Business Week
8 May - 14 May 06

Industry award for outdoor products

8 May 2006

A design competition will debut this year in conjunction with the OutDoor Friedrichshafen trade fair in Germany (July 23-26). The OutDoor Industry Award will be presented for products that combine innovative technologies with suitable features and designs and is said to offer consumers a point of reference and give the industry an incentive to present their products.

Winners will be announced on July 23 and the award-winning entries will be displayed at the OutDoor trade fair.

Design prize at Eurobike

8 May 2006

The Eurobike Award 2006 will be presented at Eurobike in Friedrichshafen, Germany, to be held August 31 to September 3, for which manufacturers have been called on to enter their best innovations.

More than 800 exhibitors from 36 companies will be taking part in the eleven exhibition halls and in the open-air grounds.

Supply and demand in polyester fibre market

8 May 2006

Dublin-based market research company Research and Markets has published a report on trends in world polyester demand.

The report covers all major fibre producing countries accounting for 88% of global production and 85% in consumption. It includes time series on trends from 1990 to 2004 on production, imports, exports and apparent consumption for 11 countries representing Asia, the USA and Western Europe.

This publication attempts to highlight trends witnessed in man-made fibres since 1990 with regards to consumption, production and trade as a basic information source for those related to the fibre and yarns industry.

GERBERcutter GT1000 launched

8 May 2006

US developer and manufacturer of integrated software and hardware automation systems Gerber Technology has made its new GERBERcutter GT1000 globally available. The new GT1000 has been designed for the made-to-measure apparel markets and is suitable for men's or ladies' tailored apparel.

The GT1000 is available in a 1.7 metre width for "on-the-open" applications or a 1 metre width for "on-the-fold" applications. It cuts up to 8mm (0.3 in) of compressed material, allowing users to cut multiple plies of lining and shirt materials as well as one or two single plies or folded suit material.

The GT1000 uses a Gerber bristle square cutting surface and knife train to enhance material stability and optimise cut part quality.

200th full-time employee at Gerber Greater China

8 May 2006

France-based developer of software, CAD/CAM equipment and related services designed for large-scale users of textiles, leather and industrial fabrics Lectra has posted improved results for the first quarter of 2006.

Revenues improved to €50.9 million, an increase of €3.8 million (+8%) at actual exchange rates and €2.3 million (+5%) compared with the same period in 2005. European revenues increased 9%, North American revenues rose 8%; whilst Asia-Pacific revenues fell 1%.

Revenues from new systems sales (€26.2 million) increased moderately (+3% like-for-like) compared with Q1 2005. Recurring revenues (€24.6 million) increased at a more robust pace (+7%).

Orders for new software licenses and CAD/CAM equipment grew 6% overall (+€1.3 million) at actual exchange rates, and 2% (+€0.5 million) like-for-like, relative to the comparable period last year.

Sensatex launches SmartShirt

8 May 2006

Developer of integrated smart textile systems Sensatex

is ready for the Beta launch of its SmartShirt System. The SmartShirt System makes it possible to remotely monitor a wearer's movement, heart rate, and respiration rate in real-time through a patented nanotechnology conductive fibre grid that is seamlessly knitted into the material of the fully washable shirt.

Possible uses for the system include training support for athletes, remote monitoring for first responders, hazard materials workers, and soldiers in action.

The light, breathable, cotton fabric has fully integrated conductive fibres that create connectivity to acquire and transfer analogue physiological signals to a small personal controller. The controller digitises the data signals and wirelessly transmits them to a remote location where the data is received for monitoring.

Field testing of the SmartShirt System is planned for later this year. Sensatex is also testing a one-lead EKG band and a SmartBra that would employ the same system to remotely monitor vital signs.

Reebok boosts adidas Group sales

9 May 2006

The adidas Group has reported currency-neutral sales growth of 40% for the first quarter, mainly driven by the first-time consolidation of the Reebok business segment. Sales for the adidas Group excluding Reebok increased 13% on a currency-neutral basis supported by higher sales in all regions. In euro terms, group revenues grew 47% to €2.459 billion in the first quarter of 2006 from €1.674 billion in 2005. Sales for the adidas Group excluding Reebok grew 19% in euro terms to €1.988 billion from €1.674 billion in the prior year.

