Business Week
5 Mar - 11 Mar

China International Boat Show attracts 350 exhibitors

5 Mar 2007

350 exhibitors, including Chinese shipyards and overseas luxury yacht manufacturers, have confirmed their participation at the China International Boat Show (CIBS). The show will take place on April 5-8 in Shanghai and is said to be Asia's largest exhibition for maritime leisure and boat building.

Exhibits will include powerboats, sailing yachts, marinas, related lifestyle goods and services as well as equipment and supplies. In 2006, over 21,000 end-users and industry professionals attended the fair, which hosted 320 exhibitors from 23 countries and regions.

With 90,000 lakes, 6,500 islands and 18,000 kilometres of coastline, China's yachting market is growing rapidly and many new buyers are expected to attend this year's event.

Wilson launches [K]Factor technology

5 Mar 2007

Wilson Racquet Sports, a division of Chicago-based Wilson Sporting Goods, has officially unveiled its new [K]Factor racket technology in Las Vegas.

Roger Federer, who played an integral role in the development and design of the new [K] Six.One racket, stated, "With [K]Factor, Wilson has taken racket technology to a whole new level and I love what it does for the control of my game." He used the racket at the Australian Open, where he completed the Men's Championship without dropping a single set.

The new racket consists of four technology innovations—[K]arophite Black, [K]onnector, [K]ontour Yoke and [K]ompact Center—which are said to work together to give the player better control.

[K]arophite Black is created by bonding carbon black, graphite and SiO2 together at nano level, creating a denser and stronger racket matrix; [K]onnector comprises two external wings moulded into each side of the hoop to increase the dwell time of the ball on the string bed upon impact, providing greater control and comfort; [K]ontour Yoke is a new frame engineering technology that enhances stiffness at key stress points on the racket for improved torsional stability; and [K]ompact Center is an industrial design innovation that is said to improve handling, manoeuvrability and give additional feel.

Nanotechnology conference to be held in South Africa

5 Mar 2007

Industry leaders from around the world will meet in Pretoria, South Africa, on April 23-24, to discuss the potential of nanotechnology in southern Africa. From water to textiles and from mining to medicine, the World Nano-Economic Congress (WNEC) South Africa will explore how this technology can offer both social and financial benefits to the region.

Companies such as US-based pharmaceutical firm Pfizer and Dutch chemical company DSM will highlight the rapid development of nanotechnology research and commercialisation in the country as well as assessing the value of nanotechnology as a platform technology for developing and emerging economies.

The event is being organised by London-based global nanotechnology consulting and intelligence company Cientifica Ltd.

BASF plans to transform into a European company

5 Mar 2007

At the company's annual meeting on April 26, the board of executive directors and supervisory board of Germany-based BASF Aktiengesellschaft will propose changing BASF into a European company (Societas Europaea, SE) with the name BASF SE. The company's headquarters and chief administrative offices will remain in Ludwigshafen.

Commenting on the proposal chairman of the board, Dr Jürgen Hambrecht, said, "The European Company is a modern legal form for a global company whose home market is in Europe," adding, "BASF considers this legal form to be an affirmation of an entrepreneurial vision of Europe."

In 2006, BASF posted approximately 60% of its sales in Europe and employed around two-thirds of its global workforce of more than 95,000 employees in the region.

2005 global sporting goods sales reach $235 billion

5 Mar 2007

Following research carried out by The NPD Group, Inc. on behalf of The World Federation of Sporting Goods Industry (WFSGI), estimates show that the size of the global sporting goods market in 2005 reached $235 billion, with the sports apparel segment accounting for $102.6 billion of this total.

North America accounted for the largest portion of sales, with a 45% share of the global market and the USA comprised 42% of North American sales with an estimated $98.4 billion. Canadian sales accounted for $6.7 billion, or 3%, of the global market. Despite Asia being the largest market, based on population, the continent registered just 19% of global sports sales, behind Europe which registered 30%.

On a per capita basis, expenditure was $330 in the USA; $207 in Canada; $85 in Europe; $12 in Asia; $6 in the Middle East; and $5 in Africa.

