

BRAND PROFILE: RÖJK

Breaking the mould

Back in 2007, Swedish designer Jan-Fahrenheit Betros won an Innovation for Extremes award for his Twister Helmet Hood jacket made using 100% recycled Polartec Power Dry fabric. On the back of his success, he launched his own technical, green sportswear brand Røjk, which has really started to take off.

Mr Betros started out as a professional gymnast and has been into high-performance sports since he was very young. However, injury prematurely ended his gymnastics career and he turned his attention to skiing and extreme sports. The young sports enthusiast started moving about, getting involved in retailing at ski resorts in France, Sweden and even Australia. And when he wasn't working he was out on the slopes.

Getting into design

He was then encouraged to enter the Innovation for Extremes competition by his university professor. "He wanted me to do it so I sent in the stuff from the Twister range," Mr Betros explains. However, he had no idea it would be successful. "I never wanted to start my own brand," he says, "but there was a lot

Bright colours and offset designs epitomise the Røjk range in addition to the performance benefits it offers.

 Røjk



of demand for the top. So I couldn't just sell the top on its own, I had to come up with new innovations." With the decision made, Røjk was born.

One of the ways he decided to expand his product range was to launch a new technical sock line. He met with Primaloft to talk about the new project and both sides felt it was a good idea. The first sock line went into development around two years ago and came out for the recent winter season, along with new Tvister products and beanie hats. "They're being sold through 18 retailers in Sweden and one in France," says Mr Betros, "and they're selling out of everything." He claims the stores were reordering up to five times before the winter season had even started.

He explains that Primaloft is a very popular brand in Sweden, and that when the company does something new, people there are keen to try it out. This is particularly true, he claims, when it is a new, fresh brand that is launching eye-catching performance products. "People feel some of the older brands have been in the market for too long," he explains. "They can see now that something new is happening." One of the things the company prides itself on is that it never makes products that already exist; it will only make products where there is a gap in the market that actually needs filling.

Tested on athletes

One of the best endorsements for the sock range is the support Røjk has had from Swedish alpine skier Janette Hargin. Ms Hargin has participated in three world championships (2003, 2005, 2007) as well as representing Sweden at two Olympic Games (2002, 2006). She is also a climbing fanatic and says she wears the new socks every time she climbs. "Then I am set for a whole day on the mountain," she says.

Because Ms Hargin is out at all times of the day and in all kinds of weather conditions, she was a perfect candidate to test the socks. "My hands and feet are always extremely cold. I am super stoked about the new socks. My toes still get a little bit frozen when it is really cold, but now with my socks made with PrimaLoft yarn, they warm up quickly as soon as I start skiing or hiking."

"Janette has always had a problem with cold feet," Mr Betros says. "Then when she's hiking she used to get hot and sweaty, but with the Røjk socks she never has a problem." The company has also provided socks for skiers at Sweet Protection along with other "really good riders" who cannot be named for sponsorship reasons.

"Our products are developed with the athletes, especially Janette," says the company founder. "She lives in Norway but she skis



Company founder Jan-Fahrenheit Betros (right) is determined to make new, fresh products wherever there is a gap in the market.

Røjk

everyday. She's also into climbing and running, and our socks work for these activities as well." He claims that people who run wearing the ski socks will still have dry feet.

Attention to detail

"All of our socks are made in Sweden and one of the good things is that they are quite long," explains Mr Betros. "With a lot of baselayers and three-quarter-length trousers, other socks are two short so there is a gap which is exposed to the cold. The added length also means they are more comfortable under boots."

The socks are reinforced at the ball of the foot and up the sides of the leg at the points where there is most pressure. Furthermore, it is rib-knitted so it doesn't get bunched up. "When you're out there, every small discomfort feels like you have a needle inside your boot," Mr Betros explains. He points out that Ms Hargin always wears really tight boots so her socks need to be very comfortable. "The boot has to be like part of the foot," he says. "Control is the most important thing."

Another thing that sets the company apart is that it is always looking to break the mould. It not only seeks to do this in terms of technical benefits, but in terms of design. This could take the form of uneven squares, which are illustrated through the Røjk beanie hat Mr Betros is wearing as he speaks, or in the tilted, off-balance

designs featured across its jacket line.

The Swedish word that inspires this is "lagom", he explains, although the direct meaning in English of "just right" is a little lost in translation. The idea is to use bright colours and distinctive, clean design to represent the balance between warm and cold. The lightweight range comes in black with brightly coloured, reinforced, patterned panels, while the midweight socks are mainly grey with the bright panels.

The brand has an ambitious expansion strategy. "We want to focus on Sweden first of all and plan to open 20 new shops by 2011," says Mr Betros. "We want to increase this even more to around 50 shops in a couple of years. Then we'll look to Norway and Denmark and then to the rest of Europe. We've also got a new distributor for Japan: the Japanese are very into socks."

He concludes: "The company has recorded 200% growth this year and there is no stock left! We've increased production a lot but there's no time to produce any more existing stock now because it's time to start on next year's range. We're telling our customers it's finished and that they should buy a lot next year, but they still want reorders." 



Röjk socks contain Primaloft and are designed to keep feet warm, dry and comfortable all day long.



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