Business Week
22 May - 28 May 06

Columbia Sportswear names new account executives

22 May 2006

US-based designer, marketer and distributor of active outdoor apparel and footwear Columbia Sportswear Company has appointed Nicholas Jacobs and Alan Gear as its two new key account executives. Mr Jacobs will fill the apparel executive role and Mr Gear will fill that of footwear executive within the newly created key accounts team. Both will report directly to Mark Flanagan, key account sales manager.

Ted Doan passes away

22 May 2006

Herbert (Ted) Doan, businessman, philanthropist and the last Dow family member to serve as chief executive officer of Dow Chemical, the company founded by his grandfather in 1897, died on May 16. He was 83.

Mr Doan brought together disparate parts of the company into a more efficient and growth-oriented organisation, including rapid expansion outside the US. He set the ambitious goal of growing earnings by 10% per year. By the time of his retirement the company had met that goal, the best record of any major chemical company at the time.

After retiring from the company, Mr Doan immediately founded Doan Associates, a venture capital firm, and later Doan Resources Corporation, a small business investment company.

Among his many public service and philanthropic activities, he served as chairman of The Herbert H and Grace A Dow Foundation, was chairman of the Michigan Molecular Institute, co-chairman of then Governor John Engler's Venture Capital Task Force and president of the Michigan High Technology Task Force. He also served on the National Science Board and on the Board of the Office of Technology Assessment in Washington. He served on the advisory board of the University of Michigan's College of Engineering and on the University of Chicago's Board of Governors for the Argonne National Laboratories and was a founding member of the ARCH Development Corp.

Ciba opens new printing centre of excellence

22 May 2006

Swiss company Ciba Specialty Chemicals has completed the construction of its Digital Textile Printing Centre of Excellence, designed to provide its customers with state-of-the-art service and development support for ink jet printing on plotters.

The official opening of the centre is scheduled for June and a customer symposium is being planned for the autumn.

The centre, at Ciba Specialty Chemicals' site in Origgio, Italy, will support the whole of Europe and is strategically located near the company's substantial customer base in Northern Italy and the Digital Textile Centre at Reggiani Macchine (Bergamo), Ciba Textile Effects' partner in industrial-scale digital textile printing.

Hibbett reports positive Q1 earnings

22 May 2006

Sporting equipment, apparel and footwear retailer Hibbett Sporting Goods, Inc. has published improved financial results for the first quarter ended April 29.

Net sales for the 13-week period increased 10.5% to $126.9 million compared with $114.8 million for the corresponding period in 2005. Net income for the first quarter increased 7.7% to $11.5 million compared with $10.7 million in the first quarter of last year.

Hibbett opened eleven new stores during the first quarter, bringing its store base to 560 in 22 US states.

Resistex released by Tecnofilati

22 May 2006

High-tech yarns producer for protective clothing, sportswear and safety apparel Tecnofilati recently launched its Resistex brand, a line of innovative technical yarns with varied functions.

Resistex Carbon consists of a continuous filament of conductive material based on active carbon and polyester fibres. Apparel produced with this filament is said to have a positive influence on muscle performance during aerobic sports, particularly in terms of temperature regulation, breathing, cardiac frequency and controlling the build up of lactic acid.

Resistex Silver uses a layer of pure silver with normal textile fibres such as cotton, polyester and nylon offering antimicrobial, anti-static and heat-regulating characteristics. This conductive yarn can be used in the medical field as well as for bedding, apparel and for sports and leisure items.

Resistex Inox contains stainless steel filaments covered with textile fibres. According to Tecnofilati, the stainless steel AISI 316 L satisfies all standards pertaining to allergies and corrosion. The conductive features of Resistex Inox make the tissue anti-static and a screen against electro-magnetic fields.

Resistex Copper uses natural/artificial textile fibres with copper and is anti-static and bacteriostatic, whilst also providing a screen against electro-magnetic fields.

