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Accelerating, Intersport launches a “Heart of Sport” brand platform

Continuing the progress already achieved, **Intersport International Corporation** reports an overall sales increase of 3.2 percent for its affiliated sports retailers around the world in 2019, reaching a total retail turnover of €12.3 billion after VAT in terms of euros and recovering from growth of only 0.7 percent in the previous year.

Sales went up in all quarters, including the fourth one, which is critical for Intersport because of its heavy winter sports business. Despite extremely warm temperatures in many regions, sales rose by 3.9 percent in the last three months of 2019.

This relatively positive development was attributed by IIC to the implementation of the group’s new Intersport 2.0 strategy, which focuses on initiatives in category management, data management, exclusive brands, elevated store concept, digital and omnichannel as well as strong partnerships with strategic brands.

Growth took place in spite of a further reduction in the number of affiliated physical stores. They were 5,421 at the end of 2019, down from 5,562 at the end of 2018 and 5,647 at the end of 2017. While developing e-commerce in one way or another, many retail members are setting up bigger stores.

By the end of last year, Intersport was represented in 43 countries. As previously reported, Intersport recently enter new co-operation agreements with **Suning** in China and **Momentum Sports** in Taiwan.

The Euro Jan. 24 rates	
Czech Koruna	25.14
Danish Krone	7.473
Hungarian Forint	336.0
Norwegian Krone	9.931
Polish Zloty	4.253
Pound Sterling	0.843
Swedish Krona	10.54
Swiss Franc	1.071
U.S. Dollar	1.103
Brazilian Real	4.601
Canadian Dollar	1.449
Chinese Yuan	7.656
Japanese Yen	120.9
Russian Ruble	68.18

The figures don’t include those of **The Athlete’s Foot**, the more lifestyle-oriented franchising operation acquired by IIC in December 2012, which continued to develop faster in the past year. The banner’s franchisees, many of whom are also Intersport franchisees, raised their sales by 11 percent to € 0.4 billion.

The TAF store network counted 561 stores in 30 markets at the end of 2019, coming up from 537 stores in 2018. Combining its two retail banners, the Intersport Group was represented in 57 countries on five continents with a retail turnover of €12.2 billion including VAT.

New energy is coming into the Intersport group under the management of **Steve Evers**, who became its new chief executive at the beginning of last year. Expressing optimism about the future development of the group, he said that Intersport wants to “physically, digitally and emotionally – in a sustainable manner – connect consumers to the heart of sport.”

With this in mind, the Intersport Group is launching a new series of campaigns to help consumers find their place in sport. The idea is based on an international consumer survey of over 1,600 customers in the UK, Germany and France. The key finding: Everyone needs a place in sport. The research revealed that 66 percent of the respondents said that they still haven’t found their place in sport, with 88 percent admitting that they don’t see themselves as athletes.

Going under the name “**Wherever You Take Training**,” Intersport’s new international campaigns come with a new brand platform - “**Heart of Sport**” - telling real stories from local communities. It is aimed at reminding people that wherever they enjoy their sport, Intersport has the right products, advice and enthusiasm.

The first two parts of the campaign started in mid-January, featuring a strong woman in Scotland and an inner-city champion in London who trains kids in an outdoor callisthenics gym operated by the **Steel Warriors**, a charity that takes steel knives from the street and recycles their metal to use it in its fixtures. It will be followed by two more chapters in February, with two German runners taking the sport to unexpected places and levels.

The campaigns are based on the fact that Intersport is a “hyper-local” retailer, says Evers. They were developed by an Amsterdam-based creative agency, **We Are Pi**, which had won the global **Intersport Agency of Record** account in early 2019.

The campaigns will run on TV, on social media, in print, in-store and in other formats in 12 European countries, including the five major ones, as well as in China and Australia.

ANWR grows by over 50%, up bt 9.6% in sporting goods

The ANWR Group, the big international cooperative of independent retailers based in Mainhausen near Frankfurt that controls Sport 2000 and other franchised chains in various countries, proudly boasted an increase of almost 54 percent in its total business volume to €14.6 billion in 2019. The year marked the 100th anniversary of the retail organization as well as the exit on Nov. 30 of its chairman and chief executive, Günter Althaus, after ten years at its helm.

The strong growth was mainly due to the development of the group's financial services. The business volume of its two financial services companies specializing in bank-supported central settlements and factoring, the DZB Bank and Aktivbank, jumped by around 75 percent to €11.6 billion. This was mainly due to Aktivbank's acquisition last June of the central settlement business of VR-Leasing.

Frank Scheuffelen, the executive board member responsible for finance and corporate development, stressed that ANWR's expansion in this segment is "consolidating the economic power, stability and thus the resilience of our Group in the long term." The efficiency and profitability of its financial services is helping to support the retail members of the cooperative and provides a basis for further investments in its core business areas, he added.

The three areas in which ANWR specializes as a cooperative of retailers are footwear, leathergoods and sporting goods, and the volume of centralized settlements carried out by the group in these areas followed different dynamics last year. In the footwear sector, where the group operates through sub-groups such as ANWR Schuh, Garant, Rexor and Quick Schuh, the volume declined by 1.5 percent but remained above €1.5 billion. Centralized invoicing for leathergoods fell by 1.7 percent to €107 million.

On the other hand, centralized settlements in the sporting goods sector increased by 9.6 percent to almost €1.3 billion. ANWR operates in this sector mainly through retailers affiliated with Sport 2000 in Germany, Switzerland and the Benelux countries.

Looking at 2020, ANWR says it wants to strengthen its online retail platform, **www.schuhe.de**, and its control tool, **Qualibet**, and launch a similar online platform in the sporting goods sector. It plans to introduce a new concept for members of ANWR Schuh highlighting comfort and trendiness in footwear. It will also expand its showroom and office facilities in Mainhausen, setting up a new 2,500-square-meter building that sports brands such as **Nike** and **Asics** can use from the middle of this year to interact with ANWR members.

New round of financing for France's Snowleader

Snowleader, the leading French online retailer of winter sports and outdoor products, says it has collected €10 million in new financing from three institutional investors, including a fund owned by the **BNP Paribas** bank, to help pursue its international omni-channel strategy.

The company's revenues have grown by 38 percent to €35 million in the last six months, with about 40 percent of the turnover generated outside France. According to **sport-guide.com**, Snowleader is targeting sales of €100 million by 2025 or 2026 in its business plan.

Created 11 years in Annecy, the company has been generating profits in the last few years from its annual sales. While developing its online sales, it has also opened physical stores in Annecy, Chamonix and Lyon. The company wants to use the funds to open a new distribution center and to open two stores per year in areas where it is experiencing strong demand over the internet, giving customers the option of a click & collect service.

In addition to other French cities like Paris, Toulouse and Strasbourg, Snowleader is also targeting foreign locations like Zurich, Brussels and London for its future stores.

Thomas Rouault, co-founder and chief executive of Snowleader, will remain the majority shareholder after the new financing round, the third one since the company's founding. In the latest transaction, three former investors have cashed out and the new ones have injected new equity, says *sport-guide.com*.

Decathlon opens its first stores in Luxembourg and Kazakhstan

Decathlon will open its first store in Luxembourg, located in the Royal-Hamilius shopping mall, during the first quarter of this year. It will be a "**Decathlon City**" concept store, with a relatively small area of 630 square meters, spread over two floors.

A "Click & Collect" service will allow customers to pick up orders placed online. They will also be able to request home delivery. In addition, the French sporting goods retailer is considering a two-hour bicycle courier delivery service, which would deliver orders to addresses in Luxembourg's city center within two hours.

Meanwhile, Decathlon has opened its first store in Kazakhstan, at the Grand Park mall, in its largest city, Almaty. Decathlon had been mulling market entry since 2018, but opened the first store only a few days ago.

The company has also begun to sell products online in the former Soviet republic, as it is now doing in Russia. It has yet to be seen whether the company will be delivering its products to locations outside of Almaty.

Decathlon has opted to offer only a limited range both in its brick-and-mortar store and online, concentrating on running apparel, skis and some skiing accessories. It seems in fact that the big French sports retailer is only testing the local market to figure out its long-term development strategy, as it did at first in Japan and elsewhere.

Several sporting goods retailers have left the Kazakh market over the past couple of years, including **Megasport**. The leading Russian sporting goods retailer, **Sportmaster**, is believed to be

the leader in the local market, with stores in 15 cities. The arrival of Decathlon may drive other smaller players out of the market.

As previously reported, Decathlon entered the Serbian market in December, opening a store in the **Big Fashion** shopping mall of Karaburma, a suburb of Belgrade. The company's development in the region is coordinated by **Michel Kappler**, who is also responsible for Decathlon in Croatia and Slovenia.

Sportmaster employs AI to improve retail network's effectiveness

The biggest Russian sporting goods retailer has adopted artificial intelligence, using algorithms supplied by a Kiev-based IT company, **Softline**, in a bid to streamline the internal logistics network. Softline has supplied the hardware and a software system, **Nvidia DGX-2**, whose performance can be compared to that of dozens of servers.

The new system will be employed to improve Sportmaster's market-demand forecasts for the timely replenishment of inventories. In addition, it is expected to increase the effectiveness of marketing programs and personnel management within the retail network.

Alexey Turenkov, director of Sportmaster's IT department, said that a human being would just be unable to execute the tasks that the group currently needs accomplished to cope with the size of its retail chain. It is necessary to place new orders for tens of thousands of product items daily for its 500-plus stores to avoid empty shelves and excessive stocks in the warehouse.

Data analysis with machine learning will also help the retailer increase the effectiveness of its marketing.

VF lowers its outlook

In releasing its results for its third quarter ended on Dec. 28 on Thursday, **VF Corporation** said its business so far this year has performed at the high end of its group's long-term growth objectives, but the management admitted that it will not be able to meet the targets it had previously set for the current financial year. Consequently, VF's share price dropped by more than 9 percent.

In particular, the management is now projecting a currency-neutral increase of only 4 percent in the full financial year for VF's Outdoor segment, or a rise of about 5 percent excluding the impact of acquisitions. The company's previous guide was toward a growth of 6 to 7 percent in Outdoor, excluding acquisitions, but **Timberland** didn't perform as expected in the latest quarter, recording a drop of 4 percent in sales, and the management is now predicting that the brand will show a decline of between one and two percent for the year.

The management is raising the outlook for Vans, forecasting growth of about 15 percent for the brand, and tightening the outlook for The North Face to an increase of around 9 percent. Overall, the updated forecast for the full year calls for an organic sales increase across the group of 7 percent in constant dollars to about \$11.75 billion, slightly below the previous target of \$11.8 billion.

The company is also now projecting a currency-neutral increase of only 10 to 11 percent in its total direct-to-consumer revenues for the full year, including growth of around 20 percent in the digital channel. That's down from earlier expectations of an increase of 12 to 13 percent. The management indicated that, in contrast to Vans, Timberland and The North Face were relatively weak in e-commerce, and pointed out that TNF's digital team has been reorganized.

As before, the management expects that the gross margin will go up by 0.8 percentage points to 54.1 percent and the operating margin up by 0.9 percentage points to 13.8 percent. However, earnings per share are predicted to show an increase of about 18 percent, below the previously forecast range of 19 to 21 percent.

Led by The North Face, sales and profits both rose during the third quarter in the Outdoor segment by 3 percent in dollars and by 4 percent in constant currencies, building up to a profit of \$348.9 million on sales of \$1,659 million.

TNF recorded a sales increase of 8 percent in the quarter, led by its business outside the U.S., with a solid performance in the urban exploration and mountain lifestyle ranges and a high single-digit

increase for footwear. The brand's performance was more mixed in the U.S. While it's still a minor contributor to TNF's revenues, its **Futurelight** technology has triggered a fourfold increase in the number of units sold in the product series that feature it since it became available to consumers four months ago.

The 4 percent quarterly sales decline at Timberland, which is being placed under new management as reported, was attributed to challenging conditions for its men's footwear range in the Americas and Europe, particularly in classics, which was only partly offset by a solid momentum in apparel, outdoor footwear and the brand's operations in China.

