Woolmark announces Performance Challenge winners

By Sandra Halliday - March 21, 2022

The Woolmark Company has announced the prize winners for the Woolmark Performance Challenge 2021/22. From more than 400 global entries, the 12 most promising ideas were picked as finalists, before judges selected the winners for each category.

Claimed to be the “preeminent ideas platform for the sports and performance market”, this year, the Woolmark Performance Challenge partnered with two brands for the first time: Swiss running specialist On, and Italian skiwear firm Salewa.

On challenged participating students to “explore apparel innovations that respond to the highest demands of performance for modern outdoor runners, whilst maximising fashion-forward wearability”. Salewa asked entrants to innovate low environmental-impact fabric technologies to create thermo-regulating apparel for mountain activities.

Caroline Schinle from Albstadt-Sigmaringen University was awarded an internship with On. And it created a new Research Opportunity award for Pearl Academy’s Harleen Kaur.

Seeking sustainable alternatives, Schinle’s innovation is a new filling technology for padded jackets to create a 100% biodegradable product, using a novel structure as support for a Merino wool and milkweed fibre filling.

Kaur’s submission identified a gap in the market to address the needs of pregnant and post-partum runners, creating activewear that works with, rather than against, the changing body. The idea supports both the mother and foetus in the correct areas, providing coolness when the body temperature rises, and monitoring the baby’s health using a foetal heart rate monitor.

Meanwhile, Dan Winegar from the University of Oregon was selected by Salewa for an internship for his idea that automatically adjusts insulation thickness to maintain comfort during and after exercise. The resultant 3D flexible fabrics can change from insulating to cooling modes depending on the levels of skier activity.

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Additionally, IED Milano student Francesco Matera was the €10,000 Woolmark Research Bursary recipient, envisioning a garment that acts like a second skin, adapting to the body in motion. His design uses strategically placed zones of high compression using elastane in seamless knitted garments to support and manipulate the wearer’s muscles and limbs during exercise.

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