

# TCK NeXT

SPORT - BUSINESS - PASSION

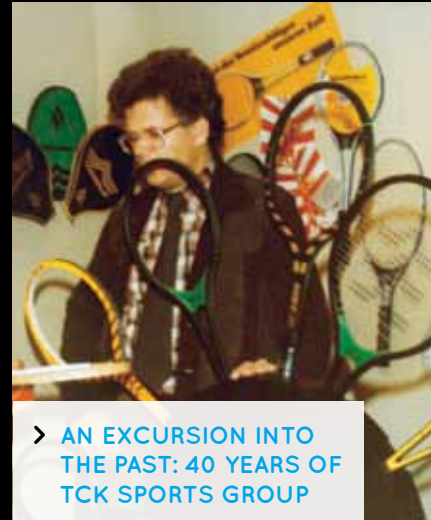
A TCK SPORTS GROUP MAGAZINE  
TCK-SPORTS.NL



## > "I'M NEVER IN ANY DOUBT"

DIRK SCHAFFRATH, DIRECTOR - OWNER  
TCK SPORTS GROUP

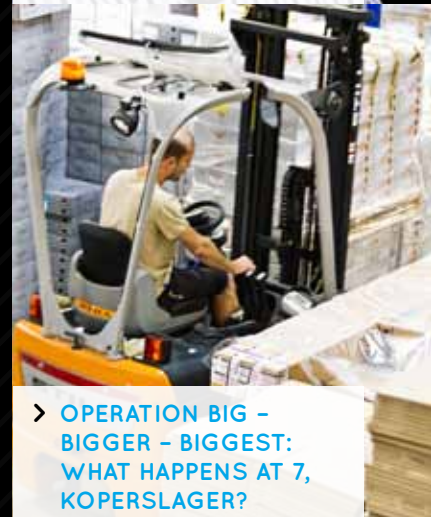
> 11 TCK employees show their favourite sport > Who's next? The brand strategy of TCK Sports Group revealed > 7 tips for not creating followers on Twitter by Sylvia C. Schaffrath > Werner Riethmann about the differences between Germans and Dutchmen > Hans Hormann of Kathmandu about nitpicking or justice > Astrid Beck of De Kampeerder about Dutch accuracy



> AN EXCURSION INTO  
THE PAST: 40 YEARS OF  
TCK SPORTS GROUP



> GUIDO SCHAFFRATH  
"I LISTEN TO MY  
GUT FEELING"



> OPERATION BIG -  
BIGGER - BIGGEST:  
WHAT HAPPENS AT 7,  
KOPERSLAGER?



# Passion or profession?

This is a magazine I never expected to see my name in. Perhaps you're asking yourself the same question: What does Jack van Gelder have to do with TCK Sports Group? But it's a small world, smaller than we often think.

I can't exactly recall the first time I met Guido Schaffrath, it must have been 25 or 30 years ago. And I'm not sure whether it was during the ISPO Fair in Munich or the Dutch Ski Championships for the sporting goods retail branch, either. What I do recall, however, is that I liked Guido right from the start, an easy-going, pleasant guy from Limburg, who really loved what he was doing and didn't have a pound sign for a brain. Next to my job as a commentator, I also had some interest in (winter sports) fashion at that time and since that first encounter with Guido, we've been running into each other on various occasions and from various professional angles. The feeling has never changed.

With TCK taking stock after 40 years, our roads cross again. The company has grown so much I hardly recognize it. A company with over 20 top brands and 55 employees is a sign of leadership with a clear vision, courage and enormous passion.

Over 10 years ago, Guido was able to hand things over to his son Dirk. Even though he isn't involved in daily operations anymore, he is still passionate about his trade, that much is clear when you read the interview with him in this magazine. Better still, his drive and energy are embedded in Dirk's DNA and in fact in every TCK employee! You only have to look at the photographs of the eleven employees showing their favourite sports article or at any of the other interviews.

I would like to congratulate TCK on their 40th anniversary and I wish everyone at TCK all the best for the future. Never lose that passion for your profession!

Jack van Gelder

> *Jack van Gelder is an esteemed TV personality and well-known for his radio commentaries on top-class soccer games. Besides sports, fashion is one of Jack's other passions. He was a fashion agent for several foreign manufacturers and together with a few friends founded the clothing brand For Fellows, of which he is at present no longer a shareholder.*

## COLOPHON

Editors	TCK Sports Group I For All Events
Concept, text, design	Mockus
Photography	Photostique

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Watch the TCK Sports company video on:  
<http://www.tck-sports.nl/40jaar>





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# MY FIRST COMPUTER



## THE COMMODORE 64

It was launched in 1983. Its casing was a hefty console, with the actual computer embedded underneath the keys. The digits 64 refer to the internal memory which amounted to 64 kB. To store programmes and data, one could use a cassette tape. Later on, a disk drive could be used. Dirk discovered his passion when touching the keys of this collector's item for the first time. Want to relive the nostalgia of a Commodore 64? Use an emulator on a modern operating system and you can experience the C64 and play games like PacMan, Choplifter and Frogger once again.



## COLUMN

# Job interview

12 October 2008. Rather nervous, I sit poised on the edge of the chair. I'm in the middle of my job interview at TCK Sports Group and already know that this is what I want! And then Dirk pops the question, "Tell me, do you have any feeling for sport?" Right, I thought, how long do we have?

That was three years ago. Right now – and fully settled in at TCK – I'm up to my ears in handling this jubilee magazine. Besides writing this column, my To Do list for today is endless, rescheduling Dirk's diary to squeeze in that important meeting, processing a sickness report, dealing with a lot of administration and answering all kinds of questions from employees. The diversity of the job is what makes it so special and ideal for me.

That's also what I'm looking for in my spare time. Exercising is a way of release for me, a much needed way of relaxation at the end of a busy day. I practise Spinning, BodyPump, Zumba, core training and I'm a great fan of running, hiking and skiing. Working at TCK is therefore not just fascinating because of the diversity, great colleagues and contacts with foreign suppliers. The variety in the range of sports goods we have on offer is what makes working at TCK so enthralling. It simply makes me greedy!

Skis are by far my favourite. They remind me of that ultimate sensation of freedom, the simple joy of being out there and forgetting everything else. And I chuckle to myself when I think of all the other goods I use. Like the Deuter rucksack every day and the sports bag when I go to my workouts, always containing a pair of spinning socks. X-Socks are also my favourite when running and during a 'normal' walk I wear them in Iowa shoes. Need I say more?

Therefore, Dirk, to return to my job interview one last time, there is absolutely nothing wrong with my feeling for sports!

*Qu*  
*hauette*

Management Assistant

"IT SIMPLY  
MAKES ME  
GREEDY!"



# "I never really lose any sleep over anything"

Dirk Schaffrath  
about Dirk Schaffrath

Dirk Schaffrath is not the type of businessman to fret and brood. Decisive and pragmatic, that's how he describes himself. Is that what makes him so successful? Or is he the right person to take TCK Sports Group to the next level because of his background in Business IT & Management? What makes Dirk typically Dirk?



## WHAT COMES BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR SLEEP?

"I never really lose any sleep over anything. The only thing that ticks me off is people being unreasonable. I always try to be understanding but there are lines. If people cross them, I get really irritated. Like that time when a retailer came to us with a customer complaint about a pair of shoes that were bought twelve years ago. The defect was clearly caused by age, but the customer wouldn't listen to reason and put pressure on the retailer and us. People should know better than to abuse our generous service. There is a limit somewhere."

## AREN'T YOU SCARED OF THE RECESSION OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES THAT CAN HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON YOUR BUSINESS?

"We have seen it all before and we are strong enough by now to deal with

some setbacks. A crisis can also create opportunities, like taking over a new brand. And let's be honest, this is a difficult market anyway. Compared to Germany or Switzerland, Dutch customers more often prefer price to quality. That has an impact on the retailer and subsequently, on us. So, that's business as usual for us."

## YOU LOVE TO MANAGE IN GENERAL TERMS, TO ADJUST, TO OPTIMIZE OPERATIONS, THE FINANCIAL SIDE OF THE BUSINESS. ARE THERE ANY THINGS YOU DISLIKE AT ALL?

"I'm not a genuine sales guy, that's why Pepijn van den Hoogen is such a great asset as commercial director. And I think I'm a bit too soft when it comes to human resource issues. In a company of this size, there are always issues of some

kind, illnesses, individual preferences or frictions on the work floor. It was a deliberate choice to hire a specialist for this, since this is also an area in which we need to professionalize."

## SO YOU'RE NOT A PEOPLE PERSON

"Only a few people know the real me, I'm rather introvert. That might make me look a bit distant, maybe even insensitive at times. The company's expansion and the introduction of an extra management layer will only emphasize that, the distance between me and the work floor will after all only increase. Don't get me wrong, I do care about the people around me. But creating a relaxed and easy-going overall culture is more my style than looking at individual needs of employees."







## YOU DON'T MIND IF PEOPLE THINK YOU'RE INSENSITIVE?

"I act in good conscience. It's not about me, I want to achieve the best possible result for our suppliers, our customers and all our employees. Not everyone around me has to believe that, that doesn't bother me. I'm driven by my own beliefs."

## DON'T YOU HAVE ANY DOUBTS, EVER?

"No, I never have any doubts. If I'm dealing with something I don't know, I leave it to others or I pick other people's brains until I'm able to make a well-considered decision. Occasional mistakes are part of the game, simple as that. It never crosses my mind when I'm in the middle of a decision. Even my wife sometimes wonders why I don't discuss everything at home every day. TCK plays an important part and it's only natural we often talk about TCK, but I'm not fretting the entire day. That's just not my style."

## IS THAT YOUR STRENGTH, THAT BELIEF, THE ABSENCE OF DOUBT?

"As a businessman I think it's definitely an advantage to adopt a course based on your own beliefs. You can't ponder decisions forever; it only causes delays and uncertainty in the company about the course we're taking. Also as an importer you need to stand firm. A retailer can choose from over twenty brands and the brands can choose whatever importer they like. You're always in the middle and it's not always a pat on the back you're getting. I find reward and recognition somewhere else. For me, the Golden Shoe we received in 2006 for Best supplier of Garant Shoes was a wonderful token of recognition. It proves we have done well, we may be proud."

## DO YOU SHOW THE SAME STRONG BELIEFS PRIVATELY?

"I love discussing certain topics with others when I'm at a party. Take my aversion to the Apple company. Pretending to be user-friendly and customer-oriented, they fool their customers. The hardware, the operating system, the App Store and content like iTunes, everything is Apple which leaves you (the customer) no choice whatsoever. They're abusing their position of power and forcing their rules down customers' throats. I really enjoy a debate with Apple addicts on the tactics and policy of a company like that."

A picture is starting to emerge. Dirk is a confident man with clear goals which he is not easily steered away from. Straight as an arrow. In that respect he reminds me of a top athlete, no buts, no reservations, just go for it. Setbacks are part of the game, keep focused, believe in yourself. And beam with pride when that earns you a medal.

# WINTER MONARCHY

nylon lilalight    nylon bunganville    rainbow blubianco    dakota fango    butter testadimoro    vagabond beige    Yaghi II SD white    Sestriere brown    Creek fur II black

[www.moonboots.nl](http://www.moonboots.nl)



# And... action!

All employees at TCK Sports Group are moved by sports. Sport is emotion, tension and de-tension, the sensation of freedom, leaving behind the daily issues. Having the right gear and clothing will only enhance that experience. Eleven TCK employees demonstrate their favourite sports activity, naturally dressed up to the nines.



