# Focus on winter 2001



*Collection: Winter 2001/Luhta Tokka Tribe Ladies*

In stark contrast to last year, Ispo Winter 2000 opened its doors in February to let in not only a record 40,000 trade visitors, but spring-like weather. The optimistic mood this engendered was borne out by the order books at the end of the exhibition.

Buyers from over 100 countries (99 in 1999) milled through the ten 'Worlds of Sport' which presented a comprehensive preview of products for Winter 2001. These products continue to multiply and diversify while becoming increasingly technical.

Fabric and material descriptions only make sense to the public if swing tags and labels are informative but simple. Fibre manufacturer DuPont, whose segment representatives were out in force at Ispo, are increasingly concerned by the fraudulent use of its brand names. A recent survey carried out in the UK by the motorcyclist publication "Ride" on 40 gloves all bearing the Kevlar brand in prominent display, found that only one or two even came near the quality control DuPont enforces in order to justify the safety promise behind the brand - in the company's words: 'An out and out consumer fraud'.

## ...on piste in safety

Safety for all sports equipment and apparel is becoming an increasingly important feature, not only from the fibre producers and manufacturers point of view, but also from the retailers, standpoint. The German journal SRE reports on the interest being taken in questions of liability, common safety standards and product standardisation, and at the directions as devised in Brussels on the intelligence gathered from the sporting-goods industry, and its effect on retailers. Safety, from a different angle, is inherent in most sportswear. If we begin with the extremities, gloves jump to mind as the article which incorporates the latest technology with high-tech and intelligent materials and comfort systems. The safety aspect here is top priority according to glove manufacturers Reusch. In its 'Carbon-Tec' ski glove model it has incorporated a protection system perfected in motocross. It protects the back of the hand from blows, a boon for slalom racers. Reusch is using an intelligent material from Schoeller which incorporates ComforTemp for the first time - a climate control phase change system based on microscopic paraffin capsules which store heat and release it when needed.

Its most interesting development has to be the AIS glove (Alpine Information System). A control watch in the left hand glove (from Ciclo Sport) is based on speed measurement developed in space technology. This uses a formula based on the difference in altitude and air pressure to measure the present, average and potential maximum performance of the skier. Its barometer displays air pressure, weather tendency for the six hours ahead, indicates present altitude, the sum of the days' and years', accumulated ascent and descent; has time, date, stop watch, temperature and altitude/time countdown functions, to mention just some of its features. The right hand glove has an AIS Tipp in the index finger so that the watch can be programmed without taking it off. A strap is included so that the watch can be worn without gloves.

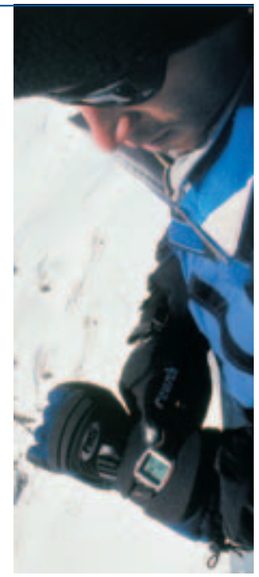
Almost half the injuries sustained by snowboarders and carvers are in the wrist. To protect this joint Ziener has introduced its 'Wrist Support System'. A padded, preformed wrist splint, fixed at three points between upper and under hand, stabilises and protects the wrist without impinging on its flexibility. Xeiner's 'Xerox' Funcarver glove in cross-look has Kevlar strengthening for the safety features: thumb protection, sliding pads, rail finger and flex zone on thumb joint.

This company follows the philosophy that previously one only went skiing when the weather was fine, but nowadays one goes skiing when one has holidays or time. This has brought about a revolution in material technology for both gloves and skiwear. Body climate, a feeling of warmth and well-being, can only be achieved by the right product. In its opinion, Schoeller's ComforTemp-based fabric has many uses in its glove and skiwear collection. Ziener also uses the Gore-Tex S-key micro-chip in its ski and snowboard gloves. No more fumbling for lift passes, just a flick of the wrist and the turnstiles open. This system is in use in over 90% of Alpine resorts in the Austrian, Italian and Swiss Alps. The safety factor here is that, if you should loose the gloves, the chip card can be cancelled as each one has its specific code number which only the machine readers can decode.

