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*WSA celebrates 20 years
Sports and outdoor can keep growing
E-textiles in touching distance of the mainstream
Two decades' worth of footwear highlights*

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE FOR PERFORMANCE & SPORTS MATERIALS

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 McIlvride**.

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 McIlvride 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

WSA 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." 🌐

