

MACHINE *Knit* AMERICA

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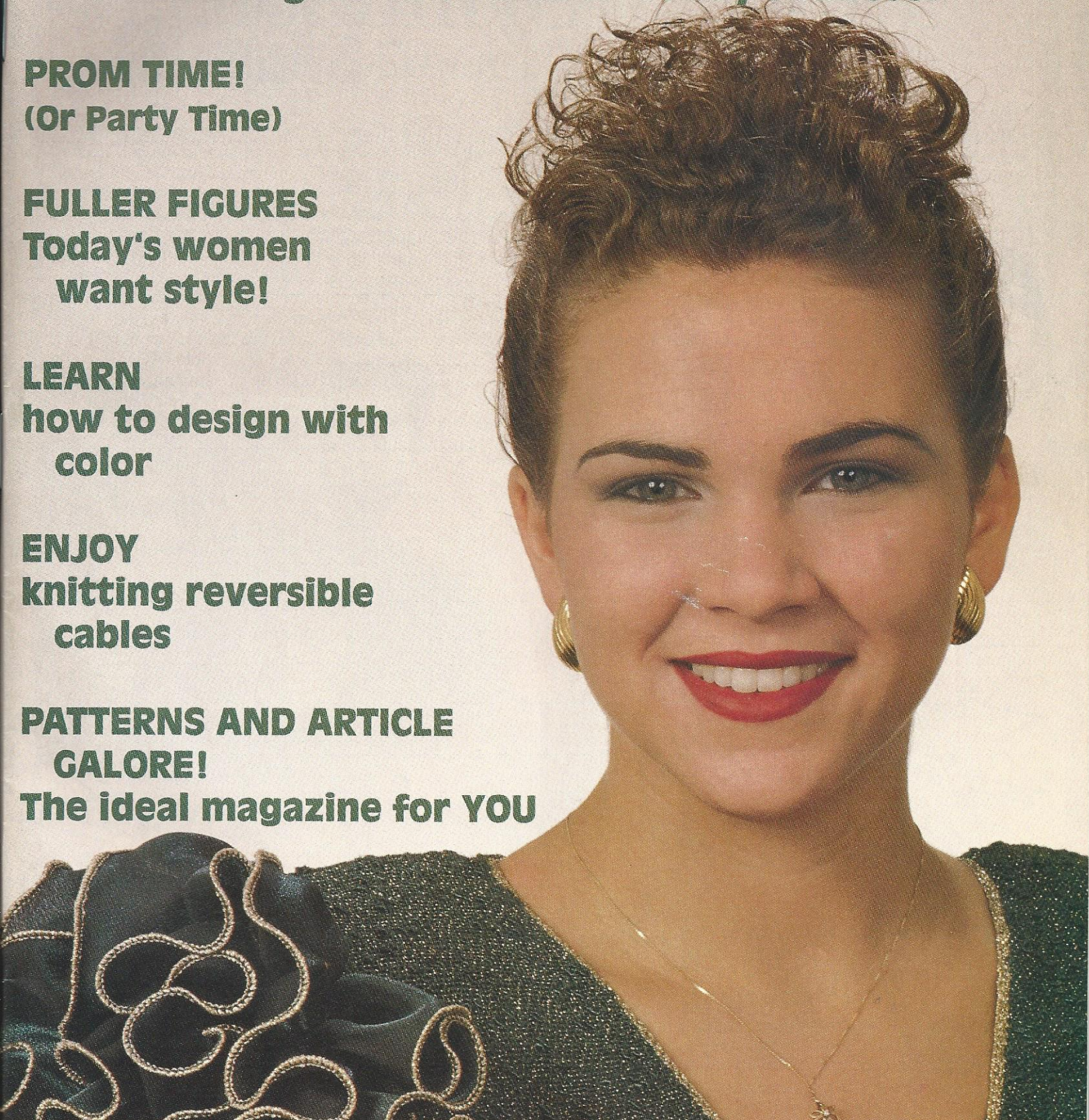
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THE WOE OF YARN FLOW

Sharon Nani starts a new series on knitting for profit.

I have been asked to write a series of articles on topics related to "Knitting for Profit". This category covers a broad arena of knitters from the professional designer, to the production knitter, to the domestic (home) knitter who just enjoys covering expenses for new projects or equipment. It covers topics ranging from knowing and understanding your equipment, yarn, and knitting techniques, to setting up a business, to conducting time and cost studies, to drafting efficient patterns, and to marketing. In other words, it applies to all of us in some form or another.

Special Note: It is important to realize that even though most brands of knitting machines operate on the same basic principles, they often use different terminology for the same function. The articles are written in "Passap" terminology. Where appropriate, the "Japanese" manufactured machine terms are enclosed in brackets (). In most cases, the "Superba, White" machines use terms equivalent to the Japanese machines.

Understanding and observation are key words in developing the skills necessary to become a confident knitter. In this issue of Machine Knit America, I will discuss problems related to yarn flow. It is important to understand the relationship of correct yarn flow to your equipment. I hope that in reading this article, it will give you better insight as to "Why do certain problems arise and how do you cope with or correct these problems."

TENSION DISC SETTING

The yarn flows through the tension disc on the mast of your machine. The disc presses against the yarn at different strengths depending upon the setting that you select on the disc. The larger the number, 7, (+) the more pressure is pushed against the yarn. This is referred to as "tight". The smaller the number, 1, (-), the "looser" the pressure against the yarn.

Remember that these discs are simply coiled springs. After a lot of use, these springs lose their strength. Therefore, you should not become dependent upon a number. Instead, you should develop the awareness of how this disc setting reacts with different yarns and what

problems will arise if the setting is incorrect. The following observations will help you develop this awareness.

