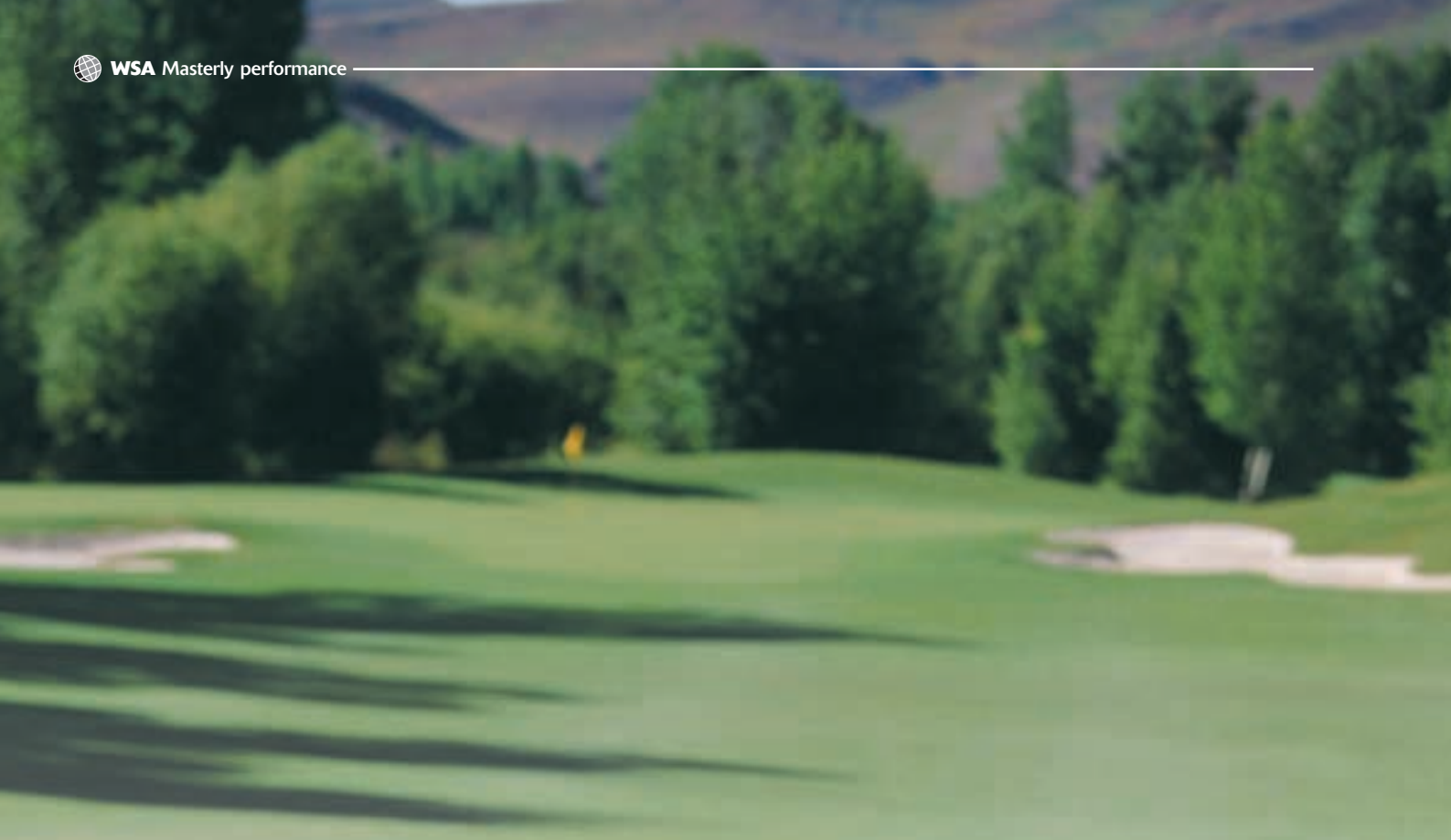


Masterly performance

Less was definitely more when it came to choosing apparel at the 2004 PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando in earlier this year. Many off-course buyers and PGA professionals were trimming their golf apparel stocks, but adding more performance fabrics because an increasing number of golfers are choosing functional pieces. The performance category continues to grow in the men's knitwear market, with most major manufacturers devoting a substantial portion of their lines to moisture wicking, temperature control, stain protection, UV protection and the latest in odour control management.

