

## FASHION

# Unstoppable Injects Fashion Into Under Armour Line

- The sport-infused fashion collection will launch on the Under Armour web site and at Dick's Sporting Goods on Oct. 2.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

After teasing it on several earnings calls, Under Armour is ready to finally take the wraps off UA Unstoppable, a fashion-skewed sport-inspired collection that will be available for purchase beginning Oct. 2.

The collection for men and women features technical fabrics and materials such as Gore Windstopper, but in elevated styles and silhouettes.

Kevin Plank, founder and chief executive officer, said on the second-quarter earnings call in August that Unstoppable “amplifies our assortment with more lifestyle silhouettes” and is being viewed as a key initiative for holiday.

Dan Leraris, general manager of men's training, said Under Armour has been working on the collection for some time and will launch it on the company's web site and at Dick's Sporting Goods in the U.S.

“We have an affinity for performance apparel but see an opportunity to continue to expand on our brand's strength by infusing fashion into the apparel,” he said.

Unstoppable is not to be confused with



Boxer Canelo Álvarez recently wore Unstoppable.

the company's high-end fashion collection, UAS, that is designed by Tim Coppens. Core pieces of UAS retail for \$129 to \$299 with some items selling for \$1,500. Unstoppable will retail for \$40 to \$100.

Leraris said Unstoppable is “still performance-based,” but with “enhanced



functionality. We're adding a layer of trend and fashion to this.”

The key piece is what Leraris described as the “modern-day track suit” that is “understated and technical.” That will be complemented by jackets, fleeces, T-shirts, tanks and shorts. In total, the initial launch is 15 items for each gender, with more pieces to be added through the end of the year.

“It's authentic athletic apparel with elevated style,” he said. “But we don't look at it as ath-leisure. We've made this type of product before, but not to this level.”

Unstoppable is being targeted to Under Armour's core consumer who might wear the brand but then change for the rest of the day, as well as to new customers. “We want to get more of his spend,” Leraris said.

He declined to say how big a business the brand can ultimately become or what percentage of the total apparel division it can represent, saying only that it can be “big.

It's a significant statement from the brand.”

Unstoppable also marks the first time the company has simultaneously launched a dual-gender sport style collection, he noted.

The line will be marketed on the company's web site and social media platforms as well as those of Under Armour's retail partners. The brand has provided the merchandise to some of its athletes, including those on the Southampton FC and Aston Villa soccer teams, as well as the UCLA men's basketball and Cal State women's basketball teams. Boxer Canelo Álvarez recently wore the collection.

The launch comes as Under Armour tries to get back on the growth track after several disappointing quarters as Nike maintains its momentum and Adidas reclaims its spot as the number-two athletic brand in the U.S. While the closure of numerous sports retailers have contributed to Under Armour's slide, Plank himself has admitted there is a need for the brand to inject more fashion into its collections.

## BUSINESS

# Middle East Department Stores Can't Clone From the West

- The Uxus design firm helped create Bloomingdale's in Kuwait City, Kuwait.

BY DAVID MOIN

In the Middle East, department stores are relatively new, well-received and can't be clones of their Western counterparts.

That's the takeaway from Oliver Michell, chief creative officer, architect and cofounder of Uxus, a strategic design consultancy based in Amsterdam and New York, which helped create Bloomingdale's in Kuwait City, Kuwait.

“It's a very big difference. You'd be surprised,” Michell told WWD, discussing Bloomingdale's Kuwait versus Bloomingdale's in the U.S. “There's certainly more digital in Kuwait. It's a much more animated space, with the use of bold architecture and very sophisticated lighting.” There's also extensive marble, stone and metal work, and Bloomingdale's signature black-and-white palette is complemented by sofas and chairs in colorful, tactile fabrics.