**BART**  
WAREHOUSE ASSISTANT  
Cycling and mountain-bike racing

**SHIRT: X-BIONIC**  
"For me, cycling in the country is all about freedom. This shirt keeps my body temperature in check."



**MICHEL**  
ACCOUNT MANAGER LOWA BENELUX  
Snowboarding

**BOARD: VÖLKL**  
"Is it snowing? Yes! My rucksack is great, my helmet keeps me safe, but my board... that's pure pleasure!"



**MARJOLEIN**  
MARKETING ASSISTANT  
TORNADO SPORT  
Zumba

**SHOES: VIBRAM FIVE FINGERS**  
“When I hear music, I simply have to move. After years of practising gymnastics barefoot, FiveFingers come closest to that feeling of being free.”



**PETER**  
SALES MANAGER X- FUNCTION BENELUX  
Golf

**TROLLEY: MOTOCADDY**  
“Peace and quiet and competing against myself all in one: I want to achieve my best handicap as soon as possible.”



**ROB**  
WAREHOUSE AND LOGISTICS  
MANAGER  
Hiking

**SHOES: LOWA**  
“For health reasons I’ve become a fan of hiking these last few years. I enjoy the exercise and being out in the open relaxes me, enjoying Mother Nature, with or without my dog Kasper.”



**BOB**  
ACCOUNT MANAGER  
TORNADO SPORT  
Competitive swimming

**SWIMMING TRUNKS: ARENA**  
“Powerskin has been the best competitive suit for years now. I should know since I’ve been a very keen swimmer indeed.”





**FEMKE**  
MARKETING MANAGER  
X-FUNCTION BENELUX  
Cycling

**PANNIER: ORTLIEB**  
“Cycling outside in the beautiful  
countryside of South Limburg,  
what more can you wish for?”



**NICO**  
ACCOUNT MANAGER LOWA  
BENELUX  
Skiing

**COAT: SCHÖFFEL**  
“Regardless the number of people  
around me, I always feel like  
I’m alone when I’m coming down a  
white mountain.”







**RENÉ**  
OFFICE SALES DEPARTMENT  
Nordic Walking

**STICKS: LEKI**  
“The power of simplicity. The amount  
of innovation in something apparently  
as straightforward as walking sticks,  
it's simply amazing!”



**PEPIJN**  
COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR  
Inline skating

**SKATES: ROLLERBLADE**  
“The perfect sports activity  
for summer....”

# “Planning five years ahead in this sector? Impossible.”

A wide range of brands, equipment for widely divergent sports and 6,000 square metres of storage space for all those goods. That gives the impression of a sophisticated organization that leaves nothing to chance. Reality turns out to be somewhat more complex than that. “It’s impossible to plan five years ahead in this sector. People claiming they have a five-year plan – or even a ten-year plan, are lying through their teeth.” Dirk Schaffrath speaks freely about market developments, his growth strategy and the brands of TCK Sports Group.



**RAMON**  
OPERATIONS DIRECTOR  
Tennis

**SOCKS: X-SOCKS**  
“These socks give comfort and support. As soon as my ankle injury has healed, I’ll take up the game again on a recreational level at tennis club Ubach over Worms.”

“People often ask me how we’ve managed to obtain so many brands. Brands don’t switch importers just like that. In many cases, such a change is preceded by processes outside our influence zone, like mergers or other international political developments. With some of our brands, such developments have been a key factor. What we can influence as TCK, is our organization. Ranging from sales, logistics, marketing and IT to finance. Not until all aspects are OK, can we be a trustworthy partner for the brands and our customers.” This is “in a nutshell” Dirk’s definition of the role of an importer.

## Strategy

TCK has often been able to profit from international strategic developments. Like with the brands Marker, Tecnica and Völkl, which for years formed the so-called MTV alliance and cooperated closely on a product, marketing and distribution level. When Marker and Völkl were taken over by Jarden Corporation a few years ago, an American multinational, that

cooperation slowly started to fall apart. Due to further mergers and partnerships, Völkl<sup>1</sup> and Tecnica<sup>2</sup> have by now completely broken up. Dirk adds, “In nearly all markets, either Völkl or Tecnica have thereupon appointed new importers, except in the Benelux. Because of our trusted relationship over the years and by creating three different companies within TCK, we managed to keep both Völkl and Tecnica on board with Marker-Völkl moving from Tornado Sport BV to Lowa<sup>3</sup> Benelux BV.” This story is an example of an importer’s dependency on international strategic developments. On the other side, sometimes it’s TCK that ends a partnership. “We finished selling brands like T-Shoes, Thorlo, Gabel and Springboost because they had issues with logistics or the quality of their products. If a brand can’t deliver to our standards, it will impact not only revenues, but also our customers’ goodwill. That’s a track you don’t want to end up on.”

**VÖLKL** ALLEY FREESTYLE SKI

**2**  
**TECNICA** VIVA INFERNO FLING

**3**  
**LOWA** CEVADALE GTX



4

ROLLERBLADE ACTIVA 90



5

ARENA BATHING SUIT MELEK



6

X-SOCKS GOLF SOCKS FOR MEN



7

MOTOCADDY THE ELECTRIC GOLF CART



8

LEKI FLASH, NORDIC WALKING



9

FIVEFINGERS BIKILA



## Marketing

We spend quite some time discussing the range of brands and the relationship between importer and brands. It strikes me that TCK devotes itself much more to marketing than I would have expected from an importer. Dirk has a simple explanation. "Each brand is focused primarily on its home market. They simply don't have the time to manage the importers. We are a brand ourselves for the Benelux market, it goes beyond representing a brand. We pay for this marketing ourselves, that is our investment in their brand positioning. It goes without saying that everything we do must be in line with their international branding and reputation. We only translate that to our local market and follow the slogan 'Think global, act local'. Major projects, like e.g. the sponsoring of Eiffel Swimmers NZE Eindhoven and Ranomi Kromowidjojo, are always executed in close consultation and alignment with the brand. For each brand and each target group we develop a tailor-made approach. Most brands trust us on that."

## New brands

In 2010, TCK takes over the distribution of Nordica and Rollerblade<sup>4</sup> also as a result of international political developments. In 2011, Arena<sup>5</sup> is a surprising new brand in the brand package of TCK. Winter sports and outdoor are traditionally segments where TCK is heavily represented, but over the last few years, this has expanded to swimming, inline skating and golf. Not a coincidence at all, according to Dirk. "Often enough those kinds of brands have become part of a larger corporation that's already with us for one of their other brands as well. It's only logical they come to us for their new brand. Should there be any specific retail channel for this sport that we are not familiar with, we will look for the right partners. That's what happened with X-Socks<sup>6</sup>, and why we asked independent agent Rob Gesthuizen to approach the golf shops with this brand. At that time he imported Motocaddy<sup>7</sup> and Golfbuddy. But at a certain point, booming business made it difficult for him to handle marketing and logistics on his own.

That's when we started a partnership, in which TCK became a co-importer of Motocaddy and GolfBuddy. This shows that partnerships can work both ways!"

## Dreams

Dirk is too level-headed to fantasize about new extreme sports brands. "I receive requests on a more or less weekly basis from small brands in niche markets that so far have not been represented in the Benelux. If we go that way, we would be constantly pioneering. No, thank you." Not counting exceptions. "Every now and then a worldwide hype comes up which is so immense that you're almost sure it will be a success in the Benelux as well. For example, we had been promoting Nordic Walking<sup>8</sup> for 4 years with press events, clinics, extensive product information, before it became a success. It was worth our while; the growth curve has been impressive. An exception like that we will only make for a brand we already carry.

Like the four years we have been promoting Vibram FiveFingers<sup>9</sup> now. As with Nordic Walking, at first our customers were not inclined to invest in this, in time nor money. By now, however, FiveFingers is very successful, also in the Benelux." Is there no brand at all that makes Dirk's mouth water? He smiles mysteriously. "There is one brand I've been lusting after for years.

At the fair I visit them each year and the directors know I'd love to carry the brand. I trust it will happen one day, but that time hasn't come yet. Those international political developments I told you about, they need to collaborate as well!"

## THE CURRENT RANGE OF TCK SPORTS GROUP BRANDS

### LOWA BENELUX BV

**LOWA**  
simply more...

**Schöffel**

**LEKI**

**deuter**

**ORTLIEB** WATERPROOF

**völkl**

**MARKER**

### TORNADO SPORT BV

**MOON BOOT**

**TECNICA**

**BLIZZARD**  
INTELLIGENT EQUIPMENT

**arena**

**uvex**

**HEY**

**vibram** fivefingers®

### X FUNCTION BENELUX BV

**X SOCKS**  
HIGH TECH FOR YOUR FEET

**X BIONIC**  
TURN SWEAT INTO ENERGY

**NORDICA**

**ROLLERBLADE**

*Bladerunner*

**MOTOCADDY**

**GolfBuddy**





# It's SoMe,

## SOCIAL MEDIA FOR YOU!

Quite frankly I was a bit shocked when I heard I would only have a hundred words at my disposal to write about Social Media and to give some tips. After all, there is simply so much to tell and to do...But fortunately (or unfortunately, whatever you prefer) I was expected to restrict myself to Twitter.

Enjoy reading and twittering.  
Sylvia C. Schaffrath | [www.itssome.nl](http://www.itssome.nl)

## TCK and Social Media

In 2011, TCK Sports Group actively started using Social Media. Quite deliberately with only a few brands.

Why? Because Social Media don't exactly require a lot of money, but do take up a lot of time, more than anything else. Much more than most people think. You have to communicate interactively. People don't accept a brand anymore that only 'sends'. And they expect a brand to come to them. A website on its own will not attract visitors.

Since the start @FiveFingersNL, @LowaBenelux, @XbionicNL, @DeuterNL, @OrtliebNL and @MoonbootsNL have acquired a substantial flock of followers and they are on the right track: they engage a conversation, do not fear a discussion and provide answers to questions. These brands often come up with attractive giveaways and promotions and a call to action. Which always works.

Hopefully some other great brands from the TCK stable will join them soon!



View my personal video portrait



## 7 TIPS FOR NOT CREATING FOLLOWERS ON TWITTER

**1** *Your avatar*  
Keep the default egg and make sure you don't publish a good photograph of your product. I might recognize it.

**2** *Your name*  
Choose a name that is difficult to type and has no logical connection to your product.

**3** *Your MiniBio*  
Just leave it empty. Imagine I would understand why your product is so good. Imagine I would be able to find you IRL! (In Real Life!) In your shop! On the Internet! It's your worst nightmare...

*If you use these tips, I am positive you will never be a success on Twitter. You can simply continue with what you've been doing so far. The world will continue without you, just as easily.*

*So, what should you do?  
If you feel like it, just follow me @HeidsieckBubble.*



**4** *Your URL*  
There I would put a link to your twitter page. Then you know for sure I suspect you really do not understand what this is about.

**5** *Your location*  
Naturally you don't fill in the name of a town but use coordinates no person will ever understand. Like N 50 50.569, E 6 0.316.

**6** *Label your updates with 'No Admittance'*  
I think it's great that I must pass a ballot before gaining access to your kingdom.

**7** *DM everyone*  
Send each new follower a DM in which you try to sell your product.

### MY FAVOURITE TWITTER ACCOUNTS FROM A PERSONAL ANGLE:

@CNNBRK (CNN BreakingNews)  
@Vester71 (sometimes a bit wearisome, but often very funny)  
@TimeOutLondon (the city where I should have been born)  
@Koningin\_NL (puts a smile on my face often enough)

### MY FAVOURITE TWITTER ACCOUNTS FROM A BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE:

@DutchCowgirls  
@DutchCowboys  
@Tweetsmania  
@Frankwatching  
@Nun!  
Because of the information and the breaking news items they share.

