

Sports shoes for summer 2006

Comfort, light weight and increasing breathability are the key words for technical sports shoes for summer 2006, writes Penny Leese. There are climate systems with lighter weight laminated membranes to keep feet cool and dry—practical in temperate climates such as Britain and Scandinavia where the weather can change quickly. For hotter climates where temperatures can reach over 40°C and additional coverage is needed, there are shoes with very open mesh and thinner lighter soles. Designers are creative in finding solutions and hybrid products are already creating newness in the market.



Sandals

Sandal-shoes are one of these. The Chameleon II Web from Merrell is a true hybrid, evolving from the best selling Chameleon shoe. This multi-sport shoe has traditional hiking boot support combined with the open breathability of a sandal, and retains its vital components for protection and performance. Basically Merrell has taken a best selling shoe and cut it open to turn it into a sandal and kept the important shoe features such as cushioning and stability.

Lizard's Agile sandal won first place in the ispo Outdoor Shoe category. This is above all

distinguished by its innovative design in combination with the lightest weight possible in the materials used. The Vibram soles provide a good hold on all kinds of terrain and can also be used in water. The judges said, "The striking feature of Agile is that it can be used both as shoe and as sandal thanks to its design and style and that it combines comfort with a trendy look."

L to R: Chameleon II Web from Merrell, Skelly from Merrell, Ecco's Off-road sandal

Lizard's Agile sandal

For the amphibious minded, Merrell's Skelly has an omnifit lacing system for a perfect fit, EVA Midsole with Air Cushion and a Vibram dual-density outsole for exceptional traction and durability. Ecco's Receptor sandals have a 360 degree wrap around the foot and a CMR footbed with a channeling system to guide water away from the foot. Built on a rubber outsole with a unique tread pattern, the Ecco Off-road sandal provides optimum traction for all excursions. The triple density midsole is based on directly injected PU fused with a dual density compression moulded EVA midsole, a combination that creates the best shock absorption on offer. It is by far the lightest sandal in its class with superb flexibility, lateral and medial support, traction during stride, and a unique feather-light fit. It moulds to the foot, is odour free and will never break or crack—says Ecco.

Running

Keeping cool is very important in summer running. Lotto's AZ Ghibli II uses an Air Zone total breathing system. There are breathing inserts which allow the recirculation of air through the upper and which are made of a special mix of polyurethane to make the footwear particularly comfortable and lightweight. There is an aerated shank in the medial zone—which supports the foot and allows the recirculation of air including downwards towards the sole; a comfortable breathable pull-out insole made of perforated EVA; and a highly breathable wide mesh fabric. The 'hottest' air produced by the movement of the foot exits through the ventilation zones placed on both the upper and the sole, while the 'colder' external air enters and optimises the comfort of the fit. The upper is made of synthetic leather and breathable air mesh with reflex inserts which give visibility during evening jogging.

Rocks

Rock climbing, bouldering and scrambling are all catered for in Merrell's new line. The Edge for technical Approach work has the unrelenting grip of a climbing shoe and the agility of a speed hiker,

handling heavy-duty scrambling and descending with ease. The new Approach last with a lower volume toe box and lace-to toe design allows a precise fit for support and control. The Air Cushion midsole provides shock absorption and stabilises the feet, while the Vibram sole delivers exceptional traction and terrain sensitivity.

Soccer

With so much attention on soccer for 2006 and the World Cup, there are lots of new soccer shoes and soccer-inspired sporty trainers around.

Lotto's soccer collection presents a complete range of soles which guarantee the best grip in all conditions and which meet players' most varied technical needs:

- SG (Soft Grounds) – for very soft and muddy pitches
- FG (Firm Grounds) – for grassy and dry pitches
- HG (Hard Grounds) – for hard and dry pitches

The Vento Concept features a black and white upper in water-repellent kangaroo skin and asymmetrical lacing to ensure an exceptionally comfortable fit. Better flexing and general shooting accuracy is matched with excellent ball control and power. The special anatomic pull-out insole with Shock-Absorber insert in the heel area, maximises performance of the BFC (Biomechanical Foot Control) in terms of comfort. In this model, the BFC—the insole that improves weight distribution on the sole and lends controlled flexibility, anatomic support and

*Lotto's AZ Ghibli II**The Edge by Merrell*

torsional elasticity—is visible along the medial part. This results in a lighter boot that controls foot torsion during direction changes. Adapto is the exclusive quarter stiffener in dual density Pebax that cradles the heel in an anatomically correct way and offers the dual benefits of adjustment and support. Prominently placed on the outside, it is an essential technical characteristic of the model as well as a design element. The stiff part is incorporated into the BFC and the soft part follows the arch to provide support without sacrificing torsional elasticity. Finally, Puntoflex allows correct foot flexion.

