

WWD

Li & Fung, Skechers Ink Deal

By EVAN CLARK

LI & FUNG LTD.'s LF USA division is teaming with shoe company Skechers USA Inc., and LF USA president Rick Darling thinks he just might be on the cusp of creating a new category in apparel: movement wear.

The two companies signed a licensing deal to produce men's and women's apparel and accessories under the Shape-ups, Tone-ups and Skechers Resistance brands — three lines of shoes intended to enhance the physical benefits of walking or running. Shape-ups, for instance, have a kinetic wedge insert and a dynamic rolling bottom that simulate walking on soft sand. That might lead, for instance, to grocery shopping leading to improved posture and stronger leg muscles.

The apparel will launch next year, most likely in the second half, and will be pitched to the same department stores, sporting goods stores and independent retailers that carry the footwear.



The Skechers-Li & Fung collaboration will include shoes and apparel.

“It’s one of the biggest launches that we’ve done so far,” Darling said. “The [footwear] brand is in thousands of doors. We think that the apparel, marketed properly and marketed along with the Skechers’ people, will be positioned right alongside of it.”

The line will be made by LF USA’s Regatta division and a new team will be assembled.

Although it has yet to be developed, Darling said the collection would follow in the spirit of the footwear.

“To some degree, we think there’s a whole new category of apparel,” Darling said. “It’s more movement wear. Go beyond

just performance. Think about garments that enhance body shape, garments that actually tone. Apparel that not only makes you feel good about yourself, but allows you to participate in these activities that are not traditional gym activities. Women today are beginning to get into things like [Latin-dance workout] Zumba and pole dancing, all these kinds of alternative ways to get fit.”

Li & Fung last year acquired the Oxford Apparel Group from Oxford Industries as well as Jimlar Corp., which owns the Frye trademark and produces shoes for Coach and Calvin Klein. The production giant’s Music Entertainment Sports Holding unit will launch Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony lines at Kohl’s for fall.

“We are acquisitive in terms of our business model and we are aggressive about getting new licensing relationships,” Darling said of the various deals.