BASF raises prices for formic acid

22 May 2006

Manufacturer of chemicals, plastics, colorants and pigments, and fine chemicals BASF is raising its prices for formic acid by €40 per metric tonne in Europe, with immediate effect, unless existing contractual agreements state otherwise. This mark-up reflects increases in raw material and energy costs.

Formic acid is used in many industries and acts as dirt remover and disinfectant.

IMB welcomes 25,000 trade visitors

22 May 2006

IMB World of Textile Processing 2006 held in Cologne, Germany, on May 10-13, welcomed 25,000 trade visitors from 115 countries—64% of whom came from abroad.

A total of 631 companies from 40 countries presented a range of technologies for clothing production as well as a spectrum of complete solutions related to technical textiles.

A greater emphasis was placed on communication and know-how transfer at this year's event. The IMB forum, which took place on May 11, focused on the changing world of IT and logistics and was attended by around 500 visitors. The top IT issue was lifecycle management and high-ranking speakers from science and industry gave presentations on the subject.

The inaugural IMB Innovation awards were also held at this year's event at which German company Pfaff Industrie Maschinen AG was presented with an award for its programmable welding system featuring full parameter control via a touch screen.

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Successful EATP conference

22 May 2006

The European Association for Textile Polyolefins (EATP) held its international conference in Berlin, Germany, on May 15-16, welcoming participants from 15 countries and four different continents. Presentations were made by companies from Belgium, Denmark, Germany, India, Italy, Switzerland, Turkey, UK and USA, on themes including 'The European and world economic framework', 'Polyolefin feedstocks and polymers', 'Developments in India', 'Competition of polyolefin fibres with other materials', 'PP fibres in the USA', 'Carpets', 'Technical textile global developments', 'Global competition in machinery', 'Market growth in nonwovens', 'Investing in China', 'Innovation', 'Synthetic sports surfaces' and 'Environmental issues.'

Textile polyolefins are a major sector of the European textile industry, producing polymers, fibres, fabrics and a wide range of other products, from polypropylene (PP) and polyethylene (PE). European output of polyolefin textiles exceeds €3 billion a year.

The next EATP executive seminar will be held in Istanbul from May 21-22, 2007.

10 years of organic cotton from Patagonia

22 May 2006

Patagonia is celebrating having used 100% organic cotton—produced without the use of pesticides, toxic fertilisers, or genetically modified seeds—in its cotton clothing for ten years. The US company first adopted organic cotton in its apparel in 1996.

A basic cotton t-shirt generally requires the use of 140 g of pesticide and chemical fertilisers. Although cotton may be natural it can soak up more than 10% of these pesticides and 25% of insecticides.

According to Patagonia, organic cotton farming methods support biodiversity and healthy ecosystems, improve the soil quality, and often use less water than conventional cotton growing methods. However, growing organically takes more time, requires more knowledge and skill, and still costs more.

Patagonia organises 'cotton tours' every year to show how 'factory farming' spoils the natural landscape and has a serious impact on the environment.

Companies such as Nike (USA), Mark & Spencer (UK), Coop (Switzerland), Prana (USA), Monoprix (France) and Timberland (USA) have all contributed to the 76% production growth between 2000 and 2005 by using organic cotton. However, organic cotton production is still marginal in relation to total production: representing only 0.1% of total cotton production.

Columbia Sportswear sponsors all female racing team

23 May 2006

Designer, marketer and distributor of active outdoor apparel and footwear Columbia Sportswear has signed a sponsorship deal with the Scottish Adventure Ladies Team (SALT). Columbia will serve as the official title and apparel sponsor, supporting the team for the 2006 adventure racing season.

Columbia SALT is the only all female racing and training squad based in Scotland. Just a year old, the team consists of nine elite members and a full squad of 25. Collectively they draw on an impressive range of sports and racing experience, including an elite level cross-country mountain bike racer, marathon and mountain marathon athletes, experienced rock climbers, ski racers and mountaineer and sea-kayaking expedition leaders.

