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GET READY, FOLKS, GEN Z IS COMING.

By Daniel P. Smith

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GEN Z

While Millennials captured much of the love in recent years from brands, retailers and marketers, a new generation of U.S. consumers is beginning to steal some of the shine. Gen Z, which most researchers peg as those born after 1995, are just beginning to enter the workforce and earn their own money. By 2020, in fact, the Society for Human Resource Management reports that Gen Z will constitute 36 percent of the global workforce. That translates into hundreds of billions in buying power with plenty more in the pipeline.

“Generation Z has not had a huge impact yet,” NPD Group sports insight analyst Matt Powell says, “but as they enter the workforce and gain buying power, their influence and impact will swell.”

As such, it’s a generation worth knowing more about. While there’s certainly risk in painting the consumer habits of any demographic group – especially one as large and diverse as Gen Z – with a single broad brush, researchers and analysts have identified a few overarching characteristics of this massive group of twentysomethings, teens and tweens that could help brands and retailers make inroads with the demographic that represents about one-quarter of the current U.S. population.

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What You Need To Know About Gen Z (continued)

“The majority report being savers over spenders.”

“They’re looking for brands to be transparent.”

“Prefer to spend their money on an experience rather than something material.”

Gen Z are mindful spenders.

A 2016 study from the retail marketing firm Interactions found that nearly nine out of 10 members of Gen Z identify themselves as “very price conscious.” Not just price conscious. Very price conscious.

Kate Turkcan, vice president and head of youth insights at Kantar Futures, a leading global strategic insights and innovation consultancy, says this more conscientious consumerism is largely the byproduct of Centennials – her team’s preferred terminology for Gen Z – coming of age in the Great Recession. Having seen financial struggles firsthand or relatives battling the job market, Gen Z has learned to withhold a purchase if it doesn’t make sense or the timing isn’t right.

“The majority report being savers over spenders because they know that is a skill set and money they will need in the long-term,” Turkcan says.

Gen Z shows a more lighthearted approach to health and wellness.

According to the Kantar Futures 2016 Centennials Sports Report, just over one-third of those ages 12-19 play on an organized school team. Of those, 85 percent say playing sports makes them happier, while 81 percent say it improves their social lives.

“For this group, it’s about living healthy every day, not simply about personal bests,” Turkcan says. “It’s a group concerned about their health, but yet team sport participation is falling. So where do they get their fix?”

Fortunately for running and fitness retailers, running leads the charge. Nearly one-third of Centennials report running a few times each week, Kantar Futures reports.

“Running has a big opportunity, but it’s important to recognize that running can be intimidating and that your content needs to pick up on this,” Turkcan says.

Gen Z favors brands that share its values.

Following the lead of Millennials, Powell says various studies of Gen Z show a demographic concerned about brands sharing their values.

“They’re looking for brands to be transparent and if a brand’s values do not sync up with theirs, they’ll go elsewhere,” Powell says, adding that Gen Z has shown greater interest in equality after Millennials championed the environment.

Gen Z is less beholden to brands.

Sure, Gen Z has its favorite brands – in particular, Nike, Gatorade, Adidas and Under Armour according to Kantar Futures 2016 Centennials Sports Report.

That said, members of the generation are less about logos and labels and more about something that speaks to their values and quality as well as products that help them stand out from the crowd.

“This presents a huge opportunity for smaller brands,” Turkcan says.

Gen Z are mobile natives.

Most Millennials can recall a pre-Google world; Gen Z cannot. Taken one step further, Powell says, many members of Gen Z have probably never lived their young adult lives without a smartphone, a constant companion for most.

Gen Z is accustomed to having information at their fingertips, completely comfortable shopping on the smartphone, reading product or business reviews online and checking on a company’s mission and values before making a purchase. As a result, Turkcan says, it’s important retailers build “experiences that allow for easy discovery, check out and delivery.”

Gen Z has expert ambitions.

Turkcan calls expertise the new status symbol and says Centennials “value knowing things over owning things.” Running retailers can play to this by having discovery of a brand be a part of a Centennial’s experience or anointing local team athletes as in-the-know ambassadors for certain products, such as GPS watches or injury prevention tools.

