Business Week
20th March - 26th March 06

Footwear Chamber of Commerce established in Fujian

20 March 2006

In order to cope with increasing competition on the international market and in response to EU action over Chinese footwear imports, a shoe and hat Chamber of Commerce has been established in Fujian, China. The organisation, which was officially opened on March 15, comprises approximately 100 large shoe-making factories and hat manufacturers.

Mr Xu Ming Hou, director of the new chamber of commerce, said that the chamber would focus its work on the effects of the duties imposed by the EU on Chinese shoes and would present its findings to the Fujian government.

The duties to be imposed on shoes made in China will impact Fujian's shoe enterprises because up to now exports to the US and EU accounted for over 60% of the total province," said an official of Fujian Foreign Economy and Trade Department.

Fuguiniao shoe company, which was recently named one of ten Kings of shoes" by China Leather Industry Association (CLIA), is one of the founding members of the chamber. A representative from the company said that it was planning to collaborate with nine other companies through the CLIA in order to resist the duties that have been imposed on Chinese footwear.

Yue Yuen profits increase 16%

20 March 2006

Hong Kong based Footwear manufacturer Yue Yuen Industrial (Holdings) Limited has reported continued operational growth in its unaudited consolidated results for the three months ended 31st December, 2005.

Turnover increased year-on-year by 17.6% to $878 milion and net profit increased by 16% year-on-year to $85.9 million.

Total footwear production amounted to 49.5 million pairs, an increase of 6.2% compared with the corresponding period of the previous year. Turnover from wholesale and retail operations in the Greater China region jumped 142% to $65.1 million, thanks to impressive domestic consumption in China. By the end of 2005, the group operated over 600 shops/counters in mainland China.

Deckers Outdoor appoints new Teva brand president

20 March 2006

Deckers Outdoor Corporation has appointed Peter Worley as Teva brand president. In this role, he will be responsible for all aspects of the Teva brand and will report directly to president and CEO, Angel Martinez. He replaces Carlo Lingiardi who was injured in a cycling accident on October 12, 2005.

Mr Worley brings over 20 years of industry experience to Deckers. Most recently, from October 2005 to March 2006, he served as vice president of US Sales with K-Swiss, Inc., where he managed a sales organisation comprised of seven regional vice presidents, seven key account directors, and approximately 45 independent sales representatives. Prior to that, he was vice president of Product Design & Development with K-Swiss.

Deckers Outdoor develops footwear for both high performance outdoor activities and everyday casual lifestyle use under the Teva, Simple and UGG brand names.

CTC opens fourth site in western China

20 March 2006

Global testing and quality assurance provider for the footwear and leather goods industries CTC has opened a new Chinese subsidiary company in the Wuhou District of Chengdu. CTC's fourth subsidiary in western China, CTC Chengdu is located in Sichuan Province, which was recently awarded the title of China Lady Shoe Centre".

The new centre provides the full range of CTC services for footwear and leather goods including pre-shipment, in-line and loading inspections; factory and social audits; and physical, biomechanical and chemical testing on finished products and raw materials.

For over 100 years CTC has been assisting manufacturers, distributors and retailers of footwear and leather goods as well as international professional organisations and academic institutions. With accredited laboratories and quality assurance inspection offices located strategically world-wide, CTC offers testing,

inspection, audit and consultancy services meeting government, industry, regulatory and client-specified standards. It has 20 international subsidiaries located in France, Spain, Germany, Portugal, the United States, Tunisia, China, Hong Kong and Vietnam, inspection offices located throughout the world on four continents, and accredited laboratories located in strategic areas.

Fashion Institute of Technology opens new lab

20 March 2006

The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) recently held a ceremony to mark the opening of its new sewing and cutting lab. The renovated facility, which features a GERBERcutter and spreader, will provide students in the production management programme with a complete view of the technology used in the product development and manufacturing process. FIT used funds from a New York City Council appropriation to purchase the Gerber equipment, which, in addition to software supplied by Gerber at no cost to the college, will give students a competitive edge when they begin their careers in the industry.

