

TaiSPO

SHOW DAILY



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Game on for fitness equipment makers

As digital technology is deployed in the latest fitness gear, working out becomes an engaging and interactive game, providing extra motivation for users to turn on the treadmill or hop on their indoor cycle.

Alatech Technology **HT C0905** is one of the Taiwanese suppliers tapping the fast-spreading trend for gamification in the fitness industry, with a smart watch and a connected treadmill that allows users to race against other runners from afar.

The treadmill syncs with the ALA Cloud Run App to take the runner on a virtual race with other connected participants. The screen of the treadmill's console shows the avatars of the runners moving along the itinerary. If they are using treadmills in the same space, the race may be shown live on a large screen.

"The workout is more stimulating when you are competing with others and engaged in a game experience," said Frank Su, vice general manager at Alatech, as he ran with his colleagues in a treadmill race at the company's head office.

The app even takes into account incline changes on the route.

If the itinerary includes a hill, the incline of the treadmill will change, up to 12 degrees, making the virtual race all the more realistic.

The company's Altacus-branded treadmill is part of a connected solution that the company is launching at TaiSPO. It includes the Star One, a smart watch that functions as an activity tracker that counts steps and analyzes heart rate data and calories burned.

The GPS watch syncs with the treadmill, providing a platform for users to track their activity both indoors and outdoors. The integrated data as well as rankings from the treadmill races may be viewed on the app and the related website.

Alatech has started working on the development of more content, with additional maps for the workouts and training program suggestions.

A similar concept of fitness

gamification has been applied by **Chi Hua Fitness** **HT C0410** for indoor bicycles. It lets cyclists take part in a race that unfolds live on a screen, while measuring metrics such as heart rate and revolutions per minute.

Chi Hua Fitness is a Taiwanese company that has long specialized in all sorts of generator brakes and motors, some of them used for fitness equipment. But more recently it has started to make its own fitness gear under the Difo brand, with gamification as an integral part of the brand strategy.

"With this game activity we are targeting consumer groups that are interested in health and technology as well as fashion and other trends," said Conny Lee, executive assistant to the general manager.

Chi Hua's technology makes for an entertaining ride. It's easy to picture riders lined up in front of a screen in a cycling studio, racing each other in 3D, in real time, and pedaling just a little faster to move their avatar ahead of the pack.

To make it all the more interesting, the company has equipped its bikes with a heart-rate monitoring function. This



All set for a 3D rowing race.

enables the riders to measure their effort and to compete with others, even if they do not have the same fitness levels.

The four training modes and the resistance on the self-powered bikes have also been engineered to provide extra motivation. "The system functions like an invisible coach. When you get faster, the resistance will get higher," Lee explained.

Chi Hua has also been working on the development of a new rower. This Difo rower is intended to work with some of the same gamification functions as the brand's bicycle. ■

Asian industry leaders discuss fast-moving fitness club market

Asia has turned into one of the most buoyant markets for the development of fitness clubs, and the industry forum taking place this afternoon brings together four of its most influential protagonists.

Simon Flint is at the helm of Evolution Wellness, which was formed last year from the merger of Celebrity Fitness and Fitness First Asia. That makes it one of the leading players in Asia, with 152 wholly-owned clubs and about 400,000 members at the time of the tie-up. The company boasts it has "the largest network of wholly-owned full service gyms in Asia."

But the group's clubs are positioned at the middle to high end of the market, which has been under attack in most international markets in the last few years – from budget clubs at one end, and boutique gyms at the other.

That is precisely the challenge that Flint will address. "Do big box gyms have the muscle?" is the headline question of his presentation, titled "The future of full service gyms in an era of boutique operators."

The discussion will center on innovation and the way in which Evolution Wellness has leveraged new ideas to remain competitive, amid the rise of boutique studios

in Asia. This is exemplified by one of the group's clubs in Kuala Lumpur, where it has faced fierce competition from boutique operators yet continues to raise its membership numbers on a monthly basis.

Another speaker, Will Wang, the president of Will's Gym, has become a figurehead of the ebullient fitness club market in China. Will's was among the first in China to build up a chain of full-service gyms, targeting affluent customers in the largest cities.

The Chinese market has grown to about 2,700 gyms with 3.9 million members, according to the Asia-Pacific Health Club Report from the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA). That leaves plenty of space for more, since the numbers amount to a club membership penetration of just 0.4%, compared with 3.8% around Asia Pacific. As a comparison, penetration rates reach an average of 7.5% in Europe, reaching a peak of more than 20% in

Sweden.