Brazilian textile companies move overseas

23 May 2006

Two of Brazil's largest textile groups, Santista and Coteminas, are likely to announce investment plans for new overseas factories in the next few weeks in an attempt to address the issue of Brazil's lack of international competitiveness.

Last year Coteminas acquired American company Springs which is set to invest $100 million to either purchase or build a towel and bed and table linen factory. A spokesman stated that if Egypt was not suitable, it would be in China, Pakistan, India or Vietnam as there is no chance that we can make such a large investment in Brazil.

Santista Têxtil will make no substantial investment in Brazil either. At the end of 2005, it acquired Spanish company Tavex and became the world's largest jeans manufacturer with 10% of the global market. Santista intends opening factories and purchase competitors abroad. The first step will be to build a jeans factory in El Salvador, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Guatemala or Costa Rica, generating around 700 new jobs.

Gap to launch online footwear business

23 May 2006

Gap Inc. plans to launch a new online footwear business through its e-commerce division Gap Inc. Direct featuring fashion brands for women, men and children. The new business is expected to go online in time for the 2006 holiday season with a broad assortment of footwear offerings from designer to casual brands.

Online footwear business is growing nearly 15% annually and will become a $5.5 billion market by 2010, according to analysis conducted by Forrester Research in 2005.

Research conducted by Gap Inc. indicates the company's own, sizeable online customer base already buys shoes online.

Wal-Mart sells South Korean business

23 May 2006

Vice chairman of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. Mike Duke has announced that Shinsegae Co. has agreed to purchase the company's South Korean retail business for Won 825 billion ($882 million).

South Korean retailer Shinsegae has 79 E-Mart hypermarkets in the country. It will continue to operate Wal-Mart Korea's 16 stores but will rename them E-Mart.

The agreement is subject to the approval by the Korea Fair Trade Commission.

Shoe exports up in China

23 May 2006

According to statistics released by Chinese customs, shoe exports increased 20.4% to $6.64 billion and garment exports rose 24.7% to $24.03 billion between January and April, compared with the same period in 2005.

Reports indicate that Chinese exports totalled $274.24 billion while imports totalled $240.48 billion, up 25.8% and 22.1% respectively, with a favourable balance of $33.76 billion.

In terms of exports, high-tech products saw the greatest increase, up 34.4% from 2005 to $81.24 billion.

Indian government proposes 25 integrated textile parks

23 May 2006

According to textiles minister Shri Vaghela, the Indian government has put forward a proposal to set up 25 integrated textile parks in the country in an attempt to enhance the competitiveness of the Indian textile industry.

Speaking at the first International Fashion Technology Forum, Shri Vaghela said that the government is also

taking steps to create a better environment for the sector by reducing production costs as well as further rationalising the excise duty structure and removing bottlenecks.

He said that by 2007 the Indian textile and apparel industry could potentially achieve a value of $85 billion; of which domestic market potential would be $45 billion and export potential would comprise $40 billion.

He emphasised the importance of R&D activities supported by the government in the sector.

He added that the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) has played a catalytic role in the growth of fashion and lifestyle related industry and business integrated design, technology and management, craft and industry, national and global markets and providing hands-on entrepreneurial experience in a holistic manner.

Natural fibres beat synthetics in new fabric

23 May 2006

Micro Equity Group Associates, Inc. (MEGA) has released EckoTech, an all natural fibre fabric with anti-odour, antibacterial, wicking and breathing properties that are said to be superior to synthetics. Eckotech is currently being used in sweaters and other knitted sporting garments, but the company plans to expand production to support fashion markets in the near future.

Made in the US from bamboo, silk, and other natural materials, EckoTech is antibacterial, and contains a naturally-occurring, organic deodorant substance which is reported to survive many washes.

Chinese acrylic fibre industry booms

23 May 2006

According to a recent report, the $5 billion plus acrylic fibre industry expanded by 5.1% in terms of value and by 2.8% in terms of volume in 2005.

