



CHIEF AND CHEERFUL

Phill Price tries some new clothing from an old name

Thirty years ago when I worked in a gun shop we used to stock a small selection of the famous Canadian Sportchief clothing. It was heavy, very strongly built and appealing to me because it was

available in camouflage patterns. Most people still used ex-army DPM (disruptive pattern material) for their camo, but I wanted something else. The trouble was that the Sportchief range was too

expensive for me, but regular customers who'd bought it sang its praises, telling me how comfortable and durable the products were.

In recent years I haven't seen the brand except at shooting shows abroad, so I was glad to hear that SMK has become the new UK importer. They've chosen

a small range that they feel will best appeal to British shooters and I asked for a selection to try out. They sent jackets and trousers from the Open Season and Sportsman ranges in a choice of camouflage patterns.

ON TREND

Following the current trend, the jackets are short relying on the matching trousers to keep your bum dry. The Sportsman suit uses Aquatex Durasupple LXS fabric, waterproof and breathable with a Teflon coating that makes the water bead and run off the surface so that it doesn't 'wet out' the fabric. This helps it to breathe and stops it becoming heavy with the weight of the water. It's also stretchable, meaning that you can

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I always like to see adjustable cuffs on any outdoors coat.



Waterproof zips save weight.

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wear a closer fitting suit without being restricted. A close fit means a lighter and quieter suit, plus body heat is better captured inside.

The outside of the fabric is smooth while the inside has a raised pile to add warmth. That being said, these are thin jackets with no padding so you adjust your warmth with the layers you wear beneath. This makes them highly versatile, because with just a thin layer such as a thermal ‘T’ they could be worn in spring and autumn and with thicker layers during winter as well.

The Mossy Oak Duck Blind camouflage pattern is highly detailed and mostly made of browns, while the Infinity pattern has a little more green in it, making it more of an all-rounder. The linings are treated with

ScentZro®, which is an antibacterial product designed to minimise the hunter’s airborne scent which can give him away to his quarry.

OPEN SEASON

The Open Season jacket is almost half the price of the Sportsman yet has plenty to recommend it. It uses a brushed outer with a more traditional smooth, drop lining that slides easily against whatever you’re wearing beneath. This makes it easy to get on and off and adds freedom of movement. It feels very light yet offers full waterproofing and is completely windproof as well. Like the more expensive model it uses lightweight, waterproof zips and the main zip has a feature that I’ve only ever seen on much more expensive jackets in the past.

Inside the zip is a smooth fabric that simply cannot get caught in the pull and jam up. Zips that won’t work easily drive me nuts and these opened and shut without a hitch every time adding a feeling of high quality to what is quite an inexpensive garment.

There’s a generous hood that has an adjuster chord for a proper fit. However, I’m not a fan of hoods because they tend to muffle sound, and as a hunter I use my hearing as a vital tool, so I was glad to see that that this one can be unzipped and removed. I’m always happier to wear a hat to keep my head warm and dry even if the water does get down my neck sometimes.

HIGH TECH

These are very modern and lightweight suits using

technologies that have been developed in the high-performance outdoor sports, such as climbing and skiing. Fully taped seams and waterproof zips keep the weather out while reducing weight and bulk. They don’t feel anything like a traditional shooting suit at all.

The thinking behind short jackets rather than what I call a Barbour-style one is the increase in mobility. The big cargo pockets on the front of a traditional coat are great for carrying gear but really get in your way for kneeling and prone shots. The shorter jacket gives away storage space but many hunters today carry a rucksack, so your spare mags’, pellets, knife, torch and all the other bits and bobs we like to haul around can live in there. Traditionalists might be wary of this thinking, but you need to try it to understand just how it works in the field and the Sportchief range could well be the place to start. ■



Extra cargo capacity comes from these thigh pockets.



There’s a choice of camouflage patterns.

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer	Sportchief
Importer	SMK Ltd
Web	www.sportsmk.co.uk
Tel	01206 795333
Model	Sportsman
Jacket	£119.99
Trouser	£59.95
Model	Open Season
Jacket	£69.95
Trouser	£59.95

SPORTCHIEF