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Gaastra develops Footwear collection under its own management

Starting in January 2011, Gaastra will be bringing its own footwear collection on the market. The sale of the first footwear collection developed under its own management will start in July 2010 in Amstelveen; a new showroom will also be opened in CAST Nieuwegein (showroom 333). Mark van der Wal, General Manager of Gaastra Footwear, would like to conquer the international market, in addition to the Netherlands. With successful Gaastra Sportswear branches in Germany, France, Belgium and Italy, the new Gaastra footwear team aspires to give the line an optimal presence on the European market. "The collection will be broadened, deepened and improved," according to Van der Wal.

Licence taken back

"Gaastra footwear was already on the market," Van der Wal explains. "But they were distributed by the licensee Footex. Driven by Gaastra's international success, we took back the licence. We believe that the interests and long-term vision of a licensee is not always consistent with that of the brand owner." But Van der Wal believes that Footex provided good service: "Together with the retailers, they achieved a very healthy resale during the past seasons." Van der Wal emphasises, however, that as the brand owner, you can link the collection even better to the Gaastra core values without losing commercialism. "One of our objectives is to improve the quality of the footwear. We will most certainly continue building on the positive elements that have already been rendered. The most important element is improving the weak points so we can lift the brand to a higher international level."

Why Gaastra Footwear

Gaastra is a strong nautical brand with a rich history. Founded by Douwe Gaastra as a sailmaker in 1897, its goal was to make sailing better and more efficient. Clothing and footwear are critically important for sailing performance. As Douwe Gaastra has said: "You do not ask the sea any questions, you just dress for the occasion."

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Three collections

Of course competitive sailing remains the basic assumption within the collection. The footwear line will reflect a nautical functional fashion collection. It will be built up from three different collections.

1. Gaastra Pro: functional sailing footwear for the professional sailor.
2. Gaastra Breton: functional boat shoes for the recreational sailor and smart casual shoes for the fashion-conscious consumer.
3. Gaastra Sport: sporty footwear for the fashion-conscious consumer.

A large part of the collection will be suitable for real sailing. Van der Wal believes that the functional properties are very important. "Compared with the Gaastra footwear collection in the past, the functionality such as non-marking soles, grip, etc. will play a greater role in future."

Organisation

The Footwear department has been set up as a separate unit within the international Gaastra head office in Amstelveen, with a team of international footwear specialists in design, production and sales. Van der Wal has already amply won his spurs at K-Swiss, among others. As the Marketing and Product Director, he has made the sneaker brand a European success in six years' time. "We are actively working on attracting even more experts from the footwear industry. So that we can work very professionally," Van der Wal explains. According to the ambitious general manager, Gaastra will continue to cooperate closely with the Sportswear division in order to market a balanced, clearly-defined international brand image.

Trends

The boat shoe will be back in full force in the summer of 2011. Consumers increasingly value authentic and functional elements in their products. "These are exactly the same elements that Gaastra will emphasise in its footwear," according to Van der Wal. "As an authentic brand, Gaastra is in the best position to make it happen."



About Gaastra

Gaastra is an authentic Dutch fashion brand with a DNA that is drenched in pure nautical passion. The company owes its international reputation to a unique mix of functionality and fashion, which is consistently carried out in Gaastra Pro and Gaastra Sportswear. Gaastra Pro is the complete professional line that uses the most advanced techniques and materials to offer maximum comfort and optimal protection under all conditions. From a recreational trip over inland waterways to a challenging regatta over the oceans. Gaastra Sportswear, subdivided into the Sport and Breton lines, is the rugged and sporty fully-coordinated casual collection, always strongly inspired by Gaastra's rich nautical legacy. Both main collections – Gaastra Pro and Gaastra Sportswear – also offer an extensive selection of accessories and footwear.

Gaastra is a division of McGregor Fashion Group B.V., established in 1993. The McGregor Fashion Group B.V. is a European fashion house that specialises in the design, purchase, marketing, distribution and sales of men's, women's and children's clothing in the higher market segment.

For more information: www.gaastra.eu

For the editorial staff (not for publication)

For more information about Gaastra, please contact:

Gaastra International Sportswear B.V.

Contact person: Merel Koster

Telephone: (+31) (0)20 - 5038600

E-mail: marketing@gaastra.nl

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