Children are in the headlines when accidents happen, but heads can be protected on the ski and snowboard slopes. Uvex has produced a kids helmet, 'Lite Cap', in designs that are bound to appeal to the young. For the boarder, cross and freerider fans it introduced a helmet style tested in a wind tunnel: "X-Race" is a streamlined form which incorporates both a ventilation and an acoustic system. To its comprehensive new range of ski goggles the company has added the "F501 Mirror". Designed originally as motorbike goggles and successfully used in the Paris-Dakar Rally, they are also eminently suitable for all boarders, freeriders, bladers and skiers, particularly those who wear helmets.

The Italian company Cassin produces lightweight climbing helmets. Its 'Mercury' model has a polycarbonate outer shell which is fused onto the polystyrene inner cap and then treated with an anti-collision substance. The ECS (Extra Comfort System) mesh inner structure and adjustable chin strap ensures a good fit and ventilation whatever the shape of the head. This is just one idea developed through the co-operation between mountaineer/manufacturer Riccardo Cassin and climber/technical advisor Patrick Edlinger.

An international congress for winter sports medicine, held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen recently, reported that the readiness to accept risk by young sportspersons is increasing dramatically and paralleled by the number of accidents. The bigger the risk, the greater the thrill: adventure and freedom are in opposition to the gentle tourism idea. Surgeons and doctors were informed of the latest sports - carving, snowboarding and free-skiing, about new ski boots and bindings, performance and health factors. But it is not only the young that are at risk. Those over-50s whose bones are more brittle and, it was suggested, particularly those who still ski as they did 20 years ago, may have a tendency to overestimate their skill or endurance. When coupled with afternoon tiredness and possible alcohol consumption they are no less to blame for the rising accident figures.The possibilities for sportswear manufacturers to counteract these tendencies are limited to their producing safe equipment and outdoor apparel which, while looking fashionable, conforms to the requirements of wind and weather.



*The AIS glove, a safety feature from Reusch.*

## ...on piste in fashion

Ispo's fashion gurus caught the impulse for future sportswear in their exhibition of trends and styles, basically dividing these into four categories: Competitive - a theme for speed and primary colours, racing yellow, electric blue and Ferrari red. Very technical fabrics underlining the aerodynamics of anatomical styling, protecting against wind and weather. High-tech materials, light and tough. New coatings and laminates, Neoprene, breathable and stretch fabrics for optimum freedom of movement and body control.

Cultural - a global mix between East and West, rustic optics, hairy fabrics and fun furs, new doubleface qualities for winter Bohemians with a sheepskin look; tulle and lace-type fabrics, combined with polar fleece and cool nylon. Layer over layer is still a popular theme and the many colours here were often in opposition to each other.

Frozen - describes best of all the latest ski and snow apparel. Silver, ice and blue, milky white and light shaded and transparent are the cool frosty tones. Sharp definition, clear cut architectural lines. Zippers and pockets are all important where mobile 'phones, keys, disc players and snow glasses can be stowed away. Fabrics tend to surprise through special effects; paper and silicone-like fabrics, super smooth and laminated effects, blow up segments and flat-quilting create more than just surface interest.

Industrial - gives many options for sportswear. Cross-over apparel combining lifestyle with sportswear to go style-surfing through life. Classic shapes for the slopes in bold colours, urban neutrals with lively yellows and strawberry shades. Nature collides with high-tech here in fabrics. Fluffy optics, knits and thermal fabrics, doubleface effects and dynamic nylon qualities, often with carbon, copper or other metallic fibres.



The Scandinavian skiwear manufacturers have always understood the effects of low temperature on performance. Their designs and fabric choices for the Winter 2001 reflect their history but they have nevertheless gone all out for the design and colour stakes.

This change was particularly noticeable in the Luhta label which used polyester Charmeuse, and crash optic "Inox" a polyamide diagonal in pink, lilac and silver - the basic colours in all its ranges. The Sport Ladies collection comprised over thirty garments, from overalls to jackets and vests with hoods, pullovers in cotton-Lycra mix or fleece with a lambs-wool optic. Fake fur is much in evidence and silhouettes are slimmer due to an improved method of quilting. Tokka Tribe, from the same company, produces casual wear for autumn through winter and the sophistication here comes as a surprise. Long skirts with cord pull around the bottom seam detail. Pockets on the fleece tops are in matching fabric. Vests and pants are matched or mixed with Loden-like jackets and tops, and models in cottage style would look equally at home at the off-piste ice-bar or in town.