Led by Vans, whose revenues jumped by 13 percent, the Active segment booked a 5 percent increase in profit to \$286.5 million on sales of \$1,239 million in the quarter. In constant currencies, Vans' sales and profits went up by 9 percent and 6 percent, respectively. The highest growth was recorded in the Progression segment, up by 30 percent, followed by apparel at 14 percent and heritage footwear at 8 percent.

In the latest quarter, the group's net income was nearly flat at \$452.7 million, but 11 percent higher than a year ago excluding discontinued operations. The group's total revenues grew by 5 percent to \$3.38 billion, with an increase of 6 percent in constant currencies.

Across the group, while wholesale revenues increased by 4 percent, DTC revenues increased by 7 percent with growth of 17 percent online and 6 percent on a comparable store basis.

While the U.S. market was affected by a more promotional environment, leading to a sales increase of only 3 percent, VF continued to perform well in China and its business in the EMEA accelerated in the quarter. VF grew by 30 percent in China, with five percentage points attributed to earlier shipments ahead of the Chinese New Year. It recorded organic growth of 7 percent in EMEA, with DTC growth of 13 percent – up by 30 percent in digital and 11 percent in same-store sales.

Excluding the company's occupational Work business, whose revenues increased by 2 percent to \$480.1 million, the group's

total sales were up by 6 percent in dollars and 7 percent in local currencies.

Just before releasing its quarterly results, VF said that it was examining strategic options for the divestiture of some of the brands in this segment (see the news brief in the Corporate section of this issue). It plans to keep **Timberland Pro** and **Dickies**, whose sales grew by 13 percent in the latest quarter, driven by growth of 68 percent in China and 16 percent in online sales. Excluding those divestitures, the segment should book a sales increase of 2 to 3 percent in constant dollars for the year.

On an adjusted basis, excluding exceptional items and the jeans business spun off last year, the gross margin and the operating margin both went up by one percentage point in the quarter, reaching 55.7 percent and 17.6 percent, respectively, partly aided by a favorable currency effect. VF's forecast for this year's profits has remained unchanged.

Lululemon is riding impressive momentum

Lululemon Athletica seems unstoppable. Citing a strong holiday period, it has upgraded its revenue and earnings guidance for the fiscal fourth quarter ending on Feb. 2, 2020. The company's shares, which nearly doubled in value last year, gained an additional 3 percentage points after the announcement.

It now anticipates that revenues will be in the range of \$1,370 million to \$1,380 million based on a total comparable sales increase in the mid- to high teens on a constant dollar basis. This is up from a previous forecast of revenues of \$1,315 million to \$1,330 million based on a total comparable sales increase in the low double digits on a constant dollar basis.

Diluted earnings per share are expected to be in the range of \$2.22 to \$2.25, instead of \$2.10 to \$2.13. This suggests that the company is likely to report a net profit of around \$290 million for the quarter, up sharply from \$218.5 million for the same period a year ago.

In recent years, Lululemon has been booming, lifted by the continued rise of the athleisure trend. The company has also been ben-

efiting from the growing popularity of health and wellness, as well as a greater awareness of environmental issues, with the brand communicating on sustainability.

The brand is gathering the fruits of strong investments in product development, using proprietary performance fabrics, that have allowed it to offer a multitude of interesting new products and to expand in the men's sector. It has also invested in its loyalty program and worked to improve the in-store shopping experience, forming a powerful bond with a loyal customer base that will buy almost everything in Lululemon's online and offline stores, regardless of price.

Crocs raises its guidance

As it recorded its strongest fourth quarter ever, **Crocs** decided to raise its revenue guidance for the last three months of 2019. The company now expects revenues to have risen by 21 percent from the year-ago period, reaching a level of \$260 to \$262 million, up from a previous forecast of \$245 to \$255 million and compared with \$216 million a year-ago.

For the full year 2019, the company anticipates a growth in revenues of around 13 percent from the previous year. The adjusted gross margin is expected to have been around 51 percent, excluding non-recurring charges associated with the company's new U.S. distribution center. The adjusted operating margin is forecast at 11 percent.

Speaking at the **ICR Conference 2020**, the management said the company is riding strong momentum, which allowed it to deliver strong direct-to-consumer (DTC) growth and wholesale sell-through. It added that 2019 was a vintage year for the company, with revenues at an all-time high. Crocs shoes claimed top spots on Google's list of most-searched shoes in 2019.

The company said it recorded strong increases in DTC comparable sales in all the regions where it operates, with gains of 21.0 percent in the Americas, 5.6 percent in Asia, and 13.3 percent in EMEA. In particular, the management said that its business in Europe is benefiting from a steadily growing brand "hotness." Crocs continued to

focus on digital commerce, with online sales in the region jumping by 33.2 percent in constant currencies in the third quarter.

The management believes that Asia represents the greatest growth opportunity in the long term, as Crocs benefits from increased brand recognition in China through a partnership with a local celebrity, Yang Mi. It recorded strong e-commerce growth there last year. EMEA also represents a major opportunity, and the group's focus in 2020 will be on maximizing digital commerce through own e-tail and marketplaces, while driving wholesale growth through distributors.

The management highlighted the increasing relevance of its clogs, with sales jumping by 21 percent in 2019 to represent 53 percent of footwear sales, driven by impactful collaborations across the globe. The strongest growth was recorded in the Americas, but there was also continued momentum in Asia and EMEA. Sales of sandals progressed by 11 percent to represent 25 percent of all footwear sales.

For the next season, the company is particularly bullish about its new Brooklyn wedge sandal, which incorporates Crocs' LiteRide foam footbed technology and intuitive upper straps. It comes with various heel heights. Sales of Crocs' LiteRide sandals doubled in 2019. The brand is working on an enhanced version of its LiteRide range that is expected to come out in 2021.

The big growth in the fourth quarter came after a positive third quarter in which the company recorded a strong performance in America and globally from the wholesale channel, e-commerce and higher comparable store sales.

Moving forward to 2020, the company anticipates full-year revenue growth of 12 to 14 percent.

Uncertainty over the non-recreational use of Nike's Vaporfly

Last year, the Kenyan distance runners **Eliud Kipchoge** and **Brigid Kosgei** made headlines around the world. Kipchoge became the first human being ever to run a marathon – albeit an unofficial one – in less than two hours, while Kosgei broke

the women's world record for the same distance. Both were wearing the **Nike Vaporfly**, and the uproar over the shoes has been constant ever since.

Inside the Vaporfly is a curved, carbon-fiber plate embedded in lightweight foam to put a little more spring in one's step. How much more? According to Nike itself, **four percent more** – by comparison with Nike's second-bounciest shoe, the **Zoom Streak 6**. Back in 2017, a Nike-sponsored study by the **University of Colorado** found that the Zoom Vaporfly was more efficient than the Nike Zoom Streak 6 or the **Adidas Adizero Adios Boost 2**. More recent, independent studies seem to confirm the figure of four percent. Again, the figure refers to extra spring, not to lower marathon times.

Now the world of track and field is waiting for its governing body, formerly called **IAAF**, to make a pronouncement. Is wearing the Vaporfly tantamount to cheating? Does it deserve a ban from professional running? **World Athletics** has been examining the case for months but so far has said nothing. **Nicole Jefferies**, the body's head of communications, has told **Business Insider** that World Athletics is "still deliberating" but hopes to announce something by the end of January.

According to **Reuters**, World Athletics will likely tighten the regulations on "technological doping" in elite sports competitions. It already has guidelines about the thickness of the midsole in shoes for the high and long jump. On the other hand, Kipchoge himself has told the **Daily Telegraph** that running in the Vaporfly is "fair" and that athletics as a sport should embrace technological advances.

Meanwhile, life in the business world goes on. **Matt Powell**, senior sports-industry adviser at the **NPD Group**, is suggesting that the controversy might spur sales. "Nike has not made a lot of pairs here, so [there is] no real financial impact." Moreover, a banned shoe might prove irresistible to amateur runners who would like to shave a few seconds from their times. **Carol Spieckerman** of the **Spieckerman Retail** consultancy agrees that sales are likely to rise and adds that a ban on the Vaporfly for its "exceptional performance" would actually leave Nike's reputation intact.

There are plenty of amateur runners who might love to own a pair of Vaporflies. The shoe retails for about \$250. The Swoosh seems to playing up this devilish angle on its website, which not only calls the Vaporfly the “fastest shoe we’ve ever made” but also describes it as having a “built-in secret weapon.”

Athletes in Japan have been taking to the Vaporfly as well, especially after its prominent use in a recent, much-watched race there. Japan is, of course, home to two of Nike’s sneaker rivals, Asics and Mizuno. According to one analyst at Iwai Cosmo Securities in Tokyo, Masami Nakanaga, the market worries that without a ban “Nike could take Asics’ share of the athletic sneakers segment.” With a ban, however, “the concerns over sales, as well as the advertising impact that comes from in-competition use, would be relieved.” Tim Morse, an analyst at Asymmetric Advisors in Singapore, disagrees. “It could be a pyrrhic victory for Asics,” he says.

Anyway, *Bloomberg* has noted that more than 84 percent of the racers in Japan’s recent Hakone Ekiden relay marathon wore the Vaporfly Next% shoe worn by Kipchoge. Only six of them wore Asics, down from 51 a year earlier, and nine wore Mizuno, down from 24. The report noted that the winning team from Tokyo’s Aoyama Gakuin University had switched from Adidas to Nike.

New management for Kjus

Kjus, the Swiss ski, golf, and lifestyle apparel company acquired by Acushnet Holdings in July 2019, has made Brooke Mackenzie president of worldwide operations. A skier and golfer herself, Mackenzie joined Kjus in 2012, taking care of the brand’s North American operations. She used to own a real estate brokerage, Mackenzie Group, and currently sits on the boards of SnowSports Industries America and Rodd & Gunn.

Mackenzie takes the place of Nico Serena, son of Kjus’ founder, Didi Serena. Both of them are no longer with the company. Since the brand’s acquisition by Acushnet, she has held the overall management of the golf and lifestyle divisions, while being jointly

responsible for the company's management with Nico Serena.

Meanwhile, **Timo Regier** has been promoted from head of global sales to managing director of European operations. He continues to operate from the Swiss headquarters in Hünenberg. He started to work at Kjus eight years ago, responsible for international sales. Regier was formerly a commercial director and regional sales director at **Callaway Golf Company**.

Nico Serena, who was previously president of the ski division at Kjus, was made CEO of Kjus in 2017, taking over from his father Didi Serena, who founded the company in 2000 together with the Norwegian ski racer **Lasse Kjus**, a medalist in all five events of the **1999 World Ski Championships**. The company entered the golf outerwear and apparel markets in 2011.

Acushnet Holdings Corp. is a subsidiary of **Fila Korea** and owns the golf brands **Titleist**, **Pinnacle** and **FootJoy**. In 2018, Acushnet generated net revenues of \$1.63 billion.

Rossignol promotes sustainability

Differentiating itself from other ski companies, the Rossignol Group announced a few days ago the official launch of a new program of sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Called "Respect," it calls among other things for a 40 percent cut in the waste generated by its manufacturing processes by 2025 and a 30 percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, with an aim to become carbon-neutral by 2050.

It has already started to go in this direction, notably with the launch of a very ecological freeride ski for the next winter season, the **Blacks**, that has won an **Ispo Gold Award**. Without compromising on performance, the ski uses 100 percent certified wooden core from durably managed forests. It also uses between 15 and 70 percent recycled materials in other parts of the ski. Rossignol plans to make 50,000 pairs of the new model at the group's Artes factory in Spain, which uses only renewable energy.

Rossignol is aiming for half of its skis to be made with certified materials. The company started using natural materials like linen in

its skis in 2009, and it launched an ecological ski binding in 2012. It wants to reduce energy and water consumption.

