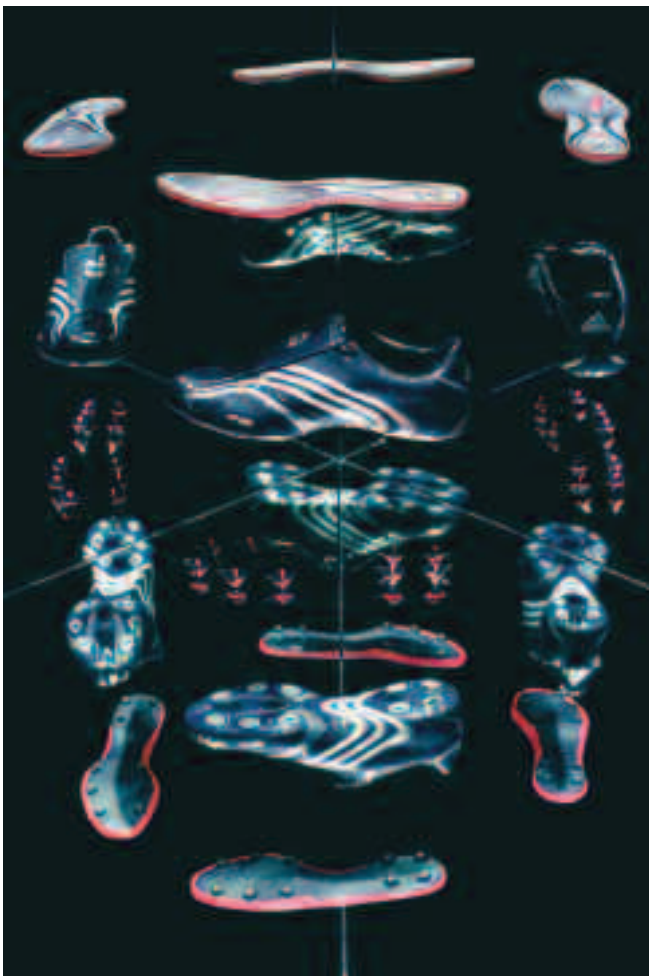


In the last issue of World Footwear, we looked at a fairly new soccer boot brand—Nomis—that established itself just in time for the 2006 World Cup. Needless to say, the major brands have not been idle either and some interesting new technology has appeared.

Just how complex can sports shoes be?

Soccer boots have undergone dramatic changes since the leather-soled and studded products of the 1940s and '50s. Adidas has always pioneered new technology. It introduced the first eight-studded removable sole plate and then direct injection PU and rubber outsoles for added grip. During the run up to the current World Cup it launched two new boots, the +Predator Absolute and the Tunit, both designed to reassert the brand as a leader in technical innovation.



Tunit customisable boots are a new concept in soccer.

Maintaining the lion's share

The +Predator Absolute continues the tradition begun by the original Predator of re-inventing the dynamics of soccer boots. This, the eighth edition, is the lightest Predator ever. It also incorporates the brand's new PowerPulse technology which shifts the centre of gravity closer to the point of impact and comes with two different insoles to offer the player extra power as required.

One insole offers a specially positioned 40g weight and one comes without. The weight, which has been moved from other areas of the boot, sits behind the foot at the point of impact to create maximum power transfer and allow players to customise their boots to their individual needs.

Developed in collaboration with Calgary University, it is said to offer the same sort of 'sweet spot' science more usually found in golf clubs. It seems to work, too, as tests showed that the boots increase ball speed by 2% compared with other Predator boots and by 5% compared with a standard boot.

Although this may seem a small improvement, it can have a massive impact at World Cup and top club level. Players such as David Beckham, Michael Ballack and Zinedine Zidane seem convinced. England forward Frank Lampard said, "I've scored my best goals wearing Predators. The extra power of +Absolute can only help me and they are so accurate too." Accuracy is further increased through re-engineered Predator technology (the rubber fins that create power and swerve) and improved fit.

The +Absolute also features a number of other features that make it a highly complex boot. The adidas X-Traxion quick-change stud system provides maximum penetration and minimal stud pressure. A lightweight split outsole adds stability by providing solid foot placement on different pitch surfaces. A much smaller external heel counter, that is both lighter and stronger, is said to reduce the pressure on the Achilles tendon and increase stability, and an A-symmetrical loop lacing with offset laces provides a larger, cleaner kicking surface. As we said, very complex.

The potential of synthetics

While the +Absolute is essentially a redesign of proven 10-year old technology, the Tunit is a totally new concept in soccer boots. In line with the slow but ever-increasing trend for customised footwear, the Tunit boot is said to be the world's first customisable soccer boot. It is not, however, designed ➤

from a purely fashion-driven perspective, but is made up of component parts that allow players to alter their boots to suit their game, the pitch, and the climate.