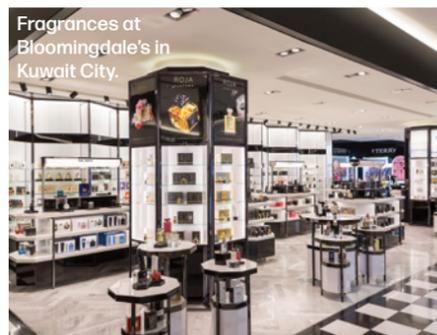
Explaining how Uxus adapted the retailer's template, Michell said Bloomingdale's Kuwait is a smaller, women's-only format at 93,000 square feet over three levels, and suggested that the Middle Eastern clientele,

unlike many Americans, regards shopping as an outing, rather than a chore.

“There's no deviation on what the brand stands for, but you have to adapt the brand for the region,” Michell said. “The luxury code needs to be dialed up. The service aspect is paramount. People are affluent. There is a lot of disposable income and free time.”

The store has “quite a lot of innovation in terms of customer experience with plenty of digital ambiance and videos for institutional and seasonal fashion messages. They provide a Bloomingdale's fashion point of view. There are screens on columns, ceilings and walls, and a 46-foot-high digital tower informing customers of what's new.”

To accommodate the “strong



culture around buying fragrance,” the 25,000-square-foot beauty floor has a “Discover Beauty” area for emerging niche brands and the “Experience Beauty” area for private treatment cabins and makeup artistry rooms.

“Men and women wear much more fragrance and spend a greater amount of time in a fragrance department than in the West,” Michell said. “Women will layer on different fragrances to create a different scent, and it's expected to be very high-end fragrance.” Home fragrance is a frequent purchase as well.

Bloomingdale's in Kuwait City opened last March in the 360 Mall luxury center. The store is licensed to Al Tayer Insignia, which is opening another Bloomingdale's in Abu Dhabi next year along with a Macy's in the Al Maryah Central center. It will be Macy's first overseas store, and the third for Bloomingdale's, which opened a store in Dubai in 2010, also licensed to Al Tayer.

“Given the size of the Kuwait store, which is not as big as Bloomingdale's in Dubai, we had to make a very conscious decision it was not going to have everything so we focused on a female-only offer with a focus on beauty, shoes and handbags. Particularly in the Middle East, handbags and shoes are a big indicator of your style and personal preferences, and women do wear quite a bit more makeup in Kuwait,” said Mitchell. That offsets the “abaya” cover-ups worn by many women in Muslim countries.

Other unique features at the store are the prayer rooms, a restaurant with an all-day menu and setting that opens into shoes and accessories to create more of a scene, and cross merchandising – handbags and shoes are displayed together by brand, and costume jewelry bridges shoes

and handbags.

“It doesn't feel like a flat space. It's a very theatrical store and the service component is definitely dialed up,” Michell said.

Personal shopping has three 200-square-foot suites with three-way mirrors, podiums for fittings, adjustable lighting to simulate day and evening hours, personal shoppers and a VIP elevator. There's also valet parking and a “personalization lounge” where anything from a perfume bottle to jeans can be embossed, engraved or embroidered.

“People are very keen on shopping in Kuwait but the taste is quite different,” from some other countries in the region. “Kuwaiti women are more interested in color. They're fashion forward.” They travel a lot, shop in London, Los Angeles and other capital cities, and are aware of the latest trends, Michell said. “They are very savvy customers and used to very high-end fashion and accessories. Those are very important considerations.”

Uxus is working on the 150,000-square-foot Bloomingdale's in Abu Dhabi. “It will be an evolution of the Kuwaiti store but will have men's clothing, shoes, accessories and grooming, a women's hair salon, home, women's ready-to-wear, accessories and beauty and a strong personal shopping component,” Michell said.

“Department stores in the U.S. are having a hard time not because of their nature. The problem is they are slow to adapt to customer needs,” Michell said. “Customers are expecting quicker turnaround, a connected cross-category approach rather than silo-ed departments. Women don't just shop by category anymore.”

But in Kuwait, which has a population of over 4 million, “people will go to Bloomingdale's for almost the entire day.”