

60 years of adidas – the stories that still inspire us today

adidas, one of the leading sports brands in the world, is turning 60 on August 18, 2009.

It still seems an unlikely story: a modest shoemaker from a small rural town in Germany develops a range of sports products so original and so perfect that they are sought by athletes from all over the world. As he indulges his passion for sport and for innovation, he creates a brand as great as any in the world. An unlikely story, but not impossible. Impossible is Nothing.

For adidas, it all started with shoes. Shoes to play in. Shoes to play better in. Shoes to win in. Shoes that, one day, would tread Wembley and Wimbledon, win medals at the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup™. Athletes would wear them, record-breakers, and champions. Today, adidas is one of the world’s leading brands, recognised and respected.



Passion, authenticity, innovation, inspiration, honesty and commitment – that is what adidas means to us. But above all, it is the stories that made Adi Dassler’s idea and principle “no athlete left behind” come to life on the biggest sports stages around the world.




Today, we would like to share some of our stories with you - stories of shoes, champions, record-breakers.





Stories of adidas.





The Decades



1949 – 1959 // 1960 – 1969 // 1970 – 1979 // 1980 – 1989 // 1990 – 1999 // Since 2000




1949 – 1959	
	<p>On August 18th, 1949, Adi Dassler first registered adidas in the commercial register (Handelsregister) in Fürth (near Herzogenaurach). The official name of the company back then was “Adolf Dassler adidas Sportschuhfabrik”. First used in 1949, the 3-Stripes would not stay confined to their birthplace Herzogenaurach but started their victory lap around the world early on to become the most famous symbol and key identifier of adidas.</p>
	<p>It might not have looked pretty, but when you win three gold medals in seven days, no one cares about pretty. With his tongue hanging out while running, Emil Zátopek gained the nickname “The Czech Locomotive” during the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games due to this unique, and not very beautiful, running style. But choosing running fast over looking good was a good move as his unbelievable achievement, winning gold in the 5,000m, 10,000m and marathon within a week, remains untouched until this day.</p>

	<p>Originally developed in the 1950s for frozen pitches, the Samba quickly evolved to become the dominant indoor football shoe for players worldwide. With its distinctive toe guard, lower stitching on the side of the sole and shoehorn, leather lining in the heel, cushioned insoles and clips for laces, the Samba is not only one of the most recognisable football silhouettes in the world, but also a modern-day street classic.</p>
	<p>We still refer to the 1954 World Cup as the Miracle of Bern for so many reasons: Germany, crushed after World War II, had more pressing matters to deal with than a football tournament in Switzerland. But in the end, it was exactly what the country needed.</p> <p>Facing the unbeatable Hungarians in the final, a victory seemed out of reach for the underdog Germany. Enter Adi. A close friend of team coach Sepp Herberger, he provided the players with a whole new boot made out of thinner, lighter leather and with screw-in studs. While the Hungarians struggled during the rainy final wearing heavy rain-soaked boots with studs too short to find a grip on the muddy field, the German team went on to score the game-deciding goal with more grip and a better feel for the ball.</p> <p>For Germany, the victory brought new confidence, for adidas and Adi Dassler the innovative football boots brought international recognition and a market leadership in the football business.</p>
	<p>Al Oerter didn't "set out to beat the world", according to his own words, but that was exactly what he did. Not once, but four consecutive times.</p> <p>Starting with the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, Adi Dassler provided Oerter with custom-made shoes to further improve the discus thrower's performance. A match made in Olympic gold medal heaven.</p>





