

Under the Radar

NATURAL FIBERS MADE FROM SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES, HIGH-TECH FABRICS AND SCIENTIFIC-BACKED CONSTRUCTION METHODS MOVE BASELAYERS FROM UNDERCOVER TOPS AND BOTTOMS TO STAND-ALONE PIECES.

If you're old enough to remember the Blizzard of AAH-HH's, Peter Frampton and straight skis, then you probably wore cotton long underwear. It's a wonder that any of us survived wearing this non-wicking fabric — a fabric that now owns the dubious on-slope tagline of "cotton kills." That may be an overstatement, but it's fair to say that once wet, cotton long underwear won't help stave off hypothermia. Now skiers and riders have something to sing about: Long underwear of yesterday has morphed into today's high-tech baselayer. These next-to-skin tops and bottoms have been through a reformation that's taken them from cold cotton to cutting-edge fabrics with technological advances that can even increase circulation and improve posture. And unlike the waffle texture of outdated long underwear, today's baselayers are stylish enough to stand alone. Look for zip-neck to crew neck, short-and long-sleeved and everything in between.

GAME IMPROVEMENT UNDERWEAR

A new trend in baselayers combines technical fabric with scientific-backed construction techniques. The results? Tops and bottoms that actually work while you're on the slopes. "The trend in functional base layers is really intuitive," says Alli Noland, spokesperson for Opedix Wellness Gear. "With so many active people aging, and even young athletes realizing the value of longevity, there's a specific need for apparel that can help keep people active longer by supporting their joints, muscles and the whole body if possible."

Opedix consulted with Vail-based Steadman Hawkins Sports Medicine Foundation to create a layer that helps the knee and shoulder joints perform better while also decreasing wear and tear from skiing and riding. The long-sleeved PS3 is known as a "posture shirt" and by correcting postural problems, decreases muscle tension. CW-X's Stabilityx tights, dubbed performance-enhancing conditioning wear, hug the knees, lower back and core areas to increase warmth and stability. They're made with quick-drying, breathable fabrics, which are also antibacterial because of titanium and silver-fiber technology. Skins use Gradient Compression Technology in their baselayers. This technology acts like a compression garment and delivers oxygenated blood to working muscles for more stamina while also helping those muscles flush out lactic acid for a faster recovery. Helly Hansen's new HH One features Hollow fiber LIFA Stay Dry technology. Similar to the way animal fur works, the HH One combines a heat-retaining interior with a wicking exterior. Polarmax Mountain Skins are designed to hold in heat even in arctic temperatures. Mountain Skins use Polarmax's proprietary Acclimate Dry polyester, clean seams, scent prevent and pick resist for a sleek look and a soft feel against the skin.

NEXT-TO-SKIN NATURALS

Baselayers made from natural fibers, which are renewable resources, top the trend charts for next season, joining the list of textiles with an eco-friendly story. Smartwool's tops and bottoms maintain the inherent insulating qualities of wool even when wet, which helps regulate body temperature. The new sleekly designed line called Intimates works to keep the body cool as soon as it starts to heat up by moving the moisture vapor away from the skin. A new line of apparel called Hot Chillys Superior uses renewable and biodegradable fibers such as cotton, silk, alpaca, tencel, and cashmere and gives them added performance properties. The cotton fibers are modified to funnel moisture away from the skin. Silk is soft, lightweight and doesn't retain odor. Alpaca and cashmere add softness and also retain heat. Tencel with MTF micro polyester and bamboo charcoal produce a soft baselayer with strong, long-lasting fibers. Obermeyer's new EcoWeave blends bamboo (a fast-growing tree) with a two-faced composite fabric. During the weaving process, polyester and bamboo charcoal blend is woven with different patterns to create a fast-drying layer that wicks moisture away from the skin. Etex, Obermeyer's bamboo ultra-blend, consists of 49-percent bamboo fiber. Designed in a modern, waffle-mesh construction, Etex is naturally anti-microbial (keeps odor at bay) and fast drying. — KRISTA CRABTREE



Obermeyer

Opedix CW-X Stabilityx tights



Smartwool Women's sports bra top and bikini



Opedix Women's Posture shirt

Hot Chillys Men's Silk crew



Polarmax Mountain skins

Hot Chillys Cotton Superior



Spyder Wool top

