



ABOVE: Brittany Sidoff, personal trainer and Blazer Dancer, models an evening look in velvet and leather. "This is definitely something I would wear to dinner in downtown Portland when I want to dress up and go out."

12th Street by Cynthia Vincent velvet blazer **\$298** At *Nolita*/ Leather ruffled skirt **\$398** At *BCBG*/ Sheer silk ruffled blouse **\$198** At *BCBG*/ Ankle-strap heels **\$152** At *BCBG*/ Rhinestone earrings **\$14.95** At *The Powder Room*

RIGHT: "This is exactly what I would wear going out on the town," Desiree Goode, a Blazer Dancer who's also a wife and mom, says of her glam "downtown" look.

Metallic multi-brite high heel sandals **\$225** At *BCBG*/ Hype golden crackle "Paparazzi" handbag **\$140** At *Sole*/ 22-karat gold wrap necklace **\$195** At *Mink*

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A new season for blazers

The jackets – unlike the team – are shorter, smaller and very feminine

STORY BY KAREN VITT / SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN PHOTOS BY BETH NAKAMURA and DOUG BEGHEL / THE OREGONIAN

As basketball season bounces back into the limelight, even some of Portland's most die-hard Blazer fans will admit to getting as excited about the kind of blazers that button and zip as the kind that dribble and dunk.

Off the court, this season's blazers are playing with a decidedly feminine touch, scoring big with softer fabrics in sleeker fits, embellished with ribbons, zippers and lace. And more often than not, fall's newest blazers are going into overtime, working outside the office on weekends and dressy nights out.

"Blazers are always classic," says Ryan Sager, BCBG store manager. "It's a chic, tailored piece to wear to work, with jeans, everywhere. Now they are shorter and smaller, in richer fabrics like velvet and suede — dressier fabrics, but not necessarily worn dressy. They can be worn with jeans and T-shirts, work pants or over an evening gown."

Not unlike basketball, blazers were traditionally a men's item. And not unlike basketball, women are reinventing the game. "Traditional blazers now come in more interesting colors and patterns, and they are more fitted, fun and sexy," says Blake Nieman-Davis, owner of Blake. "Women are pairing feminine, sexy tops underneath and wearing high heels, to remove the masculinity and make it more feminine."

Tossing a blazer over a fancy top and flirty jeans for going out now makes as much sense as wearing one with a suit to work. "Wearing a blazer with jeans takes something traditional and classic and dresses it up," Nieman-Davis says. "People wear jeans everywhere, and a blazer makes it feel more sophisticated."

Sophisticated off the court, or rough and tumble on — either way, we can look forward to seeing more blazers in action this season.

TIPS:

Blazers are stepping off the sidelines into fall fashion's starting lineup, as the most valuable players for day or night. Just how versatile are they? "Blazers are cute on the weekends — with jeans, or over a cocktail dress on Saturday night," says Ryan Sager of BCBG. We've asked local experts for coaching advice on how to match up the best blazer looks of the season.

Warm up in an evening blazer:

Star City pinstripe blazer **\$36**
Pink scarf **\$22**
At *Meier & Frank*



Beautiful blazers in jewel-tone velvets, trimmed with fur, rhinestone buttons or silky ribbon ties, are this season's best evening alternative to the capelet or shawl. "In Portland, everyone wants something to keep them warm and to cover up," Sager says. "But no one wants to deal with shawls — they're slippery, and they don't keep you warm."

Instead, throw a plush, textured blazer over dress slacks or a silky skirt, and dress it all up with statement jewelry — try a vintage brooch or layered necklaces. Want to up the ante? "Putting a blazer over a cocktail dress on Saturday night gives it a different edge," Sager says.

Glen-plaid shrunken blazer **\$148**
At *Banana Republic*



Look alive in a blazer at work:

Just because you're stuck in a boring office doesn't mean you need to wear a boring blazer. In fact, you should be penalized for it. Tailored blazers in dressy fabrics and patterns are key for the workplace this fall, but pairing them with a traditional shirt is a personal foul. "Layering is the key," says Keith Wagner, a Northwest fashion manager for Nordstrom. "Don't be afraid to play with mixing patterns and fabrics, or striped shirt and tie combinations." For casual Fridays, Wagner suggests wearing luxurious classic knits underneath, and suggests argyle as a strong choice.

Another strong look on the rebound is the power suit, which is ladylike, but with an attitude that means business. "The power suit look is tremendous if done right," Sager says. "Take the shoulders down, tailor the jacket to fit, and wear flat-front pants with a wider leg." We love it white, with a few words of caution: "A white power suit is not for a woman who does manual labor or works anywhere near a Xerox machine," Sager warns.

Audrey felted wool blazer **\$198**
At *J. Crew*



Velvet-trimmed shrunken blazer **\$148**
At *Banana Republic*



Herringbone blazer with pink trim and bow detail **\$59**
At *Wet Seal*



Black and red ruffled feminine pinstripe blazer **\$318**
At *BCBG*

