

Physical Culture | Gear Test, Arm Warmers

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By SARAH BOWEN SHEA



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RUNNING is a delightfully simple sport compared with other gear-laden activities. Still, it's a treat when something comes along to add a little fun and function to a runner's wardrobe: Enter arm warmers.

Also called arm sleeves, these accessories are exactly what they sound like — stretchy sleeves that keep an athlete's arms warm. They are migrating from the cycling world, and have grown in popularity as they are seen on the arms of professional runners, who typically wear them along with sleeveless shirts. Arm warmers can be worn at a chilly starting line, then tucked away when a runner warms up.

"We've seen a definite uptick in sales," said Cara Macari, an owner of Urban Athletics, two running specialty stores in Manhattan. Her stores don't typically stock arm warmers until October, but this year there was demand before the weather cooled. Ryan Hall, the 2007 United States men's Olympic Marathon Trials winner, is a fan of arm warmers and plans to take a pair with him to the start of his first-ever New York City Marathon next month. "I would suggest for everyone to bring them to the starting line," he wrote in an e-mail message.

Christine Hinton, a **running coach in Crofton, Md.**, who is training for her fourth marathon, tried five pairs of arm sleeves while running. She found they kept her arms warm and dry to varying degrees, and concluded that they all made her "look like a snazzy runner."

Photo: Brendan Smialowski for The New York Times

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**MOEBEN FLEECE ARM SLEEVES**

\$31.95 to \$33.95, zombierunner.com. Christine Hinton's "favorite" sleeves, the Moeben, above, have a "supersoft" brushed polyester interior with a smooth exterior. The top arm band, which had elastic in it, "felt snug but not overly tight," while the nonelasticized wrist "was like a normal tapered sleeve." The sleeves wicked moisture well, she said. "After a nine-miler, they were virtually dry except for the very tips at the wrist," she said. A "nifty side pocket" on each sleeve "was perfect" for her iPod. Her only gripe about the sleeves was the tags inside, which she snipped out.

Photo: Brendan Smialowski for The New York Times

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PEARL IZUMI SEAMLESS ARM WARMER \$20, pearlizumi.com. Made of a nylon blend, Mrs. Hinton found these arm warmers “comfortably snug at the top and roomy from the elbow to the wrist,” which gave her the option of pulling them up toward her elbow when she overheated instead of rolling them down.

Photo: Brendan Smialowski for The New York Times

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NIKE DRI-FIT RUNNING

ARMWARMERS \$20, [nike .com](http://nike.com). “Simple and basic,” was Ms. Hinton’s assessment. “They were thin and quite snug,” especially in the biceps area, due to “basically no tapering from the top of the sleeve to the bottom.” She said that “they definitely stayed up an entire 10-mile run.” The Nikes were “very easy to roll down and, due to their thinness, they were very light when rolled at the wrist.”

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SMARTWOOL ARM WARMERS \$14.93 to \$25, rei.com. Despite being 63 percent wool, these arm warmers “never felt too hot.” They “felt a little scratchy” Ms. Hinton said when she first put them on, but “only a few minutes into the run, the majority of the itchiness subsided.”

Photo: Brendan Smialowski for The New York Times

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SUGOI TATU ARM WARMER \$40, sugoi.com. These were the only ones in the test that had rubber grippers at the top, and Ms. Hinton found herself struggling to pull them on. Yet “once up and set in place, these were very comfy with no irritation,” she said, and the brushed fleece interior “felt soft against the skin.”

Photo: Brendan Smialowski for The New York Times

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