

GAME CHANGERS: JAMIE HUNT

‘The greatest innovation of the 21st century’

by Clare Grainger

Jamie Hunt, co-founder and director of product development for Australia-based 2XU, would like to see an industry standard for the term ‘compression’ to stop others using it incorrectly. 2XU is backed by LVMH and, as well as working with professional sports teams, is making breakthroughs into mainstream avenues including collaborations with rapper and designer Kanye West.

How did you come into the industry and what made you launch 2XU?

I came into the industry through being a professional triathlete and while I was doing triathlons I did an economics degree and started working at a brand called Orca, in their finance team. Within six weeks I discovered I hated finance and quickly moved into the product team, which within a few weeks I was leading. I came into the industry through Orca, learnt my trade, served my apprenticeship and in 2004 met up with Aidan Clarke and Clyde Davenport and we had a vision of creating the world’s first truly high-performance sportswear company. That was 13 years ago now, and it’s been going rosy ever since.

What have been the high points for the company?

There have been many high points. To create a business and be profitable in year two was a really huge achievement and I think we very quickly found a niche in the market that we fitted into very nicely. Our growth in the first five years was astounding and those early years were fantastic because we were the underdog trying to beat the big boys. Now we’ve become this medium-sized company and we’re turning around trying to fight off the dogs nipping at our heels while still looking ahead to the big brands in front of us. It’s still a really great time but those early years were very exciting, to be creating and evolving the brand. There’s a vision we’ve had from day one and I think we’ve done a really great job of following through on that.

Former professional triathlete Jamie Hunt turned his passion for athletics into an obsession with performance fabrics. The brand develops the fabric from yarn level with help from its partners.



How has compression changed or developed since 2005?

We've definitely honed and refined our compression. I look back to our product when we first launched it 12 years ago and it was a great product, but since then we've made our fabrics stronger, lighter, more breathable and more moisture-wicking, we've become more specialised in different sports, we've brought in our MCS (muscle containment stamping) technology, but our product from 12 years ago was still a great product and even now it would hold its own in the compression industry. We've come a long way since 2005 and we're very proud of our development.

A recent study (albeit small), by Ohio State University and funded by Nike, suggested compression does not work. What's your response to that?

Nike doesn't actually make compression garments. People just throw the word compression onto products when they're not really compression. For years we've been trying to create an industry standard certified sports compression but nobody really wants to engage with us on this because they understand they're a long way off their product being true compression. Every study we've done – and our studies have been undertaken in conjunction with the Australian government via the Australian Institute of Sport – has shown many positive results, and we know without doubt that compression works when it's a true compression garment. I think the study was just Nike putting its hands in the air and saying 'we can't do compression very well' and so they want to make it look bad for everyone else out there. Compression in the sports industry has been the greatest sporting innovation of the 21st century.

Can you tell us about moving your US headquarters to LA and the company's expansion? Does being based in Australia hinder a brand with a global focus?

If we were a US-based company it would definitely be easier to grow the brand in that market. Obviously, you're always going to be strongest in your home market. Being in Australia can be a hindrance in some ways but being in Australia also gives us a much closer synergy with the Asia market, which we see as a really key growth driver going forward. We've recently moved our office in the US from Carlsbad to Santa Monica so we're definitely now more in the action. We've got a whole new team, it's a more experienced team but it's still a tough market. Our collaborations with Kanye West have been fantastic; last year we developed a few products with them but this year we're



actually embarking on a much bigger collaboration with Kanye and the Yeezy brand and they're very excited by what we're bringing to the party.

Each batch of fabric is tested at three locations to ensure it delivers the correct amount of power.

2XU

What are your aims for the company and predictions, in terms of compression?

One of our company goals is to be the No.1 compression brand in all sports, in all markets. We haven't got there yet, and in the team sports space we haven't had as much success as we've had in the endurance space but in saying that, endurance is still our heritage, we're still an endurance brand. With compression we see it as a lever to get more into the run apparel space. We definitely see compression playing a huge part in running and we want to get more of a foothold in the runwear industry. In teamwear we already have a foothold with many professional sports teams. We currently sell to many NBA teams in the US and in the UK we sell to a vast majority of Premier League football teams, so we have great leverage in professional sport that filters down to amateur-level sport.

Away from business, how do you relax?

I do triathlons, I'm still a very competitive triathlete. I placed second in the world championships for my age group two years ago and still race competitively as a masters athlete – I wouldn't call that relaxing, but I also have a wife and three children and I enjoy having a lot of holidays with them and that's an important part of my overall life.