



Regular contributor Penny Leese reviews the footwear offerings on show at the ispo 2011 exhibition in Munich earlier in the year and notes that, in shoes at least, sport is differentiating itself from fashion in a very colourful way.

## Bright colours and barefoot running

It was a pleasure to see such a riot of colour for the sports footwear sector at ispo earlier this year. Bright, pale lime and turquoise predominated for men's and women's outdoor clothing and footwear collections for autumn-winter 2011–2012. Winter sports are no longer just ski boots, skates, winter hikers and mountaineering boots; there are jogging shoes, trail runners, and fashion-inspired all-purpose winter boots for adults, and children.

### Overshoes

Once galoshes (overshoes) were not considered trendy. Swims from Norway changed all that, selling their colourful galoshes to top

fashion shops in London. At ispo, there was a new, practical overshoe from a new company, Mr ShuShu, with lightweight waterproof textile uppers on a soft, direct-injected outsole and double-front zips that allow easy entry. For babies there are overshoes too—from another new company, Bolder Kids. These soft overshoes are for pram shoes. They're made in soft shell four-way-stretch Schoeller textiles, are waterproof and breathable, and have a reflective tag and hook-and-loop fastening on the leg.

### Customisable

Customisable insoles and orthotics for runners are run-of-the-mill these days. Now the time has come for customisable shoes, and not just in the



Lowa



Salomon



Ice Bug



Salewa

way that you can have a fancy colour or pattern on your Nike basket boots ordered on NIKEiD.

Customisable and functional shoes are meeting the demands of a growing market of runners. Running shoes from Somnio are customisable to fit your biomechanical needs, as each shoe features three types of adjustable inserts that adapt to each runner's feet and running style. You can visit a pro or do a self-assessment online. There are four models now, one for neutral women's, one each for men's and women's for stability, and, finally, one that mimics the barefoot running trend with a slim low-line sole, for men and women.

### Non-slip on ice

Ice Bugs from Sweden have running shoes with metal studs in the sole that are retractable and the author of this piece can guarantee that they really do work on icy Danish forest trails. Vibram's Ice Trek compound was designed to wear on ice. Since it is made from 100% rubber it can be worn both indoors and outdoors. It has small lugs and a large contact surface. Hanwag's award winning trekking boots have ground crystals of glass moulded into the sole. The cold weather boots from Lowa are injected, and therefore as lightweight as most Lowa products are. The women's boots are very warm due to

the membrane lining, while the G3 sole incorporates textile elements to provide excellent grip on snow, ice and wet ground.

### Barefoot running

Barefoot running is a theme we will be hearing more of, with the success of the Vibram FiveFingers and their collaboration with Merrell. Inspired by this theme we now have Inov8 from England who have designed a five-finger shoe called EvoSkin in semi-transparent silicone, with air holes in the toes so that they slip on easily without air being trapped inside. These fun shoes are very light and flexible. They're machine washable and even dishwasher safe so they can stay clean.

Even more extreme are the barefoot running socks from Akkua of Italy with protective applications like Lenzing fibres to avoid abrasions and blisters. They are seamless, antibacterial and non-slip. Since they are sock-shaped, without separate toes, they can fit more varied types of foot shapes. At the opposite extreme we have the currently popular shape-up and fitness shoes, as at Fit Flop and Skechers, but since they are relatively unstable they cannot be worn for long periods of time or on very uneven terrain which is where the barefoot runners are gaining ground.

*Winter sports footwear now means so much more than ski boots and skates.*

 WTP



### Shoes with meaning

Warm Native American moccasin boots were fashionable a few years ago, and have made a strong comeback with the recent cold and snowy winters in the Northern Hemisphere. There is a resurgence of interest in authentic products that support native lifestyles; and the Manitoba Mukluks are made in Canada, with the lining made from real rabbit-skin, a meat by-product. The Native Americans eat the rabbits, which are basically a pest, and use the skin in their traditional footwear.

