

Peter Scott




Peter Scott: A phoenix rising from the ashes

Peter Scott is a very modern company. It is 'modern' in that it is a British business which, despite possessing a distinguished heritage stretching back to the late 19th century, nearly went into liquidation and then was rescued in the nick of time by a large Asian company

The company that came to the rescue of Peter Scott was duffle coat specialist, Gloverall, part of the global South Korean-based Eland Group and which owns around 3,500 shops in South Korea and China as well as boasting famous brand licences like Berghaus, Puma and G-Star in Asia.

David Wilson, Peter Scott's golf sales and marketing manager, looks back at the company's origins: "The company was founded in 1878 by Peter Scott in Hawick, in the Scottish Borders and started in the golf industry in the 1980s when Karsten Solheim of PING wanted to source quality knitwear made in Scotland. The Peter Scott Golf ranges were then launched and the brand became a sought-after golf sweater."

It is with a note of pride in his voice that Wilson adds: "We have supplied some of the finest golf resorts and clubs as well as golf industry companies over the years, such as Nike, Titleist and Callaway."

So it must have come as a considerable shock to Tour pros, the Scottish knitwear industry and the golf trade as a whole when nearly a year ago, the company was placed into administration with the loss of around 130 jobs.

Wilson again: "There were a lot of things in the pipeline in late 2009/10 where cash flow issues were always the problem, but it was mostly the banking crisis that did it for us. Suddenly there were no banking facilities and no one would take us on. Then in March 2010, the Eland group came along, expressed an interest and in June 2010 they took Peter Scott out of administration.

"Since they've taken over, the company is more focussed. We have a factory, which has been realigned, where the yarn goes in one end and a sweater comes out of the other. Peter Scott garments are still very much a hand-finished product and go through over 22 different processes in the factory," continues the golf sales and marketing manager before adding: "The new owners have focussed on the heritage of what we have here, namely, the Scottish knitwear industry and knitting in the Borders. They are very much behind the ethos and they appreciate the quality and attention to detail of our industry."

Thanks to the takeover, and from a much reduced workforce of just 15, the company now expects to recruit 20 more and boost the workforce to 70-plus employees.

How long has Wilson been with Peter Scott?

"I joined the company in January 2000 as a sales co-ordinator. Before then I worked for Pringle when I first left school. During my time with Peter Scott, I've also worked with the corporate side of things and for some time I was embroidery manager as well. It is carried out in-house. In fact, we do everything in house. It's the full package."

Despite a busy work schedule, Wilson is a keen golfer. A modest man, Wilson admits he won the club championship in 2005 ("No-one was more surprised than me") before adding he's also a PGA qualified level 2 coach in Hawick where for the last four to five years he's been helping out on a junior golf development programme called clubgolf.

Now that the company's future is looking brighter, what is the focus for Peter Scott?

"The Eland Group has plans for us to expand in the next five years. While knitwear will continue to be made in Hawick, the Koreans intend to produce a number of other products including waterproofs and shirts under the Peter Scott name. Designers are coming over from South Korea to the UK so we can work closely with them and the plan is to launch the products in Asia first before they are introduced into Europe."

However with regard to the Scottish operation, Wilson stresses that the focus is to re-establish the knitwear, build it up again after the "last couple of difficult years" and take it from there.

How have customers reacted since the takeover?

"The feedback from customers has been fantastic. My first job after the takeover was to get the agents back both in the UK, Ireland and Europe."

What does the immediate future hold?

"A stock service programme is in place and the factory is now running at almost maximum capacity and more than 100,000 units are expected to be ordered for our Autumn/Winter collection," says Wilson promptly.

Which all goes to prove that the Peter Scott phoenix has well and truly risen from the ashes.

FACTFILE

How did you get into golf?

When I was about 12 I was given a hickory shafted 7 iron so I went into a nearby field and smashed balls up and down. I even built a two-hole course and pretended to be Sandy Lyle or Greg Norman. The holes were only 120 yards and 150 yards long, but I reckon it's how I got my short game skills. Around the same time, one of my neighbours introduced me to golf so I joined the Hawick Golf club, where Nick Faldo and Colin Montgomerie are honorary members

What do you play off now?

5 but it's been known to be as low as 3.

Who are your golfing heroes?

Sandy Lyle. I remember seeing him in the 1988 Masters. Other heroes include Greg Norman & Ernie Els.

Which is your favourite golf course?

The Ailsa course at Turnberry closely followed by Loch Lomond and the Emirates.

What clubs do you have in your bag?

Ping S58 irons, Vokey wedges, a 10-year Scotty Cameron putter which I would never change and a Callaway driver.