Gerber and FIT have partnered for more than 25 years to bring its latest technology to the classroom. In addition to the new cutter and spreader, Gerber provided 19 copies of its AccuMark pattern design, grading and marker making software and installed a Gerber plotter and digitiser in the lab. Over the last three years, Gerber Technology has also placed more than 200 licences of WebPDM, software used in product data management and development, within FIT's fashion design department. With the new installations in the lab, the value of Gerber solutions now in use throughout FIT totals more than $2.5 million.

Gerber Technology develops and manufactures integrated software and hardware automation systems for manufacturers and retailers in the sewn products and flexible materials industries.

BASF makes changes to supervisory board

21 March 2006

Effective March 17, Dr. Andreas Kreimeyer, member of the board of executive directors of BASF AG, took over as chairman of the supervisory board of BASF Coatings AG. He replaced Klaus Peter Löbbe who has resigned from the board. Dr. Kurt Bock, chief financial officer of BASF AG has also joined the supervisory board of BASF Coatings AG as a new member.

These changes are the result of the redistribution of responsibilities in the board of executive directors of BASF.

BASF has also announced that effective July 1, Raimar Jahn will become president and CEO of BASF's Coatings division. Mr Jahn will succeed Jean-Pierre Monteny who will retire as of June 30, 2006.

Axel Loehr, senior vice president, member of the board at BASF Coatings AG, Human Resources/Finance/Purchasing, Muenster, will leave the company on March 31. Dr. Wolfgang Haas, vice president Taxes, Duties & Trade Control, BASF Aktiengesellschaft, Ludwigshafen, will replace him.

Wellco names new president and CEO

21 March 2006

US military and rugged footwear manufacturer Wellco Enterprises, Inc. has named Lee Ferguson as president, chief executive officer and to serve as a member of the board of directors of the company.

Mr. Ferguson most recently served as president of the Armor and Defense Group of Arotech Corporation in Auburn, Alabama. Before joining Arotech, he held the position of chief operating officer Specialty Defense Group in Dunmore, Pennsylvania. Prior to that, Mr. Ferguson was President and Chief Operating Officer of Bike Athletic Company in Knoxville, Tennessee.

New VP named at DuPont Sorona

21 March 2006

DuPont has appointed Peter C. Hemken as vice president and general manager of DuPont Bio-Based Materials - Sorona and Bio-PDO. He will be responsible for globalising the adoption of DuPont Sorona and Bio-PDO, the first DuPont materials made using corn as the raw material.

Mr Hemken previously served as the CEO of Kordsa International, formerly DuPont-Sabanci International. He first joined DuPont in 1977 and has held a variety of engineering, technical, manufacturing, marketing and business management positions - mainly in the former nylon, polyester and other fibres businesses in the United States and in Asia.

Adidas adds Nano-Tex to new activewear line

21 March 2006

Adidas has incorporated Nano-Tex's Coolest Comfort moisture management treatment to the shorts and pants in its new Yocum activewear line.

The Coolest Comfort treatment is a quick acting moisture wicking fabric enhancement which pulls perspiration away from the skin to keep the body cooler, dryer and more comfortable. The treatment is formulated for resin-treated cottons and synthetics, such as the Yocum line's Ottoman Polyamide, which is a cotton-touch nylon material. The new products will be available in spring.

Nano-Tex is headquartered in Emeryville, California, with operations in Belgium; China; England; India; South Korea; and Turkey. It develops and markets a family of nanotechnology-based textile treatments that improve the performance of everyday fabrics.

Interstoff Asia Spring set for success

20 March 2006

The first spring run of the new style Interstoff Asia will open its doors tomorrow (March 22) at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre and will run until March 24. Re-shaped to cater to the new 'one-stop-shop' requirement of the textile and garment industry, the show now focuses on three elements: creation, function and fashion.

Close to 280 exhibitors from 12 countries and regions will participate at the fair,

Including textile suppliers and garment manufacturers from Brazil, China, France, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Japan, Korea, Macau, Pakistan, Taiwan and Thailand. Two countries will be especially highlighted: Korea and Taiwan.

Over 30 Korean companies, led by the Korea Fashion Textile Association, will participate at the fair under the heading "Dynamic Korea". The pavilion will enable buyers to appreciate the high standard of style and technology offered by Korean textile manufacturers.

