LOOKING GOOD

FROM ITS ROOTS AS PRACTICAL, UNIFORM-BASED – AND FRANKLY RATHER FRUMPY – SPORTSWEAR, EQUESTRIAN FASHION HAS COME A LONG WAY. **JANE CARLEY** EXPLORES CURRENT TRENDS.

Holland Cooper has made a big impression on the equestrian market with its casual clothing ranges, and more recently, competition clothing. The challenge for the competitive rider is to find jackets, shirts and breeches that are comfortable in the saddle, but also look smart and are flattering, says the undeniably stylish Jade Holland Cooper.

"Knowing what suits you and taking your body shape into account is the first step to looking good on a horse! If you are petite or have a shorter body then try not to get a competition jacket that's too long as it shortens your leg. When you try one on it should sit just below your hip bone. Don't worry about it covering your bum – riding jackets are made to be worn when sitting on horse!"

She advises choosing clothing that fits you well: "Don't buy a size too big otherwise it may make you look bigger than you really are. Jackets with streamlined tailoring and four-way stretch give you plenty of freedom for movement but also flatter the figure. Wear close fitting base layers and competition tops instead of ones with lots of fabric to tuck in so you don't get any bulky, unsightly lumps. A stylish belt on high waisted breeches nips the waist in and makes a real statement."

Competition clothing is now as much as a fashion item as casual wear, gone are the days when one would have a show jacket for life, suggests Pikeur.

"There has been a huge shift to softshell fabrics over the last two or three years, giving riders easy-care jackets that are lightweight, stretchy and breathable. There is a high level of detail on jackets, including bling and satin trims," says Suzanna Stuart-Monteith of UK distributor Shaws Equestrian.

She notes that the fashion-forward theme continues with rose gold accessories like buttons and zips.



LEFT: EQUESTRIAN FASHION IS INCREASINGLY INFLUENCED BY CATWALK TRENDS, SUCH AS ROSE GOLD DETAILS.

JUST FOR MEN

Men get overlooked in many equestrian fashion ranges, but Holland Cooper is working with Carl Hester to develop products for male riders.

"Carl and many of the male riders that we talk to want easy technical pieces that wear well," explains Jade. "I think keep it simple and smart. Carl likes a fitted jacket to train and teach in that has stretch but is minimal in its styling. It's about marrying your choice of breeches with some technical and stylish pieces that are comfortable and easy to wear and as athleisure is big for women it is the case for men too – so take advantage of some of the super British mainstream menswear brands out there and mix them into your riding wardrobe!"

She adds: "Some of our jackets, the Team HC Tour jacket in particular, can be worn by men and women as it's quite a unisex style, even though initially it was designed with women in mind!"



BELOW: ANOTHER MAINSTREAM FASHION CONCEPT, THE 'CAPSULE' WARDROBE IN TONING COLOURS, FEATURES IN TOGGI'S LATEST COLLECTION. **RIGHT:** JADE HOLLAND-COOPER IS WORKING WITH CARL HESTER TO DEVELOP PRODUCTS FOR 'OVERLOOKED' MALE RIDERS.

ATHLEISURE

Equestrian sport is still embracing 'athleisure' and the popularity of riding leggings and technical base layers is at an all-time high.

Jade Holland Cooper points out: "Multi-functional, all-purpose pieces that transcend the arena/stable are now the rider's wardrobe staples. So many women juggle riding their horse, working out at the gym and their 'day job' – that can all be done wearing a stylish, flexible pair of equestrian leggings and technical breathable base layers to match."

High-waisted breeches are now back in fashion, she says. "Forget the unflattering hipster style, women want to feel that they are supported and that their figure is given shape and elegance with cleverly cut breeches. Utilising new technology gives a durable, yet comfortable, flexible seat using modern fabrics and elements such as silicon prints give security in the saddle."



