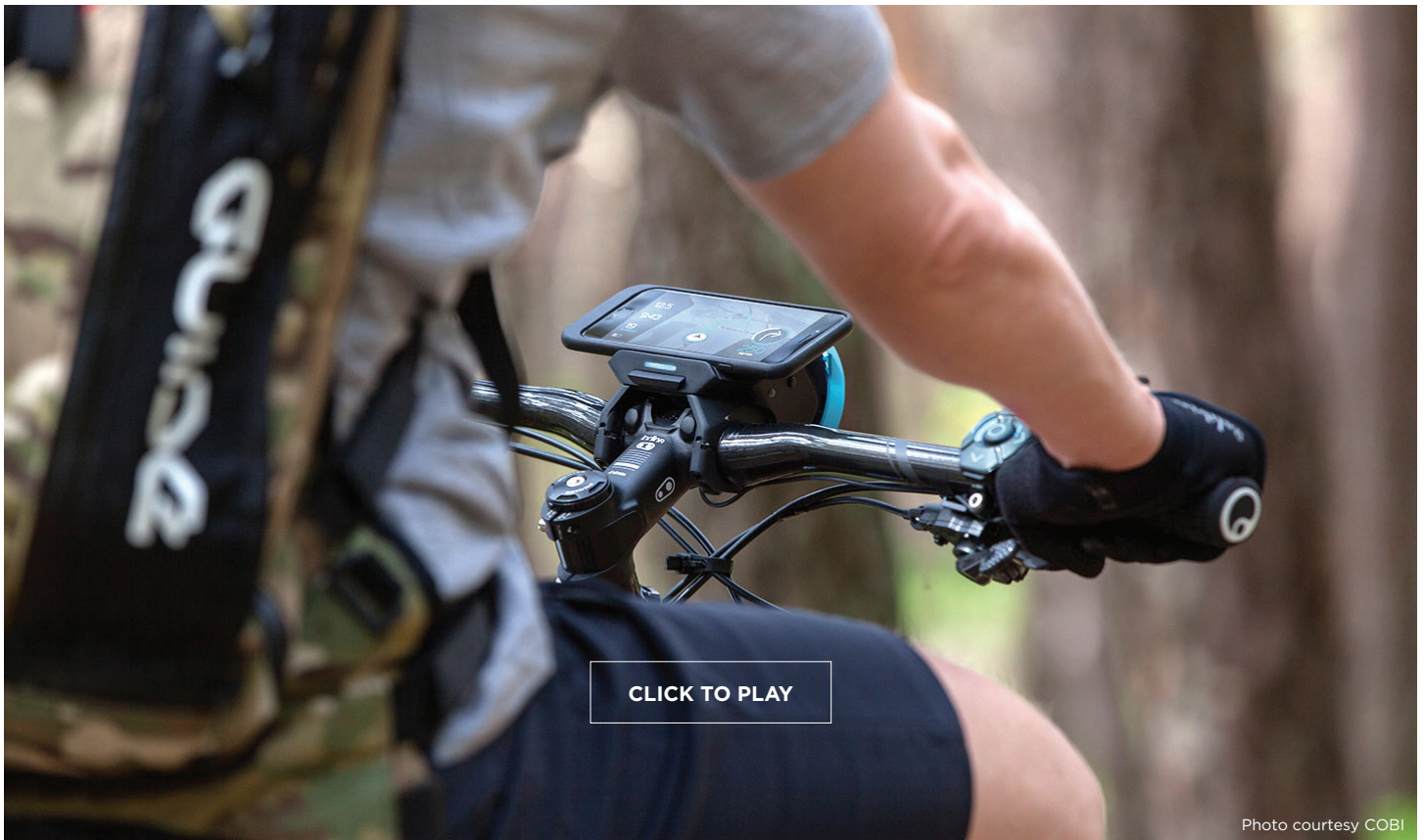
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VENDOR FOCUS

COBI TO LAUNCH 'CONNECTED BIKE' SYSTEM IN JANUARY

The German start-up is among a growing number of Kickstarter graduates pioneering the emerging urban cycling category.

By Charlie Lunan

Fortified with \$4.5 million in seed capital, German startup COBI GmbH is making a push in North America in a bid to get a leg up on other Kickstarter graduates in the rapidly emerging "connected bike" space.

