

## 03 CounterKicks adidas Interview

### DESCRIPTION:

CounterKicks.com was a sneaker website and former subsidiary of SLAM magazine, a popular basketball magazine that has been in circulation since 1994. I worked as a freelance writer for them, and pitched and wrote the majority of my articles based on current events in basketball and sneaker culture. My first article for them was a breakdown of the sneakers worn in the popular film Space Jam to celebrate its 15th anniversary. My pieces often focused on the history of basketball and the shoes worn by key players during certain moments, such as the NBA Slam Dunk Contest and NBA All-Star game. I was later asked to interview the adidas America Director of Running, Mikal Peveto, on a new release from adidas called the adizero rush. I brainstormed the questions, recorded the interview, and transcribed the dialogue. I have selected this piece because of the amount of research it required and to display my skills in transcription. Here is the interview in full, published in 2012.

## An Interview With adidas America Director Of Running Mikal Peveto On The New adidas adiZero Rush



### Feel the Rush and get a look behind the scenes at adidas Running.

Run, run, run. Train, train, train. What do you lace up while whipping yourself into shape? adidas Running and CounterKicks have the lowdown on the brand new adidas adiZero Rush, the 3-Stripes' latest in innovative running shoes that'll make your feet smile (buy it now in all sorts of colors).

We hit up Mikal Peveto, the Director of Running at adidas America for a Q&A session. Read on for his insights into the adiZero Rush, the developmental influences and technical features of the lightweight 7.5 ounce runner, and a glimpse into what else is in store from adidas Running in this Olympic packed year of 2012...

**COUNTERKICKS:** The adiZero Rush definitely has that streamlined running shoe look to it. Can you describe the thought process and importance in creating a functional yet fashionable runner?

**MIKAL PEVETO:** Essentially what we were trying to grasp here is to create a product that is best-in-class as far as weight and performance. The ultimate goal of a lightweight product from adiZero is to help the athlete go fast. If you turn the shoe over, you'd see that there's a technology called SprintFrame. You guys are familiar with SprintFrame because it's a hallmark of all of our adiZero shoes from the Crazy Lights to D-Rose, 5-Star, 5-Tool, F50. It's a full-length plastic plate that is tuned to provide energy during toe-off where the greatest forces are. We started with that as the basis for which we wanted to propel the athlete forward. And then like all adiZero shoes you're basically starting at zero and you're building from there. The midsole and the outsole are minimal in construction so there's that large area of rubber covering the sole, but there is rubber in the optimal places for durability. And then the uppers, a lot of the visuals and the functional attributes you're get-

ting used to seeing with adiZero, they're really clean. Reducing the amount of layers, it's got a very minimal heel counter. The majority of the trims, with the exception of the toe cap and the small little heel tab in the back, they are all fused HF (high frequency) welded both on the inside with the SprintWeb and on the exterior as well. It's very simplified lightweight mesh, even if you duck into the details of the tongue. We're trying to make it look fast. On its own, the form of the shoe should look like it's in motion. So the lines go from heel to toe in a flowing manner. When you see the product, there's that natural flow which running is—a linear activity. The adiZero branding, the go-fast striving already helps the shoe look like it's in motion.

**CK:** The adiZero Rush weighs in at a feathery 7.5 ounces. Is this the lightest ever, and do you think it can go lighter?

**PEVETO:** We can go lighter because we do go lighter. Unlike basketball or soccer, running covers a large gamut. It's the largest business in the industry. It's about 30 percent. We have shoes that are lighter. This is actually our fastest shoe. The 7.5 ounces is what we deem as the optimal weight for a go-fast product that can be worn by the masses. And yeah, we believe there will be a time when we can shave additional weight off this, but where we are right now is really about creating a product that is going to help a kid go faster. That can be a high school running back, it could be a cornerback, any of the skilled positions on the field. A point guard on the court, somebody that's looking for that advantage of speed and running is what they do. Eighty-five percent of all high school varsity athletes run, that's their No. 1 chosen training method from getting into shape for their primary sport. And often times it's not a slow jog, it's about firing the muscles they need to get the speed during the season that they're training for.

**CK:** You mention that it's used a lot for athletic training, so it's not a running-specific shoe. Who is the Rush really catered toward?



**PEVETO:** The Rush is catered to the high school athlete, and high school athletes run. They might not call themselves runners because that's a different thing. That's me, I wake up I think, "I'm going to run today for the sake of running. I want to get faster because my sport is running." But this shoe is made for the athlete who plays multiple sports. Twenty-two percent of all high school athletes are on the track team. You go into the girl's side, it's even greater, it's 40 percent. They might not call themselves a track kid, they're a football player, or basketball player, or baseball player, or soccer player, but they're running track and it's by far the No. 1 second sport out there. It's no less a running shoe for the cross-country kid, but we really are gearing it toward that kind of athlete. In our vernacular it's as much for Eric Berry and CJ Spiller as it is for Haile Gebrselassie. Those guys run, they're not doing anything that unusual in running. They might be doing more speed-based work but they're still using the shoe for its intended purpose. It might not be as repetitive and for as long but it holds up from the New York City Marathon in 2 hours and 6 minutes to speedwork by a cornerback in Southern California.