“Identify and share tools, hints and products that will help them grow and express their knowledge versus simply filling their closets,” Turkcan says.

Gen Z values experiences.

A Retail Perceptions survey found that 62 percent of Gen Z members prefer to spend their money on an experience rather than purchasing something material.

“So the question is how do you bridge their areas of interest and their needs?” Turkcan says. “How do you become a place to check out something cool or hang out with friends?”

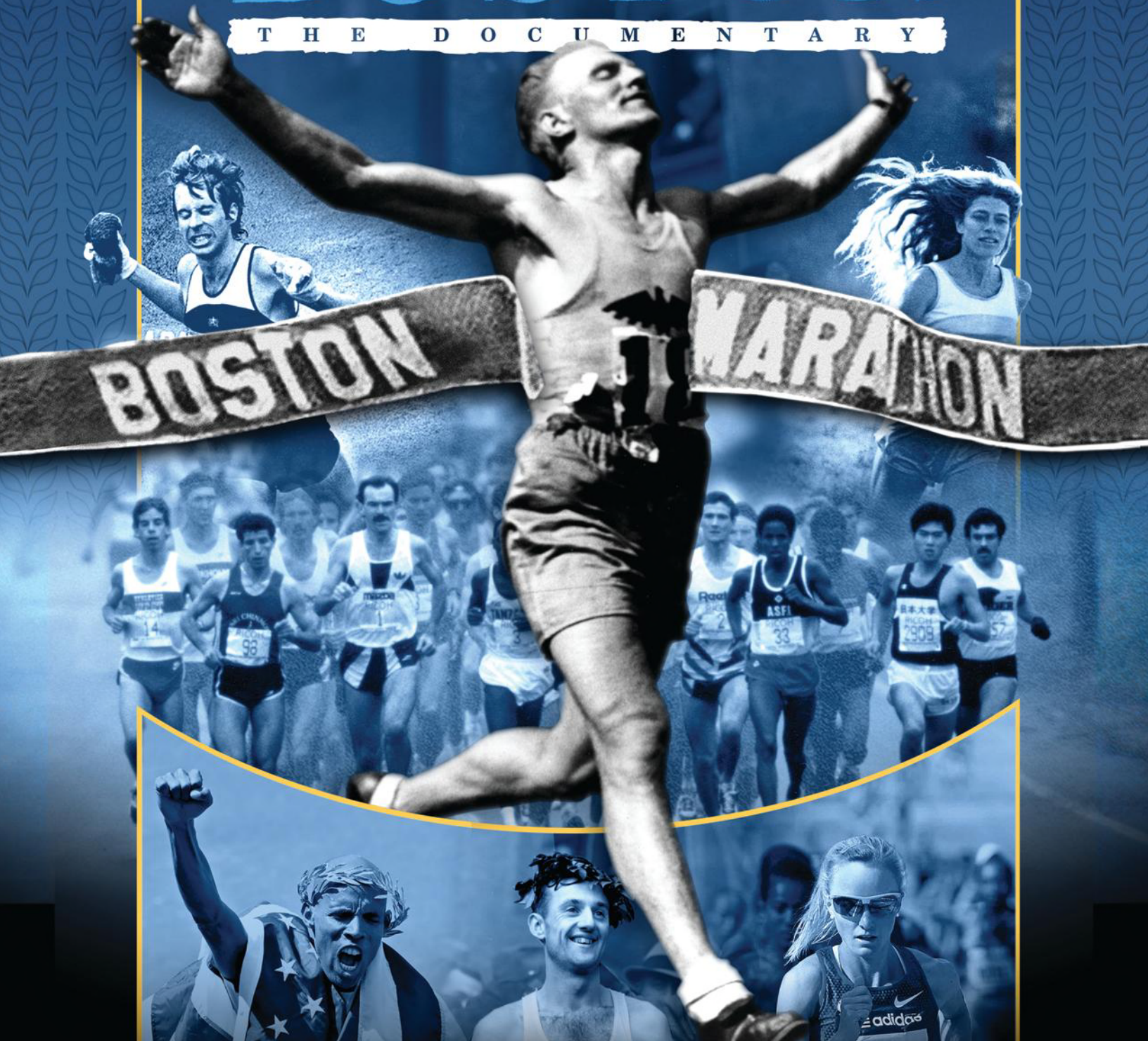
The running industry has already seen some experience economy pioneers from fun runs to stores incorporating a craft beer taproom. For the younger set, perhaps the experience comes in the form of a high school battle of the bands fun run or a juice bar.