The Rossignol Group is carrying out the majority of the production in Europe, close to the market, so it emits relatively little quantities of CO2 through transportation. To be transparent, it says that it currently produces 93,000 tons of CO2 and 3,500 tons of waste materials, but it intends to report on future savings.

Rossignol also wants to stop using polyester bags by 2030 and instead use recycled polypropylene and other materials, particularly for shipments of clothing. It is introducing new recycled cardboard packages this year for shoes and other products. The company intends to reduce the use of paper through greater digitalization. It also wants to boost its repair services.

The company started an interesting program in 2015 in France, Switzerland, Austria and Italy, buying back old skis of all the brands from ski rental shops and sending them to a recycling partner in France. The program is linked with a loyalty program that benefits the client and tends to raises the market shares of the company's own brands, including **Dynastar**, **Look** and **Lange**. It plans to launch a program for the collection of used skis in collaboration with French ski instructors in March.

Within two years, all its suppliers and subcontractors will have to follow a charter of good conduct in the area of social responsibility as part of its new "Respect" program. Rossignol says it is working on improving the quality of work inside the company, being committed to gender equality and other guidelines.

Rossignol is already a partner of **Reforest'Action**, supporting a program of planting 25,000 trees in Tanzania this year, and of **Protect Our Winters (POW)**, a big international lobby that is encouraging people in 12 countries to take public transportation rather than their own cars to ski resorts, traveling in a more responsible way. Rossi collected €35,000 for POW through a Black Friday promotion at its stores, making it last for one week and calling it "White Friday" (*SGI Europe* Vol. 30 N° 39+40, Nov. 28, 2019).

Outlining these and many other initiatives including the signing of the United Nations Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action for the growing Rossignol apparel collection, the group's chief executive, **Bruno Cercley**, said that it was reacting to customers' demands for more transparency and greater use of recycled products. In announcing the new program at the company's head office near the French Alps, he showed a survey in which young skiers indicated that they are becoming quite conscious of the dangers of climate change. "It's going very fast," he said.

He said he felt that the group had an obligation to take action against climate change because it is the biggest company in the overall ski sector, with an estimated market share of 21 percent, and because there is a real risk that many ski resorts will be left without snow in the future. Temperatures are rising twice as fast in the mountains as on the plains.

The green bona fides of Adidas

This year, for the first time, more than half of the polyester in Adidas products will derive from recycled plastic waste. If things stay on track, moreover, by 2024 Adidas will be using recycled polyester exclusively whenever it is applicable. Adidas has been working on a number of other sustainability initiatives as well.

This year, the German company expects to raise the number of shoes produced with plastic waste collected on coasts from last year's 11 million pairs to a record 15 to 20 million pairs. It produced one million such pairs in 2017 and five million the next year. A further stage in its plans is the introduction of whole new product categories founded on sustainability criteria.

Adidas' first fully recyclable running shoe, the Futurecraft Loop, has been in prototype since 2019. Every component down to the laces is made from the same recyclable material, and the whole is fused together without glue. Last year, 200 pairs were tested by 200 athletes and returned to Adidas, which recycled them and produced a second generation, which is now once again on the athletes' feet. The Futurecraft Loop running shoe should make its debut in 2021.

Meanwhile, the group's outdoor unit, **Adidas Terrex**, will show its first 100 percent recyclable Futurecraft Loop anorak at the **Ispo** fair Munich in the next days. The garment, which has earned an **Ispo Gold Award**, also features the new **Parley X Primaloft** insulation. Adidas has also embedded Parley upcycled material in a **Myshelter Parley** rain jacket, a **Free Hiker Parley** hiking boot and **Terrex Two Ultra Parley** trail-running shoes.

Adidas established its much-publicized partnership with the environmental group **Parley for the Oceans** in 2015. **Adidas x Parley** products are made with plastic waste collected from coasts. Together, they organize the annual **Run for the Oceans**, whose 50 events worldwide drew 2.2 million runners last year and resulted in \$1.5 million in donations to Parley for children's educational projects in developing countries.

A similar experiment in bio-fabricated materials is the tennis dress that Adidas has developed jointly with **Stella McCartney**. Made of cellulose and protein, the dress was introduced before last year's Wimbledon tournament. Meanwhile, **Reebok** has been using renewable materials such as cotton, corn, algae and natural rubber to produce the **Reebok Cotton + Corn** and **Reebok Forever Floatride Grow** shoes. Adidas has been obtaining sustainably produced cotton mainly from the **Better Cotton Initiative** since 2018.

At the retail end of its business, Adidas introduced the "**Infinite Play**" program last year. Consumers in the U.K. can now return still-functional Adidas footwear or apparel to a partner, **Stuffstr**, by using the Adidas app. They then receive a voucher for the company's online store. Returned products are either resold or recycled.

Adidas eliminated plastic bags from its stores in 2016, and its other sites have since followed suit, eliminating about 40 tons of plastic waste per year. From 2021, distribution transport will be using recycled packaging, and a recycling loop for transport packaging is being tested in Spain within the framework of the "**Fashion for Good**" platform.

As a signatory to the **UN Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action**, Adidas has pledged to have reduced its greenhouse-gas emissions – from its own and its suppliers' activities – by 30 percent by 2030

as compared to 2017 levels. It has also pledged to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. The company currently draws almost all its electricity from renewable sources.

Since 2000, Adidas has ranked best in the sporting goods industry in terms of environmental and social contribution, based on the **Dow Jones Sustainability Index**.

New horizons for W.L. Gore in sustainability

As part of its commitment to improve the sustainability of its products, **W.L. Gore & Associates** is working hard on the development of a new waterproof/breathable membrane based on a non-fluorinated material. In an interview with us, **Achim Loeffler**, who has been in charge of consumer-oriented fabrics for Gore since July 2019, said he is confident that it will be ready for adoption for the first time in certain products for the autumn/winter 2023/24 season, providing additional benefits as compared to its present membranes.

The strongest focus now is on the gradual elimination of PFCs of environmental concerns by that same time, investing significant resources in the project and working also with partners on the polymerization process. Gore wants to see a greater amount of recycled materials and durable water-repellent (DWR) solutions used in its lamination.

Gore has gone a long way in terms of innovation and sustainability since it invented **Gore-Tex** in 1969, working on sustainability beyond life cycle assessment for about 30 years, without compromising with functionality. According to Loeffler, half of the “associates” in the group’s fabrics division are involved in R&D. Involved in many other sectors, the group employs a total of about 10,000 “associates.”

In the past few years, Gore has rolled out many new variations of its waterproof/breathable technologies including Gore-Tex Surround, Gore-Tex Infinium and 3D Fit, a practical shoe insert that has been adopted by **Adidas** and **Salomon**. It is developing new uses for Gore-Tex Infinium with several outdoor shoe brands in the Montebelluna region. At **Ispo Munich**, it will present various technical alternatives for its **Gore-Tex Pro** range of laminates that are integrated in

the products of several sports brands for the next autumn/winter season (see the related News Brief in this issue).

Reaching out to the final user, Gore-Tex is also working with internet retailers on more customized solutions for consumers and relying more than before on social networks in its marketing campaigns. The idea is to turn Gore-Tex into a more experiential brand.

Loeffler, who has worked for the group for 18 years, focusing on footwear and gloves in the past five, said that Gore's business is growing now in particular in the area of running shoes, thanks to Gore-Tex 3D Fit. It is developing in the outdoor sector in line with market trends around the world, remaining stable in Europe and growing in China.

The FTA between the EU and Vietnam makes progress

The Committee on International Trade of the European Parliament has approved the free trade agreement signed last June by the European Commission with the government of Vietnam, paving the way for its endorsement by the full Parliament in February, ahead of its ratification by the European Council. It calls for the total elimination of duties on both sides over a period of 10 years.

For sensitive items, it will take seven years for the elimination of EU duties on footwear from Vietnam, but other types of shoes will be liberalized immediately. For textiles and apparel, it will take between five and seven years to abolish duties on sensitive items, and three years for the others. These and other industrial products originating in the EU will have to bear the "made in EU" label when they enter Vietnam. Imports of fabrics from the EU into Vietnam will become duty-free as soon as the agreement becomes effective.

Footwear represents 16.2 percent of Vietnam's total exports and 4.7 percent of its total exports to the European Union. The corresponding figures for textile and garments are 30.4 percent and 4.4 percent. In the first 11 months of 2019, Vietnam's total shoe exports grew by 13 percent to \$16.5 billion, driven by a 36

percent increase to \$5.96 billion in the U.S. because of the trade dispute between the U.S. and China, which has softened, as reported elsewhere in this issue. Increases of less than 7 percent were recorded in exports to individual EU member states.

The FTA should help European importers to negotiate better deals with Vietnamese manufacturers in competition with the generally larger orders placed by U.S. importers, which are seeking to diversify their sourcing away from China.

At the same time, the parliamentary committee endorsed the parallel **Investment Protection Agreement** negotiated by the two parties, which is set to promote the development of environmental standards and human and labor rights in Vietnam. This agreement will have to be ratified by all the member states of the EU.

Neil Narriman, president of the Federation of the European Sporting Goods Industry (**Fesi**), pointed that the two agreements, if ratified, would eliminate 99 percent of tariffs, cut red tape and open up public procurement markets. Narriman believes it would also likely expand the Vietnamese workforce in the sporting goods industry, which already exceeds 4.5 million people. Fesi's secretary general, **Jérôme Pero**, noted Vietnam's progress in freedom of association and in narrowing the gender gap in the workplace.

A truce between the U.S. and China

The governments of the U.S. and China have signed a "phase one" trade deal that was confirmed in December after a year and a half of back-and-forth tariff impositions. The deal covers intellectual property rights, which China has been known to circumvent in a variety of ways, and ensures that China will increase its imports from the U.S.

It doesn't impose new duties on products imported into the U.S. from China, as previously threatened by U.S. President **Donald Trump**, and halves some other duties to 7.5 percent, but it does not remove current tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of Chinese goods. These will remain in place until, in some unknown future, China and the U.S. agree to "phase two."

The footwear and apparel industries are pleased but unsatisfied, as they would like to see all tariffs lifted. **Matt Priest**, president and chief executive of the **Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America (FDRA)**, believes that the deal “creates a little breathing room for the industry and a little more certainty” but that “applying duties under 301 was not the right policy.”

According to the FDRA, the shoe industry pays \$3 billion in duties every year, with the applicable tariffs averaging more than 12 percent and rising to 67.5 percent on certain children’s shoes. **Steve Lamar**, who became president and CEO of the **American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA)** at the start of the year, observes that Trump’s tariffs on Chinese-made footwear “are tariffs on top of what we’re already paying” and therefore limit the industry’s investments in supply chains, manufacturing and labor. Trump, he continues, “has certainly weaponized tariffs,” which “might be a part of our trade environment for many more years to come.”

What can we expect from Amazon in 2020, after 25 years in business?

Amazon is the first brand to have achieved a brand value of more than \$200 million, according to the 2020 edition of the **Global 500** report of the world’s strongest brands just issued by **Brand Finance**. **Google** and **Apple** follow in the ranking. It was the third consecutive year that Amazon took the top spot in the rankings, with a brand valuation of \$220.8 billion, 17.5 percent higher than estimated for last year. **Nike** took the 40th slot with a value of \$34.8 billion, 7.3 percent more than a year ago. **Nike** stopped working with Amazon’s marketplace last year, but it reportedly represented a minimal component of its distribution network, and many other sports brands are still working with Amazon in many parts of the world.

Sharing some insights on how Amazon will develop in its anniversary year, an American expert who has been following this company for many years, **Larry Pluimer**, feels that the Seattle-based online giant has become more complex and diverse than ever before, with such tools as **Alexa**, **Fire TV**, **Amazon Web Services**, and **Eero Wi-Fi** routers (acquired by Amazon last year).

Now, Amazon is leasing over 200,000 square feet in Redmond, Washington, for a team dedicated to **Project Kuiper**. Of course, the project will take years, as it aims to deploy a constellation of 3,236 satellites in low Earth orbit for low-latency, high-speed broadband communications.

