



BUILT in the BACKYARD

» High-tech windsurfing gear can still be made in low-tech places.
By Bryan McDonald

Few people can claim they have made some of the world's fastest boards. Even fewer can claim they did it in their garage. That's where Mike Zajicek built the board that Kevin Pritchard used to end the 12-year world domination of Bjorn Dunkerbeck on the PWA tour.

Windsurfing has a rich history of home-brewed technology. A well-equipped garage was the birthplace of many of our sport's greatest inventions – from

clamp-on boom heads to harnesses. Even as our sport advances and relies more on high-tech materials and manufacturing processes, there are still opportunities for creative people to come up with inventions and improvements to windsurfing.

Zajicek, the San Francisco Bay-based shaper, has designed boards for half-a-dozen major windsurfing brands, including boards that have won world championships in slalom and Formula. The fact that

he operates out of a garage shop does not prevent him from using state-of-the-art materials (including carbon, Kevlar, Technora, Spectra) and techniques (like vacuum bagging) to provide some of the most sought-after Formula boards in the country – his wood veneer over PVC foam construction is famous for its durability in the harsh chop of the San Francisco Bay.

The small scale of his one-man operation has allowed him to thrive despite the

PHOTOS: JARRETT MOPEEK; (INSETS FROM TOP) COURTESY PETER FIDU; COURTESY BEN BANER



economic fluctuations that have defined the windsurfing industry. Even with the Dow Jones stuttering, Mike's waiting list is close to six months long, and in 2009 he has been working on developing JP-Australia's first Formula board. Of course, he's still experimenting – tinkering with styrofoam densities, playing with the shape and perfecting the installation of boxes and inserts into his boards. Quicker to plane and easier to handle are goals

that he's always trying to achieve. As for the shape – he's pretty pleased. His thinks his Mike's Lab L8 model Formula board – which he has left registered since 2008 with no changes – is his best board ever.

» For more from Bryan McDonald on home-built windsurfing gear, including video and podcasts, point your browser to windsurfingmag.com/backyard.

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MORE BACK-YARD TECH

Mike Zajicek isn't the only one who gets to work in a garage shop. Here are more people doing cool stuff without big-dollar R&D budgets.



▶ PETER IFJU

Engineering prof Peter Ifju of Gainesville, Florida, thought he could make a better boom – so he did. His Formula boom sports a unique shape that lets the sail stand more upright, increasing speed and efficiency in light-air conditions.



▶ F4 FINS

The F4 Fin Company, comprising Bay Area sailors Chris Radkowski, Al Mirel, Ben Bamer (above) and Bob Kdruna, has been focused on high-performance Formula fins for use in the local series. Their fins have produced top results on the race course so far.