



With a lot of neutral running competence crowding the market in different mesh and foam avatars, Nike decided it was time to conjure a new form of the long running Pegasus. It was impeccable timing too; the Pegasus had been around for three decades, and what better way to usher in the 31st with a sparkling, brand new version of the franchise? The Pegasus so far had been the footwear equivalent of a grand dame who still held sway in running circles, but was getting long in the tooth. So enter the next generation Nike Air Pegasus 31.

(Update, August 12th, 2015: The Pegasus 32 [review is here](#))

Distinctly standing out in the new Pegasus is its striking upper design. Stare at it a few more seconds, and there's an overwhelming sense of déjà-vu, that feeling of having seen something similar before. And your hunch would have been right. If aesthetics look similar to the [2014 Nike Free 5.0](#) and [Zoom Vomero 9](#), that's because all these models were drawn by the hand of Mark Miner, the Nike designer (he's since left the brand) who worked on them. The diamond shaped cut-outs have an uncanny resemblance to that of the [Nike Free 5.0](#), and the mesh overlaid heel counter look near identical to the [Zoom Vomero 9](#). So, yes the design commonality isn't just a coincidence.

In Air Pegasus 31's case, updates go more than just skin deep, with wide sweeping and radical changes everywhere. Where do we begin? Nike [says that](#) the new Pegasus is a 'speed demon', so let's probe that hyperbole as a starting point. Surely, the design looks fast, but is the shoe? The barometer by which the 'fastness' of a running shoe is measured takes into account the compression of its sole unit, the heel to toe drop and how the upper fits. Or in simplified terms, stack the shoe against a traditional racing flat and see how close it comes.



SOLEREVIEW.COM PHOTOGRAPHY

The Air Pegasus 31 gets a brand new, low profile sole unit. Zoom Air in the heel too.

SOLEREVIEW.COM PHOTOGRAPHY



Reworked outsole design. Expansive coverage of rubber

At heart of the new Pegasus 31 update is a brand new, lower profile midsole which sits at a 10 mm heel-to-toe offset, and lower than the outgoing Pegasus 30. It uses a Zoom Air bag under the heel, same as last year, no change there. The midsole is Nike's responsive Cushlon foam with a very clean profile, sans the deep side grooves seen on the Pegasus 30. We slipped into a pair, and went for a run. Within the first few kilometres, it became clear that the ride on the Pegasus 31 was different.

It is common knowledge that a high degree of midsole deformation or compression leads to a heightened feel of cushioning, but sacrifices on speed. The reverse holds true too, which means that a shoe is deemed faster if midsole deformation is minimized. The premise being

that firmer shoes have better ‘touch and go’ necessary for building up tempo, and hence you’ll never see a true racing flat featuring sink-in cushioning.

All speed running shoes which mean business look and feel the part, with a firmer midsole being an inseparable part of their poker faced personality. So with that background, we took the [Air Pegasus 30](#) and 31 to task on the track, and captured multiple freeze frames to show how the two midsole deformations compared.

Wear-tester was a heel striking neutral runner, 78 kgs / 179 lbs, running a 8.46 min mile. A heel foot strike was important as that would show the complete cycle for weight transfer across midsole length.



Body weight loading captured for Pegasus 30 and 31. The Pegasus 30 is so squishy!