Will's Gym has grown into a group of about 150 Chinese gyms, mostly in the bigger cities. But in the last few years it has faced heightened competition from other chains, as well as cheaper alternatives.

Among the latest trends, the country has seen the rise of fitness pods which customers can use on a pay-per-minute basis, using their smart phones to pay and unlock the micro-gym.

Opportunities in the Taiwanese market have encouraged Fitness Factory to seek a listing on the Taipei Exchange. George Chen, the chief executive of Fitness Factory, which runs 33 clubs with about 150,000 members in Taiwan, will share the story of its initial public offering (IPO) in 2016.

"The IPO has made it easier for us to gain access to funding and to finance potential acquisitions," said Chen. "At the same time, our status as a listed company helps us to gain the trust of our customers



Fitness Factory.

and to recruit and retain good employees."

Chen will share further insights into the development of the Taiwanese fitness industry. The last years have seen sustained growth for the business, led by fitness club franchises and operators from World Gym to Fitness Factory and True Fitness. Chen says that Fitness Factory will continue to grow, with five openings planned for this year alone.

Masaru Okamoto, president of Wellness Frontier, will provide some input from the largest regional market. The 2017 IHRSA Global Report estimates that the Japanese fitness club industry generates annual sales of \$5,158 million, with nearly 6,000 clubs and 4.16 million members. ■

TaiSPO 2018 Program

Thursday, March 8

Opening Ceremony

10 a.m.
Conference Room 3, 2nd Floor, Hall 1

Procurement meetings

2 p.m.
Conference Room 5, 2nd Floor, Hall 1

Forum of Foresight Development and Management for Fitness Industry, Asia

2 p.m.
Conference Room 1, 2nd Floor, Hall 1

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Registration

2:00 p.m. – 2:10 p.m.
Opening Remarks & Group Photo

2:10 p.m. – 2:40 p.m.
Chen Shang Yi
President, Fitness factory

2:40 p.m. – 3:10 p.m.
Will Wang
President, Will's Gym

3:10 p.m. – 3:40 p.m.
Masaru Okamoto

President, Wellness Frontier (Joyfit)

3:40 p.m. – 4:10 p.m.
Simon Flint
CEO, Evolution Wellness

4:10 p.m. – 4:40 p.m.
Panel Discussion
Moderator: Prof. Chia-Hua Kuo
(University of Taipei)

4:40 p.m. – 5 p.m.
Q & A Session

Friday, March 9

Marathon and Sports Marketing Forum

09:30 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.
Conference Room 3, 2nd Floor, Hall 1

09:00 a.m. – 09:30 a.m.
Registration

09:30 a.m. – 10:20 a.m.
Jürgen Lock
Managing Director
SSC Events GmbH, BMW Berlin
Marathon

10:30 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.
Keiji Ashihara

Director of Race Operations
Osaka Marathon Organizing
Committee

11:20 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Zheng Zong-Zheng
Chief executive
Taiwan's Rice Heaven – Tianzhong
Marathon

12:00 p.m. – 12:20 p.m.
Q&A

Fitness Trend Seminar
09:30 a.m. – 17:20 p.m.
Conference Room 1, 2nd Floor, Hall 1

Morning session
09:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
Registration

10:00 a.m. – 10:10 a.m.
Nathaniel and Gabriela Leivas,
Radical Fitness
Fitness program classes in clubs and
Intelligent Music Format

11:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
**Futoshi Ogita, National Institute of
Fitness and Sports in Kanoya**
Physiological adaptation to high-
intensity exercise training

12:00 p.m. – 12:20 p.m.

Questions and answers
Afternoon session
13:00 p.m. – 13:30 p.m.
Registration

13:30 p.m. – 14:20 p.m.
Petr Miroslav, Charles University
Nutrition and building muscle mass

14:20 p.m. – 15:10 p.m.
Rungchai Chauchaiyakul,
Mahidol University
Rehydration strategy for maximizing
sports performance

15:20 p.m. – 16:10 p.m.
**Prof. Chia-Hua Kuo, University of
Taipei**
Get physically fit by scientific
principles of sports nutrition

16:10 p.m. – 17:00 p.m.
**Prof. Jin-Jong Chen, National
Yang-Ming University**
Exercise dementia prevention for
super-aged

17:00 p.m. – 17:20 p.m.
Questions and answers

TaiSPO expands with wearables and fitness services

Smart wearables and fitness services are among the new features that have been added to TaiSPO this year, with the show returning as a standalone event.

