



By Shayne Benowitz

I have to admit—I'm a fair weather sailor. The majority of my cruising years have been spent in the subtropical waters of Key West and Miami, or in New York Harbor's summer season. I prefer a uniform of SPF, a bikini, polarized sunglasses and bare feet. However, that attire's not always realistic.

If I know I'll be offshore all day, I always have my foul weather gear handy. Anyone who has spent time sailing in South Florida knows that a calm, sunny, 80 degree day can quickly change when a storm front rolls in, blackening the sky with a wall of dark clouds and bringing with it rain and high winds. While these fronts tend to roll away just as quickly, staying dry during the downpour is crucial to your comfort. I've certainly been caught unprepared and have even had to wrap myself up in the sail to try and stay dry. When temperatures cool in the winter months and on evening sails, extra layers and long pants for warmth are important.

I recently paid a visit to West Marine's ([www.west-marine.com](http://www.west-marine.com)) new flagship location in Fort Lauderdale to meet with Department Lead Keri Hynes to learn about the latest in dressing for comfort and safety while cruising. The 50,000 square-foot store opened in November 2011 and is the largest in the company by twice the size. The blue and white behemoth was quite the sight to take in when I arrived, and inside awaited a bright and shiny treasure trove of boating gear and equipment. Hynes led me to the apparel section and we worked our way from the outside in, starting with the outer shell of foul weather gear, then moving onto the mid-layer for warmth and insulation, the base layer closest to the skin, and finally to footwear.

#### OUTER LAYER—FOUL WEATHER GEAR

When it comes to selecting the right foul weather gear, it's important to consider your needs. Will you be spend-

# Fashion, Meet Function

## Layering for comfort and safety from head to toe



ing most of your time on coastal day sails or offshore deliveries? Are you a cruiser or a racer? How frequently are you on the water, and in what climate? By assessing these factors, you'll narrow down the foul weather gear that's right for you.

"You want to pick something you'll wear all the time," Hynes tells me. "And you don't want anything more heavyweight than you actually need." West Marine's Third Reef jackets and bibs are a durable and economical approach for most cruisers, with prices starting at \$129 for the bib and \$149 for the jacket. "Plus, they go on sale," Hynes notes. "Customers come in after 30 years to replace their Third Reef gear."

For offshore sailors, gear tends to be more heavy duty, with reflective taping on the shoulders for visibility, like Gill's OS1 offshore jacket (\$549). Other practical features found today include clear panels on the hood for added visibility, as seen in some of the Henri Lloyd and Musto models.

I also had the chance to speak

with Martha Parker, owner of Team One Newport in Newport, RI ([www.team1newport.com](http://www.team1newport.com)), who explained the effectiveness of tri-laminate fabric for superior waterproofness and breathability. Found in Musto's MPX offshore jacket (\$609), the fabric's three layers consist of an outer nylon, a Gore-Tex membrane and a scrim inner lining. In some cases, the outer layer is also coated with DWR or "durable water repellent," which Parker refers to as "extra insurance."

Hynes agrees that Gore-Tex fabric is elite, pointing out Henri Lloyd's Ocean Explorer jacket (\$699). But since the Gore-Tex patent expired some years ago, most brands now use their own branded waterproof, breathable fabric based on Gore-Tex fabric technology.

There is also a two-layer approach to foul weather fabric composed only of the outer fabric and the membrane without a scrim, as found in Gill's OS2 Coastal jacket (\$295). Henri Lloyd's Shockwave jacket (\$475) utilizes a two-and-a half layer concept where the scrim is built into the membrane for an ultra lightweight outer shell. Parker notes that this is great for racers,

Team One's Sean Nightingale sports Gill's OS2 Jacket (\$295) and Trousers (\$199) with a Turtlefur Polartec Windbloc Beanie (\$24.95)



Atlantis's Aegis Race Jacket (\$295) and Hybrid Bibs (\$295)



Henri Lloyd's Shockwave Hooded Smock (\$350)



but cruisers might prefer a heavier, more durable jacket.

A new and much appreciated trend has been the introduction of jackets and pants designed specifically for women. Almost all of the top brands offer a range of women's jackets that are more flattering and functional than the straight-cut men's pieces. For example, Atlantis has introduced offshore women's

Aegis jackets (\$295) and accompanying bibs, as well as the lighter women's Microburst models (\$150), which perform as well as ever but have a more feminine look. Gill has reworked



their offshore-quality OS2 jackets to include a women's model that suits female curves. The company also offers women's offshore OS2 bibs (\$199) with a tailored elastic waist and (bonus!) a girl-friendly drop seat.