Last year, the company announced **Amazon Sidewalk**, describing the project as a “new long-term effort to greatly extend the working range of low-bandwidth, low-power, smart lights, sensors, and other low-cost devices customers install at the edge of their home network.” What exactly Amazon wants with this is still unknown, but Pluimer suspects that Amazon itself wants to become an internet service provider. And why not? In recent years, Amazon has proven time and again that it can take over infrastructures that it once used itself. This has happened in the field of logistics as well as in cloud computing.

Amazon’s advertising division is already the third-largest digital advertising platform in the U.S. – behind Google and **Facebook**. Advertising, currently bringing in over \$10 billion in revenues, is a high priority for Amazon. Nevertheless, Pluimer speculates that advertising on Amazon will soon reach its limits because the consumer is less willing to accept advertising in the search process.

In addition, Amazon is based on efficiency: customers want to buy fast and stay connected only as long as necessary. The implication of this, of course, is that limited time-on-site translates directly into limited opportunities for Amazon to present multiple advertisements to the visitor. This is a disadvantage as compared to Facebook, where people spend hours browsing the site every week and might be exposed to hundreds of ad impressions.

Costs per click will soon be hitting a plateau, too. This is simply a function of brands not having unlimited dollars to spend. The prediction here is that **Amazon Advertising** will introduce tools and programs to become a stronger competitor of Google’s **GDN**, offering better attribution data, clean room options and exclusive targeting/re-targeting options. Amazon Advertising will also

lean toward the development of its partner agency programs, formally embracing the traditional brand/agency relationship while empowering agencies with tools to help sway client budgets toward Amazon.

Pluimer also predicts that we will see more videos on Amazon in 2020. As a result, vendors and re-sellers will need to do their storytelling and communicate product value props visually. Investments in 10-second media will become increasingly valuable.

Pluimer, a former director of **Arc'teryx**, ten years ago founded **Indigitous**, a Seattle-based agency that specializes in providing select brands and their investors with the strategies, services and intelligence to maximize sales and marketing opportunities with Amazon. He had previously worked for two years on the outdoor recreation market at Amazon.

Ispo Munich wants us to be active, responsible and creative

These are the three key words chosen by Ispo Munich for its Jan. 26-29 edition, as the world's leading sporting goods fair is about to celebrate its 50th anniversary with a new and broader positioning in the world of sports.

We hope to learn more about this during the fair. Meanwhile, Ispo is calling on all the participants to "Be active." The trade show is inviting retailers, brands and sporting-goods manufacturers to address the worldwide spread of sedentary living and general idleness by discussing the links between exercise, nutrition, health and mental fortitude. Special focus areas, networking spaces and events will all be tailored to this objective.

There will be three special focus areas, partly curated by industry experts to present concepts in sports and fashion and answer some burning questions about developments in sports as they relate to society as a whole.

Body & Mind will take place in Hall B3 and take a holistic approach to humans and their environment. Presentations will run daily, from 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., and cover such topics as "Bio-

hacking & Neuroathletics” and “Yoga & Wellbeing.”

The **Alpin Snow & Safety Summit**, in Halls A3 & A4, will deal with safety and sustainability on and off the slopes. Panel discussions with sporting goods manufacturers, retailers, representatives from associations, politicians and others will consider sustainability deals and the opportunities and risks of ski tours. Demonstrations will introduce visitors to hard-shell jackets made of recycled materials, pin bindings, ski-tour bindings and airbags.

On a physically less active note, the **ES_COM Electronic Sports Competition & Unileague e-Football**, at the East Entrance, will cover e-sports, with exhibition matches and experts on hand to explain what this rising phenomenon is all about.

Also planned are the **Ispo Munich Sports Week**, which we already reported about in the last issue, and the **Mobile Health & Fitness** focus area (Hall A6). All times, dates and other information are available online from the Ispo Munich 2020 events database.

In line with the motto “**Be responsible – Sport for a planet worth living on,**” the issues of sustainability and corporate responsibility will be a key theme throughout the fair, increasingly embraced by the sports brands themselves and their suppliers in the **Texttrends Hub** in Halls C1 and C2. A “**Sustainability Hub**” in Hall A2 will provide an extensive program of presentations including a talk on Sunday at 10:30 AM about the future of sports fashion by **Neonyt**, the international sustainable fashion fair recently held during the **Berlin Fashion Week**. Themed guided tours will be offered to wade through the product displays.

As before, Ispo also wants the industry to “Be creative.” As usual, the 100 innovative products chosen by a jury for the annual Ispo Awards will be displayed in Hall B1, not far from our own stand, which will showcase an innovative way of delivering our news and analysis to the industry at its usual location between the West Entrance and Hall B1. Innovation will be a key topic in the program of conferences of the **Ispo Academy** at the West Entrance. Innovative start-ups will have their place in the **Ispo Brandnew Village** in Hall B5.

Micam diversifies into sports shoes

Micam Milano, the world's largest footwear trade show, wants to capitalize on the growing sneaker and urban outdoor trends with the second edition of the **Players District**, a new segment within the fair in which companies like **Lotto**, **Joma Sport**, **CMP** and **Garmont** participated last September in a dedicated space. The encouraging results of this experiment have led the organizers to continue the initiative at the next edition, scheduled to be held in Milan on Feb. 16-19, but the list of the participants is not yet available.

Micam's Players District will again be anchored by **Skechers**. Like us with *SGI Europe* and *Shoe Intelligence*, the American footwear brand has been playing successfully in both the fashion and athletic segments of the footwear market, with a presence in regular shoe shops as well as in the sporting goods stores. It has had one of the largest booths at the fair for years. Big sporting goods retail groups, including **Intersport**, have been successfully running growing networks of lifestyle shoe stores under different banners in the last few years.

At last September's edition of Micam, 8.5 percent of its visitors showed interest in the sports shoes presented at the fair, with 34 percent of them looking for men's sports shoes and 40 percent for women's shoes. Furthermore, 16 percent of the interest in this segment was concentrated on trekking and other outdoor shoes, with an even split between men's and women's styles.

Another reason for Micam's new initiative, which is supported by **Assosport**, is the fact that Italy has many sports and outdoor brands, especially in the area around Montebelluna, and that many of them continue to manufacture some or all of their products in Italy.

In the first nine months of 2019, Italian producers exported 11.8 million pairs of sports shoes, 9.5 percent more than in the corresponding period of 2018. Exports of the items reached a level of €650 million, 6.7 percent higher than in the first nine months of 2018. Furthermore, while Italian consumption of footwear in general stagnated, Italian households spent 3.4 percent more on this type of shoes than in the corresponding period of 2018, after an increase of 5 percent in 2018.

Corporate

VF Corp. is exploring options for divestments in its occupational workwear segment. The nine brands under review are **Red Kap**, **VF Solutions**, **Bulwark**, **Workrite**, **Walls**, **Terra**, **Kodiak**, **Work Authority** and **Horace Small**. **Dickies** and **Timberland Pro** are excluded. For VF's chairman, president and chief executive, **Steve Rendle**, "divesting these brands would leave VF with a simplified portfolio of higher-growth, consumer-focused brands" – such as **Vans**, **The North Face** and **Timberland** – while providing "financial flexibility" for other initiatives. The divestments would shift VF further toward retail and away from B2B, the main distribution channel for the nine brands, which last year accounted for \$865 million of VF's total of \$11.8 billion in revenue and for about half of the workwear segment's revenue. **Barclays** is serving as financial adviser and **Davis Polk** as legal counsel for the review.

Hummel has acquired two other Danish sports brands, **Halo** and **Newline**, from **Performance Group Scandinavia**. The purchase price has not been disclosed. Founded in 1981 by a parachutist and pentathlon athlete, **Helge Petersen**, Newline specializes in running and cycling apparel, complemented by running shoes since 2011. Halo is a recent extension of the Newline brand that takes inspiration from the Danish special forces. Its name refers to the "HALO" parachute jump, an acronym for "high altitude, low opening." Accordingly, Halo apparel has a somewhat more military feel than the training and running apparel offered under the Newline brand. Both brands feed into Hummel's objective, which its chief executive, **Allan Vad Nielsen**, describes as becoming "a visible international player in the running and training market." Hummel's current strengths are in team sports such as handball and football. The company, which dates back to 1923 and is also involved in casual sportswear, established subsidiaries in China, India and the U.S. last year and is striving to reach annual revenues of 2 billion Danish kroner (€268m-\$297m) by 2023.

Milliken & Company, which operates in chemicals, consulting and training, floor coverings and textiles, has signed an agreement to acquire **Borchers Group**, a chemicals company in Westlake, Ohio, currently owned by the **Jordan Company**. The deal should close sometime this month, after clearing the customary hurdles. According to Milliken, Borchers' production – additives for coatings, inks and adhesives as well as a full range of cobalt-free driers, dispersants, rheology modifiers, wetting agents, polymerization catalysts and adhesion promoters – should serve

as a good complement to its own operations. Millikan is based in Spartanburg, South Carolina. In June of last year, it acquired **Polartec**, the well-known producer of fleece fabrics.

Philipp Plein, the German luxury fashion company, is discontinuing its dedicated sports line, **Plein Sport**. Instead, sports products will be integrated into the main collection in the future, with a potential especially for sneakers. The sports line was launched in 2016, with a plan to open around 50 stores within two years. From now on, there will only be Philipp Plein and the menswear brand **Billionaire**, a company in which the eponymous German designer has taken over the majority from the Italian entrepreneur **Flavio Briatore**. The Lugano-based **Plein Group** generated sales of €255 million in 2018.


Specialized lost its French office at Charmes-sur-Rhône to fire on Jan. 9. The cause remains unknown. The building was also the headquarters of an architectural firm. No one was killed. According to a local newspaper, *Le Dauphiné*, the French region of Ardèche will be providing financial aid to both firms. For now, the cycling company is focused on finding a new site for the 23 people who worked there. Another 12 employees complete Specialized's total staff for the markets of France, Wallonia and Romandy, the French-speaking part of Switzerland. The company's bicycles, parts, apparel and accessories flow through the Netherlands on their way to points of sale in France and the rest of Europe. The fire will not affect deliveries.


New Era Cap has announced that it will be celebrating the company's 100th year anniversary with special collections, global partnerships, and an exhibition at the **Buffalo History Museum**. The company was founded in Buffalo, in the U.S. State of New York, as a headwear company by **Ehrhardt Koch**, the great grandfather of the current president and chief executive, **Chris Koch**. Buffalo is still where the company has its global headquarters. To celebrate its 100th anniversary, New Era will launch special collections featuring new designs and product collaborations as well as re-issues of classic caps and apparel all through the year. The collections will also celebrate the future of the company through global partnerships with fashion brands like **Levi's**, **Havaianas**, **Helmut Lang** and **Yohji Yamamoto**; contemporary furniture brand **Modernica**; visual artist **Daniel Arsham**; the watch brand **Casio G-Shock**; and New Era's first-ever circular economy product with **Pentatonic**. In addition, the Buffalo History Museum will present the first comprehensive exhibit for the brand. The exhibition, scheduled to open in the autumn of this year, will feature artifacts from the brand's archives that have never been showcased before. These will include more than 150 pieces illustrating the company's history, from the first Gatsby-style hat to the first baseball hat worn on

the field, up until the first international apparel collection.


Ecco is setting up a new factory that will employ 1,400 people in Vietnam, according to a Danish financial newspaper, *Børsen*. Quoting the *Vietnam Economic Times*, the report estimates the initial investment at \$30 million. The factory is expected to be ready at the end of the year. Ecco already has factories in Indonesia, Thailand, China, Portugal and Slovakia.

In the summer of 2019, **Zalando** completed the construction of buildings X and O in Berlin. In April 2020, the e-commerce company will be starting the construction of another building (Z) in Friedrichshain, Berlin. The new building is expected to offer a flexible working environment, allowing employees to work individually as well as in teams. The building will have a contact point where employees, partners and clients can interact freely. There will also be conference rooms where training sessions and meetings can be held.