And @Bol\_Com and @GreetzNL for serving as an example for others!



WERNER RIETHMANN  
OF LOWA:

## "The German imagine mountains, Dutchmen the Annual Four Day Walking Event"

Since 1989, TCK Sports Group, back then still known as Tornado Sport Schaffrath BV, has been an importer of the German hiking and ski boots brand Lowa. In 1993, Guido Schaffrath was forced to split his company into two separate entities, Tornado Sport BV and Lowa Benelux BV. In that same year Werner Riethmann became the Lowa contact person for the Netherlands. At the fair in Düsseldorf we interviewed the 63-year-old 'Geschäftsführer' about his partnership with TCK, the Lowa importer of the Benelux.





The moustached Riethmann has been in the shoe business since 1964. Where he found himself purely by accident. “In the village where I lived, there was a shoe factory where I found a job as a production employee. I worked my way up through every department from assistant to director.” The self-made man goes on to inform us he has two daughters, grandchildren and yes, he is also married. “Although my secretary knows where I am before my wife does.”

IN THE BEGINNING, THE GERMAN WORKED CLOSELY WITH GUIDO SCHAFFRATH. WHAT CAN HE TELL US ABOUT THOSE FIRST FEW YEARS?

“I remember Guido as a good tennis player and skier. In my view, however, he wasn't an expert yet on hiking boots. Fortunately, we have been able to fill him in on that point! We at Lowa were amazed that sales in a flat country such as the Netherlands, went so well. After all, when you say hiking, a German imagines mountains and hiking trips, whereas I think a Dutchman thinks about the Annual Four Day Walking Event in Nijmegen. For the first few years our relationship was purely business, but over the years this has gradually shifted towards friendship.”

DID ANYTHING CHANGE WHEN DIRK SUCCEEDED GUIDO AS DIRECTOR?

“In our view this was a logical and normal transition. Of course, I notice that Dirk is more into computers, but that is characteristic of his generation. Guido had a talent for languages and possessed a thorough understanding of the market. He just loved sports. With Dirk you see he is good at delegating and that he is on top of everything.”

WHAT DOES TCK MEAN TO YOUR COMPANY?

“Lowa Benelux is, after Switzerland, our most sizable importer. With Austria in third position. Because there are no mountains, other products are also in demand.” Riethmann points behind him where casual shoes, even some children's hiking boots, are lined up.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHANGE IN THE SHOE BRANCH COMPARED TO THE OLD DAYS?

There are certainly differences. According to Riethmann, Lowa was very traditional 20 years ago, having been founded as a shoe brand for workfolk. The shoes were heavy and needed wearing in for a while before they fitted comfortably. But even in those days, the quality was pre-eminent, which is still the case. Riethmann: “Nowadays the shoes weigh less and the range has more models, using other materials besides leather. In any case, the design has become much more fashionable.” That trend will be continued in the future, according to Riethmann, e.g. by launching more casual models onto the market. The director stresses, however, that their current successful segments will never suffer from that.

DOES HE HAVE ANY PIECE OF ADVICE FOR OUR IMPORTER FROM HEERLEN?

“Dirk should be careful wearing too many hats. You can't satisfy everyone and you shouldn't disappoint the brands you have now”. It's obvious the German hiking shoe tycoon knows the TCK company quite well and wants only the best for them. Which is to be expected after so many years of working together. His advice is clear and almost fatherly, ‘less is more’.

IS HE TO RETIRE SHORTLY?

“Why, no, I go on as long as my health permits me to!” With a twinkle in his eye he says goodbye. Casually, he briefly mentions the heart attack he had four years ago. The downside of his hectic life he already experienced but fortunately survived. It still remains to be seen when he will take his own piece of advice to heart.

# TECHNOLOGY FOR CHAMPIONS

POWERED BY



RANOMI KROMOWIDJOJO – WORLD AND OLYMPIC CHAMPION 4 X 100 M FREESTYLE



# 40 years of TCK Sports Group

What started as a side job in the evenings has now developed into a booming business, employing 55 people and carrying over 20 sports brands. Forty years of developing, expanding, strengthening existing relationships and establishing new ones. A combination of ambition, courage and brains has made this company successful. We look back on forty years TCK, highlighting the most special moments and milestones.

## 1972-1980 The start in the garage

Guido Schaffrath is a keen tennis player. Each time a string snaps, he is deprived of his racket for an entire week which is quite inconvenient if you only have the one. There must be a quicker way, he thinks. He buys himself a stringing machine and starts Schaffrath Sport. The name is quickly replaced by Tornado Sport when his clientele increases and he also starts to import Tornado tennis rackets.



Valid as from  
September 25, 1977

**VÖLKL**  
Exportpreise  
tennisrackets

Alle Völk Racketframes welche aus polycarbonat in normaler Ausführung hergestellt werden, sind mit einem besonderen Material (Kunststoff) beschichtet, um das Racket ein besseres Spielgefühl zu geben.

Modell	Völk Racketframes	Preis
Carbon	60 - 70 70 - 80 80 - 90	120,-
Soft	60 - 70 70 - 80 80 - 90	100,-
Super	60 - 70 70 - 80 80 - 90	90,-
Elastic	60 - 70 70 - 80 80 - 90	80,-
Explosiv	60 - 70 70 - 80 80 - 90	70,-
Serie	60 - 70 70 - 80 80 - 90	60,-
Serie	60 - 70 70 - 80 80 - 90	50,-
Serie	60 - 70 70 - 80 80 - 90	40,-
Serie	60 - 70 70 - 80 80 - 90	30,-
Serie	60 - 70 70 - 80 80 - 90	20,-
Serie	60 - 70 70 - 80 80 - 90	10,-



A list of Vökl purchase prices, dating back to 1977.

Guido Schaffrath in action sometime during the seventies, with his favourite pursuit...



# 1981-1987

## From hobby to business

Business is booming. To an extent that Guido decides to quit his job and devote himself entirely to Tornado Sport. With Mia Prumpeler and Jan Maassen as employees, the organization starts to take shape. At first, the garage is transformed into a specialist tennis shop, but soon enough in 1982, the time has come for a shop in his home town Simpelveld. The warehouse at the back of the shop offered plenty of room for expanding the wholesale activities. A key factor that contributed to the growth, is landing Völkl: at first only for tennis rackets, but in 1982 for skis as well. Paul Koster joining them as a salesman increases their strength even further. Tornado Sport is now becoming a genuine company!



Dirk Schaffrath (in the middle) during the opening of the shop at the Kloosterstraat in Simpelveld



Price list  
The title page of this price list has the Heerlen Theatre as background



An exhibition stand in the mid-eighties



Opening of the shop at the Kloosterstraat in Simpelveld



Völkl Tennis  
Tennis fashion according to Völkl in the eighties.



# 1987-1993 Transformation from retail to wholesale

Guido's eyes are especially on import and distribution of sporting goods and gradually a shift is made from retail to wholesale. Two moves mark this development, the first to another premises at Remigiusberg in Simpelveld where shop and warehouse are still combined and in 1991 to a premises without a shop, consisting of offices and 300 square metres of storage. It marks the end of the retail activities. With the arrival of the German hiking and ski boots brand Lowa, there is now a solid foundation for the wholesale business.



**Guido Schaffrath**  
in Austria during  
the Dutch Ski  
Championships.



**Völkli**  
Ski fashion in the eighties is  
quite.... colourful.

## GEH DACHT



Die Natur begreifen, die Landschaft bewußt erleben und dabei in Ruhe nachdenken. Das waren Goethes Anliegen auf seiner italienischen Reise. Unser Anliegen ist es, Ihnen ähnliche Vorhaben durch den optimalen Gehkomfort eines LOWA-Schuhs zu verschönern. Dazu haben wir uns wieder etwas Neues ausgedacht: Qualität, Paßform, Sicherheit und Design sind seit jeher die hervorragenden Produkteigenschaften der LOWA-Trekkingschuhe.



Klima-Fußbett, asymmetrische Schaftkonstruktion, Pro-Tec- und Multi-Tec-Sohlen sind bereits selbstverständlich. Das TAPE-System, eine Art Bandagenverschluß für optimalen und individuellen Halt ist neu. Hier haben sich die LOWA-Techniker durchaus etwas gedacht. Probieren Sie die neuen LOWA-Trekkingschuhe selbst. Steigen Sie ein und treten Sie auf. Und denken Sie daran: LOWA bürgt für Paßform und Qualität.

### LOWA

TAPE-SYSTEM-Schuh

**Lowa**  
This ancient Lowa  
advertisement shows all the  
values Lowa still stands for,  
Fit, Comfort and Quality.



**Opening Remigiusberg**  
Congestion in the corridor during  
the opening of the premises at  
Remigiusberg in 1987.



The Remigiusberg premises,  
where Tornado Sport was located  
from 1987 to 1991.



**Werner Riethmann**  
director of Lowa during the Lowa  
meeting in Volendam in 1993.





Photos of the opening; the bottom photo showing (left to right): Verena, Guido, Dirk and Mark.



**Opening new premises in Landgraaf**  
In 1991 a new location in Landgraaf is opened:  
a warehouse and offices without a shop.

## 1993-2007 Introducing computers and a new leader

The company is split up into Tornado Sport BV and Lowa Benelux BV in order to be able to promote the interests of the competing products of the brands Lowa and Tecnica. Dirk, the eldest son of Guido, joins the company, at first to computerize the company's operations. His talents, however, surpass IT alone and after five years he steps into his father's shoes as director of the company. Dirk introduces the umbrella brand TCK Sports Group and defines a clear company focus. The range of brands steadily increases and new brands are successfully launched onto the market. In the meantime, they have outgrown their premises once again, which is solved by building a new commercial premises at Koperslager in Heerlen.



**Tornado Sport**  
The Tornado Sport team and customers visiting the Völkl factory in Straubing (D) in 2003.



Brochure of the 25th anniversary





Mia Prumpeler (on the right, †2006) was Guido's very first employee.



Lowa's field organization with Mia in 2002.



Guido and Dirk flanking 'Diana Ross' during the 30th TCK anniversary at Vaeshartelt Castle.



Showroom  
The first Tornado Sport showroom in Leusden.



The entire TCK team visiting SnowWorld.



Golden Shoe  
In February 2007, Jan and Dirk receive the award for "Best supplier 2006" from Niek Jansen and Richard Brekelmans of Garant Shoes Netherlands. The Golden Shoe still takes pride of place in Dirk's office.



- A LOWA ad from 2000 that's still a classic -

*Your feet want shoes  
that are comfortable straight away!*

You waited 2000 years for this...



Kibo XL



Arko GTX



Renegade GTX



Strato Lo Lady



**LOWA**

...simply more

Dealers and more information: [www.lowa.nl](http://www.lowa.nl)

quality in outdoor

## 2007-present Professionalize and grow in a controlled way

A third private limited company – X-Function Benelux BV – is added to TCK Sports Group, comprising top-class brands like X-Socks and X-Bionic, later followed by A-brands Nordica, Rollerblade, Motocaddy and Golfbuddy. Within Tornado Sport BV, top-class swimwear brand Arena is added to the portfolio. A further professionalization takes place. Each limited company has its own team of account managers, the back office is reinforced and commercial director Pepijn van den Hoogen looks after the commercial interests of the entire company. To expand warehouse as well as office capacity, the neighbour's premises is acquired and connected to the existing premises by means of a new storage room. At present, TCK has a team consisting of 55 employees and a warehouse of 6,000 m<sup>2</sup> with products of over 20 brands in stock.



