

7 On A Roll

They may not yet be household apparel names, but these seven companies are making noise in run specialty. / By Carly Russo

Bak to Business

Mixing the grit, style and attitude native to its diverse city with charitable partnerships and social awareness, New York-based Bakline is a running wear brand that designs with community in mind.

Established in 2008, Bakline began life as rugby apparel brand, but eventually shifted its focus as founders and brothers Matthew Vosburgh and Robert Schnabel realized their greater passion — running. Today, the brand operates as a fully tailored performance wear line that encompasses all sizes and demographics.

“Being part of the community is a part of our model. We could not claim to be a socially aware company if we do not endeavor to make a dedicated and sustained effort to inspire and fund change,” says Vosburgh. With this sentiment in mind, Bakline introduced its Community Fund in 2020 that donates 10 percent of its online retail sales to partnering organizations.

Among its long-term partnerships are WeCoach, The Sports Bra Project and Girls on the Run, all organizations built to support women — another value close to Bakline’s heart. The brand supports women through various projects such as its female brand ambassador program and Future is Female Coaches blog series, which recognizes inspirational female coaches in the running space.

With inclusivity at the forefront of Bakline’s brand, its goal is to illustrate



Bakline wears its New York roots on its sleeve as it makes a move into running apparel.

runners’ backgrounds and create apparel for those who are underrepresented due to their size, gender or race. For that reason, Bakline will not sell products unless they are tested to fit the whole spectrum. Whereas many mainstream brands focus on standard sizing, Bakline analyzes the cut and fit of its products to ensure nobody gets left out.

“In carrying Bakline, running retailers provide an option for a brand that not only fits a broader spectrum of the community base, but celebrates who they are

as people — not simply as customers,” says Vosburgh. The brand’s small-business flexibility gives it the chance to form customizable collaborations with retailers to produce market-specific gear while maintaining its core inclusive values.

Another part of the Bakline story is its focus on artistic visuals and graphics in its apparel to inspire and spark imagination. Whether beginner or elite, Bakline acknowledges that running is a passion sport pursued for a variety reasons and develops its products to serve the emotions of

runners regardless of their pace, experience or goals, especially when it isn't easy.

"Indeed, the passion we each feel for running and training manifests itself in different ways and evolves day to day and year to year," says Vosburgh. "From the front of the pack to the back, we all experience the joys and challenges of the sport—the elation at the moment of lacing up our shoes and getting out the door, as well as dread and hitting the snooze button over and over again."

A Green Perspective

Perspective Fitwear is rising to the sustainability challenge with products that encourage female runners to do the same. The brand's eco-friendly Good Human Tech fabric is cut specifically to fit women's bodies and at the same time to reduce landfill waste.

The Good Human Tech fabric uses a degradable technology that enables its apparel to fully decompose within three years of entering a landfill. Perspective Fitwear also uses recycled industry water in the dyeing and weaving process to avoid tapping into the drinking water supply. The brand stays focused on reducing its carbon footprint by limiting its use of natural raw materials in order to create sustainable apparel without compromising quality.

A company founded and operated by women, Perspective Fitwear prioritizes comfort while maintaining its on-trend patterns and styles. The Good Human Tech fabric is sweat-wicking, fast-drying and provides SPF 50 protection in



Perspective Fitwear makes apparel to fit and look good on all women's bodies.

stylish activewear that's also good for the planet.

Zensah Heats Up

Zensah is turning up the heat in compression technology with a new sock designed to decrease muscle recovery time. The Heat Recovery Sock uses infrared

technology to promote heat as a form of therapy in place of traditional icing methods.

Rather than using outside sources of heat, the Heat Recovery Sock reflects runners' own body heat through Far Infrared Rays (FIR) that are embedded into the sock's

Zensah's new technology is utilizing heat to speed recovery for runners.



fabric. Constructed using mineral additives such as calcium, magnesium and tourmaline, these components harness FIR to penetrate muscles with deep vibrations and heat retention. The therapeutic vibrations work to speed up muscle recovery, reduce muscle fatigue and eliminate post-activity soreness.

The Heat Recovery Sock is part of Zensah's campaign to educate runners about the benefits of heat therapy versus using ice to heal injuries. The brand's goal is to create products that accelerate runners' recovery more effectively, and get them to stop using the RICE (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation) method. The Heat Recovery Sock comes as an emblem for Zensah's mission to inform the industry of the best methods of injury prevention and healing.

Fractel's Eye for Change

Sometimes an unrelated challenge leads in new directions and that's exactly what happened to Matt Niutta, a passionate runner whose diagnosis of an eye condition prevented him from driving and allowed him to see the world from a different perspective. He then decided it was time to create something new.

The result is an Australian company called Fractel, founded in 2018 with a focus on headwear for runners that offers a fusion of function and style.

"We pride ourselves on a quality product and a brand with both personality and a story," Niutta tells Running Insight. "Our products are a direct representation of our community and our target market is anyone with a passion for movement

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Fractel is bringing Australian style and performance to the U.S. run market.



Steigen socks are one-size-fits-all, with performance features added in as well.

and the outdoors — primarily in the running and adventure industry.”

Since its launch in Australia in 2018, Fractel has grown organically and it is now making a push into the U.S. market, already being stocked in more than 35 stores domestically. Further growth was seen last year with the launch of Fractel UK and well as in South Africa and continued growth in America, along with retailers and agents in New Zealand, Denmark, Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong. The brand has also partnered with Scotty Hawker (third Place UTMB 2019) as its leading sponsored athlete who signed in January of 2020.

“We are a small brand with plenty of momentum,” explains

Niutta. “The running culture and community aspect is massive in the U.S and we want to take what we know from building our brand here in Australia further abroad to share more stories and continue growing our community.

