

MARKETING

Fast Fabric Swimwear for London Summer Games



The Arena USA Powerskin Carbon-Pro is the first racing suit to integrate a carbon cage in its design to deliver intelligent muscle compression. The fabric used was created by weaving yarns of stretch fabric across a special net made entirely of carbon. The integrated carbon threads ensure that the fabric endures stretch while remaining comfortable against the skin, resulting in the mechanical durability and comfortable fit of the suit. The carbon fibers also help neutralize electrostatic discharge outside the water on muscles, and the intelligent placement and construction of internal tapes ensure power return during kicks and turns. The carbon fiber locks down when and where a critical stretch level is reached, while retaining the suit's elasticity. This delivers a ramp-up in compression on those specific overextended zones, increasing support and control when and where they are needed without detracting from the swimmer's mobility. Arena USA collaborated with Kinotech Labs on the development. ●

Pantone Teams with Sephora



Pop-Up Color: Shoppers in Manhattan got the message that "tangerine" is THE color of the year thanks to a successful joint marketing effort by trend forecaster Pantone and retailer Sephora.

OUT OF CONTEXT

As the Consumer Market Fills with More Claims and Names will Anyone Care?

The most visible technical athletic products that Middle America puts its hands on have wildly divergent technologies and lineage. Charged Cotton, Flashdry, Omni-something, Dri Fit, etc., known as house brands, they project a broad spectrum of effectiveness and sophistication, some products work really, really well, and some of them are mostly a hang tag. The problem is that a consumer with above average interest in the performance characteristics of these textiles has nowhere to go for technical information and cannot tell the apples from the oranges.

As has been noted that the continuing march of house branded technologies is making the market more than a bit muddy. And there is speculation about what the effect will be on textile science companies; people with real long term interest in the advancement of their craft, as the consumer market fills with ever more claims and names. Now the question seems to be; in the future will anyone care?

The consumer is faced with increasingly confusing and overlapping choices, with each competitive garment carrying a sensible argument about why their Zip-Bang cloth is, and always has been, the best thing going. The first reaction is to try to do the math, closely look at the tags and display information and attempt to reason out our own truth. We are, after all, a nation of label readers, it is natural for us to compare product and apply our value formula. But, all we can easily see regarding fabric technology is fiber content and marketing slang; no defensible information regarding performance at all. Into this vacuum we apply our own experiential bias and sound bite sentiment regarding synthetic vs. cotton... and then buy the brand we wanted anyway.

For specialty textile mills and brands to stay relevant they must provide the consumer with real and effective tools to define their products and judge them against other well-known and house branded competition. They have to insert real science into the market. Otherwise, the big technical bubble that is moving into the middle of the consumer apparel market won't have an aspirational top or direction. The genius will be lost amidst a multitude of 'wicking' polyester fabrics and big box marketing.

Comparative testing is a slippery slope, as textile professionals know all too well; however there is a new generation of testing protocols, especially with regards to wicking, that promise much better and more realistic results. Will the big brands and their anonymous technologies lead or follow regarding the consumer's expectations of comparing apples to apples

– Kurt Gray