

Physical Culture

GEAR TEST WITH Adam Chase, Trail Runner

Bad Weather? Zip On
An Ounce of Prevention

WHEN it's too warm to wear a medium-weight jacket and iffy weather looms, runners and hikers risk being caught unprepared. Now, outdoor apparel makers offer tissue-paper-thin nylon tops that can wad into the palm of a hand or fit in a pocket or fanny pack. Some weigh less than two ounces. They are designed to resist wind and water, but still breathe well during a summer drizzle.

To see whether they live up to their billing, Adam Chase, an author of "The Ultimate Guide to Trail Running," (Lyons Press), ran in these ultralight jackets in the foothills of the Rockies near Boulder, Colo., and in the hills of Homer, N.Y., about 30 miles south of Syracuse.

"These jackets are perfect security blankets," and all of those tested effectively stopped the wind, said Mr. Chase, a competitive trail runner. "At altitude, an unexpected storm can show up out of nowhere, and it gets chilly quick when the sun goes down."

STEFANI JACKENTHAL



HELLY HANSEN MARS JACKET \$100, www.hellyhansengear.com. The lightest of the jackets tested, this feathery 1.9 ounce full-zip shell has subtle reflective lettering that's visible at dusk. As Mr. Chase ran, he said the zipper locked into place so it didn't flop annoyingly. While the armpit vents offered some relief, he noted that the jacket heated up quickly.



THIN IS GOOD All of the super-light jackets can be smushed into the tiniest of spaces, some into their own pockets, like the GoLite Wisp Wind Shirt, above.

BROOKS L.S.D. JACKET \$84.99, www.dickssportinggoods.com. This 3.1 ounce pullover, made of "buttery soft material," was "the quietest" of those tested. He prized how the mesh vents in the back aerated, but found that they added weight, as did the "unnecessarily bulky" zippers. The jacket comes with a carry case that can be clipped to a waistband.



Above and top right, Stephen Collector for The New York Times



PATAGONIA HOUDINI FULL-ZIP \$125, www.patagonia.com. Mr. Chase found that the 3.5 ounce Houdini felt "most like a standard jacket" and had the "best breathability of all the tops." When cinched closed, the hood moved with his head so it didn't restrict his vision.



PEARLIZUMI NADA PULL-OVER \$59.99, www.pearlizumi.com. Unlike the other more boxy-cut shells, this three-ounce Nada is form-fitting. The rear zip-pocket was "easy to reach" and "terrific for toting cash and keys." Lycra binding at the collar, cuffs and hem reinforces the flimsy material.



GOLITE WISP WIND SHIRT \$70, www.golite.com. As he ran, Mr. Chase said he barely noticed this high-collared 2.5 ounce top, because it was so light. He liked the elasticized cuffs and hem and the fact that the shirt packed down to the size of a baseball. But because it unzipped only to the top of the chest, it was too easy to overheat.

Photographs by Lara Klove for The New York Times