“To be honest, though, the tactic is less important than showing this group that you take them seriously,” Turkcan says. “This is not a group that wants to be pushed to the kids’ table.” ■



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RIA SUMMIT WILL EMPHASIZE New Thinking for Run Stores



Tuesday
June 13, 2017
The Hyatt Pier 66
Fort Lauderdale



The Running Industry Association (RIA) will hold its third annual spring summit on Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at The Hyatt Pier 66 in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

The summit will take place one day prior to the Sportstyle trade show and conference, which is set for June 14-16 in Fort Lauderdale.

The theme for the 2017 RIA Summit revolves around “New Thinking: Strategies and Tactics for the Future of Running Stores,” and will be a combination of business sessions and idea sharing between brands and retailers. “The theme is about curating stores in a way that recognizes the changing needs of some of your customers, who no longer say ‘I am a runner’ but rather say ‘running is a big part of my fitness lifestyle,’” said Terry Schalow, the executive director of RIA.

“Running stores have a huge

opportunity to grow their business by serving this different customer base,” said Schalow. “We plan to talk about this customer and offer tactical take home ideas on how running stores can better serve them.”

The RIA Summit will run all day Tuesday and feature a variety of sessions that address the theme of the summit, including:

- A market overview that provides a greater understanding what your customers want and what gets them coming back.
- How POS data can help you better assort all product categories.
- Curating product assortments to meet the changing the needs of the customer.
- How new products can help build a new customer base.
- Peer sharing sessions that focus on how stores are elevating and expanding their customer connections.

Formula4 Media, publishers of *Running Insight* and produc-

ers of Sportstyle is planning to commission an independent consumer research survey to help retailers gain insights into the various consumer groups, and how running retailers may be able to turn them into new customers. The study will be unveiled during the Summit and retail attendees will receive highlights of the survey at no charge.

“This is a pivotal time for running stores,” Schalow said. “We believe the RIA Summit will provide valuable information as well as an opportunity for store owners and brand executives to collaborate on how to work together in the second half of 2017.”

The summit, being held one

day prior to the Sportstyle trade show and conference, will be complimentary to the first 50 RIA member stores who sign up. Registration will open on March 8, 2017. Once the complimentary slots are filled, RIA member stores will be able to sign up at the rate of \$495 per store. That price includes attendance at the Summit, one hotel room for two nights and admission to the Sportstyle trade show and conference. Running specialty retailers who are not RIA members can also attend at the rate of \$600, which will include attendance at the Summit, one hotel room for two nights and admission to the Sportstyle trade show and conference. ■

Retailers interested in attending the Summit should contact Terry Schalow at terry@runningindustry.org, or Jenny Swan at jswan@formula4media.com. Brands interested in being sponsors and presenting during the Best Practices sessions should contact Troy Leonard at tleonard@formula4media.com or Jeff Nott at jnott@formula4media.com.



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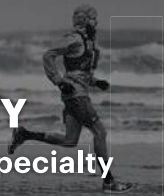
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Runners Spot Converts to Fleet Feet Franchise

Fayetteville, NC Running Store Joins Brand as 167th Franchised Store.



The store serves a community that includes Fort Bragg, the largest military base in the world.



The Runners Spot in Fayetteville, NC has become a Fleet Feet franchise. The conversion to a franchise took place on Jan. 1 of this year.

Founded in 2015 by Lou Guzman and his wife Katina, The Runners Spot serves a community that includes Fort Bragg, the largest military base in the world with more than 50,000 active duty personnel. Guzman, who spent 16 of his 24 active federal service years stationed at Fort Bragg, will continue to own the store.