Expanding technical performance fabrics in golf knitwear are gaining improved acceptance among the more technically educated consumers. For 2004, Röche Sports became more than an outerwear company when it added a line of knitted performance tops that can be layered under all outerwear for comfortable playing conditions in any weather. The new garments come in various weights to meet different weather conditions, from protection against the lowest temperatures to high-tech moisture management jersey for warm and humid weather. Combined with Röche's patented Inverse Technology (IT) for unrestricted performance, the motion moisture management system, known as Dry Motion, is offered in three different fabrics. Jersey knit is lightweight and has a smooth finish. Twill knit is a mid-weight fabric with more warmth, and pebble knit has a textured finish that allows greater airflow.





(left) Antigua's Desert Dry moisture management process gives this shirt an edge in hot and sticky conditions.

(right) In contrast, this Comfortsuede pullover from Zero Restriction laminated with Gore's Windstopper layer is said to be three times warmer than similar fabrics.

Antigua and Zero Restriction

In addition to Dry Ply moisture wicking fabric with UV and antimicrobial protection, Dockers'

Tour line features Stain Defender finish, which is a treatment using the DuPont Teflon process. Oil and water based liquids such as orange juice, soda and milk bead up and roll off the knitted fabrics treated with Stain Defender, and most semi-liquids can be blotted off the fabric to minimise staining before washing. Dockers offers a similar treatment, called SpotLifter, for the woven fabrics in its golf line. In addition this DuPont Teflon coating allows stains to be removed more easily during washing than those on fabrics finished in more regular fashion.

The Ping collection has two branded performance products and two exclusive branded fabric treatments. On the branded side, Ping uses Lycra to add comfort and freedom of movement and the CIBA UV protection for lightweight or light-coloured fabrics. Many brands such as Ping prefer to develop their own blends and treatments directly with suppliers rather than use existing branded product. The company's Dry-Fiber Dynamics, for example, is designed for high activity sportswear fabrics to absorb, wick and dry faster than average golf wear. Moisture is dispersed for ease of evaporation and perspiration is absorbed and drawn to the surface of the fabric. Ping Function 3 Dynamics acts as a weather shielding barrier being breathable, water-repellent and moderately wind-proof.



Manufactured in a variety of knits to meet varying weather conditions, Röche's Dry Motion shirts are said to epitomise temperature and comfort control.

Röche

Desert Dry from Antigua is a technical fabric made exclusively for that company. It is constructed to move moisture away from the skin, using specially treated microfibre and cotton yarns knitted with 'performance' technology. This fabric creates dry comfort in all warm weather conditions. Other brands concentrating on technical knitted fibres are the Greg Norman Collection with PlayDry, adidas' Climalite and Ashworth's EZ Tech making up about 20 percent of the men's performance knitted product mix.

Enduring comfort

It's probably true to say that knitwear has had an application to the golf sector greater than any other aspect of leisure activities. As a long-term derivation from the home-based ability to produce basic clothing from the simplest of raw materials – the hair drawn from domestic animals – the requirements of protection from temperature extremes, flexibility, low-weight, durability and inherent good looks would seem to offer all that a good clubsman or woman could ask for.

Golfers are not the only contenders of course. Knitwear can be found in every aspect of daily life and has been so for thousands of years. The demand for raw materials has been continuous and increasing, and the latter factor led to the 20th century search for an acceptable synthetic substitute. Some offerings were better than others, but the majority failed to duplicate the most important requirements of comfort and appearance.

As part of its presentation at recent international trade fairs, Invista's fibre specialists have been proposing some radical ideas for high performance products in a knitwear format. Apparently more suited to the battlefield or the machine-shop, the application of a fresh range of knitted performance yarns to sports and leisure could possibly provide a wave of new ideas for designers and specifiers alike.



A single jersey construction in dyed Cordura, plated with low-power Lycra to give greater comfort and shape retention in garments.



A chunky knit that is soft and low weight due to the use of a wool / nylon / Lycra spun yarn.



CoolMax and Lycra in a bold design suitable for sports-influenced ready-to-wear.



A single-jersey three-colour bold stripe in Cordura plated with Lycra for durability combined with a pleasant handle.

Invista