

FOOTWEAR TECHNOLOGY: ISPO MUNICH 2016



Impressions from ISPO

by Penny Leese

The once-a-year ISPO Munich sports fair is not just a trade fair, it is a meeting place, a place to have fun with physical activities and, of course, after-work parties. Outdoor and winter sports are the main focus, but the words 'hybrid' and 'sustainable' were key terms at the fair. Pure winter sports like snowboarding and skiing are losing no popularity, but the realisation has come that urban use can actually be much tougher. There is dirt and mud, and the items are used every day rather than just for a few weeks a year. Sports brands are widening their offer to cover this market.

Heritage

Brands with a past, especially sports shoe brands, often launch or relaunch styles from their archive. But what they choose to launch also moves with the times. A few years ago it was sneakers; now it's updated versions of

simple, thick leather walking and hiking boots – but not as hard and stiff as the originals so that the boots will not need months of wearing in. These boots appeal to the urban and fashion customer who is looking for style and quality.

Lundhag's Heritage collection consists of five modern boots with inspiration taken from the old boots in the archives in Sweden. The lasts have been updated, however, to improve comfort; the design is snuggier. The bevelled Commando outsole is slightly different from that of the original boots, too, as it is slightly thinner and more flexible, making the boots more suitable for all-day urban wear. They are made from high-quality Terracare leather from the German tannery Heinen.

Kavat, which is an old Swedish leather shoe company, was in the lifestyle fashion area with classic European-made ecological leather shoes on crepe rubber soles which are also European-

Winter running from Scarpa. Atom S, a trailrunning shoe with Sock-Fit construction, and Neutron G, with OutDry gaiter, waterproof zip and Vibram sole for good grip on slippery surfaces.

 Scarpa



Ergonomic fit is a prerequisite in outdoor boots.

 Keen

made. The company's historical strength is in children's shoes, and the same styles are made in all size ranges from kids' to men's.

Ergonomic

Good ergonomic fit is expected by users. But not all users want to advertise this. Keen created a niche with its highly ergonomic shoes and sandals with their characteristic aggressive toe bumper. The company is now also making shoes on more moderate lasts, to increase its appeal to the European market.

The Korean design Treksta winter collection for kids does very well in Scandinavia for two reasons. There is the Hyper Grip outsole that is non-slip rubber, and Treksta's own design. But additionally they use a special last called the Nest last, which is based on a real foot, with a natural shaped heel part and even toes. This gives excellent fit on small feet and means that even with a relatively smooth lining laminated to a membrane, the kids' feet do not slip up and down at the heel inside the boots.

Woolly linings

Warm woolly linings add a cosy look. Cow hair or "pony" has all year round appeal, Scarpa's shoes come in bright yellow with black Vibram soles. Even snow brands such as Fusalp had suede sneakers with white outsoles but with a cosy warm lamb lining. This is a perfect example of the hybrid looks that were all over the winter sports fair.

Environmental and sustainable

Greenpeace, with impeccable timing, used the fair to come out with another damning report on waterproofing and the chemicals used

in sports goods. The items tested were chosen by public vote. Clothing, tents, backpacks, sleeping bags and shoes were all tested for perfluorinated compounds (PFCs). They were found in all seven of the shoes tested. And in most shoe samples, volatile PFCs were found in higher concentration than in other product types, Greenpeace said. The Columbia sample had high levels, while two footwear samples by Mammüt and Haglöfs showed a wide range of PFCs. The Haglöfs sample had the highest perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) concentration by square-metre. The company has since taken the boots off the shelves.

This is a difficult subject because consumers now expect their boots to be totally waterproof and breathable. Footwear of course gets the



The Logger, part of Lundhag's Heritage range, was inspired by traditional work boots from the forest industry. It has an elongated lacing system with gussets to prevent water and snow from entering.

 Lundhag

harshest treatment by users so it is clear that companies specialising in this area have a challenge. There are several treatments to keep out the water, from coatings to laminates, to membranes. Greenpeace focused on durable water repellent (DWR) treatment or fluorocarbon polymer membranes. Footwear companies are now much more aware of the environmental effect they make, and the publicity too.

