



Product Knowledge:

Visit Sports Trader's website for more product knowledge: www.sportstrader.co.za

The right spikes for the job

Athletes move in different ways and have different needs while taking part in their chosen track or field activities. Thus, they have different requirements from their footwear, for example to help them to run faster or to support them when landing after jumps.

Keep in mind that spikes are shoes and the spikes are pins with specific functions.

It's important to find out what activity your customer will be taking part in before suggesting footwear. If he'll participate in several track and field events it is sometimes possible to use the same pair of spikes and just change out the pins, but not always.

The plate underneath a spike has threaded holes into which the pins are screwed, enabling the athlete to replace the pins when worn down and blunt and to change them for his requirements (see a description of the different pins and their functions later in the article).

Unless stated otherwise in this article, the pins are positioned under the forefoot (there are occasions where they are needed below the heel as well).

Track running

On the track, a split second can make the difference between winning and second place.

Each of the different track types (sprint, mid distance and long) have their own different requirements from footwear, considering that the runner can spend either a few seconds in a pair during a sprint which can therefore offer less comfort, or a much longer time in which case comfort makes a much bigger impact on how well the athlete can perform.

Sprint and middle distance spiked footwear are angled up at the front to encourage the runner onto his forefoot, in order to aid his speed.

Sprints: since they're designed to keep the athlete on his toes, these spikes have little to no heel and not much cushioning.

- Aggressive and stiff plates that run from the toes to heels, being stiffest at the toes.
- Support: fore- and midfoot
- Very lightweight
- Short sprints:
 - Plate: rigid
 - Pins: 6-10
- Longer sprint (200m +):
 - Plate: slightly more flexible than needed

Our cut-out-and-keep series to assist retailers with product knowledge

Words: Carin Hardisty. Compiled with the help of www.runnersworld.com, www.vsathletics.com, www.alexandrasports.com, athleteaudit.com, thewiredrunner.com, www.myactivesg.com



for the shorter sprint
◦ Pins: 6-8

Middle distance:

- Plate: stiff and aggressive plate, but not as firm as for sprints.
- Pins: around 6.
- Support: fore- and midfoot and in the heel.
- Cushioning under the heel section.

Long distance (1500m or more): runners need more support and cushioning than the shorter distances do.

- Made to be light and nimble with a flatter design than the shorter distance spikes.
- Comfort and durability are more of a priority.
- Support: fore- and midfoot and in the heel.
- Plate: flexible.
- Pins: 4-6
 - Mostly needed for traction on the turns

Hurdles: athletes often use either a more flex-

ible sprint or middle distance shoe because of the cushioned heel.

- Plate: slightly flexible.
- Some cushioning.
- Support: fore- and midfoot and especially on the heel.
- Pins: 5-8.

Field events

Athletes taking part in jump events (long and triple jump, as well as pole vault) run on the balls of their feet. The footwear have thin, full-length midsoles for support in the fore- and midfoot areas, stability and comfort when planting.

They also need to be very lightweight.

Long jump:

- Plate: stiff.
- Cushioning in the heel for landing.
- Pins: 6-10. Labeled LJ

Triple jump:

- Plate: slightly flexible
- Good cushioning
- Support: fore- and midfoot and in the heel.
- Pins: 6-10. Labeled TJ

Pole vault:

- Plate: stiff.
- Good cushioning.
- Support: fore- and midfoot and in the heel.
- Has a heel-to-toe offset to make the transition from running to vaulting easier.
- Pins: 6-10. Labeled PV, but can also use LJ or TJ pins.

High jump has slightly different requirements to the previously mentioned jumping events.

- This footwear has pins (typically 11) under both the forefoot and the heel for support and traction during the approach and plant.
- Flat with a thick sole to protect the heels.
- Plate: stiff.
- Good cushioning.
- Support: fore- and midfoot as well as in the heel.
 - Lateral support to keep the spike secure as the athlete twists over the high bar.

Hammer and discus throw as well as **shotput** require a flexible shoe with a wide, flat-bottom outsole that don't have pins.

The athlete can use glide or rotational shoes with textured outsoles:

- Glide: textured bottom for grip.
- Rotational: smoother bottom for better spin.

