



Product knowledge:



How to sell mouthguards

In the winter school term, with the contact team sports like rugby, hockey and soccer in full swing, you're bound to be selling mouth guards in some volume. But, how do you recommend the right size to your clients, who can obviously not try them on? And what else should you know in order to sell this accessory item to best advantage?

Who should use mouthguards?

Everybody who participates in any form of contact sport – boxing, martial arts, rugby, hockey, soccer, volleyball, basketball, netball etc. – should wear a mouthguard. It is, for example, compulsory for all junior hockey players to wear mouthguards.

A single blow to the mouth or jaw can cause serious injury, requiring expensive and painful dental treatment – which can be prevented by wearing a mouthguard. For example:

- The elasticity of a mouthguard absorbs the impact of a blow and disperses it over a wider area, thus minimising damage because the force of impact is reduced in relation to the area that absorbs it (the wider the absorption area, the less force the impact has);
- It prevents teeth from being knocked out;
- It cushions contact between the top and bottom teeth, thus preventing fractures;
- It keeps the lip away from the sharp edges of the teeth, preventing cutting;
- According to some researchers, it can also prevent head injuries and concussion.

Importance of the right fit

Unlike other merchandise that your customer can try on for size, a retailer will have to assist a customer to choose the mouthguard.

A mouthguard that doesn't fit properly will offer less effective protection. It will also be uncomfortable, as it will not stay in place unless you clench your teeth, or hold it in place with your tongue. A too big mouthguard could also make you gag.

An ill-fitting mouthguard could interfere with the wearer's ability to breathe or talk, as he will probably not want to open his mouth properly. An ill-fitting, uncomfortable mouthguard is often discarded by the customer, exposing himself to injury.

Customers sometimes cut off the extra length of a mouthguard that is too big, but this could compromise protection across the gums.

Types of mouthguards

There are three types of mouthguards sold

Our cut-out-and-keep series to assist retailers with product knowledge

Words: Trudi du Toit. Compiled with the help of Nick Wiltshire of Pat Wiltshire Sports; Steve Gallienne of SuperBrands; Peter Wright of K&T Sports; Andrew Wentzel of W.E.T. Sports; *Pediatric Sports Medicine for Primary Care* by Richard B. Birrer et al, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia 2002; *How to Custom Fit a Mouthguard* (www.ewh.com/how_2058657_custom-fit-mouthguard.html); *Sports Injury Management* by M.K. Anderson and S.J. Martin (<http://sportsmedicine.about.com/od/injuryprevention/a/mouthguards.htm>); *How to fit your new Opro* (www.opro.com/customercare.asp?CountryCode=1&DV).



through retailers (dentists also make custom-fit mouthguards):

- **Pre-formed:** These mouthguards are pre-formed and are sold *ready-to-use*, without any customization. They usually come in small, medium and large sizes, or junior and senior, which doesn't make much allowance for different jaw sizes.

While it is more difficult to recommend the correct size for a customer, they are inexpensive enough that he can afford to buy a few sizes to try and find the best fit at home.

- **Boil and bite:** The user customizes this mouthguard by immersing it in boiling water until it becomes soft, and then bites down while fitting it around the gums and teeth in order to form it around the contours of his teeth

(see Tips on fitting below).

This type of mouthguard fits better than the stock item, is more comfortable to wear because it moulds around the teeth, and offers excellent protection if it fits correctly.

Drawbacks are that you can bite too hard when fitting so that the surface above the teeth becomes too thin, and some users find that it is too bulky over the gums. It might not provide adequate protection over the gum areas either.

- **Pressure-formed:** The bite-and-form type of mouth-guard is a fairly recent addition to the SA market, and falls between the *boil-and-bite* version and a custom-fitted mouthguard made by a dentist.

Patented *fins* break down when you bite on them the first time, so that they form a mould that closely fits around the wearer's teeth (e.g. Opro). Stretch zones enhances fit in all mouth sizes, while a wide front V allows you to adapt it even more accurately to fit comfortably.

A double lamination ensures that no area will become too thin across the teeth, and a wide open front palate allows you to breathe and speak without impediment.

