FOOTWEAR TECHNOLOGY: VASQUE

Specialist outdoor footwear brand Vasque has introduced new light hiking and multisports shoes as part of its spring 2011 collection.

Lighter touch from Vasque

Performance footwear brand Vasque has included some attractive new lines in its spring 2011 collection. The brand, which specialises in shoes for serious hikers, backpackers, and trail runners, has decided to include new shoes for slightly less strenuous activities, such as light hiking, in the latest spring range.

Vasque has been active in the outdoor footwear market for around 45 years now. It is still family-owned and, in spite of the bulk of the industry gravitating towards either the Pacific North West or New England, on the eastern US seaboard, has kept its base in Redwing, Minnesota. The growing popularity over recent years of trail-running, in all its forms (from the purists who will start their runs only in places where there are no roads, to those who have adapted their enthusiasm for the activity to suburban life) has served the company well.

It looks as though it will also find itself well positioned to serve the growing number of enthusiasts for almost-barefoot running, in other words, those who love the sensation of being close to the earth while still enjoying some support and protection from their





footwear. The lightweight Vasque Transition, for example, has no insole. Instead it has a foam bottom that warms up when the runner begins to move and moulds itself to the foot to offer a high level of comfort.

The Mindbender shoe is heavier, and contains Gore-Tex technology for moisture control, but this works in an interesting way. The shoe has a built-in Gore-Tex bootee, onto which Vasque has constructed its own upper with a tongue to protect against friction 'hotspots' that all the extra fabric might otherwise generate on the foot.

Specifically for women, the Medley has a high enough level of elegance to be worn with a skirt and to keep wearing at dinner after a strenuous trail-running session. There is also a new, women's version of the brand's biggest seller from spring 2010, the Juxt. The women's shoe is called the Jule, which adds feminine touches such as some elegant stitching detail and webbing to replace eyelets. The Juxt, incidentally, is carrying over into 2011 for obvious commercial and consumer demand reasons.

Light and attractive

Perhaps one of the best examples of the lighter shoes Vasque is introducing in spring 2011 is the Scree, which comes in men's and women's, and in mid- and low-cut versions. It is presented as ideal for light hiking or shorter trail runs, but is light and attractive to wear on walks, gentle jogs, easier climbs and a long list of sports and leisure activities.

The Scree combines water-resistant technical textile material in the high part of the upper with large quantities of suede in the lower part of the vamp and reaching round towards the back of the upper. The heel and toe areas are reinforced with rubber and all versions come with a polyurethane midsole and Stealth sole. A bright kingfisher blue and pearl grey colour combination on the women's shoe gives way to slate and sage green on the men's.

Vasque is confident its new, lighter lines will win it a wider following than ever before among hikers, trail-runners and everyone who loves the great outdoors.

The men's and low-cut women's versions of the Scree – a performance shoe that is light and attractive enough to wear for a wide variety of sports and leisure activities.

Vasque