About 300 exhibitors from the fitness, racquet sports, water sports and other sporting goods categories are taking part in the show, which has diversified after its split from Taipei Cycle.

"To reinforce TaiSPO as a standalone show and manifest the strengths of the Taiwanese sporting goods industry, this year we have launched two new pavilions for smart wearables and for fitness programs and services," said Thomas Huang, executive director at TAITRA's exhibition department.

The Smart Sports Pavilion shows the latest in sports technology, from smart clothing to smart wearable devices, heart rate monitors and more. The Fitness Programs & Services area will feature demonstrations of

various fitness classes, as well as information about nutrition and fitness membership management.

Again held in conjunction with the Taipei International Sports Textile & Accessory Expo (SpoMODE) and the Taiwan International Diving and Water Sports Show (DiWaS), TaiSPO is taking place for the 45th time this year, making it the oldest of all fairs organized by TAITRA.

For six years until 2017, it was held at the same time as Taipei Cycle fair. But when the organizers of the larger bicycle fair decided to move to the second half of the year, about 70% of TaiSPO exhibitors spoke out in favour of sticking with the March dates.

TaiSPO is expected to draw about 20,000 visitors, down from

24,000 last year, due to the fact that some of the TaiSPO visitors primarily attended the Taipei Cycle show. However, Huang said that TAITRA has enhanced its video and social media marketing, and closely worked with its sixty international branch offices to get more international buyers to the fair.

The organizers said at a news conference last week that the three-day event has emerged as Asia's forum for the sporting goods industry, with a full roster of innovative companies as well as seminars with prominent speakers and nearly 100 procurement meetings.

The conference was attended by Yang Ho-Chen, who won five gold medals in roller sports at the 2017 Summer Universiade. This was held in August in Taipei City, which underscores growing Taiwanese interest in organizing and taking part in sports events.

Such events will be part of the



discussion at the second TaiSPO Marathon and Sports Marketing Forum. The conference program further includes the Forum of Foresight Development and Management for Fitness Industry, Asia (see preview on page 2), and the Fitness Trend Seminar.

"As Taiwanese fitness and sporting goods suppliers continue to upgrade their core competencies in developing innovative products by applying new technologies, new textiles and new materials, we believe that TaiSPO on its own can be the leading fitness and sporting goods sourcing platform in Asia," said Huang. ■

Kinpo puts medical-grade technology into sportswear

Most of the runners on the streets of Taipei this morning probably headed out with a wearable device, attached to their wrist or in a strap on their arm.

But some of the leading electronics and apparel makers in Taiwan have been working to integrate connected tracking devices into garments, to provide increasingly precise measurements on the wearer's performance and health metrics.

Among the most high-profile contenders is **Kinpo Electronics** (HT 00206). The company is part of a Taiwanese group specialized in electronics products, from printers to computer parts and medical equipment. It has used its insights into heart-rate monitoring and other medical technologies to develop its own range of smart clothing, under the XYZlife brand.

"Our technology is based on electrocardiography, instead of optical measurements," said Sherry Hsu, from the healthcare research team at Kinpo Electronics. "Then we developed an algorithm that enables us to transform these accurate, medical-grade measurements into data that is directly relevant for fitness users."

The technology uses ECG signals to work out indicators that help to monitor heart rate during exercise, to make sure it's in an effective aerobic range. It may also

detect fatigue and stress in real time, to help reduce insomnia and improve sleep quality.

Hsu explains that Kinpo's smart sportswear could be regarded as an extension of its medical products. The algorithms use the guidelines of the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), drawing on sports medicine to provide relevant fitness data.

Kinpo Electronics has started selling men's shirts and women's bras equipped with modules that capture the data. Among the upgrades in the latest products, the company has been working on the development of new electrodes that make it easier to capture body signals, without moisturizing the area.

The central processing unit is a rectangular receptor placed in the chest area, on the inside of the garment. It turns the data into fitness indicators that are then transferred to a smart phone in real time, through Bluetooth.

The receptor also features a secure digital memory card, meaning that the data may be synched after the workout. At a later stage, the idea is to create a digital and cloud-based platform, which could link up with other

systems.

