

## 20TH ANNIVERSARY: A RETROSPECTIVE

As part of WSA's 20th anniversary celebrations, some of the big players in the textiles and sportswear supply chains share their views on the advances of the past two decades and consider where we are headed, and explain how the magazine has helped inform them.

# WSA hits the spot



### Collector's item

Co-founder with his brother Luca of laminated membrane technology provider OutDry, **Matteo Morlacchi** recalls seeing *WSA* for the first time at the Premiere Vision exhibition in 1996. One year later, he started a collection that he has kept intact, with every issue since 1997 and 50 articles bookmarked for reference.

The brothers had spent several years developing their idea of bonding a waterproof, breathable membrane directly to the outermost layer of a shoe or glove to prevent water or dirt from penetrating before they launched their original company, Nextec.

Mr Morlacchi is kind enough to say *WSA* helped by providing a "technical and commercial perspective". It is also his conviction that the magazine has been able to track accurately the evolution of OutDry, which he says is one of the stand-out technologies that *WSA* has covered over the years. OutDry was acquired by outdoor group Columbia Sportswear in 2010 and the technology has been incorporated into backpacks.

It's important for companies to keep investing in new products and processes, he says, as what he calls "real and effective innovation" is a major driver for growth. 🌐



### Performance grows up

Italian textile company Eurojersey deems Ispo in Munich the most important trade show, and the team there recommends the Wirtshaus Zum Straubinger restaurant for socialising.

In the time that *WSA* has been in publication, Eurojersey's most important innovation has been Sensitive Fabrics, their improvement and development, according to Eurojersey CEO **Andrea Crespi**.

The Lycra-polyamide blends are made in the company's production facility, based outside Milan.

"The industry now is more demanding," he tells us. "The idea of performance has grown up.

"Eurojersey is working towards requests for more versatile and multifunctional products; we want to achieve a perfect balance between performance and appeal."

He thinks the style of the magazine suits his company's needs in terms of product presentation and technologies for the sportswear segment.

Asked which articles have stood out, he mentions Eurojersey's advertorial page, 'Beyond performance'. "It was published in the February issue and distributed during the Ispo fair, and was a good opportunity for us to present the latest technologies of Sensitive Fabrics to the sportswear industry," he says. 🌐

### Céline and Bernard Cugerone, JRC-Reflex

#### Can you recall any WSA articles that have stood out for you?

I found the recent articles on the connections being made between 3D printing and traditional textile manufacturing particularly interesting, as they open up a whole new area for our industry.

I read *sportstextiles.com* to keep up to date on the latest news and happenings in the industry, they are essential in the fast-paced business environment. I prefer reading the longer articles of the magazine in the print edition.

#### What have been the major innovations in your field in the last 20 years?

Our daily activities have changed dramatically with the emergence of the internet and how it has accelerated communications and business at all levels. As a manufacturer, the implementation of stricter chemicals standards and certification systems, such as REACh, Oekotex, etc, has also had a major impact on our day-to-day business. Each product must now be tested before and after production, by certified laboratories. These have led to higher costs.

#### Which is the most important industry show for your business, and where you do like to go to eat or relax after a show?

The most important show for us is Ispo, which attracts 80,000 visitors. We have been going to a wonderful Thai restaurant in Munich for some 20 years. It's called Ruen Thai and it is, in my opinion, the best Thai restaurant in all of Germany. 🌐



### Lee Howarth, Huntsman Textile Effects

#### *What has been your company's most important innovation?*

Over the last decade, a significant shift in emphasis has been placed on delivering innovations that fulfil both environmental and economic sustainability. Huntsman has been successful in providing innovative products from pretreatment with low temperature bleaching systems such as Gentle Power Bleach and more recently leading the transition in the field of DWR treatments from C8 PFC chemistry to C6 PFCs and on to non-

fluorine solutions. The revolution in digital printing over the last 20 years must also rate very highly as a very important technology. For me, however, Huntsman's award winning range of reactive dyes for cotton, AVITERA SE, is a real game changer.