**Teambuilding in the Ardennes**

Operations director Ramon Nellissen doesn't fear what's in store for him by the looks of it. (During the TCK teambuilding day in the Ardennes.)



**'The dynamic pair'**

Jan Maassen and Paul Koster are caricatured spot on during a company outing in 2009.



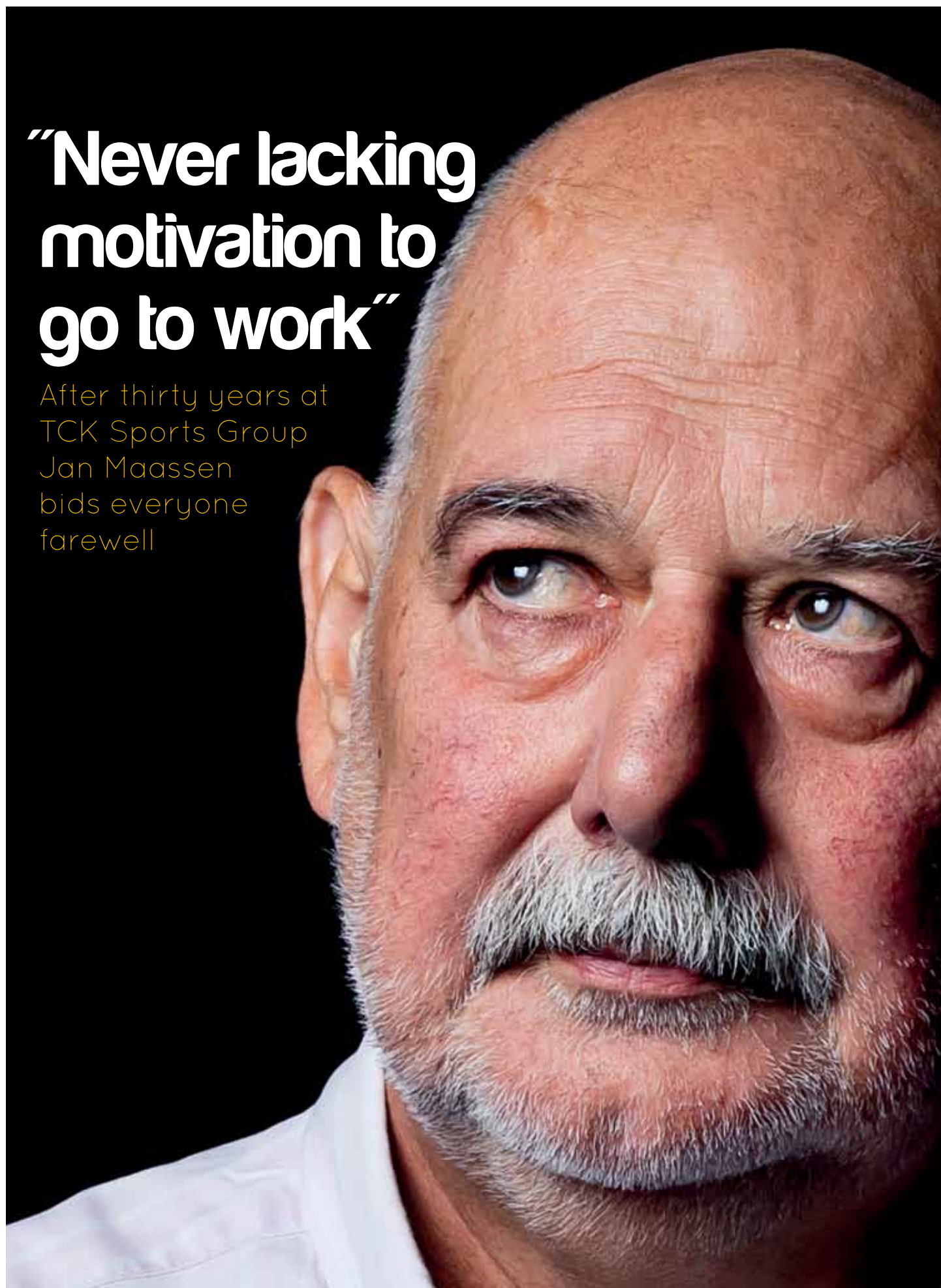
### The end of Völkl Tennis

After Völkl had sold its tennis division to an American company, TCK reluctantly decided in 2009 to end the distribution of Völkl tennis products.



# "Never lacking motivation to go to work"

After thirty years at TCK Sports Group Jan Maassen bids everyone farewell



"Twenty years ago, people bought their hiking boots in Austria. The wrong type of course, those models were far too heavy for our countryside. With the Lowa brand we were able to offer people in the Netherlands a fitting range of high-quality hiking shoes." Jan Maassen talks about his job and the market in a casual way, the trademark of a very experienced expert. After thirty years, his career at TCK ends, and his life as a dynamic senior citizen starts. "I make room for a younger generation. It's been a great time."

Jan takes us round the company one last time. "Did you see that picture of me with Michael Jackson?" Jan points at a large canvas that was made as a farewell gift, testifying of all the moments to remember: business trips, exhibitions and team outings show us a cheerful and committed man. Some of the photographs have been photoshopped, picturing Jan as a Formula 1 driver next to Michael Jackson. Which is not as inconceivable as it might seem in the sales manager's varied and dynamic life. "I've been in so many places, have done so many things. That was what made my job so incredibly interesting. Like the time when I participated in the 'think tank' at Lowa, and we discussed the design of new products. As a result, the products were much more tailored to the market we serviced. And I was able to explain them in much more detail to our customers."

## RACKETS

Jan joined Tornado Sport Schaffrath BV, which was the company's name at the time, in 1981 after he had been helping out founder Guido Schaffrath several times during trade fairs. Jan played top-class tennis himself and a career in his beloved sport was a prospect he relished. The sale of Tornado rackets was not an

unqualified success, but that wasn't Jan's fault. "They were the first rackets made of cold-bent aluminium. At the least little touch they snapped. Guido and I were relieved when we could switch to Völkl rackets, which were the first man-made fibre rackets in the world." Later on, the Völkl skis were added, which complemented the Lowa brand nicely, which was then a big name in ski boots. In this way the portfolio gradually expanded: from tennis to winter sports and from there to outdoor sports.

## KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT

Even though Jan is a salesman, he doesn't like idle talk. "We have always approached the market from our product expertise. With a proper preparation, clear product information and clinics for the staff, we could really demonstrate why our products deserved to be sold in that store. I'd rather help a retailer sell his product than stimulate him into ordering more. What good does it do if he has a lot of surplus stock and consumers regard his store as being behind the times? At Lowa Benelux all sales people are experts, able to advise retailers in the best possible way. I've trained them myself and this was one of my pet subjects."

## NO LACK OF MOTIVATION

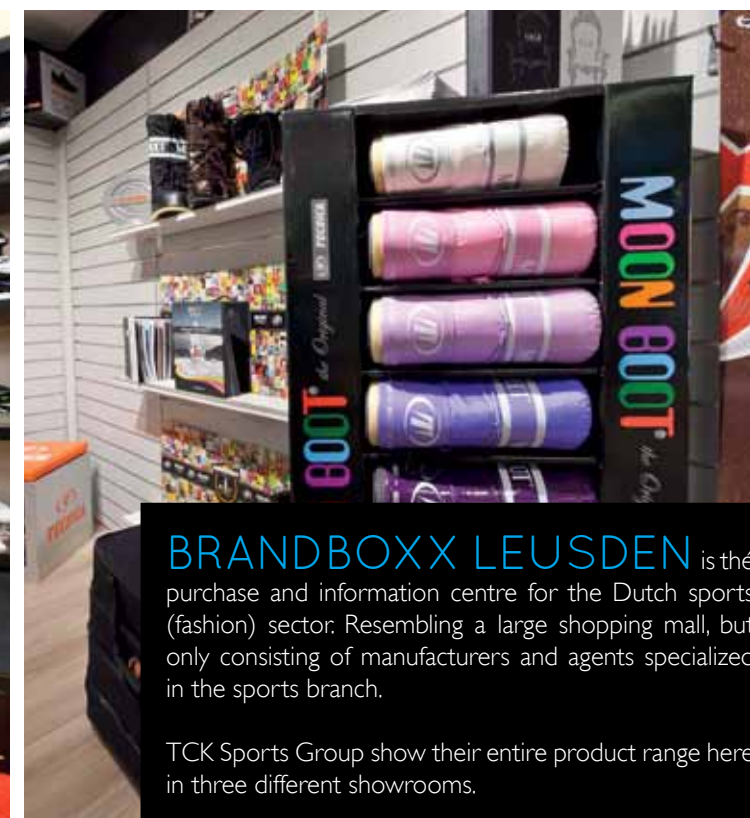
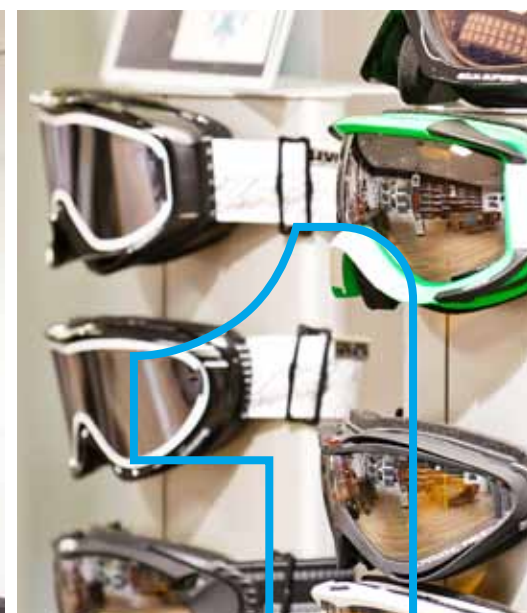
The time has now come for Jan to spend more time on his hobbies. Much to his regret, tennis is no longer possible, but photography and angling all the more. Six months before his retirement, he still had to get used to the very idea. "I just loved my job and never used up all my vacation. After all, I was travelling so much already, why would I need a holiday? Retirement still seemed a long time away. Now I'm ready, it's been quite enough. Also, in retail a new generation has emerged that wants to do business with people their own age. I look back on thirty wonderful years and have never been lacking in motivation to go to work." Jan foresees a bright future for TCK. "The choice for high-quality products and an active market approach are what makes TCK strong. With Dirk leading the company a strong drive to grow is added to the mix. No doubt the company will profit even more from that combination."