While Kinpo Electronics provides the technology, it has turned to a sportswear specialist to make its smart sportswear. It has teamed up with Makalot Industrial, a key supplier of functional textile for sportswear brands, which knows all about moisture management, body temperature regulation and strategic muscle support.

"The key in this technology is the accuracy of the signal and the power of the algorithm that is delivered by Kinpo Electronics," explains Jimmy Chou, senior sales associate at Makalot. "We have to make sure that the garments are comfortable and washable, and that they provide optimal support for the technology." The partnership has turned into a key project for the apparel maker in terms of material research and design.

Kinpo Electronics is among the exhibitors at TaiSPO's new Smart Sports Pavilion, along with companies such as Maxtek Go-Go and Everest Textile.



XYZlife smart sportswear combines medical-grade technology with performance fabrics.

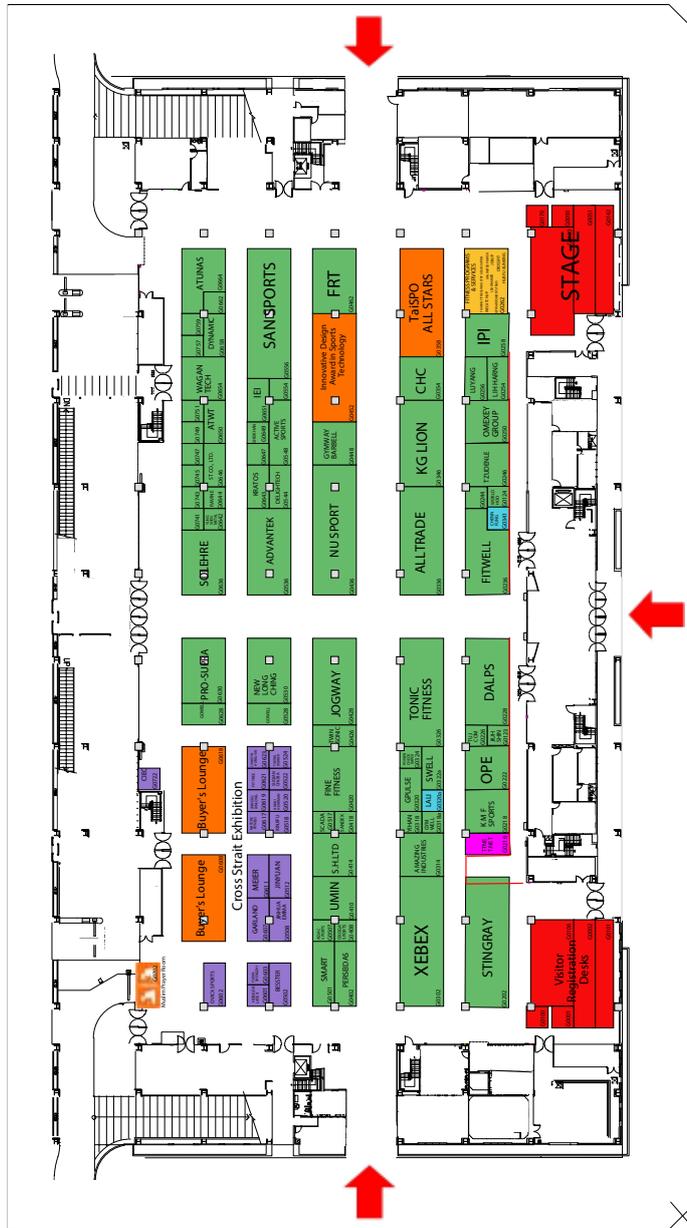
They are taking part in a market that is anticipated by the International Data Corporation (IDC) to nearly double in five years, to reach about 240.1 million units shipped in 2021. Smart clothing was projected by IDC to increase from 3.3 million items shipped in 2017 to 21.6 million units five years later, meaning that the share of smart clothing in wearable devices should increase from 2.6 percent in 2017 to about 9.0 percent in five years. ■



TWTC Exhibition Hall 3, 1st floor

柑府路 Shih-Fu Road

- Fitness
- Miscellaneous
- Media &
- Cross Strait
- Training



松壽路 Song-Shou Road

松智路 Song-Chih Road



Matrix Fitness sprints ahead

Targeting the growing demand for athletic and high-intensity interval training gear, Matrix Fitness is expanding its range with the S-Force Performance Trainer.