Founded by former employees of the digital marketing agency Razorfish, COBI describes itself as "not a bike company, but rather a tech company within the bike sector." "Our focus is on the user rather than on technology," the company said. COBI has 35 employees worldwide with offices in San Francisco and Frankfurt, Germany.

COBI and its eponymous brand, which takes its name from the acronym for "connected

bike," made waves on Kickstarter last December by pre-selling 1,872 of its systems and raising \$401,666. That made it the most successful Kickstarter campaign to come out of Germany and second most successful involving a cycling technology product. The success helped COBI raise \$4.5 million in seed capital in April, which the company has plowed into launching an e-commerce platform, broadening its product line and establishing a North American office in San Francisco.

Presented to the cycling industry at Eurobike in Friedrichshafen, Germany, earlier this year, COBI's innovation and functionality resulted in

a Eurobike Award in the Concepts and Services category. COBI was also named the Prototype and Overall Winner at the 2014 Bluetooth Breakthrough Awards, was a 2014 IOT Innovation World Cup Innovator of the Year, and 2015 Best of Mobile Innovation Winner.

COBI also just announced it has been selected as a Consumer Electronics Show (CES) 2016 Innovation Awards Honoree in the Vehicle Intelligence product category.

The COBI system consists of a mount and charger for a smartphone, an app and a handlebar-mounted six-button controller. Sold separately for \$70, the controller allows riders to take phone



COBI System Upclose

calls, switch from navigation to fitness apps, skip songs, and control turn signals and e-bike settings as needed via their phone's Bluetooth connection. The smartphone can also be set up to run off a bike's dynamo hub or e-bike battery.

The company will begin shipping three models in January, including: a standard COBI for \$179; a COBI Sport with a headlight for \$229; and a COBI Plus with a sensor-equipped rear light that serves as a brake light and signal indicator for \$259. Together with the controller, that puts the COBI in the \$250 to \$320 range.

COBI is marketing the unit as a way for cyclists to reduce clutter by consolidating bike computer, navigation, security alarm, bell and light into an iOS or Android smartphone.

"What we call 'Connected Biking' is the experience of tapping into over 100 bike-specific data features in a single unit," said Chief Marketing Officer Andreas Freitag. "Bicyclists can tailor COBI to their preferred riding experience, whether it's commuting in the city or out on training or finding adventure on the road or trail." The product was also inspired from the founders' experience in the automotive industry.

While the company is working on adding ANT+ connectivity used by many heart rate monitors, power meters and other sensors, COBI is primarily targeting urban cyclists. The system already works with the most recent models of Bosch e-bike drives and will support BROSE, TransX, Continental, Impulse and other drives hitting the market next year.

While e-bikes are catching on much more slowly in the U.S. than they did in Europe, Accell North America will offer COBI-equipped IZIP and Raleigh e-bikes in the United States in first quarter of 2016.

COBI is still mulling its wholesale distribution plan, said Scott Kaier of Verde Brand

Communications, which COBI hired this fall to coordinate its marketing in North America. "What we can say at this point in time is that we are working on an innovative solution to allow all IBDs to participate in the success of COBI," Kaier told SGB. "COBI will be an accessory bike dealers can sell. If it comes as OEM equipment, dealers will have a point of differentiation and a solid extra to help make the sale. Heart rate monitors, power meters, and even dynamo hubs will be among the extras bike dealers can sell."

California bike dealer Jeff Selzer does not see COBI luring sport cyclists away from the Lezyne and Garmin GPS accessories he sells, but does see potential for both OEM and aftermarket distribution of COBI and other connected bike systems among less performance oriented urban cyclists.

"My hope as a retailer is that the technology becomes so ubiquitous that every light manufacturer I carry can work as a stand-alone unit

or dovetail with smartphones in much the way cyclometers have done with ANT+ or Bluetooth," said Selzer, general manager of Palo Alto Bicycles, which sells a few e-bikes from Faraday and Haibike alongside sports bikes from Trek, BMC and Kona.

What Selzer does not want to see is bike manufacturers loading up their bikes, which he sells at 35 percent margin, with accessories that displace his aftermarket sales of lights, computers, racks and other add-ons that earn him 40 to 50 percent margin.