The NPD Group measures the athletic footwear and sports apparel markets in ten countries, representing two-thirds of global sports sales. For the remaining third, NPD estimates are based on assumptions related to Gross Domestic Product development.

New Osprey range launched with 70% recycled materials

5 Mar 2007

Colorado-based backpack company Osprey recently launched its new six-piece Resource Series made from 70% recycled materials at ispo in February.

Made from 18 recycled litre plastic bottles (post consumer waste) and other components such as plastic buckles (post manufacturing waste) its Circuit 32 Daypack features recycled mesh pockets, spacer mesh, stretch woven pockets, binding tape, webbing and zipper pulls. The product hangtags are printed on recycled card and the packs are delivered to stores in recycled bags.

Future ready-to-wear directions from creora

5 Mar 2007

Elastane brand creora, developed by Korean company Hyosung Corporation, has unveiled its new ready-to-wear trends under the themes Dedicated Denim, Deluxe, Basics Update and Fluidity.

Dedicated Denim will feature new hollow polyester/cotton/creora blends to offer strength with less weight. Creora H-350 is used for stretch and a soft hand and creora H-100D black elastane for classic twills and lightweight/quick drying denims. Pima Cotton and other rich fibres including cashmere and silk have been used for the high-end market. Garment applications include jeans, jackets and skirts.

The Deluxe trend incorporates creora H-100X alkali resistant spandex which retains elasticity after burn-out in both cut and un-cut pile fabrics. High gloss stretch satins, rich touch surfaces and stretch velvet with creora H-250 feature alongside Pima Cotton and viscose, bright micro fibres and silk. Garment directions include both casual and formalwear.

Basics Update contrasts a compact and protective look with a more expressive and rebellious theme. Classic twill and gabardine constructions with creora H-350 offer stretch and softness with heat resistant and wrinkle resistant. Lighter weight fabrics use creora H-450 for softness and stretch with reduced shrinkage.

Traditional loose hopsack weaves, laser cutting and open jacquards blended with creora C-400 are featured for softness and improved shrinkage. The range features geometric structures, double-sided and brushed surfaces using one-way and bi-stretch fabrics for city wear, leisure and casual wear.

The Fluidity theme captures the fit and flare of mono- and bi-stretch single and double jersey fabrics. Creora H-250 complements silk microfibre blends in jerseys and charmeuse. Renewable fibres featured in this trend include bamboo and wood-based fibres with creora H-450. Garments are base and top layered looks from casual through to formal wear.

Nike to build new footwear distribution centre

5 Mar 2007

Nike, Inc. has reached an agreement to acquire a 125-acre land parcel in Memphis, Tennessee, USA, known locally as Northridge, where it plans to build a new one million square foot footwear distribution centre.

The facility is expected to house employees from both Nike's existing Winchester Road facility in Memphis, and employees relocating from a second distribution centre based in Wilsonville, Oregon.

Call for entries for the Techtextil and Avantex prizes

5 Mar 2007

Drawing attention to achievements in research, materials and product development and new technology, the Techtextil and Avantex trade fairs, to be held in Frankfurt

am Main, Germany, in June, are now calling for entries for this year's innovation prizes.

Anyone who has completed an exemplary development since January 1, 2006, is invited to enter for the prizes, which will be awarded for achievements in research, materials and product development and new technology. The closing date for entries is March 30.

The Techtextil Innovation Prize is held for the Research New developments, products, means of production, manufacturing and finishing methods, new materials and applications in the fields of 'Buildtech' (building and architecture), 'Medtech' (medicine and hygiene) and 'Mobiltech' (motor-vehicle manufacturing).

The Avantex Innovation Prize is awarded in the fields of new developments in connection with materials, technology, finishing and processing, e.g., new fibres and yarns, new coatings, nanotechnology, electronics in apparel, fashionable aspects in connection with new technologies and new functions, medical applications through apparel, the combination of comfort and function in sports, and workwear innovations for safety and protection in the working world.

The prizes will be awarded at a ceremony on June 11 and the winning projects will be exhibited during the two fairs (International Trade Fair for Technical Textiles and Nonwovens and International Forum for Innovative Apparel Textiles on June 12-14.