# Showrooms

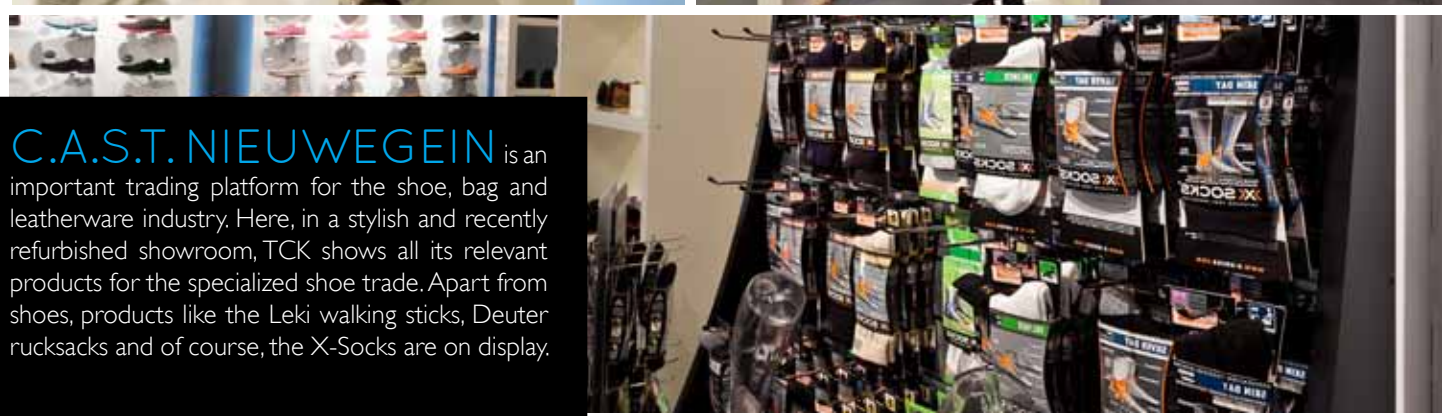
SEEING IS BELIEVING, AND WE WANT OUR CUSTOMERS TO BE ABLE TO SEE AND FEEL OUR PRODUCTS. SOMETIMES YOU EVEN NEED A SPECIAL AREA TO PROVIDE ALL THE RELEVANT PRODUCT INFORMATION AND TO ENABLE PEOPLE TO EXPERIENCE THE PRODUCT THEMSELVES. THAT IS WHY WE SHOW OUR LATEST COLLECTIONS IN THREE CENTRALLY LOCATED SHOWROOMS: LEUSDEN, NIEUWEGEIN AND BRUSSELS.



**BRANDBOXX LEUSDEN** is the purchase and information centre for the Dutch sports (fashion) sector. Resembling a large shopping mall, but only consisting of manufacturers and agents specialized in the sports branch.

TCK Sports Group show their entire product range here in three different showrooms.





**C.A.S.T. NIEUWEGEIN** is an important trading platform for the shoe, bag and leatherware industry. Here, in a stylish and recently refurbished showroom, TCK shows all its relevant products for the specialized shoe trade. Apart from shoes, products like the Leki walking sticks, Deuter rucksacks and of course, the X-Socks are on display.



**TRADE MART BRUSSELS** is a permanent trade fair for various sectors, such as sports, leather goods, fashion, shoes and interior design. In one extensive showroom customers can always come to see and purchase the latest collections of the TCK brands.



# To the golf course with Dirk



## 1 YOU TOOK UP GOLF BECAUSE...

My back and ankle joints had had it after 20 years of volleyball. I had mixed feelings taking up golf, but by now I feel properly challenged by the sport and a round of golf relaxes me.

## HANDICAP

23

## 2 MOST BEAUTIFUL GOLF COURSE

The Old Course in Scotland is a real classic of course. But Monte Rei in Portugal is the most beautiful golf course I ever played. Even the tiniest details have been taken care of and the course is beautifully situated in the hills.

## 3 CHALLENGING GOLF COURSE

Kingbarns in Scotland. Perfectly placed obstacles in combination with the ever present wind require a lot of concentration and tactics.



PEBBLE BEACH CALIFORNIË



## 5

### DREAMS TO PLAY ON

Pebble Beach in California and Augusta in Georgia, because the majors take place there. That would be a special experience.

### OFTEN PLAYS GOLF WITH

Sylvia, my wife.

## 6

### TIPS

- Don't wait too long taking up golf. It's so much easier to learn when you're young.
- Don't use clubs that are ten years old, materials have improved so much since then, even an average golf player notices the difference.

## 8

### RECOMMENDS GOLF TO

Anyone with a feeling for ball games and who loves nature. I'm not an endurance or strength sports type. Even though golf is totally different from volleyball or tennis, I enjoy it tremendously because I simply love ball games.

### LOVES GOLF BECAUSE

- Every golf course is different.
- You're in the countryside.
- You don't have an opponent. You can only blame yourself when things go terrible.

## 9



THE OLD COURSE IN SCOTLAND





# Pronto!

Commercial director  
Pepijn van den Hoogen



Ever since he was four years old, Pepijn van den Hoogen (1969) and his three sisters were taken to the mountains by their parents. While his family kept to hiking, Pepijn developed a passion for climbing. After studying Clothing Industry at the Technical College and with mountaineering as his main drive, he specifically chose to go to Italy, where he could combine his hobby with a career.

During the next five years he worked in Italy as an export manager for a skiwear manufacturer. Between times he went on impressive expeditions to e.g. the Pamir Mountains, the Russian embranchment of the Himalayas. After an invitation from the city of Moscow he conquered a peak no one had ever climbed before, together with three other Dutchmen. The mountain now bears the name Peak Holland. Quite an achievement, if you realize the mountain is 4900 metres high and primarily consists of barren areas with glaciers and vertical granite planes. Pepijn characterizes that climb as difficult rather than high. He went on to work for two years in France, after which he ended up with Rollerblade, the Italian brand for which he became responsible for distribution to the Netherlands. Van Megen Sports Group bought the company in 2003 and appointed Pepijn as their sales and marketing manager. Since these brands, like Tecnica and Lowa, belong to the Tecnica Group as well, the Italian owner decided in 2010 to assign the Benelux distribution of these brands to TCK Sports Group. The Italian owner introduced Pepijn to Dirk Schaffrath and they hit it off from the very first moment.

## WAS IT ONLY LOGICAL YOU WOULD FULFIL THE POSITION OF COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR FOR TCK FROM THEN ON?

"This opportunity presented itself on the very moment I intended to leave Van Megen Sports Group. A new challenge that has proven superbly satisfying. There are no limits to TCK's growth and development. It feels as if I'm allowed full play and freedom, which brings out the best in me. When I joined the company, they already had a good team in place, which made it possible for me to focus on my own priorities."

## DOES TCK CONTINUE TO GROW IF IT'S UP TO YOU?

"Quite possibly, although it's important to pay sufficient attention to all aspects. We now have more than 20 top-class brands, of which you need to know every detail and every future development. The growth we have experienced until now, needs time to 'settle'. Optimize is perhaps a more apt description. If you want to be a market leader in our sector, the size of your company matters. That's your 'raison d'être'. Our market value has certainly increased as a result of our growth. In my view, stagnation means decline, so I would prefer a steady and controlled growth scenario."

## DO YOU FEEL AT HOME IN THE COMPANY?

"Absolutely. Primarily because Dirk and I complement each other so well. At first view we are often seen as opposites, but we have a common goal. In addition, there is a division of duties and a consultative structure in place. We trust each other completely. There is no noise in our communication process, everything can be discussed."

## ISN'T THAT AWKWARD AT TIMES?

"Sometimes the cultural roots of the company show and matters are solved diplomatically. My immediate response is then to be very up-front. But when I'm in Belgium for instance, it is wiser to adopt a more modest attitude. I prefer the southern European mentality, whereas Dirk prefers the German way." Immediately his phone rings. "Pronto!" Fluent Italian without an accent fills the office for the next two minutes.

## WELL WELL, IT SEEMS ITALIAN IS YOUR SECOND LANGUAGE?

"You could say that. Understanding people's culture and mentality is very important in my view and language is certainly a part of that."

## WHAT KEEPS YOUR JOB INTERESTING FOR YOU?

"As long as there is room for personal development, it remains challenging. I love the fact that I travel a lot, even though this can be tiring sometimes. There is a meeting or a presentation at least once every two weeks at a supplier in Italy or Germany and many of our customers are based in Belgium and Luxembourg. Furthermore, I have meetings in the Dutch showrooms or staff meetings in Heerlen. From where I live in Overveen, I'm on the road quite a lot."

## THAT DOESN'T LEAVE A LOT OF TIME FOR MOUNTAINEERING?

"You're right. Even though mountaineering is my passion, I ski more than I climb. When I lived in Italy, I managed to perfect my skills. I ski work-related, i.e. with customers or for testing products. And whereas climbing used to be all about pushing your limits, it's now more about enjoying and respecting safety. That kind of wisdom probably comes with being a father. A few times a year, however, I go mountaineering with a regular group of friends."

## HOW IMPORTANT IS EXERCISING FOR YOU?

"The fact I've chosen a career in sports, is probably the answer to your question. To be honest, I'm not a brilliant salesman, but because I connect to the products I'm able to pass on my knowledge and that proves a convincing strategy. My knowledge is not restricted to one product, which is also important. Climbing, skiing, skating and nowadays also mountain-bike racing and running; you can leave it all to me."

## THAT'S QUITE A LIST. CAN YOU NAME ONE ARTICLE YOU FAVOUR MOST?

"The inline skates. In Berlin I've skated the marathon four times and in Switzerland I skated three different marathons with colleagues. I've been involved in the development and organization of Rollerblade for such a long time, they're very dear to me."

## YOU SEEM TO BE FIT AS A FIDDLE!

"Even though I travel a lot, I always have my running gear with me. I run 30 kilometres on average each week and that keeps me in shape." It's nearly lunch time. Chériëtte Hamers, management assistant, puts her head round the door: "Shall I order you a sandwich?" Pepijn nods: "I feel like a 10a today." Chériëtte knows enough and turns away. Pepijn explains: "That stands for raw prepared beef."

## ENJOY YOUR LUNCH! A LAST TIP PERHAPS FOR AN AMATEUR CLIMBER?

"Piz Bernina, 4049 metres high on the Italian side of the border, is a beautiful mountain to climb. Under supervision, of course! The climb is not that difficult and the views are truly spectacular. An impressive experience."



### In which way are you like your father?

We're both very straight businessmen. If a partnership doesn't feel right, you have to say: "Why don't you keep your money, then I get to keep the goods." We are both driven, but we can also let go, no problem.

### What makes you different?

Most of all, because I belong to a different generation, my father is not into computers or IT at all, whereas I believe in automated processes. Perhaps I'm a bit more businesslike, keep a distance. I think you have to be, now that we've become so much bigger as a company.

### Wasn't it hard for you to take over your father's company, instead of starting something new yourself?

At first it was difficult at times. I was only 27 and wasn't taken seriously all the time. "Can I speak to the boss, please?" some people used to say. But I've never felt my father breathing down my neck or expect more from me just because I'm his son.

### You must run into people that once bought their racket in your father's garage as often as not. How does that make you feel?

On the one hand it's great, never a wrong word is spoken about my father and half the population here bought its tennis racket or strings in his shop. But I'm sometimes tired of it as well. We're a totally different organization now and that's what should count most.

### When looking at your father, what makes you most proud?

His keen understanding of the business: seasonal patterns and other mechanisms you need to know in order to be successful. He taught me all that, and it has proven invaluable knowledge. Furthermore, I admire the way he put me in total control of everything. He gave me carte blanche to do things my way and he didn't want the company to stagnate. In many family businesses that's exactly where things go wrong.

### If you could give your father a piece of advise, what would that be?

Enjoy life, you deserve every bit of it!



### In which way is Dirk like you?

We're both kind and trustworthy. We never break a promise, you can rely on that.

### What makes Dirk different?

Dirk prefers to do things by himself, without help from others. As a child he used to say, "me, alone!"

### How difficult was it for you to hand things over to your son?

Not difficult at all. I've worked long and hard, from 1972 to 1981 even in two jobs at the same time. I wanted to call it a day. It makes me laugh when I hear some parents complain about their children running the business in a different way. To me, that's only logical. Better still, I think it is essential! A new generation brings with it new ways of working.

### Often enough Dirk runs into someone who once bought a racket in your garage. What do you think of that?

Isn't that just great! I had developed a special way of stringing, chose the best and most costly strings, since they lasted much longer. By simply looking at a racket I could predict which string would snap first.

### What makes you most proud when looking at Dirk?

I have friends that I play golf with, who tell me, "I wish I'd had a Dirk myself, that would have been such a blessing for my company!" That makes me so proud!