Manitoba Mukluks look like classic mukluks but are equipped with Vibram soles. They are designed by Heather Stepler, an artist from the Cree First Nation, and each of the patterns in the design on the sole has a meaning. The sky represents life-giving water falling as rain and snow, while there are the Western mountains, and the trees of the woodland people. The circle in the middle represents the doorway we walk through as modern hunter-gatherers, while fire tells us that the native peoples will always survive. The swirling four winds cleanse. The sole is practical too. The rubber compound of the Vibram sole was originally developed for the military and is as soft and flexible as the original leather soles, but also hard-wearing and non-slip.

### Let's do good

Ecological is no longer at odds with colour and fun. Patagonia makes stylish boots in bright fashion colours. Keen's canvas injected Palladium-type boots are marketed as conserving valuable resources, since they are made on re-harvested direct vulcanisation machines. Since the soles are directly vulcanised onto the uppers no cementing is involved, so there is an adhesive-free production, and since the uppers are in cotton canvas they are made from natural materials. Keen went to Santiago de los Caballeros in the Dominican Republic, which has a long history of making footwear, to learn how to make a shoe more sustainably, but to do that, it needed to find the right tool: a hand-operated vulcanisation machine that was made in Germany more than 60 years ago.

After scouring the globe including Poland, Russia, Turkey, and Spain, Keen gathered a few dozen dusty, vintage models. Once refurbished, the machines were pressed back into service, with no glue or stitches required. Keen is also using the classic-looking lace-ups and slip-ons as vehicles for raising \$1 million in micro-loans for impoverished communities around the world. The North Face has an explorer fund to help kids discover nature's playground. The brand has committed €200,000 to the explore fund



Tecnica



Kamik



Columbia

programme, to help kids enjoy and appreciate their own outdoors more.

Etnies, a brand of skater shoes, plants a tree in Costa Rica's rainforest for every pair of Jameson Eco shoes sold. The ad campaign says "Etnies buy a shoe, plant a tree". The Dolomite Rangdun charity project helps educate kids in the Himalayas, where their mountain climbers have been active for nearly a century now.

### Keeping warm and dry is important

Ugg boots, Mukluks and other traditional shearling and fur boots are still popular for après ski. Even Yeti Boots in various forms are making a comeback. More technical solutions are now gaining ground: Columbia's OmniHeat technology has the shoes or clothes plugged into a power point to be warmed up before wear. Columbia also uses patented OutDry technology, a laminating process to apply a waterproof breathable membrane directly to the footwear upper, eliminating the extra bootee layer of traditional membranes. Water doesn't seep through the upper and lie between the upper and membrane so wearers are not carrying around the weight of water in their boots.

Keen, the popular wide-toed comfort footwear, has a new product to keep feet warm

with three layers. There is a layer of honeycomb under the foot to trap warm air, under the honeycomb is a layer of wool felt, and under that before the outsole is a thermal heat shield to keep cold out and heat in. There is also a move back to traditional values and products, shown by the resurgence of popularity of Canadian shell foot boot makers such as Sorel and Kamik. Sorel's boots are in fashion again; they use the relatively heavy but soft and functional waterproof vulcanised foot with really waxy leather nubuck, or alternative fashion uppers. Kamik's kids' boots use a full moulded shell, where a water-resistant upper is stitched to the top of the shell. For warmth, they have removable thermal insulated socks, which can be pulled out and be worn indoors or in the tent.

Tecnica, maker of the original moon boot has a slightly slimmer and glossier version that is easier to walk around in than a pair of big boots where there is no left and right. Fur versions are doing well in the market.

Made in the country of origin is making a comeback. Kamik's classic top-grade nubuck leather shell boots make a selling-point of being made in Canada. Keen has a new product called the NoPo which is made in the US, one of the first shoes to be produced by Keen out of its Portland, Oregon, factory. 

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