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Homecoming

U.S. Hosiery Manufacturers See
Return of Offshore Production

(page 6)



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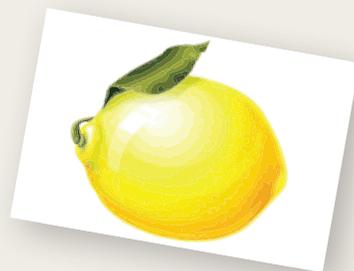
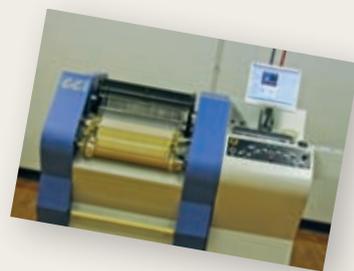
TRENDS

Legwear Fashions Textiles

**The only monthly publication that offers
News About The Industry, From The Industry, For The Industry.**

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legislative column

by PAUL FOGLEMAN, Director, Hosiery Governmental Affairs Council



When the North Carolina lawmakers last month sent a budget to the governor, proponents of the Textile Technology Center at Belmont and the Center for Emerging Manufacturing Solutions (CEMS) in Hickory were relieved.

Despite a tough year and demands for more money for education, both industry service programs were preserved in the continuation budget, thanks to the work of Rep. Ray Warren and Sen. David Hoyle. Each center receives \$750,000 which is matched by earned income from fees from industry and retailers.

The CEMS money supports the Hosiery Technology Center at Catawba Valley Community College. Those funds also will be added to the expanded resources from outreach to furniture, plastics, packaging and other traditional manufacturing. Longtime hosiery center director Dan St. Louis is director of CEMS.

The Textiles Technology Center under Gaston College has rapidly expanded its outreach through the efforts of John Anderson, director and veteran textiles company executive. Revenue from services has grown five-fold since he accepted the leadership position two years ago. The TTC and hosiery center have developed close ties in helping companies with research and development and testing.

moved up to the Senate and served on committees that addressed issues of interest to the business community. The Kings Mountain Democrat began the tradition of sending socks to members of the General Assembly for the holidays.

Mauney was president of Mauney Hosiery Mills which employed almost 300 people. He also was owner of Carolina Throwing Co. and had interests in several hosiery mills in Cleveland County.

•••

The pro-business attitude remains strong in the Legislature. In the Senate, President Pro-Tem Marc Basnight and Sen. David Hoyle, Finance Committee Chairman, are business executives, as are Sen. Stan Bingham, an influential Republican. The House also has a strong business presence: Reps. Bill Owens, Nelson Cole, Van Braxton, Walter Church, Danny McComas, Robert Grady, and scores of others who own businesses or retired from corporations.

Business lobbyists represent insurance companies, utilities, retailers, manufacturers, and transportation interests. There is a balance between the public and private sectors in the halls of government.

The hosiery program has added market development to its outreach and has put North Carolina manufacturers in touch with customers in Europe and the Middle East.

The hosiery program has added market development to its outreach and has put North Carolina manufacturers in touch with customers in Europe and the Middle East. It also has added personnel to help manufacturers develop high-tech products for niche markets in the U.S., specifically healthcare and outdoor.

•••

W.K. (Bill) Mauney Jr. who died recently was among a disappearing segment in the North Carolina General Assembly. He was a manufacturer and businessman. And as such, he brought a conservative agenda to the House and the Senate.

Mauney was first elected to the House in 1967, representing Cleveland County. After one term, he

•••

When the curtain came down on the 2008 session, several legislators returned to clean their offices. It was goodbye for Reps. Joe Kiser of Lincoln, Drew Saunders of Mecklenburg, and Karen Ray of Iredell. Rep. Joe Boylan of Moore County, who lost his primary bid, made a dramatic gesture relating to some personal problems.

"I am Joe Boylan and I am an alcoholic," he told a surprised House Chamber, and then apologized for his behavior. After a brief silence, the House broke into applause and then resumed business.

