STANDARDS IN SPORT: GOLF

Golf has long had a reputation for being conservative with regard to apparel regulations. These days, if they avoid a small number of out-of-bounds clothing options, players can more or less wear what they like.

(Almost) anything goes

In this section, *WSA* seeks to examine changes in the regulations surrounding clothes and shoes athletes can and cannot wear in competition. Most sports' governing bodies have detailed regulations on this and the rules can change quickly and frequently. Some, swimming being the most obvious recent example, have embroiled themselves in great controversy over textiles, with complaints that innovations can give pioneer wearers an unfair sporting advantage over their peers.

Golf is different. It's not usually a team game and players have freedom to wear more or less what they like as long as their trousers are long and their shirts have a collar. Some are inclined to stretch the limits of good taste quite far. For example, flamboyant US golfer John Daly has taken to wearing multi-coloured trousers at major tournaments. At The Open at Royal Liverpool at Hoylake in July 2014, he at first



Justin Rose was among the golfers who backed an Ashworth campaign to make shorts permissible in tournament golf.

Chatchai Somwat/Shutterstock.com

COPYRIGHT

garnered attention because of his colour combinations (blocks of brown, beige and orange tones with pink in one pair; metallic blues with black and white in another), and later because, on closer inspection, it became clear that the motif consisted of silhouettes of scantily clad women.

This may have prompted some shaking of heads among tournament directors and the august Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews (the R&A), golf's governing body, but John Daly played on. And it's interesting to ask what, if not multi-coloured trousers with busty women depicted on them, he would have had to wear to earn any sort of sanction. Nothing? Possibly not even then.

No clothes, no penalty

The circumstances were exceptional, but Spanish tournament player Pablo Larrazábal had to strip off at the Malaysian Open in June 2014 after being attacked by an angry swarm of hornets on the fourteenth green, receiving around 20 stings. To escape, he took his clothes off and submerged himself in a green-side water hazard. Not only did he receive no penalty from the tournament referee, but the player was given medical treatment and extra time to complete the hole, at which he managed to score a birdie.

It seems that the only way a player's wardrobe might incur the wrath of the R&A would be if he wore shorts instead of long dress trousers for tournament play. This applies to men only; women can wear shorts if they like.

Short story

In 2013, golf apparel brand Ashworth launched a campaign on social media aimed at provoking discussion on the acceptability of wearing shorts on the course. Prominent players including Justin Rose, Justin Leonard, Sean O'Hair, Retief Goosen and Johnson Wagner took part in a promotional video complaining that women players on the PGA tour are allowed to wear shorts while men are not. They supported a petition that Ashworth, a TaylorMade-adidas brand, launched on the issue. TaylorMade-adidas golf chief marketing officer, Bob Maggiore, commented: "We always strive to make golf relevant and fun, and who knows, maybe being comfortable in shorts will simply increase performance. Either way, it's an entertaining conversation." Entertaining, yes, but it seems to have made little difference to the powers that be.

Ashworth's clothing collections certainly include shorts, with highlights including the Microfiber Mini Check Flat Front Short. The company describes them as soft to the touch with good moisture-wicking capabilities to provide comfort on and off the course. The shorts feature



Even the flamboyance of John Daly's outfits is within golf's norms.

mooinblack/Shutterstock.com

double-welt pockets and are made from 98% polyester and 2% spandex. These are fine for amateur players at many clubs, for whom tailored shorts (not baggy beachwear) are permitted, but top professionals taking part in elite tournaments have to have their legs covered.

Interestingly, this was not always the case. Brian Barnes, a regular maker of cuts at big tournaments in the 1970s, cut a dash with shorts and long socks. The shorts were short. Brian



Ashworth's Flat Front Check Shorts incorporate wicking, breathable fabric.