“After I retired from the military in 2015, I knew I wanted to be here in Fayetteville and do something meaningful for my community and the men and women stationed at Fort Bragg,” says Guzman. “Owning my own business is such a tremendous privilege, and I love what

I do. Becoming a part of Fleet Feet Sports quickly amplifies what our store will be able to do in the running community moving forward, and I just am really excited for what that means for our customers here.”

“Becoming a part of Fleet Feet Sports quickly amplifies what our store will be able to do in the running community.”

LOU GUZMAN, THE RUNNERS SPOT

Guzman says he’s already implementing and promoting several Fleet Feet Sports initiatives, including No Boundaries, the brand’s national couch to 5K training program, which will kick off in the spring; the brand’s online store at fleetfeetsports.com; and Workplace Fit, the brand’s on-site shoe fitting

experience that brings a selection of shoes, socks, insoles, and other products to companies and organizations. In addition to those efforts, the store will now have exclusive access to Karhu, a Finnish running brand that counts Fleet Feet Sports as its only U.S. retailer for running shoes.

“Lou is passionate about what he does and the community he serves, and that’s why we’re so excited for him to join the Fleet Feet Sports brand,” says Robyn Goby, vice president of development for Fleet Feet Sports. “He’s relentless in providing the best service and support to his customers, and he represents the type of owner that makes this brand so impactful at the local level.”

The Runners Spot will reflect the Fleet Sports name and branding over time, the company says. ■

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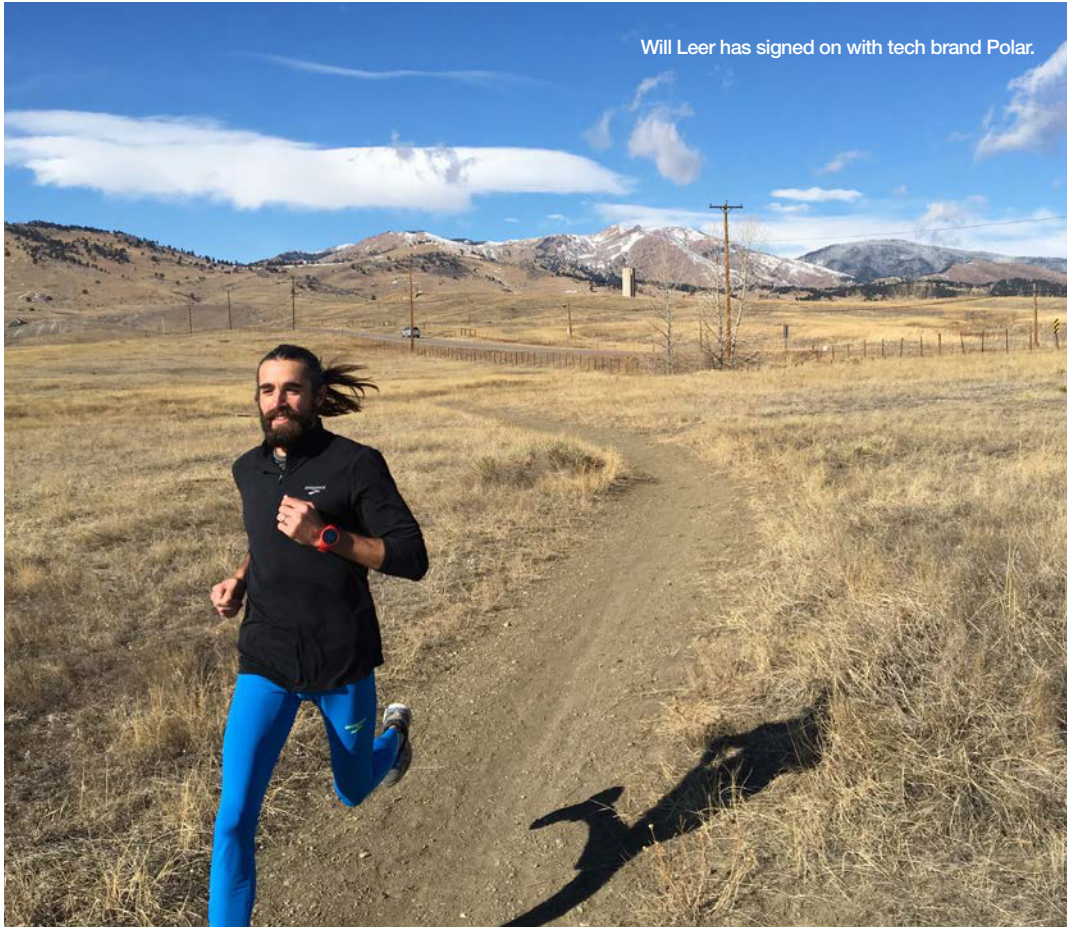
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Running Shorts