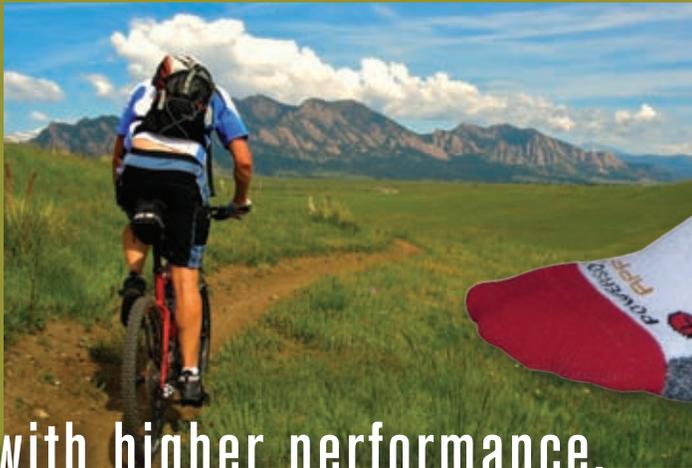
Three top leaders said farewell in the Senate: Walter Dalton and Kay Hagan are running for lieutenant governor and the U.S. Senate respectively, and John Kerr, co-chair of Finance, is retiring. 



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With Economy Slowdown, Hosiery Has *A “Homecoming”*

by Paul Fogleman

If the U.S. economy is in recession – and most economists are now saying so – the hosiery industry is one of the industries that is an exception.

In fact, there is a homecoming of sorts, propelled by the soaring energy costs. Container loads from Asia have increased three-fold, according to some reports from hosiery executives. More manufacturers and retailers are turning back to U.S. production for goods needed for quick turnarounds.

A survey of hosiery executives recently indicated that business is “surprisingly strong.” While the third quarter also looks promising, there are questions about the fourth quarter which includes the all-important holiday season.

Historically, when the overall economy is slow, socks and hosiery do well, surmises Kevin Huitt, president of Huitt Mills in Hickory and North Wilkesboro. Shoppers continue to visit stores, but they end up buying smaller items, Huitt concludes.

Also, Wal-Mart reportedly has announced it will adopt a policy of buying 5 percent



of goods from manufacturers with production in the U.S. “That could mean \$20 million in hosiery sales,” Huitt observed.

The 108 and 84-needle basics are still the backbone for U.S. manufacturers, but the demand is up sharply for 132 and 168-needle goods, primarily anklets for women and girls.

Dennis Martin, president of N.C. Socks Inc. in Hickory, says his niche – catalog companies – are as cautious as mainline retailers. He is getting a steady stream of small orders.

Martin agrees the shipping costs from Asia are helping

manufacturers in the U.S., but also sees more emphasis on moving production to the Caribbean. He noted that 3,000 Lonati knitting machines were shipped to Honduras. Lower costs for labor and transportation are making Honduras more popular, along with a supply chain that includes yarn and fiber producers.

Jerry Collins, vice president of Twin-City Knitting Inc. in Conover, says the higher shipping costs from China has prompted his company to look at all options – including more U.S. production and sourcing

(continued on page 8)

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SMART SILVER



A "Homecoming" from page 6

from the Caribbean region.

Collins also said the increased shipping costs – up more than 17 percent – prompted a reluctant price increase. "Our customers weren't happy but they understood and stayed with us," he said.

Business definitely is coming back from China, declared Darrell Frye, vice president of Harriss-Covington Hosiery Co. in High Point. For the first time in over 10 years, the company maintained knitting operations throughout the July Fourth holidays.

The manufacturer has added 25 employees during the past quarter and is using four contract knitting and finishing companies extensively, he added.

China is experiencing rising labor costs and expenses associated with environmental issues, Frye said. To reduce pollution for the upcoming Olympics, some manufacturing was curtailed, resulting in reduced and later shipments.

For American manufacturers, Honduras is looming as a bigger

threat, Frye said. But the experiences of some U.S. manufacturers have not been profitable, he added.

An executive with a large hosiery operation said retailers are watching turns closer than ever. Forecasting is even more challenging, but this makes you a better business person, he insisted.

Manufacturers were divided on the impact of the stimulus checks sent by the federal government. Some felt there was a minor bump in stores, but others thought people used this "windfall" to fill up their gas tanks and pay credit card bills.

Reports from hosiery executives indicate that payrolls are smaller, conforming to a national trend which is worrying economists. U.S. unemployment, now at 5.5 percent of the workforce, is expected to hit 6.5 percent by the end of 2009, according to Goldman-Sachs.

