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Getting the Hang of It!

With the right molder & material finally in place, a manufacturer optimizes production of innovative surfing product

The Skedeleski's, owners and operators of surfing product development company **SurfCo Hawaii, Inc.** are, not surprisingly, a surfing family. They understand that along with the excitement of the sport comes the occasional bump and bruise. However, when David Skedeleski and his wife got a call from the local emergency room regarding their teenage son, they were not prepared for what they found when they got there.

"Michael had a severe cut on his inner thigh from the hard fiberglass fin on his board. It took a big chunk out of his leg and required more than 200 stitches," recalled Skedeleski. *"As my wife and I watched the surgeon work on our son, I vowed to develop a surfboard fin with a flexible edge that would greatly reduce the chances of fin cuts to surfers."*

He soon learned that injuries like Michael's were disturbingly common. In fact, the surgeon at the hospital explained to him how much time he spent sewing up fin gashes. Skedeleski also realized that Michael and patients like him

could actually be counted among the lucky ones. *"Unfortunately, many people with severe fin cuts never make it to the hospital,"* he said.

Skedeleski, who had previously developed a very well received nose guard that protects surfers from the hard tips of their boards, was driven to help reduce these tragedies as well. He soon designed a rigid fin with a flexible edge that could replace the standard hard and sharp edge fin on surf and stand up paddle boards. Dubbed Pro Teck fins, they not only provide safer surfing, they also enhance the performance of the board, since the flexible material allowed for tighter turns. Pro Teck fins were eagerly received by surfers, surf shops, surf schools and the entire boarding community. But, he reports, actually producing them—and doing so consistently—has been a long-term challenge for the small company.

According to Skedeleski, the tooling costs were astronomical. In addition, the company's search for a combination of the best material source and a molder with the experience and skill to overcome

the challenges of overmolding a flexible polyurethane edge onto the surface of a 40% long fiber reinforced composite has been a source of frustration lasting nearly two decades. Further, he reports that a number of times when he thought the problems were solved, one of the suppliers would be acquired or otherwise change operations, leaving him in the lurch.

"As a result, we've been plagued by periods of low supply or struggled to the point where we hardly had inventory available for several years," he explained. *"It was very frustrating—people depend on this product and I hated telling them that we don't know when we can supply them."* *cont.*





*“The **RTP Company** material definitely gives **SurfCo** a better looking product”*

-Sam Dettore,
Business Development
Manager for AAIMS

SurfCo

Market: Consumer Goods

Compound: Glass Fiber Reinforced Rigid Thermoplastic Polyurethane (RTPU)

cont.

That’s why he was so overjoyed when he became reacquainted with All American Injection Molding Services (AAIMS) in early 2015.

“They are very skilled—they figured out the issues with the overmolding process that several other companies couldn’t, and started helping us fill our product pipeline very quickly,” he said.

As they began production, AAIMS, in turn, looked to **RTP Company** for their 40% long fiber composite when the material from the most recent incumbent materials supplier ran out.

*“The **RTP Company** material definitely gives **SurfCo** a better looking product—the surface finish is a much richer and more brilliant black, and there is less glass on the*

surface than the material that had been used in the past,” explained Sam Dettore, Business Development Manager for AAIMS. “It runs very well in our process, too. The scrap percentage on the project is way down.”

Now that he finally has the right team in place, Skedleski notes that, as of late December 2015, **SurfCo** has their Pro Teck product pipeline completely full—for the first time in years.

“It’s like a renaissance, a rebirth for us,” he said. “The buzz is getting out there and we look forward to 2016 being the best year ever for Pro Teck fins—and the safest one for the surfers who use them.”



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