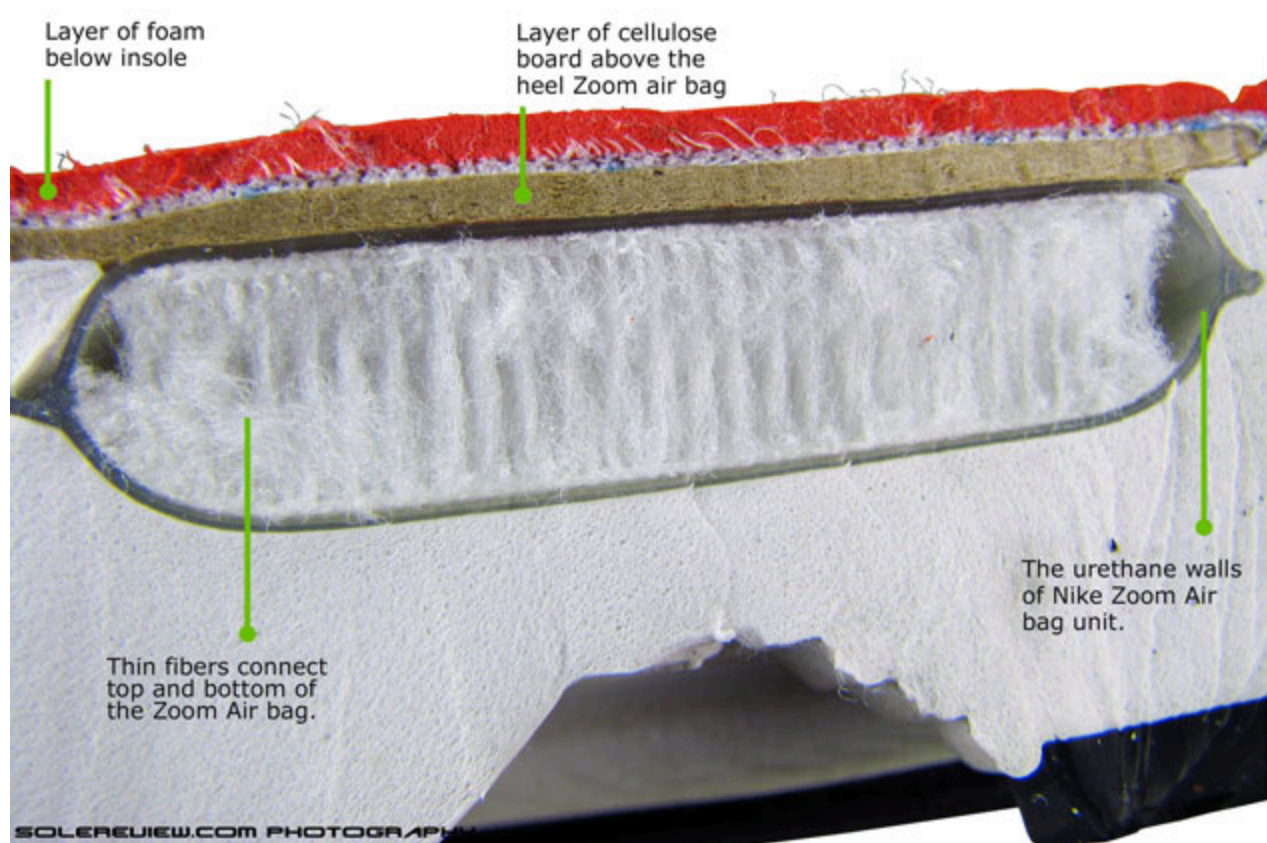
As you can see from the freeze frames above (click above to expand), Pegasus 30’s rear foot just gets crushed (top frame) under each impact, and it behaves the same on medial side too (not in frame). The 2014 Air Pegasus 31 (lower frame) on the other hand, shows little deformation as the foot transfers weight from heel to toe. The deep side grooves from Pegasus 30 are eliminated, which helps limit compression. The crash pad in the new shoe is also redesigned and moves towards a greater level of integration with the outsole, resulting in less deformation.

There’s another thing at play here – due to lower heel height, most of the heel cushioning sensation comes from the Zoom Air bag instead of the foam, which wasn’t the case in Pegasus 30. The result is a more snappier, responsive ride instead of the relative plushness experienced in the Pegasus 30.

The Pegasus 31 forefoot also saw near zero external deformation, and during our runs, the forefoot felt lower to the ground. If the sidewall thickness is anything to go by, then the shoe should indeed sit lower than the Pegasus 30 in the front.

We also saw tell tale signs that the new Pegasus 31 midsole is compression molded, instead of being injection molded like the Pegasus 30. Compression molded midsoles tend to be usually denser than the injected variety. This, in theory should result in increased firmness and more resilience. But we can't say for sure if this is the case because we don't have durometer (hardness) gauges on hand.

The Pegasus 31, while not as plush as the Pegasus 30, has more than enough cushioning in the heel. The ride sits right in the median between soft and firm, and Nike's description of its shoe as 'responsive' is apt. That is exactly how the new Pegasus feels like.



Anatomy of heel Zoom Air. The bag is 'drop-stitched' with thin fibers keeping the top and bottom walls together.



Cellulose board (cardboard) piece over the heel Zoom Air bag. This is from Vomero 8, but the Pegasus uses an identical set-up.



Cross section of rear-foot with Zoom Air Bag. A perfect pair of \$130 Vomero 8 was sacrificed for this educational picture.