Both Hynes and Parker agree that the most important thing about foul weather gear is caring for it. Parker recommends washing and conditioning your gear twice a year to extend its life by double or even triple. "Treat it the same way you would your equipment," says Hynes, noting that salt and sun can be extremely damaging. "It's as simple as hosing and sponging it off." While some fabrics can withstand the laundry, it's important to read the label's care instructions and never use fabric softener, because it deteriorates the fiber and compromises its waterproof capabilities.

## MID-LAYER: WARMTH & INSULATION

While foul weather gear is designed to keep you dry, your mid-layer is intended to keep you warm and insulated. This is perhaps the least technical layer to consider, but it's an essential one nonetheless. Parker recommends looking in your closet for any thermal-oriented clothes you already have, such as sweatshirts, sweaters or fleece, noting a comeback in merino wool amongst sailors.

Hynes says not to worry about which brand to choose because any fleece will do, but notes that some



The author wears West Marine's Traveler Jacket (\$94), Henri Lloyd's Atmosphere SPF 50 UV Protection Shirt (\$25), SLAM's Jay Shorts (\$55) and Sperry Top-Sider SeaRacers (\$99.99)



brands such as Helly Hansen and Henri Lloyd utilize Windstopper technology for total windproofness in soft, lightweight vests, jackets, shorts and pants. Parker mentions a similar technology called Windblock, which is found in hats by Musto and Turtle Fur.

Both ladies point out that the most important job of your mid-layer is to keep your core warm to avoid hypothermia.

### BASE LAYER: WICKING & COMFORT

The base layer's function is to move moisture away from the body to keep you dry and comfortable. Parker raves about new technology in polyester. "This isn't the polyester of the '80s," she quips. "But of 2012, of the new millennium. It's soft and silky, holds thermal properties, and wicks away moisture, retaining only 1% of its weight in water."

Compared to cotton, which holds 28%, polyester fabrics are superior in keeping moisture off of your skin. Parker swears by Patagonia Expedition Underwear for her base layer.

Meanwhile, over at West Marine, Hynes and I look at long and short-sleeved shirts and long underwear by Helly Hansen with Lifa hydrophobic fabric.

### FOOTWEAR

As I mentioned before, barefoot is my favorite way to cruise. Otherwise, I'm pretty attached to my Reef flip flops (sorry, I'm a Florida girl!) or a worn-in pair of pink Sperry Top-Sider espadrilles with a lime green bow (and I'm a Key West girl!). Hynes introduces me to some high-performance options in sailing footwear, including Sperry's SeaRacer shoes and Ventus boots (which, sadly, are being discontinued). For a truly heavy-duty waterproof boot, Dubarry makes a great one using Gore-Tex.

We also looked at sandal/shoe hybrids by Teva and Keen that grip to the deck and offer support while drying quickly. Another option is to wear a Gore-Tex or neoprene smart sock, which acts as foul weather gear for your feet. These should be worn over your regular socks to keep your feet dry in wet conditions. Hynes' tip for selecting a pair of shoes for cruising is, "If the choice is between two pairs, always opt for the more lightweight one for comfort and maneuverability."

### GET THE LOOK

Finally, it was time for Hynes to act as my personal shopper and get me outfitted in a couple of options practical for my use. We put together

a three-layer ensemble, starting with West Marine's Third Reef women's jacket in a pretty shade of lavender, much like the bright red one I have in my closet at home, and matched it with a Third Reef navy women's bib with a convenient drop seat. I was drawn to a Henri Lloyd Genesis jacket made with a thermal Primaloft lining (similar to down in its thermal properties, but much more suited for use on the water) with its soft, puffy fabric and fashionable cut, but we stuck with West Marine for its practicality. For my mid-layer, we grabbed a fleece White Sierra Alpha Top in black, and for my base layer we went with Helly Hansen's long underwear and long-sleeved shirt with Lifa fabric. I was ready to try a pair of boots with my bib, so we



West Marine's Third Reef Jacket (\$149) and Bib (\$129), Helly Hansen's Lifa Shirt (\$40) and Long Underwear (\$40), and Sperry Top-Sider Ventus boots (\$180)





Musto's Windstopper Hat (\$40), MPX Offshore Jacket (\$609), MPX Offshore Trousers (\$435) and HPX Race Boots (\$355)

grabbed the Sperry Ventus.

The Lifa fabric felt great against my skin and the cut was comfortable and flattering. I also appreciated the feminine lavender color, since my foul weather gear has always been either red or black. The bib was comfortable and the boots were a great fit. I felt ready to get offshore and be handy in any weather conditions.

Next, we put together a more lightweight ensemble for a sunny day in Florida, starting with West Marine's Traveler jacket. Hynes encourages mixing and matching brands to get exactly what you're looking for, so I grabbed a pair of SLAM's Jay shorts with a reinforced bottom and adjustable waistband. Hynes also recommends shorts and pants with abrasion-resistant fabric found in Henri Lloyd's products. I opted for

Henri Lloyd's Atmosphere SPF 50 shirt with UV protection and a pair of Sperry's SeaRacer shoes to complete the outfit. I felt sporty and agile and ready to hit the deck.