Currency-neutral revenues for the adidas segment increased 12%, attributable to significant increases in nearly all Sport Performance categories as well as double-digit growth in the Sport Heritage and Sport Style divisions. The Reebok segment, which was consolidated for the first time in the first quarter of 2006, contributed €454 million to sales. At TaylorMade-adidas Golf currency-neutral revenues increased 26%. This performance was driven by strong double-digit growth in all major categories and the first-time inclusion of the Greg Norman apparel business.

First quarter adidas Group sales in Europe grew 20% on a currency-neutral basis, mainly reflecting the first-time consolidation of the Reebok segment as well as increases at brand adidas. In North America, group sales during the first quarter increased 94% on a currency-neutral basis. This represents the highest first quarter growth rate since the group’s IPO in 1995. Sales in Asia increased by 28% and by 58% in Latin America.

Tefron sales rise 8%

9 May 2006

Israeli producer of seamless intimate apparel and active wear Tefron Ltd. has posted revenues of $56.8 million for the first quarter of 2006, an increase of 8% over the comparable period in 2005.

On a pro-forma basis excluding AlbaHealth, which Tefron sold on April 27, revenues for the quarter reached $49.4 million, representing an 11% increase over the first quarter of 2005. The growth in revenues over the first quarter of 2005 were mainly attributed to the growth in sales of the company's active-wear product line, and in particular sales to Nike for its Nike Pro category, as well as to the growth in sales of the swimwear product line.

Tefron manufactures seamless intimate apparel, active wear and swimwear sold under brand names such as Nike, The Gap, Banana Republic, Target, Warnaco/Calvin Klein, Patagonia, and Reebok.

Moderate profitability increase for Clariant in Q1

9 May 2006

Swiss chemical company Clariant has posted a solid performance in the first three months of the year, with organic growth increasing 6% in local currency and 11% in Swiss francs compared with the same period in 2005.

Good demand was seen across most sectors, while sales prices were held at last year’s level. Net income rose 31% to CHF94 million ($76.983 million) from CHF72 million in 2005. Earnings continued to be affected by higher raw material, energy and logistics costs compared to the same period in 2005 with raw material costs up 2% on a year-on-year basis.

Textile, Leather & Paper Chemicals posted moderate growth, with mixed developments across its businesses. Pigments & Additives had a strong quarter, with substantial increases in pigments and good sales for additives, including recently launched ranges of waxes and flame retardants.

The Americas posted the strongest increase, with organic growth of 5% overall and 9% specifically in the United States. Asia grew by 3%, driven by a 13% rise in China, while Europe was up 6%, in which Germany posted organic growth of 6%.

Delta Apparel enjoys sales increase

9 May 2006

Casual and athletic wear specialist Delta Apparel, Inc. has posted improved financial results for its fiscal third

quarter ended April 1. The company's results for the quarter and year-to-date periods include the operations of Junkfood Clothing Company since its acquisition by the company on August 22, 2005.

For the third quarter of fiscal 2006, net sales rose 19% to a record $69.4 million compared with $58.3 million in the prior year quarter. Net income was $2.7 million in the fiscal third quarter of 2006 compared with the prior year's level of $5.4 million.

For the fourth fiscal quarter ending July 1, 2006, the company expects sales to fall between $81 to $88 million, compared with prior year sales of $66.3 million.

Gildan Activewear Q2 earnings up 40.3%

9 May 2006

Manufacturer of branded apparel and sportswear Gildan Activewear Inc. has posted net earnings increases for its fiscal quarter ended April 2. Earnings of $31 million were reported, up 40.3% from adjusted net earnings of $22.1 million in the second quarter of fiscal 2005. Adjusted net earnings for the second quarter of last year exclude a charge of $7.8 million after-tax for the closure and relocation of the company's Canadian yarn-spinning operations. Net earnings increased by 116.7% over the second quarter of fiscal 2005, if this charge is taken into consideration.

Sales in the second quarter amounted to $183.8 million, up 11.2% from $165.3 million in the second quarter of last year. The increase in sales revenues reflected a 13.9% increase in unit sales volumes, partially offset by the impact of an approximate 1.5% reduction in net selling prices.