### If you could give Dirk a piece of advise, what would that be?

Dare to put your trust in the people around you, don't bite off more than you can chew. That is why I've told him to take up golf, it relaxes him.





# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE SALES MANAGER



9:25 O'CLOCK ROBIN WIJGERS, SALES MANAGER TORNADO SPORT, AT WORK IN NIEUWEGEIN 10:15 O'CLOCK ON HIS WAY TO LEUSDEN FOR A MEETING WITH A CUSTOMER



11:32 O'CLOCK A CORRIDOR DISCUSSION 11:47 O'CLOCK CHECKING MAIL AND UPDATING AGENDAS IS DONE IN BETWEEN



12:03 O'CLOCK DISCUSSING THE NEW COLLECTIONS WITH A COLLEAGUE 12:33 O'CLOCK A QUICK LUNCH IN LEUSDEN



14:26 O'CLOCK A CUSTOMER MEETING IN BARENDRECHT AT THE SITE OF SPORT EMOTION 17:12 O'CLOCK FINISHING ON SITE AND HITTING THE ROAD AGAIN...



# Melodic Death, Doom, Trash

## DIRK'S TOP 10

Every music fan hates being asked to name his favourite top 10 bands or albums. Where to start, you ask yourself? I've got more than 2,000 CDs and another 100 DVDs, mostly of live concerts. My taste in music is very varied, ranging from 70s, 80s, 90s to contemporary, from Queen and Pink Floyd to U2 and Adele. But my true style is the heavy stuff. Very uncharacteristic for someone who doesn't smoke, doesn't drink, has no tattoos, doesn't wear his hair long, but it's true. Nothing better than a hefty dose of Heavy Metal! Perfectly acceptable all over the world, but in the Netherlands still kept under wraps in the national media. My all-time top 10 will put an end to that taboo.

### SCORPIONS World Wide Live



Because of the song 'Still Loving you' this double album from 1985 was my very first LP. This is where my love for hard rock and metal started. When you open the double album you see a breathtaking fish-eye photograph of what are said to be 400,000 concertgoers in Rio de Janeiro. Even now, 27 years later, this album simply radiates energy. A classic!



### OPETH In Concert at the Royal Albert Hall

How to explain the brilliance of Opeth in a few sentences? They are a contemporary Mozart and Beethoven combined with the Beatles and Pink Floyd of our time and have become immensely popular with an increasing number of fans. Or, as singer Michael Åkerfeldt puts it: "We bring Death Metal music into the halls of fine culture". Don't miss the distinct Deep Purple reference on the cover.

### NOVEMBERS DOOM A pale haunt departure



Novembers Doom sits right in the middle of my favourite styles of music - Melodic Death, Doom, Trash - with diverse vocals and beautiful, complex compositions. Very soon I bought the complete back catalogue of this band and nearly every CD could have figured in this list. Unbelievable that this band hasn't quite made it yet.



### INTO ETERNITY Buried in Oblivion

I'd never heard of this band before, until I read a positive review in the Rock Hard magazine. I've never been as blown off my feet as I was when listening to this album for the first time. I listened to it four times in a row, without interruption. Even after the 300th time, it's still a fantastic and intriguing album. The next CDs of this Canadian band never quite achieved the same level though.

### PRIMORDIAL All Empires Fall



As we speak, this is the band I listen to most of the time, preferably their live concerts. This double DVD is - how typical of Primordial - very understated. On display it has an image of 'I'm dull, please don't buy me'. How wrong can you be. Incredible music with unique lyrics and an overdose of passion. At the moment my number 1!



### METALLICA Français pour une nuit

Next to all the official albums and DVD's, I have more than 60 less official live CDs and DVD's of Metallica at home, from the early eighties until quite recent times. I hardly play them anymore, because the quality of images as well as (DTS surround-) sound of this blu-ray disc is incredibly high, as if you are there in person, live. Metallica rules!

### WINTERSUN Wintersun



This is by far the heaviest CD on my list. A school example of how a Melodic Death Metal CD should sound. Outrageous and extreme. Strangely enough this album from 2004 has been the only CD of this band so far. It was, however, so successful that Wintersun has been given enough money from the record company to be able to work on a successor ever since.

### THERION Celebrators of becoming



Long before the well-known Symphony & Metallica album, Therion combined classical music with Heavy Metal. Nowhere else has the fact that these two styles of music are closely related in composition, complexity and intensity, been demonstrated so clearly. Replace violins by guitars, the copper section by keyboards and combine opera singers with hefty grunts and Richard Wagner will tell you it's perfect.



### ROGER WATERS Amused to death

I also wanted my list to have a tip for non-Metal fans. Instead of the complete works of Pink Floyd, I've put this unsurpassed solo album of Pink Floyd's mastermind Roger Waters on my list. Brilliant music with still relevant lyrics, critical of today's society, and amazing sound effects make this album a must-have for every Pink Floyd fan.

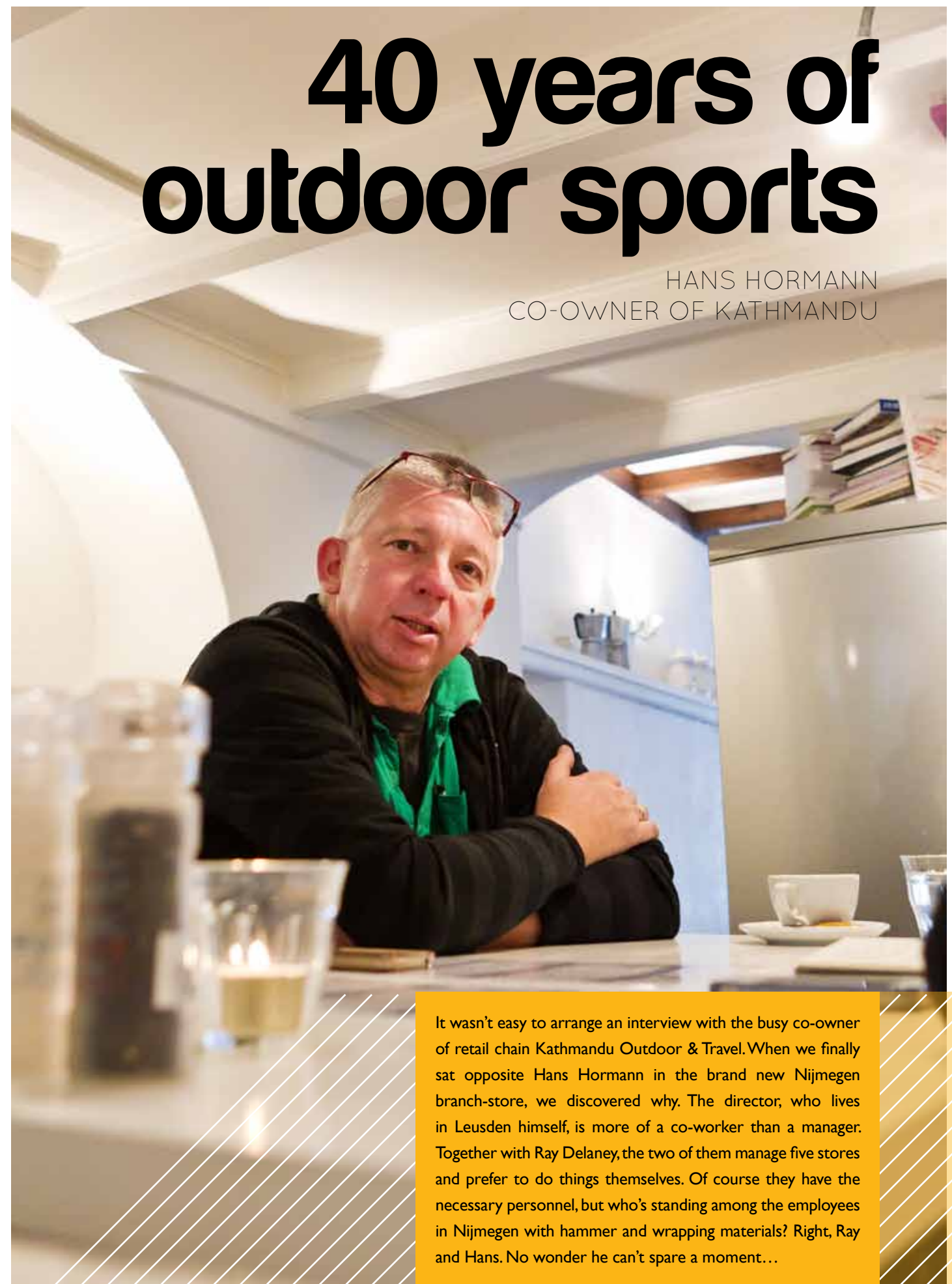
### ICED EARTH Something wicked this way comes



The last choice. Iron Maiden or Iced Earth? In the end I chose Iced Earth, because everyone already knows how good Iron Maiden is. This Iced Earth album is a beautiful mix. It's two levels up from say Bon Jovi, but still very accessible. The ballad 'Watching over me' will give you goose pimples, no doubt about it.

# 40 years of outdoor sports

HANS HORMANN  
CO-OWNER OF KATHMANDU



It wasn't easy to arrange an interview with the busy co-owner of retail chain Kathmandu Outdoor & Travel. When we finally sat opposite Hans Hormann in the brand new Nijmegen branch-store, we discovered why. The director, who lives in Leusden himself, is more of a co-worker than a manager. Together with Ray Delaney, the two of them manage five stores and prefer to do things themselves. Of course they have the necessary personnel, but who's standing among the employees in Nijmegen with hammer and wrapping materials? Right, Ray and Hans. No wonder he can't spare a moment...





#### CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE KIND OF STORE KATHMANDU IS?

“Kathmandu Outdoor & Travel offers outdoor sports goods from the top of the range. The shops in Utrecht, Amersfoort, Deventer and Nijmegen carry a great many TCK Sports Group brands, like Lowa, Ortlieb, Deuter, Schöffel and FiveFingers. Our partnership goes back nearly twenty years. Even though my memories of Guido Schaffrath go back even further, to the time when I was still working as an employee in a sports shop. Lowa, Tornado and rucksacks are the first things that spring to mind.”

#### WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH THESE SPORTS?

“I used to climb a lot. Nowadays I prefer cycling holidays. Last year I toured Portugal on my bike. Naturally using panniers we sell in the shop, what else.”

#### WHAT DOES TCK MEAN TO YOU?

“They are our biggest partner and I must say, a comfortable one. Our contacts with the sales force are great, but also with the back office and with Dirk himself.”

#### WHAT IS THE FIRST THING THAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK OF TCK?

“Dirk trying to rule the world with two computer screens in front of him! In a pleasant way, mind you. I admire what he has achieved so far, compared to where it all started for his father Guido. Even though Dirk himself is not a hardcore outdoor sportsman or mountaineer, TCK is one of the top players in those two areas.”

#### WHAT DISTINGUISHES TCK FROM OTHER SUPPLIERS?

“TCK is a well-oiled machine. In our daily operations we notice that Dirk has put together a good team. I mention their sales people, after sales, marketing and customer service. I know plenty of suppliers with an entirely different standard.”

#### THAT SOUNDS A BIT COMMERCIAL, HANS. SURELY, THERE MUST BE OTHER REMARKABLE POINTS?

“Well, I probably end up with Dirk again. I recognize certain characteristics in myself. Perhaps some people think he is an irritating nitpicker. I think he is fair and a perfectionist. If you run your own business, you must want only the best for your customers. I recognize that drive in Dirk. Linking this to daily operations: in my view a supplier should always take his responsibility and that's what TCK does very well.”