#### *Where do you think the industry is heading?*

The industry is really embarking on a precipice of change. Pressure from consumers, legislations and NGOs are likely to continue driving increasing demands for more environmentally-acceptable production methods and chemistries used. My hope is we will witness real drive to more innovative dyeing and finishing processing and the smart use of chemistry over the coming years with the common goal of reducing the environmental impact of textiles for a truly sustainable business.

#### *Can you recall any WSA articles that have stood out?*

There are so many it's hard to single out any one of them. In saying that, I do take a close interest in the Durable Water Repellent arena and have found, especially over the last few years, that WSA is by far the most valuable source of information about this rapidly changing market space. It is essential to be kept fully informed of all the dynamics that is happening here to make informed choices but also to help guide other industry stakeholders with appropriate information. I have to thank WSA for keeping me abreast of all the changes and updates in the industry! 

### WSA is just right (and for reading at the hairdresser)

It's 17 years since Yvonne Heinen, European marketing and communications director of Gerber Technology, encountered WSA at a breakfast meeting in Paris with the sales team. She even had a hand in helping the magazine put together the first of many articles about outdoor brand Patagonia, by putting us in touch with a journalist friend who was based near the company's headquarters in California and paid Patagonia a visit on our behalf.

If technology companies, like hers (which has been developing hardware and software to help automate apparel production for almost half a century), want to reach the activewear and sportswear markets, they could not find "a better channel to talk to those people" than WSA, she says. There are other titles, and she talks to them all. "But they are not as focused," she continues. "People in activewear have to read WSA; it's so specific and has such a high level of quality."

Suggestions she has for improving WSA include moving the News Map feature to the end of the magazine to allow it to open with "a more visual article", and making the contents section clearer. "But these are small things," she insists. "WSA is a pleasure to read; I take it to the hairdresser to read it there."

In terms of technological innovation in the industry overall, Ms Heinen says she expects improving processes through automation is certain to remain an important focus. She describes automation as the key to allowing companies to generate the margins they need to survive in such a competitive market.

And competitiveness is only going to increase. "We are in a fundamental phase of change," Ms Heinen adds, "because of the way the internet is changing. "E-commerce is changing retail faster than we thought, and 3D technology has much more behind it now." 

### Kieran O'Hare, Camtex

#### *What has been your company's most important innovation?*

Cambrelle shoe linings, a durable, practical fabric that became a replacement for leather linings.

#### *How has the industry changed over the past two decades?*

The company has been around for 45 years, and we have distributors in nearly every country so we've seen big swings, and that's mainly influenced by lower labour costs from country to country. We've ended up following that, with half our capacity now in China and the remainder in the UK. Clients' costs have also been affected significantly by fluctuations in currency.

#### *Where do you think the industry is heading?*

I feel that because it's still a labour-intensive industry, technology is going to have a bigger impact. If you look at the significant changes in technology in the last 20 years – the internet has revolutionised how people communicate and the need for travel – there doesn't seem to have been any huge changes in the way shoes are made. If you take the cost of labour and transportation – we're making things in china and shipping them to America. There's bound to be a smart group of people in the next few years that finds ways to make shoes cheaper so you don't have to follow the labour. Then you can make products closer to home and reduce the carbon footprint

#### *Have any WSA articles stood out?*

I've always found the magazine interesting, you can't say that about a lot of the others. In terms of the articles, one that is fresh in my mind is one on Celliant. Having read that, we decided to follow it up and introduce Celliant into a new range of Cambrelle linings.

#### *Which is the most important industry show for your business?*

We have always gone to Lineapelle in Italy. For the European market, on which we concentrate, that's the one show that covered near enough everyone. It's faded away a bit now, but because people would travel from Asia and the US, I could see all my distributors at the one time, rather than have to travel to Finland or Brazil; all the people I needed to talk to were there.

#### *Do you recommend any restaurants at that show?*

Too many too mention! 

## Commitment to innovation

New Zealand-based Designer Textiles International, which uses merino wool to create specialist fabrics for activewear, heard about *WSA* by word of mouth. An industry contact recommended the magazine as a means of advertising its products to potential clients in the outdoor industry. "It placed us on the same page as our target customers," says the company's innovation manager, **Brett McIlvrive**.

