

There are many seemingly contradictory trends in winter sports footwear, but they can complement each other too. Some very obvious trends at ispo 2012 were colourful, retro, luxury, barefoot, and family winter sports.

# Sports trends – colourful, retro & luxury

by Penny Leese

**T**here is no end to the brilliant strong solid colours that we have been seeing recently in sports fashion, for all active sports including skiing and running. Much of the new ski wear is brilliantly coloured, with contrast colour welded waterproof zippers and laminated membranes, generally in solid block colours, but also in some vibrant prints.

There is fuchsia, lime, orange and cyan blue, both for men and women. It is a package solution that many companies offer today. It is not enough just to offer a great trendy product when the main clothing players offer everything from ski suits to helmets, gloves, and socks, like Craft of Sweden, all in the same colour palette.

## Keep warm

Some lightweight trail running shoes for winter 2012 come with electrical pre-heating inside, warmth that can last up to eight hours. Ski boots and inner sock liners that heat up are also becoming more common. Omni-Heat technology from Columbia Sportswear is now tried and tested and was an award winner at ispo again this year. The boots have two types of technology, with a battery pack that warms up the boots, or reflective heat technology. This technology appears on hiking boots and on trail runners. Battery packs are getting lighter and slimmer and the technology is becoming more portable where packs can be recharged in a car cigarette lighter socket. French insock company Sidas provides a complete package, from a boot liner that can be warmed with a small battery on a strap, to gel cushions on the shins to stop chafing. Insocks for ski boots are heat-moulded for a perfect fit, and now the company is offering shell boots too.

## Luxury and bling-bling

The ispo Vision section represents top quality sportswear designer labels such as Ludwig Reiter, Sportalm, Lacroix, Bogner, Armani and with



*Columbia Bugaboot with built-in heating system.*

 Columbia Sportswear

materials that include cashmere. Luxury is not always understated. Since rich people enjoy winter sports, too, there are clothes and boots for them to show off in from brands such as Lacroix, Armani and Bogner. Boots are often shiny with a bling-bling look, like black patent moon boots with gold print or leopard print satin and Swarovski crystals that decorate and sparkle. The Porsche Design collection from adidas is “very exclusive”, yet still technical. The newest Bounce running shoe has the famous Bounce technology sole with engineered pivot mechanism and metal springs, inspired by car suspension, in a new semi-translucent finish the better to see the mechanism. Downward strike is converted into horizontal velocity. The upper mesh is laminated all over with reinforcement pieces but is still breathable. Inside there are as few seams as possible for no-sock comfort. Only 500 samples are being made worldwide.

## Heritage looks

At the same time, there is a look back to the past with real rubber boots especially making a strong comeback, no doubt inspired by Hunter’s ongoing popularity and the growth of duck boots, especially in colder climates. Canada-type shell boots, with a real rubber foot part and leather shaft were totally updated with felt or



*Montets mid by Lafuma, leather upper, Ortholite inside and Vibram Jankuat rubber sole, EVA midsole. Sand and black for men, lavender and grey for women.*  
 Lafuma/Stephane Cande

cow hair on the leg part by Sorel of Canada, creating a high-grade new look in boots. And it is the look of real natural rubber here that attracts because it is matt and the boots can be multi-coloured and textured. Consumers feel that rubber is a natural material, with not just a traditional look but also the impression that it is more environmental sound than, say, PVC. Old traditional materials such as felt and wool tweed appear on lots of cozy winter boots and shoes.

Celebrating its 80th year, Bogner delivered a wide range of retro-inspired clothes for younger people; not just Dolomite authentic boots but natural cow hair even old sailcloth type parkas in century old Norwegian style from Amundsen. The real wool for underwear in retro styles is not just added for technical reasons. Real felt boots from Zoar in the US and jackets with wool tweed and felt for active sports, duffle inspired in wide boxy shapes. Fjällräven's oilskin pants and parkas can be rewaxed by hand and fixed with an iron, to improve and maintain waterproofness in a traditional way.

### Winter sports are a family affair

More winter sports companies are offering full collections, for mom and dad and the kids in the same high-tech materials and in the same colours and styles. Many can offer a collection from head to foot in matching materials and accessories, from jacket and pants where the zips match the contrast details, to skis, gloves, hats and socks. Children's feet grow too fast, think many parents, so Roces of Italy showed ski boots with triple sizes that can grow with the kids, ideal for rental companies to reduce their inventory. Kids are becoming more fashionable all the time, but for ease of use, nothing can beat kids' boots with touch-and-close fastenings; the two and three strap basic models from Lowa and Viking are still extremely popular especially with the boys.

### Barefoot running and lightweight

Even though it is winter, there is still plenty of "barefoot" running. Vibram's 5 fingers shoes come in winter shoe and boot styles. Vibram claims that they provide the best protection in minimal soles, with their separated toe system. The 3D cocoon enables plantar pressure to be optimised during motion. It is flexible enough for barefoot running but strong enough for walking over uneven and rough terrain. There is strong grip at the heel area, and a moulded nylon mesh panel in the midsole to prevent sharp rocks and objects penetrating.

The winner of the footwear award in the Performance segment of the ispo Brand New awards this year was Starringer with its Freeheel shoes, which it says encourage a new way of winter forefoot running. The shoe looks like a wooly sheepskin flip flop with the back cut off.

Designed and made in Bavaria, it prevents overheating, protects against the chill and adapts to the user's needs, with less perspiration, claim the makers. The shoes are soft and resistant and only weigh 80 grammes per pair.