1960-1969	
	<p>If the adidas brand slogan “Impossible is Nothing” had been around in the 60s, Wilma Rudolph would have been the perfect ambassador.</p> <p>Born as the 20th of 22 children, Wilma faced polio as a child and the diagnosis that she might never be able to walk again. But with her mother’s help and her own determination, Wilma beat the odds and in 1960, the 20-year-old not only participated in the Olympic Games in Rome, but took home three gold medals; the first American women to achieve this. adidas equipped Wilma with track spikes made from the thinnest, lightest kangaroo leather, and featuring a nylon spike plate and a midfoot shank to keep her on her toes.</p>
	<p>Another star emerged from the Games: the Rome, a new era of trainer, featured extra padding protecting the ankle, heel and Achilles tendon and a reinforced heel counter and rubber toecap offered more durability and wear.</p>
	<p>The football boot featured in all 32 matches of the 1962 World Cup was named after the host country Chile. Cut lower than any shoe before, it featured the polyamide sole and a new protective cushion for the vulnerable Achilles tendon and also introduced the distinctive heel tab.</p>
	<p>Adi Dassler extended his company’s portfolio in 1963 when he developed the first adidas football. Called Santiago, it was made up of 18 leather panels and used as a “back-up ball” for the 1966 World Cup in England. However, it wouldn’t take long until the first official World Cup ball called Telstar was produced in 1970.</p>






	<p>When Willi Holdorf crossed the finish line of the 1,500m race, the last of the ten decathlon disciplines, at the 1964 Olympic Games, he outlasted his competition with pure will and the right shoes on his feet. After working with Holdorf before the Games, Adi Dassler noticed that the athlete tended to lean back on his heels while running, thus losing valuable energy and power. So, in order to keep the athlete on his toes, Adi simply increased the heel wedge of the shoe to make sure Holdorf would lean forward during the race. A simple solution that led to an Olympic gold medal.</p>
	<p>Rod Laver is the only tennis player to have won all four Grand Slam singles titles in the same year twice. This achievement resulted in one of the most famous tennis arenas being named in his honour: the Centre Court in Melbourne, home of the Australian Open. By many estimates, Rod is among the greatest male tennis players of all time.</p>
	<p>William Mervin Mills or "Billy" Mills is the second Native American ever to win an Olympic gold medal. He accomplished this feat in the 10,000m at the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, making him the only American ever to win the Olympic gold in this event. He was equipped with the lightest adidas spike ever made to that day. Today, Mills also serves as the spokesperson for Running Strong for American Indian Youth, an organisation that helps support projects that benefit the American Indian people, especially the youth. Billy also wrote an amazingly inspiring book together with bestselling author Nicolas Sparks: "Wokini - a lakota journey to happiness and self-understanding".</p>
	<p>In or not? Not many goals in history have caused as much controversy as the legendary Wembley goal. Uwe Seeler, the German superstar had to deal with drama on his own before the World Cup ever started. Seeler had badly hurt his Achilles tendon and faced exclusion from the team. Then, Adi created a custom-made shoe with added padding at the heel but also additional laces in the crucial area to protect Seeler's tendon, thus enabling the German superstar to take the field at all.</p>






	<p>When you are already wearing a shoe called "Weltrekord" (World Record) for your competition, you might as well fulfil its destiny. Bob Beamon's legendary long jump into history took place under dark cloudy skies in Mexico City during the Olympic Games in 1968. Beamon took off like a missile, hanging impossibly long in the air and landed well beyond expectation – and the measurement tape. After organisers hastily got an additional tape to the long jump pitch, the unbelievable World Record of 8.90m, which would stand for 23 years, was confirmed – and a shoe's destiny fulfilled.</p>
	<p>The best things are more often than not born out of necessity. In 1963, several athletes approached Adi Dassler with a request for a shoe that could be used in the locker room and for showering. Little did they know that the result would become an instant classic for decades to come. To this day, the Adilette is one of adidas' bestsellers and has long found its way out of the locker rooms and into everyday life.</p>
	<p>Introduced in 1969, the aptly-titled Superstar was the first low-top basketball shoe made out of leather. It was immediately identified by its rubber toe box and became known to millions as the "shell toe". Only a few years after this shoe came to the basketball courts more than 75% of all league basketball players were wearing it and a decade later the "shell toe" was the most iconic shoe in street culture and is still one of the most successful adidas shoes of all times today.</p>