This might also be a good time to talk about Zoom Air, and how it differs from regular Nike Air bags. Zoom Air is a pressurized urethane chamber, but it is drop-stitched inside. That kind of construction is very common in the outdoor industry – thin strands of fiber keep the top and bottom layers from bulging outwards. Sounds familiar? Your favorite camping mattress is kind of a gigantic Zoom Air bag. Or an inflatable SUP board.

Benefits of this construction include excellent shape retention and effective cushioning from a lower volume of compressed material. We won't leave anything to your imagination, though. We cut up the 2013 Zoom Vomero 8 to show you the innards of a Zoom Air midsole – the heel Zoom unit is very similar to what has been used in the Pegasus 31. And like the Vomero 8 [and 9](#), the Air Pegasus 31 uses a cardboard piece over heel Zoom Air, adding stability in that area.

SOLE REVIEW.COM PHOTOGRAPHY



Prominent toe-spring of the Pegasus 31. You still have to work hard to push-off.

Visually, the toe spring is quite pronounced in the Air Pegasus 31, and before wearing the shoe, we thought that would result in quicker forefoot roll-offs. But no, the forefoot is quite pliable, and flexes and flattens during forefoot weight transfer.

So toe-offs happen in good old fashion, with the big toe propelling the push-offs. There is no Zoom Air bag in the forefoot, hence no stiffness either. But slightly less bendable than the Pegasus 30 due to one missing exposed forefoot flex groove.



SOLE REVIEW.COM PHOTOGRAPHY

The much talked about 'Crash rail', a twin strip of rubber divided by a flex groove.

Nike calls out the inclusion of new 'crash rails' which claim to improve stability. The crash rail is a near continuous twin strip of rubber which starts at the heel and ends just short of the toe. The two rubber 'rails' are separated by a deep flex groove, the idea being that the flex groove will splay during weight loading, providing an increased outsole surface area.

Does it work? Frankly, we could not feel any additional stability, considering that even the [older Pegasus 30](#) featured something similar, the only difference being that the flex groove was not an unbroken line.



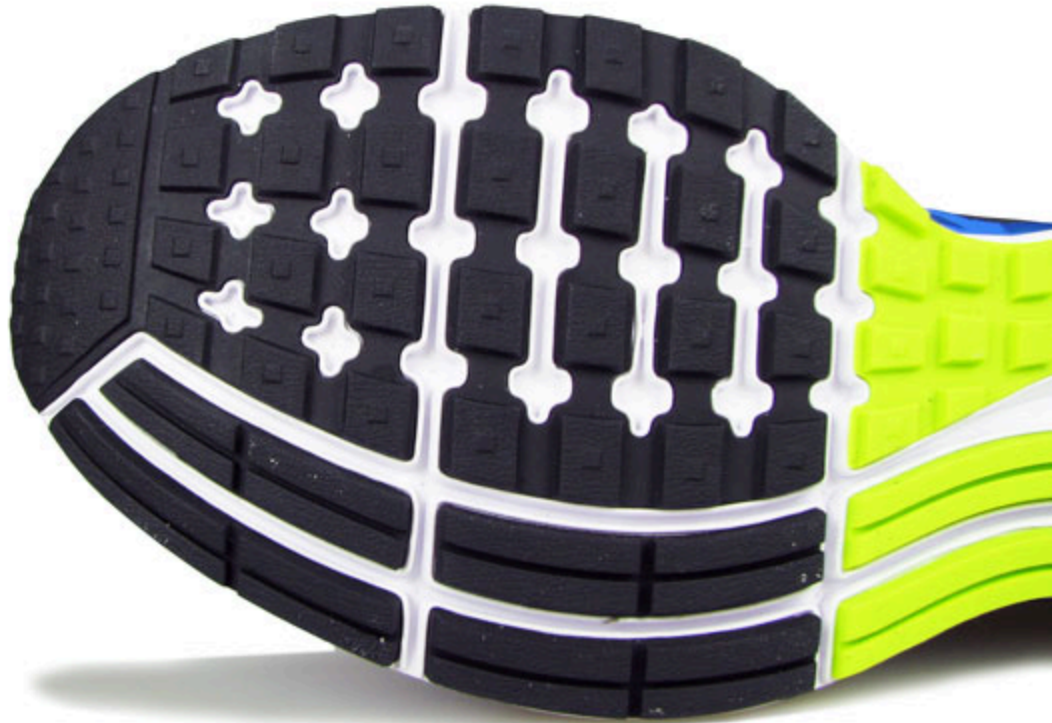
SOLEREVIEW.COM PHOTOGRAPHY

The lateral midsole/outsole has a prominent flare to ease up landings.