The conspicuous piece of gym equipment complements the S-Drive, a treadmill with parachute and sled push functions launched by Matrix Fitness **H1 B0609a** three years ago.

Justin Hong, product manager for commercial products at Matrix Fitness, explains that athletes

appreciate the S-Drive as a means to train for sprinting, but they enquired if Matrix could come up with a complementary machine for the drive phase of the sprint – when they have to lunge forward.

The result is a low-impact machine that is meant to work on acceleration. When users stand upright they get an intense cardio training, which is most demanding on calves and hamstrings. But when they lean forward on the handlebar, their position will replicate the drive phase of a sprint. It will mostly activate the shins and quads, and help to train the acceleration required at the start of a fast run.

“This movement is useful for almost any sport, like basketball or football,” said Hong from Matrix Fitness, the commercial fitness equipment brand owned by Johnson Health Tech (JHT)

The stride is adjusted for each user and the S-Force Performance



The S-Force Performance Trainer is meant for athletic and high-intensity interval training.

Trainer has five levels of magnetic resistance. It reacts automatically to the force deployed by the user, meaning that the resistance is increased if the athlete pushes harder, but the exercise is accessible to less athletic users as well.

Matrix has a program of demonstrations at its stand, with special programs involving the S-Force Performance Trainer. The Sprint 8 sprint cardio training program will be integrated into the machine’s software, along

with a Challenge Training setting.

When announcing the global launch a few weeks ago, Matrix pointed to the judicious combination of athletic training options and integration into a variety of group training programs. “When you can serve two groups important to your business with one product, you know your design really found the sweet spot,” said Peter Sell, director of commercial product at JHT, in a statement. ■

Johnson Health Tech Demos

Hall 1, B0609a

11:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Small Group Training

1:45 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.
Indoor Cycle

3:45 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.
Small Group Training

Circle Fitness goes full circle with connected gear

Circle Fitness is preparing for a push in the full commercial fitness equipment market, after it finalized a range of connected cardio gear with smart price options.

The Taiwanese company has spent the last two years working on the Circle Cloud Go – a cloud-based platform operating with a body analyzer, connected cardio equipment and an app.

It allows users to obtain updated information about their body composition when they work out, and customized advice from their trainers on ways to achieve their goals, based on evolving body analysis.

But Circle Fitness **H1 B0102** is adjusting its proposition this year by offering machines with smaller touch-screen consoles. While the cardio products previously came with 16-inch consoles, the company has started building them with a 8-inch version of the console, which is less expensive but still efficient.

“The cardio machines with smaller consoles have about 80% of the cloud-based functions, but they will cost only about \$150 more than machines with LED consoles,” said Timothy Hsieh, sales manager at Circle Fitness. The Sport console

is available for four items of cardio gear, from treadmills to ellipticals and bikes.

The push will be paired with the launch of the Circle Fitness brand in the U.S. commercial fitness equipment market this year. The Taiwanese supplier’s products have been sold in the U.S. by Brigadoon Fitness, under the Green Series brand. But this distributor, specialized in the hotel fitness market, has agreed to adopt the Circle Fitness brand instead.

“We have fine-tuned our cardio equipment with the cloud-based platform, which is very suitable for the commercial market. That means the time is right to establish the Circle Fitness brand in the U.S. market,” said Hsieh, adding that U.S. exposure should support the brand in other countries.

At the same time, the Circle Fitness brand’s European development benefits from the efforts of a distribution partner that has invested on a large-scale office and warehouse complex for



The MS8 treadmill with the Sport console.

the German and Dutch markets. This partner has also created My Circle, a circle training concept.

Circle Fitness said another partnership has just started in China with Taoruity.

Circle Fitness is part of

the larger P&F Group, named after Paul and Frank Chang, the brothers who established it in 1974. P&F supplies tools and machinery for customers including Bosch. ■

Tonic Fitness rolls out smart and modular fitness products

Tonic Fitness Technology has become a key supplier of stationary bikes in the last years, using ultra-smart technology and an efficient manufacturing facility in Tainan.

Both of these assets will be crucial for the company to widen its product range this year, with a rower as well as a bike with modular design and a fan bike.

Vince Wu, vice general manager at **Tonic Fitness H3 60326** explains that the products launched at TaiSPO use an updated version of the intelligent sensor technology that has drawn leading equipment brands to the Taiwanese manufacturer in the last years.