1970-1979	
	<p>“Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee”. Who doesn’t know Muhammad Ali’s famous quote? And a special fighter needs a special shoe: In December 1970, Ali was fighting Argentinean boxer Oscar Bonavena in New York’s Madison Square Garden. For this fight, Ali asked adidas to produce a special boxing shoe only 24 hours before the fight started. Ali was dreaming of a shoe inspired by outfits featuring tassels worn by elegantly moving female dancers. The solution: a unique 3-stripped boot with red tassels. Needless to say that these boots called Ali-Shuffle were the talk of the town after the fight.</p>
	<p>The first adidas tennis leather shoe was created in collaboration with Robert Haillet, a retired French player, providing more support, thus preventing twisted ankles and other slip injuries. In 1971, the shoe was renamed to Stan Smith as Stan was the world’s No. 1 ranked tennis player at that time. The shoe became a smash hit with players and was even worn by Stan’s opponents.</p>
	<p>Talk about a real-life soap opera: As Adi Dassler was driven to improve athletic performance through product innovations, he needed real athletes as “subjects” to get their feedback and ideas. German Olympians Kurt Bendlin, who won the bronze medal in the Men’s Decathlon event in Mexico, and Heide Rosendahl were two of those willing subjects.</p> <p>The “suction cup” pattern for outsoles was an innovation born out of one of the long testing sessions behind Adi’s home to find solutions for the slipperiness of the new synthetic surfaces when wet. Adi first had Rosendahl and Bendlin run tests over watered-down synthetic turf in his backyard, then covered it in dish soap to further test his traction ideas. Heide went on to become a double Olympic gold medal winner at the Munich 1972 Olympic Games in the 4x100m relay as well as long-jump in adidas shoes.</p>






	<p>In 1974, Franz Beckenbauer who was referred to as “Der Kaiser” led the West German national football team to victory in the FIFA World Cup™. He liked winning the Cup so much as a player that he came back in 1990 to win it again – this time as a coach. But nothing he has accomplished means more to him than helping to bring the FIFA World Cup™ to his home country Germany in 2006.</p>
	<p>Arthur Ashe was the first African American tennis player to win a Grand Slam title and play for the American Davis Cup team. The highlight of his career was his victory against Jimmy Connors in the Wimbledon final in 1975. The signature shoe Arthur Ashe wore during his career was the Matchplay Tournament. After ending his career as a tennis player, he worked in many social projects. Arthur Ashe died in 1993 after having received an HIV-positive blood transfusion during blood transfusion five years earlier.</p>
	<p>As if winning six NBA titles, six MVP awards and two Finals MVP awards is not impressive enough, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar raised the bar for generations to come and still is the all-time leader for most All-Star games played, most All-Star selections points scored, minutes played, field goal attempts and field goals made. It’s his patented “sky hook” that will forever be remembered. Signing with adidas in 1976, Kareem endorsed the adidas Superstar which massively inflated the orders posted by the American distributors. Just signing the contract itself caused one problem: when 2.18m tall Kareem turned up in Landersheim at adidas France to sign, the hotel managers of the “Auberge” had to saw off the footboards from his bed to fit him in before he would be able to get a good night’s sleep.</p>
	<p>At the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, 14-year-old Nadia Comaneci became the first gymnast to ever score a perfect 10. And while it’s impossible to top perfection, Nadia was able to equal it with <i>six</i> more perfect scores during those Games. It is because of her amazing performance that scoreboards are equipped to display a four-digit 10.00.</p>

	<p>Who said practice makes perfect? Take Alberto Juantorena for example. When he stepped to the start blocks of the 800m race at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, he had run the distance exactly four times before. It was enough: not only did he win the race, but he did it in World Record time. To put the icing on the cake, Alberto then also took home gold in the 400m race. His shoe, the adiStar 2000, featured a variable spike system that allowed him to customise his spikes to the surface and his preference.</p>
	<p>Considered the greatest super heavyweight weightlifter of all times, Vasily Alekseyev's résumé consists of two gold medals, eight World Championship titles, eight European Championships, and 80 world records. One of the few weightlifters to rise to international stardom, Alekseyev later worked as a coach in the early 90s leading the Unified Team (former Soviet Union except Baltic States) to ten weightlifting medals at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona.</p>
	<p>Then, as now, cross-country shoes took a lot of abuse. Serious runners considered the Country, first introduced in 1978, outstanding value for its long wear. Styled in soft leather, it had a "double thick" supporting heel wedge and special wrap-around heel to protect the heel and Achilles tendon.</p>
	<p>The World Cup, introduced in 1978, is known as the last shoe Adi Dassler himself worked on before his death that same year. With studs angled outwards, which broadened the footprint for added stability, the shoe featured the revolutionary dual-density sole: While the white figure-of-eight section was of hard synthetic material, the sections in black formed a softer footrest. A model for strength and flexibility, the shoe paved the way for shoes to come until this very day.</p>
	<p>The "granddaddy" of all trail running shoes, the Marathon Trainer, paid homage to Adi Dassler's childhood love of trail running - and its growing popularity in the 1970s. Maximum grip and stability came from the convex Trefoil outsole. The spoiler construction at its heel slowed foot motion on landing to minimise impact force.</p>

