BRAND PROFILE: GIORDANA

Cycling apparel brand Giordana is making a return to elite-level competition, supplying two UCI World Tour teams with its latest range of innovation-led clothing.

Back in the saddle

'Founded by cyclists, for cyclists'; that is the motto that guides Italian apparel manufacturer Giordana. The founder in question, an experienced cyclist called Giorgio Andretta, established the company after relocating to Canada to race professionally. He spotted a gap in the market that he felt he could fill – for high-quality apparel for cyclists – and founded Gita Sporting Goods in 1971 to import cycling clothing from his native Italy. He had built good relationships with a number of Italian manufacturers during his time competing in Europe, including Diadora, Pinarello and Campagnolo, which saw him become the first North American distributor for several of them. This meant he could offer garments that were previously only available on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Gita's first professional partner team was US outfit SRC in 1977. Mr Andretta was able to marry Italian craftsmanship with the latest product development ideas coming out of the US to produce the best possible kit for the team, helping it climb to the top of the sport over the next decade. He also started to design his own products, drawing on his experience and knowledge from racing competitively. It was at this point that he saw the need to establish his own brand. The Giordana name was



Giordana will hope the Orica team (pictured) repeats its successes of recent years.

Giordana



Giordana's state-of-the-art apparel is a far cry from the wool garments that were favoured by elite cyclists in the past.
Giordana

trademarked in 1979; it was chosen in tribute to his young daughter, who had been born that year. He came up with a creative idea for getting his brand noticed, placing its logo, at the time simply its name in script, on the underside of the waistband of the wool jerseys it supplied. When one of its riders won a race, they would cross the finish line and raise their hands in victory, causing the waistband to flip up and reveal the logo. At a time when the manufacturers often didn't put their own logo on a garment, it meant the only name visible was Giordana's. The current logo was adopted in 1980; it was again inspired by Mr Andretta's daughter, taking the form of her astrological sign, Sagittarius.

Breakaway

In 1982, Giordana released a range of clothing called Aero; it indicated a move away from the wool shorts and jerseys that had long been the staple kit of cyclists. Nylon and Lycra were used instead to create better-fitting garments that offered superior aerodynamics. It followed this a year later with its first sublimated jerseys, employing a heat-transfer printing technique to generate permanent, colour-fast patterns, without compromising the performance of the garment. It strived to stretch the limits of cycling clothing throughout the 1980s. Among its innovations was the Gamex all-weather jacket, which it says was the first high-visibility, fluorescent inclement-weather jacket on the market.

It also continued to work closely with leading US cycling teams, taking on board the "invaluable feedback" of their riders and applying it to its growing list of products. Mr Andretta underscored his faith in Italian craftsmanship by establishing his own dedicated manufacturing facility in Italy in 1986. It gave the brand complete control over the garments it made, allowing it to fully embrace modern technologies and develop and test new materials. For the first time, it also meant it could offer fully customised kit to professional and club teams, something that remains an important part of its business model.

The year 1995 was a pivotal one for the company; as well as being named as the official clothing supplier of the Tour de France, it also marked the start of a more than 15-year relationship with sportswear manufacturer Nike, which saw the two collaborate on the development of cycling apparel and team jerseys. During that time, Giordana produced clothing for several notable professional teams, including US Postal Service, Discovery and Radio Shack. The partnership also supplied kit for the US, Brazilian and Chinese Olympic teams.

Race ready

Giordana described the BodyClone Forma range of apparel that it introduced in 2005 as the "most technical clothing" it had ever created. It incorporated a lightweight nylon-Lycra fabric with a high thread-count to provide a better compression-to-weight ratio, which is claimed to improve blood-flow to the muscles, reducing the risk of muscle strains and delaying the onset of fatigue. It built on this development with the release of the FormaRed range in 2008, which in turn led to the FormaRed Carbon (FR-C) upgrade a year later and the new FR-C Pro collection. A carbon-laced fabric was used in

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The brand was built on Italian craftsmanship; the company continues to place its trust in these same skills.

Giordana

certain panels of the FR-C jersey to prevent it from stretching out of shape. Controlling the amount of stretch allows better muscle isolation, further combatting fatigue. "Our goal with FR-C Pro was to set the bar high in regards to innovation and performance to handle any riding condition throughout the year," explains Mr Andretta. It will serve as the core component for the kit Giordana is providing for two International Cyclist Union (UCI) World Tour teams in 2017. In November 2016, it announced its return to the premier elite road-cycling tour after agreeing a partnership with Kazakh outfit Astana, which will see the brand supply technical apparel for all the team's racing and training activities. A little over a month later, it signed a similar deal with Australia's Orica team.

The FR-C bib short is made using a more compact knit material than that used in the BodyClone Forma range. The HC-50 Power Lycra offers even better compression-to-weight ratio, as well as enhanced comfort and wicking. The garment's inner leg and seat panels consist of a durable, anti-abrasion Lycra. The rear panel features the carbon-laced fabric; it contours over the shoulders and down the spine, wrapping the kidneys to give extra support and prevent sag, which would reduce aerodynamic efficiency. Giordana claims the lightly compressive 'Revolution' fabric it uses for the shoulders, biceps and hips of the jersey in the collection provides "aerodynamic, muscle-supporting fit that other microfibres simply can't achieve". The sleeves have laser-cut and heat-welded arm cuffs for added comfort, as well as an ergonomically sculpted six-piece collar. A new proprietary material is used in the leg band of the shorts. Already employed in the medical industry, it expands when necessary to improve blood flow. The sock fabric promotes temperature regulation and circulation, as well as having anti-bacterial properties.

Trailblazers

Much has changed during Girodana's nearly 40-year history; cycling has become a mainstream professional sport and the leading riders now have access to the most cutting-edge materials. One thing that hasn't changed is Giorgio Andretta's hands-on role. He retains full control over all aspects of the business, with the company describing him as "still the driving force behind product development". Its commitment to manufacturing in Italy also remains strong; in 2015 it relocated to a new facility to further streamline its operations. As to what the future holds for Giordana, it intends to "continue to push the envelope", all the time guided by a passion for creating technically advanced products that offer enhanced value, comfort and performance for all cyclists, whether they be elite-level professionals or everyday enthusiasts.



The construction of the FR-C bib short mimics the body's natural position when riding.

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