I could have spent the entire afternoon experimenting with the wide selection of cruising wear available at West Marine and still have barely skimmed the surface. The store's sheer size caters to a bevy of merchandise and offers so many options. I know the next time I need to round out my gear for a passage or a delivery, Fort Lauderdale's flagship store will be my destination. And if I'm a bit farther north, I'll be sure to pop into Team One Newport.

As I wrap up this article from my balcony, I see that a storm front has descended on Miami Beach. There's a familiar black sky turning the ocean a frothy pistachio green with heavy rain and a howling wind. Times like these, I'm happy to be inside writing as opposed to offshore on a sailboat. However, I daydream about how comfortable, warm and dry I would be in the three-layer ensemble and boots

that Hynes helped me pick out at West Marine.

I check the radar. Florida's famous blue skies should reappear on the horizon soon, with temperatures at 79 degrees. The rain is already abating. When the sunshine reappears, it would be more than appropriate to strip down to my preferred base layer of SPF, sunglasses, bikini and bare feet, and perhaps even drop anchor and take a dip in the clear blue ocean. ~

*Shayne Benowitz is a writer, traveler and occasional deckhand based in Miami Beach, Florida. Her work can be found in both regional and national magazines and on the web. Follow her adventures on Twitter @ShayneBenowitz..*

**BWS asked, you answered: What's your most essential item of clothing for coastal and offshore cruising?**

**My Marmot dry clime vest is indispensable. Lightweight, windproof, wrinkle-proof. Equally good for snowboarding, sailing and cold airplanes. – Scott A.**

**My Icebreaker t-shirt is perfect for when weather starts to cool down as an outer layer or under other layers. –Elliott**

**Woolens—to hell with being cold! –Jerry R.**

**My muumuu, which is basically a sarong! It's great for steamy days that turn into hot, sticky nights, and when it's cool, it doubles as a nice shawl or a makeshift scarf for the neck and head. It truly is more than just a bikini cover-up! –Kathy D.**

**My one indispensable item of clothing is a wide-brim rain hat, like a Tilley. It keeps you both cool and UV-protected in the daytime, and warm in the evening. –Bill H.**

**Ski goggles for hail, high winds and rain. –Benson**

**I love my Henri Lloyd windbreaker. It is windproof and waterproof—even on my very wet trimaran. It's so good, in fact, that my son stole it from me! –Diane L.**

**West Marine's Typhoon Jacket is the perfect piece of boating outerwear. It keeps me warm when I'm cold, cool when I'm hot, and dry when it's wet. It is lightweight, but sturdy; well-made, but affordable! –Loretta L.**

**My Harken UV Tech long-sleeved tee is an awesome base layer. It's quick drying and super breathable. I find it great for biking and hiking as well! –Mike Y.**

## Harken Hyperseal Pro 3-Layer Semi-Drytop and Bibs

Worn together or separately, Harken's Hyperseal Pro 3-Layer Semi-Drytop and Bibs provide extreme protection from the elements while offering an uncommon level of comfort and convenience. The Drytop is crafted with unique details like an anti-fog/anti-UV wrist window for checking your watch, a tricot lining for comfort against bare skin, and an innovative Hyperseal collar with non-chafing Lycra and high-stretch neoprene for a nearly watertight seal against your skin.

The three-layer fabric (Teflon coating, polyurethane membrane and tricot) is 100% windproof and waterproof but has superior breathability. Neoprene anchors in the waistband prevent ride-up, while reinforced abrasion-resistant panels in high-wear areas and 2-way stretch material on the elbows, back and underarms promote mobility and comfort. Other features include fully-taped seams, reflective 3M accents for safety, extra-long arm length for maximum reach and a heat-welded self-draining pocket.

Top: Men's XS-XXL, Ice/Carbon/Black, \$199. Bibs: Men's XS-XXL, Ice/Carbon/Black, \$189. [www.harkensport.com](http://www.harkensport.com)



**West Marine  
Navigator  
Foul  
Weather  
Jacket**

## West Marine Trysail Bibs

Just like their jacket counterpart, West Marine's rugged bibs provide heavy-duty protection without actually *feeling* heavy. They are completely waterproof, yet they breathe and move with you comfortably. 500 denier Cordura® seat and knee reinforcement ensures that they'll hold up season after season. Other features include self-fabric shoulder straps with hook-and-loop adjustment, internal gusset, hook-and-loop external ankle and waist adjusters, a fast-draining, quick-access leg pocket, and a two-way storm flap with drainage channel. Men's S-XXL, Yellow, \$299. [www.westmarine.com](http://www.westmarine.com)