	<p>When Reinhold Messner became the first man to ascend Mount Everest without supplemental oxygen, adidas was right there with him: the SUPERTREKKING, the first especially light trekking shoe, was developed in close cooperation with Messner and helped him all the way to the basecamp during his historic expedition, thus becoming a bestseller and legend in the outdoor scene. More than 30 years later, in 2010, the SUPERTREKKING collection is celebrating its return to the outdoors.</p>
1980 – 1989	
	<p>The beginning of customised footwear, the LA Trainer was the first shoe with adjustable cushioning coming from replaceable elements featuring various densities.</p>
	<p>The accolade of any professional golf player? Winning The Masters. Bernhard Langer did that not only once but twice (1985 and 1993). The inaugural World Number 1 when the Official World Golf rankings were introduced in 1986, Langer was introduced into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 2001.</p>
	<p>Its appearance was from a different world with a silver colourway, its shoelace cover and the integrated microcomputer: The Micropacer had a sensor in the big toe area, which was triggered when the wearer pushed off the ground with the left foot. The shoe's computer sensed distance, average pace and even calorie burn making it a mind-blowing technology of its time.</p>
	<p>On June 4th, 1987, Edwin Moses crossed the finish line of a 400m race second – the first time in nine years, nine months and nine days that Moses did not win. Until then, the American had won 122 consecutive races, set the world record two more times, won three World Cup titles, two World Championships, and two Olympic gold medals (1976 and 1984). After retirement, Moses was also an innovative reformer in the areas of Olympic eligibility and drug testing. In 2000, he was elected the first Chairman of the Laureus World Sports Academy, an international service organisation</p>

	<p>of world-class athletes.</p>
	<p>Commercially ahead of its time, the design of the adicolor Hi gave everybody the opportunity to customise their own footwear. It came with eight different coloured markers that enabled the consumers to fill in the plain white stripes on the side panel themselves.</p>
	<p>Based on biomechanical research from the ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich) adidas launched the ZX 500 in the mid 80s. The Swiss experts identified three main needs for a runner when making ground contact: Cushion the heel at impact, support the foot during midstance and guide the foot when pushing off. Developed and designed at adidas France in Landersheim, the ZX 500 was the first shoe to follow these new principles.</p>
	<p>A two-time gold medal winner (1980 and 1984) and four-time world record holder, Daley Thompson also won three Commonwealth titles as well as several World and European Championships and is considered one of the greatest decathletes of all time.</p>
	<p>In 1986, Run-DMC came out with their song "my adidas". Their motivation to write a song about adidas sneakers, namely the Superstar, came about after a prominent member of Run-DMC's Hollis, Queens neighbourhood, Dr. Dees, wrote in one of his editorials that people wearing the adidas sneakers, new Lee Jeans and gold chains were felons. With the song "my adidas", Run-DMC not only made these sneakers culturally acceptable, but also turned them into a true fashion statement.</p>
	<p>The Olympic Gold Medal, Wimbledon, the French Open, the U.S. Open, the Australian Open... in two words: the Golden Slam. Stefanie Graf is the only one player in tennis history to have achieved it. And she won them all wearing adidas. Throughout her illustrious career, Stefanie was the No.1 world-ranked female player for a record 377 total weeks – the longest of any player, male or female, since rankings began. Deservedly so, in December 1999, she was named the greatest female tennis player of the 20th century by a panel of experts assembled by the Associated Press.</p>

