

**Front****Taking the Buckeye spirit to the 'next level'****BY LYNDESEY TETER**

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Remember that time you were stuck in Lane Avenue traffic on game day? You hadn't moved for 20 minutes, which still wasn't enough time to contemplate how those girls made those tiny outfits out of a football jersey? Maybe you ended up cursing a few drunken co-eds who had been banging on your hood?

Now you can memorialize the event with a unique apparel opportunity, courtesy of an Ohio State business grad.

"I was taking classes two nights a week at Fisher," (that's the college of business, for the uninitiated), said Raj Shroff.

"I was walking down Lane when it clicked in my head."

Shroff thought of the perfect way to give a nod to his alma matter without actually using the words "Ohio," "State," or "Buckeyes"—words The Ohio State University protect like the Colonel's secret recipe.

That's when Wearlane Apparel Co. was born.

By slapping an oh-so-simple road-sign design on tees, jackets and hoodies, Shroff and his business partner Gabe Shultz could capture the local spirit of the university while sidestepping cumbersome trademark limitation.

The truth is, however, Wearlane is looking to take it to the next level. For while more traditional Buckeyes gear in every country on the globe—and probably in a satellite or two—Shroff hopes the Wearlane brand can tag along, kind of as Brutus's cooler cousin.

"We're trying to make it more about not being as obvious as an Ohio State T-shirt," he said.

"Anywhere you go, you can find a guy in an OSU hat or a Buckeye shirt. But if you see a guy in an American Apparel track jacket with the words 'Lane Avenue' on it, it would spark a significantly different dialogue with a different kind of person on a whole new level."

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"Sparking a significantly different dialogue with a different kind of person on a whole new level.": Introducing Wearlane Apparel Co.

Shroff was wearing his Lane Avenue shirt on the strip in Vegas when he overheard a passer-by tell his cohorts: "That guy is from Columbus."

It's that kind of subtlety that Wearlane hopes to attract.

"We're not 'In your face,'" he said. "It's a different level of engagement."

Shroff wants to make it clear that he's not affiliated with the university.

"Technically, Lane runs all the way up to Upper Arlington, and we're not tied to the university at all," Shroff said.

Although admittedly, that would be hard to discern from the Wearlane website, where students are "wearing Lane" at OSU games, or studying behind a giant book—perhaps even a college-level textbook.

The Wearlane logos aren't overt enough to get the attention of Ohio State's trademark and licensing services department, said its director Rick Van Brimmer.

"At this point, that's not something we would pursue," Brimmer said.

And though it has been argued that the colors scarlet and gray are an indicator of a school's brand, the Wearlane apparel is "fine from our standpoint," he said.

"That kind of merchandising is trying to tie into the trademark," but it doesn't hold the same kind of appeal to the buyer as an official Ohio State logo, Brimmer said.

Wearlane's insider-y Columbus feel lets the wearer subtly tout their game.

"Wouldn't it be nice to have clothes that capture your obvious spirit without being so ... obvious?" he asked.

"We're actually going to move away from the scarlet and gray and incorporate some other designs in different colors and styles," Shroff said.

But what does Lane Avenue mean to Wearlane creators? The company website explains:

"It's the champions' lane. It's the sidewalk you woke up on. It's the 4-year plan. It's also the 5, 6, 7 and 8 year plans. It's a major. It's a minor. It's the biggest

7 a.m. party you've ever been to. It's your dorm, your bar, your locker room, and

your last class before summer. But mostly it's a road."

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