Global acrylic staple fibre production capacity stands at 3,127 thousand tonnes. Of this, nearly half is produced in Asia, with China accounting for almost a quarter of global capacity. Japan, on the other hand, shares just 9.5% of global capacity which has seen consistent declines from 13.5% in 2000. Turkey has maintained its global share at 7.8% in the last 5 years.

In 2005, China produced 865,000 tons of acrylic staple fibre, up by almost 30% compared with the previous year.

China is also a major consumer of acrylic staple fibre. In 2004, the latest estimates, it consumed about 1,125 thousand tonnes of acrylic fibre, of which 40% were imported.

Rhodia results meet expectations

24 May 2006

French specialty chemicals company Rhodia has reported first quarter results in line with expectations.

Net sales increased 9.4% to €1,354 million, compared with a particularly strong first quarter 2005. This increase resulted from a 2% growth in volumes, a 2% rise in prices as well as a 7% positive currency effect due to the appreciation of the dollar and the Brazilian real against the euro.

Operating profit rose to €81 million from €75 million in the first quarter 2005.

Net income from continuing operations reached €9 million, from a €57 million loss in the first quarter 2005

India launches integrated handloom cluster scheme

24 May 2006

India's Ministry of Textiles has launched a new scheme, "Integrated Handloom Cluster Development Scheme", for the development of handloom sector from the year 2005-06, with an outlay of Rs40.00 crore ($8.7 million) for development of 20 handloom clusters throughout the country.

The scheme is set to cover all the needs of the handloom sector in each cluster for the supply of raw materials, marketing support, design input, upgrading technology and welfare of the weavers. Customised programmes will be developed for each cluster after a detailed survey and requirement analysis.

169 yarn depots in 65 clusters have already been set up and another 165 have already been planned.

Perry Ellis reports Q1 results

24 May 2006

Designer, distributor and licensor of apparel, accessories, sportswear and swimwear Perry Ellis International, Inc. has posted financial results for the first quarter ended April 30.

Net sales for the first quarter were $208.3 million compared with $229.4 million in 2005. Net income was also down from $8.9 million in 2005 to $5.9 million.

Total revenues were $214 million, a 5% decrease compared with $225.6 million reported during the corresponding period in 2005. The decline in total revenues during the quarter was anticipated as part of the company's fiscal 2007 plan. It was primarily a result of previously announced reductions of private label and branded programmes at a national mid tier chain as well as the impact of federated department store door closures due to the May Company merger integration.

Cobra introduces new Optica SL putter

24 May 2006

Cobra Golf has launched the new Optica SL putter, the first putter using fibre optic technology that claims to enable golfers to align putts with greater confidence and precision.

The new putter uses Truglo fibre optic sight line and is said to help provide square alignment and greater accuracy.

Features include tri-material construction: a forged aluminum 6061 body and milled face to provide soft feel and true roll, injected urethane body cap for enhanced feel and forged stainless steel weight ring for low/back CG and high MOI, said to provide greater accuracy and distance control.

New head of global brand marketing appointed by adidas

24 May 2006

Adidas has appointed Eric Liedtke as head of global brand marketing for the adidas brand. Mr Liedtke will be responsible for communications, PR and market research and will report directly to Erich Stamminger, president and CEO of the adidas brand.

Eric Liedtke currently heads up brand marketing at adidas America in Portland, Oregon. He succeeds Uli Becker who has been appointed head of global marketing for the Reebok brand.

Nike launches Air Zoom Moire

24 May 2006

Nike is introducing the Air Zoom Moire, said to be the first footwear designed to talk to Apple's iPod nano.

The Air Zoom Moire connects to the iPod through a wireless Nike+iPod Sport Kit, on which then information on time, distance, calories burned and pace is stored on the iPod and displayed on the screen; real-time audible feedback is also provided through headphones. The kit includes an in-shoe sensor and a receiver that attaches to iPod.