**CK:** The Rush is available in a variety of different color schemes. What is the method to choosing the colors?

**PEVETO:** First and foremost, we start each year with the idea of "owning a color." Lets stand for something. Over time we're talking about a competitive marketplace. You are trying to constantly break through. One of the areas we've found that we have been able to do that in is if we can have all those assets funneling back into one color. This happened in 2011 with a color called Intense Green, and in 2012 this year that color is High Energy, a red-hued orange. With London, it's a competitive year. You try to pinnacle the running with the London Olympics. If you watched the Australian Open, High Energy was our lead color there. You see that brought into two of the inline colors with one being the all over High Energy, the one we featured in the ad and then you'll also see it on our light grey based. So really try to take advantage of using all of our assets to stand out in the crowd and this year it's High Energy.

**CK:** What were some of the influences in developing the Rush and how big of a factor was runner feedback as well as previous adidas Running models?

**PEVETO:** This is a US specific product, so we built this with our US team here, what we call Creative Center Portland (CCP). We built this specifically for our market so we were focusing on tying back in to what we've done in basketball, what we've done in football, and you'll see cues from this product coming from things like the Crazy Light. Again, this product is first and foremost for the athlete who wants to get faster. They're going to be familiar with Crazy Light, they're going to be familiar with 5-Star. We're trying to bring in some of those visual influences into the Rush. It's validated. Last year we won the New York City Marathon and broke the sports record by two minutes in the global version of this product. So it has been validated on athletes at the very, very tip of the spear. Somebody that can run four 40 miles times 26 in a row with zero rest, that's 70 seconds a quarter, 35 seconds a half lap with zero rest. It's validated at the top but also we put this on our universities, college athletes, and trainers, anybody we have that's helping us spread that message of speed.

**CK:** The term Zero Mesh, is that what you guys are calling the high-frequency welded upper or is that something else?

**PEVETO:** The high-frequency welded upper is SprintWeb. The Zero Mesh is this super lightweight mesh that we have built just for us and for these products. It's that air mesh that has enough translucency and breathability but it passes our stringent quality standards.

**CK:** What other features differentiate the adiZero Rush from just your typical runner?

**PEVETO:** It starts with that adiZero philosophy. We would not have a product without a traditional heel counter outside of adiZero. The fusing of the SprintWeb, traditionally we stitch those on and they're anywhere from a 1 milli to a 1.2 milli trim whereas these are a fraction of that. It starts from the beginning, from the onset. When it's going to be an adiZero product there's not a shoe that starts as one shoe and then we just go "Wow that really looks minimal and maybe we should brand this adiZero." It starts with, "This is an adiZero product." We're a German company, we're very exacting. So we have standards that are set in place for adiZero. The pattern has to go through an engineering process with our Japanese pattern guru. It really starts from the onset to create an adiZero product.

**CK:** What kind of interaction is there between the Portland design team and the adidas designers over in Germany?

**PEVETO:** It's really one big creative engine where we focus in on when there is a specific need. We as adidas America wanted to parlay all the hard work we've put in to building the adiZero franchise to come out with a product specific for that time period. And that's when from a global standpoint they said, "Let's put that on our group in CCP. Lets have CCP work on that specifically." So we did. As we get into the back half of the year, the adiZero that I was mentioning before will come from the global group, so it's more of a collaboration. Our creation center is actually in a market where there's commerce and all of the things that go along with that dynamic. At times what we're doing is building specific products for our unique market conditions. We're a wholesale driven market which means you're selling to a retailer before. In a lot of markets we own our retail doors so you can have a different flow of creation in those two dynamics. We're trying to take advantage of the power of our group here when applicable. That was a case when we needed something done for this market and we had a team here so we said "Let's get on it from us." So we shortened the calendar and very specifically built something for this market.

**CK:** We've previously spotlighted the running commercial with the band, cheerleaders, and the players all wearing the shoe. How else are you promoting the Rush?

**PEVETO:** The major push for us is in the stores with our retail partners Finish Line, Foot Locker, and Dick's Sporting Goods, really focusing on bringing it both on their online presence but also in the stores. Digital, making sure that we get out there, things like CounterKicks where the aficionados are, and our own Facebook pages. And then validated on our athletes. We have universities that we see these products on so we can get them on the collegiate athletes because that's an influence over a high school kid. In the ad itself you can see there is a recruiter in the background from Michigan in there. To a high school kid, that's an attainable goal as opposed to the NFL or NBA. That can be a dream, but a real attainable kind of benchmark is the steps to get to that area. These colleges are the next step.

**CK:** What else can we expect from adidas Running in 2012?

**PEVETO:** We have a great new ClimaCool product that's going to launch April 5th. It's a really new and exciting product called the Clima Seduction. I think all these sneakerhead websites are kind of burnt out on this love of basketball product. I just want to make sure we get into the right flow of how we see these things out there. Maybe we're waiting a little too late in some cases cause I see the Rose 2.5 out there well before it's at the store because you're getting a little fever pitch going. Hopefully we can do the same with the Seduction. And then we have for back-to-school a new adiZero push because it's around the London games. So we'll have a marquee-level product that will be featured on our athletes, perhaps some of our marathoners in the race itself but all of our athletes on podiums would be wearing this new adiZero shoe.