If so, this could slow down the economic recovery as consumers make up 70 percent of U.S. economic activity. ■

W.K. Mauney Jr.: Hosiery Pioneer In Kings Mountain

W.K. (Bill) Mauney Jr., former president and chairman of Mauney Hosiery Mills in Kings Mountain, died June 28 after a lingering illness. He was 90.

Mauney started his hosiery operation before World War II in the basement of his father's cotton mill. The company became a major supplier of socks for the military during the war and later developed into a fashion socks company employing some 300.

Among his other ventures was Carolina Throwing Co. Inc., Lyntex Hosiery, Gaye Hosiery, Cleveland Hosiery, L&L Hosiery and RDS Hosiery. He also was active in real estate investments.

One of the founders of the Catawba Valley Hosiery Association in 1959, Mauney received that organization's Distinguished Service Award in 1991. He served as a director of the association, which later become the Carolina Hosiery Association.

Mauney served in the N.C. House of Representatives and later moved to the N.C. Senate. He served several terms during the administrations of Gov. Robert Scott and Gov. Jim Hunt. He was a graduate of Lenoir-Rhyne College and served on its Board of Trustees.

Among the survivors are his wife of 69 years, Mary Elizabeth, a son, W.K. (Kemp) Mauney III, a daughter, Mrs. David (Sara) Faunce, a brother, Miles, and numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren. ■

Harry Whisnant, Jon-Scott Hosiery

Harry Whisnant, owner of Jon-Scott Hosiery Mill in Hickory NC, died July 15. He was 71. Whisnant's mill produced 108-needle and 84-needle greige products for over 30 years. It closed several years ago. ■



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Activity, Growth Gain Momentum At Textile Technology Center

by John Anderson, Director

The Textile Technology Center at Gaston College just completed its third year of operations as a statewide Center of Excellence that serves all components of the textile industry. During 2007 – 2008, the center continued to make significant progress in carrying out that mission.

John Anderson, Director of The Textile Technology Center at Gaston College recently made a report to the Board of Advisors which provides guidance and direction to the Center.

He reported that total service provided to the industry increased exponentially, as measured by billings for product processing, product testing and industry seminars. The overall quantum of services has increased 500% from approximately \$50,000 in the first year of operation to \$250,000 for services performed in 2007 – 2008 (North Carolina state institutions are on a July 1 to June 30 fiscal calendar). He stressed that the dollar figure is a proxy for total service, since the things that the Center does for its clients are diverse and growing.

During 2007 – 2008, The Center expanded its service offerings to include:

- Fabric defect analysis
- Elemental analysis (Chemical)
- Material Identification via FTIR “IlluminatiIR II”
- Advanced Scanning Electron microscopy
- Small sample weaving
- Fiber analysis and trend measurement

The Textile Center added more than 100 new clients during the past fiscal year, in all sectors of the textile supply chain from fiber to finished product. Particular effort is ongoing to make certain that the Performance Textile Sector is made aware of the Center and its capabilities. Anderson enumerated the particular initiatives that were implemented in 2007-2008.

The Center:

1. Purchased sample

weaving system.

2. Moderated NCSU “Performance Textiles” forum.
3. Attended Techtextil show in Atlanta.
4. Developed incoming fiber test protocol.
5. Exhibited at ITMA Showtime in High Point.

In October, the Center will have a booth at the IFAI 2008 show in Charlotte.

Partnerships are particularly important to the Textile Technology Center. The collaborative relationship between the Textile Center and the Hosiery Technology Center continued to grow and build upon success. In addition, in the area of technology, the Center



IlluminatiIR II

expanded partnerships to include the laboratory facilities at UNCC, NC State and Burlington Labs. This allows “one stop” convenience for clients who need a package of services that includes tests or

(continued on page 12)



Components of sample weaving system.

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Markets that used to be weeks away are now serviced in a matter of hours. The world is smaller. But thanks to instant communications global markets are available to businesses of all sizes. Companies that introduce new hosiery, socks, apparel, and yarns are growing, thanks to innovation.

The Hosiery Technology Center at the new Center for Emerging Manufacturing Solutions (CEMS) is supporting companies

with research and development, testing and sourcing, marketing and sales. From production to retailing, the center is engaged in supply chain services. That includes training and lean manufacturing strategies.

