Sporty tech gadgets put data in users' hands

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Cycling medalist Dotsie Bausch demonstrates a bicycle at the Consumer Electronics Show on January 7, 2015, in Las Vegas, Nevada

Olympic cycling medalist Dotsie Bausch is hooked on data, and she wants everyone to know it.

Showing up at this week's Consumer Electronics Show as a spokeswoman for the medical technology group Masimo, Bausch

offered a demonstration of her cycling skills and the data she uses to train.

Getting good physiological data for training is important in a sport marred by numerous doping scandals, said the 2012 Olympic silver medalist who kicked a drug habit before her sports career.

"I don't dope because I don't want to cheat. But you want to use every fair-game device available," she said following the demonstration using Masimo's fingertip monitor for oxygen saturation and pulse rate using infrared sensors.

"The goal is to get the most out of a workout and still recover so you can do it the next day."

Masimo spokesman said the systems use "a hospital-grade device which we have brought to the consumer."

One of the big themes at this year's Las Vegas event was the marriage of technology and sports. The Consumer Electronics Association, which organizes the show, estimates Americans alone will spend $1.8 billion on fitness and activity trackers this year.

But CES exhibitors were showing off devices and services that go far beyond the simple fitness band.

Unveiled at the show, the AmpStrip by US-based Fitlinxx is a patch that sticks to the body for anywhere from three to seven days and measures heart rate, activity and stress.

"It was designed as an aid to fitness enthusiasts," said Fitlinxx's Doug McClure.

"The need has to do with understanding how you are training. Overtraining leads to injury. By wearing this 24/7 we can understand how much stress your body is under."

Digital coaching

California startup Zepp Labs showed its device, the size of a bottle cap, which can be attached to a tennis racquet baseball bat or golf club to collect data to analyze one's swing, and compare it to that of professionals.

Epson, the Japanese electronics giant, presents fitness band at the 2015 International CES at the Sands Expo and Convention Center on January 6, 2015 in Las Vegas, Nevada

The data is fed into a smartphone app that allows the user to visualize his or her motions.

"We're not just giving you data, we want to help you get better," said Zepp's Bill Lucarelli, as he showed the product in Las Vegas.

While several similar trackers are on the market, Lucarelli said the quality depends on the expertise behind the app.

"It's all about the software and the algorithm," he said.

California-based Blast Motion offers a device for baseball, basketball and other sports, also using a tracking device.

"You can play basketball and see your metrics," said Blast's Donovan Prostrollo. "And a great feature is that when you have a good score you can tweet it to your friends."

Epson, the Japanese electronics giant, used CES to introduce its M-Tracer golf swing analyzer. The tracker, which slips onto a golf club, takes measurements of the golfer's swing speed, backswing and other characteristics to offer advice.

"The target market is someone who is passionate about the sport, who already has good gold skills, or someone who is taking lessons," said Epson's Randy Bergstedt.

Garments from Under Armour are displayed at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada, on January 7, 2015

The shirt's the thing

Garments meanwhile are also being developed with these same sensors, woven into the fabric, eliminating the need for other kinds of wearable activity trackers.

"The next hot wearable is the shirt," said Ramon Llamas, analyst with the research firm IDC. "It's a wearable that's already wearable, and it's useful for pro athletes or weekend warriors."

Several activity-monitoring garments were on display at the show including shirts and socks.

British-based development firm Cambridge Consultants showed its connected shirt with sensors woven into the fabric, virtually unseen. The prototype can be adapted for use in sports including tennis or golf.

"There is a large gap between what you can collect with a wrist band and the system that professional athletes have," said developer Martin Brock.

"With this you can measure one's motion not just on your wrist but on your entire body.

The thin wire blended into the garment allows it to be "washable, waterproof and robust," he said.

"It's reaching toward the idea with wearables where there is no (visible) technology, it's just the garment."

French technology firm Cityzen Sciences meanwhile showed its connected shirt, the technology for which will be used by Japan's Asics in future sportswear.

The garments provide data "which can be analyzed to see people's well-being, their health risks," said Cityzen's Herve Rannou.

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