To p36



Athletic spikes cont. from p35

The requirements for the outsole's performance differ slightly:

- **Hammer throw:** smooth and slightly rounded for natural rotation.
- **Discus throw:** flat, wide base that is smooth and rounded to allow the athlete to spin.
- **Shotput:** slightly curved with a wide flat heel. Slightly textured for more lateral stability, as the shotputter needs shoes with extra grip.

Other requirements:

- Flexible.
- Cushioning.
- Support: ankle, midfoot and achilles.

Javelin throwers use boots, which are bigger, heavier and offer more support. They come in low-, mid- or high tops.

- The plate is the full length of the boot to provide traction during the approach and a solid plant when throwing.
 - Thus they also have front and rear pins (usually 11 in total).

How to choose the pins

It's important that your customer always has pins or studs in his spikes, so that he doesn't pick up debris in the holes.

Events often limit the maximum length of the pins on spikes (usually around 6mm), so

recommend that your customer finds out what the event rules say before he competes.

Also advise your customer that he can't sharpen his pins and will have to buy replacements should they become dull. It takes quite long to dull the pins, however, so he won't need to replace often.

He can swap out his pins should he need to, for example if he were to take part on a different surface.

The five spike shapes each have their own function and benefits:

- **Pyramid:** for dirt or grass surfaces, hard tracks or rubber.
 - Most common length: 1/4"
- **Needle / pin:** good for all weather and rubber tracks.
 - Also known as Slim as they are slimmer than Pyramid pins.
 - Most common length: 3/16"
- **Christmas tree or compression pins:** for softer tracks such as rubber or tartan, when the athlete doesn't want to stick to the surface.
 - Design prevents the pins from sticking into the track too much.
 - Most common length: 1/4"
- **Tartan:** for rubber tracks.
 - Not as sharp and stick less to the surface.

- Has a cylindrical shaft and pointy spike at the top.
- **Blank or stud:** for indoor surfaces or surfaces where no pins are allowed.
 - Flat and can be used to fill spike wells to keep out debris.

Fitting the shoe

How to tell if the shoe fits:

- The toes shouldn't feel cramped, but there shouldn't be a lot of room between the toe and front of the shoe.
- Shoe should fit very snug, more than a running shoe would, for example. Sometimes athletes will even size down from their normal running shoes.
- It should have the correct stiffness, support and padding in the right areas, as described earlier.

How to fit the shoes and what to keep in mind:

- Socks: to wear socks or not is up to personal taste. Find out which your customer prefers (with or without socks) before recommending spikes as it will determine if he needs to try on the footwear with socks on or not.
- Advise your customer that there's no break-in period for the footwear: how it fits when trying on is how it will fit on the track.
- If it's possible in your store, have your customer jog in the shoes to see if they fit properly while he's moving.

Get Olympic speed on athletic tracks

Advertorial



Pace Sprint 09S929R



Pace Mid Spike 09S928M

THE OLYMPIC footwear brand entered the South African market in 1918 with a range of athletic running shoes, or spikes. Today, as Olympic International, the brand provides technically advanced athletic spikes to assist the modern athlete to reach new milestones.

PACE SPRINT

This lightweight sprint shoe has a flash colour combination of red, white and yellow. The upper features breathable sports mesh and moulded trim features and a comfortable and light inner sock.

Designed specifically for the sprinter, the sole has aggressive cleats for added traction on tartan race tracks. The spikes are removable to suit the running surface of the athlete.

The heel area has an EVA support block to aid a more natural walking motion.

PACE MID

A lightweight shoe with a flash colour combination of blue and yellow, this spike is for the middle distance athlete. The breathable upper has sports mesh and moulded trim features. The inner sock is comfortable and light. Designed specifically for the middle distance runner, the sole has aggressive cleats for added traction on tartan race tracks.

The spikes are removable to suit the running surface of the athlete. There is an EVA support wedge running the length of the sole to provide support to the athlete's feet as they run their event.

Contact your local agent for more information:

Gauteng:	Dilesh & Gary Wilson
KwaZulu Natal:	Kamal & Hilton
Free State/ Lesotho:	Owen
Namibia:	Carl & Bernidine
Eastern Cape;	Wayne & Danie
Western Cape:	Brent & Grant Way

082 566 6607/ 082 376 1635
 082 731 5568/ 082 070 6893
 072 346 6045
 022 648 112 40125/ +2646 123 2948
 083 647 6091/ 073 637 0770
 082 779 3349 / 082 557 7938



OLYMPIC
INTERNATIONAL