Thanks to Kickstarter and Indiegogo, dealers already have several of those options to choose from. This summer, two new minimalist navigation devices quickly sold through their early bird offers of £30 and of £50 (\$45 and \$70) on Kickstarter. The handlebar mounted Haize and Beeline look and work much like compasses that instead of pointing north, point to the destination the cyclist has set up in his or her smartphone navigation app. Rather than receiving turn-by-turn directions, the cyclist gets to improvise their own route guided by a simple arrow or blinking LEDs. Creators of both devices say they wanted to find a hands-free navigation aid for urban cyclists without eliminating the fun of exploring new routes, which is core to their love for cycling.

But for now, COBI seems to have a corner on the completely integrated cycling electronics market. COBI believes it is the first integrated system to "intelligently connect" your bike with your smartphone in an all-in-one smartphone holder with charging function, bike computer, navigation system, security alarm, bell, and light. ■



COBI Founders (seated) with Team COBI.
Photo courtesy Tomy Badurina



Sport Insoles Broaden Consumer Base

The insoles category, continually bolstered by athletes' enduring injuries, has been expanding smartly for years. But the minimalist craze – with its attention to barefoot-feel – worked against the supportive message insoles promised. With a shift back to cushioned and even maximalist styles, the insoles category is gaining renewed respect.

By Thomas J. Ryan

More runners (not to mention walkers, skiers and cyclists) are seeking the functional support of aftermarket insoles. Midsole materials that launched successfully over the last 12 to 18 months have done so primarily based on the “feel” they deliver creating opportunity for the insole category to deliver more options for the consumer.

“The idea that there isn’t just one ‘right’ product that is ideal for everyone is starting to be more widely accepted and is certainly reflected in the way that we are developing new products,” said Matt Gooch, Superfeet’s product development and education manager. “Being able to provide an insole product line that features multiple shapes and an array of different materials that enable the consumer to select the right fit, function and feel is going to be critical to long term success in this industry going forward.”

Pam Gelsomini, OrthoLite’s president, said the minimalist running craze created a need for insoles that provided high levels of cushioning in very thin applications and, in some cases, creating the underfoot cushioning in the strobil layer with no post-applied insole.

“When shoes are not equipped with a comfortable insole, the consumer will look elsewhere for a replacement which has also resulted in a surge in aftermarket insole offerings. Ultimately, the brands are trying to create a complete product that they can market with optimum comfort which starts next to the foot in the insole,” said Gelsomini.

Jeff Antonioli, Spenco’s VP of sales and marketing, pointed to many new aftermarket insole companies to arrive in the category as a sign of the overall strength aftermarket insoles as a category has. “Athletes are looking for diverse options to solve a particular problem or enhance their physical talents. That’s why we offer many different insoles ranging in stability from lightweight cushion to high rigidity,” said Antonioli.

Beyond run, insole vendors are seeing strength in ski, hike and cycling while exploring new activities such as hunt. The popularity of CrossFit and functional fitness underscores the need for insoles to handle activities such as weight lifting. Walking and dress are bigger categories that many insole manufacturers are capitalizing on, and the interest in women’s-specific models is emerging. However, injury remedies and prevention still drive much of the innovation in the space.

Replacing Factory Insoles...Here’s Why.

CurrexSole

CurrexSole, Europe’s leading athletic insole brand that quickly established a foothold in the U.S. over the last two years, is focused on its RunPro and ActivePro insoles, both priced at \$50. Worn by marathoner Gilbert Kiptoo and U.S. Olympic marathon hopeful Becky Wade, the RunPro is designed to fit the wearer’s foot profile and a runner’s motion patterns. Available in three profile heights (High, Med, Low), the RunPro includes a deep heel cup and triple layers for moisture wicking with a mid-layer to reduce blisters. Other features include 3D DAT for natural foot guidance, PROPO+ for rebound, and medium Rebound Poron to support initial foot contact. The ActivePro



Photo courtesy Hickory Brands NB

is Europe’s top soccer insole and claims to be the only insole engineered to fit precisely with athletic cleats.

Hickory Brands NB

Hickory Brands NB (New Balance) Supportive Cushion, \$45, features Abzorb cushioning pods with Poron Urethan Technology at the heel and forefoot for shock absorption. The NB Motion Control Insole, \$45, offers a deep heel cup, external heel stabilizer, arch and metatarsal supports.

