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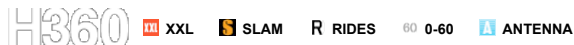
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Tuesday, April 19th, 2011 at 1:07 pm | 8 responses

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Ektio To Target NBA Players

Founder discusses why his shoe should be used in the L.

by Kyle Stack / @KyleStack

Dr. Barry Katz is confident that the shoe he invented, the Ektio, will reduce ankle sprains. Katz, an orthopedic radiologist, said as much in a recent interview with SLAMonline. "We expect that we're going to knock out the vast majority of ankle sprains, and we will be the first company to ever do that," Katz said.

The shoe, which retails for \$199.99 and was released in Dick's Sporting Goods in March, prevents ankle rollover from occurring, according to studies by the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City and Drexel University in Philadelphia. The Wraaptor high-top is available in two colorways (red, black and grey; Carolina blue with mesh-detailed walls) and the Post Up three-quarter-top comes in four color combinations (white and red; blue and black; all white; all black).



Dr. Katz discussed why the shoe works, what conventional basketball shoes don't provide and who Ektio will target to wear its shoes.

SLAM: How did you come up with the idea for this shoe?

Barry Katz: I played high school, a little bit of college basketball and had three serious ankle sprains. I've been a practicing physician for a long time. It always bothered me why there are so many sprained ankles. Why is it no matter what shoe people wear and no matter whether they wear tape or braces or high tops or low tops, people were spraining their ankles? I knew there were a lot of ankle injuries but not why they were occurring and what we could do to prevent them. The solution just came to me several years ago, and I refined it with a couple of other doctors and orthopedic surgeons and podiatrists. We worked on the details of

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how to put that idea into a product. We got a patent in 2004 and started the business in 2009 after I had gone to business school and got my MBA. We're off to the races now.

SLAM: Were you speaking with colleagues and contacts to understand whether this product was in-demand in the basketball shoe market?

BK: Well, I thought of it like [a sprained ankle] is the number one orthopedic injury in the world, and it has been for a long time. It's by far the number one injury in basketball. Anytime you have a problem that exists, you have to figure out why that problem is occurring. Is there a solution to the problem? I realized that part of our research was the people who don't wear shoes don't sprain their ankles. It's a function of people wearing shoes that causes sprained ankles. It's the way shoes are built. It's all in the shoes, not only basketball shoes, but all shoes that have a hard bottom and a soft upper.

When the shoe rolls – you step or land on someone's foot – the shoe is going to roll under. When the shoe rolls under, you're going to sprain your ankle. The key we figured out is to prevent the shoe from rolling. That was the key to the whole thing.

SLAM: How does the shoe work to prevent sprains?

BK: We have an internally built strap mechanism, so it's kind of like having a brace in the shoe. It secures your foot and shoe together so that they work as a single unit. Normally, even if you wear tape or braces, they're attached to your foot but not to the shoe. The shoe and the foot are separate entities. If the shoe rolls, the foot is an innocent bystander in the ankle wrap, which sprains the ankle. In our shoe, we bring the foot and shoe together. That was one aspect of it.

The second aspect is we brought these side bumpers on the outside of the shoe which, if you're walking or running along and your ankle starts to turn, the bumper will stop it from the turning from occurring. It helps both from somebody jumping and landing on an uneven surface or somebody running along and turning their ankle. It helps in both situations.

SLAM: What kind of research did you do to find the prevalence of ankle sprains in basketball?

BK: There were over 5.5 ankle sprains per 1,000 hours of play. I looked up a lot of studies that were done in the US and Europe. It's well-published. If you look at the NBA's [injury] records, ankle sprains have always been essentially the number one injury every year in the League. This year alone there have been over 50 ankle sprains to players that have caused them to miss games. It's very common. Basically every two or three nights, if you follow the NBA, there is going to be an ankle sprain. If you looked at a list of the players who've had ankle sprains this year, it's a Who's Who of the NBA.

SLAM: Yeah, and then you have guys like Bruce Bowen who stick their feet where a guy in the air is going to land.

BK: It's interesting, I actually called our shoe at one point the anti-Bruce Bowen shoe.

SLAM: How much of spraining an ankle is knowing how to land?

BK: I don't think it matters because your shoe lands where it lands. You don't expect to land on someone's foot when you come down. It just happens. You need something that is going to protect you. Now, something about ankle sprains that's important to know is that it has chronic implications. People who sprain it once are much more likely to re-sprain it and re-sprain it. You lose the sensory fibers in there, so your body doesn't sense where your ankle is. Your body and brain are not working in sync. I use the example of [Devin Harris](#) and [Stephen Curry](#), as players who continually sprain their ankle. That's going to continue to happen. And people say, 'Oh, that's just a sprain.' Well, you'd be much better off breaking your ankle. A healed bone is totally 100 percent when it comes back. Once you sprain your ankle, it's never the same. Every time you sprain your ankle, you lose some function, some quickness, some jumping ability. And if you sprain it time and time again, it's going to kill your game. That's what's happened with some of the guys in the League who have bad ankles. They're not the same players and they never will be.

You want players who have had ankle injuries to wear this, to protect them. They don't need tape or braces when they wear this shoe. We'll save a lot of time and money for people not buying tape and braces and save the trainers effort. And we want people who have never sprained their ankles to wear this because why should they go through this very painful process that can keep them out of action for four or five weeks. And when they come back, it's weak and they're not the same player. It takes away your quickness and jumping. Any orthopedic surgeon will tell you that.

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Eric F. Posted: Apr.19 at 3:28 pm

Great Idea. These shoes are going to be big, think of all the injuries they could prevent.

niQ Posted: Apr.19 at 3:51 pm

Well hey, if these work I think I'd try them out...when they go on sale. lol

Addam Posted: Apr.19 at 4:47 pm

They look like ski boots. But, since when did basketball players care about style?

hoodsnake Posted: Apr.19 at 4:59 pm

Did he really say 'in snyc' lol. But on a serious note if the force of the imbalance does not knock your ankle it will go up the leg to the shin of knee for example.

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JL Posted: Apr.19 at 5:33 pm

the black post ups look pretty nice. although not sure if the lower version provides less protection. bit pricey but really a good idea. reviews i find online seem to point to good results.

[The Black Rick Kamla](#) Posted: Apr.19 at 5:41 pm

I like the idea

[San Dova](#) Posted: Apr.19 at 11:00 pm

SUPERB interview, Kyle. I loved this.

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