SOLEREVIEW.COM PHOTOGRAPHY



Heel crash pad is not so 'decoupled', and integrates with rest of the rubbery outsole.

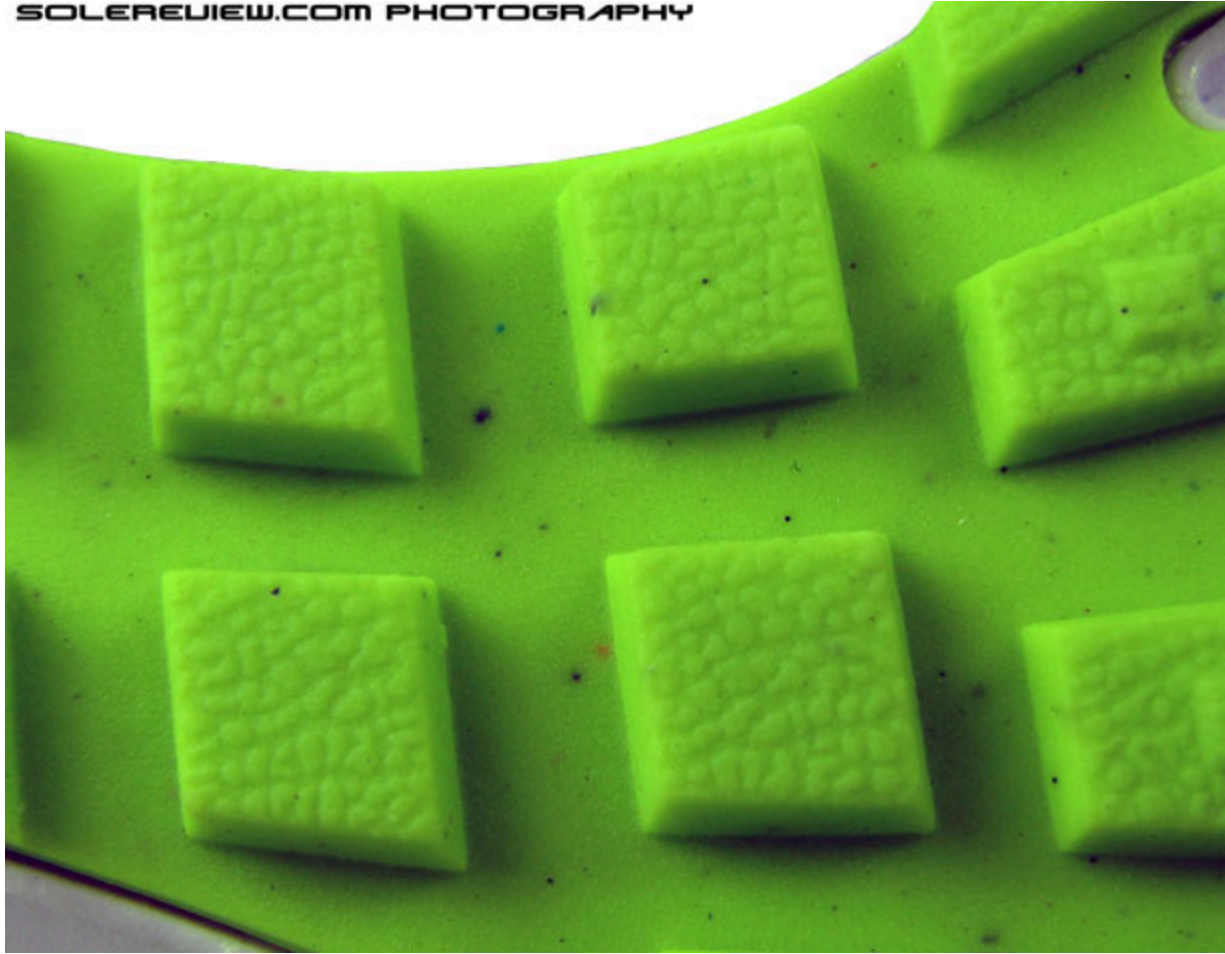


SOLEREVIEW.COM PHOTOGRAPHY

Forefoot has lot of rubber and grip, but loses one flex groove when compared to Pegasus 30.

