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Virtual Teamwork Speeds Development of Joe Nimble Foot Recovery Sandal During Pandemic

THE WOODLANDS, Texas – Runners can now buy a new form of footwear that can help their feet recover from pounding the pavements during the pandemic. ‘Functional Footwear’ specialist Joe Nimble has developed its first recovery sandal for runners – with assistance from Footwear Innovation Lab GmbH and global chemical company Huntsman Corporation. The so-called ‘recoverToes’ sandals, which are designed to rehabilitate tired feet after exercise and are made from polyurethane, were developed virtually during the last half of 2020, and went on widespread sale in mid-April.

The concept behind ‘recoverToes’ is simple. Forms of exercise, such as running, can cause feet to fatigue, get sore and tighten up. ‘recoverToes’ sandals can provide relief from these symptoms. Working like braces do on teeth, the sandals optimize the alignment of the big toes with a special footbed that spaces out the toes to significantly improve foot shape and structure, ease plantar pressure and stimulate foot nerve endings to improve circulation. Easy to slip on and off, and available in three colors, the sandals feature an adjustable “ToeRite®” toe spacer based on Joe Nimble’s TOEFREEDOM® technology.

‘recoverToes’ sandals are made from two types of polyurethane from Huntsman. The use of Huntsman’s material was recommended by Footwear Innovation Lab GmbH, which teamed up with Head of Joe Nimble, Sebastian Bär, to bring his recovery sandal concept to life in record time.

Explaining more, Sebastian said: “Joe Nimble is a young, vibrant brand, but we have 40 years’ experience behind us. My dad founded Bär Shoes in the early 1980s. His mission was to produce shoes that offered a natural fit and carefree comfort. Over the years, Bär Shoes and more recently Joe Nimble have continued that work developing casual and active shoes that are better for foot health. Around the time we launched Joe Nimble, I contacted British biomechanics expert Lee Saxby to help fix my own running injuries. A friendship developed and, in 2017, we decided to combine Lee’s foot function knowledge with our ‘Functional Footwear’ expertise. Our first collaboration resulted in our ‘nimbleToes’ running and trail shoes. Now we’ve developed ‘recoverToes’.

“From the start we knew what we wanted to achieve with ‘recoverToes’ and we knew we wanted to use a very high-quality polyurethane material. Widely used in footwear, polyurethanes are renowned for being light, flexible, comfortable and durable. After making a first prototype with Footwear Innovation Lab, we discussed in detail the properties we wanted the sandals to have and how best to scale up production. Having worked together in the past, Jens and the team at Footwear Innovation Lab quickly recommended Huntsman as our material partner.”

Jens Schmidt, CEO of Footwear Innovation Lab, said: “When Sebastian approached us about ‘recoverToes,’ we knew there was only one company that could take control of the chemistry: Huntsman. Although Huntsman is a global chemical company, it is incredibly entrepreneurial, and its’ team works in a really agile way. Always open to ideas, Huntsman’s footwear experts go out of their way to find solutions to technical challenges. With ‘recoverToes’ our mission was to find a polyurethane with excellent flowability that could replicate the complicated mould design. Huntsman delivered on that brief.”

‘recoverToes’ is made using Huntsman’s DALTOPED® polyurethane footwear system technology. DALTOPED® Aqua PUR, a low-density polyurethane, was used to make the soft inner part of the sandal. For the outer surface, which has an intricate design, Huntsman and Footwear Innovation Lab adapted a DALTOPED® Grip grade to work with the Stemma RPU spray concept. This unique system allows complex bottom designs to be realized without having to worry about potential air bubbles. The system works with compact and expanding polyurethanes from Huntsman.

Johan Van Dyck, Global Polyurethanes Elastomers Applications Manager at Huntsman, said: “We are grateful to Footwear Innovation Lab for the introduction to Sebastian and the Joe Nimble team. From start to finish this was a fast-paced project and there was great dynamic between everyone involved – as evidenced by the rapid turnaround. When you consider that we only got involved in the project in October 2020; that all interactions were virtual; and that first customers received their sandals in January, it is remarkable. ‘recoverToes’ is going to be a hugely popular line for Joe Nimble. With a sharp increase in running during the pandemic, now is the perfect time to launch this kind of product and we look forward to working with Footwear Innovation Lab and Joe Nimble on future projects.”

Joe Nimble’s ‘recoverToes’ sandals are available to buy online and in Bär Shoes stores across Germany. International wholesale partners in Scandinavia, USA and Czech Republic – among others – will start their sales campaigns in May. The first batch of “recoverToes” sandals were shipped to customers in Q1 2021 following a crowdfunding campaign to test consumer interest. The campaign raised €60,000 in four weeks with more than 1,000 advance purchases.

For more information about ‘recoverToes’ sandals go to: www.joe-nimble.com/int/recovery/ or email: amelie@joe-nimble.com. For more information about DALTOPED® polyurethane footwear technology please email paola.palma_faoro@huntsman.com.

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About Joe Nimble: *Joe Nimble is a pioneer in the field of Functional Footwear. The brand's mission is to enable a pain-free running experience by restoring and maintaining natural foot function. Together with Lee Saxby and other globally recognized experts in running technique and biomechanics, the second-generation company owners Sebastian and Christof Bär have developed a revolutionary shoe design for natural toefreedom® and maximum stability. The product range currently includes the areas of performance (road, trail, gym and recovery), lifestyle and kids. Joe Nimble, among others, has been awarded with the Red Dot Award, the German Design Award Special Mention and as a Top Innovator for his commitment to foot health. Behind Joe Nimble is the traditional company BÄR GmbH, one of the world's leading manufacturers of shoes that support healthy and comfortable walking for 40 years. The family business relies on high-quality materials, innovative design, top quality craftsmanship and sustainability. Under the management of the two founding siblings Christof and Sebastian Bär as well as Werner Ruf, BÄR GmbH / Joe Nimble employs over 500 people at locations in Bietigheim-Bissingen and Ludwigsburg, Germany as well as in India. For more information about Joe Nimble, go to: <https://www.joe-nimble.com/int/>*

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About Footwear Innovation Lab: *Footwear Innovation Lab is a 360° full service provider in footwear design and development. All necessary departments are under one roof - from last design and development, 3D design and construction, rapid prototyping, pattern and sample room, mold making and direct injection on a state-of-the-art STEMMA DIP machine equipped with RPU. For more information please email info@fil-lab.com or go to: www.fil-lab.com.*

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