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### Detergent lands knockout punch to gym clothes' odor

By **JEANNINE STEIN, Los Angeles Times**  
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Here's a little secret about me: When I exercise, I sweat like oxen plowing fields in August.

It's not pretty, and it doesn't make me smell good. In fact, I smell horrible.

Actually, it's not me, but the clothes. After a workout, their musty eau de funky locker-room aroma is so pungent that getting them into the washing machine requires a HAZMAT suit.

I've been through the litany of laundry regimes. I've tried a serious dousing with Febreze, a hot wash with detergent and OxiClean, then into the dryer with a fragranced dryer sheet. I have tried practically every product on the market, all with the same results: The clothes smell fine when they're newly clean, but once I start sweating again, the bacteria begin to rally. It's as if I stuck some chips and salsa under their little microbial noses and yelled, "Let's party!"

So it was with a mix of skepticism and foolish hope that I greeted this recent e-mail: "WIN Products Inc. has just introduced WIN detergent. WIN is the first laundry detergent specifically designed to remove embedded sweat and odors from high performance workout apparel."

I called the publicist, who offered to send me a bottle. I was going to give this stuff a road test.

Although my regular malodorous gym clothes would have been fine for the job, I decided to go a few steps further. I worked out, then stuck my still-wet clothes - including a cotton T-shirt and microfiber pants - into a zipper-lock plastic bag. There they remained, incubating for a couple of days before I took them out and washed them.

But first I spoke to the founder of the company, Mark Konjevod, 36, and got the back story on WIN. The former college football player turned marathon runner admitted to having had a smell problem of his own. After long runs in high humidity, "literally I had to wring out my shirt," he said. Like me, he soon discovered that sweaty clothes plus laundry hamper for a few days equals "a little bit funky."

Konjevod said he'd tried every remedy possible: Three scoops of detergent per load, copious dryer sheets, hand washing, even a vinegar formula that a co-worker recommended. Nothing worked.

Then, about four years ago, he had one of those if-they-can-put-a-man-on-the-moon moments. He started asking friends and colleagues if they had issues with smelly gym clothes, too, which they admitted they did.

Working with a chemical company, Konjevod developed a formula containing hydrogen peroxide and an antibacterial ingredient he would not name but that he claims is "not found in typical detergents" and removes the odor-causing molecules.

WIN isn't cheap - 21 ounces, which should clean 14 loads, is about \$6.99. Could this stuff have cleaning agents with superpowers? I called a scientist to get her take.

Carol Resch, a New Jersey-based microbiologist and consultant for consumer products, speculated about how WIN might work. Peroxide, she says, is a very mild bleach; it won't damage skin or remove color from clothes, but it's poison to bacteria. "It blows holes in the walls of the bacteria," she says. Then the surfactant, or cleaning agent in the detergent, washes the bacteria away.

But it's not just the bacteria that cause the smell, Resch said. Body oils produced via sweat

end up as bacterial lunch. The longer oils are trapped in clothes, the more the bacteria hangs around. Some folks will produce tastier sweat than others, based on their individual body oil chemistry and what they eat and drink.

Worse still, if the oils and bacteria aren't washed away, they'll reanimate as soon as water (or sweat) hits them again.

I proceeded with my road test of WIN. I washed my well-marinated clothes following manufacturer's instructions. Taking the clothes out of the washer, I noticed a strong fragrance from the detergent, but no musty odor. Out of the dryer, same thing. I even had my husband sniff them, because he has a nose like a bloodhound. Nada.

The acid test came at the gym the next day. I did a vigorous interval-training cardio session to bring on the sweat. Usually, about halfway through my workout, I can start smelling myself, which is embarrassing, especially when someone hops onto the machine next to me and then hops off a few minutes later.

I pressed my nose against my clothes throughout my workout (undoubtedly making people wonder why that crazy lady was sniffing her shirt) and detected no mustiness. After the workout, I put the clothes back into a plastic bag, let them sit in the trunk of my car for a few hours and then gave them another sniff test. I detected a mild musty odor, but nothing like what I'd smelled before. I was able to hang them in the shower without passing out.

Konjevod's marketing strategy includes selling WIN not at grocery stores, but online and at gyms and specialty running and cycling stores. WIN also was an officially licensed product of the U.S. Olympic Team.

For those who share my burden, don't expect miracles from WIN: It didn't completely remove the nasty odors from my clothes, though it did a better job than anything else I've tried.

FYI: You also might want to rethink your clothes. The "high performance workout apparel" mentioned on WIN's label refers to the popular synthetics that don't hold as much moisture as cotton does, but their much tighter weave means they can trap molecules that cause odor.

Or you could work out in the wee hours when no one's around. Maybe I'll see you there.

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