Golf apparel – on and off the course

by Mel Cheskin, MBS, C.Ped

With footwear giants Nike, adidas and Puma gaining an ever increasing percentage of the performance apparel market, it is not surprising that golf apparel trends are following more physically demanding sports such as running, tennis and soccer.

Golf apparel has been moving toward the performance category for some years; now the category is performance for both men and women. With up to 85% of men's golf shirt sales and 65% of women's tops made from technical fabrics, the performance category has become more conducive to comfort, breathability and moisture wicking performance. Analogous with the slimmer, more athletic fit, performance fibres—as opposed to traditional cotton blends—hold their shape better and colours seem to stay more vibrant for longer. Fit is an important factor when sizing up body-hugging technical fabrics and, of course, the slim fit is not for everyone. The trend is for a lot more XL, XXL and XXXL sizes, the latter being a new size definition for most manufacturers.

Protecting the environment is an ongoing process and being accountable to consumers and suppliers in terms of the environment is of great importance within the golfing community. In addition to making great strides in reducing or phasing out PVC content in hard goods, golf apparel brands are laying emphasis on natural fibres and blends with 'organic' and 'green' hangtags in keeping with values that are important in the world today.

Another trend emerging from the new slimmer performance look, at least for men, is that the trendier, more versatile golf shirts can be worn both on and off the course. Logos are becoming more subtle and the richer, smarter looking shirt can easily be worn with a pair of slacks for casual evening wear. For men it is all



Lija golfwear for women offers body-hugging support, moisture wicking and a UV protection factor of 49 plus.

Lija

about technical fabrics; ladies tops are more fashion-forward, in terms of styling and colouration. Nike and adidas' ladies' collections scream technology for the athletic figure that is being heavily influenced by younger female players such as Michelle Wie, Natalie Gulbis and Paula Creamer on the LPGA tour.

Branded apparel notes

Nike Golf's integrated women's designs encompass head-to-toe colour and design synergy between skirts and tops. Colour combinations such as blue ice, watermelon and trails-end brown are offered in nylon/Lycra materials, which are both soft and stretchy to the touch. New for men in 2009 is the Nike Tour Line, comprising Dri Fit UV, body mapping and Nike Sphere, which is all about zoned performance.

The adidas Golf apparel range for ladies features a new ClimaCool sleeveless print mock shirt created with an effective blend of polyester, and a Lycra CoolMax Extreme jersey. This combination of high-tech materials allows the skin to breathe comfortably even when temperatures rise to 85° or 95°F.

Adidas Golf's Formation shirt for men is a complete upper-body system complete with raglan sleeve construction and ClimaCool technology designed to promote a sleeker, more fluid and more dynamic swing without restricting movement. It was created after the company recognised that golf shirts are contorted and distorted with every swing, often resulting in discomfort for the golfer, not to mention the negative effect of this on performance.

Puma Golf's latest innovation is InvisiBonding – an alternative to classic stitching. Two layers of material are fused together, resulting in a lightweight, durable bond and a smooth surface that reduces friction and potential irritation. This technology helps to provide a garment that is lighter in weight, more comfortable and also extremely durable. Puma's golf apparel for men and tops for ladies feature a catalogue of technology including: advanced ventilation, moisture management and UV protection materials and treatments such as Lycra manmade elastic fibre produced by Invista, Teflon Fabric Protector and Cyclofresh - circular sugar molecules that absorb organic perspiration particles simply by entrapping them.

Greg Norman's collection (a subsidiary of Reebok/adidas) has emphasised its commitment to technology in men's shirts with its Temperature Control Technology, which reacts to cool weather by warming the body's temperature through a state-of-the-technology internal climate regulation system that provides freedom of movement and is wrinkle, fade, pill and shrink resistant in the wash. The Greg Norman women's collection is still very much fashion-oriented, while maintaining a basic performance platform. For a new look at colour, this season's palette consists of three played-up primary colours tying in black and white with one other basic contrasting splash.



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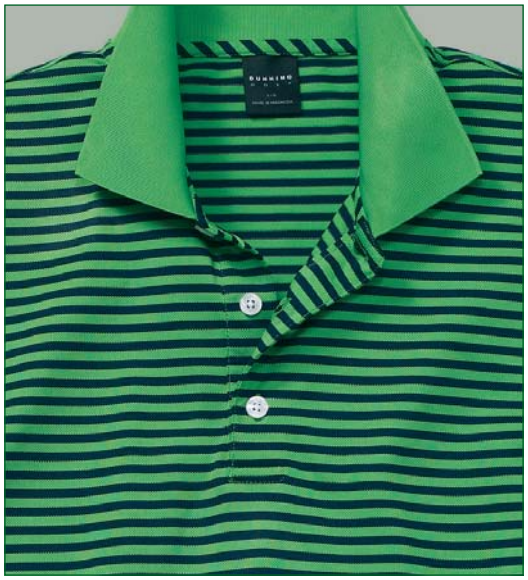
Nike Golf

Ashworth is concentrating its technology on eco-friendly, 100% organic cotton. For men's golf shirts this is available in a small capsule line under the label Ashworth Organics. In keeping with the world trend towards environmentally friendly products, organic cotton, along with Ashworth's EZ tech Hi-Def 100% luxury cotton, is incorporated into comfortable fabrics and classic styles. It has also added a specialised 'innosoft' finish that gives the fabric a lustrous feel while remaining easy to care for and non-wrinkle. For women, this lightweight cotton is incorporated into a no-roll collared top for extra comfort and a classical, refined look.