Sales for the six months ended April 2 were $304.1 million, up 10.9% from the corresponding period last year.

Net earnings for the first six months of fiscal 2006 were $47.2 million, up 54.8% from adjusted net earnings of $30.5 million in fiscal 2005, before the prior year charge for the closure of the Canadian yarn-spinning facilities. Net earnings increased107.9% from $22.7 million including the charge in fiscal 2005.

Meanwhile, the company has appointed William Anderson to its board of directors. Mr Anderson has had a successful career as a business leader in Canada spanning over 30 years. Most recently, he served as chairman and chief executive officer of Bell Canada International Inc.

New RFID Military Compliance Solution

9 May 2006

A new service bureau offering called the RFID Military Compliance Solution has been released by information management, brand identification and solution-enabling products company Avery Dennison Retail Information Services. The solution enables vendors to meet US Department of Defence (DoD) mandates for affixing RFID labels containing unique identification codes to cartons and pallets, and for issuing advance shipment notices.

The mandates affect vendors shipping hardgoods, apparel, footwear and other commodities to DoD distribution centres in Susquehanna, Pa. and San Joaquin, California. The RFID label requirement is in addition to existing DoD requirements for identifying cartons and pallets with barcoded Military Shipping Labels (MSL). The MSL labels, which are produced by vendors with in-house label printing systems or sourced from service bureaux contain destination and other key shipping data.

Fringe programmes to enhance Interstoff

9 May 2006

Manufacturers and buyers from the international garment and apparel fabric sector are preparing for Interstoff Asia which will run concurrently with Source It in Hong Kong on October 4-6.

Fringe programmes at Interstoff will include:

Fabric-To-Fashion: This exercise enables visitors to follow the journey of garment production from raw material to finished products: creation, function and fashion. The garments will be displayed both in a mannequin showcase and in the fashion shows.

A series of fashion shows will give exhibitors the unique opportunity to demonstrate their creativity, versatility and craftsmanship. The shows will include collections from upcoming local and ASEAN designers, and garment and textile manufacturers.

Designer's Corner will allow textile and garment designers to showcase their creations. Representatives from the Young Fashion Designers Society (Hong Kong) as well as the winners of the Texprint competition will introduce the latest fashion trends.

The Interstoff Asia Directions trend forum will present the textile forecast for Autumn/Winter 2007/2008. This season, the forum will be designed by Here & There from New York, USA.

The latest trends will also be highlighted at the Function section of the fair. This autumn it will not only feature the

popular live tests performed by the Taiwan Textile Federation but will also highlight the latest trend in performance textiles: environmentally-friendly functional fabrics. With the emergence of eco-fabrics on many buyers' lists, an eco-labelling system was launched in autumn 2005. The green labels will make their comeback at Interstoff Asia Autumn 2006 highlighting exhibitors that can offer environmentally-friendly products.

Interstoff Asia seminars are a popular venue for gathering market and trend information. This October the schedule will cover a wide range of topics including design & trends, business strategy and special product presentation.

A & E boosts Ruddick's Q2 results

9 May 2006

Manufacturer of thread and specialty engineered yarns American & Efird (A & E) —a subsidiary of Ruddick Corporation—has boosted Ruddick's consolidated sales in the fiscal second quarter ended April 2. During this period, Ruddicks's consolidated sales rose 8.9% to $801 million from $736 million in the second quarter of fiscal 2005. For the 26 weeks ended April 2, sales of $1.6 billion were 9.2% above the $1.46 billion for the comparable period of fiscal 2005.

A & E's sales of $85.6 million in the second quarter of fiscal 2006 increased 6.9% from the $80.1 million for the same quarter of fiscal 2005. The increase was driven by a domestic sales increase of 11.4% and a foreign sales increase of 2.7%. Foreign sales accounted for approximately 50% and 52% of A & E sales for the second quarter of fiscal 2006 and fiscal 2005, respectively.

A & E's sales for the 26 weeks ended April 2, 2006 were $166.2 million, an increase of 9.5% from the prior year period when sales were $151.8 million. This increase was driven by domestic sales increases of 18.6% and foreign sales increases of 1.4%. The increase in domestic sales resulted primarily from sales attributed to the acquisition of the businesses of Robison-Anton Textile Co. in the fourth quarter of fiscal 2005 and Ludlow Textiles Company, Inc. in the second quarter of fiscal 2005.