Coming back for the second time at Interstoff Asia, the 'Amazing Taiwan' pavilion brings together 18 Taiwanese companies including 13 renowned functional textile manufacturers. Visitors will be able to discover the latest range of products from Taiwan, a country renowned for the quality and originality of its textiles.

Meanwhile, the Interstoff Asia Directions trend committee will present its apparel fabric trends forecast for spring/summer 2007.

Nike posts record results

22 March 2006

Athletic footwear, apparel, equipment and accessories brand Nike, Inc. has reported record results for the third quarter ended February 28, 2006. Third quarter revenues increased 9% to $3.6 billion, compared with $3.3 billion for the same period last year and net income grew 19% to $325.8 million, compared with $273.4 million in the prior year.

The company also reported world-wide futures orders for athletic footwear and apparel, scheduled for delivery from March 2006 through July 2006, totalling $5.4 billion, 2.9% higher than the orders reported for the same period last year.

On a regional basis, US revenues increased 14% to $1.4 billion versus $1.3 billion for the third quarter of fiscal 2005. US athletic footwear revenues increased 18% to $1 billion. Apparel revenues increased 6% to $366.6 million. Equipment revenues declined 3% to $70.3 million.

Revenues for the European region declined 5% to $980.1 million from $1 billion for the same period last year. Footwear revenues were $563.8 million, down 8% from $615.3 million a year ago. Apparel revenues decreased 1% to $347.1 million and equipment revenues increased 3% to $69.2 million.

Third quarter revenues for the Asia Pacific region grew 13% to $532.3 million compared with $472.8 million a year ago. Footwear revenues were up 19% to $284.1 million, apparel revenues increased 6% to $199 million and equipment revenues grew 6% to $49.2 million.

Revenues in the Americas region increased 41% to $203.1 million, an improvement from $143.7 million in the third quarter of fiscal 2005. Footwear revenues were up 44% to $143.7 million, apparel revenues increased 33% to $44.4 million and equipment jumped 42% to $15 million.

Third quarter other business revenues, which include Converse Inc., Nike Golf, Nike Bauer Hockey Inc., Cole Haan, Hurley International LLC and Exeter Brands Group LLC, grew 17% to $454.5 million from $389.6 million last year.

Mandelson: EU must defend sustainable approach to open markets

22 March 2006

On March 21, two days before he is set to receive a mandate for the implementation of anti-dumping duties on Chinese and Vietnamese leather footwear, EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson told a Brussels conference on sustainable trade policy that there are "no simple text book answers" for developing sustainable trade policy, but that the costs and benefits of liberalisation have to be weighed carefully in each case. Citing the example of agricultural and industrial trade in

the Doha Round, Mr Mandelson warned against both a simplistic conviction that trade liberalisation brings automatic economic benefits, and the argument that developing countries cannot benefit from more open markets.

Addressing recent debates in Europe, Mandelson argued that protectionist industrial policy offers short term advantages only at the expense of long term competitiveness. He argued that the choice to open markets to competition had to be balanced by a commitment to helping industries affected adjust: "If we react positively rather then defensively, we win the chance to shape globalisation, rather than being passively shaped by it."

He defended a policy of "progressive liberalisation" which combined "better opportunities to trade through lowering trade barriers with increasing capacities to trade as a result of good governance" including the development of property rights, stable legal systems and effective infrastructure.

The North Face makes promotions

22 March 2006

Makers of outdoor apparel, footwear and equipment The North Face has made several changes of staff.

Kevin Charles has been promoted to the position of country for The North Face brand, reporting to Patrik Frisk.

Mr Charles joined the company in November 2005 as a key account manager, responsible for the 'Outdoor Group' of accounts. During his time with the company, he has developed strong relationships with TNF's biggest customer.
Prior to joining The North Face, he worked for Quicksilver as UK sales manager.

Keith Byrne has been also been promoted to the position of sales & marketing manager. In this role, he will now have full responsibility for the technical sales representatives.

Mr Byrne joined the company in 1999, having previously worked as a sales representative for Sprayway.

In light of Mr Byrne's new role, Eadaoin Hutchinson has been promoted to marketing controller. In this position, she will take on greater responsibility and decision

making with regard to marketing. She will continue to report to Mr Byrne.