The path to a successful future depends on open-minded management. We're here to help management open new doors in a *smaller world.*



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Textile Technology Center

.....from page 10

processes outside the Textile Centers current capabilities

A different type of partnership was also successfully modeled during the past year. Len Furlough of B.L. Consulting collaborated on training, but also helped develop a concept of “virtual consulting,” where the Textile Center is able to not only generate test data for clients, but also offer proactive suggestions for problem solving and process improvement, utilizing Furlough’s expertise in carding and yarn formation when necessary. Anderson plans to expand this service in the coming year to include experts in fabric formation and dyeing and finishing.

The center also prototyped a partnership with Johnson & Wales University, where the merchandising program at J&W utilizes the staff and facilities in Belmont to hold experiential lab sessions for students. The Center and Johnson & Wales agreed to a five year arrangement to continue and build upon the collaboration. “These students will be making purchasing decisions shortly after they enter industry, and it is to everyone’s benefit that they have an understanding of textile fundamentals to aid them in making sound judgments regarding suitability, function and quality of textile products.

In addition to the Johnson & Wales partnership, the Center significantly increased the training component of its service mission, as reported in an earlier edition of Trends. A start up grant from Lowes helped to launch the “Manufacturing Excellence” seminar series, which will continue in September and that schedule will soon be available on the website at www.textilecenter.gaston.edu.

In conjunction with the Southern Textile Association, The Textile Technology Center also will also conduct a Textile Fundamentals seminar on August 13 at the Center in Belmont. This one day program covers textiles from fiber through consumer products and is an ideal course for people who work for or with textile related firms who don’t have a formal background in the industry. The cost of the seminar is a nominal \$35 to cover the cost of lunch and printed materials. To register on-line, go to www.southerntextile.org, or contact Lillian Link at (704) 824-3522.

The Textile Technology Center has developed a series of strategic initiatives that adapt those of Gaston College to its mission to serve the textile industry. They will guide the efforts of the center as it enters 2008-2009. They are:

1. Provide seamless and effective textile client focused services
2. Expand partnerships
3. Ensure quality manufacturing, testing and analytical practices
4. Provide the essential resources to support quality programs and services
5. Enhance communication
6. Serve the technical learning needs of a diverse textile workforce.

Anyone wishing to learn more about the Textile Technology Center at Gaston College or utilize its services is invited to contact John Anderson, Director at 704-825-3737, Ext 254, or anderson.john@gaston.edu. 

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N.C. Technology Centers Included In History Channel Documentary

The Textile Technology Center at Belmont and the Hosiery Technology Center were featured prominently in the History Channel's hour-long television production of the history of underwear.

The documentary was produced for Modern Marvels and first aired at 9 p.m. July 17. Scenes included interviews with Hosiery Center manager Dan St. Louis who demonstrated the operation of a hand-operated knitting device. The show also included the nationally-recognized HTC testing program and services in prototyping new products.

John Anderson, manager of the Textile Technology Center, was interviewed on the emergence of high-tech fabrics that control body temperatures. Companies featured in the show included Beverly Knits and Parkdale Mills in Gastonia.

Kevin Toomey, CEO of Kayser-Roth Hosiery, was interviewed in the modern 200,000 square foot socks plant in Asheboro. The K-R pantyhose plant in Lumberton also was part of the program.

The theme of the program was the development of undergarments, including hosiery and socks, from the Middle Ages, through the 19th century, and including the high-tech industry of the 21st century. ■

PrimaLoft Eco Yarn New For Outdoor Retailer Show

A new eco-friendly yarn will be introduced by Primaloft® at the upcoming Outdoor Retailer Show August 8-11 in Salt Lake City.

The new yarn will be marketed as PrimaLoft® Eco Yarn. It is a blend of 50 percent virgin PrimaLoft fibers and 50 percent recycled fibers produced from plastic bottles and post industrial plastic waste.

Retailers attending the outdoor show will be shopping for products that address a growing interest in sustainability, especially among hikers, hunters, and consumers who enjoy nature.