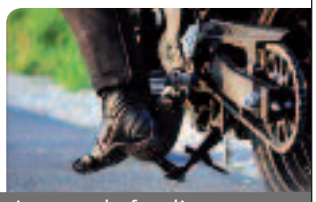
Ashworth

COPYRIGHT

CTC

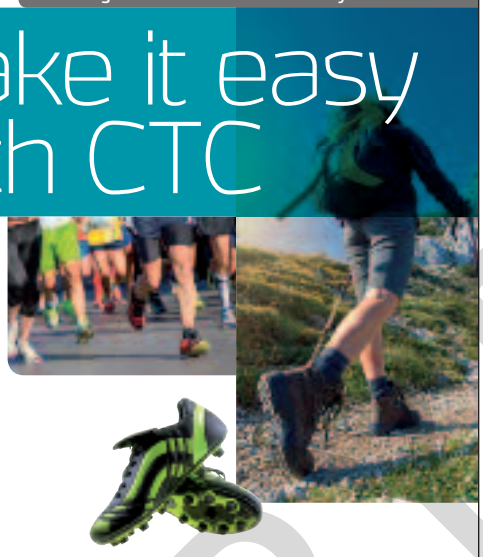
need to

SECURE YOUR SOURCING!
SECURE YOUR PRODUCTION!
GIVE CONFIDENCE TO YOUR CLIENTS!



The world's premier network of quality assurance experts and CSR consultants for the leather, leather goods and footwear industry

Make it easy with CTC



360° VISION QUALITY
ASSURANCE
SUSTAINABILITY

Audits: social, factory, technical
Inspections
R&D/ Innovation consultancy & training
Physical laboratory testing
Chemical analysis
Certification accreditation & standards

© CTC - Fotolia - Marianne Mayer - Dušan Zidar - Lullia Sokolovska - Lucky Dragon USA

France - Portugal - Spain - Tunisia - China - India - Vietnam - Indonesia - USA

www.ctcgroupe.com
contactclient@ctcgroupe.com

Barnes never won a major tournament, but, famously, he did beat Jack Nicklaus twice in one day (September 21) at the 1975 Ryder Cup at the Laurel Valley Golf Club in Pennsylvania. He was ultimately on the losing side and was wearing long trousers for the occasion.

Rise in popularity

Times have changed. The fortieth edition of the Ryder Cup takes place on the last weekend of September 2014. This biennial battle between Europe and the US is now regarded as one of the biggest sports events in the world and team apparel is carefully planned and co-ordinated. Aside from what the players will wear to compete, official licensed merchandise providers believe demand for their products, including "fanware", will reach record levels this year. Tim Hunt, marketing and communications director for the European team, said in the build-up to the competition: "The Ryder Cup is one of the biggest sports events in the world, attracting a global TV reach of more than 500 million homes. This rise in popularity is reflected in the level of consumer demand which, in 2014, we expect to be the highest ever for a Ryder Cup match in Europe. As with all major international sports events, such as the World Cup and Olympics, fans want to participate and show support for their team. So the Ryder Cup is a unique opportunity for the golf trade."

Unspoken etiquette

The 17 official Ryder Cup licensees include companies that make commemorative glassware and other souvenir ornaments, but a number of them, including Swedish golfwear brand Abacus, think deeply about innovation in golf apparel. Abacus head designer, Chris Mattsson, says clothing in golf is part of the decorum of the game, perhaps more so than in any other sport. Not only is there an unspoken etiquette, but most golf courses have a dress code that requires "particular attire" to be worn for play, with certain protocols to help maintain the game's traditions. "It is this heritage rather than any particular governing body that has imposed what the athletes can and cannot wear," she says. "The traditions of the game have dictated an adherence to a conventional sense of modesty at all times. Collared shirts, long trousers and dress shorts, for example, have continuously been staple items of a golfer's wardrobe."

Appeal to individuals

Unlike in other sports, however, in which standards and regulations have become stricter, Ms Mattsson confirms that golf's customs have become more relaxed in recent times, in the wake of the authorities recognising a need to "open up the game", to promote its accessibility and to appeal to individuals who perhaps were put off by its formality in the past, she says.