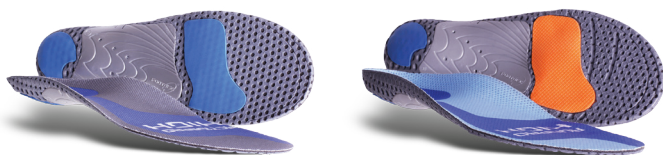
Earlier this year Hickory Brands reached an agreement to distribute FootBalance customizable insoles in the U.S. A signature item is the FB Dynamic Blue, \$90 offering shock absorption and moderate support. Its in-house brand, 10-Seconds Arch 1000, \$35, features anatomically shaped arch support and a deep heel cup. Poron cellular urethane provides shock absorption and the breathable, anti-friction top cover helps prevent blisters.

Icebug

Swedish footwear brand Icebug offers the Slim, \$47, designed for lower volume shoes and ideal for running, cleated shoe sports and cycling. A double-arc heel design reduces pressure on the plantar fascia. The low friction top cover is longwearing and easy to clean. For maximum shock absorption, the Fat, \$47, features an extra layer of open-cell Poliyou foam.

Icebug’s insoles feature Arch Flex System technology developed in collaboration with Ortolab, Sweden’s leading orthotic lab. Icebug launched the insole under the ArchFlex name several years ago but it has rebranded to Icebug.

Icebug’s insole addresses the metatarsal arch, which helps with forefoot comfort and shoe fit, especially for over-pronators. Said Evan Wert, president of Icebug USA, “Our desire is to build and develop products to get consumers outdoors, on feet and engaging with nature....at any level. Consumers are looking for products that help them stay healthy and comfortable, and that’s what Icebug is all about.”

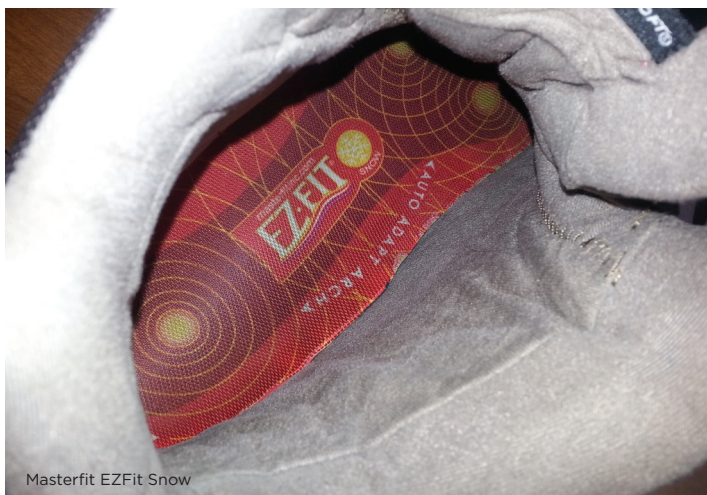


CurrexSole ActivePro

CurrexSole RunPro



Icebug Slim



Masterfit EZFit Snow

Masterfit

Masterfit will launch the EZFit collection, Version 3.0 of its popular EZFit cut-to-fit insole collection. Now called EZFit QF (QuikFit) both the Snow, \$40, and Universal, \$39, have improved Auto-Adapt arch molding. They are also available in regular and low volume to fit the complete range of arch shapes. New graphics and packaging are part of a robust upgrade to the collection.

Also new is a microwaveable custom arch called EZFit+ that uses Masterfit's InstaForm Gel, a heat-moldable gel composition. EZFit+ can be pegged for do-it-yourself sales, \$50, or fabricated in shop.

Masterfit is also introducing its AirVac Insole Molding System redesigned custom molding system. The molding capabilities and on-board analysis tools open the custom insole molding market segment to a wider spectrum of footwear retailers. When teamed with Masterfit's Instaprint QF no-glue, no-grind insole liner, sales techs can make hi-definition custom insoles in about 15 minutes with minimal training.