Gap posts lower revenues

5 Mar 2007

US-based apparel and accessories retailer Gap Inc. has reported lower sales for fiscal 2006, ended February 3. Net sales for the 53 weeks slipped to $15.9 billion from $16 billion for the 52 weeks ended January 28, 2006. Comparable store sales decreased 7%, compared with a decrease of 5% in the prior year.

Commenting on the results, Bob Fisher, interim president and CEO, said, "We were not satisfied with our 2006 results and are taking action." He added, "In 2007, we are focusing on three priorities: fixing our core business by creating the right product and outstanding store experiences; retaining and developing the best talent in the industry; and examining our organisational structure to ensure that we enable our brands to make decisions and effect change more efficiently."

Since January this year, the company has already announced a change in the CEO position. Mr Fisher, the company's current non-employee chairman of the board, has stepped in to serve as interim president and chief executive officer until the company appoints a permanent CEO. In addition, the company has named Marka Hansen, former president of Banana Republic, as president of Gap Brand and Michael Cape as executive vice president of marketing for Old Navy. The company has also decided to close its distribution facility in Hebron, Kentucky and its 19 Forth & Towne stores.

Kellwood names new VP

6 Mar 2007

Stephen Beluk, Jr. has been named vice president of internal audit for marketer of apparel and consumer soft goods Kellwood Company.

With sales in excess of $1.9 billion Kellwood specialises in branded as well as private label products.

Vardhman to demerge threads business

6 Mar 2007

India's Vardhman Textiles Ltd is to bring together its sewing thread businesses into a subsidiary company—Vardhman Yarns & Threads Ltd., and demerge the business. All of the company's thread units will be transferred to the subsidiary.

Suessen sells 2,000,000th EliteCompact spindle

6 Mar 2007

Germany-based producer of compact spindles has celebrated the delivery of its two-millionth EliteCompact spindle, which has been installed on a Zinser 350 ring spinning machine at Matesa Tekstil Sanayi ve Ticaret A.S in Turkey.

Suessen celebrated the sale of its one-millionth EliteCompact spindle only 18 months ago at ITMA Asia in Singapore.

According to the company more than 10% of the world's cotton crop is now spun with Suessen components.

Mitsubishi Rayon to transfer acrylic filaments to subsidiary

6 Mar 2007

Japan-based Mitsubishi Rayon Co., Ltd has decided to transfer the responsibility for marketing its acrylic filament products and its synthetic leather products to its existing subsidiary Mitsubishi Rayon Textile Co., Ltd, with effect from April 1. Until now the subsidiary only handled the wholesaling of fabric.

With the objective of enhancing profitability by creating a more efficient operating framework, and strengthening the consolidated group's textile operations, MRC has

decided to transfer the responsibility for the marketing of its Silpalon acrylic fibres and ultra-fine acrylic fibre synthetic suede, Glore, to Mitsubishi Rayon Textile Co., Ltd. through the corporate divestiture procedure.

EDANA awards R&D student grants

6 Mar 2007

In the framework of its Nonwovens Research Academy 2007, EDANA has awarded R&D student grants to 11 MSc and PhD students from seven different European universities. All of the students are studying in the field of nonwovens and related areas.

EDANA's Nonwovens Research Academy 2007, which will take place at the University of Leeds, UK, on March 29-30, is designed to bring together an interdisciplinary group of academics, students, researchers, scientists and engineers to present and disseminate pre-competitive and post-competitive research studies relevant to the growth of the nonwoven industry in the future.

New issue of the JTATM published

6 Mar 2007

The latest issue of the Journal of Textile and Apparel, Technology and Management (JTATM), coordinated by the Department of Textile and Apparel, Technology and Management, College of Textiles, North Carolina State University, USA, is now available highlighting the College of Textiles' Research Open House 2007. The research open house is an annual event, which will be held on April 17, which offers industry and government personnel the opportunity to visit the college's facilities, learn about its research programmes (graduate and undergraduate), meet the faculty, staff and students, and tour the facilities.

The journal also includes research papers as well as industry and education articles related to issues in the global textile sector.

Nike names new VP

6 Mar 2007

Nike, Inc. has named Greg Dinges vice president, Nike, Inc. Corporate Development, and chief financial officer of the company's Affiliate Brands Group. He will report to Lee Bird, president of Nike's Affiliate Brands Group, and to Don Blair, Nike's chief financial officer.