Lottos' Sala is specially designed for advanced five-a-side indoor football. It is characterised by its ultra light weight and breathability, and is made from a natural leather and suede upper with nylon mesh inserts.

Nike has also focused on soccer heritage and has created a whole collection of soccer clothing and footwear for street use based on old Nike models. The 'Nike' is a soccer shoe of the 1970s with the studs removed to make a street version. Inspirational clubs include the five-a-side 'Parqué' from Buenos Aires. The collection is built on famous clubs of the 30s and 40s long before Nike was born and the old shoes have been updated with the graphics and colours of some of the world's most famous old clubs.

Nordic walking

Nordic walking is now a mainstream sport activity but could more probably be called a fitness activity. In Scandinavia it has gained many enthusiasts, especially the elderly (who find the poles supportive when out walking) and those with rheumatism or arthritis (the Danish Arthritis charity offers members a hefty discount on poles). Shoes require heel cushioning and in some countries a weatherproof membrane is an advantage. The trend is towards low cut cross trainer looks for Nordic walking, with plenty of padding and cushioning. In addition, the soles must not be so high that ankles can twist on uneven terrain.

Volleyball

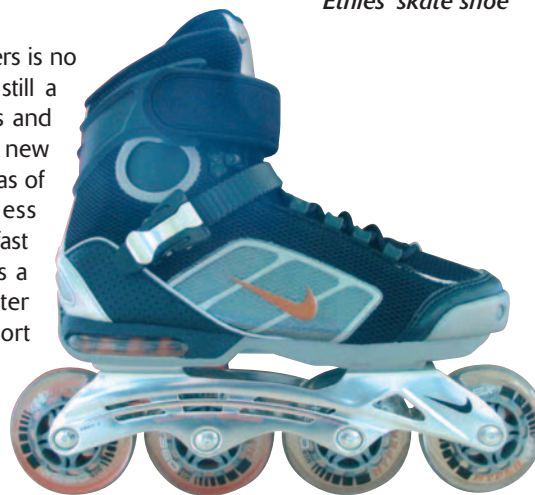
At Bread and Butter, Veja presented basic looking but ethical shoes. The new brand makes shoes in Brazil from organic cotton and natural rubber from the Amazon. It manufactures under strict guidelines about how to treat its workers. The first collection is basic low tech volleyball shoes, with summer and winter shoes using the same styles but in different colours. Old volleyball and badminton looks follow fast on the popularity of retro trends. Now shoes are often simple and white, with suede trims such as the retro Fred Perry styles that hark back to the 1930s in white canvas with suede or leather trims. Retro simple tennis shoes are big too; Lacoste's is in plain white leather with punched alligator on the side. Etnies' skate shoes are in a natural embossed leather with hemp or jute parts on the uppers for summer.



Etnies' skate shoe

In-line skating

Even if the number of skaters is no longer increasing, there are still a lot of hobby as well as fitness and speed skaters. There is still new potential, especially in the areas of Nordic Fitness and Fitness Skating. Nordic Skating is a fast growing trend and not just as a summer alternative for winter cross-country skiers. The sport on wheels remains very popular and has become a stable sales generator for the summer regardless of whether it is used as a means of transport, competitive sport or training method. There are also increases in race track skating and speed skating.



Nike's in-line skate

The interest in big running events such as city marathons is growing strongly, especially the Real Berlin Marathon with more than 10,000 runners at the starting line. Various races distributed around Germany are planned for 2006 to fulfill the great demand. The Munich Blade Night alone attracts between 15,000 and 20,000 inline skaters on to the streets for each race.

The Nordic Fitness craze is being used in an attempt to reach another target group with an expanded range of products. For example, there are now skates with slow-moving ball bearings, which brake and consequently make fast skating safer and require use of poles from companies such as K2, Salomon and Powerslide.



Veja's ethical shoe