

# Nike claims 'mental benefits' from new styles, observers take wait-and-see approach

**N**ike makes big technical claims for a category of non-sport footwear (their description: pre-game and post-game) launched in January.

Certainly not the first footwear to incorporate underfoot pressure points, 'Nike Mind Technology' is 2 shoes – a mule and a sneaker (in different colour options) – which Nike says literally affect the wearer's brain.

What Nike claims (the full statement is on <https://www.nike.com/za/a/nike-mind-release-info>) is that the shoes, designed

*Nike's 'mind shoe', modelled here by sponsored footballer Erling Haaland, makes claims to destress the wearer through stimulation of the sole of the foot.*

for pre-game and post-game, "help athletes feel calm, focused and present".

It says its research – Nike Mind technology – "blends neuroscience with design to support pre-game routine and post-game recovery".

The Nike Mind system consists of "22 anatomically mapped foam nodes" on the sole of the shoes which "independently move in a piston-like rhythm to activate key pressure-point areas connected to sensory regions of the brain. The nodes in the Nike Mind footwear interact with receptors on the bottom of the foot to amplify underfoot sensation, providing a unique sensory experience with every step."

Nike says "neuroscientists in the Nike Mind Science Department utilised mechanical sensors, electrical signals from the muscles and brain rhythms to investigate the impact of Nike Mind technology on the nervous system and the brain. They found that the unique sensation felt through the feet stimulates athletes' senses, strengthening the mind-body connection and improving stability, movement efficiency, focus and mindfulness, allowing wearers to stay more present in the moment. The Nike Mind system also helps to disengage the default mode network and can help athletes be less distracted, by engaging the sensorimotor network of the brain."

Shoes & Views asked podocalceist **Richard Kushlick** and sports podiatrist **Dennis Rehbock** – neither of whom has seen or worn the shoes – about the claimed benefits.

"Now that I have had time to read up and do some preliminary research, this is my opinion thus far," wrote Kushlick. "The underlying neurophysiology is credible, and I have no reason to doubt that Nike conducted extensive research. However, from an engineering and footwear perspective, the publicly available evidence does not yet demonstrate that the Mind 002's pod system consistently delivers a mechanical stimulus of sufficient magnitude and precision to produce the claimed neurological benefits across the wider population."

"I've done some research and find it at best interesting," wrote Rehbock. "I don't know enough about this stuff to comment much further. I can say they look like they're very comfortable and soft. So as a comfortable, casual lifestyle / tackie type shoe I'm sure they will sell well. Almost like a fancier Croc that the youth seem to love these days. I have not yet tried a pair. I hope to." ■