“The technology was primarily mechanical but it has been digitalized,” says Wu. “The products will use sensors that we have been developing for the last two years. They provide a more accurate reading of the physical effort, and are easier to calibrate.”

The family-owned firm has long specialized in the production of stationary cycles and it has raced ahead in the last three years in partnership with Peloton. This U.S. company has drawn thousands of customers with a program of live-streamed

and interactive indoor cycling classes. It requires a monthly fee of \$39, as well as the acquisition of a Peloton bike worth \$1,995.

Tonic Fitness says it has seen its orders multiply due to the soaring orders of Peloton bikes. The growing demand has encouraged the Taiwanese company to entirely revise its production process, making it much more efficient. While it previously had 300 employees making 300 to 400 bicycles per day, the number of employees has been reduced to just over 200 and the output has almost doubled to 600.

These impressive gains have been paired with improvements in the flow of quality control. Wu explained that about 70% of the components are already checked before assembly. Tonic’s suppliers also use barcodes to avoid time-consuming manual entry of long product codes. The lead time has been sharply reduced, and more investments are afoot to improve polishing and welding techniques.

The outstanding results have emboldened Tonic Fitness to move ahead with the launch of three fitness products, using modular design and compatible workout measurements.

Tonic Fitness has experience in the production of air resistance rowers. But in the last months it has been working together with Body Alive, a company from Luxembourg, to finalize a rower with magnetic resistance. Body Alive will supervise distribution in European markets.

“The rower works with an app to provide interactive games and to record and manage exercise data, and it has the same workout measurement system as the two other products,” Wu explains. “People can compete against each other by using the rower, the bike and the fan bike at the same time.”

The indoor bike has been developed for modularized



Vince Wu with the rower by Tonic Fitness.

production, with a frame that can be used to install the wheel at the front or at the back, allowing for more flexible deliveries. The third product is a fan bike using magnetic resistance to deliver smooth power for training and competition. ■

Green treadmill powers Sports Art

With its thick belt and clean design, the Verde treadmill from Sports Art Industrial caught the eye of many seasoned buyers when the company brought prototypes to international trade fairs last year.

But the finished product, which went into production a few weeks ago, is equally striking for its engineering — **Sports Art 80301a** says that it’s the first treadmill that is able to turn human power into utility-grade electricity.

The Verde treadmill complements a range of Eco-Powr cardio gear that channels the energy generated by the user back into the electricity grid – enabling club owners to reduce their energy bills and to run more environmentally-friendly facilities. The range already includes bikes and cross trainers, and now Sports Art has found a way to integrate the technology into a user-friendly treadmill.

The Verde is a non-motorized treadmill with a slatted belt. While some of the other self-

powered running mills have a curved belt, the Verde is straight with a fixed incline of seven degrees, meaning that the weight and the movement of the user will create initial traction. Once the generator is running, he or she will be able to control the speed.

“The flat surface makes this treadmill accessible for any runner, and due to the absence of a belt it almost feels like you are running outside,” says Michael Kuo, general manager at Sports Art.

Since it brought along its prototypes last year, Sports Art has added a sled-pushing function and an automatic brake. At the same time, it has improved the console and the materials used for the construction, lending an even more eye-catching appearance.

As Kuo explains, the company

has used Eco-Powr as a means to differentiate its products, helping fitness club owners to engage customers with a green approach. The Verde treadmill is capable of capturing up to 200 watts per hour of energy. A second version of the treadmill comes without the energy-generating feature but still is entirely self-powered, and with the same striking design.

The full launch of the Verde treadmill is accompanied by the introduction of the Verso, which Sports Art describes as the first three-in-one cross trainer, combining elliptical, stepper and cycling motions. It enables Sports Art to offer a fully updated cardio range, with options including Eco-Powr.

It comes as Sports Art continues to invest in its international development, with the opening of an office in Germany in October. The team of agents and engineers is led by Volker Hoyer, who has long worked as Sports Art’s distributor, covering the fitness



Michael Kuo leans on the Verde treadmill.

and rehabilitation markets.

Ivo Grossi, former vice president of sales and marketing at Technogym in North America, was appointed as chief executive for Sports Art in the Americas in July. He already joined Sports Art’s team in Seattle as vice president about two years ago, to provide strategy, sales and business development guidance. ■

Aropec flies high with triathlon wetsuit

When they are making an all-out effort to perform in a triathlon, the last thing athletes want is to waste hard-won seconds by having to wriggle out of their wetsuit.