To this end, golf apparel manufacturers have developed their ranges to include, in addition to the more flamboyant and daring colour schemes that John Daly favours, what she refers to as "more modern items", such as turtleneck golf shirts, capris and skorts (golf skirts with an undershort, for women only; Abacus is official team apparel supplier to the European team for the Solheim Cup, the women's equivalent of the Ryder Cup). She adds that, at Abacus, additional factors driving innovation revolve around functionality and performance. "The intricacies of a golf swing require garments to be stretchable, to

COPYRIGHT



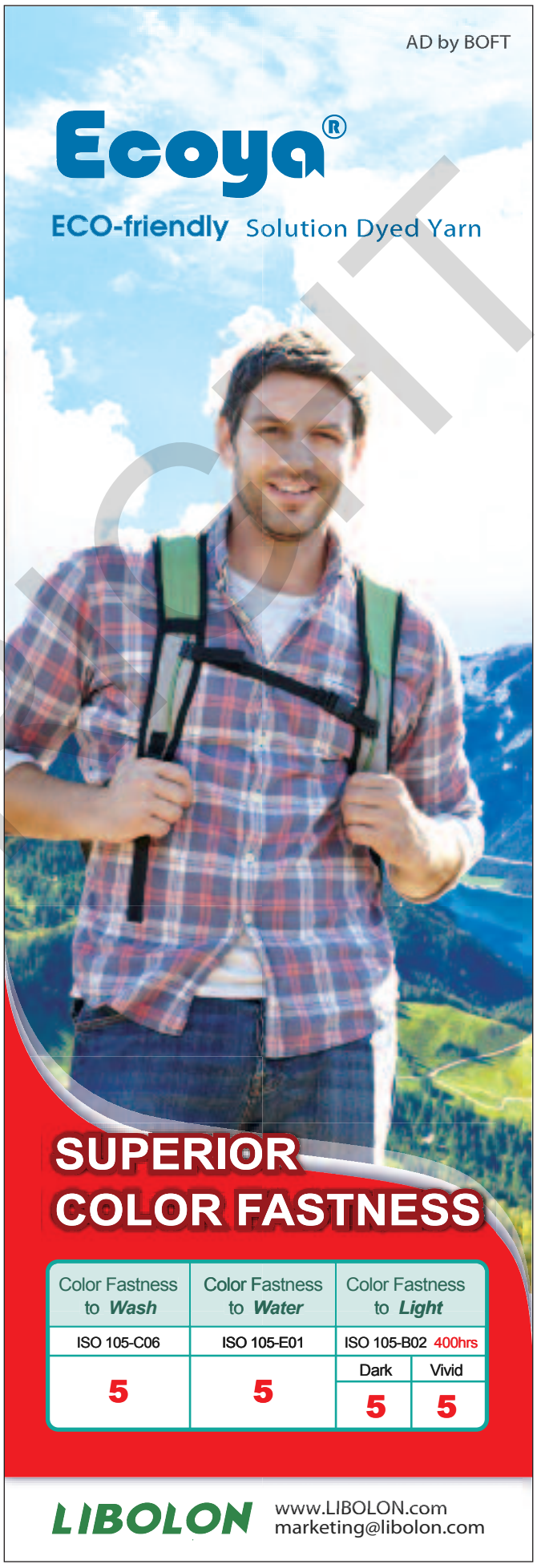
Products such as the Barton StretchLite jacket from Abacus prove that performance does matter to some in the field of golf apparel.

Abacus Sportswear

move in total sync with a player's actions, providing complete freedom of motion," she explains. "The nature of the game calls upon athletes to be out on the course for a length of time, determining the need for clothing to be breathable and lightweight. Comfort and focus are the important cornerstones which enable golfers to perform at the top of their game."

Inspiration from other sports

She presents Abacus as a "pioneer of high-performance stretch waterproof fabrics", and says she is constantly pushing the boundaries, drawing inspiration from other sports and other sectors, to provide "improved performance quality fabrics and enhanced functional materials". One example is the Barton StretchLite jacket, which Abacus claims is the most stretchable lightweight waterproof jacket in golf. It weighs 99 grammes per square-metre and has the ability to stretch to more than two-and-a-half times its size. It was influenced by cycling, the designer reveals, in which clothing's waterproofness, stretchability, breathability and lightweight qualities are key features. Another product, the Score fleece, was inspired by winter sports. Made from stretch reverse fleece material, whereby the thick, pill fleece is on the inside of the garment and the exterior is similar to a satin soft shell, the Score fleece embodies the same features used in many snowboarding and skiing garments, ensuring complete flexibility, comfort and warmth. Ms Mattsson thinks attention to detail and knowledge and understanding of what a golf garment entails, has enabled her company to forge partnerships with top golfers and top competitions.



COPYRIGHT