Regardless, stability is not an issue in the Pegasus 31, in much part helped by the lowered midsole, a wider under-arch base and a prominent midsole flare in the heel which helps guide foot strike. The shoe will do well for forefoot strikers too; there is ample padding underfoot, with protection and grip coming from the generous cladding of outsole rubber.

We do like the new outsole pattern – more unbroken swathes of rubber instead of ribs on the Pegasus 30. Long term durability on these is good. (Updated Dec 29, 2014).



Outsole rubber is recycled Nike Regrind. Or is 'environmentally preferred' the politically correct term?

And if it interests you, Nike uses its recycled 'Regrind' rubber on the outsole. The small specks embedded in the rubber are dead giveaways.

Upper design: Construction and fit



Three cheers for the inner sleeve. Tongue slide is a thing of the past.



Another shot of the inner sleeve. We like to overdo it at times.



Engineered mesh, a now familiar sight. The toebox is very shallow, with upper bearing down on the foot there.



Collar is a step below the Pegasus 30 padding, but still grips well. Lining material is top notch.

The upper fit is really, really good on the Pegasus 31. Highlight is the newly inducted inner sleeve, which fits around mid-foot and finally says sayonara to tongue slide. Two layers of mesh are used; the top being an engineered flat mesh, and lining is a thin foam padded mesh which forms the inner sleeve. An obvious downside to this change is decreased ventilation in the forefoot. The Pegasus 30 was more breathable, but only relatively, and the Pegasus 31 performed well in 25 C/77 F weather with a relative humidity of 50%

The heel area carries over the same plush lining used in the Pegasus 30. The two lining fabrics are joined together by an edge to edge zig-zag seam instead of overlapping each other. This gives the Pegasus 31 interior a near seamless fit and feel, with no irritation at all.

Keeping in line with changes on the sole, the Pegasus 31 upper loses a lot of its plushness. Absence of the bouncy spacer mesh (of the Pegasus 30) results in a comparatively spartan feel around the foot, and even the collar area loses a lot of foam. The internal padding around the ankles is reduced when compared to the [Pegasus 30](#), though it still feels comfortable due to the luxurious mesh lining and does a good job at preventing any heel slippage.



Fused layers form most of the overlays.



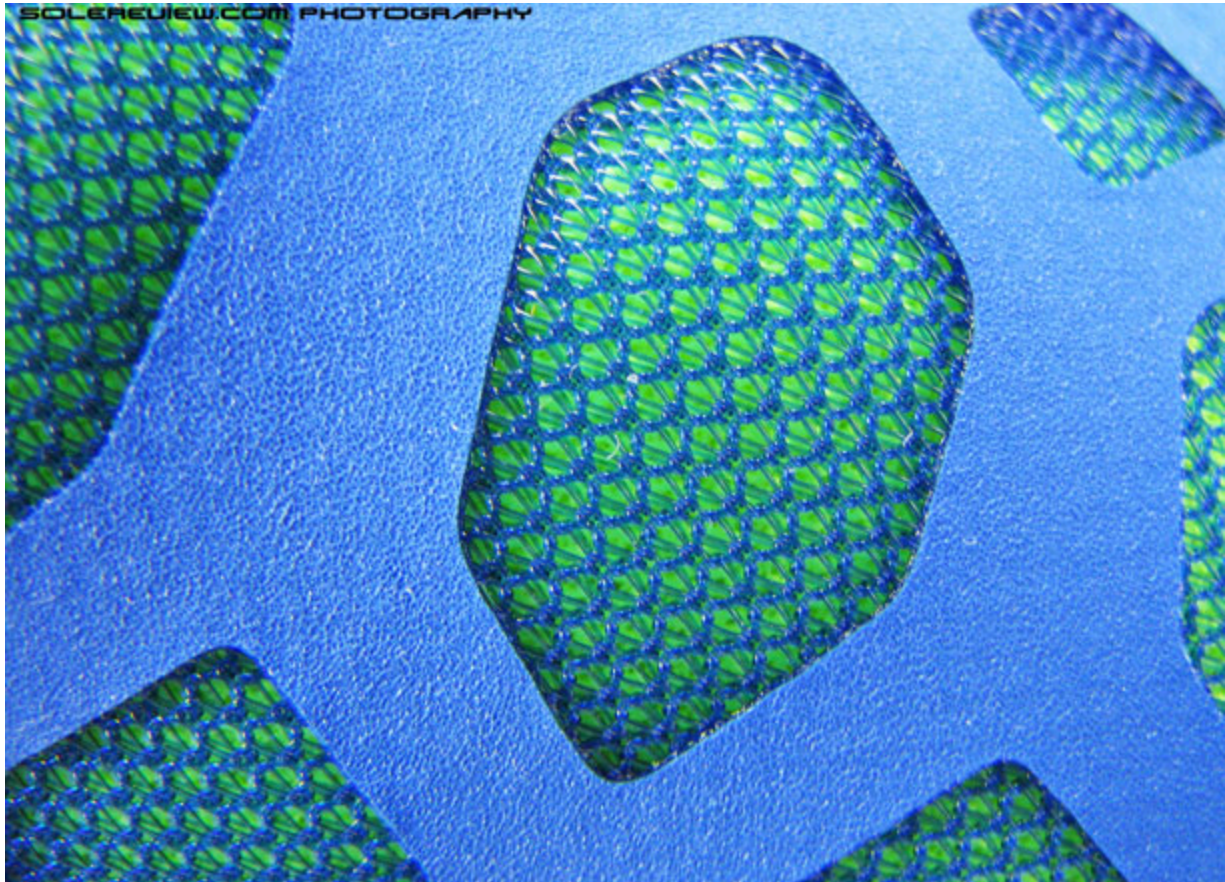
Toe bumper is now internal, and stretches the mesh from underneath.