"While yarn products made of traditional recycled fibers are usually coarse to the touch, adding PrimaLoft fibers to recycled fibers significantly improved the feel of the yarn, said Ronald L. Comer, director of international sales for the company's yarn division. ■

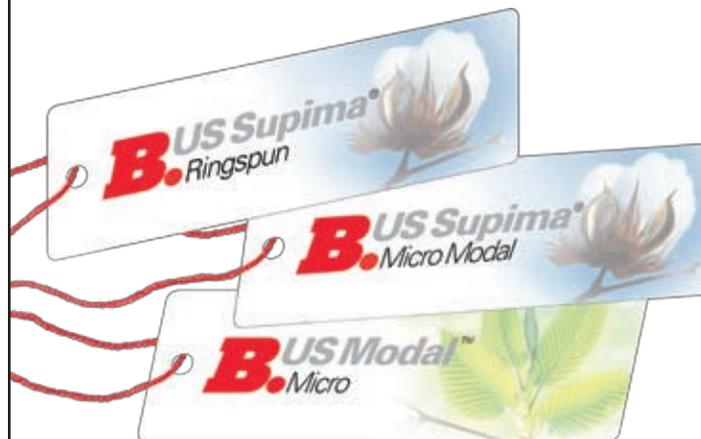
Advansa Set Rollout Of New ThermoCool

Advansa, a European-based manufacturer of polyester fiber and fiber blend yarn, will introduce Advanse ThermoCool at the Outdoor Retailer Summer Market in Salt Lake City August 8-11.

Gerald Illeras, Advansa's active sportswear marketing manager, said the "special hybrid enables evaporative cooling when wearers perspire. It also has thermo-buffering properties to maintain a comfortable body temperature.

The company said the yarn wicks moisture away faster than other materials by as much as 48 percent. ■

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At Retail

Don't ask retailers if the U.S. economy has moved into a recession. Action at the cash register confirms the depth of the slowdown.

But for some, notably Wal-Mart, it is not all bad news. Even upscale shoppers are heading to discounters to look for bargains. Add T.J. Maxx, Marshalls, and Family Dollar Stores to this list.

But mainline specialty stores and department stores are pushing new strategies to hold on to customers and this will continue through the holiday season, according to retail analysts. One action already noted: early back-to-school promotions that started in late June. The National Retail Federation reports in 2007 retailers took in \$18 billion from back-to-school sales.

Domestic manufacturers could benefit from the changing economy. Stores are demanding quick replenishment and lower inventories. Vendors either stock inventories from containers shipped from Asia or adopt lean manufacturing and supply chain strategies.

Other retail news:

The Athlete's Foot Soon To Be 'Taf'

Parent company NexCen Brands has appointed Darius Billings as director of retail brand marketing and merchandising for the major re-branding of The Athlete's Foot.

Billings has announced plans to increase the assortment of performance and fashion apparel in the stores, including a possible TAF private label product. The proposed store brands are compelling, functional and fashionable, he said.

Franchises that will be opening will have the option of using different modernized logos and in-store layouts. TafTEC is the named of the proposed private label apparel and socks products.

The Athlete's Foot has 242 stores in 32 states.

long-ailing fashion business. He will report to Bruce Johnson, interim CEO of Sears Holdings Corp., which also operates Kmart Holding Corp. and will be responsible for all men's and women's apparel and accessories.

Sears owns Lands' End which is getting a more prominent role in the chain's merchandising strategies. Sears also has teamed with rapper LL Cool J to launch a new line that includes a collection of casualwear for juniors, young men, boys and girls. The LL Cool J rollout is scheduled for September in 450 stores.

Sears Announces New Apparel Unit President

Veteran department store executive Craig M. Israel has been appointed senior vice president and president of the apparel unit of Sears.