	<p>Up until 1989, critical requirements such as cushion, support and guidance were all combined into <i>one</i> shoe. With the TORSION® era came different shoes designed specifically for different types of running styles and runners: the ZX 7000 for guidance, the ZX 8000 for cushion and the ZX 9000 for support.</p> <p>As the first biomechanical shoe, the ZX 8000's unique TORSION® technology worked with the foot's natural ability to have an independent motion of the heel and the forefoot to better adapt to the ground and create greater stability and control. Runners appreciated the fact they had more flexibility and comfort.</p>
	<p>Knocking over most of the hurdles during a race should slow you down. Roger Kingdom did not seem to mind. Even though his style might have been less than ideal, Kingdom won two Olympic gold medals and was the first man to run below the magical 13-second barrier in the Olympic final with a time of 12.98s. Kingdom is also the only second athlete to defend his Olympic title in the 110m hurdles. His world record of 12.92s set in 1989 stood for 13 years when it was beaten by a mere 1/100th of a second.</p>
<p>1990 – 1999</p>	
	<p>When German high-jumper Heike Henkel cleared the bar at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona and took home the gold medal, she was already a European and World Champion. That same year she was awarded "World Track & Field Athlete".</p>
	<p>In 1994, adidas took to the streets. With help from NBA great Detlev Schrempf, adidas engaged into the street version of basketball launching the global adidas Streetball Challenge to target a younger, more urban audience for the first time.</p>

	<p>Equipment reflected adidas' personalised approach to running in the early 90s. More than a single shoe or style, "EQT" offered athletes the option of different models for a variety of running styles and foot types. The line included Support, Cushion, Guidance - even Equipment shoes made specifically for road racing (i.e. marathons, etc.). The series was briefly stopped but enjoyed a successful comeback in 2007.</p>
	<p>If you want to become adidas' best-selling football boot, you have to bring it all to the table. The Predator®, first introduced for the 1994 World Cup in the US, featured rippled fins which gave players more control, more power and more swerve on the ball. In combination with the new Traxion technology on the outsole, the Predator® was the biggest revolution in football boot design since the 1954 football boot. For the 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa™, the Predator® will go into its 10th generation.</p>
	<p>Sometimes, one moment is all it takes to become the biggest football star on the planet. On August 17th, 1996, during a game early on in his career, David Beckham found himself on the midline ready to pass the ball when he spotted the out-of-position goalkeeper. From the halfway line, he fired... and scored. Another 10 years later, David would repeat the feat scoring from an even longer distance into an empty goal. It takes a lot of things to become the greatest football star and, apparently, guts is one of them.</p>
	<p>Feet You Wear products were designed to mimic the inherent stability, efficiency and rapid reaction time of the bare foot. It was a concept offered for a variety of sports (e.g. basketball, tennis) and running versions would follow. The little foot symbol seen on all the products visualised the idea behind the shoe concept.</p>
	<p>The greatest star of the 1998 FIFA World Cup France™, Zinedine Zidane forever secured his place in the history books. The win of the World Cup title in front of his home crowd was the beginning of many title wins to come, including the win of the UEFA EURO 2000™ only two years later. That same year, the superstar, playing the Predator® football boot, was awarded the "Best Player of the Year" by FIFA.</p>

Since 2000	
	<p>Even though he had numerous world records over numerous distances under his belt and several gold medals on his résumé, Haile Gebrselassie still had a dream: in 2003, he announced that his personal impossible was to be the first man to run the marathon distance under 2 hours and 4 minutes. Impossible? Not really. Five years later, Haile crossed the finish line in Berlin in exactly 2 hours, 3 minutes and 59 seconds. Talk about precision.</p>
	<p>Yohji meets adidas. In October 2002, the collaboration between the 3-Stripes brand and the Japanese designer Yohji Yamamoto gave birth to the future of modern sportswear: Y-3. With this new collection adidas completed its product range and addressed the demands of the international style-conscious and design-minded consumer.</p>
	<p>"Feel the breeze". In 2002, adidas introduced the footwear innovation featuring a 360° ventilation system called ClimaCool™. The breathable materials were later also introduced in apparel and entire product collections are now featuring this technology such as the Beijing 2008 Olympic athlete range and most football jerseys.</p>
	<p>Working out has never looked better. In 2004, adidas and Stella McCartney presented the adidas by Stella McCartney sport performance collection making it the first time ever that a high-end fashion designer created a functional sport performance range for women. The result: a collection for women who take both their sport and style seriously and do not want to sacrifice one for the other. Call it a smash hit.</p>

