

New Swimsuits on the Mark for Beijing Olympics



Photos courtesy of Yingfa.

By **Robert L. Wallack**, Asia Correspondent

In 2008, the world's best swimmers will compete for gold, silver, and bronze medals before 17,000 spectators at the Beijing Olympics in Beijing's new Water Cube. The one-piece swimsuits, the fastest swimsuits ever produced, are designed and manufactured with high-performance fabrics and technologies. These lightweight and water-repellent materials and models are also becoming available to consumers.

The athlete's swimsuit is form-fitted to the human body. The new suits are designed and made by famous brands Speedo of the United Kingdom, TYR Sport Inc. of the United States, and Yingfa of China.

Olympic swimmers from the Ukraine are using Yingfa performance swimwear. Yingfa's athlete swimsuits combine polyester fabric and spandex with Teflon. The Teflon-treated fabric provides faster speed through the water by absorbing less water and quicker. "Teflon is used for the fabric so that water slides off quickly," said Becky Ye, manager of Yingfa Industrial Co. Ltd., Guangdong province, China. Yingfa's consumer (for women) version of this swimwear uses Lycra and has padding inside with a higher cut at the breast and lower cut at the legs.

Speedo and TYR Sport use similar lightweight and hydrophobic fabrics in their "Tracer" and "LZR" respective models for Olympic and world-record setting athletes. Advances in fabrics and technologies have been found in research and development laboratories at these companies since the full body suits were introduced in 2000. Speedo, for example, has employed shark skin experts, as well as National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) engineering and medical experts. "Speedo tested the drag of more than 60 types of fabric to see which offered the best performance in terms of ultra fast speed through lower skin friction drag." The newest LZR Racer model uses three seamless pieces for the first fully-bonded body suit manufactured by ultrasonically-welded (not sewn) technology.

Beijing's new National Aquatics Center, or Water Cube, is a technological wonder in itself. The US\$200 million rectangular-shaped building is near the Olympic National Stadium, or Bird's Nest, and designed to appear as soap bubbles from the outside and inside. The 100,000 square meters of translucent plastic has futuristic light emitting diodes (LED) lit in bubble shapes that record speeds as the fastest swimmers move through the pool in their high-powered swimwear.

LINKS:

"Water Cube"

<http://en.beijing2008.cn/46/39/WaterCube.shtml>

"Bird's Nest"

<http://en.beijing2008.cn/02/41/Nationalstadium.shtml>