Under Armour is unveiling its Accuracy polo shirt for men, an updated variation on its famous Instinct polo. The body fabric matches the company's signature Performance polo and the inserts are closed hole mesh. Features include moisture transportation, stretch and recovery, antimicrobial treatments, UPF protection and noise reduction.

In the US at least, Under Armour has been equally responsible (along with Nike), in popularising the sleeker DriFit polyester look at the expense of the traditional 50/50 cotton/polyester blend.

The women's HeatGear UA Playoff sleeveless polo is new from Under Armour. Loaded with performance features to help women focus on their game, it features fast design with a feminine fit that is made with stretch to move



Many golf apparel designers are producing versatile golf shirts that can be worn on and off the course.

Dunning

with the swing. The lightweight, textured HeatGear moves moisture away from the skin to keep golfers cool, dry and focused with strategically placed asymmetric designed mesh ventilation zones to maximise breathability. HeatGear is highly breathable and protects against overheating by maintaining an even body temperature during strenuous activity.

Tehama (based in Nashville, Tennessee), which is one of Corporate Clothier's branded golf lines, has introduced a new men's line of Carbon-Tech products. Following the 'all natural' trend, the Tehama collection includes garments made from Cocona by Trap-Tek, Vitamin C-dipped polos, bamboo and coconut carbon.

For the lady golfer, Tehama's spring 2009 collection brings an expansion of eco-collections with new Merino wool and Minerale, while continuing the evolution of luxury fashion and stellar performance with Hang'emDry moisture wicking fabrication groupings. Other key 'green' garments include a recycled polyester blend Nubby Jacket for women in chalk with one-of-a-kind serenity embroidery both on the front pocket and back of the piece.

Page & Tuttle's new development for men in 2009 is MicroCool shirts. Its textured jacquard fabrication with white dash exemplifies the fusion of performance and timeless, sophisticated styling of Page & Tuttle's range. These shirts are available in classic Argylle and tropical patterns for spring. MicroCool technology uses tuck stitches to provide style and ventilation in a garment. The 100% micro-polyester Cool Swing interlock jacquard fabrication, used in P & T's ladies' range wicks moisture, breathes and is anti-bacterial to prevent bacterial growth and odours.

Fabrics that can effectively wick moisture away from the skin and quickly evaporate moisture will keep the wearer dry and comfortable as opposed to fabrics that can't get rid of perspiration quickly, which leaves the wearer wet and uncomfortable.

Fairway & Greene's has a performance Rimrock Stripe golf shirt in 100% cotton double-mercerised 'hybrid' knit. Its unique knitting and finishing of a cotton-poly blended garment with special treatment of the yarn, as well as the knitted fabric, gives the lustrous appearance of a cotton product but with the wicking and drying qualities of a synthetic. New from Smith & Tweed for men are shirts made using double mercerised 80s two-ply yarn with a wicking micro-poly back called PimaTec. This fabric has the feel and appearance of pure luxury with the added performance of the wicking micro-poly against the skin.

BambooTech from Aureus is a revolutionary new green fabric material that feels like cashmere and performs like cotton. It is carefully constructed from a biodegradable, hypo-allergenic, stain-resistant and luxurious 70% bamboo and 30% cotton yarn. Aureus is the only golf apparel company with a full line of green performance fibre garments made from BambooTech.

Nylon/Lycra, which is stretchy and soft to the touch, is Lija's core fabric for the active golf collection. This fabrication has body-hugging support, moisture wicking and a UV protection factor of 49 plus, providing comfortable conditions for excellent performance. This garment protects from harmful UV rays in extreme exposure to sunlight through a special coating on the fabric.

An example of the more traditional shirt maker would be Dunning, which continues to expand its range with a variety of heritage-driven pieces for 2009. These authentic country club prep styles feature clean silhouettes and the finest tailoring. Branded polos, wool pants and a variety of sweaters showcase colours and materials that are ideal for the autumn season. Cotton-Coolmax blended bottoms and performance woven button-downs highlight the brand's exclusive proprietary fabric technologies.



Puma's new InvisiBonding technology fuses materials together so stitching is no longer needed.

Puma