

Virat Kohli to partner with Agilitas as Puma deal ends

Star cricketer Virat Kohli is set to join sports athleisure firm Agilitas as an investor, multiple people aware of the matter said, with his eight-year contract worth around ₹110 crore with German sportswear giant Puma coming to an end. An announcement in this respect is likely during the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL).

Agilitas was founded in 2023 by former Puma India and South-East Asia managing director Abhishek Ganguly. The company makes and retails sportswear goods in India and abroad. Last year, Agilitas acquired long-term licence rights for sports brand Lotto in India, Australia, and South Africa.



Virat Kohli's switch to Agilitas signals his ambition to grow One8, his lifestyle brand launched in 2017. (REUTERS)

Scaling One8

At the heart of Kohli's switch to Agilitas is his ambition to grow One8, his lifestyle brand launched in 2017. Agilitas will distribute and scale the One8 brand by opening more stores and expanding abroad leveraging the cricketer's popularity, the people said on the condition of anonymity.

"The brand will be a significant part of Agilitas's growth story," the person cited above said on the condition of anonymity. "It's all about turning One8 into a global brand—footwear, sportswear. India does not have an aspirational sportswear brand. There will be a new brand identity and relaunch for one8," the person added.

A Puma India spokesperson confirmed Kohli's departure, wishing him "the best for his future endeavours". The brand said it was a wonderful association with him spanning over several years, many outstanding campaigns, and path-breaking product collaborations. "As a sports brand, Puma will continue to actively invest in the next generation of athletes and aggressively build the future of the sporting ecosystem in India."

Agilitas did not respond to Mint's emailed queries. Kohli did not respond to text messages.

"Puma went back to Kohli with an offer to retain the cricketer, but he wants to build a global company from India," the person cited earlier said.

Building for India

There were several media reports last year that Kohli was set to terminate his contract with Puma. At the time, Puma had denied these reports, and Kohli continued his association with the company during the last year of his contract.

However, since India's successful Champions Trophy campaign, Kohli has been seen sporting shoes that do not bear Puma's trademark "formstrip", which resembles three lanes from athletic tracks. Instead, Kohli's on-field shoes now bear a placeholder logo with interconnected triangles.

In global sports, it's typical for athletes to wear unbranded or so-called generic shoes during matches or appearances between contracts. This helps them avoid conflicts with current or future sponsors and maintain neutrality while negotiating deals.

In 2021, Puma signed a long-term strategic partnership with Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), the franchise Kohli has represented since the league's inaugural edition. A year later, Puma signed Bollywood actress and Kohli's wife Anushka Sharma as a brand ambassador.

Ambitious startup

Agilitas Sports has raised funds advised by Convergent Finance LLP, an investment management and advisory partnership led by Harsha Raghavan, who has invested ₹400 crore, and ₹30 crore have come from individual investors. In December 2023, the company secured funding of ₹100 crore from Nexus Venture Partners. In 2023, it also acquired sports footwear manufacturer Mochiko Shoes Pvt. Ltd to build a greater role in the sports manufacturing ecosystem in India.