Business Week
20 Aug - 24 Aug

New kit wows cyclists

24 Aug 2007

Australian specialist sports apparel manufacturer 2XU, which has long specialised in the triathlon market, has made a move into mainstream cycling.

Under the product name Elite, it recently launched a new cycling bib and shorts.

The shorts are in the company's own moisture-wicking Kinetic fabric, which the manufacturer claims also offers abrasion resistance, built-in antimicrobial properties, and some compressive benefits thanks to its high elastane and Lycra content.

The matching top is made of a blend of 2XU's SMD Cool (Super Micro Denier) fabric on the front of the body and upper sleeves, combined with more openly woven mesh fabrics elsewhere for effective moisture transport and increased airflow in warm weather. Further ventilation is provided by the 1/2-length zipper, and impregnated silver for odour management.

Key markets grow for India

24 Aug 2007

India's textile and clothing exports to the US and the member states of the European Union recorded a growth of 8% and 14% respectively in 2006 compared to the previous year.

These two markets together account for two-thirds of India's total textiles and clothing exports.

German Football Association sticks with adidas

24 Aug 2007

Nike's bid to supply kit to the football world's top international and club sides hit a stumbling block today when the German Football Association (DFB) turned down a reported offer of €500 million to continue doing business with its traditional supplier, adidas.

The German firm has been supplying the national team since the 1950s and currently pays an estimated €11 million a year for the privilege.

A dispute over the length of the current contract between the two was not enough, in the end, to let Nike in on this iconic partnership.

Venus signs clothing deal

24 Aug 2007

Tennis star Venus Williams has agreed to help design and promote a new range of high-performance lifestyle and active clothing for retailer Steve & Barry's.

The company serves the lower end of the market by keeping all item prices below $20.

Venus Williams is more qualified than most sports stars to put her name to clothing lines because she studied fashion design at the Art Institute of Florida after leaving school.

In the past she has worn on court clothing she designed herself.

The new collection will be called EleVen, to represent the house number of the tennis player's childhood home. She will wear some items from it during the US Open event, which starts next week in New York.

The whole collection will go on sale in branches of Steve & Barry's in November.

Conservation initiatives open to all

24 Aug 2007

The Conservation Association set up by the European Outdoor Group has decided to introduce a lower level of membership. For a fee of €500 a year, smaller manufacturers, distributors and retailers in the outdoor space can take part in the group's discussions on conservation. This fee will be valid for all companies turning over €3 million or less.

The Conservation Association has already provided funds totalling €125,000 for five separate projects.

Cognis reports sales increase

23 Aug 2007

Chemicals company Cognis has increased its sales by 6.2% for the first half of the year.

Chief executive, Carlos Trius, mentioned the company's functional products business unit as one of the main con-

tributors to this success. He said it and the care chemicals and nutrition and health parts of the business had been able to focus on " innovation-driven growth markets".

Among the products he had in mind is the Active Textiles range, which includes Skintex, a specialist treatment that garment manufacturers can add to sportswear and other apparel to help wearers take better care of their skin.

Mr Trius pointed that these good results helped make up for the higher raw materials costs Cognis and all its rivals are trying to cope with.

Demand for textiles products was particularly high in Asia, the company said.

Italian company opens service centre in China

23 Aug 2007

Italian textile manufacturer Smit Textile has expanded service to its customers in China with the opening of a new service centre in Hangzhou.

The new facility includes a weaving room equipped with air-jet and rapier machines.

HQ jobs go in reorganisation

23 Aug 2007

Textile manufacturer Unifi has announced 25 job losses among its corporate and manufacturing-support staff. The move is part of an ongoing effort to cut costs.

Chief operating and chief financial officer, William Lowe, said on making the announcement: "It is imperative that we continue to match our support costs to the size of our current business. We absolutely must institute a cost-conscious culture."

Unifi has not had a profitable quarter since 2003 as it has struggled amid a downturn in the US textile industry.

It has eliminated at least 2,000 jobs in North Carolina since the start of the decade. Its chief executive, Brian Parke, left the company at the start of this month.

Wilson highlights new green initiative

22 Aug 2007

Wilson Racquet Sports has launched a new environmental initiative with a programme to reduce waste and develop more environmentally friendly manufacturing processes.

"We felt a growing obligation to elevate our environmental focus and take some necessary steps to make a positive impact in several product areas," said Jon Muir, general manager of Wilson. "We've been quietly working on implementing a number of important changes to our production and manufacturing processes over the past year, and we felt it was time to make both the industry and consumers aware of the initiative. This will be a growing area of focus for our product development for 2008 and beyond."

All PET Wilson tennis ball cans, for example, now contain a minimum of 25% post-consumer recycled PET. For 2007 alone, the company anticipates that this will result in a reduction of 160,000 kilos of landfill waste.

For Wilson's accessories and indoor racquet sports products, new changes in packaging and manufacturing processes are also being implemented. Wilson has already replaced the non-recyclable PVC packaging for their racquetball gloves with recyclable cardboard.

Additional packaging changes are being made to other indoor products such as protective eyewear for squash and racquetball that will reduce overall packaging waste.