Ashworth signs agreement with PGA of Portugal

9 May 2006

Designer of golf-inspired sportswear Ashworth Europe has signed an agreement with the PGA of Portugal to become the official apparel partner.

As a result, Ashworth will become one of the most prominent companies at this year's tournaments via on-course advertising, inclusion in TV coverage and brand presence in all PGA of Portugal media.

Ashworth Europe will also develop and offer a specific range of branded PGA of Portugal clothing, which will be available to all PGA members. As part of this agreement, Ashworth has retained the right to extend the initial one year contract for a further period of 3 years, to 2009.

Nilit acquires Torcidos Ibericos

10 May 2006

Israel-based producer of nylon 6.6, Nilit, has acquired the texturing facility of Torcidos Ibericos in Puig-Reig, near Barcelona, Spain.

The primary goal of the acquisition will be to serve Nilit's European customers, but the operation will also support Nilit's activities throughout the world. The deal will also significantly increase Nilit's texturing capacity. The new company will be called: Nilit Iberica.

NSGA survey shows rising prices for sports footwear

10 May 2006

According to a new survey released by the US National Sporting Goods Association (NGSA) the average price point for sports footwear rose 2% in 2005—with advances in average prices outnumbering declines more than two to one for the 22 categories of athletic and sports footwear surveyed.

In 2005, the average price rose to $40.33 versus $39.32 in 2004 and $38.88 in 2003. In 2004, the average price rose 1.7%; in 2003, it had declined 0.3%.

Many major categories posted increase in excess of 2% including jogging/running (+4.2%), gym shoes/sneakers (+2.6%), and walking shoes (+2.4%), led the increase. Among major categories, only tennis shoes (down 1.7%) and basketball shoes (down 1.0%) showed declines.

The 2% increase in 2005 and the 1.1% increase in 2004 followed downturns in the three previous years, 0.3%, 3.0% and 0.4% respectively. However, the year's overall average matched the 2000 average price of $40.32, the highest in the history of the NSGA survey.

With a 5.4% increase in their average price, hunting boots held the Number one position as the most expensive shoe in the 2005 sports footwear market. The $67.33 average hunting boot price point placed it ahead of golf, running/jogging and basketball shoes, the average prices of which were $61.48 (+1.9%), $53.55 (+2.6%) and $52.58 (-1.0%), respectively.

The information on average shoe prices will be included in the NSGA report 'The Sporting Goods Market in 2006',

which will be published by the association in May.

Swimwear struggles at Warnaco

10 May 2006

US apparel company The Warnaco Group, Inc. has reported improved net revenues for the first quarter ended April 1, rising to $466.3 million from $439.5 million in the first quarter of fiscal 2005. However, operating income slipped to $34.6 million compared with $52.9 million in the first quarter of fiscal 2005; and net income fell to $16.1 million from $29.4 million.

Whilst its Intimate categories performed well, the company believes that revenue and operating income for the Swimwear Group fell short of targeted amounts by approximately $30 million and $10 million, respectively, during the quarter, primarily due to difficulties with the implementation of a new systems infrastructure and its effect on shipping, re-orders and order cancellations.

Additionally, the timing shift in sales of certain sportswear product offerings resulted in the absence of approximately $12 million of net revenues and $5 million of operating income, which revenues and operating income occurred in the first quarter of 2005 but are not expected to occur until the latter half of this year.

Joe Gromek, president and chief executive officer commented, "The strong performance of our Intimate Apparel Group and international businesses, including our newly acquired International Calvin Klein businesses, was overshadowed by a disappointing first quarter for our Swimwear Group, where disruptions caused by the implementation of a new systems infrastructure negatively affected shipping in the quarter, resulting in sales declines year over year and additional expense. The quarter was also negatively impacted by the effects of retail consolidation and a significant timing shift in certain sportswear sales from the first half of this year into the latter half of this year."

The Warnaco Group designs and markets intimate apparel, menswear, jeanswear, swimwear, men's and women's sportswear and accessories under owned and licensed brands such as Warner's, Speedo, Ocean Pacific, Chaps and Calvin Klein.