	<p>The introduction of the Ground Control System in 2004 featured in the adiStar Trail and the adiStar Control greatly enhanced ground adaptability while ensuring a smooth rear to forefoot transition. Critical forces which can have a negative effect on lower leg anatomy are significantly reduced. Known today as FORMOTION™, it is also now featured in adidas apparel where it enhances and supports natural movement because it is cut to match the curve of the athlete's body during motion.</p>
	<p>Perfect fitting is of utmost importance when it comes to any kind of shoe, but even more when it comes to running. The first models of the adiZero family, first introduced in 2005, came to the rescue. The primary characteristic of the newly developed last was a fine curve that firmly traces a runner's heel in every angle. In addition, contrary to the heel, the forefoot of the new last is given appropriate room to ensure comfortable fit during midstance and push-off.</p>
	<p>Ever heard of a shoe that "comes to life"? Until 2005, neither had anyone else. With the introduction of the adidas_1, adidas took sport electronics and personalisation to a new level. The first intelligent shoe not only senses every step you take, but understands that your cushioning needs change with faster or slower speed and the different surfaces of the ground - and adapts the cushioning respectively. What's in it for you? The most personalised run of your life.</p>
	<p>In 2006, adidas introduced the F50 TUNiT. This new football boot concept allows players to customise, adapt and tune their boots to any weather, any pitch and their very own personal style. The F50 TUNiT is easily created from three interchangeable components: the upper, the chassis and the studs.</p>
	<p>For the 2006 FIFA World Cup™ in Germany, adidas revolutionised the football world once again and introduced Teamgeist™, the first 14-panel configuration reducing the amount of three-panel touch points by 60% and the total length of the panel lines by over 15%, forming a smooth and perfectly round exterior allowing players significant improvements in accuracy and control. The not-so-secret star of the four-week tournament also proved to be aptly named: "Teamgeist" is based on the single most decisive characteristic every team needs to have in order to lift the</p>

	<p>trophy: it is the German word for team spirit.</p>
	<p>While the Predator® represents the power player and the F50 TUNiT the artistic kicker, the adiPURE symbolises the main features of the handcrafted football boot: pureness, simplicity, naturalness and elegance. The high-quality materials, soft leather and pre-moulded sockliner provide outstanding comfort as well as an excellent, natural feel for the ball. World-class players such as Kaká and Philip Lahm wear the adiPURE on the pitch.</p>
	<p>As Official Sportswear Partner of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, adidas supplied more than 3 million products to federations, volunteers, officials and others. By outfitting 16 National Olympic Committees, including the most successful nation, China, plus three other Top Six ranked Olympic Teams, adidas underlined its position as the true Olympic brand. Shoes for 27 different sports were created as part of the "MADE FOR BEIJING" range. Many contain the single layer CLIMACOOOL™ mesh that was developed especially to reflect architectural features of the national stadium.</p>
	<p>2009 marks the 60th anniversary of the iconic 3-Stripes brand. In keeping with this important milestone, adidas unveiled its largest global brand campaign ever for adidas Originals called "60 Years of Soles and Stripes". The campaign was set against the backdrop of a house party hosting an electric mix of people from the worlds of music, fashion and sport.</p>
	<p>August 18th, 2009 As we celebrate our 60th anniversary, we are looking back on the greatest moments athletes celebrated in 3-Stripes. But at the same time, we are looking forward. The passion and spirit of our founder still lives on in adidas employees around the world today and all of us strive to create the perfect equipment for every athlete so that they can achieve their dreams. Because to us Impossible is Nothing.</p>