The synthetic on the Pegasus 31 are fused overlays, delivering an overall structural outcome which has much in common with Pegasus 30. That said, the toe box of the Pegasus 31 is completely cleaned up, with no overlays on the tip of the shoe.

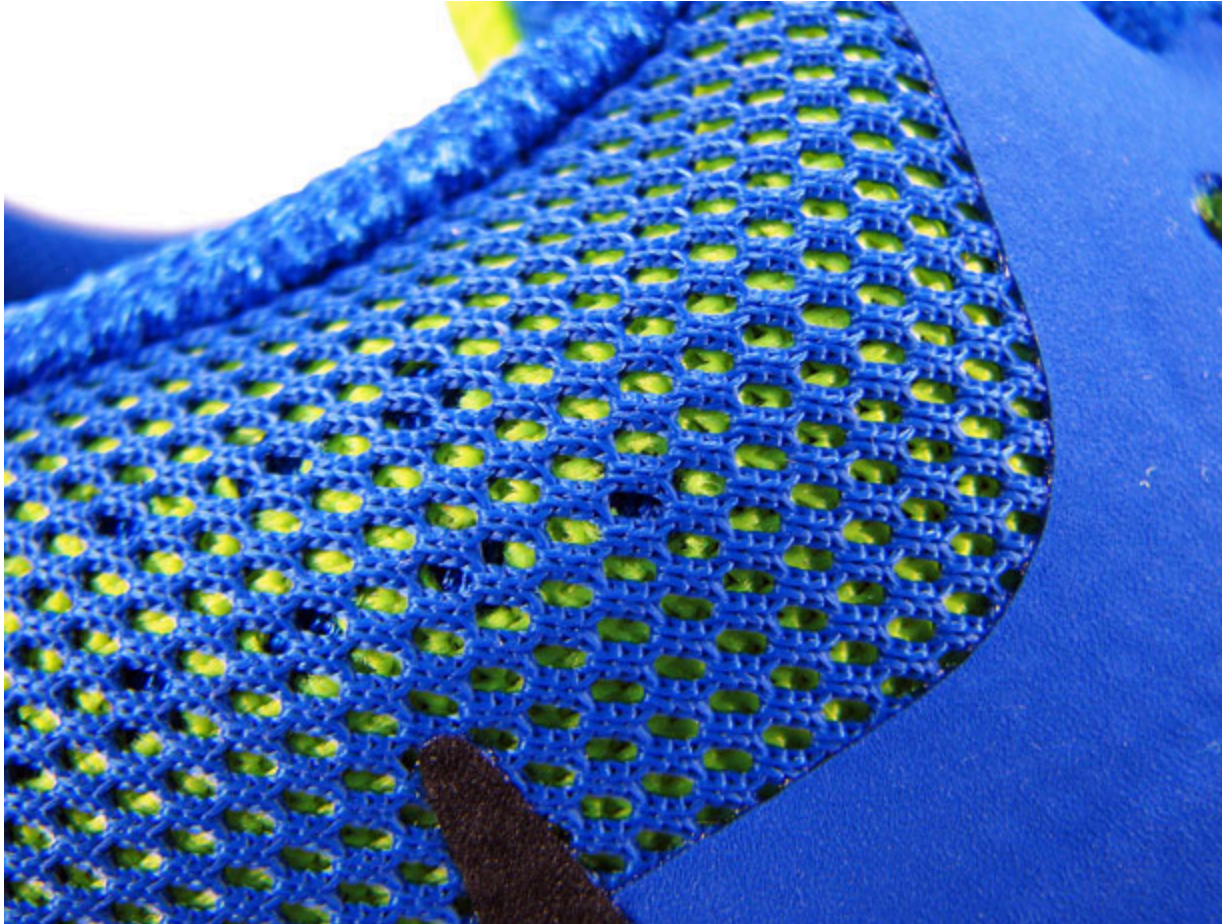
Support comes from underneath instead, with an invisible toe puff material fuse-stretching the mesh taut over it. Gives the shoe a streamlined aesthetic in the front, and gives credence to the 'speed demon' moniker, at least visually.