 The **Oberalp Group**, which owns **Salewa** and other brands, indicated at its recent sales meeting that its “Brand House” is going to soon add a sixth brand of mountain sports products. Declining to provide any details at this stage, **Ruth Oberrauch**, brand manager and sustainability manager of the group, said it is still working on the new project, but she denied that Oberalp is about to acquire a brand of sustainable women’s apparel. Ruth, who is said to be in charge of the project, is one of the three children of **Heiner Oberrauch**, the 61-year-old founder and president of the group. Meanwhile, one of the group’s brands, **Dynafit**, is set to move its head office in 2022 from the Munich area to a new €20 million complex in Kiefersfelden, next to the highway leading from Munich via Innsbruck to the Brenner Pass between Austria and Italy.

 **Anllian Capital** – a special-purpose investment vehicle belonging to **Anta Sports Products** that directly or indirectly owns just over 59 percent of **Amer Sports** through the **Mascot Bidco** consortium – is issuing convertible bonds with a zero coupon worth €1 billion. Issued at a price 0.25 percent higher than the principal, the bonds will have a five-year duration but can be redeemed after three years. If fully converted, they would give bondholders 2.95 percent of the shares in Anllian. Amer had a stock market capitalization of €4.66 billion prior to



indicates that the article was already featured in The Outdoor Industry Compass /  + indicates that the article was already featured in The Compass, but this is a new version with additional contents.

its acquisition by Mascot Bidco last year. Anta, which is the guarantor of the bond issue, currently has a stock market capitalization of more than 200 billion Hong Kong dollars (€23.2bn-\$25.7bn). The offering is managed by **Merrill Lynch, Citigroup** and **Morgan Stanley**.



Spartan Race, the global leader in obstacle course racing, recently announced the acquisition of **Tough Mudder's** U.K., Canadian and German events. This is the first step in an effort to merge both obstacle course race leaders. Events in these countries will continue to be operated by the same team and under the same brand name, but they will be organized under Spartan ownership. They will focus on teamwork and be organized as non-competitive festival events. The competitions will be handled by Spartan, which will continue to work with Tough Mudder's founders, **Will Dean** and **Guy Livingstone**, to complete the acquisition and the renewal of Tough Mudder's U.S.-based events and operations. **Kyle McLoughlin**, chief executive of Tough Mudder since July 2019, stepped down on Dec. 20. The company was struggling to pay vendors towards the end of 2018 but is said to have turned around in 2019. However, tickets for events in North America were no longer on sale on Dec. 23, when Spartan announced the merger.



+++ **Garmont** has obtained the **UNI EN ISO 9001:2015** label from **SGS** for the quality of its supply chain management and its response to the customers' demand +++ **Heralding** a 60th anniversary of the brand in 2021, the Canadian glove specialist **Kombi** is presenting its 2020-21 collections at **Ispo Munich** +++

Management


Andreas Heep, senior director of sales for fashion products in Central Europe at **Adidas**, has left the company at his own request, after working there for 22 years. He is said to want to follow new projects in the future. His successor is **Philip Clas**, who has been with the company for several years. Heep has significantly influenced the fashion business of Adidas. Under his leadership, **Adidas Originals** became one of the leading global lifestyle brands, with strong performance especially in the sneaker sector.

The supervisory board of **Intersport Germany** has appointed **Thomas Storck**, 51, as the new retail cooperative's new chief financial officer. A graduate in business administration and information technology, he will take up his new position in May. After various management posts at companies such as **Real SB-Warenhaus**, Storck took over the CFO positions at **Metro C&C Wholesale** and later at **Galeria Kaufhof**. As CIO of **Metro AG**, he was also a member of its Operating Board and the Investment Committee and also served as CEO of **Metro Germany**.

on the supervisory board of **Metro Logistik**. He succeeds **Hannes Rumer**. The post had to be filled because Rumer left the company at the end of March at his own request.

To consolidate its North American, European and Asian sales under single management, **Primaloft** has expanded **Chris Humphris**' purview as vice president of sales from the Americas to the world. Humphris has been dealing in sales at Primaloft for more than 20 years. He also spent 16 years with **Concept III Textiles**. He will continue to work out of Primaloft's headquarters in Latham, New York. Meanwhile, **Jochen Lagemann**, senior vice president and managing director for Europe and Asia, is adding a new role as president of a new unit, **Primaloft Licensing**, focusing on the use of the company's technologies in other segments than clothing, footwear and home textiles. He will be assisted by an expert in licensing, **Bob Sameski**.

Jim Pisani has resigned as global brand president of **Timberland** and is moving to the Midwest of the U.S. to be closer to his family. **Martino Scabbia Guerrini**, group president for EMEA at Timberland's parent, **VF Corp.**, will occupy Pisani's post until a successor is found, working with Pisani to ensure a smoother transition. Pisani took charge of the Timberland brand in August 2016. At the time, he had been president since 2008 of a former VF company, the **Licensed Sports Group**, that managed **Majestic** and other brands. Under his management, Timberland has been focusing on higher direct-to-consumer sales, sustainability and development in China, but the latest sales figures reported by VF indicate that it has not made much progress overall. Last November, VF placed **Mariano Alonso** in charge of **Timberland EMEA**, replacing **Timo Schmidt-Eisenhardt**, who was moved to **Napapijri**.

 **Magnus Wedhammar** has left **Sanuk**. He had been the surf-inspired footwear brand's general manager since July 2016, when it moved within California from Irvine to Goleta, the location of **Deckers**' headquarters. Deckers purchased Sanuk – founded by **Jeff Kelley** in 1997 – for \$120 million in cash in 2011. Before joining Sanuk, Wedhammar was senior vice president of product at **Sperry Top-Sider**. Earlier still, he was vice president of footwear at **Converse**. According to **ShopEatSurf**, Sanuk's top management has remained much the same since Wedhammar's departure. **Erik Ecklund**, senior director of sales, and **Seth Pulford**, director of marketing, are still in place, and it is unclear whether Sanuk will name a new general manager. **Wendy Yang** continues to lead the Deckers Performance Lifestyle Group, which includes Sanuk as well as the **Hoka** and **Teva** brands. In the last full fiscal year, Sanuk's sales totaled \$82.6 million, down 9.1 percent from the previous year. According to Deckers, Sanuk's total sales for the

current fiscal year are expected to decline by 30 percent.

+++ **Jeroen Snijders Blok**, a former chief operating officer of **Accell Group** who retired from the post at the end of 2018, has come back to the Dutch-based bike producer in the position of external affairs manager +++ **Hanesbrands**, the parent company of **Champion**, has appointed its chief accounting officer and controller, **M. Scott Lewis**, as interim chief financial officer until a permanent replacement can be found for **Barry Hytinen**, who left the company in November +++ **Charlie Ninegar**, a former vice president of **Spy Optic**, has been appointed to a similar role at **Nixon** +++

Distribution

Under Armour is reassessing its wholesale and direct-to-consumer strategy in Russia, where it intends to be an active player, following the liquidation of **Vostokininvest**, with which it signed a non-exclusive distribution and franchising agreement in 2017. By the end of 2018, the company had opened 16 Under Armour stores in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg, but all of them were closed in the last months of 2019. The contracts with Vostokininvest were terminated at the end of last year. There are still some Under Armour products available online in the country, in particular on the major Russian marketplace for fashion products, **Lamoda**.

This summer, **Megasport** will be taking charge of the distribution of **Lowa** throughout the Iberian Peninsula, following the bankruptcy last October of the German brand's former long-time Spanish distributor, **Gregal Sport**. Megasport's brand portfolio includes **Haglöfs**, **Black Diamond**, **Rossignol**, **Spyder**, **Peak Performance**, **Briko**, **Protest**, **Dynastar**, **Lange** and **Giro**.

MD Viper is taking charge of the distribution in Spain for **Rock Experience**, the Italian brand of sustainable outdoor apparel. Over the past few seasons, the company has begun to blend its technical fibers with a kind of merino wool (**Aqa Wool 2**) to improve the handling of moisture, odor and heat while keeping its fabrics soft and light. Its **99% Ecofriendly** line includes, for instance, polar fleeces made entirely of recycled PET plastic. Rock Experience was founded in 2013.

Hunter Boots has chosen **Socrep** as its distributor in Italy, starting in January. Founded in 1963 by **Franco Prinoth**, Socrep is based at Ortisei in the Italian Dolomites. It distributes the fashion brands **Canada Goose**, **Fred Perry Lavenham** and **Orlebar Brown**. It also distributes several mountain equipment brands, including **Alpina**, **Elan** and **Toko**, and the outdoor

brands **Mammut**, **Montana** and **Frischi**. Socrep has 5,000 square meters of warehousing space and four showrooms, two in Milan, one in Rome and one in Trani, Puglia. Hunter, which is well known for its **Wellington** boots, has been growing through its diversification into outerwear and accessories. Now footwear only represents about 60 percent of its revenues, which were reported to have reached £113 million (€133m-\$147m) in 2018.



Zimtstern, the German-based action sports brand, is launching a new apparel collection for skiers and snowboarders and has recently expanded its sales team. The former Swiss boardsports brand – once a part of **Sports Pool**, the Swiss company behind the **Belowzero** brand of ski and snowboard apparel – withdrew from the Swiss market in mid-2018. The brand was subsequently taken over by **Sönke Voss** and **Hans Allmendinger**, two German managers who had previously worked for **Sport 2000**. Last year, under its new ownership, it set up a head office in Germany and developed a new bikewear collection, including a line of sustainable clothing for trail bikers. Now, after the move to Germany, the brand is launching its first snowsports apparel collection. The new autumn/winter 2020/21 collection for bike, snow and lifestyle is already available to order.



Youngone Corp., the big Korean textile and apparel manufacturer, is investing 9 billion Indian rupees (€114m-\$127m) to set up eight new factories at the **Kakatiya Mega Textile Park (KMTP)** in Warangal, in India's state of Telangana. The factories should create up to 12,000 jobs directly or indirectly and will be producing knitted and woven apparel and technical textiles for export. According to KMTP, Telangana ranks third among India's cotton-producing states and boasts a good network of roads and railways. KMTP is being vertically integrated to cover the entire value chain in textiles. Youngone produces outdoor and athletic apparel, footwear and fabrics and operates other factories in Bangladesh, Vietnam, China, Uzbekistan and El Salvador. In 2015, it acquired a controlling stake in **Scott Sports Group**.



Movement, the Swiss freeski company, has teamed up with an American equity and investment firm, **Progression Brands Group**, as their new distributor to relaunch the brand in North America at the **Outdoor Retailer Snow Show**, scheduled to begin on Jan. 29 in Denver. Movement is offering a diverse range of skis, mainly for the all-mountain and touring categories. Past distributors for North America included Vancouver-based **Recreation Outfitters** in the late 2000s, **Garmont North America** in the early 2010s, **Liberty Mountain** in 2017 and, most recently, **Skimo Co.** of Utah. The renewed attempt to gain a foothold in North America follows the recent win of a 2019 *Backcountry Magazine* editor's choice award.

Retail

Sportspar.de, the German online outlet shop for surplus sports products, continues its internationalization. Having starting with internet-based factory outlet shops for France (**sport-outlet.fr**), Italy (**Scontosport.it**) and Benelux (**sport-korting.nl**), it is now setting up similar shops for the markets of Spain and Poland. Spain should go online in the first quarter of 2020, Poland in the second. Other countries are planned. Sportspar specializes in the sale of dead stock of sporting goods that are at least one year old and can be obtained directly from brands or distributors. The company was founded 10 years ago by the twin brothers **Jevgenij** and **Aleksandr Borisenko**. In 2018 Sportspar generated net sales after returns of €23.4 million, generating a profit of €2 million. Returns are not free of charge, but the return rate of 11 percent achieved by Sportspar is far below the industry average. The core market is still Germany, but other markets, especially France, are driving growth. Around 15 percent of sales are now generated abroad. In addition, sales are now made largely through the company's own online shops, while sales via marketplaces such as **Amazon** and **eBay** have been significantly reduced. Only 7 percent of sales are still going through marketplaces.