Stay warm and dry, whether hauling upwind, weathering stormy seas, or sitting on deck for a long night watch. West Marine's rugged, comfortable foul weather gear has been designed specifically for coastal cruising and racing. This completely waterproof and breathable garment is made of 100% nylon and features a microporous coating and a hydrophilic top coat that draws moisture away from the body while keeping cold seawater out. Unlined to speed up dry time and reduce interlayer binding, and articulated and contoured to fit you well and reduce windage. Other features include an articulated and adjustable hood and hood pod with microfleece lining, adjustable closure systems for the hood, collar, cuffs and waistband, and reinforced seams to reduce wear. Matching bibs also available. Men's S-XXL, Red and Carbon, \$259. [www.westmarine.com](http://www.westmarine.com)

## Gill OS1 Women's Jacket and Trousers

Due to the success of Gill's OS1 range and the popularity of the brand's female-specific designs, the company has launched a Women's OS1 suit for 2012. Built for the worst conditions imaginable, the OS1 range is tough, weatherproof, and at home on any ocean crossing. Designed specifically for the female form, the new garments incorporate a more flattering fit, while maintaining all of the technical features of the unisex product.

The Women's OS1 Jacket uses a 5Dot, 3-layer shell fabric that is ruggedly durable, waterproof and highly breathable, making it perfect for extended use. A high collar with a gridded thermal fleece lining, wraparound face guard, and fold-down face flap offer protection and warmth from the elements, while cuffs featuring a retractable adjuster and PU inner seals provide watertight comfort. Additional features include an active-fit rollaway hood with two-way volume adjustment, cargo pockets that allow storage of bulky items, two sets of fleece-lined handwarmer pockets, an adjustable shock cord hem, and prismatic reflectors and piping.

The OS1 Women's Trousers feature a convenient drop-seat function without the need to undo the braces. Additional features include a chest pocket, well-placed hand warmer pockets, a multi-tool pocket for ease of access, and performance cut for unrestricted movement and comfort. Jacket: Sizes 8-14, Red/Graphite, \$549. Trousers: Sizes 8-14, Graphite, \$359. [www.gillna.com](http://www.gillna.com)

## Henri Lloyd Extreme Waterproof Boot

This year, Henri Lloyd challenges convention with the re-invention of the waterproof boot. Their new twin-skin system creates not only one, but two waterproof barriers, offering protection from the outside *and* the inside. The outer is constructed from 100% waterproof material, while the inner features a fully-taped bootie constructed with a waterproof, breathable 4-layer laminate. A final moisture management lining transports and disperses moisture vapor to the outside of the boot. Other features include a fully adjustable permanent gaiter made from waterproof nylon with drainage mesh, NASA-developed adaptive comfort technology, a slip-resistant outsole with permanent tread pattern, and two pairs of insocks to allow for narrow or broad foot width. Black, \$299. [www.henrilloydonline.com](http://www.henrilloydonline.com)





## Atlantis Challenger Jacket

Atlantis's new Challenger Jacket is designed to cover all of your needs, transitioning effortlessly from a mild spring day on the water to coffee on the docks on a chilly fall afternoon. With its design of high-loft polyester insulation covered by a waterproof, breathable nylon shell with fully taped seams, this versatile piece delivers the ultimate combination of comfort and coastal style. XS-XXL, Flag Blue/Pearl, Arbor and Cardinal/Flag Blue, \$250. [www.atlantisweathergear.com](http://www.atlantisweathergear.com)



## Atlantis Watch Jacket & Vest

The new Watch Jackets and Vests from Atlantis represent the ultimate in crew gear. A sharp profile combines with a rugged, breathable, waterproof shell and a soft-brushed polyester liner to deliver the perfect blend of performance and style. Watch Jackets and Vests include an internal zipper in the liner to provide embroidery access anywhere in the piece. Jacket: XS-XXL, Cardinal, Graphite, Stone and Steel, \$130, Vest: XS-XXL, Cardinal, Stone and Granite, \$95. [www.atlantisweathergear.com](http://www.atlantisweathergear.com)

## Henri Lloyd Freedom Jacket

Henri Lloyd's feature-packed cruising jacket is constructed from Gore-Tex Performance Shell fabric and features the brand's critically-acclaimed Optivision hood and watch window for enhanced peripheral vision on deck. There are two microfleece-lined handwarmer pockets as well as reflective detail on the shoulders and throat tab, and the garment is contoured to reduce windage. Other features include one-handed shockcord aperture adjusters, fleece collar lining, 600D nylon reinforcement, an internal storm cuff and a two-way storm flap with drainage channel. S-XXL, Optical White and Red, \$599. [www.henrilloydonline.com](http://www.henrilloydonline.com)

