

GETTING FRESH

Local man launches product to take smell out of hockey bags

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Hockey equipment bags often have an unpleasant smell all their own.

Sweat-covered pads, gloves, helmets and everything else a player wears gets stuffed into the bag after a practice or game. It sits there, festering, until the next time it's needed.



The odor-eating insert for the Odor Gladiator.

Michael Morneault, a Gibsonia resident and lawyer by trade, knows that experience all too well.

His son, Aiden, 8, is the youngest of his four children and is a youth-hockey player in a learn-to-skate program at the RMU Island Sports Center on Neville Island.

The equipment bag, he said, often has a stench wafting from it. Morneault said many attempts

to quell the smell didn't work, and that led him to develop a product that was able to break through the problem.

That's how the Odor Gladiator, which was launched in September of 2011, came into being.

The deodorizer is ball-shaped — slightly smaller than a baseball — and its two pieces snap together to form something similar to a gladiator's helmet.

The hard plastic covering protects the heart of the product — a disposable disc that gives off a fresh scent and neutralizes and eliminates the offensive odors.

"The goal isn't to mask the odors with some heavy deodorant," Morneault said.

He said the disposable disc, through field testing, is known to last up to about 60 days.

"In the first three or four months, we made an effort to follow up with consumers. We wanted to get feedback, good or bad, so we could adjust this as necessary," Morneault said.

"It took 18 months to develop, and we ran it through several focus groups and did a lot of testing in tough conditions. We wanted to develop a product that wasn't going to leak or have any sort of issues like that."

He said that unlike other products that require constant application of sprays or detergents, the Odor Gladiator can be placed in a bag and simply left alone to do its job.

Morneault said 4,000 units already have been sold in more than 30 states, as well as Canada and Australia.

He sold 2,500 to organizers of the J.W. Kennedy Memorial hockey tournament in Providence, R.I., over the Martin Luther King weekend.

Each player got an Odor Gladiator as part of a gift bag in his or her team's colors.

"It was good penetration into New England for us," Morneault said.

Tournaments have been an important source of exposure throughout the first several months since the product's launch, and Morneault said he is looking forward to continuing to get the word out.

"We've found out that kids like the way it looks, and they can customize it in their colors," he said.

Lisa Defoggia, whose husband plays hockey and whose son is a member of the Butler Valley Dawgs youth hockey organization, said she knows of the Odor Gladiator's strength.

"We tried (a number of things) in their bags, and it wasn't enough to do the job. The (Odor Gladiator) really worked to cut



PHOTOS BY DEAN M. BEATTIE

Odor Gladiator founder Michael D. Morneault

the smell," she said.

Defoggia said her son's team has used the Odor Gladiator in fundraisers. Morneault said fundraisers are a big part how he wants the product to become more well-known.

He said the Odor Gladiator will be at the NCAA Division I Lacrosse Championships in Foxboro, Mass., in May, and, he said, he hopes it will be a big part of the NCAA Frozen Four men's ice hockey tournament at the RMU Island Sports Center in April 2013.

Expansion of the product's reach, he said, is happening through social media, where people can like the product on Facebook and provide feedback.

He also is using Twitter to talk about the product, take feedback and answer questions.

Two of Morneault's children, including Nathaniel, a senior at

Sewickley Academy, are lacrosse players. He said their equipment bags suffer from odor just as much as a hockey bag does.

The Odor Gladiator, he said, is good for any sports equipment or gym bag. Its uses, he added, can go beyond the confines of a bag.

"We want consumers to reach conclusions themselves," Morneault said.

Parker Plastics Corps, located in Bethel Park, assembles the Odor Gladiator. Morneault and his wife, Colleen, handle the shipping from their home.

"Everything is local," he said. "We're proud of that. It's nice to have local investment."

The Odor Gladiator can be purchased online at odorgladiator.com for \$14.95, and it comes with the plastic covering and one scent shield.

Replacement packs contain three shields at a cost of \$17.85.