“When performance and style are combined, synergies are sure to arise,” he adds. “Fractel Headwear intends to bridge and commune the worlds of sports and fashion, by bringing out the best of both.”

Fractel found initial success in its home country by targeting distribution in run speciality stores with a focus on bringing premium products to the table with sustainability front of mind.

This year Fractel will

continue its product expansion with the introduction of 100 percent recycled polyester fabric to be used in more than 75 percent of its products. “Sustainable fashion is a key driver for us and we have our sights set on transitioning our whole range to recycled materials as soon as possible,” Niutta says.

“We’re a community driven brand with a passion for sustainability, function and style,” he adds. “We all have a ‘why’ and we believe we all have a story to share. We want our products to resonate with you like they do us and be a conversation starter for all the right reasons.”

One For All At Steigen

At first glance, a one-size-fits-all sock company might

seem simple by design, but the concepts behind Steigen are anything but plain. This Australian-based brand, known for giving back to athletics in its hometown and making blister-free socks for runners, is now coming to the United States with its socks and a new apparel line.

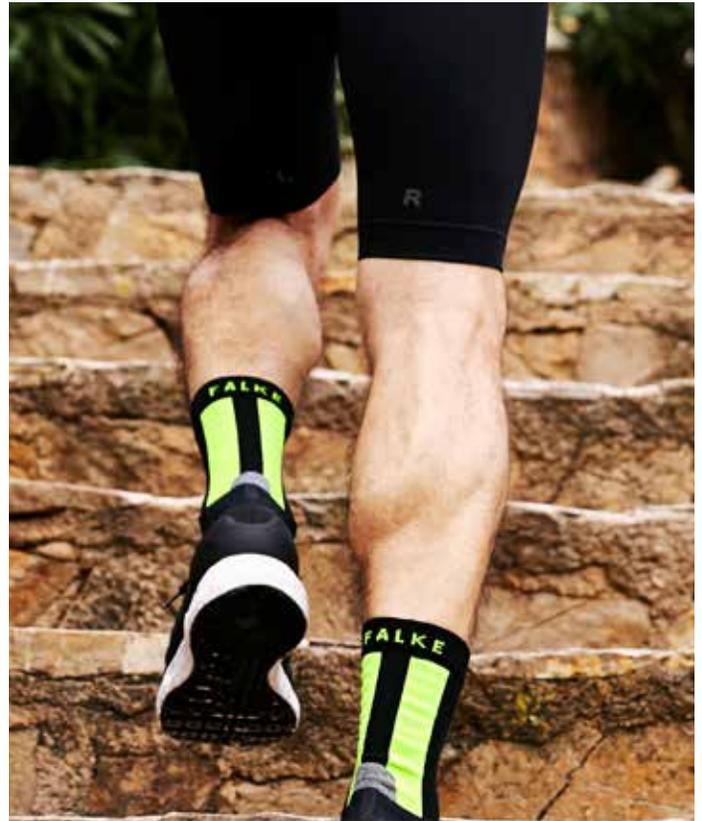
Steigen’s line features socks that are sold in one size, but can stretch to fit sizes US 5-12 due to the combination of Lycra and nylon used to create a sock that is stretchy, but also lightweight and breathable. Its socks are crafted to target the arches, heel, toe box and ankle in order to prevent runners from feeling pain in their most blister-susceptible areas.

Founded by Olympic athlete,

7 on a Roll (continued)



Nathan has expanded its knowledge of what runners need into apparel in 2021.



Falke Achilles sock is a medically approved product to treat a common ailment.

Louis Rowan, Steigen prides itself on being more than just a sock company through its charitable acts in its hometown in Geelong.

The brand hosted its first race in 2020 in an effort to generate a greater fan interest in track racing. The event invited runners to participate in a team-based format giving them the chance to win both team and individual cash prizes. Positive feedback has prompted Steigen to make plans to do it again in 2021.

In order to expand its brand Steigen has unveiled an apparel line that includes a Pro Singlet made for runners. The singlet is a lightweight and anti-drying to keep moisture on the skin and cool runners down in the

heat. Previously just available in Australia, New Zealand and Asian markets, Steigen's socks and Pro Singlet are now coming to the U.S.

Nathan's Apparel Move

Known for its hydration and other running accessory products, Nathan's new apparel collection debuts this month with the theme "Beyond Boundaries."

Whether it's running a mile or a marathon, the company says it is there to support runners with the gear they need to empower and improve the run.

The company has taken the attention to detail in its other running products and applied it to the new line of apparel. The 2021 collection includes

running tees, shorts, jackets and leggings boasting, according to the company "superior performance meets cool comfort."

Falke's Achilles Heal

A sock can be so much more than a sock in 2021 and Falke is utilizing medical technology to address a common runners' concern with its Falke Achilles sock.

Since Achilles tendon injuries are among the most common injuries athletes suffer – it is expected that one out of five runners will fall victim to Achilles injuries at some point – and with few reliable solutions to ease their pain, Falke has developed a medically approved design to give athletes the relief they desire.

The Falke Achilles is a Lyocell sock created to stimulate

blood circulation and improve the oxygen supply to tissue in the foot, which decreases pain during running. Its blueprint features anatomically designed silicon nubs that rub up on both sides of the heel for a feeling of massage.

The compression molds to runners' feet and stabilizes the heel, providing the safety measures that can help heal Achilles problems. One other technical benefit: the socks are built for right or left feet in order to avoid uncomfortable pressure and rubbing of the toes.

Lending even more tech credence, as a medically approved product Falke Achilles meets the laws, regulations and framework enacted by the European Directive on Medical Devices. ■