Will Leer has signed on with tech brand Polar.

Will Leer Joins the Polar Team

U.S. runner Will Leer has joined the Polar team. One of America's elite mid-distance runners, Leer joins Polar's growing team of running and endurance athletes including Gwen Jorgensen, Molly Huddle, Kate Grace, Mirinda Carfrae and Andy Potts.

Leer, who achieved a 1500m runner-up finish at the 2014 USA Indoor Championships, is training for the USATF National Track & Field Championships in June in Sacramento, CA.

Says Leer, "I'm preparing for the National and World Championships so it's key that I train smart while not losing the intense natural approach I enjoy." Leer notes that the Polar M200 has "seamlessly integrated" into his training style, allowing him to focus on that last five percent of "effort and precision that's the difference between having a good race versus a great race," while also preventing him "from going over the edge and training too hard."

"Will embodies everything

most of us want to be as a runner," says Stan Brajer, Senior Vice President of U.S. Sales and Marketing. "Polar has been a fan of Will for a long time so we are pumped to add him to the team. There are different types of runners out there, each with their own successful style. From pros to the local run clubs, there are calculated data junkies, grinding runners that love the pain, group runners that enjoy the social aspect and solo runners who like to clear their mind and find new ways to motivate themselves.

Will embodies pieces of each of those types of runners... and that's what makes him fun to watch and be around."

Free Instant Photo System Launched by Ram Racing's Tech Division

EnMotive, RAM Racing's technology division, officially launched a new integrated system delivering race results, free real-time race photos and shareable digital content via a single platform on February 4th at the Dallas Hot Chocolate 15k and 5k after a trial roll-out at recent Hot Chocolate races in Atlanta and Nashville.

"Before we introduced our new linked EnMotive EnPhoto and The HUB offerings, runners needed to go to one site to check their results and another place to claim photos of themselves," explained Steve Ginsburg, CEO of RAM Racing.

"Participants can now revisit their race day experience with instant, easy and direct access to free shareable photos at one single website thanks to our proprietary cloud-based platforms."

Known for its registration, event management and timing platforms, EnMotive added two more capabilities designed to elevate the race-day experience for runners and provide extra services to event producers. EnPhoto is an instantaneous race-day photography solution. The HUB is a web content



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Running Shorts (continued)

portal that serves as a runner engagement platform

EnPhoto uses a patented technology solution that sends instant photos to the cloud for tagging and quick delivery to runners via email and SMS. The system operates independently from specific bib/chip technology. It also seamlessly integrates through The HUB with Facebook for maximized mobile and social sharing of captured moments and memories.

“We can offer EnPhoto at a lower price point than other photography programs because pictures transfer to the cloud immediately from each camera. There’s no need for hard lines or special equipment,” asserted Ginsburg.

The HUB is not only the place runners head to for race results and pictures, going forward it will also hold information on training, nutrition, injury prevention, travel, other races and a host of additional content.

“We think of The HUB as ‘the one stop solution’ because we can tap into original information from all our relationships with many of the top running specialty stores and coaches from all over the country,” said Ginsburg.

He predicted “The HUB will reach 15-20 million users in our first year based on the fact that we already have access to more than 10 million unique users looking for results and photos from events that we time.”

Fleet Feet to Host National 5K

Fleet Feet Sports is planning

to hold the brand’s first nationally coordinated 5K race.