That's where **Aropec Sports HT D0102** comes in with its Flying Fish, a triathlon wetsuit with water drainers for extra speed in the water, and a full-length zipper at the back that allows for an extra-quick change when triathletes rush from the water to the road. The Flying Fish won a 2018 Taiwan Excellence Award.

"The zipper can be pulled up all the way, so it opens up entirely," says Nick Wen, sales executive at Aropec, a company from Taichung that is strongly recognized for its wide product range in water sports and triathlon.

The water drainers have been placed on the arms and calves of the Flying Fish. They are meant to help the wearer paddle more efficiently, by shifting larger volumes of water.

Aropec is one of the nine

water sports equipment suppliers that are displaying their latest products as part of the Taiwan International Diving and Water Sports Show (DiWaS), held in conjunction with TaiSPO.

It has become established in the water sports market as one of the leading suppliers of neoprene wetsuits. But over the years it has expanded with a full catalog, from diving goggles to snorkeling masks and canoes, and a few years ago it branched into the performance running and triathlon business.

Aropec's latest triathlon suits use Tri-Slick fabric, which it has been developing for the last two years. They include two back pockets for more storage capacity, a foam pad for comfort on the saddle, and a dynamic band to

make sure the trunk of the shorts remains in place.

As Wen explains, Aropec already had two distinct ranges of triathlon suits, one of them with a standard combination of nylon and elastic fabric, and the other at the upper end of the market, with compression properties. "The Tri-Slick series is an intermediary level, with improved levels of water repellency and plenty of technical features for triathletes," he said.

But at the same time, Aropec continues to turn out outstanding water sports products such as the Aqua Thermal series, which also received a Taiwan Excellence Award in 2018. The garments are intended for thermal protection for a variety of sports, such as sailing, kayaking and stand-up paddling.

Wen explains that the



Nick Wen zips up the Flying Fish.

lightweight garments are made with three layers of fabric, using nano-technology in the middle layer to create tiny holes that make the suits more breathable. The inner lining is made of thermal fleece, to keep the wearer warmer. ■

Sport equipment makers target demand for wellness

Ultra-busy and permanently-connected lifestyles are making it increasingly compelling to regularly switch off, relax and regain some balance.

Several suppliers of sports equipment and accessories at TaiSPO have expanded their range for this purpose, with wellness products such as massage balls, fascial rollers and balance boards.

Azuni International HT A1223 has built up a catalog with hundreds of items from exercise mats to small weights and foam rollers.

The Taichung-based company is neatly on-trend this year with a balance board launched last October, a compact item that helps to train core strength and

balance in a playful way.

"The demand for wellness items has been growing, because people spend long hours in the office and they want to take time to relax their body and their minds," said Lisa Wu, one of Azuni's owners.

Wu said that the company started by sourcing products for other brands, but in the last years it has been developing its own accessories. As it mostly produces plastic-based items, Azuni has acquired particular expertise in combinations of different synthetic materials. Some of the products are suitable for rehabilitation purposes as well.

Among Azuni's standout products this year are massage mats covered with protrusions of different shapes and sizes. They may be placed under a desk at the office, or used for massages and



Lisa Wu advocates a balanced lifestyle.

relaxation at the end of the day.

An unexpected innovator in the category of massage tools and fascial training is **Nan Yun Sporting Goods HT A0325a**. The group is a leading supplier of shuttlecocks and athletics equipment, but this year its product highlights include the Knot-Out massage ball and peanut balls.

They come with a patented two-layer construction consisting of synthetic rubber with a nylon core, meaning that the product is soft on the skin but its shapes and patterns make for a particularly efficient massage.

"You can use the massage ball like a human elbow, almost at any angle," says Danjor Cho, from Nan Yun's product development department. "If you press it against your back, your brain will tell your muscles to relax."

The products targeting the

fitness and wellness markets enable Nan Yun to take advantage of the insights gained in more than four decades as a manufacturer of nylon shuttlecocks and other sports products with injected parts. It runs a factory of nearly 5,500 square meters in Tainan.

Nan Yun sells its Tainan-made products to some of the most famous international racquet sports brands and sports retailers. The company also operates as a Taiwanese distributor for several international brands of equipment for table tennis, pole vaulting and outdoor sports, among others. ■



Danjor Cho with Nan Yun's massage balls.



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