While Pikeur is seeing a return to the McCrown (machine-washable mock-suede) seat, which gives the rider more protection than the silicon grip style, super-elasticated hi-tech fabrics abound and the 'bregging' – a breech-style legging in thin fabric – continues to grow in popularity, even for competition, says Suzanna.

"Athleisure styles, with super-lightweight sporty fabrics like mesh are now in competition shirts as well as breggings and casual wear."

A flattering fit is also a feature of the LeMieux range and marketing specialist Zoe Bradley comments: "We have really worked hard this year to make our clothing more ▶



ABOVE: LE MIEUX'S NEW SPRING COLOURS INCLUDE MINT AVAILABLE IN HIGH TECH UV SHIRTS AND THIS CLASSIC SLIM FIT POLO SHIRT, AND CAN BE MATCHED TO YOUR HORSE'S WARDROBE!

true to size and inclusive for all shapes and sizes. Made from a soft, highly durable fabric, the lightweight LeMieux Freya breeches feature four-way stretch and a seamless design to provide maximum comfort, allowing full range of movement whilst keeping them in place with a supportive high waist."

Lowered swing pockets are an interesting feature, placed to keep a mobile phone safe without restriction whilst riding.

LeMieux is renowned for its innovative approach to colour, and Zoe says: "We have some exciting new colours coming out – our Spring/Summer colours are French Rose, Champagne, Citron and Mint."

The colour palette can be seen in My LeMieux Air-Tec UV Shirt made from a lightweight, sweat-wicking material with mesh side panels for added breathability and a sun-protective UV finish. Classic slim fit polo shirts in QuickDry-Nylon and Spandex mix also pick up on the colourways.

"Be on trend, match your top with LeMieux pads, boots, bandages and fly hoods for the complete look!" suggests Zoe.

For casual gear, Pikeur employs muted shades of navy, grey and olive, with stand-out colours Wild Berry and Caribbean Sea.

Toggi has taken another nod from the catwalks with a 'capsule collection' of casual riding wear, with base layers, mid layers and down jackets in toning, neutral colours to be worn together, along with a practical waterproof jacket and breeches and riding tights in durable technical fabrics, for a 'pulled together' look.

"Whether professional or amateur we are finding that riders want a smart, functional look. Neutral colours are also easy to personalise for teams or businesses," says marketing manager Sally Rhodes.



ABOVE: 'BREGGINGS' CONTINUE TO INCREASE IN POPULARITY FOR COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE.

ECO-FRIENDLY

"The other trend we are seeing coming through is eco-friendly fabrics," says Jade Holland Cooper. This isn't so much of a trend for us but a decision to respect the environment. Where possible we work with fabrics that are manufactured in the UK."

LeMieux's new range includes an eco-friendly T-Shirt made from recycled plastic bottles which Zoe expects to be highly popular this summer.

"The innovative fabric of the J'Adore T-Shirt has a super soft touch and four-way stretch which makes it incredibly comfortable. The tailored fit, V-neck and J'Adore LeMieux printed design finish the look." ■

HEADS UP

'Bling' is still way ahead in the riding hat style stakes suggests Charles Owen's marketing manager Danielle Santos.

"Our new Ayrbrush hat is enhanced with Swarovski crystals and has a gloss finish; for something a little more subtle we are adding a pinstripe version without the crystals this spring," she says.

"We find that appearance is crucial for many riders and they like to stand out, but also to have the confidence to know they are safe."

She adds that while the Ayrbrush range retains a classical profile which reflects the traditional roots of dressage, some riders are attracted to a sportier look.

The My PS hat, which incorporates MIPS technology to offer protection against rotational motion (kinematics) transmitted to the brain from angled impacts to the head, has proved popular with riders who also ski or cycle, where the technology is also used in helmets.

And for something different, the distinctive Wide Peak hat is growing in markets away from its traditional target of warmer areas where the peak protects from the sun; it has been found to flatter the wearer's face by accentuating the cheekbones, food for thought for the image conscious!



RIGHT: SWAROVSKI CRYSTALS ADD GLAMOUR TO A HAT.