CITA issues revised definition of ski/snowboard pant quotas

10 May 2006

The Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements (CITA), an inter-agency committee chaired by the US Department of Commerce, has revised the definition of ski and snowboard pants that are exempt from the quota on man-made fibre pants from China. The revision is the result of several meetings between CITA and SnowSports Industries America (SIA) and the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) and will be effective July, 1, 2006.

For the purposes of subheadings 6203.43.3510, 6204.63.3010, 6210.40.5031 and 6210.50.5031, the term ski and snowboard pants' means ankle-length pants made of synthetic fabrics, with or without insulation for cold weather protection, with pockets, at least one of which has a zippered or hook and loop closure, sealed seams at the front (up to the zipper or other means of closure) and back rise, hidden leg sleeves with a means of tightening at the ankle, and with one of more the following: side openings, scuff guards or reinforcement in the seat. A sealed seam is one that is sealed by the means of taping, gluing, bonding, cementing, fusing or similar process so that air and water cannot pass through.

Following the announcement, David Ingemie, president of SIA, commented The revised definition solves one immediate problem: it allows companies who produce woven performance ski and snowboard pants to take full advantage of the intended exemption for such pants by clarifying the definition. Both SIA and OIA members had been adversely affected by the narrow interpretation of the original language. We appreciate CITA's clarification of this matter.'

However, we are extremely disappointed that this ruling fails to address the core issue: that American makers of innovative outdoor apparel have no domestic commercial sources to rely upon, yet continue to be included in quota systems that unfairly exposes businesses to potential embargoes,' said Frank Hugelmeyer, president of Outdoor Industry Association.

Tefron signs JV in China

10 May 2006

Israeli producer of seamless intimate apparel and active wear Tefron Ltd. has signed an agreement to form a joint venture in China with Langsha Knitting Co. Ltd., a Chinese textile brand name company, and Itochu Corporation, a Japanese Fortune-500 company with significant business interests and experience managing multi-national joint ventures in China. The joint venture has been formed to manufacture seamless underwear for the Asian market using Santoni knitting machines contributed by Tefron USA.

Tefron will hold 50.1% of the equity of the joint-venture. The parties expect the venture to become operational within the next few months.

AVP signs Speedo as official licensing partner

10 May 2006

Lifestyle sports entertainment company AVP Pro Beach Volleyball Tour, Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of AVP, Inc., has signed a three-year licensing agreement with swimwear brand Speedo. As part of the new deal, which runs until 2009, Speedo will manufacture, market and distribute the new "AVP and AVP Pro Series apparel by Speedo" line of merchandise to be sold at all AVP Crocs Tour events as well as through retail distribution.

Products will include volley shorts, women's performance swimwear, outerwear, casual wear, hats, visors and backpacks.

Gerber Technology launches new wide-format inkjet plotters

11 May 2006

Gerber Technology has introduced two new wide-format inkjet plotters, the Infinity 45 and Infinity 85, which are said to be suitable for plotting in an ultra-wide format, yet compact enough to fit into any design, pattern making or marking/nesting operation.

These latest additions to the Infinity series are said to provide faster throughput and increased flexibility to maximise large marker production. Using HP printhead technology, the Infinity 45 uses standard 42 ml HP 51645a monochrome ink cartridges that are commercially available world-wide for maximum convenience. The Infinity 85 uses the HP 350 ml bulk ink system for additional cost and time savings. With more than eight times the capacity of standard cartridges, it is claimed that the bulk ink supply will save customers an estimated 15% on ink costs and will decrease down time caused by ink cartridge replacement. A new capability for remote monitoring of ink and paper levels also ensures that the system is not idle due to paper or ink out.

Gerber Technology develops and manufactures integrated software and hardware automation systems for manufacturers and retailers in the sewn products and flexible materials industries.

Yue Yuen posts higher revenues in April

11 May 2006

The world’s largest manufacturer of sports and athletic footwear Yue Yuen reported consolidated operating revenues $332.553 million in April, more than 15% higher than in March. Net consolidated accumulative operating revenue $1.176 billion for the four months ended April 30.

Net consolidated sales for the current April reached $1.418 billion whilst net consolidated accumulative sales for the first four months reached $5.986 billion.