Fusalp will have three new pop-up stores set up in three countries over the next weeks. The temporary "corner" in the men's department at **Le Bon Marché**, the department store on the Left Bank of Paris, will be open through March 1; the pop-up at the **Reel Mall** in Shanghai will be open through Feb. 28; and the 180 square meter space in the Garosu-Gil neighborhood of Seoul, South Korea, will be open through March 9. The French sportswear brand has also been setting up new brick-and-mortar locations. It opened a store in Nice in November, followed by a store of 85 square meters on Boulevard Beaumarchais in Paris in December, and opened a further store in Marseille this very month. The banner now has 40 doors in addition to its 400 resellers, of which 242 are in France, 92 in the rest of the European Union and 59 outside the European Union.

 To celebrate its 11th anniversary, **Picture Organic Clothing** opened a 12th physical store – and first own-store – last November in the French city of Clermont-Ferrand. The move followed an experimental "corner" at the local **Galleries Lafayette** department store, a store opening in November in Nice, and another opening in August in Grenoble. Stores were also opened in Toulouse, Bordeaux, Biarritz and Hossegor in 2019. Strasbourg will follow in February, and perhaps other cities after that. In late 2020, the outdoor organic-clothing banner will be moving into a 2,000 square meter flagship in Clermont-Ferrand, the hometown of its three founders. In its latest complete fiscal year, ended in March 2019, Picture posted pre-tax sales of €23.4 million and pre-tax profits of €450,000. The goal for

2019/20 is €29 million in sales. Winter generally generates for 80 percent of revenue. Picture works with 390 resellers in France and 1,500 worldwide.

+++ Decathlon opened its fourth store in South Africa last month +++

Results & Statistics

Stella International Holding posted consolidated revenues of \$345.4 million in the final quarter of 2019, representing a 10.9 percent drop as compared to the same period in 2018. The Chinese group experienced an 8.6 percent decline to 13.8 million pairs in the volume of manufactured shoes, accompanied by a drop of 0.4 percent in average selling prices to \$24.7 per pair. However, it said it continued to see “robust ordering activity” for its sports fashion footwear segment. In 2020, Stella plans to further expand its manufacturing operations in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia. The group’s first factory was established in Taiwan in 1982. In 2010, operations moved to mainland China and in 2012, a new production line opened in Indonesia. The group’s headquarters is in Hong Kong. Its clients include **Timberland, Prada, Coach** and **Nike**, among others.

+++ More than 50% of all bicycles sold in Belgium in 2019 were e-bikes +++

Legal & Institutional

According to the European Commission’s new “**Report on the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights in third countries**,” clothing and footwear remain the most pirated goods. The report is aimed particularly at small and medium-size enterprises based in the EU and doing business abroad. It underscores the importance of IP “infrastructure” to cover the legal recognition, registration, use and enforcement of intellectual-property rights (IPR). The Commission cites another 2019 report, from the **European Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)**, according to which the clothing and footwear sector in the EU lost €28.4 billion in revenues from 2012 to 2016 to IPR infringement. Pharmaceuticals came in second place, with €9.6 billion in lost revenue. Apparently, more than 80 percent of the counterfeit goods seized by EU customs come from China and Hong Kong. The so-called “priority two” countries are India, Indonesia, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. In this edition of the report, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia have joined Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Malaysia and Thailand in the “priority three” category.

Steven Gerrard, the former player who now manages the **Rangers** in the **Scottish Premiership**, has won a legal fight with two Italian sportswear firms – **Lotto** and **Erreà** – that attempted to block his clothing range. In 2018, Gerrard launched a menswear line, called **SGG Apparel**, comprising polo shirts, hooded tops and jackets, in partnership with his former club, **Liverpool**. Gerrard signed the partnership with Liverpool on the clothing range while still coaching there, prior to his move to Glasgow and the Rangers. Problems arose when an application was made to register “SGG Apparel” as a trademark in the U.K., with a logo consisting of two overlapping diamonds. Lotto and Erreà both objected to the move, claiming that the diamond logo used on the Gerrard outfits was too similar to their own and could generate confusion. The UK Intellectual Property Office (UKIPO) has now stated that the logo to be used on SGG Apparel is sufficiently different from those of the two Italian firms to enable consumers to distinguish them, and has therefore allowed SGG Apparel to register the trademark. As reported by *Scottish Legal News*, Erreà has been ordered to pay £1,800 (€2,136-\$2,359) towards Liverpool’s costs in the case, while Lotto has been ordered to pay £3,200 (€3,798-\$4,194).

The Court of Appeal, the highest court within the Senior Courts of England and Wales, has upheld the findings of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) that **Ping Europe Ltd** acted illegally in banning the online sale of its products. The Court has dismissed Ping’s appeal against an infringement decision and a fine of £1.25 million (€1.48m-\$1.64m), after the CMA found that the company had broken competition law by stopping retailers from selling its golf clubs on their websites. The new decision comes after the dismissal of Ping’s initial appeal to the Competition Appeal Tribunal (CAT) in September 2018. The Court of Appeal’s recent ruling, which upholds both the CMA’s main finding and the CAT’s judgment, means that Ping must now allow retailers to sell its products online, although the company is reportedly planning to take the case to the Supreme Court.



In December, the Dutch electronics conglomerate **Philips** filed a complaint with the U.S. International Trade Commission to allege that **Fitbit**, **Garmin**, the distributor **Ingram Micro** and two Chinese manufacturers, **Inventec** and **Main-tek**, have been stealing its wearable technology, in violation of section 337 of the Tariff Act of 1930. The commission has agreed to investigate. The patents in question concern activity tracking, alarm reporting and other such features. A ruling favorable to Philips could result in tariffs or bans on any patent-infringing devices. Fitbit has denied the allegations.

+++ **VDS**, the German sporting goods retailers’ federation, has put together a team of experts in sales, marketing and technologies to help its members to develop future-oriented solutions in the area of digitalization +++

Product

Under Armour will pull **UA Record** out of the market at the end of March, encouraging users of its mobile app for fitness workouts to transition to the company's **MapMyFitness** app, which is launching a new feature, **Workout Routines**. By Dec. 31, 2019, **UA Record** had already been removed from any app stores. Customer service for the app has been discontinued.

Clariant, the color expert and manufacturer, has partnered with **Francesco Franceschetti Elastomeri (FFE)** on an in-depth research and color-finding project that has led to a solution for high-end ski boot application. Early in the summer of 2019, **Clariant** and **FFE** joined forces on an exhaustive study of the Italian ski boot marketplace and the colors that boot makers use in their products. The outcome was to be a comprehensive report and guide, including five colors suggested for the 2021/22 ski season. Experts focused on colors used in four key areas of the ski boot – the shell, the cuff, the buckles and accent areas – and created a 3D color map of about 2,000 color data points. This study gave color experts at **Clariant** a baseline and understanding of the colors present in the market. Based on the information gathered during interviews with ski shop owners as well as **Clariant's** color map, **Clariant** created three mood boards to define the different target personalities and match them with colors to be used as a design guide for the new boots of the 2021–2022 ski season. **FFE** and **Clariant** plan to make their ski-boot color forecast an annual affair.

Asics is launching a new Tokyo-inspired collection of footwear and apparel to celebrate its Japanese heritage. The collection features two lines, **Retro Tokyo** and **Modern Tokyo**, and comprises multiple categories, including running, volleyball, tennis and sportstyle. The design of the collection is inspired by Japanese culture and craftsmanship, with breathable panels and tonal shading to mirror origami design.

Anta has developed its first graphene-enhanced garment, the **A-Flame** down jacket, in collaboration with researchers at **Xiamen University**. Graphene is used in the jacket to radiate far infrared rays and help keep the wearer warm in cold temperatures. The company said that it plans to use graphene in a wide range of products in the future, including outdoor, training and leisure apparel.

The North Face and **Fusalp** have adopted the “intelligent heating technology” developed by **Clim8**, a four-year-old French firm, in the wake of **Odlo**, **Ixon** and **Burton**. For the next autumn/winter season, **TNF** will be using it in some versatile mid-layers and sport chic jackets, and **Fusalp** in gloves. Similar functionalities

are embedded in a body heating system developed by a German firm, **Intellitex**, and adopted by **Schöffel** for critical areas of its ski clothing. Making use of very thick carbon tubes, the German system allows the wearer to keep the temperature constant and to shut it off when it's not needed.

Will chunky and colorful sneakers continue to be in fashion? **Balenciaga**, which launched the new trend a few years ago, presented a much smaller sneaker, called **Zen**, at its recent fashion show in Paris under the slogan "**take it easy**." Made of polyurethane, the more minimalistic Zen shoe has a round toe, an elasticated rubber tongue, a foam insole and a thick rubber sole.



Rab will present its first skiwear collection, called **Khroma**, at **Ispo Munich**. The British outdoor brand describes it as a natural progression of its own history. Khroma is a clothing system to keep ski mountaineers warm, dry and comfortable at all times. The step does seem natural, as Rab has been designing and selling clothing for mountaineers and alpinists for about four decades, and especially because ski mountaineering is currently rising fast in popularity. Khroma offers 15 different styles for both women and men. Rab says that it is suitable not only for ski mountaineering but for all types of terrain and activities. Rab is the accessible outdoor apparel brand of **Equip Outdoor Technologies**, which also owns **Lowe Alpine**.



Arc'teryx, **Mammut**, **Mountain Equipment**, **Mountain Hardwear**, **Montbell**, **Norröna** and **Patagonia** are among the apparel brands that have adopted three new **Gore-Tex Pro** technologies for their autumn/winter 2020/21 collections. Segmenting its offer of solutions for waterproof/breathable fabrics, **W.L. Gore & Associates** has developed a "most rugged technology," a "stretch technology" and a "most breathable technology" under the Gore-Tex Pro label for different areas of the garment and different uses. The first type of fabric, best suited for skiing and other types of mountain sports, features a three-layer system for very rugged face textiles with a **Micro Grid** backer in a new solution-dyed version. The second technology offers durability combined with up to 20 percent warp stretch for more comfort in motion, especially in climbing. The "most breathable" technology, which is still "guaranteed to keep you dry," minimizes the build-up of moisture on lighter and very rugged fabrics with a Micro Grid backer for situations of higher exertion. Gore is offering its Gore-Tex Pro fabrics in nine recycled and six solution-dyed face textiles, requiring less water than laminates with a jet-dyed backer and face.



The winners of the **Ispo Awards 2020** have been selected but, as usual, cannot be announced before the official award ceremony at **Ispo Munich** on Jan.

26 at 4.30 p.m. As the organizers report, the jury has selected the highlights from over 430 entries in four segments: snowsports, outdoor, fitness & team sports, and running. A total of almost 100 products were awarded either a **Product of the Year**, a **Gold Winner** or **Winner** award. All winning products will be exhibited in the official Award area of the show in Hall B1.



Polartec will present a lighter version of its two-year-old **Power Air** fabric at **Ispo Munich 2020**. The polyester fabric is made from a single yarn, is fully recyclable and has a higher content (73 percent) of post-consumer recycled (PCR) resin. It works by encapsulating air-trapping fibers. This results in a warm, comfortable and breathable end product that sheds at least five times fewer microfibers than other premium mid-layer fabrics. The Swedish outdoor brand **Houdini** is the first company to offer a fleece jacket made from the fabric: the **Houdini Mono Air Houdi**. It will be shown at the Ispo Munich fair and be available online immediately. **Eva Karlsson**, chief executive of Houdini, said that the Mono Air Houdi embodies the company's goal of creating products that work with nature, not at nature's expense. This aligns with the brand's objective to be the first fully circular outdoor company in the world. And indeed, 72 percent of the models in Houdini's autumn/winter 2020/21 collection are already made from at least 50 percent recycled fiber that is itself recyclable. In addition to the Mono Air Houdi, the new autumn/winter 2020/21 collection offers other innovative pieces, including a complete range of hard shells designed for mountaineering and skiing, as well as a series of extremely comfortable base- and mid-layers.