Mr Dinges joins the company from PepsiCo, where he was vice president of corporate strategy and development.

Converse, Cole Haan, Nike Bauer Hockey, Hurley International and Exeter Brands Group comprise Nike's affiliate brands group. Exeter includes Starter athletic footwear and apparel, and the newly-launched Tailwind brand of performance and fashion athletic footwear for women.

Kanematsu sells stake in Textile Corporation to Li & Fung

7 Mar 2007

Japanese company Kanematsu Corporation is to sell its 55% share in its apparel and textile subsidiary company Kanematsu Textile Corporation (KTC), to the investment arm of Hong Kong-based Li & Fung.

KTC, which reported a consolidated turnover of over $450 million in 2006, will retain its name and Hiroshi Ishikawa will continue in his role as president. Dr Victor Fung will become chairman of its board of directors. The new ownership structure is expected to commence in April 2007.

Adidas exceeds €10 billion in sales

7 Mar 2007

Germany-based adidas Group has reported revenues of €10.084 billion for 2006, 52% higher than the €6.636 billion posted for 2005. Sales, excluding Reebok, increased 14% to reach €7.548 billion from €6.636 billion in the prior year, representing the company's highest organic growth within the last eight years.

The adidas segment was the main driver of sales growth in 2006, driven by increases in nearly all of its Sport Performance categories as well as double-digit growth in the Sport Heritage and Sport Style divisions. First-time consolidation of the Reebok segment added €2.473 billion to the group's sales. Compared with the prior year, in which Reebok was not consolidated, this represented a decline of 9%.

At TaylorMade-adidas Golf, currency-neutral revenues increased 22% with solid growth in nearly all major product categories. The inclusion of the Greg Norman apparel business, which was acquired as part of the Reebok acquisition, also had a positive impact on sales. Excluding the Greg Norman apparel business, sales increased 13% to €6.626 billion in 2006 from €5.861 billion in 2005 and TaylorMade-adidas Golf sales grew 21% to €856 million from €709 million.

Sales improved in all regions with sales in Europe increasing 31% to €4.162 billion from €3.166 billion; sales in North America rising 107% to total €3.234 billion compared with €1.561 billion; sales in Asia increasing 33% to reach €2.02 billion from €1.523 billion; and sales in Latin America improving 56% to €499 million from

€319 million. Excluding Reebok, sales grew 8% in Europe, 14% in North America, 20% in Asia and 31% in Latin America.

The group's net income increased 14% to €496 million from €434 million in 2005, driven by the strong sales and the lower tax rate, which fell 2.3 percentage points to 31.4%.

For 2007, the company expects to increase at a mid-single-digit rate is forecasting revenue growth to be weighted towards the second half of 2007.

Jhung Yuro launches new footwear collection

7 Mar 2007

Luxury lifestyle brand Jhung Yuro has launched the Ceasar Lunix collection, a new line of young men's 'affordable luxury' footwear, which will be sold exclusively at Finish Line stores during its debut season.

Targeting young men aged between 15 and 24, the line is said to be a more moderately priced extension of the existing Jhung Yuro brand.

ispo Russia winter 07 attracts 250 exhibitors

7 Mar 2007

A total of 250 exhibitors from 21 countries (2006: 230 brands from 21 countries) exhibited product ranges from the Winter Sport, Outdoor, Team Sport, Sportstyle, Boardsports and Running segments at ispo Russia winter 07, held in late February, attracting some 4,311 trade visitors.

Seminars and events held at the show focused on the topics the 'Main Trends in Sports Retail in Russia' and 'Sport Facilities'.

ispo Russia summer 07 will take place in Moscow on September 5-8.

Lectra appoints VP of Fashion

7 Mar 2007

France-based provider of CAD/CAM equipment and services to large-scale users of textiles, leather and industrial fabrics Lectra has named Paula Levy as vice president of Sales for Fashion for Lectra Americas. Based in New York City, she will be responsible for expanding Lectra's footprint in the fashion sector.