Nike also is introducing a range of performance apparel and accessories, including jackets, tops, shorts and armband, designed for the iPod nano and Nike+iPod Sport Kit. All Nike+ apparel is designed for the way athletes move, integrating smart, ergonomic design, performance-specific materials, ventilation, and weather protection.

Nike will introduce a further six footwear styles that are Nike+ ready in the autumn.

Rocky Shoes & Boots changes name

25 May 2006

US-based designer and manufacturer of premium footwear and apparel Rocky Shoes & Boots, Inc. has officially changed its name to Rocky Brands, Inc.

Mike Brooks, chairman and chief executive officer of Rocky Brands, stated, "The Rocky name is synonymous with quality, comfort, and durability and it will continue to serve as the foundation of our company into the future. At the same time, we now operate a diversified portfolio of leading brands in addition to Rocky Outdoor Gear including Georgia Boot, Durango, Lehigh and Dickies, and we believe our new name better represents our expanded operations and our growing position in the marketplace."

The name change was approved by the company's shareholders at its annual meeting on May 16.

Unrest continues in Bangladesh garment industry

25 May 2006

Following riots by angry workers in Bangladesh's export garment sector, employers have been told to stop destroying the image of Bangladesh, the future of the garment industry, and the livelihoods of the millions of workers that produce their wealth.

In two days of violent unrest, over 200 factories have been destroyed and scores of vehicles have been set on fire. Two workers have died and hundreds have been injured.

Neil Kearney, general secretary of the Brussels-based International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation said, "We have repeatedly warned of the growing frustration at the payment of starvation wages, the excessive hours of work, the cheating on piece work and the falsifying of overtime rates, the abusive treatment and the appalling health and safety conditions.

"But the employers association has brushed aside the

notion that the violence is the result of low wages and poor conditions, claiming that workers were ‘well paid and enjoyed good conditions’.”

The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) has since decided to reopen the closed garment factories and demanded full assurance of security from the government, which it blamed for its failure to provide protection to the industry.

Nigerian textile firm cuts 1,200 jobs

25 May 2006

According to local media reports, the last remaining textile factory in Kaduna, Nigeria, United Nigeria Textiles (UNT) Plc, has cut 1,200 jobs.

A statement released by the company stated that the cuts had been necessary due to rising production costs and an unstable market—partly as a result of smuggling activities and counterfeit products.

Future of Ramatex in Namibia remains uncertain

25 May 2006

The Namibian Prime Minister's Office and Ramatex Textile Factory have issued a joint statement, refuting recent media reports that the Malaysian textile company plans to close its facility in Namibia with the loss of up to 6,000 jobs.

Both parties said that they were "currently engaged in serious discussions on the project" with a view to finding an "amicable solution" and "settlement" but, however, Ramatex gave no firm assurances of the company’s future presence in the country.

The government claimed that ‘false’ reports of Ramatex's closure have led to suppliers threatening to discontinue services to the factory or demanding advance payment.

New acupressure sports line licensed

25 May 2006

New York College of Health Professions has received an exclusive licence for a patented, new line of clothing and accessories that are said to provide the benefits of acupressure to specific points when in contact with the body.

Acupuncture and Acupressure have been used for thousands of years and are well known in traditional Chinese medicine having been shown to produce chemicals in the body that allow a person to either relax or become energised. "We now have the ability to apply this to lines of clothing," said Donald Spector, chairman of the board of trustees of New York College of Health Professions. "While the application in sports is obvious, these clothing and accessories can also be used to reduce motion sickness, help in weight reduction and assist in smoking cessation," he added.

The natural drug release is achieved by putting small seeds in the right places. When the consumer presses on these points they basically practise the most basic technique of acupressure. "We are not going to say that this is as effective as our licensed professionals that the College trains to become practitioners of acupuncture or acupressure," said Lisa Pamintuan, "but there should be a noticeable effect in many cases."

The college will launch the clothing and accessories line under the brand name MyChi but it also expects major apparel companies to licence its technology.

