

Textiles experts' view on the new All Blacks jersey

The new All Blacks jersey is apparently the strongest ever, but we thought we'd get the inside word.

Richie McCaw will be happy enough - the jersey is still "black with a fern." But what about the much-hyped technology behind this very fancy T-shirt?

When we received it in the Stuff newsroom we were surprised at the heavy, rubbery feel of the jersey's inside. In fact, it reminded us a bit of punishing women's shapewear such as Spanx. The control panels are quite thick and plasticky, and we couldn't imagine they'd be particularly comfortable.



This year's All Blacks jersey looks a lot like the previous version, but this one has a "chassis."

According to Peter Heslop, Textile and Design Lab manager at AUT and Gordon Fraser, Senior Technician, they've done well.

They both scrutinised the shirt, pulling and tugging on it as well as carefully examining the seams and panels up close.



Parachutes and All Blacks jerseys both have a zero-tolerance policy on rips.

"That's definitely not coming off anytime soon," said Fraser.

Heslop said the fabric itself was worthy of note.

"We were a bit skeptical as to whether or not it was woven. Now days, most sportswear is knitted, so the fact that they've reverted to a woven structure is impressive," he said.



SPANX/SUPPLIED

The new All Blacks jersey feels a lot like a pair of Spanx, if you're familiar with them.

"Just looking at it, the way that it's constructed, it's incorporated basically two garments into one... It's very well-designed and impressive."

Heslop said it was a big step up in terms of rugby shirts, and reminded him of the 'rip-proof' fabric technology used in parachutes.

"This is a new generation of shirts," he said.

Adidas will be pleased with that assessment, as they emphasised the science behind the shirt.

Deborah Yeomans, director of Adidas futures, said: "In looking at the kinetic chain, which is the flow of energy through the body, we found an area we could improve to give the All Blacks a competitive advantage.

"We identified the area of the spine known as 'L5S1' as the key point where energy transfers between the top and bottom parts of the body. The chassis system works with the jersey to improve posture, core stability and a player's movement efficiency."

That all still sounds pretty technical to us, but Heslop and Fraser gave the jersey their seal of approval.