The Canadian brand **Lolë**, which until now has focused exclusively on women's athleisure apparel, has announced its expansion into the men's and travel categories. This move appears as a direct result of the arrival of actor and outdoor enthusiast **Josh Duhamel** as equity owner and investor as well as ambassador of the brand in October. The Montréal-based lifestyle brand has 29 corporate stores (19 in Canada, six in the U.S. and four in Europe), several airport stores in Canada and 12 franchisees. It is represented in 11 countries through distributors and other partners. The new travel clothing line for men will at first be available only in North America. Lolë was founded 19 years ago by **Evelyn Trempe**, who in 1989, together with **Eric D'Anjou**, also created the ski outerwear brand **Orage** under the umbrella of **Coalision**, which has been managed since 2009 by **Bernard Mariette**, former president of **Quiksilver**. In 2013, after the addition of the fashion/technical brand **Paradox** to the company's portfolio, Orage was sold back to D'Anjou, who left Coalision in 2009, and to the freeski pioneer **Mike Nick**.



Head has announced the introduction of the lightest snowboard range on the market with boards made of innovative material combinations following the

“Lyt Tech” principle. The brand applies the principle also to other product lines, including skis and ski boots. The idea is to focus only on essentials during product development and optimize each component for weight. This ultimately has a major influence on design and construction.



With “Telekom Fashion Fusion,” Deutsche Telekom has launched a program at the crossroads of fashion and technology. The program has previously promoted talent in prototype development in cooperation with events, such as the IFA trade show and the #Fashiontech Conference, both in Berlin. Only in 2019 did the program begin to develop market-ready products, such as the new **Heatable Capsule Collection**, developed in collaboration with the **AlphaTauri** label (founded by **Red Bull** in 2016) and **Schoeller Textil AG** of Switzerland. Deutsche Telekom contributed technological components to the collection, Schoeller developed the heating technologies and fabrics as well as the electronic components, and AlphaTauri handled design. The collection’s first item is a men’s and women’s jacket with an integrated, app-operated heating system, with special zones in the pocket and kidney area. The jacket targets the lifestyle and technology-oriented consumer segment, which the participating brands call “Urban Explorers.” It is suitable for all seasons, including the cold, and ideal for traveling, hiking and other activities. Thanks to the **Schoeller E-Soft-Shell**, the heating system is fully integrated into the fabric and is placed as close as possible to the body. In addition, the built-in sensors can measure the temperature inside the jacket. According to the Fashion Fusion program, the next generation of the jacket is already in development with additional features and connectivity. AI is becoming increasingly important.



+++ On Jan. 9, **Icebug** reported that the crowdfunding campaign launched on Dec. 11 for its “most sustainable trail running shoe,” **Outrun**, had been fully backed, reaching 212,683 Swedish krona (€20,130-\$22,419) +++ **Black Diamond** is launching a men’s and women’s footwear collection of two lifestyle shoes and two performance shoes +++ **H&M** has inked a deal with the NFL to make and sell NFL-branded apparel and accessories in stores and online in more than 20 countries, excluding the U.S. +++ **Danny Abshire**, the running coach who founded **Newton Running**, has launched a new brand of running shoes called **Active88** +++

Marketing

Under Armour has inaugurated a brand campaign for 2020 called “**The Only Way Is Through.**” The launch – a two-day “immersion” in the presence of sponsored athletes and trainers – took place in Baltimore, Maryland, where the brand has its headquarters. A 90-second commercial is showing on **YouTube** and the

Under Armour website, which also has images available for download. The brand will be releasing further content throughout the year. On Jan. 21, for instance, Under Armour released the first episode of a podcast, itself called “**The Only Way Is Through.**” The first episode in a series of eight will feature a heptathlon competitor, **Georgia Ellenwood**. The subsequent guests will be athletes, their coaches and other figures from their lives. The podcast is produced in partnership with **iHeartRadio** and hosted by a well-known American journalist and writer, **Calvin “Cal” Fussman**, who has been working for *The New York Times* and *Esquire*.

Puma has signed a sponsorship deal with **Duje Ćaleta-Car**, the 23-year-old center-back for the **Olympique de Marseille** and Croatian national football teams. The Croatian football player was on the losing team in the **2018 Fifa World Cup** final. He wore Puma’s **Future** cleats for Marseille’s win over Granville in the **French Cup** match on Jan. 17.

In confirmation of a report in our previous issue (*SGI Europe* Vol. 31 n°1,2 of Jan. 11, 2020), **Puma** has indeed signed a long-term deal with the Dutch football club **PSV Eindhoven**. The wildcat is set to become the club’s official kit supplier from July 2020. PSV Eindhoven has won 24 league titles, nine domestic cups, the **European Cup** and the **Uefa Cup**. Puma also sponsors **Manchester City**, **AC Milan**, **BVB Dortmund** and **Valencia**, among others.

In partnership with **Nike**, the German team sports specialist **11teamsports** is equipping the international e-sports team **SK Gaming** with jerseys and training clothing. The long-term cooperation includes Nike’s merchandising collection, for which 11teamsports is taking over the global distribution. The new collection was presented to the public for the first time at the exclusive jersey launch in Berlin’s 11teamsports store. Founded in 2007, 11teamsports is the outfitter of over 4,000 clubs and the official supplier to several **Bundesliga** teams. Since 2019, the company has also been an official license partner of the **German Football Association (DFB)** and is responsible for global sales and the production of the backing for the jerseys of the German national team. With over 2.5 million customers, 11teamsports describes itself as the largest online shop for football and team sports in the German-speaking area. In addition, the company operates 14 physical stores in Germany, six in Austria and one in Switzerland.

Nike and the **Chinese Athletics Association (CAA)**, China’s governing body for athletics, have extended their partnership through 2033. Their contract was first signed in 2013 and set to run from 2014 to 2021. Nike will be supplying training gear to China’s national athletes for all **Olympic Games**, and it will also undertake initiatives to promote athletics in China. Among other things, the company

will be operating training camps, some overseas, staffing them with coaches from other nations.

Nike has extended its deal with the **Chinese Athletics Association (CAA)** through 2033. The sponsorship contract with China's national track and field team was first made in 2013, and was set to expire in 2021. Nike will therefore continue to supply footwear, uniforms and equipment to CAA athletes. To capitalize on the synergy, the sportswear firm has also committed to investments that promote the development of athletics in China, with a focus on track and field.

Reebok wants to start the international rollout of a new loyalty program, "**Reebok Unlocked**." It was launched in March 2019 for Reebok's U.S. customers and its 160,000 certified Reebok trainers in the country. To build up Reebok Unlocked, existing programs were examined and evaluated. The aim was to maintain important benefits with high customer acceptance and to give up other, less used benefits in order to improve usability and to create a deeper and more relevant relationship with the customer. Members can get early access to new products, exclusive access to special events or rewards from Reebok's numerous partners in the wellness space. Aimed at the fitness training community, Reebok Unlocked offers ongoing career development, workshops, training and certifications. Within six months, the program reached over 2.5 million members in the U.S. alone. To date, the purchasing frequency for Reebok's non-training community is 10 percent higher versus those who are not in the program. Also, purchase frequency among trainers is up 117 percent versus trainers who have not signed up.

Merrell has signed up as the official footwear partner of the first edition in the U.K. of the **Ragnar Relay**, an American race that is described as the world's largest overnight relay series. Called **Ragnar Trail Forest of Dean**, the trail running event will be organized in June by the **Grounded Events Company**, which already organizes the **Brighton Marathon Weekend**.

K-Swiss has signed multi-year apparel and footwear sponsorship deals with **Ajla Tomljanovic** and **Cameron Norrie**. Tomljanovic, a 26-year-old Australian tennis player, is currently 52nd in the **WTA** standings, having reached a peak rank of 39 last April. She will be wearing the **Ultrashot 2** shoe on the court. Norrie, a 24-year-old Englishman born in South Africa, is ranked 62nd by the **ATP**. He will be playing in the **Hypercourt Supreme**.

Quiksilver and **Roxy** have struck a deal with the **French Surfing Federation** for the next four years. This notably includes the **Summer Olympics** coming up this year in Tokyo. The brands are now the official kit suppliers

for the French men's and women's short-board teams. In parallel, they will develop a capsule collection with the French team's colors. These items will become available from **Intersport** in June. Both Quiksilver and Roxy belong to the recently created **Boardriders** group.

Kinexon, the German sports tracking company, has expanded a partnership with the **European Handball Federation (EHF)** to track both the men's and women's tournaments of the European handball championships through 2024. The deal started with the European Handball Federation's **Euro 2020** tournament, taking place from Jan. 9 to 26. Kinexon sensors are embedded into the players' and referees' uniforms and in balls. Metrics include shot and pass speeds, distance from goal and heat maps of shooting locations. The performance data are distributed in real time to coaches and players, as well as to the EHF's media channels and broadcast partners. According to the federation, the player-tracking information could help reduce injuries and open up new sponsorship opportunities. Kinexon's ball tracking devices have already been used in several European handball events in 2018 and 2019, as well as by various **NBA** teams in the U.S.


Vibram has signed a partnership agreement with **Léo Slemett**, the French freeride champion. As a brand ambassador, Slemett will also collaborate with Vibram on the development of new solutions for the sport, with a focus on technology and performance. Slemett was born in 1993 in Chamonix, France, a capital of ski mountaineering with access to iconic peaks, including the Mont Blanc. In 2017, Slemett won the **Freeride World Tour** overall title, rising from the ashes of personal tragedy. In April 2016, his girlfriend and fellow Freeride World Tour competitor, **Estelle Balet**, died in an avalanche in Switzerland. In 2019, he earned the third spot in the general ranking of the Freeride World Tour.


Slinger Bag, the innovative, portable tennis ball launcher, has engaged **Nick Bollettieri** as head coach for the next three years, to provide training content on the brand's website. Bollettieri was the first tennis coach to create a tennis academy, and he trained big champions like **André Agassi**, **Boris Becker**, **Monica Seles** and **Serena Williams**. Bollettieri had worked before with **Mike Ballardie**, the CEO of Slinger Bag, while he was the chief executive of **Prince Sports**. Ahead of its launch in the next few weeks, Slinger Bag also won an innovation award from the **Tennis Industry Association** of the U.K.

Crocs has launched the fourth edition of its annual "**Come As You Are**" global marketing campaign. On this occasion, it has added a fifth celebrity ambassador, the Bollywood actor and producer **Priyanka Chopra Jonas**. The other four are the Chinese actor **Yang Mi**, the American actor **Zooey Deschanel**, the South Korean

singer and actor **Kim Sejeong** and the Japanese actor **Suzu Hirose**. Through the campaign, Crocs will be launching several products, such as the **LiteRide** collection, and new colorways, such as “Cantaloupe” and “Neo Mint.” Crocs entered the Indian market in 2007. In October, the American footwear producer collaborated with an Indian designer, **Nitin Bal Chauhan**, on a pool party in New Delhi.

Atlantic Stars, the Tuscany-based brand of sneakers, is launching a project that is set to involve 52 “microinfluencers,” who will comment on the brand’s products. The microinfluencers will post both comments and photos weekly. Meanwhile, the brand’s **Instagram** profile will be updated every day with new stories and posts about the brand’s collections. In addition to focusing on digital channels, Atlantic Stars is expanding in Japan, the leading foreign market for the company in terms of sales. The brand is planning to open its second store in Osaka and to inaugurate a shop-in-shop at the **Ginza Six** in Tokyo, which will add to the others at **Hankyu** and **Isetan**, also at Ginza Six – the luxury shopping complex in Tokyo’s Ginza area. Atlantic Stars is controlled by **Alcedo SGR**, which owns a 76 percent stake.