Reebok appoints new head of global marketing

25 May 2006

Uli Becker has been appointed as head of global marketing for the Reebok brand. In this newly structured role, Mr Becker will oversee global product, sports marketing, global brand marketing and global brand public relations. He will report directly to Paul Harrington, president and CEO of the Reebok brand.

Mr Becker currently heads up global brand marketing at adidas and serves as managing director of the adidas International B.V. in Amsterdam. He will relocate to Reebok’s headquarters in Canton, Massachusetts, and begin his new role July 17.

Mr Becker has been with the adidas Group for over 16 years. During that time, he held various senior management positions in product marketing, brand communication, advertising/media and sales on a global, regional and local level.

Mr Becker succeeds Dennis Baldwin, who is leaving Reebok to pursue new professional interests. Since October 2005, Mr Becker and Mr Baldwin co-led the marketing team in the adidas-Reebok integration process.

New White Steel 2-ball SRT putter from Odyssey

25 May 2006

Callaway Golf Company brand Odyssey has released its new White Steel 2-Ball SRT Putter. The putter’s Saturn Ring Technology features a high-density alloy ring weighting system around a lightweight milled aluminum body, a combination that sets the centre of gravity (CG) deep and well back from the face. This CG position

results in a massive moment of inertia that is said to be 30% higher than the original 2-Ball Putter.

The White Steel 2-Ball SRT Putter face features Dual Insert Technology – combining a modified White Hot urethane insert with a milled stainless steel insert for the precision and accuracy of milled steel with the feel and distance control of urethane.

Oxfam criticises sportswear industry over Asian workers' rights

26 May 2006

As top sportswear brands prepare to showcase their newest products at this year's World Cup in Germany, many workers who make the products are said to be facing intimidation or dismissal for attempting to unionise, according to a report released by Oxfam International.

Oxfam's report, Offside! Labor Rights and Sportswear Production in Asia, found that workers making clothes, shoes and other goods for global sports brands have been fired or threatened with violence when they have organised unions to lobby for better pay and conditions. Oxfam said that the big sports brands are not doing enough to solve the problem.

Oxfam has carried out a year-long survey of 12 sportswear labels and found labour abuses at facilities producing goods for some of the world’s the best known brands.

Polo Ralph Lauren reports higher income

26 May 2006

Polo Ralph Lauren Corporation has reported net income of $63 million for the fourth quarter of 2006 compared with net income of $23 million for the same quarter in 2005. For the fiscal year 2006 net income reached $308 million compared with $190 million in 2005.

Net revenues for the fourth quarter increased 8% to $972 million compared with $902 million in the comparable period a year earlier, driven by a 15% increase in retail and a 6% increase in wholesale sales. Net revenues for the full year increased 13% to $3.75 billion, driven by strong increases in retail sales and wholesale sales. Fiscal 2006 revenues also reflect the acquisition of Polo Jeans in the fourth quarter and footwear in the second quarter.

Gross profit for the fourth quarter increased 10% to $525 million and rose 20% for the full fiscal year to reach $2.02 billion.

Wholesale sales in the fourth quarter were $574 million, up 6%, compared with $543 million in the fourth quarter last year. The increase came primarily from the inclusion of Polo Jeans and footwear, the launch of Chaps for women and boys, and increased sales in Lauren and the full-price menswear business.

Wholesale sales in fiscal year 2006 were $1.94 billion, up 13%, compared with $1.71 billion last year.

Retail sales were $335 million in the fourth quarter, up 15%, compared with $292 million in the fourth quarter last year. Retail sales in fiscal 2006 were $1.56 billion, up 16%, compared with $1.35 billion last year.

Licensing revenues fell in the fourth quarter to $63 million from $68 million in the fourth quarter last year. The decrease reflected lost royalties from footwear for the quarter and Polo Jeans for two months, as they transitioned to the wholesale segment post acquisition.

Raichle launches anti-spraining device

26 May 2006

As top sportswear brands prepare to showcase their newest products at this year's World Cup in Germany, many workers who make the products are said to be facing intimidation or dismissal for attempting to unionise, according to a report released by Oxfam International.