Ispo China winter 06 confirms its status

22 March 2006

Ispo China winter 06 confirmed its status as a quality brand and contact platform for the sports industry. The fair was which was held on March 13-16, when 286 brands from 26 countries exhibited their product novelties at the Shanghai New International Expo Center, SNIEC.

The event attracted 11,098 retailers, down slightly from the 13,353 who attended ispo China 05. 82% of the visitors came from more than 30 regions of mainland China and the international visitors were mainly from the Asian-Pacific region, although people attended from more than 70 countries overall. The largest contingents of visitors came from Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan.

The first ispo China summer 06 will be held in Shanghai on August 21-24, 2006, and the next ispo China winter 07 will take place on March 14-17, 2007, in Beijing.

European textile manufacturing falls

22 March 2006

In January 2006 compared to December 2005, manufacturing of textiles and textile products fell by 1.6% in both zones, and transport equipment decreased by 14.4% in the euro-zone and by 8.7% in the EU25.

However, year-on-year the sector showed an improvement. In January 2006 compared with January 2005, manufacturing of textiles and textile products grew by 9.4% and 7.5% respectively.

300 exhibitors registered for China Interdye

22 March 2006

Dye, organic pigment, textile Chemicals fair, China Interdye 2006, will take place in Shanghai on April 12- 14, presenting various kinds of dyestuff, organic pigment, textile chemicals and various supporting production facilities.

China Interdye has grown in size as a result of the industry's growth and after six years of steady development, the organisers claim that it is now the world's largest professional exhibition for dye, organic pigment and textile chemicals. Some 300 chemical companies from 15 countries and regions will showcase their latest products at the show alongside overseas exhibitors such as Ciba Specialty Chemicals, BASF, Dystar and Lamberti.

To support China Interdye 2006, the China Dyeing & Printing Association, China International Dyestuff Industry Association and Shanghai Paintings and Dyestuff Industry Association, have decided to hold their 2006 annual meeting and council meeting during the event.

In recent years the production and marketing of China's dyestuff, dyeing auxiliary and organic pigments have

seen rapid growth within the market, in turn driving the consumption of and demand for dyeing chemicals. In 2005, the production of dyed and printed cloth totalled 36.215 billion meters in length, an increase of 15.69% year on year; the total imports and exports of the nation's top six categories of dyed and printed products reached over $12.003 billion.

EU adopts provisional anti-dumping measures on leather shoes

23 March 2006

The European Commission adopted proposals by the European Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson on March 23 to impose a provisional anti-dumping duty on leather shoes from China and Vietnam.

The measures follow a preliminary Commission investigation that identified clear evidence of disguised subsidies and unfair state intervention to the leather footwear sector in China and Vietnam.

On announcing the provisional duties, the Trade Commissioner firmly reiterated his willingness to work with the Vietnamese and Chinese governments to address the questions of competitive distortions raised by the Commission's investigation. He said, "These anti-dumping measures will correct the injury caused to European leather shoe producers. It is important that we act against unfair trade while encouraging legitimate and competitive trade from emerging economies. We do not target China and Vietnam's natural competitive advantages, only unfair distortions of trade."

In order to minimise any sudden impact on imports, the duties will be imposed progressively over a period of five months, beginning on April 7. They will rise to 16.8% for leather shoes from Vietnam and 19.4% for leather shoes from China.

The provisional measures exclude children's leather shoes so as to ensure that even the small price rises are not passed on to poorer families. Special Technology Advanced Footwear will also be excluded from the measures because there is not sufficient production of these shoes in Europe for injury to have occurred. A monitoring mechanism will be created to ensure that importers do not use these excluded categories to circumvent the duties.

Timberland provides estimated impact of EU duties

23 March 2006

Footwear, apparel and accessories company The Timberland Company has announced its preliminary estimated impact from the European Commission's decision to impose provisional duties on leather upper footwear originating from China and Vietnam and imported into European Member States.

While Timberland is implementing strategies in response to this action, including potential price increases on footwear products sold in Europe, its preliminary estimate is that the implementation of these duties will likely reduce its 2006 operating profits in the range of $10 million.

Jeffrey B. Swartz, president and chief executive officer, stated "As a premium footwear provider, we do not believe that our footwear is being imported into Europe at below market costs, and we believe that the imposition of percentage duties disproportionately impacts premium branded footwear companies, like Timberland, which have not caused injury to Europe-based footwear manufacturers. While we are disappointed by the decision of the European Commission, we will continue to work with the Commission to put forth our position with a view to finding a constructive solution."