OrthoLite Patchwork

OrthoLite

For the OEM market, OrthoLite continues to develop more sustainable products and introduced a new version of the popular X40 High Rebound insole called EcoX40. Gelsomini said model replaces 12 percent of the petroleum used to make the traditional foams with a bio-based formulation made from

castor beans. The Patchwork OEM line uses the waste foam from its production to create a visual effect on the top or bottom of any insole, dye-cut into small shapes such as flowers, stars, or any logo design and then molded with a base of regular foams for performance. OrthoLite's original 3D Skive "egg-crate" design has been extended to a new 3D Skive design called Wave.



Powerstep Pinnacle Plus Full Length Orthotics

Powerstep

Powerstep, owned by Remington Products Co., launched the Pinnacle Plus Full Length Orthotics, \$38, with a built-in metatarsal cushion to spread and cushion the

metatarsal heads. The Pinnacle Plus helps alleviate plantar fasciitis, Morton's Neuroma and ball-of-foot pain. It also features dual layer cushioning with firm but flexible arch support and a heel cradle for motion control.

Sidas

Sidas, the French company celebrating its 40th year, is introducing the 3Feet Active line of insoles, \$50, designed for sports involving dynamic forward foot flexion. Available in three styles to fit a range of foot shapes, from low to high, 3Feet Active insoles feature a shell to support low, medium and high arches, a gel pad under the heel for cushioning, forefoot perforations for breathability and construction to aid forefoot propulsion.



Sidas 3Feet Active



Sof Sole Gel Heel Spur Pad

Sof Sole

Sof Sole Gel Heel Spur Pad, \$13, disperses heel strike shock, relieving pressure and reducing stress. The dual-density foam and gel design provides relief for heel pain and other heel-related issues.



Sole Softec Ultra

Sole

Sole, Canadian-based insole specialist's Softec Ultra, \$45, offers a 3.2mm layer of Softec cushioning to the moldable EVA base layer with a moisture-wicking top sheet. The footbed is ideal for loose-fitting footwear or specialized activities where maximum cushioning is preferable. Benefits include equalized pressure distribution, reduced plantar fascia strain, increased balance, and improved natural heel cushioning. Sole is now officially a member of 1% for the Planet, the world's largest environmental network.



Sorbothane Ultra Sole for women

Sorbothane

Sorbothane Ultra Sole for women offers an air-infused foundation for support with a Sorbothane heel inlay for shock absorption and impact protection. A Sorbothane Gel forefoot pad adds cushioning and returns energy. Tapered insole designed with a narrow cupped heel provides support and stability specific to a woman's biomechanics.



Photo courtesy Spenco

Spenco

Spenco teamed up with Unequal Technologies Co. to launch a new line of insoles for athletes wanting to reduce the risk of foot and leg impact stress injuries. The co-branded Protective Insoles, \$40, are available in two types: one for cushioning that provides ultra-thin comfort, and one for stability that has a lightweight orthotic cradle. The insole marries the cushioned heel, deep heel cupping, orthotic arch support, metatarsal dome, and a cushioned forefoot with protection and shock attenuation.



Photo courtesy Superfeet

Superfeet

Superfeet created an insole specifically for the hunt market with the Trophy Series that comes in four insoles, each designed for the different hunting seasons. The Men's Trophy Hunt, \$40, has a top layer of

Merino wool for warmth and cushion underfoot. Less rigid than Superfeet's Guide insoles the hunt version has no break-in period but provides arch and heel support. The Women's version, \$40, features a narrower heel cup and a higher arch. All of the insoles feature Scentlok technology, high-impact waterproof foam, Silent Step stabilizing shape, and Ground-Sense Impact Dampening technology. Other key offerings include the Superfeet Trophy Guide, \$50, which comes equipped with a supportive carbon fiber EVOLyte stabilizer and memory foam for moisture management. The Trophy Trail, \$30, eliminates heat through ventilation in the forefoot with a microsuede moisture wicking top layer.

