

# Q&A: Full Turn Custom Apparel's Mark Killeen on the Newest Arnold Palmer Fashion

The Palmer family trusted Killeen's company to create a new men's golf and lifestyle collection worthy of Arnold's name.

JANICE FERGUSON

The Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill has become a time to reflect, respect and be inspired by the tournament namesake's life and legacy. The new apparel brand AD Palmer (for Arnold Daniel Palmer), was created as a reflection of Palmer's sense of style, and how he lived his life. The professional golfer's roles of philanthropist, family man, businessman and aviator inspire aspects of this collection.

*Sports Illustrated* got a sneak peek of the new assortment in January and came away impressed. Mark Killeen, founder and CEO of Full Turn Custom Apparel, discussed the partnership and the finished product.

**Sports Illustrated: We see other companies create Arnold Palmer apparel, footwear and accessory collections, such as Puma's collaboration with AP. How is the AD Palmer project different and how did the opportunity for Full Turn, and you, come about?**

**Mark Killeen:** I met Amy Palmer Saunders a few years ago at the **Masters**. Full Turn produced **the famous red cardigan** that is gifted to each year's champion of the Arnold Palmer Invitational, which is quite an honor. She contacted me and expressed a desire to not just put the AP logo on someone else's brand, but to create a collection that was a true reflection of what her father wore.

Our design focus was to honor Amy's vision while ensuring that the product was current for today's market. Our guardrails were set by answering the question: "If Arnold was 30 years old today and at the peak of his career, what would he be wearing?" As long as we steered that course, the welcomed the input and feedback we got along the way made the entire experience and outcome all the better.



We'll continue to see licensing opportunities for brands to create AP items that are different and geared to certain audiences, but this AD Palmer project is separate—it's its own unique brand bearing its own label.

**SI: One of the first things to notice about the line is the new colors of the umbrella logo going from the very recognizable bright, playful colors to more rich, sophisticated tones. How did the idea to make that change come about, and was it an easy sell?**

**MK:** The AD Palmer collection is so different from any apparel produced previously, so we felt comfortable with further differentiating the logo. As the story goes, the original umbrella concept was hand-drawn on a napkin so we took that inspiration while designing the new logo. It has a hand-drawn look to it. As for the colors, we did adjust them to be more appropriate for this collection. This was not a difficult sell as all involved understood the direction.

**SI: You told us in Orlando that “fabric is the story” for this collection, and the feel is pretty incredible. But you had a challenge convincing high-end Italian fabricators to add some sort of performance feature to their beautiful materials to appease the American market.**

**MK:** To be true to Mr. Palmer's taste and fashion we decided to produce the collection entirely in Italy. We know the U.S. market is performance-driven, which is an important element of the collection. The Italians have a very different approach to performance, which is defined by utilizing today's fabric technology to enhance the beauty of natural fibers. Every garment is a blend of natural fibers like Giza cotton, silk, cashmere and extra-fine micron merino with performance yarns like Lyocell, polyamide, and elastane.

**SI: Arnold Palmer regularly appeared in magazines and in 2007, GQ honored him as one of its “50 Most Stylish Men of the Past 50 Years.” Your designer took much, if not all, of her inspiration from looking and studying old photos of Palmer and his classic style. Give us the details of couple pieces that resulted from this creative process.**

**MK:** So true! Our designer, Annete Evans, was able to capture Mr. Palmer's style while making the garments appropriate for today's market. Obviously, the cardigan was a core focus. Annete saw today's cardigan as being a beautiful merino/silk pique

stitch with a dual-zip front instead of the traditional buttons. Arnold was also known for his blazers so she designed a “travel blazer” made of microfiber that contains six different pockets, is water and soil resistant and easy to care for. Really every garment in the line has a direct historical reference, each with a modern twist.

**SI: Only select accounts were invited by the Palmer family to bring this first capsule into their shops. Can you give us a couple examples and what sort of comments you got when they viewed the assortment. How well-received is it?**

**MK:** We had tested our direction with some of the leaders in our industry and felt very good we were on the right track. That said, you never know until customers see the actual product. We have launched the concept with about 100 clubs and specialty retailers in the U.S. and Europe. We began showing the line at Bay Hill during the week of the PGA Show and have been amazed by the response. It was particularly meaningful to hear the responses by those who had close relationships with Mr. Palmer.

**SI: Are there future plans for expanding the AD Palmer label and making it more accessible?**

**MK:** We are starting “tight” as we want to ensure we are building a solid foundation for the brand and what it stands for. We are also choosing our vehicle of distribution to be the golf and specialty shops, and not direct to the consumer, as we do not want to compete with our retail partners.

**SI: If Palmer were here today, what do you think he’d say about his new apparel brand?**

**MK:** I would never presume what Arnold would say. I would hope he would be very proud of what we have accomplished. I also believe he would be humbled by the support of so many great customers.

The new AD Palmer assortment is comprised of a range of polos, sweaters, pull-overs, button-down shirts, jacket and signature blazer that complement Mr. Palmer’s legendary personal style. The garments are all manufactured in Italy with quality craftsmanship, preeminent custom fabrics, contemporary silhouettes and distinctive details. The limited edition, first release of the AD Palmer collection will start shipping in May to invitation-only, select green grass and specialty retail accounts.

# AD Palmer Collection

