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Rule the Road: Under Armour's Charge RC



Article by: [Kyle Stack](#) | September 27, 2011



Under Armour's "Footsteps" national advertising campaign conveys the message that UA is—and will continue to be—a force to be reckoned with in the athletic shoe market. Their new Charge RC running shoe reflects the full significance of that message.

To be released Oct. 1 at UA.com, City Sports and other specialty running shoe retailers, the Charge RC (road version, \$120) manifests a renewed sense of shoe design at the Baltimore-based company. (A full release at Dick's Sporting Goods, Foot Locker and other national retailers will take place Dec. 1.)

UA is starting with the Charge RC, but in the future they plan to develop footwear for basketball, football and other sports as well.

According to Dave Dombrow, UA's creative director of footwear, they studied how UA's apparel was built and made their shoes with the same principles of design and construction. The Charge RC integrates three UA apparel technologies: lightweight HeatGear for moisture-wicking; zonal compression, built around the mid-foot to ensure foot lockdown; and a modular protection zone (MPZ), a molded pad in the tongue and forefoot for impact protection. "The upper, in my opinion, is the heart of the story," Dombrow says.

The back half features more traditional shoemaking, according to Dombrow. But instead of fusing the front and back pieces with glue, UA uses flatlock stitching, another import from their apparel. "It works well against the body," Dombrow says, "and flatlock stitching and MPZ made layers of glue, lining and foam unnecessary." That's why the Charge RC is somewhat minimalist.

The shoe's bottom features UA's Micro G cushioning, intended more for performance than for comfort. Dombrow says, "We're not trying to sell the plushiest ride here. We're trying to sell the most responsive ride." He compared it to the difference between a cruiser and a race bike, with the Charge RC analogous to the latter.

Dombrow is optimistic that even diehard runners with strong loyalties to other brands will find the shoe appealing.

In Spring 2012, the trail version of the Charge RC will debut. Dombrow calls it similar in performance, but it

will have a coating of Storm, a water-resistant material that UA uses in its sweatshirts and pants. The trail shoe, also priced at \$120, will contain louder graphics and bolder colors than the road version.

The men's road version is black with yellow on the bottom, a choice of black or pink laces and a camo-style graphic on the upper. The women's model is gray with a blue bottom and either gray or blue laces. "We tried to get aggressive with the color, but not in a polarizing way," Dombrow asserts.

The same can be said for the Charge RC's place in the running shoe market. While not polarizing, the shoe has a distinctive Under Armour look and feel.

Kyle Stack is a New York-based writer/reporter who covers health, technology, business and media in sports. He also writes for SLAM, Wired and ESPN. His work can be found at kylestack.com.

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