Sympatex launched its all-season laminate at the fair, with a lightweight hardwearing knitted upper where the Sympatex membrane is bonded directly to the upper, which is seamless.

Plasmaguard technology is a nano-coating that combines water repellency with "outstanding breathability". It uses fewer chemicals, and claims that one kilo of Plasmaguard replaces five kilos of DWR coating materials, more than 115 litres of wastewater, more than 80 kilos of CO₂-equivalent and the use of other crosslinking agents, chlorides, formaldehydes and other toxic wet chemicals. Plasmaguard technology is used by sporting companies such as Asics and O'Neill. The application is used in sports clothing where waterproofness is paramount. Waterproof technologies where environmental damage is reduced as much as possible is the direction that many high-tech companies are going in.

Even the stands at the fair considered the environment. The look generally was untreated wood, rusty metal and clean lines. The Vaude stand had no carpeting, avoiding 2,200 square-metres per year. The wood the stand is made of is FSC-certified untreated ash. All metal components had a solvent-free surface. Daylight lamps save 80% energy.

Winter safety

Icebug of Sweden's designers won an award for a newer version of their non-slip sole system, the BUGweb. Their hybrid suede chukka boot on a sporty sole has a clean look, ideal for all seasons but can be converted into an "ice fighter" with the addition of a stretchy (removable) soft rubber web around the sole so that the boots are safe on ice. Since the web wraps round, it also protects the toe and heel area as well. It is interesting that the more urban boot won an award at ISPO, since the company had expected greater interest in the pure outdoor running shoe. This demonstrates the line between sports and casual is blurring more at ISPO.

Of course, some of the more classic brands still use the claw system, where there is a metal grip in the heel that can be opened or turned over to show studs or claws, and closed again on smooth surfaces or indoors.

It is not just ice that can be difficult in winter



time, but snow too. Meindl's hiking boots use their own designed Vibram IceTrek PRO sole with pyramid construction lugs for grip in soft snow and concave exterior lugs for better side grip.

Icebug RB9x multi-functional trainer with BugWeb removable antislip.



Being seen in poor light is vital in winter. Both reflective and luminous effects are used on jackets and footwear. The theme now is not just to have placement strips of 3M, the designs are integrated into the footwear. Northland won an award for its luminous trail running shoe. The Vibram sole gives traction in rain or mud. The upper is made of highly reflective mesh, and has the added advantage that the luminous outsole increases visibility in poor light.

Viking's new Boa Technology boots might look like a regular black boot, but the upper incorporates reflective material, so the boots are safe without being garish.

Slimmer and lighter

Shell boots are getting lighter, with lightweight rubber or EVA shells. Rubber boots weigh less too. Viking has launched rubber boots for kids with soft and light neoprene shafts. The idea of the neoprene shaft is not just that it is waterproof, but the fact that it insulates too.



Ballop with its award winning finned toe aquasock.





Viking kids rubber boot on neoprene shaft.



UGG boots and moon boots are both having a revival, but in the shorter versions. Original moon boots were double sized and had no difference between left and right. The sports fashion from EA by Armani has sequin moon boots with more fashionable left and right foot lasts and feminine oval toes. Generally the look is moving away from heavy and bulky boots, especially for women. Slim lace-up boots below the knee and a slimmer, almost jogging shoe, last are perfect for after-ski and city streets. Versions were offered by Merrell, Helly Hansen and Viking, to name a few.

Trendy kids

Rather than colourful cross trainers for everyday wear, many kids prefer simpler shoes like Nike Free and adidas Yeezy. They are wearing Vans and Converse even in winter. This has led to companies like Viking, Kamik and Reima broadening their kids' ranges by including winter boots on a sneaker-inspired sole with a good tread, waterproofness and warm linings.

The Reima sole has a "happy face" on the bottom. The parents can measure their kids' feet on the sole and there is a curve in another colour in the toe area, showing where the child's toes should stop, to allow room for growth when they buy the shoes.

Innovations

Innovations at ISPO are not always restricted to winter sports. The Ballop Aqualander from Korea showed innovation with its aquasocks that were combined with a forefoot paddle – rather like a duck's toe on the top of the foot.

The next ISPO will be held in Munich in January 2017. 

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