



Bobby Jones



# PGA Show a Big Draw

Brands include more lifestyle looks

BRENDA LLOYD

**ORLANDO, Fla.** — At the 2006 PGA Merchandise Show & Convention, exhibitors unfurled their elegant but functional apparel lines, which they bet will make an impression on the links.

The show, held Jan. 26-29 at the Orange County Convention Center, attracted some 43,000 attendees from 75 countries and featured more than 200 exhibitors in the apparel section, an increase from last year, according to Ed Sevel, vice-president and general manager of the show. "Our apparel section has exploded," he said.

The show is trying to improve the retailer's experience, he said, so it expanded the Dream Shop—which was introduced last year—the fashion show and the New Product Center. Adidas Golf was a significant reentry to the show, after having missed the past couple of years. Also new this year was Tommy Bahama's 18 Golf brand and the new Puma Golf line.

While technical fabrics continue to make gains in golf apparel, fashion played a key role this year: Colors included deep reds, olive green, royal blue, russet and brown; shirt trends featured geometric and engineered stripes; texture, including waffle weaves, jacquards and dobby weaves, and yarn or space-dyed fabrics were present; knits continued to dominate over wovens; color blocking was strong in both shirts and jackets; and several companies had more self-collars in their lines. And logos were subtle.

The golf market also is starting to show some seam-sealed jackets on the technical side—like Greg Norman Collection's new PlayDry Waterproof, seam-sealed jacket with zip-out vest—while also offering many elegant pieces on the après golf side, including a shearling and leather bomber jacket from the Bobby Jones Collection and a leather jacket from Tehama. Vendors also showed sweaters in cashmere and cashmere blends. Additionally, several brands introduced various accessories being done by licensees. Nike Golf, for example, introduced belts, and Bobby Jones launched belts, small leather goods by Luxury Accessories International and watches.

"A lot of the top brands are incorporating what they're seeing at retail into golf," said Desane Blaney, execu-

tive director, Association of Golf Merchandisers (AGM). "There are more lifestyle looks, and men are looking for multifunctionality."

Blaney said business is good among her retail membership but not great. "It's flat to a little up, but nothing like it was in the '90s," she said. "People have been slowly building their businesses back since [September 11, 2001]. Buyers are very cautious about their buys and are taking smaller deliveries but more often. That serves two factors—you're not depleting your cash, and you're keeping your shop fresh." Manufacturers, she added, have been accommodating by staggering delivery dates.

Stephen Cryan, director of retail, Pinchurst, said he had record sales last year, boosted by the 2005 U.S. Open being held there. The apparel he liked at the PGA show included Greg Norman Collection's new Signature line; Tommy Bahama Golf 18; Peter Millar, which has an in-stock cashmere program; Ashworth's Silver label and AWS lines; Nike Golf's Dri-Fit and Tiger Woods lines; and both the Bobby Jones Collection and Players Collection. "One of the great things in our industry now is that even though we have a saturation of companies, the design and quality of product are very good," he said.

David Hagler, director of apparel, Nike Golf, said apparel sales continue to grow even though the golf market itself is flat. He said Nike Golf grew by 25 percent last year and is projecting 30 percent growth this year. Women's, which has a smaller base than men's, is the fastest-growing, but men's is doing extremely well, he said.

Other companies experiencing double-digit growth include Tehama, which also does Izod G, Fairway & Greene and Greg Norman Collection. Gary Sims, executive vice-president of sales and marketing, Ashworth Inc., said, "This should be a good year for golf. The golf industry is giving consumers a reason to buy with fresh new product that they don't have in their closets."

However, Jim Leddy, president, Bobby Jones, said there needs to be further consolidation of resources in the industry. "Too many people are doing similar things," he said.