ThermaCELL

ThermaCELL Heated Insoles, \$135, have temperature settings controlled by a wireless remote control for temperature adjustment without removing shoes or boots with two temperature settings or no heat. From Schawbel Technologies, ThermaCELL Heated Insoles are water resistant and tested by SATRA, a world leader in footwear research and development. The insoles are good for 500 uses. The ProFLEX ThermaCELL, \$185, adds removable, rechargeable batteries, USB or wall charging, and polyurethane foam. ■



ThermaCELL Heated Insoles



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Mount Prospect, IL 60056
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nsga.org

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NOVEMBER

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

DECEMBER

- 1-4 The Running Event
Austin, TX
- 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 Outdoor Retailer Winter Market
Demo Day, Salt Lake City, UT
- 6-9 CES Show
Las Vegas, NV
- 7-10 Outdoor Retailer Winter Market
Salt Lake City, UT
- 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
- 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

FEBRUARY

- 1-2 SIA On-Snow Demo
Denver, CO
- 1-2 SIA Nordic Demo
Denver, CO
- 2-4 FFANY
New York, NY
- 2-4 Worldwide Spring Show
Reno, NV
- 8-10 EORA SE February Show
Greenville, SC
- 16-17 MWSRA New Model Demo
Afton Alps-Hastings, MN
- 17-20 Sports Inc. Outdoor Show
Phoenix, AZ
- 18-22 NBS Semi-Annual Market
Fort Worth, TX

MARCH

- 8-9 SFIA National Health Through Fitness Day
Washington, D.C.
- 17-19 Imprinted Sportswear Show (ISS)
Atlantic City, NJ

APRIL

- 1-2 SFIA Litigation & Risk Management Summit
New Orleans, LA
- 19-21 Imprinted Sportswear Show (ISS)
Nashville, TN

MAY

- 22-25 NSGA Management Conference and Team
Hilton Head Island, SC

I AM...SGB

NIC SIMS BIKE MARKETING MANAGER SCOTT USA



Over the years, Nic Sims as bike marketing manager for Scott USA, has become entrenched in the bicycle industry with more than a quarter century of experience. Originally from England, now based in Salt Lake City, UT, he accepted his current position with Scott in September 2013. Prior to that, Sims worked as the Outside Communications Manager for technical action sports apparel company Alpinestars. However, the bulk of Sim's experience comes from Specialized – where he worked as a customer service manager for 14 years, R&D shop manager and athlete support manager for three years, then in global marketing and PR to round out 22 years with the brand.

What Pulled You Back Into The Bicycle Industry After Leaving Specialized? The opportunity to work with Alpinestars in motorsports appealed to me, being a fan of motorsports too, but keeping a foot in the door of cycling with their cycling line, was something that I wanted to try. I didn't want to be years down the road thinking, what would have happened if... It did make me realize though that the bike industry is in my blood, and I wanted to get back into it full time - but I wanted to find the right brand that I could sink my teeth into. Scott had just gone through some changes, so it was the perfect time to join the team and help get the brand out there and to start getting them the recognition they deserve.

You Have Been Face To Face With Some Of The Most Buzzed About Pros In The Industry At The Tour De France. When Was That And Who Was Your Favorite To Hang Out With? I used to go to the Spring Classics and the Tour back in 2006-2010 and yes I was around some of the biggest names in the sport. But the one thing you

soon realize is that all these guys are just like you but maybe a little or a lot faster; it's just boys and toys at the end of the day. I would say that I didn't have any favorites, but Cavendish was a good character to be around and obviously there was no language barrier. Ex -pros like Bobby Julich were great too.

What Was Your Most Epic Bike Ride? I think one of the best weeks of riding was when I did a trip to Europe with media and we rode the Tour of Flanders course on Saturday then watched the race Sunday and got to witness Cancellara ride away from everyone to win. We then rode the Ghent Wevelgem course and the next day watched the race from a small café on the Kemmelburg climb. Then we pre-rode all the cobbled secteurs of Paris Roubaix, riding the Arenberg Forest secteur behind the Quick-Step squad, and getting to watch the race on Sunday chasing it around the countryside to see it in four or five spots before dashing to the Velodrome for the finish.

What Advice Do You Have For People Who Strive To Rise Through The Ranks? Learn all you can and if openings come up that you want to try, then go for it even if you don't have the experience. You never know what can happen. I have been a mechanic, customer service rep, I ran the R&D shop and helped give feedback to the engineers, I worked sponsored athletes/teams to make sure they had the equipment they needed to compete, and finally ended up on the marketing side. I think all these positions have complemented each other, and I understand multiple areas within the industry and how they affect one another. So that would be my take away. Make sure you try everything you can and bring a little of your personality to each position. ■

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