Airy windows. Lots of them. They look similar to the 2014 Nike Free 5.0, yes?



A close look at one of the mid-foot windows. Mesh is see-through and breathable.



This is getting used a lot these days. Mesh fused over – mesh?

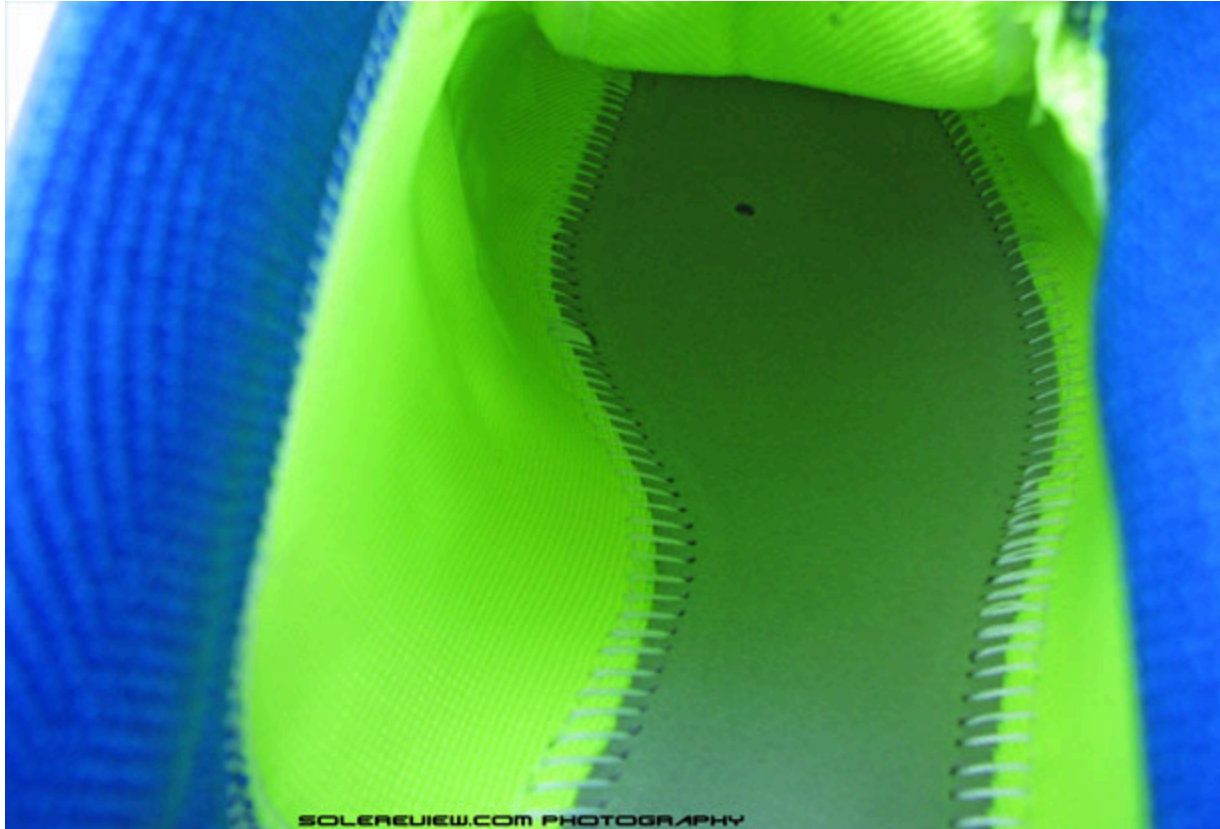
Midfoot is similar to what was seen in the 2014 Nike Free 5.0. (same designer, remember?) The synthetic panels with a lot of diamond shaped see-thru windows and spanned by breathable micro mesh. The lime green peeks through the windows and provides for a muted color contrast.