 **Norrøna**, the family-owned and operated Norwegian outdoor brand that is now the majority shareholder of another Norwegian company, **Hvitserk**, has announced the establishment of a new travel company, **Norrøna Hvitserk Adventure**. The tour operator offers year-round tailor-made excursions throughout Norway on foot, on skis or in a kayak, providing unique, captivating and exciting adventures through nature. This comes just two months after **Arc'teryx** – the Vancouver-based sports clothing brand controlled by China’s **Anta Group** – announced the launch of “**Trips**,” a program of adventure trips in North America and Europe starting this summer. Arc'teryx and Norrøna are not the first outdoor companies to enter the travel market. The Swiss brand **Mammut** is already on the market with its **Alpine School**, and the American bicycle manufacturer **Trek** founded its own travel company in 2002. The growing interest in travel experiences offered directly by outdoor gear companies seems to be growing, and the market is obviously offering some previously untapped opportunities. The question is how the travel market will react to this and what will happen in terms of sponsorship or partnership opportunities for travel operators, as the latter now see themselves in direct competition with their potential partners. We will continue to observe this trend.

 **ABS**, the specialist and pioneer for avalanche airbag backpacks, has announced a complete renewal of the brand and product portfolio for **Ispo Munich**. ABS was founded in 1985 by Peter Aschauer and sold in 2017 to the Munich-based investment company Spin Capital, which also acquired the **Pyua** clothing brand in 2018 and the **Freeride Film Festival** in 2019. According

to its chief executive, **Dr. Stefan Mohr**, the company now seeks to inspire more people to go outside and “**Enjoy Your Wild**,” as the new brand slogan says. In addition to newly designed backpacks, the company will offer a safety set consisting of a probe and shovel as well as a new service app for ski mountaineering enthusiasts.



Rewoolution, part of the **Reda** group, supported **Maurizio Perron**'s work on the construction last December of the **Icehotel** in Jukkasjärvi, Sweden. The Italian artist wore Rewoolution merino apparel while above the Arctic Circle. Icehotel is both a hotel and an art exhibition, with ever-changing art made out of snow and ice. Every winter, it is remade in a new guise entirely out of natural ice from Sweden's Torne River. Part of the hotel survives into spring, after the winter suites have melted into the river. Perron was the only Italian artist to participate in the creation of the 2019 hotel, which was inaugurated on Dec. 13.



Anja Blacha, a German athlete sponsored by **Intersport**, reached the South Pole on Thursday, Jan. 9, after a trek of 57 days, 18 hours and 50 minutes – a record time. The 29-year-old athlete is the first person to cover the 1,400 km solo, unassisted and unsupported. At the geographic South Pole, Blacha planted a flag that reads: “Not bad for a girl – almost impossible for everyone else.” Another woman made it to the South Pole just one day later. It took the **Mollie Hughes** of the U.K. 58 days, or 650 hours, to get there solo on skis by Jan. 10. She had started on Nov. 13 at the Hercules Inlet in West Antarctica, 1,300 km away. The 29-year-old Hughes, who was sponsored by **Gore-Tex**, **Mountain Equipment** and **Atag Heating Technology**, is the youngest woman ever to reach earth's southernmost point from the Antarctic coast on skis.



Karpos is sponsoring **Manrico dell'Agnola** and his team for their expedition to Antarctica, organized with the **Italian National Research Council (CNR)**. The expedition is set to return at the end of January. The adventure has environmental as well as mountaineering objectives, as dell'Agnola has explained. The team will help determine whether this region – crucial for the planet's well-being – has been contaminated and compromised by human activities, and perhaps to what extent.



Wintersteiger, the international machinery and plant engineering group founded in Austria in 1953 and a specialist in ski-servicing equipment, has become the exclusive worldwide service partner of the **Atomic Pro Centers**. These centers are specialist stores for ski racers and members of the **International Ski Federation (FIS)** where pro and semi-pro athletes, from young talents to world

cup racers, get all their equipment. All Atomic Pro Centers are now equipped with Wintersteiger ski-service machines. Wintersteiger is now the recommended service partner for sports retailers that run an Atomic Pro Center. Wintersteiger and Atomic, one of the leading ski brands of **Amer Sports**, have in fact been in a successful partnership for decades. This extended cooperation amounts to a win-win situation for both companies, according to **Daniel Steininger**, head of the Sports business at Wintersteiger. According to Atomic's CEO, **Wolfgang Mayrhofer**, Wintersteiger has always been a reliable partner, standing out for its expertise, accessibility and after-sales service.



The **Kalk OR**, the flagship product of the Swedish e-motorcycle manufacturer **Cake**, has been included in the **Petersen Automotive Museum's** permanent collection. In April 2019, the museum first featured the Kalk OR in an exhibition titled "**Electric Revolution**." Cake was founded in 2016 as a "high-performance zero-emission off-road motorcycle brand" by the founder of **POC Sport**, **Stefan Ytterborn**, and has since received many awards, including an **Outdoor Retailer Innovation Award**, an **Ispo Award**, a **German Design Award**, an **IF** and **Red Dot Design Award** and, most recently, an **M3 "Best of Show at @CES 2020."**



+++ The Vermont-based glove maker **Gordini**, founded in 1956, has debuted a brand campaign featuring a new logo, website, creative campaign and product line +++ **Mammut** has agreed to outfit more than 8,000 mountain professionals as the official supplier of **POWR**, and adventure lifestyle company, working at its various resorts in North America and for its heli-ski operations, from the 2020/21 season through 2026 +++ **Salomon** has signed up **Lauren Fleshman**, the former American track & field athlete sponsored by **Nike** until 2012, to endorse its running shoes and hydration products +++ **Nike** will donate \$5 million to build a basketball court and other public sports facilities as part of the **Obama Presidential Center** in Chicago's **Jackson Park** +++ **Nike** has announced an apparel sponsorship deal with **T1 Entertainment and Sports**, the South Korean e-sports company, for all the company's teams and players, including **Lee Sang-hyeok** – the **League of Legends** star known as "**Faker**" +++ **Adidas** is reported to be ready to take the place of **Kappa** as the sponsor of the **Leeds United** team, provided it graduates to the **English Premier League** after the end of the current season +++ In its first contract with an American professional soccer team, **Puma** has signed up as kit sponsor of the **New Mexico United** football club +++ **Mico**, the Italian maker of sports socks, is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a rebranding program +++ **Vibram** has signed a sponsorship agreement with a young French freeride ski champion, **Léo Siemett** +++ **K-Swiss** has announced the signing of **Ajla Tomljanovic** and **Cameron Norrie**, respectively **WTA** and **ATP** tennis players, to multi-year apparel and footwear endorsement deals +++ **Adidas** has signed up **Guido Miglione**, the professional golf player and **European Tour Rookie of the Year**

finalist, to a multi-year deal that involves wearing the sportswear brand's apparel, shoes and accessories on the course +++ Ecco has announced a multi-year agreement with **Henrik Stenson**, the 43-year-old Swedish professional golfer, as a new brand ambassador +++ Ping has signed up **Eddie Pepperell**, the English professional golfer and two-time winner of the **European Tour**, to a multi-year equipment contract +++

Trade Shows & Other Events

Boardriders, the world's largest conglomerate in the action sports segment, will return to **Ispo Munich** from this Sunday, accompanied in Hall B4 by **Dakine** and **O'Neill**. On the other hand, **Schöffel** will be making its first appearance at **Ispo Beijing**, scheduled for Feb. 12-15. Other brands taking part include **Black Diamond**, **Kailas**, **La Sportiva**, **Mammut**, **Vibram** and **Walltopia**. This 16th edition of the trade show will feature indoor climbing, in light of the sport's introduction at forthcoming **Beijing Winter Olympics** in 2022. There will be a boulder block, a test area and a networking zone.

Li-Ning, the eponymous Chinese brand of sports apparel, celebrated its 30th anniversary at its third fashion show in Paris, held at the **Centre Pompidou**. The guest list included the basketball player **Dwayne Wade**, the DJ **Honey Dijon** and the Italian designer **Stefano Pilati**, but the star of the show was **Jackie Chan**, the world-famous martial artist and cinema stuntman. At the show, Li-Ning introduced Chan's "futurist" capsule collection of 10 black-and-white, Kung Fu-inspired items, which went on sale in China on Jan. 19. Last year's show featured Stefano Pilati's sneaker collection, **Random Identities**. Li-Ning has also collaborated with the English designer **Neil Barrett** for the **Milan Fashion Week**. Li-Ning has also signed a three-year deal to hold other fashion shows at the Centre Pompidou. In addition, it will sponsor the museum's performing arts and **Move** festival, and help fund one art exhibition per year. The first of these will be "**Matisse as a Novel**."

Micam Milano will launch the teaser of a new format, called **Micam X**, at the next edition of the trade show on Feb. 16-19. Located in Hall 1, where its fashion shows and conferences have been held lately, Micam X is described as a new space where visitors can discover the latest market trends, explore different fashion styles and learn about innovative materials, sustainability and the future of retail. The initiative has been taken by the organizers to help them explore the transformation that the shoe manufacturing industry is going through and the changing perception and

buying habits of consumers. After its official debut in September 2020 with a richer and more immersive program, it is expected to grow with each edition of the fair.

CSR & Sustainability

The Swedish non-profit organization **Global Fashion Agenda** is further strengthening its group of Associate Partners by welcoming three new companies: **TAL Apparel**, **VF Corporation** and **Zalando**. Global Fashion Agenda is a leadership forum for industry collaboration on fashion sustainability and the organizer of the renowned **Copenhagen Fashion Summit**. It seeks to ensure that sustainability is a strategic priority for the fashion industry. Other strategic partners are **Asos**, **Bestseller**, **H&M Group**, **Kering**, **Li & Fung**, **Nike**, **PVH Corp.**, the **Sustainable Apparel Coalition** and **Target**.

Puma and **Ralph Lauren** have joined the trans-Arctic shipping ban, a pledge to prohibit shipping through the Arctic Ocean. The **Arctic Shipping Corporate Pledge** was launched by **Nike** and **Ocean Conservancy** in October 2019 to invite companies to commit to not intentionally send ships through the delicate Arctic ecosystem. The temperature in the Arctic region is warming two to three times faster than in other parts of the planet, resulting in a diminution of sea ice. Cargo traffic therefore becomes increasingly more feasible through ocean routes that were previously un-navigable, but shipping routes can only pose an additional risk of greater environmental impact. More information on the Arctic pledge and how to join can be found at <https://oceanconservancy.org/protecting-the-arctic/take-the-pledge/>

The **Ellen MacArthur Foundation** has launched **Circulytics**, a new digital tool for companies to measure circularity across all operations and help them adopt circular economy practices. The tool, which is available for free, goes beyond measuring products and material flows to measure a company's entire circularity. It uses company-level data with applied insights and analysis from the Ellen Macarthur Foundation's Data and Metrics team. Circulytics is meant to highlight opportunities for innovation while at the same time allowing companies to track their progress and compare themselves against the rest of the industry. The tool was tested by more than 30 companies from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's network in 2019. The foundation now plans to engage with the companies that generate outstanding scores to create inspirational case studies.

YKK has announced a collection of zippers made from ocean bound plastic. The zippers of the new **Natulon Ocean Sourced** collection are made from plastic waste that has been collected within 50km of the coastline of Sri Lanka. According to YKK, the collection is indistinguishable from zippers made of virgin polyester and offers the same strength, functionality and durability as conventional zippers. The collection, which expands YKK's current offer of sustainable trims, will debut at **Ispo Munich** on Jan. 26-29, as well as at **The Outdoor Retailer and Snow Show** on Jan. 29-31 in Denver, Colorado. The zippers of the Natulon Ocean Sourced will be available for purchase in the spring.



Sympatex is presenting the first upcycled functional jacket made from 30 percent recycled textiles and 70 percent recycled PET bottles at **Ispo Munich**. The three-layer high-performance jacket was developed and produced as part of the **wear2wear** consortium, the European industrial partnership founded in 2017, and announced by Sympatex in May 2019. For several years, the specialist in functional textiles has been working on closing the textile cycle for functional materials.

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