

A little Birdi told me...

Birdi Golf Apparel has been styling SA golfers for the past 15 years and is one of our most recognisable golf brands. We caught up with Birdi's Charlene Lewison who is not only a director of the company, but also heads up the design division and coordinates all aspects of the business.

What exactly is the association between Birdi and the PGA of SA?

Birdi received the endorsement of the PGA as a preferred supplier some six years ago. We assist the PGA in many events over the year, including supplying the PGA players at their annual international PGA event (usually held in Spain) with their clothing requirements.

Tell us a little about local golf fashion trends over the past year or two.

Golfers in South Africa are definitely split into two sections. We have the conservative golfer, which is our largest market and the trendy golfer – which is more of a niche market at the moment. Both have definitely become more adventurous though, and over the past few years we've experienced an incredible progression in styles and particularly bright colours. We've established that male golfers are definitely fashion conscious and style and comfort are equally important to them – which explains why there's a trend towards technically advanced fabrics at the moment. As for women's golf, it's growing daily and it's a very discerning market.

More specifically, what can we expect from Birdi for the 2009 season?

At Birdi, we take what's called an 'holistic approach' and always use premium quality fabrics that allow the golfer to 'breathe' while playing. I'd say that's our main focus – technically advanced fabrics that are perfect for golf wear. So we will be using filoscia double-mercerized, jersey-knit-mercerized, single-mercerized and combed cottons in abundance, and in big, bright colours. As far as styles go, we try to cover all the bases, but in

general, we satisfy those two distinct sectors mentioned earlier: our more trendy golfer will be wearing more 'fitted' merchandise as opposed to our conservative golfer who prefers simpler, un-constructed styling where the emphasis is completely on comfort.

Birdi is best known as a golf brand, but what other markets do you compete in?

Golf is our primary market, yes, but the brand has become highly recognised in the general leisure market. Part of that has to do with the fact that we provide a very extensive range consisting of mens and ladies golf shirts, trousers, bermudas, rainwear, windshirts, headwear, socks – and of course we use a variety of engineered fabrics and contemporary designs. We're distributed in a number of established, well-known retail outlets, a large component of our business is providing clothing for corporate golf days and we also have a very exciting kiddies collection that will be launching soon.

Who do you think are the most fashionable golfers currently playing the game – and why?

Grant Muller has to be the most fashionable golfer currently playing on the SA circuit – he only wears Birdi clothing! I also think Ulrich van den Berg has great, modern, golfing style.

Is Birdi a wholly SA company?

Absolutely – Birdi is a wholly South African brand, developed some 15 years ago, and we're proud to have a B-BBEE status as a level 1 contributor with 100 points. The Birdi board comprises of seven members, four of whom are high-profile members of the black community. With an ever-expanding



market, we all work together and all partners contribute their marketing expertise as well as performing whatever business functions are required.

What advice would you give a golfer who has no sense of style but desperately wants to look better on the course?

That's easy – go to your nearest PGA pro and get kitted out with the latest Birdi products! You'll find our range at most high-profile, on-course golf outlets and certain retail outlets across the country, including the Golfer's Club group.

What's your dream for Birdi clothing?

Our dream is simply for Birdi to be the leading South African clothing brand across Africa and abroad. In order to get there, we will continue to offer an incredibly affordable quality collection of merchandise – and first-class, loyal service to our clients – after all, it's thanks to our clients that Birdi has achieved recognition as a top clothing and apparel brand in South Africa.

