

Press Release



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Continuous fiber-reinforced thermoplastic composites enable high-performance components for sports shoes

Stepping up the game

Anta Sports Products Ltd., a leading sportswear company in China, has launched KT6 – the latest generation of the signature sneaker of NBA all-star Klay Thompson. Available for sale in China and some Southeast Asian countries, this iconic basketball shoe features a variety of material technologies, including a carbon fiber shank made with [Covestro's](#) Maezio[®] thermoplastic composites for midfoot support and a smooth transition from heel to toe.

Maezio[®] is a brand of continuous fiber-reinforced thermoplastic composites that enable high-performance components for the footwear industry, among many other applications. These strong and lightweight materials provide superior stiffness without adding much weight to shoe parts, such as the midsole, toe kick and shank. The shank is a supporting structure in the shoe that runs beneath the arch of the foot.

“The excellent properties of carbon fiber composites can significantly improve the torsional stiffness of basketball shoes and help smooth the transition from heel to toe,” says Anson Zheng, senior director of Anta’s basketball category and designer of KT6. “The carbon fiber shank, together with the highly responsive midsole and shock-absorbing module on the heel, makes the KT6 a truly high-performance kick on the court.”

Versatile material for a sports icon

Since reaching an endorsement deal in 2015 with Klay Thompson, the Golden State Warriors shooting guard, Anta has released six generations of the KT line in a wide variety of colors and many playoff editions. They became instant hits and topped the charts in China among all Anta basketball lines – with growth continuing as the NBA star becomes increasingly popular in China.



In this latest KT silhouette, the X-shaped shank must be very thin to meet the weight specifications, but also strong enough to fulfill the torsional requirements. Maezio[®] composites offer not only stiffness at low density, but also a great deal of design freedom – It can be stacked layer by layer at different angles to form sheets that are tailored to specific performance and mechanical criteria. For the design of the Anta shank, the orientation of the carbon fiber has been optimized to provide high stability, while the thickness is limited to just 1-millimeter to achieve a lightweight feel.

Thompson is expected to wear the KT6 in the upcoming 2020-21 NBA season, which is not expected to start before Christmas due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Designed for scale and sustainability

The KT6 is expected to be the top-selling product in the KT series. For this reason, Anta requires a carbon fiber composite material that is easy and efficient to process even on a larger scale. As thermoplastics, Maezio[®] composites can be thermoformed efficiently at high yield rates and low cycle times, which is associated with cost reductions for millions of parts per year. The principle recyclability of the material, thanks to its thermoplastic matrix, offers added value for footwear brands that want to focus more on sustainability.

Strong collaboration

Covestro has been collaborating with Anta even before the development of the KT6. The team supported the sporting goods company in the design of carbon fiber midsoles for a running and another basketball shoe, which Anta developed as part of its product range in the run-up to the world-wide athletic competition in 2022.

“We’re very excited to support Anta in the design and development of its brand-new athletic shoes by contributing our material expertise in composites,” says Lisa Ketelsen, head of the thermoplastic composites business of Covestro. “We see Maezio[®] as a material that enables efficient mass production of high-performance parts in a diverse range of applications, including footwear. Another advantage is that the material can be adapted to the desired performance and different production sizes, and offers great value creation across industries.”

Anta owns a number of world-leading brands through frequent acquisitions. A consortium led by the company completed the purchase of Finnish sporting goods company Amer Sports in 2019, making Anta a globally leading sportswear maker by revenue.



About Covestro:

With 2019 sales of EUR 12.4 billion, Covestro is among the world's largest polymer companies. Business activities are focused on the manufacture of high-tech polymer materials and the development of innovative solutions for products used in many areas of daily life. The main segments served are the automotive, construction, wood processing and furniture, and electrical and electronics industries. Other sectors include sports and leisure, cosmetics, health and the chemical industry itself. Covestro has 30 production sites worldwide and employs approximately 17,200 people (calculated as full-time equivalents) at the end of 2019.

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