TENSION DISC: TOO TIGHT

If the tension disc is set too tight, the take up spring or tension wire will be bent too far in a downward position. It will be pulling too strongly on the yarn. This in turn will:

a. Make tight stitches on the edge of your knitting. Then on the next row, the tight stitches will not knit off the needle properly and dropped stitches will probably result, or, the lock (carriage) will jam on the edge, possibly breaking your yarn.

b. If it is extremely tight, the yarn will not be able to flow smoothly enough for the proper stitch size to be formed as the row is being knit. Then on the next row the lock will jam because the "too tight stitches" will not knit off the needle to form new stitches.

c. The left edge needles will be pulled up into the needle bed channel (the space between the two beds). (The left edge needles will be pulled forward to the front of the needle bed and gate posts.) On the next row, the stripper (sinker plate) will hit these needles, possibly damaging the needles, scratching the stripper (sinker plate), dropping the edge stitches, and/or jamming the lock.

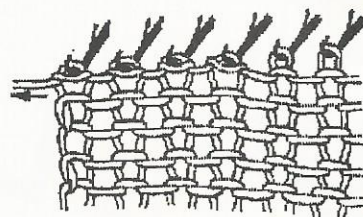
WOE! WOE! WOE! What Do We Do?

Notice that the key words in each of the above cases were "on the next row" when the resulting problem occurred. This shows you that observation is extremely important. If the above cue signals are observed on the first row, and that row is unraveled, the tension disc is loosened and the row is re-knit, then the problem will be eliminated.

In summary, watch for these cue signals that the tension disc is too tight:

- a. Take up spring [tension wire] is consistently bent downward too far. You ask "What is too far?" Too far causes the problems discussed above.
- b. Latch needles are being pulled into the needle bed channel (forward in front of the gate posts) all along the knitting or at the left edge.

c. The stitches look even along the bed except for the edge stitches on the left side, which are smaller. Notice the size of the hole at the bottom of the stitch underneath the head of the latch needle.



TENSION DISC: TOO LOOSE

If the tension disc is too loose, the following problems arise:

a. The tension wire goes straight in the air. This is a sign that the wire is not pulling up the slack yarn in time for the next row to be knitted. Therefore, a loop of the excess yarn is formed. If you watch closely, you can actually see this yarn being trapped between the stripper (sinker plate) and the left edge of the knitting. If the loop is in a finished area, the row should be unraveled, tension disc tightened and continue.

b. Sometimes the loop of yarn discussed in a (above) gets tangled on the edge needles. This will result in the lock jamming and you will have no alternative but to set you locks to GX/GX (free move), remove your strippers (sinker plate), take the locks (carriage) back to the start of the row. Then correct your problem by unraveling the loop and putting the needles back into work position making sure that all stitches are in the hooks of the needles (making sure that the needles are back in the position you were using). Reinsert the strippers [sinker plate], reset the lock (carriage) settings, and proceed. (The loop could also get tangled in the brushes of the sinker plate, so you would have to untangle it after removing the sinker plate.)

c. Other times, the loop of yarn discussed in a, will go under the needle hooks as the next row is being knit. This will result in the edge stitches being

KNITTING FOR PROFIT

dropped because the new yarn was not received into the hooks. Again, you should pick up the stitches, unravel the row, tighten the disc and proceed.

My personal preference is that I like to work on as loose of a setting on my tension disc without giving me problems of edge loops, because, if using textured yarns, this gives more time allowance for the tension system to correct problems. But in order to apply this principle, you must be knitting at a consistent rhythm, such as a motor would supply. Otherwise, if you are stopping a lot to check your work the tension will be lost and the take up spring wire will point straight up in the air. In that case, you will have to manually pull the yarn down so that the wire once again shows tension applied.

In Yarn Flow, Part 2, I will discuss how you can adjust your yarn flow to compensate for different yarn textures, the effects of stitch size, and the effect of the weight systems.

Note on Sharon Nani

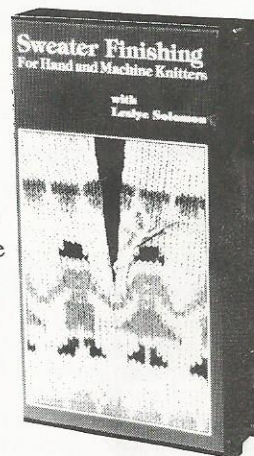
Sharon has been involved with the knitting machine industry since 1970. She established her knit Studio: The Knit Tree in 1973. Specializing in the production of ski wear and custom knits, was her first venture. Since that time, she has been involved with developing programs and patterns for schools, cottage industries, and production companies. Sharon currently specializes in development of cottage industry and teaches professional machine knitting techniques at both her studio and Shasta College. She has had designed published in several knitting magazines, including the international magazines "Passap Model Book" and "Duet International". Other publications to her credit are: "Basic Production Knitting" (Knitting for Profit Series - Marlene Correspondence Course) and the series of books and patterns with "Professional Knitting, My Way". Her experience as an educator, author, and designer is being shared with you through these publications. - Editor

YOUR MANUAL DOESN'T TELL YOU EVERYTHING!

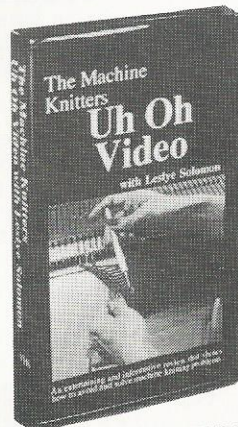
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