NZ Tariff Act clears way for four-nation trade deal

23 March 2006

A Tariff (Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership) Amendment Act has been passed in New Zealand parliament and will now allow the country to ratify a four-way trade agreement with Chile, Brunei, and Singapore, said trade minister Phil Goff.

"The Trans-Pacific Economic Partnership Agreement liberalises trade in goods and services, improves the business environment and promotes cooperation on a range of economic areas between all four countries," Mr Goff said.

He added, Tariff reductions under the agreement will make New Zealand's exports more competitive in Chile and Brunei Darussalam. Once the agreement comes into force, tariffs will be immediately eliminated on 89% of our current exports to Chile, and 92% of our current exports to Brunei.

"Tariffs will be phased out in three steps through to 2015, with special steps for sensitive New Zealand products such as apparel, footwear and carpet."

Safety Products Holdings and Norcross Safety Products report results

23 March 2006

Manufacturer of branded products in the personal protection equipment industry Safety Products Holdings, Inc. and Norcross Safety Products L.L.C. have announced results for the year ended December 31, 2005. Net sales increased 9.7% to reach $481.1 million from $438.5 million in 2004. This increase was said to be attributable to increased net sales in each of its three operating seg-

ments. In the company's general safety and preparedness segment, a rise in net sales of $24 million, or 7.8%, reflected a combination of overall organic growth in Canada, Europe, and South Africa, favourable exchange rates and incremental net sales resulting from the acquisition of The Fibre-Metal Products Company. In the United States, strong overall market demand was offset by a decrease in government contract shipments resulting in lower net sales.

In the fire service segment, net sales increased $9 million, or 11.5%, reflecting continued strong market demand. In the electrical safety segment, net sales increased $9.6 million, or 18.8%, primarily driven by strong market demand and new product penetration. Both of the company's general safety and preparedness and electrical safety segments realised increased sales from the hurricane activity in the Gulf Coast region.

The company manufactures and markets a line of personal protection equipment for workers in the general safety and preparedness, fire service and electrical safety industries. Its products are sold under brand names including North, Fibre-Metal, Morning Pride, Ranger, Servus, Pro-Warrington and Salisbury.

West 49 appoints new CFO

23 March 2006

Canadian action sport retailer West 49 Inc., has named Steven Boyack, as chief financial officer (CFO) and corporate secretary, effective March 27.

"With three acquisitions over the past nine months, the scope of our lead financial role has significantly expanded," said Sam Baio, president and CEO.

Mr Boyack is a chartered accountant with more than 17 years of accounting and finance experience, primarily in the retail and consumer goods industries. Most recently, he was vice president, controller at Winners Merchants International L.P., a division of The TJX Companies, Inc.

The company has also appointed Leslie Freeman as vice president, Web Commerce at West 49's wholly-owned subsidiary, Board Zone Inc.

In this newly created role, Ms Freeman will be responsible for the development and implementation of an e-commerce web site for the West 49 banner, leveraging the platform and infrastructure of the Board Zone web site.

Ms. Freeman is a founder of West 49 and its predecessor companies and has previously served as director of Buying and vice president, Global Sourcing.

West 49 Inc. is a multi-banner specialty retailer of apparel, footwear and accessories related to skateboarding, snowboarding, and surfing.

Hemptown to change name and form two new subsidiaries

23 March 2006

Canadian manufacturer of sustainable, environmentally-friendly fibres and fabrics Hemptown Clothing Inc., has announced the formation of two new subsidiaries and a change in the company's name to Naturally Advanced Technologies Inc.

The two new subsidiaries are Crailar Fiber Technologies Inc. and Hemptown Clothing and both will operate under the parent company, Naturally Advanced Technologies. Crailar Fiber Technologies was formed to produce high-tech, high-strength natural fibre for the textile and composite industry.

Hemptown Clothing, the company's legacy business, produces eco-friendly fibre garments for the sportswear industry with its HT Naturals division.

"Our name change to Naturally Advanced Technologies and the addition of the two new subsidiaries reflects our strategic decision to focus on the development and commercialisation of Crailar," stated Jerry Kroll, CEO.

