

Sports shoes get cool and airy

Active sports shoes for summer 2005 are brilliantly lightweight, airy and breathable. Ultra-breathable membranes like Gore-Tex XCR are still popular for the northern hemisphere's changeable climate, but more shoes and sandals are being developed for hot weather and very active sports. Single layer mesh uppers are so light that the foot can be seen through them. At the same time there is more hybrid footwear, mixes of shoes and sandals for all sorts of water sports.

Running shoes

Cushioning and anti-pronation are still important for running. The adidas Ground Control System was one of the prize winners at ispo. The technology is an intermediate sole system in the heel area which improves horizontal cushioning and therefore reduces strain on feet and knees. Pearl Izumi's lady running shoes have won prizes for their low weight, and summer 2005 shoes were no exception. The ultra-light weight running shoes with Kevlar reinforcements are also designed to totally co-ordinate with the sports clothing line, so shoes were pretty in lilac with shorts and singlet to match. Bright colours could be seen on the K2 collection for ladies - magenta and grey being a favourite. Ecco's running shoes are light and airy with open side panels.

Golf

Golf today is a young sport – no doubt helped by the appeal of young stars like Tiger Woods. The fashion content of golf shoes is growing all the time. No longer are they just designed for inclement northern climes and all male club houses. Bright colours, fashion lasts and light weight summery shoes are now much more



Prize winning Ground Control System running shoes from adidas.



widely available. At ispo there were trendy square toed shoes with all leather uppers, designed in Italy for men by Duca Del Cosma. Fritz Unitzer's ladies collection would look just as good in a 1930's inspired fashion shoot as on a golf course. These are high grade, dressy, lady shoes with studs for the golf course. There is even an all leather ladies golf shoe on a leather sole with cut out sides for summer wear. Golf shoes that can be worn everywhere are gaining ground with female leisure golfers in particular. Hi Tec's golf shoes are selling to fashion stores with their simple sneaker inspired, white punched leather uppers and stud-less outsoles in clear rubber with pictures underneath of golfing tees and greens. Bally's golf shoes have an internal torsion (Flexi-Tek) plate which means they can be made on very soft soles. The bright fashion colours, ranging from pink patent to gold metallic mean that the shoe can be worn to the mall, round the golf course and then in the club house too.





Yoga

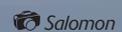
Yoga and fitness are still predominately female sports, now with a wider selection of shoes. Reebok's are a lightweight and super flexible moccasin construction with a centre seam under the foot and a two-part open-waisted sole. Uppers are streamlined and airy without laces, with soft elastic straps across the vamps. Pastels like blue, pink and white are still popular.

Womens Fitness by Reebok.



Co-coordinating soccer

Top-to-toe co-ordination is also part of soccer fashion. Lotto's soccer boot, the Opitka is updated to totally match with the shin guards, the ball and a five-a-side version. The uppers are water repellent micro-fibre, there's an EVA insert and the now industry standard asymmetric lacing. By eliminating pressure points on the instep zone and enlarging the ball contact area Lotto reckons the boots provide more sensitivity in contact with ball, and better control.





Water sports footwear from Ecco (left) and Salomon (right)

Ecco / Salomon

Sail sports

Many of the summer sports shoes are designed for wear without socks. Sebago's new water sports sandal shoes have partially siped soles and open uppers – but with a big rubber toe reinforcement against rocks and other protuberances. Enclosed vamps mean they are perfect for leaning out far over the edge of the dinghy. The new shoes are made more comfortable with a removable knitted sock covering the, again removable, insock which reduces abrasion, soaks up perspiration, and is quick drying.

Drainage is important in water sports – there are draining holes on the sole sidewall (Salomon) or mesh covered cut outs in the bottom (Ecco, Sebago). Generally water sports footwear is more enclosed, and has more support, especially in the heel counter and toecap; while the rest of the shoe remains thin and light.

A new technical water sports shoe for dinghy sailing was launched by Helly Hansen of Norway at ispo. It has a PU-coated ribbed plastic moulding on the vamp, with additional abrasion resistance making it ideal for hanging over the hull. These boots have been tested by Siren Sundby, tipped as champion women dinghy racer for the Olympics. Here there has been cross-over technology from clothing to shoes. Helly Hansen is famous for its groundbreaking research in water resistance and breathability at an accessible level. It's almost-venerable Lifa Versa technology used in the clothing has polypropylene inside, polyester outside. It is used in single layer T-shirts, which means that it works to get the water out and the vapour away from the body. So the new dinghy sailing boots don't just have big holes on the vamp and sole walls – the entire bootee is hydrophobic and quick drying. The interesting detail about this line is that it is designed to be worn sock-less for summer, not like many tech shoes that require socks for optimal performance.

Sebago introduced a new sailing boot for summer 2005 with Gore-Tex XCR. It differs from the industry standard Dubarry boot with its very light weight and specially developed exclusive Vibram sole. The top collar is leg hugging neoprene and there is an ultra lightweight version with thin textile for most of the shaft. There is also a kicker plate at the heel so the boots can be quickly removed before they can fill up with water and pull the wearer under if they fall overboard.

Sandals

The line between sandals and shoes is blurring, Salomon's water sports shoes are hybrid sandal shoes with drain holes in the side of the wall. Ecco's sandal shoes for water sports have drain holes in the sole covered with mesh. Sebago's sailing sandal shoes even have a footbed with drain holes, and a partly siped sole. Sandal uppers are often synthetic, and if leather they have special features like Ecco's which are made in Corinthian leather that is water and salt resistant.

Nordic walking

Nordic walking – with a strong launch at ispo last year - has enjoyed explosive growth. It is now a mainstream sports fitness category that can be enjoyed at any level. Originally most popular with women, it is now attracting more men. Now almost all outdoor shoe makers are offering Nordic Walking shoes. Meindl won the outdoor category with its XO series, a super light stable multi functional shoe with Gore-Tex XCR. Plastic exoskeleton ribs sprayed onto the outside and a liquid rubber applied to the lightweight textile upper protect it from wear. The rubber sole is reinforced with Kevlar and has a nylon shank stabiliser. For the less fit Nordic Rolling is a new alternative, these are roller skates with a double row of 3 wheels making the exercise possible for all age groups, even for those overweight.

Skate

Authentic skate brands are going back to traditional skate shoes in simpler colours and styling; white leather on a natural gum coloured rubber sole is the clear best seller world wide. Fresh new colours like green (Adio), and neon orange (Circa) are for the more daring. Formula One inspired shoes and bootees are still incredibly popular for leisure sneakers. Started several years ago by Puma in its Sparco range, they are one of the main themes in sneaker fashion, for men and women. The T-toe cut, lace up eyestay and top hook 'n loop strap mid-cut boot with low level tyre pattern outsole come in numerous versions; the newest and most colourful, by Brunotti of Holland, has a nylon quarter with bright op art printing.

Helly Hansen's dinghy sailing boot.

Helly Hansen