With more than 20 years experience in enterprise software industry, Ms Levy has worked with various companies in the retail, healthcare, manufacturing, and consumer product business sectors. Most recently, she was senior director of Sales and Marketing for Retaligent Solutions, Inc.

Sales slip at Rocky Brands

8 Mar 2007

US designer and manufacturer of footwear and apparel Rocky Brands, Inc. has reported lower sales for the fourth quarter and full year ended December 31.
For the fourth quarter, net sales decreased to $70.6 million from $74.9 million in the comparable period a year earlier. It also reported a net loss of $0.1 million versus net income of $2.6 million.

For the full year, the company reported net sales of $263.5 million, down from $296 million in 2005 and net income of $4.8 million versus $13 million.

Commenting on the results chairman and CEO, Mike Brooks, stated, "Our revenues came in slightly below our forecast primarily due to continued weakness in our women's western footwear category during the fourth quarter," adding, "That said, in the fourth quarter we did witness sales increases in our outdoor footwear and apparel on a year-over-year basis for the first time in 2006 as well as increased sales in our retail business."

The company's footwear and apparel is marketed under brand names such as Rocky Outdoor Gear, Georgia Boot, Durango, Lehigh, and the licensed brands Dickies, Zumfoot and Michelin.

Sales rise 43% at Zumiez

8 Mar 2007

US-based action sports-related apparel, footwear, equipment retailer Zumiez Inc. has posted total net sales of $20.7 million for the four-week period ended March 3—an increase of 43.9% compared with the $14.4 million reported for the comparable prior year period.
Comparable store sales also increased, rising 12.4%.

Danner launches new 'all condition' footwear

8 Mar 2007

Portland-based branded work and outdoor footwear provider Danner, Inc., a subsidiary of LaCrosse Footwear, Inc., has introduced its new 'All Climates, All Conditions' campaign.

The company's Hot Weather boots feature ventilation holes for increased breathability, light material for added airflow and perforated leather on the instep for extra

ventilation. The Hot Weather line currently offers work, uniform and military categories.

In its Temperate boot line, the company uses a waterproof Gore-Tex liner to protect feet and offers breathability, durability and comfort. The range includes outdoor, work, uniform, hunting and military footwear.

Its Mild Cold footwear is also built with a waterproof Gore-Tex liner and light insulation in hunting, work, uniform and military footwear.

For extreme and cold weather conditions, the company's Cold Weather boots for hunting and uniform footwear are built with a waterproof Gore-Tex liner and high insulation.

New Schoeller fabrics received well in Europe

8 Mar 2007

Swiss functional fabrics and technology developer Schoeller Textil AG's fabrics have been well received at the recent trade shows in Paris and Milan, which included fabric mixes with linen or cotton for spring/summer 2008 and wool for autumn/winter 2008/09 combined with the company's c_change and NanoSphere technology and its wind-repelling micro-coating.

According to the company, fabric developments with a masculine touch in a carbon look or as a twill in gold, silver, metallic and anthracite attracted buyers. Initially developed for the motorcycle sector, these fabrics have also made proved successful for trench coats. Demand for 'sheen and shine' and the company's various aluminium looks were also well received. Further successes included light linen blends and polyester fabrics with a discreet hint of gold.

Edana symposium in the Middle East proves a success

8 Mar 2007

305 participants from 36 countries—almost 40% of which came from the Middle East, Africa and Asia—took part in the first ever Middle East Nonwovens Symposium and Tabletop Exhibition in Dubai on February 20-21.

The symposium featured 13 speakers from both regional and global companies, illustrating several of the nonwovens growth markets including geotextiles and protective apparel, whilst some 35 companies from various European countries as well as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, India and Pakistan also promoted their products and services at the event.

With a positive outlook in terms of its demographics and economics, the Middle East is expected to be one of the world's fastest areas of growth for nonwovens and related products in the future.

Apranga Group extends Inditex chain in Latvia

8 Mar 2007

Retail company Apranga Group has opened two stores in Riga, the first Bershka and the second Zara store in the Latvian capital.

Both Zara and Bershka belong to retailer Inditex, alongside Kiddy's Class, Pull & Bear, Massimo Dutti, Bershka, Stradivarius, Oysho and Zara Home.

