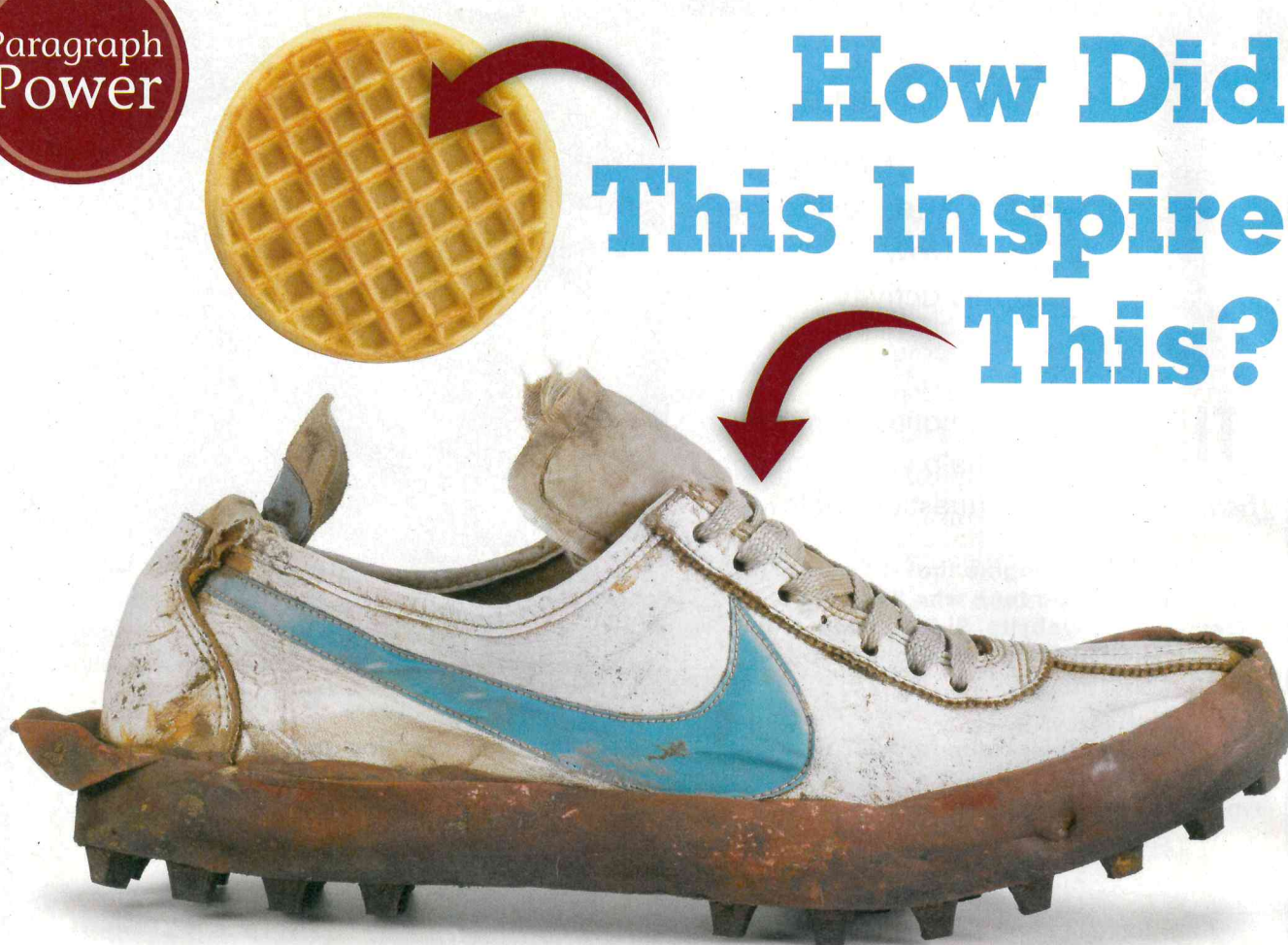


# How Did This Inspire This?



The true story of the first Nike sneakers—and how they were inspired by a waffle. BY CHRISTOPHER MOLICKI

Bill Bowerman was stumped. It was 1971, and he had tried everything to make a lighter, better running shoe. But he just couldn't figure out the right design.

Bill was a track coach. He wanted to help athletes run faster. So he had learned how to make running shoes. He had also started a shoe company with a friend.

Running shoes at the time were heavy. They had pointy spikes on the sole. The spikes

tore up the track and slowed down runners.

To make a lighter shoe, Bill tried the skins of fish and rattlesnakes instead of leather.

To make a better sole, he wanted to replace the spikes. Bill dug through his wife Barbara's jewelry box. He hoped to find a piece of jewelry with an interesting pattern. He would then copy the pattern onto the new soles.

Nothing worked.

Then, one Sunday

morning, Barbara made Bill waffles for breakfast. Bill watched her cook. He studied the criss-cross pattern on their old waffle iron.

Inspiration struck.

The grid pattern on a waffle iron was just what Bill was looking for. The squares were flatter and wider than sharp spikes. The pattern would help the shoes grip any surface without tearing into it.

When Barbara left the house, Bill ran to his lab. He

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