

The Milan footwear exhibition Micam added a new component for its September 2019 show. For the first time, sports and outdoor brands were able to show off their latest collections in a dedicated space called the Players' District.

Micam celebrates sports shoe success

In the autumn of 2019, the Italian Sporting Goods Industry Association, Assosport, partnered with the country's biggest shoe exhibition, Micam, to develop a new feature. For the first time, Micam this September had a component called the Players' District, devoting a substantial number of square-metres at Milan's Rho exhibition centre to sports and outdoor shoes.

"Sports shoes are a flourishing and highly diversified segment," Micam organiser,

Assocalzaturifici, stated at the launch of the new feature, "with a huge potential for growth. In 2018, 18.1 million pairs were produced in Italy alone, with a value of €750 million." It was for this reason, that it wanted to provide a dedicated space for sports shoes at the exhibition.

The presidents of Assocalzaturifici, Siro Badon, and of Assosport, Federico De Ponti, formally inaugurated the Players' District, which comprised stands for sports and outdoor footwear brands positioned around an arena,

Demonstrations of sports skills and indoor football tournaments were part of the attraction of the exhibition's newest component.

Micam



which was in use throughout the four days of Micam for indoor football and basketball tournaments, cycling events and demonstrations of skill from invited guests. Gianluca Zambrotta, who played almost 100 times for Italy's national football team and was part of the 2006 FIFA World Cup-winning team, was a guest of honour.

"We open up this space to all companies in the sector," Siro Badon said at the formal opening. "We have launched a great project that will become part of the Micam tradition. We are convinced that, by virtue of our work with Assosport, the Players' District will develop further in the coming editions and become a landmark for this particular kind of footwear product." He said he thought ideas like this would help expand the sports and outdoor footwear market and create business opportunities for companies.

Brands with a presence closest to the arena ranged from those providing serious trekking boots for walks in the mountains to those offering colourful knitted-upper sneakers for the athleisure market. German group Tamaris took a booth for its Fashletics brand, which it pitches as offering femininity, comfort and fashion at an attractive price. It sought to emphasise its fashionable credentials in Milan by putting on show at the Players' District shoes such as a model with large, crystal-style decorations on a white upper. Its team at Micam told WSA that it was too soon to say if the Players' District idea would work well.

For his part, however, Assosport president, Federico De Ponti, was in no doubt. He said projects such as this would provide his member companies with an opportunity to grow. "Sport plays an increasingly important role in our lives," he explained. The presence of a company like trekking, hiking and trail-running shoe and boot brand CMP reflected this seriousness. This company, based in a part of Italy famous for Alpine footwear, the area in northern Veneto around Bassano del Grappa, only began making footwear in 2014 after decades of dedication to textiles and apparel.

The move is going well, according to the team representing the brand at the Players' District, who called it "a logical step" for a company that had been making softshell and fleece outerwear for trekking, hiking and other activities since the 1960s. Top-of-the-range products in the company's footwear collections have Vibram soles, Ortholite footbeds and membrane protection. A best-seller is the Rigel range of low-cut trekking shoes, available for women, men and children, in bright colours such as (for the spring-summer 2020 season) petrol blue, black-and-orange, and pistachio green.



Assocalzaturifici's analysis is that consumers in the Italian domestic market spent more than €1.1 billion on athletic footwear in the first six months of 2019, an increase of 2.9% compared to the same period in 2018. Brands, including companies based outside Italy, sold almost 23.3 million pairs of sports shoes to consumers in Italy over the six-month period, which is slightly up (by 0.8%) year on year. This gives an average price per pair for this type of footwear of €48.04 during the months in question, 2.1% higher than for the same months in 2018. However, practically all other footwear segments registered declines between January and June 2019. 

World Cup winner Gianluca Zambrotta (left) at the Players' District at Micam in September. Assocalzaturifici president, Siro Badon (right), says the Players' District will become part of the Micam tradition.

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Sports and outdoor shoes is practically the only footwear segment that grew in the first half of 2019.

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