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Guys' Need for Speedsuits

Amateur male runners are ditching shorts for skintight unitards, not because they make them faster, but to capture some of the vibe of elite competitors in longer races

By Ashley Mateo

AFTER the Norwegian running champion Jakob Ingebrigtsen won gold in the 5,000-meter race wearing a skintight unitard at the Paris Olympics, amateur runners took notice.

Long worn by professional sprinters, one-pieces are appealing to a new clientele: guys at local marathons and Tuesday night track meets, who have no podium ambitions but every intention of looking like they do. Retailers like Tracksmith, Bandit, Soar and more have been developing their own versions of full-body, aerodynamically engineered one-pieces for men.

Marathon runner Anthony Farmer, 24, who works in sports retail outside Chicago, ditched his singlet and running shorts for a unitard after seeing Ingebrigtsen, his running idol, wearing it. He thought the look was "super, super funny" until Ingebrigtsen turned it into a signal of dominance. "He looks so cool wearing it and if he feels confident, then I want to do the same," he said.

"These runners are not elite, but they take this s—seriously," said Ardith Singh, co-founder and chief design officer for athletic-apparel brand Bandit Running. "There's a halo effect from elite runners—if you're inspired by that type of runner, you're going to imprint what they wear on how you want to show up for a race."

For over two decades, speedsuits were used primarily by pro sprinters who have the most to gain from wearing them during short-distance races, where a fraction of a second can make all the difference. This year, the one-piece is showing up on male athletes in longer races. Great Britain's Josh Kerr wore a bespoke speedsuit from Brooks to break the 27-year-old world record in the men's mile in July. Ethiopia's Yomif Kejelcha wore Adidas's Techfit Endurance Suit in May when he became the second man in history to officially finish a marathon in under two hours.

Performance data from Nike and Brooks shows that a well-designed speedsuit could reduce drag and, in some cases, stabilize the hips and pelvis over long distances. But those marginal gains likely only register for the world's fastest runners—not a guy trying to shave 15 seconds off his mile. What men are really buying into is the vibe.

> 'You have to have some level of audacity to wear one, and I think I have that audacity.'

"Nothing looks faster and evokes 'this guy has confidence and can back it up' than a speedsuit," Singh said.

Patryk Odedina, a 36-year-old sales enablement manager in the Bronx, ran a then-personal best of 3:12:59 at the 2025 Jersey City Marathon clad in Bandit's $168 Ares Flex Speedsuit.

"You have to have some level of audacity to wear one," he said. "And I think I have that audacity. I want what other people probably aren't going to wear. I want people looking at me."

Bandit dropped a new speedsuit Sept. 16 in a limited-edition collection for the Copenhagen Half Marathon. Singh said speedsuits were a niche interest, but "the people who do [want them] have an impact on the rest of the community." The brand's speedsuits have been selling out quickly, she said.

Speedsuits offer real functional perks: Farmer said the compression feels sleek and supportive, and Odedina swears by the pockets for help carrying enough gel packets.

"What's been exciting is seeing it resonate well beyond the athletes we initially imagined wearing it," said Jon Tappan, Tracksmith's chief product and merchandising officer, of the brand's $175 Strata Speedsuit.

Amateur runners hunt down old team-issue stock on eBay and Instagram, buying up kits that sprinters and national federations had discarded, said Cole Townsend, author of the running fashion newsletter Running Supply on Substack.

"It's what fast people wear," Townsend said. "It makes people look at you and think you're fast, too."

WHAT THEY'RE WEARING / UNITARDS THAT GO THE DISTANCE



Tracksmith Strata Speedsuit, *$175*



Jonathan Escalante-Phillips in the Soar Running Marathon Speedsuit, *$345*



Bandit Running Ares Flex & Superbeam Speedsuit, *$168*

AMANDA CHEN/WSJ, COURTESY OF ANTHONY FARMER, ISTOCK (ILLUSTRATION); SOAR RUNNING (ESCALANTE-PHILLIPS)



