

Stiff Rockers... More the Just Hoka

The world of running shoes is ever changing!

Graphite inserts, superfoams and the news of yet another world record being shattered are hyped on social media channels every week!

So what do we need to pay attention to in order to provide patients with the best possible footwear options ?

Well..... Hoka continues to dominate the everyday running shoe landscape with functional stiff soled shoes. Nike owns the performance category with superfoams, graphite spring plates and design features that are changing at world record pace. Traditional running shoe styles like the New Balance 880, Brooks Ghost and Mizuno Wave Rider remain essentially unchanged, with similar styles dropping on a yearly cycle.

What we are seeing though is the introduction of a plethora of Hoka-like Maximalist options in almost all 2024 footwear lineups. That means Hoka now has some stiff competition!

But are these new styles just cheap, late to the party imitationsor are they real difference makers ? And if they are functionally distinct, what features make them actually a better choice than those currently available on the market? Are they better at offloading the forefoot and creating a more positive patient experience?

The First thing I would say is that Hoka shoes have always been essentially a family of stiff soled shoes that perform like a pair of highly cushioned foot splints. And as we all know, that alone has been of tremendous value!

But there is room for improvement! What Hoka's two iconic styles the Bondi and the Clifton lack, is a noticeable rocker profile. That omission can leave them a touch clunky through transition and in some cases ineffective at offloading pressure in the forefoot. Here is where it's critical to be technically sound when critiquing other manufacturer's high stack footwear options.

ASICS for instance make a few models that have very pronounced early rockers. They can be excellent for patients with ankle flexion limitations due to arthritis, ankle fusion / replacement surgeries, etc.(wide widths are unavailable which can be annoying)



The all NEW Brooks Ghost Max arrived in store this fall and has come as a welcomed addition to the Maximalist category. It is Brooks' first real jump into the world of 'Hoka'!

The Max boasts two very important features, which have combined to drive some early success, especially from an orthopaedic standpoint.

Number oneit has a very noticeable early pronounced rocker profile, similar to that found in the Saucony Endorphin Shift. It's stiff rocker design makes for a smoother transition through toe off than others in this category. Another key to it's success is the wide range of widths it comes in (B, D and 2E extra wide for women and D, 2E, 4E extra wide for men. Hoka only makes the extra wide in the men's Bondi, but not the lady's which has limited the style orthopaedically)

The midsole of the Ghost Max is firm and durable , giving it the upper hand on softer models like the NB Fresh Foam More , Hoka Clifton and even the NEW semi-stiff rockered Asics Nimbus 25. Unlike the Hoka Bondi, the overall midsole/outsole frame of the Brooks Ghost Max is more trim making it not only attractive but less of a trip hazard.



Now don't get me wrong, the Hoka Bondi is still the gold standard when it comes to a stiff soled shoe. It's broad platform, foot frame design and firm midsole helps provide unmatched stability. But if you are looking for an effective rocker profile with many of the benefits of a standard Hoka then the Brooks Ghost Max may prove to be a great option in this all important maximalist stiff rocker category of shoes.

Make sure to check out the comprehensive stiff rocker review on our website.

[Stiff Rockers](#)

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Happy Holidays

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