#### ANYTHING YOU DISLIKE ABOUT TCK?

“I can't think of anything but if you insist, maybe their office location. The showroom in Leusden is very convenient for us, but if I want to pay Dirk a 'simple' visit, I have to plan that well in advance.”

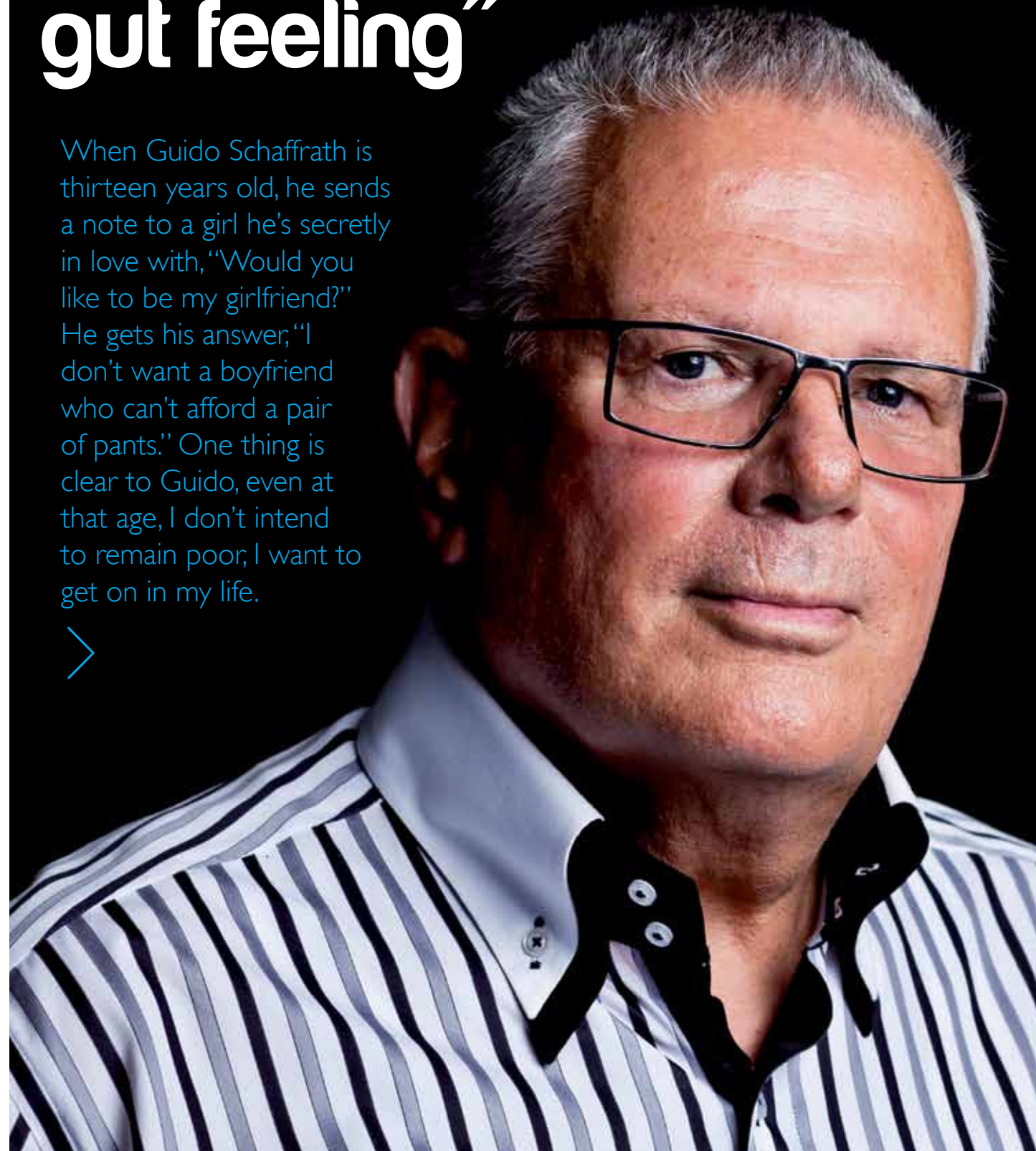
#### HANS HAS BEEN IN THE OUTDOOR SPORTS SECTOR SINCE 1972 AND KNOWS THE TRICKS OF THE TRADE. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO TCK AS A PIECE OF ADVICE FOR THE FUTURE?

“Now that you mention it, I realize I've been in the business for 40 years just like TCK! We should celebrate our 40th anniversary together! I would like to tell them what I've told myself: keep going! The Schaffrath family has built a great company and they should try to keep it that way!”

Guido Schaffrath about the start and growth of TCK Sports Group

## “I listen to my gut feeling”

When Guido Schaffrath is thirteen years old, he sends a note to a girl he's secretly in love with, “Would you like to be my girlfriend?” He gets his answer, “I don't want a boyfriend who can't afford a pair of pants.” One thing is clear to Guido, even at that age, I don't intend to remain poor, I want to get on in my life.







In his younger years, Guido is a keen sportsman and even makes it to the German national handball team. For health reasons he has to give this up in 1970 and takes up tennis instead. "I noticed that when a string snapped, you were deprived of your racket for a whole week. In those days this meant you couldn't play for a week since no one had a spare racket. I said to myself, there must be a better and quicker way!"

### Strings

Guido uses his savings to buy a stringing machine from bankrupt's assets. He practises in his garage underneath his house until he has found the ultimate stringing and is up to speed. Customers can collect their racket as soon as the following day and this spreads like wildfire among tennis clubs. With a daily average of fifteen rackets, Guido provides countless people in the region with new strings. A nice side job, next to his daytime job as sales manager for a large food group.

### Only a heartfelt 'yes'

Guido's ambitions reach further. In 1975, the opportunity presents itself to import and sell German Tornado tennis rackets. The garage underneath his house is refurbished into a specialist tennis shop and is named Tornado Sport. On a specimen copy of his first letter paper, Guido requests the Völkl brand if he can import their tennis goods as well, promising the brand will do very well in the Netherlands. Typical of his inspiring confidence is his reaction to the director's indecisive 'yes'. "I notice you're still not

fully convinced. I'll come back to you tomorrow and only after a heartfelt 'yes' we'll go into business together." Völkl's doubts are gone, a man giving a reply like that when an agreement has already been reached, must be reliable. This decision proves profitable for both parties. Sales are such that Völkl also offers him an importership for skis. Shortly after, he quits his job at the food group. With two employees he moves into a shop-premises in Simpelveld, which provides plenty of space for his wholesale activities as well. It's the beginning of a steady growth. In 1987 Tornado lands the Lowa brand for hiking and ski boots and the focus shifts from retail to wholesale.

### No fear

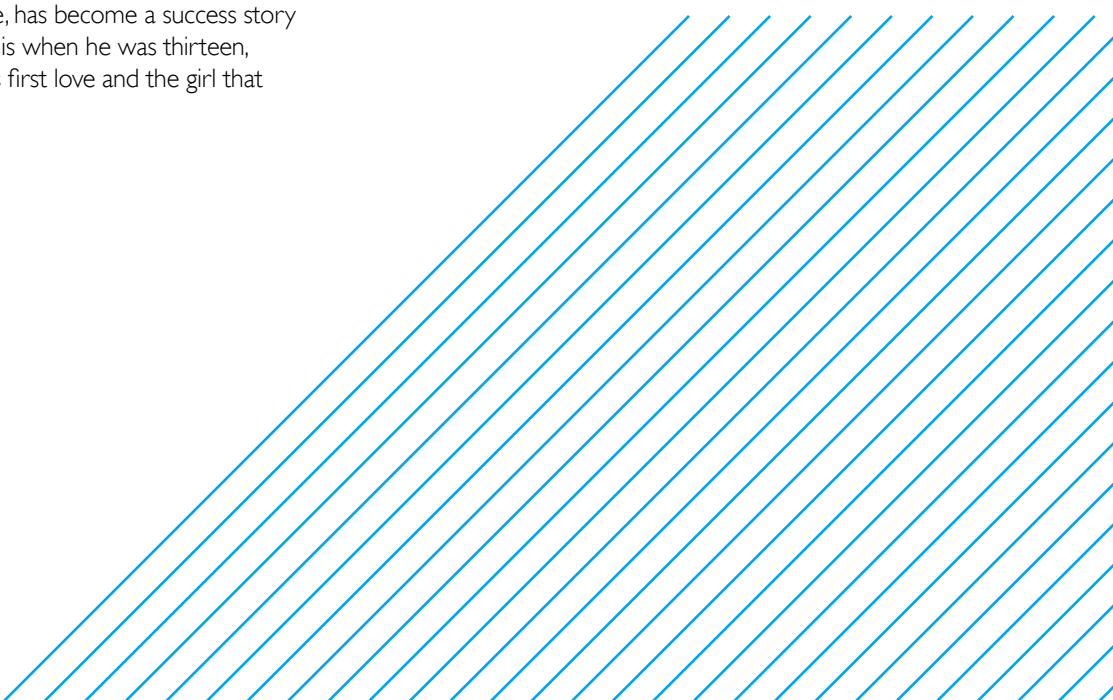
Smart and honest, those are the trademarks of Guido Schaffrath. Determined to make the most of every opportunity that presents itself, he is always that little bit more knowledgeable and better prepared than the competition. "I listen to my gut feeling. When Paul Koster called me for a job, he thought about postponing his holidays for our job interview. I told him, 'You just go on holiday as planned and the job is yours when you come back. I'd never seen him, but it felt good, that was it'. Paul Koster is still a much valued account manager at TCK, so the choice has proven a good one. "I've never been afraid whether my decisions were right or not or should have been different. It was wartime when I was a little child and our house was shelled up to twelve times. Never did I feel any fear. Why on earth then should I fear the consequences of my own decisions?"

### His own car

Guido looks back on his achievements with pride, but when asked what makes him proudest, his sons are top of his list. "Both Mark as well as Dirk are honest and do things they are good at. That makes me proud as a peacock. But my own career from railway employee to owner of a successful business is also a source of pride for me." It contrasts with the poverty of his childhood which is stamped on his memory. "When I was young I never thought I would be able to afford my own car. And when the company started to become profitable I was economical enough to reinvest most of the money in the company. It wasn't until 1988 that I bought myself a new car."

The company that started in a garage, has become a success story with a capital S. Had Guido known this when he was thirteen, he would have forgotten all about his first love and the girl that rejected him.

"OF COURSE I AM  
PROUD I MANAGED  
TO GET ON IN MY LIFE."





# Youngest vs. oldest



**Position** > Tim Schlenter (1987)  
Warehouse assistant/packer since September 2009.

**Lives** > 'with mum and dad' in Brunssum, single.

**Sports** > Football and fitness, around five times a week.

**Education** > Storage/warehouse at Gilde Opleidingen Roermond.

**Favourite dish** > Pasta and chicken, home-made by my mother.

**First memory about TCK** > What a great many articles! I find the whole product range fascinating and love to learn as much as possible about the products. From hiking boots to pannier and from socks to snowboards.

**What I like most about my job at TCK** > The team spirit. There is a good working atmosphere in the warehouse. This year for the first time I will join the team on their snowboard trip. I am so looking forward to that!

**Favourite article** > I like them all. The products look so nice that you handle them with care as well. I didn't know there were so many different brands. Their high-quality character appeals to me.

**Five years from now** > We'll see, I take life one day at a time. It's nice to have met Paul.

**What would you like to say to him** > He knows so much about the company, I can learn a lot from him.

**TCK's 40th anniversary** > Wonderful of course, congratulations to all of you!

A flourishing company that celebrates its 40th anniversary, must employ people with different characters, ages and from different backgrounds. What do the youngest and oldest employee think of TCK Sports Group, its products and the future? And... how much do they really differ from each other?