Apranga Group operates 67 stores chain in the Baltic with 47 in Lithuania, 17 in Latvia and three in Estonia. 2006 turnover in Latvia totalled LVL14.3 million (€20.5 million), 46.4% higher than in 2005.

Iconix to buy Rocawear

8 Mar 2007

US-based owner, licensor and marketer Iconix Brand Group, Inc. has entered into a definitive agreement to purchase lifestyle apparel brand Rocawear. The purchase price will be $204 million in cash with contingent payments of an additional $35 million of Iconix stock, based upon the brand surpassing certain performance thresholds.

With annual sales of over $700 million, Rocawear's co-founder musician Jay-Z will remain in charge of all product development, marketing and licensing.

The acquisition is anticipated to close in March and is subject to customary closing conditions.

Slight improvement in sales at Foot Locker

8 Mar 2007

New York-based specialty athletic retailer Foot Locker, Inc. has reported a slight improvement in its fourth quarter and full year results, ended February 3.

Sales increased 5.6% for the fourth quarter to reach $1,652 million compared with $1,564 million in the comparable quarter a year earlier, although comparable store sales decreased 3.4%. Net income increased to $113 million from $96 million.

For the full year, sales improved 1.7% to $5,750 million from $5,653 million in the prior year, whilst comparable store sales slipped 1.2%. Net income for the full year was $251 million.

In 2007, the company plans to open 100 new stores and close between 100 and 150 poorly performing stores, whilst remodelling or relocating 200 to 300 stores in its existing athletic footwear and apparel formats. It also aims to open 70 new family footwear stores under the Footquarters name and expand its franchising operation in the Middle East with 15 additional stores.

Improved sales at American Eagle Outfitters

9 Mar 2007

Sales for the four weeks, ended March 3, increased 16% to $166.3 million at US sporting retailer American Eagle Outfitters, Inc. This compared with $143.1 million reported in the corresponding period last year.

The company designs and sells its own brand of casual clothing, outerwear, footwear, and swimwear. It currently operates 834 stores.

Q4 net sales rise 9.9% at K2

9 Mar 2007

For its fourth quarter, ended December 31, American branded consumer products company K2 Inc. reported net sales of $388.6 million versus $353.5 million in the prior year, an increase of 9.9%. Net sales for the full year reached a record $1.4 billion, 6.2% higher than in 2005. Adjusted net income for the fourth quarter was $13.4 million compared with $14.7 million whilst adjusted net income for 2006 was $44.8 million compared with $39 million in 2005, an increase of 14.8%.

President and chief executive officer Wayne Merck attributed the strong growth in its Action and Team section to new product developments ranging from premium alpine skis and integrated binding systems to high performance baseball and softball bats, gloves and accessories.

Net sales of winter products and in-line skates totalled $178.2 million in the fourth quarter, an increase of 22.6%, primarily as a result of increased sales of K2 and Völkl alpine skis and Marker bindings. In the Marine and Outdoor segment, Shakespeare fishing tackle and monofilament and Stearns marine and outdoor products generated net sales of $74.9 million, a 6.5% increase compared with the 2005 quarter. On a slightly negative note, Apparel and Footwear net sales slipped 10.4% to $45.6 million due to reduced sales of Marmot winter outerwear products and to declines in sales of skateboard shoes and apparel.

Pantone and Clariant form colour development partnership

9 Mar 2007

US-based provider of colour standards for the design industries Pantone, Inc. and the Textiles Business of Swiss specialty chemicals company Clariant International Ltd. have formed a strategic partnership to focus on textile colour development.

This partnership will connect users of the Pantone Fashion & Home Colour System with Clariant's network of technical specialists and colorants technology. The combined capabilities aim to improve the colour matching and approval cycles, potentially reducing colour development times and associated management costs by 50% or more.

New products and services will be available later this month.

Merino wool proves popular at fashion festival

9 Mar 2007

Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) has presented new developments in Australian Merino wool as part of the L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival (LMFF), which is taking place from March 4-10.

Images featuring the Josh Goot black pure Merino wool tank were printed onto wool canvas, in order to demonstrate the versatility of the Australian Merino fibre. The display also presented work from photographers including Ben Watts, Richard Bailey, Georges Antoni, Jay Harrison, Max Doyle and Jon Compson.

