



Keeping pace with the times: Mammut Sports Group takes over the avalanche airbag specialist Snowpulse SA

At the last ISPO trade fair in Munich, the Swiss mountain sports equipment manufacturer Mammut unveiled its new avalanche airbag incorporating technology developed by the Swiss company Snowpulse SA. This innovation made headlines and met with an extremely positive reception in the market. On the July 1, the company went a step further: Mammut has acquired 100% ownership of Snowpulse.

For Mammut, the worldwide market leader in avalanche transceivers, Snowpulse represents a valuable addition to its portfolio, as the acquisition gives Mammut access to leading technology in the avalanche airbag market. On July 1, 2011 100% ownership of Snowpulse's share capital passed to Mammut. The company will now be progressively integrated in the Mammut Sports Group. This puts Mammut in a strong position to further consolidate its own market presence.

The founders and former owners of Snowpulse SA, Yan Berchten, CEO, and Pierre Yves Guernier, CTO, will continue their involvement in the world of airbags, as employees of the Mammut Sports Group. Based in Snowpulse's current premises in Martigny, they will work on product development, quality control, production, sales and marketing of airbag products. "Becoming part of the Mammut Sports Group AG will give Snowpulse the capacity to fully exploit the potential of these excellent products all over the world," explains Yan Berchten. Otherwise, the company from Martigny, not far from the freeriding Meccas of Verbier and Chamonix, would have had to confront a challenging growth phase. Its airbag products will now benefit from the new owner's strong sales, marketing and procurement structures.

Mammut intends to continue to market the proven Lifebag models and the Snowpulse R.A.S. models under the Snowpulse brand. Dealers in the existing distribution network will be contacted by their distributor over the next few weeks and informed of the subsequent process.



What is an avalanche airbag?

Along with an avalanche transceiver, shovel and probe, an avalanche airbag is an essential item of safety equipment for all off-piste winter sports enthusiasts. An avalanche airbag is already part of the standard equipment carried by most mountain guides in the Alps, and its advantages have been recognised by amateur snow sports enthusiasts as well. The airbag and compressed air cartridge are contained in a special backpack, still leaving enough space for other items of equipment and provisions. In the event of an avalanche, you simply pull on the handle stowed in the shoulder straps to inflate the airbag to its full size of 150 litres in 3 seconds.

The Snowpulse Airbag is based on the same functional principle as a life jacket for water sports: it places the wearer in a supine position, with his or her head facing upwards. According to the phase separation principle, larger particles float up to the surface of a liquid after a short time. The airbag increases the wearer's volume, helping him or her to stay on the surface of the avalanche in an emergency situation. This can help to prevent a deep burial, which would make the search process more difficult.

Different systems are used for avalanche airbags. Marketed under the Mammut brand, the R.A.S. (Removable Airbag System) can be easily integrated in a different volume of backpack. The airbag inflates directly behind the wearer's head.

The Snowpulse Lifebag models use a differently shaped airbag to the R.A.S. This provides additional protection for the head and neck and is partially integrated in the shoulder straps. Unlike the R.A.S., this system is permanently connected to the backpack and cannot be transferred to another model.

About the companies:

Mammut Sports Group AG: In 1862, Kaspar Tanner laid the foundations of the business when he created his traditional ropeworks in Dintikon near Lenzburg, Switzerland. Today, the Mammut Sports Group AG is an innovative company that develops, produces and sells products for mountaineering, outdoor activities and snow sports. In addition to its central headquarters in Seon, Switzerland (since 1992), where around 200 people are employed, the Mammut Sports Group has a worldwide presence through its branches and subsidiaries. A close-meshed network of representatives is responsible for global sales. The Mammut Sports Group is part of Conzzeta AG, a highly diversified international holding company based in Zurich. In 2012, Mammut will be celebrating its 150th anniversary.

Snowpulse SA: Founded in 2006, the Swiss company Snowpulse is located close to the freeriding Mecca of Verbier. It develops and produces backpacks featuring an integrated avalanche airbag system. Snowpulse's developments are based on three key principles to increase the chances of survival in an avalanche: avoid complete burial – reduce the burial time – reduce mechanical injuries. Over the last few years, Snowpulse has established itself very successfully in the market and is now represented in 18 countries. During production period Snowpulse counts around 20 employees.