

FOOTWEAR TECHNOLOGY: SHOES AT ISPO 2014

Sporty gets fashionable

by Penny Leese

ISPO 2014 in Munich clearly demonstrated how much the lines between sport and fashion are blurring. Natural materials like wood, wool, leather and felt are making a resurgence in both equipment, clothing and accessories. But these materials often have high-tech details such as waterproof membranes, sealed seams and waterproof zips. After all, an urban environment can be just as challenging as the great outdoors: for example, winter cycling in slush and snow needs good waterproof gear.

Heritage feelings

It's all about the total look – no longer is it just jacket and dungarees to match or tone; the socks, hats, mittens, and snowboard boots are all

toning, matching, or are even made in the same materials. Natural materials, like those used for active sports almost a century ago, have come back. Sporty snow jackets and thigh-length coats come in tweed and felt. Lumberjack check wool or rib knit appear as collars on snow boots, while cosy snowflake patterns and felt panels decorate warm winter boots.

Many brands have gone back to their roots to recreate a feeling of high quality, long-lasting leather boots from the past, such as Dolomite's Karakorum collection, with its simple, long, down-filled coats and retro-looking shoes and boots in oiled suede and cow hair.

AKU has made an entire heritage project, showing black-and-white photos of traditional farmers and their families in the Italian Alps by Lorenzo Di Nozzi and, at the same time,

Salewa's award winning après ski shoe.

 Salewa

showing their classic hand-finished leather boots, inspired by their own archives of climbing and hiking boots of 80 years ago.

Bright colours and technical details

Winter safety and comfort combine in spiked winter boots – Icebug has now launched a safety boot version, the first with retractable spikes with lightweight metal toecap that meets EU safety standards. Vibram has soles using Multi Control Tech with tubes of fabric co-moulded separately in the rubber lugs which are in contact with the ground, improving grip on icy surfaces. Nordic Grip (from Norway) makes moulded rubber boots and galoshes called Ice Lock, which have fibreglass that is perpendicular to the surface in the outsole to create good grip. The same company also has stretchable and adjustable studded rubber bands to be put over shoes. All these come in a range of vivid colours including bright green, yellow and blue. The Nordic Grip studded performance running shoes, with and without membrane, have a HyperGrip sole inserted with fixed tungsten spikes from Finland.

Desigual, the Spanish clothing brand famous for its vivid clashing colours and prints, has now launched a sportswear collection, with shoes. The shoes are cross-over sports, for those who want to be glamorous, and to show off and be different. They have EVA wedge heels on the colourful printed jogging shoes.

Barefoot running, logically enough, is more of a summer sport than winter. There has been some research that the transition from traditional running shoes to barefoot might not suit all runners. Vibram's Five Fingers have led the way in this category (they were the shoes used in the research "Foot Bone Marrow Edema after 10-week Transition to Minimalist Running Shoes"). For autumn they have made the toed sock shoes on more sturdy soles with more wrap around at the sides and toe tips.

All sorts of footwear, ski boots, running shoes, hiking boots and even 'being cosy in the tent' shoes, have taken colours from outerwear,



Dachstein boot with tweed collar and bright contrast.

 Dachstein

where vivid colours and neon brights are still in the lead. Salewa's award-winning après ski shoe is very colourful. It is built on an ergonomic last, with a super soft and slipper-like comfy upper, and has a thick insulated sole with a special grip pattern for non-slip on ice. So, after taking the ski or mountaineering boots off, and relaxing indoors to warm up, the wearer can easily pop outside to fetch some firewood, for example.

Fur and warm

At the deluxe end of sportswear, black and white are standards from Emporio Armani and the other Italian designers, worn with white or black moon boots or leather sneakers. Black is the colour of the new Porsche Design Sport shoes for winter 2014 – with some yellow technical details. The new shoes use adidas's Bounce suspension technology with more cushioning and elasticity, and lighter weight. The metal springs have been removed and the rear "suspension" is a leaf construction with no material at the heel that would need to be compressed, the sole acts as a spring. The upper is made in seamless mesh, as is the lining to remove any seams that could rub.



Nordic Grip's HyperGrip sole with tungsten spikes from Finland.

 Nordic Grip



Porsche Design uses adidas Bounce technology.



Kamik Stormin 2, lightweight moulded rubber with 7mm neoprene on the leg part.



In the luxury market, real fur is making a huge comeback on and off the slopes – on jackets, inside jackets, on hats and boots. Boots can be all over fur like the old Yeti boots, back in fashion again, or just trimmed at the top. Lambskin and wool are strong in the middle market. The ongoing Ugg boot influence is seen by the amount of visible fur in the top of most warm lined boots – they need to look cosier rather than streamlined.

Kids and women

The sports world has really woken up to the fact that women and children need just as high specification technical products as men. Gone are the days of “shrink it and pink it”. Women’s ski wear is made to fit women’s bodies, and sports shoes are on women-specific lasts. Kids’ clothes are bright and colourful, mixed and matched to their parents’, while their winter boots need to be as warm, if not warmer than their parents’ as kids are often out in the cold for longer if they are playing in the snow. Winter boots for boys and girls are not just standard two or three hook-n-loop styles with a rugged sole any more: fashion plays a greater part for younger and younger consumers. Lowa has sneaker-inspired winter soles, with studding on the uppers for the girls and tartan and suede for the boys. Feminine, slim leg long shaft styles have front lacing and embroidery and fur tops, like scaled-down lady boots. For ease of wear many incorporate an inside zipper, so no need to adjust or re-tie the laces after the boots are fitted to the leg.

To keep feet warm, fur linings are not the only solution. Kamik’s

winter boots for kids use a 7mm waterproof four-way stretch neoprene on the shaft. Added features are a lighter-weight rubber, Kamik’s proprietary RubberHE, a Canadian-made innovation. It’s a recyclable PVC-free synthetic rubber that the company says is 50% lighter than natural rubber and 30% lighter than other synthetic rubbers. Overall, Kamik claims that the boots are 23% lighter than corresponding products and that they are comfortable down to -32°C (including wind chill factor). Reima of Finland offers warm wool felt boots with wool lining. The wool felt makes the boots warm and snow-resistant, and the boots can be sold in Russia where synthetic linings in children’s footwear are not allowed. But it is the last that is the most important feature. The broad and roomy toe box is typical of northern Scandinavia as there is plenty of “wriggle” room for toes, so that the kids can wear more than one pair of socks, and their circulation is not restricted. 🌐



Lowa kids winter boots with sneaker inspiration