The Big Run will take place at Fleet Feet Sports locations nationwide on June 7, and will allow runners from across the country to compete against each other while also unifying the efforts of running communities in different locations behind one event. Sponsored by Brooks, The Big Run coincides with the annual Global Running Day initiative and is open to runners of all levels and abilities.

“The Big Run embodies exactly what our brand does best—bring communities together to move in an inclusive, fun, exciting environment,” says Jeff Phillips, CEO and president of Fleet Feet Sports. “This event allows our stores to localize the experience for their customers and communities while participating in a cohesive national effort that draws attention to running in a really

meaningful, approachable way.”

All participating stores will funnel the results from its local 5K up into a national leaderboard on fleetfeetsports.com to determine the fastest overall participants in the country. The brand will award prizes in a variety of categories, including the top three males and females, as well as recognize runners in a variety of ways through social media and raffle prize opportunities. Each finisher will receive a specially designed medal. Select locations will also have a finish line festival celebration in partnership with Brooks.

“It’s really important for us to have a partner for this initiative who believes in and supports local running stores and communities,” says Phillips. “Brooks will help us create a truly unique and milestone moment for running communities across the country, one that hopefully

inspires more people to run.”

Online registration for each local 5K opens up on March 20, the first day of spring. Race fees and start times will vary by location. Interested participants can find a full list of stores holding a certified 5K race on fleetfeetsports.com. More locations will be added prior to the March 20 registration kick-off. Fleet Feet Sports stores not holding a 5K race this year will still hold a fun run or non-certified 5K run as part of The Big Run; however those finisher results will not be included in the national leaderboard nor eligible for national prizes.

Superfeet Announces New Senior Leadership Team as Brand Celebrates 40th Anniversary

During its 40 year history, Superfeet has successfully launched several new product categories and major





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Running Shorts (continued)

technology alliances and announced the world's first foot-scanning and footwear recommendation platform. Most recently, Superfeet announced a newly restructured senior team, poised to build on the brand's lengthy history.

Comprised of five newly appointed team members who will aim to grow Superfeet's product launches for 2017 and beyond, the new team includes:

- John Rauvola is assuming the role of CEO and president. Since joining Superfeet in 2013, he has overseen a 27 percent growth in revenue and led the company in becoming 100 percent employee

owned.

- Dave Howard is being promoted to Chief Operating Officer (COO) as a result of his accomplishments in Operations and Finance. He has succeeded in increasing Superfeet's US production capacity and quality.
- Eric Hayes, in recognition of his achievements in Marketing and Product Development, is being promoted to Chief Marketing Officer (CMO). Under Eric's leadership, Superfeet has introduced multiple new products and categories and more than doubled brand awareness.
- Mike Houser is being promoted to VP of US Sales.

As the head of Superfeet's US Sales group, he has helped navigate through a challenging retail environment with strong results.

- Frits Kuper is being promoted to Director of European Sales. He has succeeded in growing Superfeet's European business by double digits over the past three years.

Both Adidas and Nike Are Touting a Sub 2 Marathon Focus

Adidas has launched the adizero Sub2, a marathon shoe the brand says is created to take athletes below the two-hour marathon barrier. The first step in the brand's Sub2 program, the shoe launched

at the Tokyo Marathon, worn by former world record holder and Adidas athlete, Wilson Kipsang. The Kenyan marathon runner currently owns the only pair of adidas adizero Sub2 shoes in existence, in an exclusive Energy Blue colourway.

The result of years of research and testing, the adidas adizero Sub2 is engineered specifically for elite athletes on race day. It features "energy-returning" Boost Light, the brand's lightest-ever foam. The shoe's upper is made of one single layer of ultralight fabric, featuring a weight-reduced mesh with internal reinforcements and advanced Microfit, developed to create the best support, comfort and



Locking in on the Running Market

Positive Distribution, a Durham, NC company, thinks it has the perfect, low-cost product for retailers and runners alike. For the shop owner, the lace closure system takes up little floor display space but can add \$8-10 to an average ticket. Lock Laces provide a customized, supportive fit via the tension put on the device and a customized look through 15 color options and recently added camouflage and six reflective options for the performance runner.

