Winter success leads to summer launch

Four-times World Cup gold-medal winner Marc Girardelli hung up his skis competitively in 1996, but his passion for the sport, and for outdoor activity in general, has never left him.

That's why he has devoted the last few years to building and growing his own outdoor clothing brand, which is specifically for children. He recently expanded it to launch, for the first time, a summer collection to add to the winter-wear range he first brought out in 2005 under the Marc Girardelli Ski Wear label.

This is the route he decided to follow after setting up and running for four years the longest indoor ski site in the world. The 600-metre long facility, called the Alpincenter, is in Bottrop, a town in the industrial Rhine-Ruhr region of Germany. He built the business up to have in the end 700,000 visitors attending the centre a year.

"I suppose this proves that it's not just about the outdoors," Mr Girardelli says. "You can do a lot indoors too. I would say 90% of the people we had coming to the centre were beginners, and I can tell you that 40,000 children signed up for our coaching sessions. We gave them a good deal: two hours' tuition, plus lunch for €13 each session. It was not bad."

Such modesty from a former world champion. It was so "not bad" that Dutch hotel and leisure chain Van der Valk stepped in to buy the Alpincenter in the summer of 2004, giving its founder the capital to move into the outdoor apparel market instead. And, incidentally, although it's true what he says about the centre providing him, for once, with some indoor success, he constantly played visitors videos of the Dolomites and other Alpine ranges to show them what 'real' skiing looked like. Eventually, he even installed a travel agency in the complex so that his customers could book up for trips to any of eight winter sports centres in the mountains.

Looking beyond winter activity was a natural step for him to take, along with his manufacturing partner, Liegelind, which has its headquarters near Ulm in Germany. The Marc Girardelli Ski Wear selection sold well from the outset, and quickly built up a presence internationally. The Ultra indoor ski facility in Dubai stocked it soon after its launch, and outlets such as Giacomelli Sport in Italy also found the products to be popular among customers.

Liegelind has paid tribute to the former skier for his attention to detail and quality, pointing out that the clothes offer an impressive level of functionality and practicality, with a high degree of comfort, good fit, the best quality functional fabric to make garments wind-resistant, waterproof and breathable, welded seams on all jackets and trousers to keep rain and snow out, fleece linings to keep little ones warm and cosy, and even special pockets for ski-passes.

Summer assortment

The new spring and summer collection, which will be available in retail outlets in Europe next year, stays true to the same principles. It includes a wide range of garments for smaller children, with sizes up to 152 centimetres, and a separate range for juniors, up to 176 centimetres tall. The starting size is 92 centimetres, suitable for children as young as two.

There are trousers of different lengths, including long trousers that convert to capri pants using zip attachments at the knee, conventional capris, and shorts. The materials used include the polyamide Tactel to offer easy-care and quick-drying functionality. There are also PU-coated jackets, soft-shell jackets, body-warmers, cotton T-shirts and tops in a variety of bright colours, and all with the famous skier's logo.

Mr Girardelli believes the apparel will work well for any activity, which, as he knows from having four children of his own, is quite a claim. Hiking, biking, skating and streetwear are all part of his vision, but, as we have seen, he has a long-standing commitment to teaching skiing and encouraging young people to take to the hills, so it's no surprise to learn that there is a serious side to the collection too.

The jackets have a waterproofing specification of up to 7000 millimetres, have welded seams, carefully finished hoods and mesh lining to offer children decent protection in wet and windy weather. The former champion skier has also built plenty of reflective material into his designs so that the children who wear them can stay safe while they enjoy some outdoor fun.



Apparel featuring the Girardelli logo has been praised for its attention to detail and quality.

Marc Girardelli

