

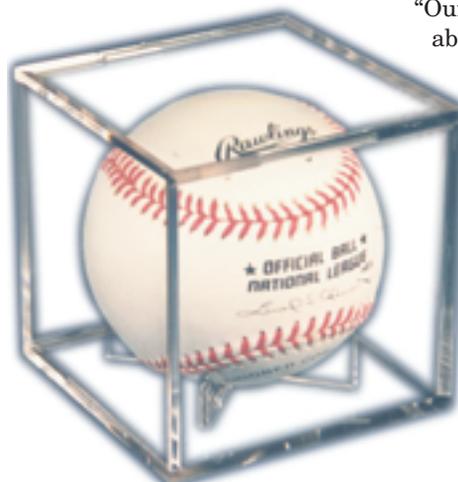
Meet the Industry

Pro-Mold has clear mission in hobby

Ed Neugebauer concedes that his company, Pro-Mold, will never be one of those big, household names closely associated with the sports collecting hobby. But he'll be more than satisfied if his hard work and creativity get Pro-Mold recognized for what it is: an innovative little company that makes products that collectors really need, and tries to make them a little better than anybody else.

"We have a lot of niche products that a lot of the card shops aren't going to carry," said Neugebauer, who, along with his father, Ed Sr., began producing plastic card holders in 1991. "We just have a lot of unique products that people are not going to find at their local card shops, so they can buy from us direct."

Pro Mold, located about a half-hour from Cleveland in Kipton, Ohio, is a plastic injection molding company that makes a product line of protective holders for trading cards and memorabilia. The company specializes in "hard plastic" holders such as trading card holders, including magnetics, screwdowns, mini snaps,



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and memorabilia holders like baseball cubes. The company has more than 60 products and holds three U.S. patents.

One of the Neugebauer's claims to fame — Ed Jr. is the collector and the businessman of the pair, while his father is the engineer and plastics expert — was the invention of the mini snap and one-screw screwdown. The factory is located near Cleveland, Ohio, and is a family owned and operated business that was established in 1984. They introduced their first product related to the collectibles industry in 1991 (the mini snap).

"In the beginning, I actually used to do flea markets and card shows," said Neugebauer. "I approached father and was looking for a way to pay my way through college ... and in October of 1991 we introduced the mini-snap. That was

the start of it all. Since then we've sold millions and millions of the things. Now we're the industry standard as far as hard plastic holders. We invented all the best hard plastic holders in the industry."

"What used to be my hobby turned into my career," he added with a laugh.

Neugebauer said that it is no easy task to stay in the plastics game with all the competition from overseas markets, particularly China. He said it is nearly impossible to keep new technology to yourself once somebody overseas gets a whiff of what you're doing.

"We can guess after we introduce something new that within three weeks it's going to be shipped over to China and 'invented' there within another three weeks," Neugebauer said. "But it's the American dream. We enjoy getting out of bed every morning and competing with the Chinese."

If Pro-Mold has any clear advantages over its competition, it is in the simplicity and sturdiness of its products, and that fact that it beats its overseas competitors to the punch.

One example is one of Pro-Mold's newest products, a magnetic card holder with a stronger magnetic that doesn't come apart on its own, even if you drop it. It's another one of those products that a collector probably has to get their hands on and use for themselves to really appreciate.

"Our magnetics are doing very well in areas where people know about them," Neugebauer said. "A lot of people don't want screws anymore and want magnetics so they don't have to go get a screw driver every time. They can just pop them open. The difference is our magnets are very strong and won't come open if you drop them."

"We send out a lot of samples and starter sets to people," said Neugebauer. "We like to let people see a lot of samples, get them in people's hands and let people see how good of a product it is. That's what has worked best for us."

Customers can learn more about the company at its products by visiting www.Pro-Mold.com. Visit www.Pro-Molddirect.com to order directly from the company. ♦

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