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EU calls off reinstating FSC tariff sanctions

26 May 2006

According to the Sporting Goods Manufacturers’ Association (SGMA), the European Union has called off plans to reinstate 14% retaliatory duties on several categories of US-manufactured apparel, footwear, and other products in connection with the WTO ruling against the US FSC-ETI export tax programme.

Scheduled by the EU to take effect on May 16, the penalty duties were avoided when the US Congress passed tax reconciliation legislation on May 11, repealing various provisions contained in the original FSC-repeal legislation which was passed in October 2004.

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Brown Shoe posts 10% higher sales but athletic segment struggles

26 May 2006

US footwear company, Brown Shoe Company, Inc., has posted a 10% increase in consolidated net sales to $575.538 million for the first quarter of fiscal 2006, ended April 29, versus $523.283 million in the year-ago period.

Net earnings were $10.031 million versus $3.779 million a year earlier.

In its retail divisions, sales at Famous Footwear, the company's 952-store family footwear chain, were up 4.7% to $302.318 million for the quarter, from $288.735 million for the same 13-week period last year. Same-store sales for the quarter increased 1.9%. Operating earnings fell 3.7% to $15.895 million versus $16.514 million for the year-ago period.

All categories but athletics were positive for the first quarter, with kids' and women's posting double-digit gains. Sales in the women's category were driven by junior sport-fusion, fashion dress and clog styles. Men's non-athletic sales were boosted by sandals and casual footwear. In the athletic category, sales of men's and boys' skate styles were up dramatically, but these were offset by lacklustre sales of other athletic footwear.

In its specialty retail segment, which includes Naturalizer, Via Spiga, FX LaSalle, and Franco Sarto as well as its Shoes.com e-commerce business, sales reached $56.387 million, an increase of 5.9% over last year's $53.260 million. The segment's operating loss decreased to $2.903 million from $3.509 million.

Wholesale sales were up 19.6% to $216.833 million versus $181.288 million last year, primarily resulting from recording a full quarter of revenues from the Bennett brands, which were acquired in April, 2005.

Wholesale operating earnings declined to $14.148 million from $17.504 million a year ago, attributable primarily to the planned lower sales at Naturalizer and in the kids' business.

Gains were realised by the LifeStride and Carlos by Carlos Santana brands as well as in the specialty/private label business. While down versus last year, Naturalizer's performance exceeded expectations, as the brand focused on its new business model.

Pacific Safety Products to establish US business

26 May 2006

Canadian producer of safety products, Pacific Safety Products Inc. is establish a wholly-owned subsidiary, Sentry Armor Systems, in Dover, Tennessee, USA. Sentry Armor will develop, market, manufacture and sell armour systems for customers including the US Federal Government, the Department of Defense, and State and Law Enforcement agencies. The production plant will commence operations in July 2006 and initial orders will be fulfilled during that quarter.

The company is the largest armour manufacturer in Canada and its products primarily include body armour to protect against ballistic, stab and fragmentation threats. It also produces tactical clothing and emergency medical kits.

Nike creates limited edition soccer kit for US send-off game

26 May 2006

On Sunday, May 28, Nike will present the players of the US Soccer Federation with a Limited Edition ‘Don't Tread On Me’ uniform to mark the team's final send-off match before leaving for Germany and the World Cup.

Borrowing from a jersey that US soccer players wore in the 1950s, the red jersey features a diagonal sash across the chest in blue and white. The players' numbers sit below the sash on their right. Over the heart rests a US Soccer crest reminiscent of the same 1950s era. On the left sleeve is the ‘Don't Tread On Me’ mark with a snake coiled around a soccer ball.

Nike introduced the ‘Don't Tread On Me’ campaign in autumn 2005. It was designed to give US soccer fans a unifying rally cry and a mark they could use to celebrate their team. It began with the unveiling of a giant banner bearing the crest at a US soccer game last October.