Over 300 guests attended the event from across the globe including buyers, designers, manufacturers, fashion business personnel and media representatives.

Finish Line posts positive Q4 and full year results

9 Mar 2007

US-based athletic apparel and footwear retailer The Finish Line, Inc. has reported a 7.5% increase in net sales for the fourteen weeks ended March 3. Sales totalled $429 million compared with the $399.2 million reported for the thirteen weeks ended February 25, 2006. Excluding the fourteenth week this year (approximately $24.2 million of sales), sales increased by 1.4% over the comparable thirteen-week period last year. For the fifty-three weeks, net sales were $1.338 billion—an increase of 2.5% compared with the $1.306 billion reported for the fifty-two weeks ended February 25, 2006. Excluding the fifty-third week this year, net sales

increased by 0.6%.

China and Russia lead international growth at Umbro

9 Mar 2007

UK-based sportswear manufacturer Umbro plc has posted preliminary results for 2006. Total wholesale sales were £409.4 million, an increase of 16.3% over 2005 and up 14.9% compared with 2004, the previous major international tournament year. Sales from outside the UK constituted 64% of this total. There was growth across all regions, particularly from Greater China, with a 48% increase and Russia with 40% growth.

Profit before tax and exceptionals was £26.6 million, an increase of 15.7% versus 2005 and a 21.9% increase over 2004. Branded product categories grew by 10.2% at constant exchange rates, in line with the stated objective of 10%.

The 2006 World Cup also boosted growth in the UK market by 22% compared with 2005 and saw significantly increased sales of England soccer kits and associated items.

Q1 income declines at Quiksilver

9 Mar 2007

US-based outdoor sports lifestyle company Quiksilver, Inc. has posted a decline in net income for its first quarter ended January 31. Net income amounted to $2.5 million compared with $18.6 million in the prior-year quarter. Net revenues increased 2% to $552.5 million from $541.1 million in the first quarter of 2006.

Net revenues in the Americas increased 9% to reach $240.6 million compared with $220.7 million in the previous year. European net revenues decreased 3% to $254 million from $261.2 million. In euros, European net revenues decreased 11% for the same period. Asia Pacific net revenues fell 2% to $57.2 million in the first quarter from $58.3 million in the prior-year period.

Chairman of the board and chief executive officer Robert McKnight, Jr. expressed the company’s disappointment with these results. He said, “Feedback on the winter sports season, which was the worst in decades, has further deteriorated over the last several weeks. We are experiencing poor reorders, heavy markdowns, and a significant reduction in the order book for next season and the effects of that can be expected to continue throughout the year. On a more positive note, Quiksilver, Roxy and DC continue to prosper.”

Revenues fall at Ashworth

9 Mar 2007

US-based designer of on-course golf apparel and golf-inspired sportswear Ashworth, Inc. has posted lower revenues for its first quarter ended January 31.

Consolidated net revenue decreased 5.8% to $38.3 million from $40.6 million in the first quarter of 2006, whilst the company reported a consolidated first quarter net loss of $2.4 million, compared with a net loss of $50,000 a year earlier.

Net revenue for the domestic segment (including Gekko Brands, LLC) decreased 7.9% to $32 million from $34.8 million for the same period of the prior year, whilst net revenue from the international segment (including Ashworth, U.K., Ltd.) increased 7.1% to $6.3 million from $5.8 million for the same period of the prior year.

Meanwhile, the company has named Eric Hohl as executive vice president, chief financial officer and treasurer, effective March 19. In his new role, Mr Hohl will be responsible for all finance as well as various other administrative functions at the company and will report directly to Peter Weil, president and CEO.

Veltex launches distribution operation in China

9 Mar 2007

US-based designer and manufacturer of brand named apparel and caps Veltex Corporation has signed contracts with the municipal government of Wuxi City, Jiangsu, which allow Veltex to begin retail and wholesale operations at the city's International Textile and Fashion Mega-Mall (ITFM).

Covering more than 1.3 million square metres, the ITFM complex, which is scheduled to be officially opened on March 28, is said to be the world's largest textile and clothing trade centre.