Rear foot is near identical to Nike Zoom Vomero 9; mesh is fused over another layer, revealing perforations in different shapes and a few reflective bits on the heel counter.



There's plenty of forefoot space with room for foot splay without being baggy, but runners upgrading from the Pegasus 30 will find that the little toe (fifth metatarsal) is hemmed in slightly by the fused synthetic; the Pegasus 30 had mesh on both sides so forefoot fit was comparatively relaxed. You'll also notice the Pegasus 31's toe bumper to be much shallower, with the upper straining against the big toe.

But if you're slipping into a pair of Pegasus 31 for the first time, chances are you won't notice a thing and find the forefoot room to your liking. We'd also like to call out that the Pegasus 31 fits true to size for the average, sock clad foot.



You can go sock-less in the Pegasus 31. Interior fit feels awesome.

How is to wear the Pegasus 31 without any socks? It is comfortable, fits well except in the forefoot where the area feels baggy with the materials bunching out. But if you can live with that, the Pegasus 31 is a good fit for your birthday shoes.

Nike's marketing also points at use of a new last, but we were hard pressed to tell the difference in light of all the structural changes happening on the upper. If the last marking on the Pegasus 31 sockliner is anything to go by, it seems that the last is the same as the one used in Pegasus 30. Except that the heel is lowered by 2 mm – and a corresponding increase in toe spring up front. We could be wrong, but details on the sockliner seems to support our theory. The Pegasus 30 sockliner says 'QMR-2' and the Pegasus 31 says 'QMR-2/MR-10'.

We interpret this cryptic language as, ' The Pegasus 31 has the same Men's Running (MR) last as the Pegasus 30, except that it has a 10 mm drop. We wonder what last the upcoming Zoom Elite 7 would use? The QMR-2/MR-8? Just a guess, but let's see when the Zoom Elite 7 debuts in August. (see below)

Update, August 10th: We were wrong, the Elite 7 sockliner is the same as Pegasus 31. Read our [detailed Zoom Elite 7 Review](#)



Sockliner name change. Everything else, same old.

SOLEREVIEW.COM PHOTOGRAPHY



While on topic, the sockliner nomenclature has changed. 'Fitsole' no longer appears on the insole top cloth, and is replaced by a bold 'Running' text going across, and captioned with sub-texts calling out 'neutral ride' and 'responsive'. The name change aside, there is little difference between the material make-up of the Pegasus 30 and 31 sockliner. Single layer of memory foam-eque EVA sits beneath the fabric, and not very thick. It could have been a figment of our imagination, but we thought that the Pegasus 31 insole was slightly softer than the 30. But for all we know, it could be manufacturing inconsistency instead of intended design goal.

Beneath the left sockliner, there is no cavity for Nike Plus anymore. This will be the norm for all Nike running shoes going forward, as newer iPhones and iPods feature digital accelerometers without a need for an in-shoe transmitter or footpod.

Arch support is a lesser thing in the Pegasus 31 compared to the 30. The under arch midsole flare seen in the Pegasus 30 is now trimmed off, so there's decreased support underneath.





Nike has been stingy with Pegasus 31 reflectivity.

Are there any faults in the Pegasus 31? We couldn't find any. Ok, if we had to nitpick, it would be reduced night time visibility. The Pegasus 30 had massive reflective mid-foot panels, but the Pegasus 31 limits reflectivity only to the heel area. A couple of diamond shaped underlays on either side of the heel, that's all. Nike's Air Pegasus 31 description says, 'reflectivity under the saddle'. Isn't saddle supposed to be somewhere in the middle? There aren't any shiny bits there, we can assure you. The tiny pieces on the heel is all there's to it.

Conclusion:

So what do we think of the new Pegasus? The Nike Air Pegasus 31 is a neutral running shoe of high caliber, and ticks all the boxes on overall ride experience. It comes across as very balanced, taking things like a cushioned ride, smooth transition, great upper fit and stitching all of them up perfectly well together. We're also happy to note that Nike hasn't taken up the price for this one – at \$100, it is good value.



(Disclaimer: Solereview paid full US retail price for the shoe reviewed)