

The Journal

The Original Skate Squeegee

By Jeremy Behnke — Journal Sports Editor
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NEW ULM - Every now and then, you see a product or invention on television or in the store and your initial reaction may be "wow, why didn't I think of that?"

For a local man, his idea not only turned out to be a new idea that had never been done before, but one that may also be a major hit among hockey players all over the United States and maybe even beyond.

Brian Mixdorf came up with an idea, which he calls the Original Skate Squeegee. The idea came from coaching his son Ethan's hockey practice a couple of years ago.

Mixdorf, who has coached in the New Ulm Hockey Association for the past three years, wanted to make sure his son's skate blades were clean and dry, but he found himself using his fingers to do this since a towel didn't work that well. That's when the idea of the Original Skate Squeegee began taking shape.

The device is small and fits easily in your hand. Made out of plastic, it has a groove down the middle just wider than the blade of the skate. Inside the device there are three squeegee blades that are designed to wipe away excess moisture, and two circular felt plugs that dry the bottom. The small pieces of ice, and snow are removed as the blade enters the device. It does this with one motion.

"Most of the players carry a throw-away rag in their bag to wipe off the blade," Mixdorf said. "The blade is the most critical part of the skate. If you don't maintain your skate blades properly, rust develops. It can cause that person to have to replace their skates sooner than they should need to. So the blade maintenance is critical."

He knew that using a rag or towel wasn't the safest way to clean the blade, because of the danger of the blade itself cutting through the rag, and cutting a hand or finger.

So with that in mind, he began the first steps, and that involved a lot of sketches with many different ideas.

"I went home and started making concept sketches, and was looking at different shapes and designs," he said. "I started drawing out concepts for the shape of the device, and so this helped me decide the size, and the actual shape of it."

From there, he searched the internet for a product similar to or anything that would match what he had in mind, and again to his surprise he found nothing that matched his idea. This meant he could take the next step.

"I took it upon myself to invest some of my own money for a patent search through an internet patent service," he said.

He then wrote his own provisional patent, which isn't a legal binding patent, but it held his place in line until his non-provisional patent was filed with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Meaning if someone else tried to patent the same product after him, Mixdorf would have the first patent in line and would be credited with the invention.

The patent search came back, and showed that there wasn't anything out on the market like his product, he was able to go further with his idea.

From there, he went to Target and bought some clay and began to transfer his ideas that he sketched on paper into clay. After about a dozen or so tries, he finally got something that he thought would work.

"I actually made a physical shape of it, and wanted to see how it would feel in my hand," he said. "From there, I decided on a shape and I started to focus on how the insides would work, fully knowing that I wanted to use the squeegee affect like you would on a window."



Brian Mixdorf holds his invention called The Original Skate Squeegee in his right hand.

Next, he went to a hardware store and bought some window cleaner squeegee material and he started to make smaller versions of the handheld device to test the inside of the product.

After that, he went to a cousin who works with plastics, and his cousin developed a raw model that they later worked with until they got the finished product in which they have now patented.

A company in Monticello called Aroplax will manufacture the product, and once it's in stores, it will retail for around \$15.00 to ensure affordability. He said it was important for him to go with a local manufacturer, because he wanted the product to say "Made in the U.S.A."

He also has two local business partners, Ben and Shannon Frauenholtz, that have helped him launch the product. His brother Grant is also a partner in WLR Enterprises, the name of the company that Mixdorf started.

But Mixdorf doesn't want the product to stop there. He is in the process of getting it licensed by the NHL and the WCHA (Western Collegiate Hockey Association) to have the official team logos on it.

He's also working close to home, trying to get the New Ulm Hockey Association to let him put their logo on it as well. He hopes that the product will have good feedback at the high school, college and professional levels.

"I've received feedback from players at the high school, college, and professional level, and all have provided very favorable feedback," he said. "The exciting thing is that some professional players have agreed to actually use the product themselves."

He also mentioned that a large sporting goods retailer has agreed to sell the Original Skate Squeegee. Mixdorf will have product ready to hit the stores before the hockey season begins.

Overall, Mixdorf is excited for the new product to launch and he's anxiously awaiting the results and impact it has on the sport of hockey. With the help of this product, he'd like to give back to the New Ulm Hockey Association.

"I'd like to donate money or equipment back to them," he said. "I think it's important to give back to them, because I love the sport of hockey."

He also has another plan that he's working on.

"I'd like to sponsor kids that can't afford to play and to fully cover their expenses," he said. "Not only do I believe in the sport of hockey, but I also believe in the New Ulm hockey program. It's an excellent program. The coaches are excellent, quality coaches, and have quality players that come out of the program. So I'd like to give a chance to a kid that doesn't have the opportunity to play."