Première Vision heads to Russia

11 May 2006

As a result of the ever-increasing interest from fabric manufacturers in gaining a foothold in the Russian market, Première Vision has decided to organise a new show in Moscow, which will bring weavers together with Russian fabric and fashion professionals.

The first edition of Première Vision Moscou will take place on October 5-6, at a venue close to the centre of Moscow.

According to the organisers, Première Vision Moscou will present a broad offer of products to attract the "poly-directional" Russian market and in preparation for the new event Première Vision has created a permanent branch in Moscow.

Lectra previews automated grading solution and 3D prototyping at IMB

11 May 2006

France-based developer of software, CAD/CAM equipment and related services Lectra, is previewing its new automated grading solution and its 3D virtual prototyping at the IMB 2006 trade show in Cologne, Germany (May 10-13).

Its new automated grading solution is said to facilitate and accelerate the grading process for fashion-sector companies while satisfying quality requirements and ensuring perfectly-fitting garments. It is based on an innovative template' concept; the operator selects a graphical representation, with grading information, by product type (pants, shirt, skirt, etc.) from a custom library. After selecting a measurement chart, the operator loads the pattern pieces and positions them onto the template either manually or automatically. The grading is then performed with the click of the mouse.

The new 3D virtual prototyping solution is said to be a major CAD breakthrough for design and engineering departments as the integration of 3D prototyping and product visualisation solutions into the development and marketing cycle will enable fashion companies to shorten lead times and reduce development costs while facilitating collaborative work and decision-making. The solution is the result of eight years of development.

These two new systems will be available in the last quarter of 2006.

Versa-Matic launches Mini-Matic Pumps

11 May 2006

US designer and manufacturer of air-operated double diaphragm pumps and accessories Versa-Matic Pump Company has launched a new ‘mini’ pump that is said to offer all the dependable performance of its full-size pumps in a versatile and compact design. Whilst the E8 3/8" Mini-Matic Pump weighs only three pounds it can pump up to 6.8 gallons per minute (26 litres per minute) and deliver pressures of up to 100 psi (6.8 bar).

It can be mounted upright, sideways, or inverted to adapt to uses in ink and pigment dispensing; oil and quick lube applications; foaming applications; chemical batching and dosing; adhesive applications; OEM applications; as well as, drum/pail transfer.
It also features Versa-Matic's patented Elima-Matic Air Valve System to eliminate blow-by, and deliver non-stalling, non-icing, lube-free operation.

It is available in Polypropylene- and Kynar-wetted construction materials, with XL (Santoprene), Geolast, or Teflon interiors.

Itema acquires Steiger textile machinery business

11 May 2006

Italian textile machinery manufacturer Itema has acquired the Steiger Group, a Switzerland-based developer and manufacturer of flatbed knitting machines.

Under the deal, the Itema Group acquired 100% of the share capital of the Swiss company retrospectively, effective as of April 30.

The Itema Group now owns nine companies and seven development centres and is represented in more than 90 countries. With a workforce of 2,700, the group achieved a turnover of €605 million in 2005.

Its companies include Savio (winding machines), Promatech and Sultex (weaving machines), First (accessories) and Eutron (electronic components).

Apax completes acquisition of Tommy Hilfiger Corporation

11 May 2006

Apax Partners has completed its previously announced acquisition of the Tommy Hilfiger Corporation for a purchase price of approximately $1.6 billion in cash to shareholders.

Tommy Hilfiger, the company's founder and principal designer, commented, "We are very excited as we embark on this new chapter in the evolution of our global lifestyle company. In Apax Partners, we have an outstanding new partner, and we look forward to working together to take the Tommy Hilfiger brand to new heights."

Tommy Hilfiger Corporation, through its subsidiaries, designs, sources and markets men's and women's sportswear, jeanswear and childrenswear. Apax Partners is a private equity investment group operating across the United States, Europe, Israel and Asia.

Adidas designs football boots in 32 team colours for the World Cup

12 May 2006

Adidas recently presented 32 football boot designs, inspired by the team colours of the 32 nations participating in the 2006 FIFA World Cup. Every nation will have its very own +F50 Tunit design featuring a variety of country colours and details. Some of the shoes will be widely available in retail, others will be produced in limited editions only. The +F50 Tunit 32 designs will only be made available as upper components of the modular TUNIT concept.