Sears said Isarel is taking a newly-created position to revive the

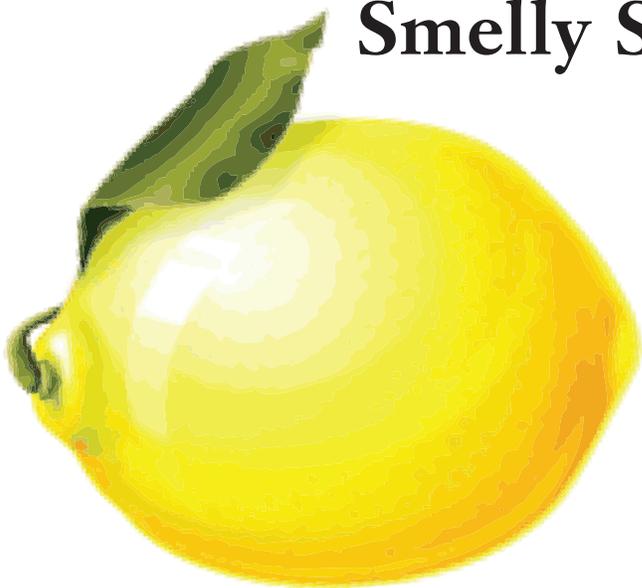
Macy's Is Healthy, CEO Reassures Team

As the stock market has plummeted in recent weeks, so have shares of retailers.

Target, JC Penney and Macy's have seen the value drop more than 50 percent over the past year.

When Macy's stock fell below \$16 a share in mid-July, CEO Terry Lundgren felt it necessary to send out a memo to his associates. The message: we're financially stable. ■

Smelly Socks? Try Lemon Scent



Hosiery manufacturers have long been asked about techniques to avoid rank odors in socks.

Now Chemical engineers in Portugal have come up with a solution to the smelly socks problem. A new type of "microcapsule" filled with perfume can be embedded in fabric for producing scented suits, socks, underwear and other clothing.

Alirio Rodrigues and colleagues at Porto University point out in the journal Industrial and Engineering Chemistry Research

that microcapsules or microscopic shells have been used commonly to deliver fragrances in products such a scratch and sniff stickers and advertisements. But these microcapsules are made with formaldehyde which is toxic and prohibited in the U.S.

Instead, the Portuguese researchers used polyurethane-urea, a less harmful plastic that is compatible with textiles. Their microcapsules contain limonene, the main component of lemon scent. ■



TRENDS

Legwear Fashions Textiles

2008 Editorial Calendar

AUGUST

NEXT RENAISSANCE: In the 1970s and 1980s the industry experienced a new awakening, led by young executives entering the family business. They helped the industry become brand marketers and establish new strategies for reaching out to retailers. Is a new generation of executives ready to carry companies to new markets, global and within the U.S.? Profiles of new leaders.

SEPTEMBER

INDUSTRY CLUSTERS: North Carolina and the Fort Payne, Alabama area are examples of industry clusters. Hosiery manufacturing spawned companies that supply them. The same is the case with textile operations. These clusters have given manufacturers a competitive advantage. But are those clusters still working as a support mechanism? Where are the missing links in the 21st century economy?

OCTOBER

RETAILING: Is it true that Chinese consumers want products with a made-in-the-USA label? Are global retailers a market for U.S. manufacturers? How much business is going to online marketers? What is solidifying relations with U.S. retailers? Brands? Features and news stories cover trends. Holiday shipments are included.

NOVEMBER

TECHNOLOGY CENTERS AND THEIR MISSION: The technology centers in Hickory, Asheboro and Belmont, North Carolina, have adjusted to the changing needs of their clients – the manufacturers. Research and development and prototyping of new products remain priorities, along with market support. Roles also have encompassed other industries that interface with textiles and hosiery.

DECEMBER

NEW LEADERSHIP: The 2008 elections have brought changes to U.S. government and the halls in state legislatures. We will profile some of the new faces and offer some insight into the issues they will embrace that could affect manufacturers. Universal health insurance could be one. More doors open for organized labor could be another.

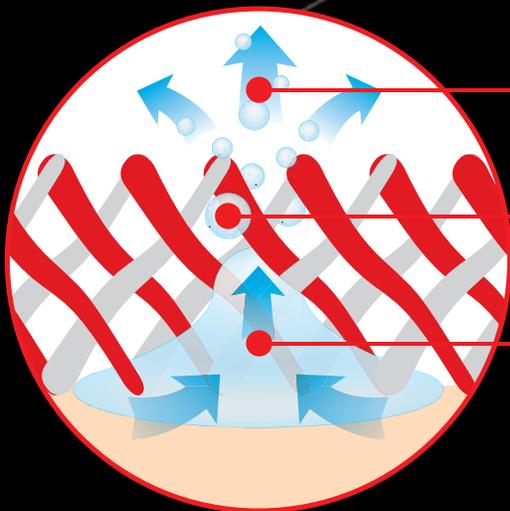
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