Paul Koster (1950) < **Position**  
Currently account manager.  
Employed since 1986.

In Dordrecht. < **Lives**

Currently golf. I used to play top-class baseball. < **Sports**

A long time ago the school for the retail trade and plenty of hands-on experience. < **Education**

Oysters and champers at Beluga, great fun. < **Favourite dish**

Oh my, is this still the Netherlands?! < **First memory about TCK**  
Once a week I drove south from Rotterdam. Together with Guido, Jan and Mia we sort of managed the business, albeit a bit amateurishly at times.

Selling A-brands. You have to be 100% behind that as a salesman, otherwise you won't be successful. < **What I like most about my job at TCK**  
My passion for skiing was what attracted me to the company and those products are top of the bill.

The skis, even though the shoes are more important. But those skis, wow, it's all in the detail. With sport at top level, a fraction of a second can make all the difference. < **Favourite article**

When I'm 65, I see myself more in an advisory role for the shops on customer interaction. < **Five years from now**

It's funny he should say he takes life one day at a time. My generation really has had to learn to plan less. Well, you know what they say, the hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world! < **What would you like to say to him**

Many memories spring to my mind, but most of all I hope the team spirit will never change. < **TCK's 40th anniversary**





# in focus Marketing and Communication

**Loes Paters**  
marketing Lowa Benelux

Born and bred in Limburg, discovered skating and coordinates the sponsoring of the Control skating team, among other things.

**Angela Bakker-  
van Deursen**  
marketing manager  
Tornado Sport

Has been at TCK for 12 years and saw the department grow from one to six employees. She reveals all the secrets of the new ski boots collection to her colleague Joppe Beurskens (marketing X-Function Benelux).

**Susan Bloemen**  
marketing manager  
Lowa Benelux

Selects a pair of new MoonBoots for the coming winter season.

**Femke Goessens**  
marketing manager  
X-Function Benelux

Checks the translation of the Nordica brochure. Femke has the same taste in music as Dirk (see elsewhere in this magazine) and loves crochet.

**Marjolein Vliegen**  
marketing Tornado Sport

Multi-talent that easily switches from FiveFingers, via MoonBoots and ski boots to swimsuits.



# in focus Procurement



# in focus Inside sales



# in focus Service





# in focus Warehouse

## 6,000 m<sup>2</sup> warehouse

Despite several additions, the 6,000 m<sup>2</sup> warehouse is often crammed. Especially after a truckload of Iowa shoes has arrived.



## Wifi bar code scanners

Are used in order picking to minimize the risk of human errors.



## Our warehouse team

Ensures an efficient handling of over 2 million warehouse movements each year. The advanced tailor-made software is a great help in delivering every order as quickly as possible.



# in focus Accounts Department



## Coats

The coats of the administrative team: (left to right) Claudie Dullens, Wilma Hahnrahts, Valesca Snippe and Jessica Hamers.

## Jessica Hamers

TCK's financial director.

## Ever since 2007

TCK sends all invoices strictly by e-mail. Much more ecofriendly!

## Money box for sweet pies

When you have a craving for sweets, this is the place to be. The ladies have a money box for buying pies, candy and starting September; chocolate spice nuts for sure.



## “The Dutch accuracy appeals to us”

Close to Antwerp's historic city centre, De Kampeerder has two shop-premises. In one location they sell mountaineer and climbing gear, the other specializes in hiking and camping goods. The latter is our destination on a sunny Monday morning for a nice cup of coffee.

Our interview is with Astrid Beck (30), daughter of owner Dirk Beck. Her mother Magda is also a shop assistant and her brother Karel runs the other location. A family business, so much is clear when we take a seat in the kitchen for the interview. At times Astrid is called into the shop by her mother: “Sorry about that, normally we have more hands on deck, but today it's just the two of us.” It gives us an opportunity to take our time and look around. We notice they take plenty of time to help a customer, offer detailed advice and do so in a relaxed atmosphere. It's a large store, two storeys high and offering many, very many hiking and camping goods. Seven people are on the payroll of De Kampeerder; two of whom are visiting the Trademart in Brussels on the day of our interview, to have a look at the latest collection of Lowa hiking shoes.

## WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR PARTNERSHIP WITH TCK SPORTS GROUP?

“We've been working together for twenty years now and it really feels good. TCK Sports Group offers impeccable service. To name an example, they always answer the phone when you call, which is not exactly common practice! And you are put through to your regular contact person, whom you know is familiar with your store. If you have a question or a customer complaint, they call you back straight away with an answer. Fortunately, complaints are quite rare, but that's because the quality of their products is so high.”

## WHAT IS YOUR IMPRESSION OF THE COMPANY?

“TCK likes to make a special effort for their customers. We were invited on a business trip to Slovakia. The trip combined business with pleasure, we learned a lot and a trip like that is a great experience. We visited the factories that manufactured our products. It really was all very informative and that's something we can put across to our customers. Knowledge of the products is very important in our sector.”





#### ARE THERE ANY OTHER DIFFERENCES WITH OTHER SUPPLIERS?

"With TCK we can place an order online, saving time, and check stock. When we have a customer here, we can e.g. check online whether a certain model is available in another colour. TCK is a trendsetter when it comes to new ordering tools."

#### WHAT IS IT LIKE FOR YOU TO WORK WITH A DUTCH COMPANY?

"We love to work with Dutch people, rather than Walloons, haha! They are accurate and correct and we like that." Astrid's mother puts her head around the kitchen corner and adds, "But their image is not typically Dutch, in my view. I'd rather say European." When we have finished our coffee, we take a look at the shop and witness three-year-old twins fitting a pair of Lowa shoes. They walk around dapperly. A postman enters, a gentleman asks for some advice about a raincoat. It only goes to show that the shop is a success, providing plenty of work for Astrid and her mother today. If we could make a bet, this is a result of the Belgium gentleness, the patience the two of them demonstrate and their expert advice. A better combination for the TCK products you cannot wish for.

#### YOU'VE GOT MAIL!



When it comes to computer based accountancy, TCK is leading in the sector.

As early as 2007, TCK introduced e-mail invoicing for all customers. Saving costs and time, offering convenience and service, those were the key arguments. Just think of the time and effort that is saved on both sides when there is no mail to be handled anymore! Of course it took some getting used to and at first not every customer was convinced of the advantages. And now? It's hard to imagine any other way anymore!

#### TCK in short

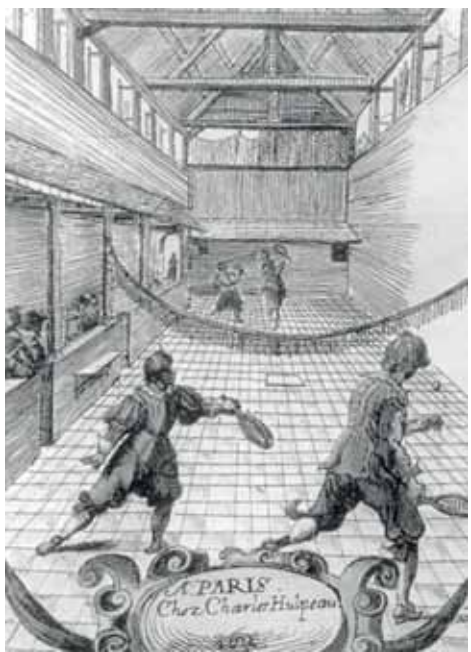
#### TCK Sports Group supports Disabled Sports Fund



Bart and Anna from the 'Dutch Adaptive Alpine Ski Team' which has been sponsored by TCK for over 20 years.

Sport teaches you to cope with your handicap and is good for your health. Exercising is also a nice leisure activity. A wheelchair user can train his arm muscle power by hand-biking, which he will benefit from in his daily life. A person with a mental disability gets to know new people at a sports club and by training and competition (self-)esteem and self-approval will increase. For many people with a disability, sport is a way of learning to cope better with obstacles they encounter in their day-to-day life. The Disabled Sports Funds proclaims sport makes you stronger, both physically and mentally and is therefore essential for disabled people. That is why TCK has been supporting the Dutch Adaptive Alpine Ski Team for over twenty years. For more information go to

[www.fondsgehandicaptensport.nl](http://www.fondsgehandicaptensport.nl)



#### ITS ORIGIN LIES IN TENNIS. BUT WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF TENNIS ITSELF?

It all started with Jeu de Paume: a ball game that was played in France in the 11th century. The name tennis comes from the French word "tenez!", in Dutch: "keep (the ball)!" A yell that was given to warn the opponent you were about to serve. It served a purpose because in those days the tennis ball was much heavier than the one that is used nowadays.

In the Netherlands tennis has been a popular sport for centuries. The oldest tennis court in the Netherlands is the 'caetsbaan' of the Prince of Orange. This was situated behind the Knights' Hall at the Binnenhof from approx. 1500 to 1650.

Crafting rackets was a skill the Dutch mastered like no one else. They were experts at techniques for bending wood. At the end of the fifteenth century, sheep gut strings were used, the so-called 'ketsdarmen'. The word racket probably also stems from the Flemish-Dutch language. It's a 're-kets', an object to cast the ball back.



# TCK Sports Group Sponsors

TCK sponsors three top athletes whom we like to put in the spotlight: inline skater Sven Boekhorst, speed skater Mark Tuitert and swimmer Ranomi Kromowidjojo. All three of them sports stars on the highest level and ideal for TCK to promote some of their brands. Not only because of the promotional value of such a sponsorship, but also to demonstrate TCK's social responsibility towards sports. Sport connects people, sport activates and sport is emotion. We are proud as peacocks on our products, the more so if it makes an athlete perform that tiny bit better. Every sportsman or sportswoman knows that a fraction of a second can make a world of difference.

## Inline skater Sven Boekhorst Den Bosch, 19 June 1980

Website: [www.svenboekhorst.com](http://www.svenboekhorst.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/s.boekhorst](http://www.facebook.com/s.boekhorst)

Brand: Rollerblade

Nice to know: Sven has very recently launched his own line of inline skates with Rollerblade: the Rollerblade Sven Boekhorst Estillo skate

Best performance: In 2000, Sven won the top three most prestigious inline skating events: the Gravity games, the X-Games and the ASA Pro Tour World Championships.



## Swimmer Ranomi Kromowidjojo Sauwerd, 20 August 1990

Website: [www.ranomi.nl](http://www.ranomi.nl)

Twitter: In 2011, @ranomikromo was chosen Funniest Dutch Sports Person on Twitter for the second time in a row by the editing staff of [www.linkeballen.nl](http://www.linkeballen.nl)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ranomi](http://www.facebook.com/ranomi)

Brand: Arena

Nice to know: Jumped into the swimming pool wearing her first bathing suit when she was three and had to be rescued by her mother and grandmother.

Best performance: Olympic Champion in 2008 with the Dutch relay team, number 1 on the world rankings and Sports Woman of the Year 2011!

## Speed skater Mark Tuitert Holten, 4 April 1980

Website: [www.marktuitert.nl](http://www.marktuitert.nl)

Twitter: Mark loves to twitter. Therefore, the information on @marktuitert is far more up to date than his website! Check: @marktuitert

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/mtuitert](http://www.facebook.com/mtuitert)

Brand: X-Socks, X-Bionic, Schöffel, Deuter

Nice to know: Coolest speed skater in the Netherlands, became a proud father of a daughter named Anna in 2011.

Best performance: Became Olympic Champion on the 1500 metres in 2010.





®



[www.fivefingers.nl](http://www.fivefingers.nl)

