



**WSA**<sup>TM</sup> CELEBRATING 20<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
PERFORMANCE & SPORTS MATERIALS

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*20 years of WSA:  
Apparel and textile highlights of the last two decades  
Shells take on a new shape  
The jacket runners really wanted*

**THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE FOR PERFORMANCE & SPORTS MATERIALS**

**Simon Whitmarsh-Knight, Invista**

*What has been your company's most important innovation in the last 20 years?*

I think the evolution of Lycra fibre within our customers' fabrics has supported many of the trends over the last 20 years – from comfortable compression, to the ubiquitous black leggings to the rise of the MAMIL [middle-aged man in Lycra], whose ranks I am proud to have joined recently!

*How has the industry changed?*

Having started my career selling waterproof, breathable fabrics to UK companies 20 years ago, it's been great to see the whole outdoor industry grow and lead the sustainability debate across the apparel market, whilst more recently I've been really pleased to see the impact of events like the London Olympics on getting kids into sport and raising the profile of women's and disabled sport in general.


*Where do you think the industry is going in the next 20 years?*

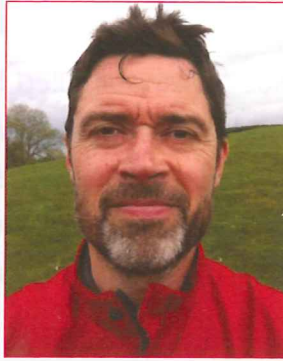
On a personal note, I hope overall participation in a more wellness approach to living continues to grow – not just competitive sports, but taking time with family to enjoy walks, playing with your kids and enjoying the simple things in life. From an industry perspective, I think the whole area of wearable tech will really start to take off as brands seek to capitalise on their investment in this area and users enjoy the benefits of feedback/monitoring from their gear.

*Have any WSA articles stood out for you?*

As a sporting goods professional with a non-technical textiles background it has been a valuable tool to keep learning about new technologies, developments and applications. As a (bad!) surfer, I have been interested in the articles around developments in sustainability, neoprene and alternative wetsuit technologies.

*Which is the most important show, and which bar do you recommend?*

I really value all the industry shows and am pleased to see how Performance Days in particular has refined its scope and grown. Clearly, I'm always far too busy during shows to visit any drinking establishments (!) but I hear that Gracie's in Salt Lake City is a pleasant spot... 

**S.J. Lee and Geza Maklary, Sealon**

*What has been your company's most important innovation in the last 20 years?*

Stretchable deco film and stretchable adhesive film. In terms of the developments in the seam tape area, I would say our Ghost tape: very soft, invisible inside the garment, with a matt aspect and very light.

In general, we have been developing lighter and lighter two- and three-layer tapes, the weight has been getting lighter and more stretch is used, in terms of the fabric.

*How has the industry changed?*

We used to concentrate on the outdoor market, but now we've started to also focus on the sportswear and even the intimate market, and we've developed many welding products according to market needs.

The workwear market has also become more demanding in terms of not only technical but also good-looking products, a market we will be actively pursuing. The outdoor and ski brands in general have shown more interest in trims, as a point of differentiation from their competition, as more and more brands use the same fabrics and the same garment manufacturers.


*Where do you think the industry is going in the next 20 years?*

Being comfortable will be the most important thing in the future. Outdoor brands have started to mix the sports and outdoor concepts, using stretch fabric and lightweight materials for comfort. Security will also be a big trend going forward, hence the growth we've seen in demand for reflective adhesive films.

*Have any articles of WSA stood out for you, or have any helped inform you of developments in the industry?*

I have been following all articles related to the 3D printing/weaving stories and find this a fantastic development, not only for make prototyping easier but also to make local additive/personalised production a reality.

*Which is the most important industry show for your business, and which bar or restaurant do you recommend?*

Ispo is definitely the most important show for our business in Europe. In Munich I like to go to Haxnbauer restaurant and have a wonderful pork knuckle with a Hefeweizen beer. 

**Doug Hoschek, RamTect**

**F**or Doug Hoschek, a 50-year veteran of the textile industry and the co-inventor of Polar Fleece, WSA's focus on product and technology rather than marketing or brands helps it get the thumbs up. And he cites wool's resurgence in the outdoor markets and its increasing use for military and outdoor safety apparel as a significant move of late.

"Fibres have moved from synthetics back to natural, especially wool, down and tree pulp, leaving synthetics as a cheap, fast-fashion, mass-retailing fibre," he says. "This opens the door to innovation, and encourages start-ups in the outdoor apparel field." He says many of these wish to only work with wool and other natural fibres and in fact attribute some global warming to the oil-based synthetics. However, he is quick to acknowledge that he built many products from synthetics over the years. "There has never been a standstill time in the outdoor industry," he says.

He suggests the culture of how outdoor products were created prior to 2000 disappeared with the rise of mega factories in Asia. "The focus of different designs are lost in the mega volumes required to work in those factories. It also allows anyone to bring out the same designs and materials without trying to be different."

But things are changing, with evidence of specialty retailers focusing on better quality. "There are many new companies that offer their own retailing, including online, and with that comes the need for close-by manufacturing."

His focus now is RamTect, developed with Hobbs Bonded Fibers – a soft and pliable wool insulation fabric using the company's no-yarn compression technology, launched at the January 2014 edition of Outdoor Retailer. After the show he relaxes in a Thai restaurant a mile east of the downtown show area. "I won't name any names though or it will no longer be a local neighbourhood hideout!" he says. 