"We are one of the no-tie shoelace alternatives out there," says John Riddle, head of operations and retail sales, adding, "our trademarked slogan is: 'Win, Never Tie.'"

Lock-Laces were originally created by Eric Jackson, a Baltimore resident, on his mother's sewing machine five years ago. In July 2014, Jackson, looking to move into other business ventures, sold the brand's trademarks and patents to Frank Sutton, the CEO/owner of Lock Laces and a graduate of the business school at the University of North Carolina.

The product found a niche in the running market with triathletes some 3-4 years ago due to its ability

to allow easy entry and exit from a shoe. But Lock Laces have subsequently found traction in other areas, including runners of all levels, the medical community and those with physical handicaps such as arthritis. With its \$7.99 retail original Lock Laces accounting for an estimated 90 percent of Positive Distribution's business today, the company recently launched \$9.99 reflective

Specialty run has been the primary brick-and-mortar distribution focus of Lock Laces, which currently counts more than 150 doors and many Fleet Feet banners. The product, which is currently undergoing a test with the Rack Room chain, also distributes in Bed, Bath and Beyond, Rite Aid and Ace Hardware stores and in approximately 50 countries. Besides its own website, Positive Distribution has parlayed four years of analytics' work with Amazon into a successful marketplace that now sells related products from other brands, including Prince and Hi-Tec branded socks.

In addition to social media and trade shows, Lock Laces are promoted through the company's contract with Outdoor Channel personality Travis Turner. ■ —Bob McGee

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Running Shorts (continued)



ADIZERO SUB2
The adizero Sub2 marathon shoe will be available to consumers later this year.

fit for high-speed road racing. A Continental Microweb (an evolution of Stretchweb) outsole delivers maximum grip, whatever the race conditions, to ensure no energy is wasted due to even the slightest amount of slipping. The brand says the shoe was created for community runners and world class athletes alike.

Back in December, Nike launched Breaking2, what it called “an innovation moonshot designed to unlock human potential.”

To help achieve a sub two-hour marathon, Nike says it is working with a diverse team

of leaders across several fields of science and sport with a holistic approach to athletes, product, training, nutrition and environment.

JackRabbit Closing Lexington Avenue Store in NYC

JackRabbit has announced it is shutting its Lexington Avenue store in Manhattan on March 18.

The chain’s remaining five New York City doors, four in Manhattan and one in Brooklyn, will remain open.

The move is seen as a cost cutting move, prior to the

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Running Shorts (continued)

closing of the acquisition of JackRabbit by CriticalPoint Capital LLC, a California based investment group. The transaction is expected to close by the end of this month.

Saucony Reports Growth

The Wolverine Worldwide-owned brand reported “mid-single digit” sales growth in the company’s final 2016 quarter ended December 31. Saucony’s international business increased in the “high-teens” and now represents nearly 50 percent of the brand’s global business.

Saucony launched the Guide 10 early in the period and the



GUIDE 10

Saucony’s Guide 10 has a streamlined midsole design and a dynamic engineered mesh upper.

new Freedom ISO in December. Blake W. Krueger, Wolverine’s Chairman, CEO and president, told analysts that initial sell-in and sell-through of the style was very strong and the company expects sales momentum “to ramp up into this spring.”

Revealing Luke’s Locker Filing

In a recent filing around its Chapter 11 procedure, Luke’s Locker revealed that company founder Don Lucas is among the retailer’s largest unsecured creditors. Don Lucas is owed

\$570,000 for a line of credit he took out in his name a number of years ago to help the store’s expansion. The line was secured by personal assets for the benefit of the business. ■



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The 3rd Annual

RIA Summit



New Thinking: Strategies and Tactics for the Future of Running Stores

June 13, 2017: The Hyatt Pier 66, Ft Lauderdale

The **Running Industry Association** will hold its 3rd annual Summit in Ft. Lauderdale on June 13. The Summit is expected to attract 150+ running store owners and executives for seminars, workshops, networking and Spring '18 product presentations.

Co-located with the **sportstyle trade show** held June 14-15, the RIA summit is an opportunity to connect with run store owners and executives in an exclusive setting before the trade show.

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