Fresh Take on Cycle Wear

Commuter cycling apparel, technical base layers and innovative insect repellent fabrics were among the offerings at Outdoor Retailer Summer Market. Kathryn Swantko reports.

Responding to a consumer that is looking for multi-faceted apparel, gear and accessories, outdoor-wear manufacturers are engineering lighter, smarter product ideas for commuters.

“As innovation is critical to moving the industry forward,” says Kenji Haroutunian, show director for Outdoor Retailer Summer Market. “Whether it is a lighter, smaller backpack, recycled fabrics, solar jackets, or a reversible T-shirt, product designers are always paying attention to durability and functionality. And we are lucky to have some of the most creative product designers in our outdoor industry.”

At this season’s OR show, which ran from 8–11 August in Salt Lake City, a notable trend emerged. While cycling has always been an important outdoor activity, with the rise in fuel prices, there is a new interest in cycling to work. This commuter cycling trend has prompted designers to create an updated look in cycling apparel.

At the show, Gramicci, a popular manufacturer of outdoor lifestyle apparel, introduced its first line of biking apparel that is also appropriate for the office. SmartWool also unveiled a new line of wool blend performance cycling apparel and socks designed especially for the daily commuter and traveller.

“As more people are biking, they need clothes built for sport, and also for life,” says Marty Weening, president of Gramicci. “Our new line is designed for people who want to be able to go from their bike to their offices, or from a ride with their families to a restaurant for dinner. This isn’t just a trend, but a cultural lifestyle shift.”

Yarn developments

Knitting International also identified a number of suppliers introducing yarn developments at the show, many of which could have applications in this new cycling market, as well as a variety of other end-use categories.

Innovator of the patented Performance Toesocks, Injinji launched the revival of its classic Rainbow toesock, which uses the renewable Coolmax EcoTech yarn. Replicating the original Coolmax fibre technology, the new Coolmax EcoTech fibre provides the same performance-enhancing attributes as its predecessor, including moisture-wicking, breathable, soft, durable qualities, but with an added eco-friendly feature. The yarn is created from repurposed, recycled plastic bottles and post-industrial waste.

The new five-individual-sleeve Rainbow toesock also incorporates Injinji’s patented Performance Series construction, which recently received the American Podiatric...
Medical Association’s Seal of Acceptance for its superior moisture management, odour control, and ability to improve foot alignment for better posture, gripping, and balance.

“Thanks to a successful combination of the new Coolmax EcoTech fibre technology and Injinji’s technical advantages, the new Rainbow offers a fun colour palette without compromising important performance attributes,” explains Jan Kimbrell, VP of sales for Injinji.

Invista and Cyberknit showcased 10 new Cordura baselayer brand fabrics at the OR show. The new line offers innovative knit structures for a broad range of apparel applications. The product line was built around a unique fabric blend of Invista’s T420 high tenacity nylon 66 and cotton.

The new fabrics include an interlocking thermal, a mesh, a blend with Lycra elastane fibre, a French Terry, as well as several ribs and pique double knits. The fabric is said to be ideal for the outdoor and workwear markets.

The base layer fabric is being touted for its next-to-skin performance properties when exposed to heat in flash fire situations, such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

“With the potential dangers surrounding use of polyester based undergarments in flash fires, there’s a need for the Cordura brand baselayer,” explains Jon Heard, global business director of Invista’s nylon staple and government business.

The combat-ready, lightweight Cordura baselayer stands out because it offers moisture management, comfort, durability and abrasion resistance qualities, combined with its “No Melt, No Drip” thermal feature. The fabric insulates the body under heat threat. And, when exposed to these high temperatures, it forms gels and chars around the cotton, creating an entirely new fabric structure with a higher ignition resistance that doesn’t drip or melt onto the skin underneath like polyester, according to the company.

Optimer Performance Fibers introduced two new innovations involving its Dri-release moisture management with FreshGuard technology, expanding its growing line of high-tech offerings. The first is a combined technology with

Insect repellent

Dri-release featured the Celliant technology in a new sock that will be available to retailers via stock programmes and will also be sold on line directly to consumers. The new Dri-release with Insect Shield Repellent Technology will be available in a recently launched line of performance apparel called Roonbug, targeted towards the infants’ and toddlers’ market, a collection made by Roonwear.

Indigenous Designs is a fair-trade and organic apparel pioneer specialising in providing knitted garments, handmade by more than 300 artisan groups in remote regions of the globe. At the show, the company featured its proprietary Terra Sport Collection for Fall 2008, made of all-natural performance mid-layers. The fresh selection of individually crafted designs offered a natural alternative for mid-layers like fleece jackets or synthetic pullovers, and were promoted as ideal for everyday casual wear and light outdoor activities.

“With Terra Sport, we’ve taken a completely natural fibre blend that breathes naturally, manages moisture, and offers superior comfort and merged it with contemporary styles and easy silhouettes,” says Scott Leonard, CEO for Indigenous Designs.

The stylish and functional collection consists of innovative hand-knit blends of Tencel, alpaca, and Merino wool that allow comfort while naturally regulating body temperature and reducing odours. In keeping with the company’s sustainable business practices, the line also features natural, low-impact dyes.

Cordura baselayer “No Melt, No Drip” T-shirt, made from Invista’s T420 high tenacity nylon 66 and cotton

Gramicci’s Bike Short, made from a quick-drying nylon, and featuring a knitted yoke and ‘Rider Comfort Fit Waistband’ in the back, designed to keep the back of the pants up while riding

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