Pride unveils new technology for protective clothing

23 March 2006

Pride Business Development Holdings, Inc., a manufacturer of personal protective clothing, has unveiled its new patent pending technology named, "Uni-Block Construction".

According to the inventors, M. Michael Markow and Ari Markow, the technology is a unique process for the manufacture of a bullet resistant pouch that can protect its contents from the adverse effects of ultra-violet light, water and other specific mechanisms of invasion that can lead to the rapid deterioration of the pouch's contents.

The product has been developed as a direct response to the recent failure of certain bullet resistant vests whose protective qualities purportedly degraded as a result of exposure to external moisture and ultraviolet light. M. Michael Markow stated, "It is well known that many textile products change their physical characteristics, specifically with respect to tensile strength, as a result of moisture and ultraviolet light intervention. Recent product deficiencies leading to product failure and subsequent decertification by the National Institute of Justice were the clear call for the invention of our Uni-Block Construction process."

Pride Business Development Holdings, Inc., with its brand of Bodyguard products, develops specialty and protective clothing and materials manufacturer for the domestic and international law enforcement, military and dangerous materials handling markets.

AlvaProducts creates new fit and sizing consulting division

23 March 2006

AlvaProducts, an US provider of technology solutions for apparel product development, sourcing and quality, has created a new consulting division and appointed apparel fit and sizing expert, Ed Gribbin, to lead the division. Mr Gribbin has been appointed as director of Strategic Services for the company's new global consulting division which will provide comprehensive size and fit consulting solutions to the apparel industry.

Mr Gribbin is the co-inventor of the Intellifit System, which is said to be the first body scanner capable of collecting accurate body measurements from fully clothed people.

According to research by Kurt Salmon Associates, 62% of consumers are more dissatisfied than ever with how clothing fits, and 85% buy a specific brand because of the way it fits his or her figure. This wide-spread misconception of body shapes and sizes is making it more difficult for retailers and brands to retain customers and attract new ones. In response to these issues, the new consulting division hopes to help retailers and brands increase apparel sales and lower markdowns through: analysing fit, from product development to sourcing to quality, against global best practices and worldwide measurement data; presenting practical solutions designed to improve fit for a brand's current and target customers; assist clients in the testing and implementation of the solutions offered.

AlvaProducts' technology and customised mannequins are used by major retailers, brands, cataloguers, sourcing offices and apparel manufacturers throughout the world. The company holds several key patents using research in human morphology, 3D garment engineering, as well as information technology.

Phoenix Footwear posts 60% rise in sales

24 March 2006

US multi-brand footwear, apparel and accessories company Phoenix Footwear Group, Inc., has reported a 60.2% increase in net sales for the fourth quarter ended December 31, 2005, to reach $33.2 million compared with $20.7 million for the fourth quarter of 2004.

The strong performance was attributed to robust growth from the Royal Robbins brand and the recently acquired Chambers and Tommy Bahama brands.

For the twelve months ended December 31, net sales increased 42.9% to a record $109.2 million compared with $76.4 million for the prior-year period. The growth was primarily attributable to a robust year-over-year increase from Royal Robbins and H.S. Trask and strong contribution from Chambers and Tommy Bahama in the second half of 2005.

Phoenix Footwear designs and markets men's and women's dress and casual footwear, belts, personal items, outdoor sportswear and travel apparel. The company's brands include Royal Robbins apparel, the Tommy Bahama, Trotters, SoftWalk, Strol, H.S. Trask, and Altama footwear lines, and Chambers Belts.

Wolverine World Wide reaffirms 2006 estimates despite EU duties

24 March 2006

Despite the European Commission’s decision to impose provisional trade measures on certain leather footwear imported into the European Union from China and Vietnam, Wolverine World Wide, Inc. has reaffirmed its estimated results for 2006.

Commenting on the action, chairman and CEO, Timothy O'Donovan, stated, "The EU has been considering these trade actions for over eight months and this has given our brands and sourcing organization time to adapt to possible measures. We believe these protectionist measures are unwarranted, and we will continue to partner with European importers, retailers and consumers to limit the impact of any final trade measures which will be evaluated by the Commission over the coming months.