During the 2006 FIFA World Cup, the +F50 Tunit 32 concept will also be endorsed on the pitch. Amongst the athletes wearing the product will be players such as Lionel Messi (Argentina and FC Barcelona), Lukas Podolski (Germany and 1. FC Cologne), Zé Roberto (Brazil and FC Bayern Munich), Nigel de Jong (Holland and Hamburg SV) and Nicolas Anelka (France and Fenerbahçe).

Safety Products Holdings and Norcross Safety Products post higher sales

12 May 2006

Designer and manufacturer of personal protection equipment Safety Products Holdings, Inc. and Norcross Safety Products LLC has reported positive results for the quarter ended April 1.

For the first quarter, net sales of the company reached $141.9 million compared with $119.9 million in the first quarter of 2005. Net sales increased to $22 million, 18.3%, which was said to be attributable to increased net sales in each of its three operating segments.

In the general safety and preparedness segment, net sales increase of $16.5 million, or 19.9%, reflected a combination of overall organic growth and incremental net sales resulting from the acquisition of The Fibre-Metal Products Company, which offset unfavourable exchange rates. In the fire service segment, net sales increased $1.1 million, or 4.7%,

primarily as a result of incremental net sales from the acquisition of American Firewear, Inc. In the electrical safety segment, net sales increased $4.4 million, or 31.1%, driven by strong market demand and new product penetration.

The company's products are sold under brand names such as North, KCL, Fibre-Metal, Morning Pride, Ranger, Servus, Pro-Warrington, American Firewear and Salisbury.

European textiles and machinery sectors launch joint R&D initiative

12 May 2006

During the European Technology Platforms Conference, organised by The European Commission and the Austrian EU Presidency, which was held on May 4-5, in Vienna, the European Technology Platform for Assuring the future of Manufacturing in Europe (Manufuture) and the European Technology Platform for the Future of Textiles and Clothing (Textile ETP) launched an initiative entitled ManuTex in order to nurture closer collaboration in pre-competitive research and development at European level.

The objectives of the ManuTex initiative are:

• The establishment of a permanent collaboration forum between textile/clothing manufacturers and developers and manufacturers of machines, systems & tools for textile/clothing production to exchange major technological trends and evolving user needs

• The combination of complementary elements of the Strategic Research Agendas of the Manufuture and Textile European Technology Platforms in a joint implementation plan

• The initiation of strategic, genuinely breakthrough-oriented collaborative research projects between the two sectors bringing together the best available competences and capacities to mutual benefit.

The implementation of ManuTex will be coordinated by a Coordination Committee composed of representatives of all stakeholder groups. The Coordination Committee will be chaired by Professor Thomas Gries, director of the Institut für Textiltechnik at the RWTH Aachen University, Germany (ITA).

Sales rise at Big 5 Sporting Goods

12 May 2006

Sporting goods retailer Big 5 Sporting Goods Corporation has reported increased sales for the fiscal 2006 first quarter ended April 2.

Net sales increased by $17.1 million (9%) to $207.2 million from $190.1 million for the first quarter of fiscal 2005. Same store sales increased 5.3%, representing the company's 41st consecutive quarter of positive same store sales comparisons.

Gross profit increased 8.3% to $73.4 million from $67.8 million in the comparable period of the prior year.

Net income for the first quarter was $5.9 million compared with $6.4 million for the first quarter of fiscal 2005.

The company operates 327 stores in 10 states offering athletic shoes, apparel and accessories, as well as outdoor and athletic equipment for team sports, fitness, camping, hunting, fishing, tennis, golf, snowboarding and in-line skating.

Bayer increases prices for polyesters

12 May 2006

Effective May 15, BASF will increase its prices for styrene copolymer specialties in Europe by €150 per metric ton. The products affected include Luran S (ASA), Terlux (MABS), Terblend N (ABS/PA-Blends) and Terluran High Heat (ABS high heat grades). The increase is said to be the result of increases in feedstock prices, energy and transportation costs.

These styrene copolymer specialties provide solutions where components have to meet special requirements regarding their aesthetics and longevity. Examples of such applications are in the sport and leisure and automotive sectors.