Recycling comes to the pitch, as soccer jerseys go circular

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Just like the fashion industry, sports equipment manufacturers are working to reduce waste in order to lessen their impact on the planet. Puma, for example, is currently testing a new recycling method to make new soccer jerseys from old team kits for its partner clubs. It's a perfect example of the circular economy.

Whether swapped with other players, given to fans or donated to charities, soccer jerseys can have several lives, but some -- and there are many -- also regularly end up in the trash, adding considerably to the mountains of waste clothing that end up polluting the environment. To address this issue, Puma is introducing a new recycling process that uses old jerseys to create new ones.

The sports equipment manufacturer did not wait until 2022 to consider such a process, but it had previously proved complicated -- if not impossible -- due to the presence of additional elements such as logos, club crests, or certain embroidered elements. These details can now be accounted for in the new recycling process being tested by the brand, called "RE:JERSEY."

In a news release, Puma explains that old soccer kits can now serve as a raw material for producing brand-new models. Through this new process, the old jerseys are first chemically broken down, then the colors are filtered out, before the whole thing is chemically reconstituted to give rise to the yarn that is used to create the new soccer jerseys. These new pieces are made from 75% repurposed jerseys, and 25% recycled marine plastic.

"With the RE:JERSEY project, we wanted to develop ways to reduce our environmental impact, respect resources and reuse materials," said Howard Williams, director of apparel technology at Puma. "The insights we gained with RE:JERSEY will help us develop more circular products in the future."

The first products made with this technology will be worn by players from the manufacturer's partner clubs -- Manchester City, AC Milan, Borussia Dortmund, Olympique de Marseille -- during pre-match warm-ups. Manchester City will lead the way on April 23, at its match against Watford.

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