"Despite this trade action, we are reaffirming our previously announced 2006 estimates with a revenue range of $1.110 to $1.130 billion.”

Wolverine World Wide produces casual, active lifestyle, work, outdoor sport and uniform footwear. The Company's brands include Bates, Hush Puppies, Hytest, Merrell, Sebago and Wolverine. The company also holds exclusive footwear licences for brands including CAT, Harley-Davidson, Patagonia and Stanley.

SGMA celebrates 100th anniversary

24 March 2006

The Sporting Goods Manufacturers’ Association (SGMA) celebrated its 100th anniversary on March 20. Founded in 1906 by six sporting goods manufacturers, their mission was to enhance the performance, safety, and impact of sporting goods products for all athletes. A century later, SGMA boasts nearly 1,000 member companies.

Through innovation and dedication, the sporting goods industry has opened doors and encouraged the inner athlete in all of us,” said SGMA president and CEO Tom Cove. We are proud of our members’ contributions to society and culture in America, and on the occasion of our 100 year anniversary, we celebrate the results of their achievements for athletes from casual to elite.”

SGMA is launching a website campaign to celebrate the significance of the sporting goods industry in American culture. The Centennial Celebration site will highlight this heritage along with an evolution of sporting goods products.

Since 1906, SGMA advocacy, collaboration, and grants have helped expand access to sport around the USA, including increased funding for school PE programmes, more parks and recreation facilities for outdoor activities, and the founding of national sports participation programmes such as The Athletic Institute, Tennis Industry Association, and the American Legion Junior Baseball Programme.

Polymer Group forms partnership with Colorama

24 March 2006

US producer of nonwovens Polymer Group Inc. has announced that its Canadian subsidiary Difco has formed a partnership with Ontario-based fabric dyer and finisher Colorama, to provide customers the latest technology, expanded capacity and new protective fabrics.

The partnership has already resulted in PGI Difco expanding its product portfolio to offer knitted sheared fleece fire resistant (FR) fabrics for use in garments worn by electricians and utility line workers. These protective garments are designed to offer protection against electrical arcs, a growing area in FR apparel, to meet National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 70E regulations.

PGI Difco, based in Magog, Canada, produces high-performance woven products for industrial, automotive and filtration applications, and FR apparel and turnout gear used by fire-fighters, military personnel, utility workers, and petrochemical and other industries.

Maria Sharapova to debut Nike custom-designed apparel

24 March 2006

Maria Sharapova will debut new custom made Nike apparel at the NASDAQ-100 Open tennis tournament in Miami, Florida. The new apparel features a unique Dri-FIT sport corset and skirt that are adapted from Nike's fitness dance collection.

After learning of Maria's interest in Nike's fitness dance collection, Nike designers adapted two key pieces for her to wear on the tennis court. The Nike Speed Corset features a ventilation system in the front and back for breathability to keep her cool while playing in Miami's heat. The black Nike Shimmer Mix Skirt is made of moisture-wicking Dri-FIT fabric and features an adjustable roll top waist that allows for a custom fit. Nike's proprietary, tested and re-tested, moisture-wicking technology, ensuring Nike Dri-FIT helps sustain body temperature by drawing sweat away from the skin and moving it to the outside of the fabric where it quickly evaporates.

Eurostop and Options Systems to offer integrated wholesale and retail solution

24 March 2006

Eurostop, a supplier of retail systems to the fashion, footwear and general merchandise sector, has announced a strategic affiliation with Options Systems Ltd, a global provider of IT solutions for the apparel and footwear industries. Initially providing solutions for specific ends of the market – retail and wholesale, the two companies plan to develop seamless integration between their products to provide an end-to-end merchandise management solution for clothing and footwear manufacturers and retailers.

The affiliation between the two companies is designed to meet the changing needs of retailers and wholesalers as they expand their business operations. The companies already have established customers utilising both solutions including WDT, Ben Sherman and Hi-Tec Sports.

According to Tony Parkinson, managing director of Options Systems Ltd.,"The distinct business patterns of retailers and wholesalers are starting to become blurred. Increasingly we are seeing wholesalers open factory outlets, concessions in department stores and retailers licensing their brands to other retailers. Apparel companies need an end-to-end solution and the integration of two specialist apparel products offers a best-of-breed solution that is unparalleled."