Comprised of three interchangeable components, the upper, the chassis and the studs, the range will eventually offer 52 different possible permutations, including a warm boot, a cool boot, a lightweight boot, a cushioned boot and a soft or hard ground boot. Two types of upper are currently available, adihex and ClimaCool. Adihex uses the first synthetic to be endorsed by adidas. It is lightweight and durable, and produces a low maintenance, high performance upper. It is also said to improve with time and becomes softer the longer it is worn. The ClimaCool version has an adihex mesh with ventilation to provide a 360° cooling effect.

The chassis is a triple density TPU sockliner that holds the receptacles for the studs and stabilises the upper. It is produced in comfort, lightweight and orthotic versions, allowing the player to adapt the boot to match the playing conditions and their individual style. Studs can also be altered to suit hard ground, firm ground or soft ground and can again be chosen to suit a player's style. The boots were extensively tested by adidas sponsored players including Djibril Cisse, Ashley Cole and Arjen Robben, before being released to amateur players in March.



Lotto's laceless Zhero Gravity soccer boot

Playing the Lotto

Not to be outdone, one of the smaller but much respected brands Lotto came up with some truly original concepts for the World Cup. Lotto, it appears, has solved one of the most long-standing issues in soccer-laces by launching Zhero Gravity: the first laceless football boot. This was no quick evolution, however, and Lotto's R&D centre had been analysing and studying matches and players' behaviour on the pitch ever since

**Need to know about shoemaking?
in NY or LA**

Introduction to Shoemaking

Three-day Course - 17th to 19th October

A practical course aimed at giving non-shoemakers a real understanding of how shoes are made. Ideal for buyers, designers, quality control, sales, material and other suppliers, etc. Clients include Gap, Nine West, North Face, Reebok, Skechers, Rockport, New Balance, Macy's, Ferragamo and Timberland.

For detailed brochure or other dates for East and West Coast, contact:-

Noble Footwear
175 Newchurch Road, Rossendale, Lancs.
England BB4 7SU
tel: +441706211181
email: wf3@noblefootwear.com

in USA? call Deborah Nye
tel: 610-6682775



the 2002 World Cup.

But how has it solved a riddle that has baffled the most experienced designers? Thanks to the exclusive Pro-fit technology inserted in the upper, Zhero Gravity acts like a suction cup and adheres to the foot perfectly without letting any air in. The absence of laces means that the entire upper is in contact with the foot, ensuring the player has total feel of the ball and therefore more control.

Unlacing a mystery

Developers wanted to improve the players' game even further by improving precision and sensitivity of touch. This involved ergonomic studies of players' feet and body movements, laboratory tests of materials, structural resistance and torsion in order to produce a unique new boot. Lotto tested the structural resistance and elasticity of the upper, during which the boot was stretched no fewer than 300,000 times, ending with a deformation of only 1mm from the original shape. It also offers superior comfort as the boot wraps itself around the foot, providing the right amount of support and good protection through external Pebax reinforcement.

As with the +Predator Absolute, it is also available with two different insoles that adapt the shoe to different foot conformations. The regular insole has a special Poron anti-

shock insert for a standard fit, whilst the slim version has a thicker Poron anti-shock insert for a closer fit.

The upper is made of water-repellent, anti-abrasive micro-fibre, which offers superior performance in all conditions. It also incorporates Lotto's new Neo Switch sole that enables studs to be changed according to the state of the pitch. New studs have also been developed that are extremely light and can be inserted and removed easily. The sole is a combination of Pebax and TPU with seven fixed lamellar studs to give excellent differentiated traction and four interchangeable conical studs for the greatest possible stability. If all that were not enough, there is also a special key to change studs quickly and easily that can also be used as a shoehorn.

Although Lotto is now owned by an American entrepreneur, Zhero Gravity was totally designed and manufactured in Italy. It seems these developments are not only a move forward for soccer boots but a positive indication of the creative ability of the struggling Italian shoe industry.

It is also positive news for Europe, the home of soccer, that European companies such as adidas and Lotto are still leaders in soccer boot development. The World Cup is probably the one single event that is able to draw the whole world's attention. With companies from as far away as Australia adding to the new boots available, everyone is set to benefit from these advances. The end result should be even more exciting soccer. 



Lo stampista ha lavorato bene!
The mould-maker did a good job!

ZAGO'S FOOTWEAR DIRECT INJECTION MOULDS RANGE:

PU	RUBBER - PU
PU - PU	RUBBER - PU2
TPU - PU	RUBBER - PU1
PU - PU / PU2	RUBBER - RUBBER
TPU - TPU / PU	RUBBER - RUBBER / PU

Zago's footwear moulds
Moulds created by a team of experts to meet the most demanding needs for design and functionality and are the results of dedicated efforts to obtain the highest quality.

ZAGO
moulds solutions

Zago S.p.A. Via Sesto San Giovanni 15 - 00193 Roma - Tel. 06/7711201 - Fax 06/7711202 - e-mail: info@zago.com - www.zago.com