Leading ladies off into a 'White Wonderland', Klepper introduced a sportswear collection in bi-coloured changeant fabrics, with sports jackets in specially light and soft-to-the-touch Gore-Tex laminate. Jackets have an inner life; pockets for all manner of items: lipstick, mobile 'phone and organiser holders. Classic colours are popular but it is the silver grey, nougat and winter whites through to blue which predominate. Klepper allows the men to shine too, using Aquastop Plus on lightweight shiny outer fabrics and colour linings on hoods often trimmed with fleece. Micro-fleece rollnecks team with jackets and can be worn in combination with the ski garments.

Another company producing ski and sportswear in an interchangeable or combination mode is Ellesse. Its 'Before, During and After' theme in sports and leisurewear can take one from the piste to the tennis court or into town, and always look right. Employing some of the newest technical materials, such as breathable ripstop nylon with Dry-tex, Sympatex and Thermore, and an increased use of Polartec fleece, Ellesse maintains its high-quality range. And for a company with such Italian origins, there is no slack off in design and colours are simply classical red, blue and white complemented by pigeon grey and black. Its technical Racing Line boasts a complete range of garments to meet the extreme criteria demanded by sportspersons, and all lines team up with a full range of accessories.

Double jackets for all outdoor activities are a big feature for snow sports. The advantages are that the garments are designed to be worn together or apart, and are cut accordingly. Of particular interest was an example from Scandinavian company Skila, a bright red zipped-in 'Windstopper' fleece which, when taken out of its 'Winter White' Gore-Tex jacket, can be zipped-up rather than having to be pulled over one's head. Coupled with its range of body bags in fake grizzly fur and a range of complementary accessories, this is another company from the far north whose products well deserve the 'fashionable' tag.

*Left: Rucksacks Winter 2001 Big Pack*

What characterises the Big Pack winter collection for 2001 is variety in clearly defined product groups. Catering from underwear to outerwear and everything in between, this company produces quality products for expeditions into the mountains or icy wastes all year round. At Ispo it presented a new ultralight sleeping bag and the C-Class - a new sleeping bag generation, as well as its special technical ski functional clothing for alpinists and tour boarders. Thermo is a new generation of down jackets and technical, fashionable fleece wear, particularly double jackets in Memotex with fleece inner jackets which can be purchased separately. Its Polar Range of down jackets in Memotex 2000 is of consistently high quality due to the precision of the quality control process, and its Blueberry ranges have been designed by women for women to ensure good looks and comfort.

Big Pack announced its new business partnership with Japanese manufacturer and distributor of outdoor and camping equipment, Logos Corporation of Osaka. This co-operation has resulted in Big Pack planning to open two shops and a warehouse in Japan this year.

French company Rossignol introduced a revised range of skiwear at Ispo. The jackets and pants are in Gore-Tex fabric, while the use of breathable Thinsulate along with fleece linings offer additional warmth and comfort. Double jackets are a feature here too. Its competition suits range from the practical, warming Long Shell to a Speed Suit, all in Taslan, in racing colours of yellow/black and red/black. A special range for boarders and carvers, the 'Stamina Line', and a range of ladies skiwear in Gore-Tex Calypso, rounds off the collection for the coming winter.

New Transactive, the innovative membrane from Sympatex, was used in many collections at Ispo. To explain the advantages of this product to the consumer, Vaude, together with Sympatex, will be starting a promotional campaign this summer. Vaude is also using Windproof for some fleece jackets for the ski and outdoor sector - one of the few jackets in fleece to come with a detachable hood. An improved Polartec fleece from Malden Mills, Thermal Pro, with a strengthened pile which, through its composition and structure, retains more warmth, is also new to the range. Space technology brought 'Outlast' phase change into the world and Vaude are incorporating this in jackets and pants for high alpine sports.

A final comment on safety followed the horrendous number of avalanche fatalities in 1999, with a large number of gadgets shown at Ispo to enable easy tracking of the victims. Where time is of the essence - 15 minutes is the time reckoned to ensure being dug out alive, after that, one's chances dwindle rapidly - all ideas are welcome.

*Kay Turtle*



*Tourenboarding*
*Photo: Big Pack*