Recommended sizes per age group on the packaging further helps to find the correct fit.

This option is, however, more expensive than the other two sold through retail stores, but is far less expensive than a custom-made mouthguard from a dentist.

Tips on fitting a mouthguard

A mouthguard can obviously only be fitted to the customer's mouth after it had been bought, but the retailer can use a sample to demonstrate the correct way to fit it – or else make recommendations on how to do it at home.

Some of the higher quality pressure-formed mouthguards come with a CD that demonstrates the right way of fitting and shaping.

For the *boil-and-bite* version, the following recommendations will result in a more satisfied customer:

- Clean the mouthguard with dishwashing detergent to remove any surface oil and dirt;
- Submerge the mouthguard in boiling water, deep enough so that it doesn't touch the bottom of the pan, for about 20-30 minutes, then take it out without pinching the sides together;
- Shake off excess water, but don't rinse in cold water as this will set the mouthguard again;
- Place it over your upper front teeth, using your thumbs to centre it. Close your mouth, but don't bite down on the

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mouthguard.

- Place your tongue against your top palate and pretend that you are sucking through a straw for 15-25 seconds. The sucking causes a vacuum, which will mould the mouthguard around the teeth and gums.
- Rinse the mouthguard in cold water for about half a minute to harden the material.
- Try the mouthguard on for size. It is fitting correctly if you can open your mouth and talk without it falling out. If it doesn't fit correctly, repeat the process, but don't repeat it too often as

the mouthguard will fit less securely every time you refit it.

If there are clear imperfections, rather replace the mouthguard and repeat the process.

Cleaning and storing

You should recommend to your customer that his mouthguard must be rinsed under clear water after each use (some manufacturers, e.g. Opro, provide special cleaning tablets), and then replaced in the original container to air-dry. If a container was not provided, a plastic sandwich bag can be used. But, take care not to leave it in the sun too long as this will harden it.

A mouthguard can periodically be washed in soap, or soaked in a weak bleach solution.

Stakeholders asked to join in Sports Indaba

A NATIONAL Sports Indaba will be held in August this year, where everybody with interests in sport and recreation – including the business of sport – will be brought together to discuss ways to make South African sport more inclusive and to help develop a National Sports Plan for SA by April 2012.

According to Minister of Sport & Recreation Fikile Mbalula the Indaba will be a forum for frank discussion by all.

He identified the need to address some of the following key issues: looking at the history of transfor-

mation in sport, discussing if there is room for review and refinement of transformation, fast-tracking a transformation charter; the provision of facilities in disadvantaged communities; etc.

The objectives of the Indaba are to clarify and suggest action on policies emanating from the revised White Paper on sport (download from www.srsa.gov.za/MediaLib/Home/DocumentLibrary/16%20White%20Paper%20Sept%202010.pdf); to integrate the six priority areas identified in the SRSA 2011 Road Map; to facilitate buy-in from stakeholders to the National Sports Plan; to consider feedback from provincial indabas; and to update information contained in the SRSA document *A Case for Sport*, including figures on sporting goods sales.

For more information, contact Sanet le Grange on sanet@srsa.gov.za or Tel: 012 304 5032. To read more about the indaba, visit www.srsa.gov.za/pebble.asp?relid=811.

Corrections

We apologise for the following mistakes that were made in the February/March issue of *Sports Trader*.

- p15: We jumped the gun by saying that Puma is the new Bafana Bafana sponsor in the replica article. At the time of going to press the announcement of the new sponsor was imminent and SAFA CEO Leslie Sedibe confirmed that the new Bafana Bafana technical sponsor will be Puma. The new technical sponsor had not yet been announced by the time this current issue went to press.
- p19: In the article *Power Arm-bands and the Advertising Authority*, we said that the Australian advertising authority ruled that Pro Balance had to publish on their website that there is no scientific proof that their arm-bands work – that was a typing error, the ruling was against Power Balance, as stated in the rest of the article.
- On p50 in the article *World Cup's legacy on ball market* we said that the Gilbert IRB World Cup balls had been available since November 2009 – it should have been November 2010.