His commitment to innovation means he has kept an eye on innovation in *WSA* articles at the same time as Designer Textiles was developing its own ideas, moving from a focus on "commodity product" such as cotton and polyester and poly-cotton blends to a position as a specialist merino producer. "Now we are evolving merino to blend with these other fibres to enhance the best performance aspects from each combination," he explains.

The industry continues to grow, Mr McIlvrive observes, with sportswear now morphing into the fashion and lifestyle arenas, and while advances in technology at all levels of the supply chain have led to what he calls "significant diversification in product capability", the challenge is still for specialist textile suppliers to deliver value to customers while still being able to retain margin to reinvest in the business.

He prefers the print edition of *WSA* to the online version, saying that there is so much online media these days that it's sometimes hard to remember where we read what and articles become "just another read". Industry exhibitions also remain important, with Outdoor Retailer and Ispo the most significant ones for Designer Textiles, based on its target customer profile. And when it's time to relax after a hard day's work at the former, he likes, and recommends, the Café Molise across the road from the Salt Palace exhibition centre in Salt Lake City. 🌐



## Hans-Jürgen Hübner and Christine Hübner-Dütschler, Schoeller Textil

**What are your first recollections of *WSA*?**

We still call the magazine World Sports Activewear and not *WSA*, this is our earliest recollection of the publication. We noticed it because of its technical articles that enrich the textile sector. We appreciate its in-depth research, independent viewpoint and innovative articles that we feel are ideally suited to the Schoeller brand and company.

**What have been the major innovations in your field in the last 20 years?**

Schoeller Textil has made several breakthroughs of its own, such as using Kevlar fibres in protection textiles and developing the first soft shell fabrics. The climate membrane *c\_change* was also a milestone in our history.

Sustainability has been a major issue for use for decades now, we participated in the development of the bluesign system and are proud of having developed the ecological ecorepel technology for water repellency.

**Where do you think the industry is going?**

In the future, the industry needs to focus even more on comfort, performance and ecological properties to create functional clothing for everyday life. We see this as a key trend. Also, workwear as protection textiles can no longer offer safety alone but must also be comfortable to wear, elastic, breathable, etc.

**Which is the most important industry show for your business, and where do like to go to eat or relax after a show?**

As an event presenting many new developments and ideas, Techtextil, in Frankfurt, is a most inspiring show. When we are there, we often go to Main Nizza, the food is excellent and there is a wonderful terrace. Its owner is a true 'original' who has a great sense of humour. 🌐

## Marco Weichert, Weichert Agencies / Performance Days

**W**SA is the only industry magazine that I read from the first to the last page. It is, in my opinion, the most detailed and experienced media platform on the web and in print covering the news and evolution of technical fabrics. I personally prefer the printed magazine to the online version. I take time to read it thoroughly, something I often do when travelling. The email newsletter then keeps me up to date every week on industry news. Some of the articles that I found most inspiring are those that cover fabric innovation and sustainability, such as the story on 'The new state of DWRs' or 'Next-generation membranes'.



"I think it is very positive that *WSA* keeps on investigating subjects that are emerging and have yet to be scientifically validated, as well as materials that are still in research. The story on ceramic products (*Far-infrared reflecting textiles: the science behind the magic*) has sparked much discussion.

"It is useful for our industry to examine and evaluate new technologies but we must also think about how innovative textiles should be marketed to retailers and consumers. As we have to reinvent our offering twice a year, our industry tends to focus too much on the next-gen technologies and not enough on how to communicate the benefits of existing products to consumers. This is an area that needs to be addressed: how to tell stories that consumers will understand and motivate them to purchase a new garment.

"The most important change in the past 20 years has been the acknowledgement of sustainable technical fabrics in our industry. We will see a lot more sustainable innovations in the future.

"For me, the key venues for our industry are the Ispo and the Performance Days shows in Munich. Ispo is the leading industry platform and Performance Days, as a fabric sourcing event, takes place at an ideal time for buyers." 🌐