

Basic Detail Report

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Title

Men's Speedo Racerback swimsuit

Date

1930s

Primary Maker

Speedo International Ltd

Medium

Cotton

Dimensions

Overall: 520 x 395 mm

Name

Swimsuit

History

In 1927 Speedo launched a new competitive swimming costume for men and women called the Racerback. The design was loosely based on the Canadian style swimsuit, which arrived in Australia in the early 1920s. The Racerback was innovative in its incorporation of a high, narrow back panel with twin straps. This unique configuration facilitated greater freedom of movement for the shoulder and back muscles. The swimsuit also had a patented half-skirt, replacing the ungainly and restrictive full skirt. The half skirt allowed the swimmer greater leg movement, while ensuring the modesty offered by the full skirt. Though the design was initially introduced for competitive swimmers, Speedo quickly saw an opportunity for the costume in the wider and more lucrative leisure market. By hiring competitive swimmers of the day to endorse and promote their new swimsuit Speedo managed to promote their product to the greater public and dramatically increase sales. Most prominent of all was the Australian Champion and world record holder, Arne Borg, who regularly appeared in Speedo advertisements. This relationship between sport stars and the product represents one of the earliest Australian examples of sports personality endorsement.