

NC Tech Boyz shocks mega truck industry



Birds Creek shocks in action. Photo courtesy of NC Tech Boyz.

By Sarah Vance

The New Carlow Tech Boyz are using product innovation to carve their name into emerging manufacturing markets.

From a 7,000-square-foot facility in Birds Creek, tool and die makers Travis Layland, Quentin Armstrong and Corey Armstrong combine talents to deliver products across the continent.

For example, they manufacture Scott Shocks, a fabricated steering cylinder with a custom-designed nitrated protective girdle. This product is quickly becoming a staple in the American mega-truck industry. "Loose Cannons Racing, Gearhearts Garage, and 4x4 Off Road are just a few of our regular American clients," said Layland.

NC Tech serves big name rock crawlers and mega truck drivers who rip up extreme off-road sport circuits. "Randy Priest is a professional competitor who races in the States," said Armstrong. "He has our work in both his Quick Stick and Mudstick mega trucks."

Rigs are engineered with roll cages, four-wheel steering, upgraded suspension, oversized mud terrain tires and Scott Shocks to climb the rough terrain at these circuits, also called dirt riots. Scott Shocks are becoming popular fixtures in this industry because of their durability.

"The steel we use doesn't peel like chrome, and the design is sleeker," said Layland about the product, which is marketed with the tag "designed for abuse."

"It is an industry where it is not unusual for the whole truck to collapse under the task; sometimes the tires and frame fall right off," said Quentin. "But our shaft isn't going to break."

It has been 10 years since the tool and die makers, who grew up in Carlow Mayo, saw their city careers being outsourced. The team moved back to Hastings Highlands and after purchasing the Birds Creek facility, began working every job that came their way.

"We used to get a lot of work from the logging industry. But we've seen a steady decline in that sector," said Armstrong. "We needed a way to replace lost revenue."

Product innovation has been a solution as markets change.

NC Tech developed a name for themselves by designing a wall mounted security system for crossbows called a Bowlocker. The lock uses CNC machined anodized black billet aluminum and a keyed push lock design that weighs approximately 3.5 pounds.

“But today, the shocks are keeping us busy. We have 10 sets going out this week,” said Armstrong, “including four to Calgary and two to Michigan. We sell a pile in Florida, Maine and Oregon, where the market has exploded.”

“Growing up, we were always boring through the trails on some kind of a chassis and an engine,” said Corey, who now applies the off-road skills he learned as a kid to design for that market. “We know what is involved in the sport.”

Exporting products to American clients comes with additional demands. For example, time is required to process and package materials. This can be costly and slow. “The borders make it difficult,” said Armstrong. “We would like to develop more warehousing opportunities to house and distribute our products in the U.S. market.”

They are also getting diversified. They now do a lot of work in the maple syrup industry. Thus, as maple syrup season gets underway, NC Tech has seen an influx of locals needing work on their sap pans. “We get sap pans brought in every day,” said Layland.

Manufacturing isn't a big part of the area's economic base. It accounts for only 220 jobs and in 2012, employed only 18 of every 1,000 residents in North Hastings (1.8 per cent). But the NC Boyz are setting a great example of how to change that.