

Looking to liven your apparel offering? Why not . . .

# Cap it Off!

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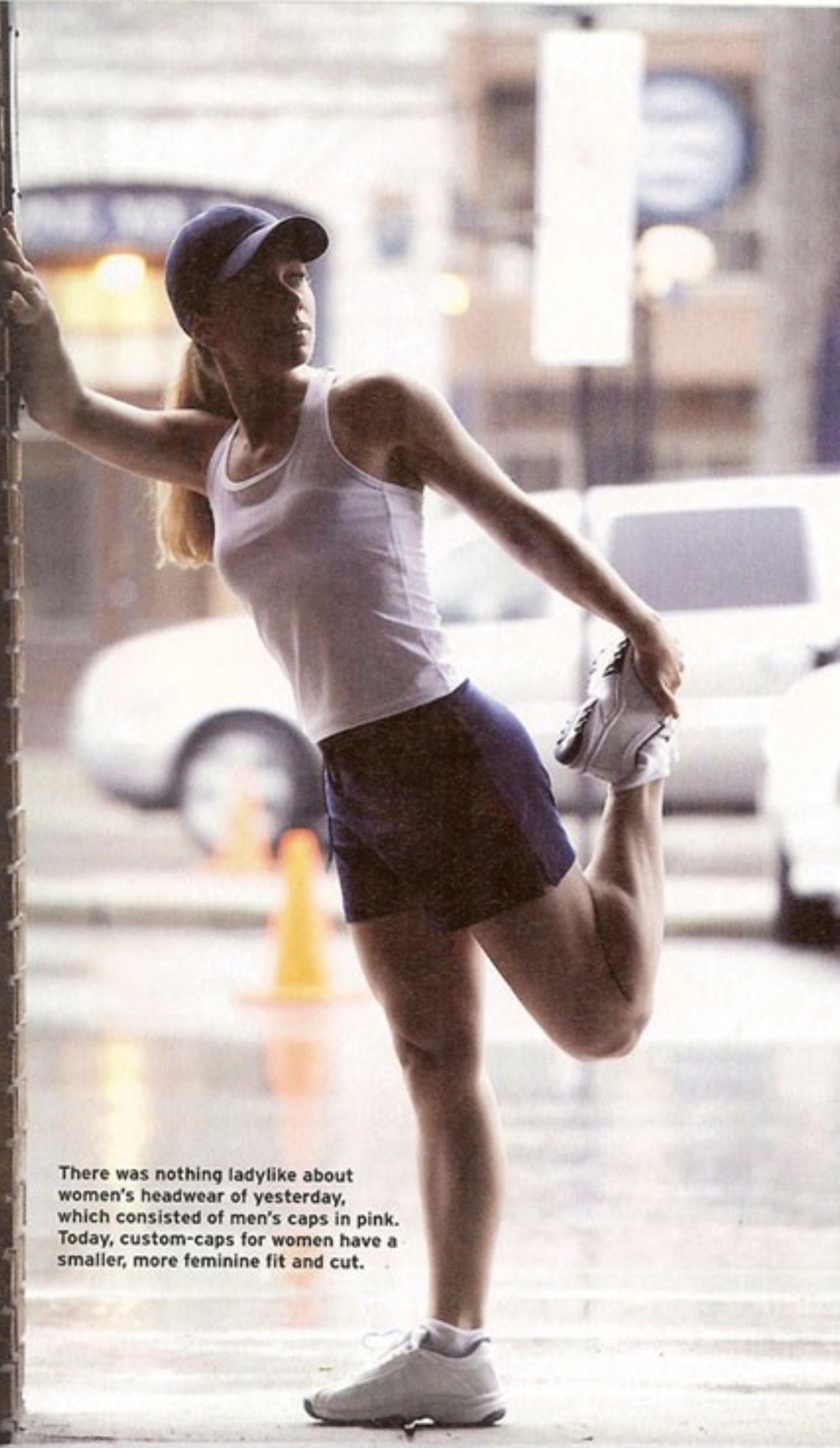
**H**ats associate people. Certain styles signify group affiliation, team allegiance, bond gardener and vacationer through a shield from immobilizing sunburns, and top off every slope-goer's bundled getup with that essential sheath against ice-cubed ears. But while caps continue to connect cultures through their respective roles, they have also become part of a collective fashion faction, defining individuals among a group; because sometimes it only takes a hat to transform a style from everyday to edgy. Here's a peek under the thinking caps of industry headwear players as they unearth the modern-day cap and the different hats *it* wears.

## When is a cap more than just a cap?

When it's a piece of someone's personality: "It's part of our culture, it's part of someone's personality, it's also something that you can use," says David Chen of Mega Cap Inc., commenting on a cap's ability to cover up, yet reveal its wearer. "Of course a pen is a pen, a calculator is a calculator, everyone can use that, but I think nowadays hats are not just a commodity." Chen admits that people still purchase hats for practical properties, but it's increasingly becoming a personal style statement.

When pondering innovative opportunities for headwear, Flexfit's Mark Stern sees distinct markets emerge: "The first group is promotional, who really seem to take a fond liking to a different style, a different shape, a different silhouette," he remarks, moving on to the flat visor, high crown *fashion* genre. "This is similar to what you see on the baseball field," Stern reports. "The skaters, the snowboarders, it's that type of very fun group of people that are going for that. It's a younger crowd. Although baseball players have been wearing this for the last sixty years."

Taking cues from fellow apparel items, caps are also trending inevitably toward



There was nothing ladylike about women's headwear of yesterday, which consisted of men's caps in pink. Today, custom-caps for women have a smaller, more feminine fit and cut.