

Athletes returning to wool to stay warm, dry

By Blair Anthony Robertson, Sacramento Bee

In the past 15 or 20 years, there have been countless technical advances in clothing for athletes and active folks.

Clothes got smarter and so did we.

New high-tech, petroleum-based synthetic garments wicked, warmed and breathed, and they made those who skied, hiked, hunted, ran and bicycled all the more comfortable.

They seemed to do everything but run your 10k for you or make you resemble the second coming of Jean Claude Killy on the double black diamond.

But the latest advance in active wear involves looking to the past. Think of it as the ultimate high-tech fabric – in sheep's clothing.

Outdated and all but overlooked for decades, wool, insist its many proponents, wicks better, warms better, looks better and is kinder to the planet. It also passes the sniff test – it's anti-microbial, meaning it resists absorbing odors.

With the early days of winter weather upon us in Sacramento and in the Sierra, it's worth assessing the recent history of good, old-fashioned wool – how it nearly got muscled out of the way by those new-fangled fabrics that attempted to do some of the things – but not everything – wool has always done.

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