

As one of the judges on the panel of the BrandNew Awards *WSA's* editor Mike Redwood offers the insider's view on this year's competition and an insight into how the winners were chosen from the 171 applicants.

BrandNew winter awards

The BrandNew Village at the forthcoming Winter ispo will be an interesting place to visit. As a competition, the BrandNew Awards - sponsored by ispo, Coolmax, Thermolite, Riri and Toray - continues to grow with more and more young companies from all over the world sending in entries. Applications rise steadily year-on-year and this time the judges had to examine 171 applications from 25 countries, including entries from Morocco, Slovenia, South Korea, Pakistan, as well as Germany, the USA and Australia, which have always been prominent amongst the entries.

This emphasises the difficulties the judges have to face in examining such a wide range of products. First to decide if it is really new, then whether it is viable, and finally whether it is commercially viable. The latter is a tough call as often commercial viability is a matter of marketing or serendipity, so the judges have to decide if a product is worth giving a chance or not. Indeed, this is one of the key aspects of BrandNew as we all know that in a crowded market, with lots of dominant companies, it is hard for an innovation to break through successfully – even if we are all well-aware that innovation is the lifeblood of the sports industry.

Considering that each year BrandNew looks at over 300 innovations from companies that are less than four years old, the total number of innovations worldwide each year must be quite immense. The dynamics of the sports world is proved by this simple fact, as is the value of BrandNew in allowing access to a wider stage for a few of the better young ideas.



SMX could transform into a new sport

Quite appropriately the overall winner was a small Norwegian company North Legion that has placed a mountain bike frame on three skids to metamorphose BMX into SMX and readers can look forward to some exciting videos on its stand at ispo. Viewing this product, the judges felt that this could potentially create a whole new sport. They were also impressed with the level of attention that had been paid to small but important details including the safety-stop function in the event of a fall, and the way bike is carried on different types of ski-lift. Produced by North Legion, the SMX is already being tested by freeriders Trond G. Hansen, Niels Windfeldt, and Sondre Falck and skiers Cato Lagreid and Sondre Bjorkheim and is set to stir up a great deal of interest in the BrandNew Village

Golf sector in an upswing

Surprisingly, for a sport that appears to have reached its plateau and be ready to decline with the boomer generation, there were a lot of golf products for the judges to work through. From fancy gloves, through head covers, to a shoe with a technical movement in the sole to help with movement during the swing the choice was wide and varied. The hardware accessory winner that shone through was the beautiful golf caddy from Mantis, Germany. At a time when the sport is trying to become more affordable and accessible to young people it is perhaps curious that a winner should come at a price which is more than most young people pay for golf in a year. Yet, the pure elegance of the looks and the design of this piece of equipment took the judges aback. The Mantis caddy is a high class electric driven golf caddy made of lightweight high tech carbon. It has full suspension and is exceptionally easy to fold and to use. It is the Ferrari of the caddy world and, true to form, the way it collapses it should be able to fit into the boot of a rich golfer's Porsche or BMW Z4. This is just as well, as with a retail price of around

Winners of the 13th ispo BrandNew Awards Winter 2006

1. ***Overall Winner:*** North Legion from Norway
2. ***Hardware Winter:*** Icelantic Boards from the US
3. ***Style:*** Tyra Clothing from Hungary
4. ***Sportswear:*** Stridelite from the US
5. ***Hardware Accessories:*** Mantis from Germany
6. ***Accessories:*** Tubeline from Germany
7. ***Hardware Summer:*** Banshee Riverboards from the US
8. ***Sportswear Accessories:*** CziP from the US

€3,500 they might be the only ones that can afford this luxurious beauty.

In the accessory section, the winner was the German Tubeline with its funky bags made of bicycle tyres. We saw a lot of use of materials from various sports activities and there was also another product that used kite material amongst the entries. Tubeline bags were chosen as the winner not just because of the novel concept, but also because the designs were clever and contemporary, and the company has adopted some clever marketing. Cycle enthusiasts have various options available to them, they can have bags made from their own used tyres or from those of some of the major international teams. Recycling in its truest form!

You don't need to look like a construction worker

We often talk about the leading edge use of electronics in garments in WSA, and this leading edge activity was well-represented in the competition, with both heating and visibility devices. Stridelite wowed the judges with its illuminated outdoor clothing containing a patented electroluminescent lighting system. Its flashing lights are integrated into a weatherproof jacket to give 360 degree visibility for over 400 metres and will work for over 300 hours on two AAA batteries. As the company says, "You don't need to look like a construction worker while you run at night."

There may be some controversy over the winning entry in the accessory section as some in the sports industry argue as to whether a glove can be classed as such, but the winner of the accessory section was nonetheless the innovative CZip Glove from the USA. It is not the first glove to offer a design which opens to allow the removal of the hand, but the construction of this product was thought to be more easily manageable than the current systems available and easier to get back on. In snow conditions this glove with a zipper not only allows the user to remove their hands from the gloves without completely taking them off, the open vent regulates temperature of the hand, and assists the glove to dry quickly.

Difficult choices

The number of entries for the ski and snowboard section were, similar to the overall winner, abundant, and had the technical experts poring over a myriad of details. The entries were designed for all levels from learners through to professional level equipment. The winner in the winter hardware section was an all terrain ski from young company Icelantic. These skis are designed for a variety of conditions and terrains. They offer the combined benefits of a long ski – giving speed and stability – with the manoeuvrability of a short ski. They are designed to be well-suited for backcountry, alpine, touring, and telemark skiing for all levels of ability.

With summer coming the Banshee Riverboard won the summer hardware award with a 'boat-less' river surfing device. The Riverboard is a 53-inch foam and fibreglass composite using a bungee system that can achieve up to 30 miles an hour. According to the inventors it is also easy to learn and use.

Tuned in style

With convergence in all things from TV to telephones, with history and fiction, and with sportswear and fashion wear, the style section of the Awards is steadily increasing and caused some hard decisions for the judges. The section included crochet in footwear, urban wear of many kinds, items linked to the soccer World Cup, and a number of outstanding individual designers. The winner was a young Hungarian company, Tyra, with its well-priced range of multi-functional clothing that the judges thought merged fashion and sport, satisfying the needs of even the extreme sports athlete.

All of the winners will be present in the BrandNew Village at the winter ispo.