New range majors on high-performance fabrics

22 Aug 2007

Outdoor brand Regatta has launched its promotional and corporate collection for 2008. It includes a substantial range of products in high-end performance fabrics.

Examples include the Isotex 5000 and lightweight Isolite 5000 fabrics play a part. Both are waterproof, windproof and breathable.

The range includes waterproof and softshell jackets, 3-in-1s and fleeces. One of the highlights, according to Regatta, is the Stance women's waterproof shell jacket.

This product is made from waterproof and breathable Isotex Taslan fabric and features taped seams, a mesh-lined upper body, a concealed hood with adjuster, Velcro adjustable cuffs, an internal mobile phone pocket and an adjustable shockcord hem and waist.

Underarm pads to stop sweat stains

22 Aug 2007

US manufacturer Kleinert has begun distributing a new moisture-management product, an underarm DryShield pad that absorbs perspiration and prevents stains on clothes.

Sportswear and women's tops are among the markets the company will target.

The pads can be disposable or washable, with some even coming sewn into garments.

The company claims that one in four people suffers from excessive perspiration.

Spain spends less on textiles

22 Aug 2007

A new report suggests spending on textiles in Spain has fallen.

Figures for the first half of the year indicate a total spend in the sector of €9.2 billion, a 3.5% decrease on the same period last year.

The report, by a specialist consultancy called TNS Worldpanel, show that men's clothing is the area to have suffered most, with a downturn of 4%. Spend on children's clothes have decreased by more, 4.4%, but observers say this has more to do with price reductions than with a drop in volume.

In spite of the negative numbers, TNS Worldpanel offered encouragement to specialist clothing retailers. Only they saw an increase in sales—5.4%—while department stores and other retailers with a mixed offering saw sales fall.

Fila USA enters corporate golf market with key appointment

22 Aug 2007

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Athletic apparel industry veteran Peter Holmberg is joining Fila USA as national sales manager for the golf and corporate division, reporting to director of golf, Jeff Clark.

Mr. Holmberg joins Fila USA after spending the past nine years at Ashworth, where he held a variety of sales and product marketing positions and was instrumental in the launch and development of its corporate division.

Most recently, he was the executive vice-president for sales for the Ashworth brand and for the licensed Callaway Golf Apparel brand. Prior to Ashworth, Mr Holmberg held senior sales positions with Cutter and Buck where, again, he started the corporate division.

In his Fila role, he will focus on increasing golf apparel distribution in specialty trade channels as well as guiding the company's entry into corporate sales. He will oversee the golf sales force and will recruit new members to join the sales team to penetrate additional markets around the country.

"Peter's industry experience is extraordinary," said Jeff Clark on announcing the appointment. "He brings creativity and a strategic mind to guide the golf business to the next level and introduce Fila Golf to corporate America. We look forward to continued growth in this highly visible category."

Dow raises prices

20 Aug 2007

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The Dow Chemical Company has announced that it will raise from September 1 the price of its acrylic acid and esters product range.

The products, also known as acrylic monomers or acrylates, are used in woven and non-woven textiles.

"The price for propylene, a key raw material, has increased 30% over the last seven months and has outpaced our ability to implement price increases, thus severely compressing our margins," explained Mark Bassett, global business director for Dow's acrylic monomers business. "Our margins are being squeezed and some key alcohols and the resulting acrylates have gotten tight.

"This action is necessary to help offset the increase on propylene and other key raw materials we are seeing in the marketplace and to enable us to continue to be a reliable supplier."

Prices will go up by between $0.03 and $0.05 per pound in the US, between €50 and €80 per tonne in Europe and between $70 and $110 per tonne in all other markets.

Nonwovens — quantities and prices up

20 Aug 2007

According to figures released by Edana—the international association serving the nonwovens and related products industries—production of nonwovens in Europe grew by 6.5% last year to reach 1.49 million tonnes.

According to an estimate, based on the same sample of companies in 2005 and 2006, the average price of nonwovens also appears to have increased by almost 3% from €3.33 to €3.43 per kg. As a result the total turnover of the European nonwovens industry is estimated at around €5.1 million.

Pierre Wiertz,general manager of Brussels-based Edana said on revealing the figures that the highest growth seemed to have come from companies involved in the needling process, with an increase of 13.8 % on the previous year.

Polymer-based nonwovens also witnessed an impressive growth with over 10% increase in 2006.

The main end-use for nonwovens remains the hygiene market with a 33% share of deliveries, but the most significant growth area for nonwovens in 2006 was garments (14.4 %).

Polypropylene, either in fibre or granule form, continues to be the most important polymer used in the European nonwovens industry accounting for 766,200 tonnes, 48.4% of the total fibre.

In 2006, the 27 European Union member states exported 215,554 tonnes of nonwovens (compared to 193,716 tonnes in 2005) at a value of almost €928 million, which represents a 11.3% increase in volume and 14.4% in value compared to the previous year.

Innovation on show

20 Aug 2007

Australian Wool Innovation, the research, development and marketing body for Australian Merino wool, is preparing to showcase more than fifteen new developments at the Spin Expo event in Shanghai from September 5–7.

The organisation, which works on behalf of Australian woolgrowers, says the new developments will highlight the versatility and durability of the fibre.