

RSI



OUTLOOK  
2021

FOOTWEAR

# Positive Reinforcement

Footwear manufacturers remain optimistic that the new year will bring more play, and the chance for more sales.

BY KENT OSWALD

**L**et us whisper that 2021 might be a good year for the tennis industry. The tours have returned to screens and streams. Public and private courts are reopening in fits and starts. Tennis and pickleball are proving great ways to exercise and engage with others outside the house through socially distanced play. And there is buzz of new and returning players.

Among other things, more play translates to increased shoe sales. While it has been a few years since there were brick-and-mortar sales trends to celebrate—and a worldwide pandemic does little to turn that around—retailers and manufacturers are increasingly successful meeting new demand for footwear through online strategies.

We won't speak louder of these hopes for fear of jinxing positive signs. Still, reading through what manufacturers are sharing so far does call to mind what happens immediately before a match begins. There are introductions by the umpire, a pause, then, "Play!"—and that is when the real fun begins.



1 / ADIDAS  
[adidas.com](https://www.adidas.com)  
 971-234-2300

- Looking forward to riding the wave of positivity in both clothing and footwear, Adidas unveiled its lightest shoe yet, the Ubersonic 4 (\$130), with new colors for both men and women, a more durable woven upper (from fully sustainable, recyclable materials) and new midsole compound for greater comfort and responsiveness. Among those slated to showcase these new rides beginning in Australia are Alexander Zverev, Stefanos Tsitsipas, Angelique Kerber and Garbine Muguruza.



2 / BABOLAT  
[babolat.com](https://www.babolat.com)  
 877-316-9435

- Providing enhanced cross-surface agility, the Jet Mach 3 (\$140) launched in January with a reengineered and more responsive Michelin sole, a higher strength fabric upper, and additional cushioning and support inside. The recently launched lightweight and breathable Jet Tere (\$110) will be adding new colorways for both men's and women's versions in February. The same month will also see new hues on the SFX3 (\$100), a performance shoe emphasizing comfort and durability.

COURTESY ADIDAS, BABOLAT, FILA, HEAD, K-SWISS

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**3 / FILA**  
[fila.com](http://fila.com)  
 800-845-FILA

• The lightweight, flexible Axilus 2 Energized (\$110) will feature new colorways at the Australian Open and Roland Garros. Continuing the pattern of recent seasons, the shoes worn by world No. 1 Ashleigh Barty and American No. 1 Sofia Kenin, as well as John Isner and Diego Schwartzman, will coordinate with Fila clothes debuting themes for the two majors. 2021 will also see new colors adorning the Volley Zone (\$110), the company's shoe designed for the more frequent stop-start-stop-starts of pickleballers.

**4 / HEAD**  
[head.com](http://head.com)  
 800-289-7366

• Signing Marin Cilic as the lead global endorser for shoes and sportswear will heighten visibility for Head's line, while new tweaks to the high-performance series roll out in March and April. The Sprint SF (\$159.95) gets a color upgrade and more robust cushioning; the Sprint 3.0 (\$129.95) receives design tweaks on the outside; the Revolt 3.5 (\$119.95) features refreshed uppers and a heel redesigned for more stability and comfort; the Revolt Evo (\$109.95) has exterior design enhancements, as does the Revolt Pro Junior (\$79.95).

**5 / K-SWISS**  
[kswiss.com](http://kswiss.com)  
 800-938-8000

• The Ultrashot 3 (\$145) debuted in January, and while K-Swiss's co-design venture with Lucky in Love brings one type of attention, that shouldn't eclipse the attention to technology built into this high-performance shoe. The Ultrashot 3 offers an improved outsole for durability, grip and traction, as well as enhanced energy and support through the midsole. The line will also see colorways unveiled during the year for the Hypercourt Supreme (\$135) and Express Light Pickleball shoe (\$95).

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**6 / LOTTO**  
[lotto.sportlife.us](http://lotto.sportlife.us)  
 484-261-2100

• Claiming a sweetspot in the stability/durability/flexibility balance, Lotto's Mirage 300 (\$99.95) for men and women club players rolls out in new colorways during the first months of the year.

**7 / MIZUNO**  
[mizunousa.com](http://mizunousa.com)  
 800-392-9899

• Mizuno's Wave Exceed Tour 4 AC (\$120) will be dropping new colorways and increased cushioning onto men's and women's platforms that are built ultra-lightweight for agility and acceleration. Using an expanding distribution footprint, the new year will be the inaugural season for the All Wave Exceed SL 2 AC (\$105), a lightweight, plush and breathable shoe well-adapted for both tennis and pickleball play.

**8 / NEW BALANCE**  
[newbalance.com](http://newbalance.com)  
 800-595-9138

• Plans are for a build in New Balance tennis product throughout the year. The 996v4 (\$130) will be worn by Coco Gauff among other pros at the Australian Open and will feature new colors. Promised for later in the year are new features for the tennis line based on technology pioneered in other sports categories.

COURTESY LOTTO, MIZUNO, NEW BALANCE, PRINCE, WILSON, YONEX



**9 / PRINCE**  
 princetennis.com

• The classic T22 (\$99) for men, women and juniors will arrive in new color combinations, but will continue to provide comfort and durability for club players. Tweaks to the technology are expected in a summer rollout.

**10 / WILSON**  
 wilson.com  
 773-714-6400

• Available at the Wilson.com website and select specialty retailers, the Kaos Mirage (\$169) takes over as headliner of the light and agile footwear series beginning in March. New chassis construction technology provides better arch support and lateral stability. The men's and women's Rush Pro 3.5 (\$129) continues with its wider toe box even as it features a sleeker design and improved upper mesh for a more adaptable fit. The Kaos Swift (\$119) will allow new color options for both men and women.

**11 / YONEX**  
 yonex.com  
 424-201-4800

• To provide the highest level of stability, the Eclipsion 3 (\$155) features a graphite sheet inserted at mid-foot and a one-piece outsole. Focused on comfort, the Sonicage 2 (\$120) has a durable skin supporting agility and speed. Both are available in men's and women's versions, as well as with hard-court and clay-court soles.