Gaiter effects are now being included in the upper design of mountain trainers, part of the lighter weight trend. Salewa's Alp Trainer has deleted the standard padded collar and replaced it with an elasticated top collar to reduce bulk and keep debris, as well as grit and stones, out of the boots. Much of the upper is Kevlar reinforced textile, to further reduce weight.

Rykä's everyday fitness running shoes are inspired by the barefoot running trend, but do not follow it. They are "everyday" running shoes, very lightweight with lots of forefoot flex in the dual density sole. The idea is that with the one-piece upper and tongue, they can create such a snug fit that there is no longer any need for socks inside. Minimalist running shoes have less cushioning, no support and are always neutral to allow the feet to function as if barefoot. However, to suddenly change from cushioned footwear to minimalist footwear can lead to injury, until the body becomes accustomed to the new type of running. Innov8 from the UK has developed a transitional system of shoes so runners can progress to barefoot running; these shoes can gradually encourage the user to change running style. The company believes that heel strike when you run is an unnatural action, and minimalist runners strike with the forefoot.

Even socks are making "barefoot" possible. Akkua's socks, with different left and right and strategically placed rubber parts can be used for gym sports. They are not split at the big toe, but the first two toes are together, and then the other three toes together, ideal for working with elastics. The Italian made sock type shoes are designed for outdoor and indoor barefoot sports, like a glove that wraps the



*Fjällräven G-1000 fabric can be hand treated with extra wax to enhance water and wind resistance.*



*Roces Idea ski boot grows with the child for several years.*



foot. Technical socks, in a more classic sock design, using Kevlar for barefoot running from the Swiss Barefoot Company, on display in the Brand New area, had been worn for six months with hardly a sign of wear.

### Rubber and shell boots

Both rubber, PU and shell boots are gaining popularity in winter. Hi-Tec's introduction, the Para boots, are named after the para tree where the natural latex rubber comes from. It is warm-lined and with an ice slip-resistant sole from Vibram. The inner part is made from Neoprene with a close fit like a wetsuit, keeping feet warm and stopping socks inside from falling down, a common problem with rubber boots. Now just in men's sizes, sizes for women will follow next year.

Fun rubber boots from Lacrosse had knitted textile shafts with rubber inside so they are still totally waterproof. Sorel has become a trend boot company; their traditional boots range included a 50 year series, to celebrate the brand's heritage. There is a men's original with colours and styling inspired by the original vulcanised boot. Fashion adaptations include shell boots from the New Icons collection with a spat shaft in leather. There is even a high heeled natural rubber boot with a forepart platform. There is a rubber-soled felt boot inspired by cabin boots, but with an outdoor sole. More for city fashion than for cabin functionality, but still with a heritage appeal.

Shell (Bean) boots appeal to more than users in extreme cold climates. They are both very functional and also fashionable. Teva's new shell boot is incredibly lightweight PU, with a non-slip outer sole and a waterproof upper with welded seams. It has an insulating inner sock with a slim sole that means it can be worn on its own.

Kamik, the Canadian functional shell and wellington boot company, has just launched a collection with Gore-Tex. Although the foot part of the classic Kamik boots are totally waterproof, the company has linked up with Gore to make winter boots with full bootie construction with Partelana warm lining. It makes them warm and entirely waterproof all the way round the foot. From Spring Yard, PU galoshes are semi-transparent and colourful and good for keeping leather footwear dry.

### Green

Green is not just conserving energy and recycling soda bottles to make fleece any more; it also means sustainable ways of working, even down to the booths at the fair, with examples including Patagonia and Keen using recyclable wood and natural materials on theirs.

While Toms gives a free pair of shoes to poor kids for every pair sold, Teva's "A Pair for a Foot" campaign will clear a linear foot of waterways for



*Starringer's ispo award winning Freeheel Running Pad.*



every pair sold. Meindl's range called Schladming Identity can trace all the components from source. The German company promises total traceability, from the parentage and farming of the cattle used for the leather, to the manufacturing. The traditional style made locally has a leather vamp, and the lining is real shearling lambskin, to keep feet cozy and warm. There are models for men and women. Each pair has a QR (Quick Response) barcode identity which can be read with a QR reader on any smart phone. The user gets redirected to a website with all the information.

### Don't slip

In the old days, shoe attachments (overshoes and claw hooks in soles) to stop slipping on icy pavements were marketed to older people to stop them falling. Today, non-slip footwear and attachments are targeted at active winter runners, and the designs and colours have got brighter and trendier.

IceBug of Sweden's running shoes with retractable studs have won the "best in test" in one of the local Swedish running magazines. Colours are vivid and eye-catching in line with winter sports clothing, a good idea when it starts getting dark in winter before 4pm. Overshoes are another way to prevent slipping on icy paths. Stabilicers from Italy are lightweight open soles with studs on the bottom, which act as non-slip overshoes. And they come in a range of fashion colours from pink to lime.

Walk's EzyShoes are inspired by tyre "chains". Modern tyre chains are not made of metal but from composite rope, and are easily stretched over the tyres with elastics. The EzyShoes, originally designed as multi-purpose non-slip shoe covers, easily slip over winter footwear. The makers found that many people were using them for running, but that they found them lacking in flexibility. The new anti-skid overshoes for runners don't just come in bright colours, but have been redesigned to provide more forepart flexibility; the vamp reinforcement has been made shorter so the foot can flex more easily. 