



Graphics in custom laminated mouthguards

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Graphics and colours are a great way to increase the acceptance and use of custom laminated mouthguards, particularly for children and first time wearers.

We all know the technical advantages of our custom made product and it is easy for us to recognize the differences between these and store brought over the counter mouthguards (usually the boil and bite type mouthguards). However for the average consumer this is generally not the case, particularly in the light of the improved packaging, distribution and marketing claims that many readymade products now use to sell their product.

Fortunately when we manufacture custom laminated mouthguards we have the advantage of being able to incorporate almost unlimited individual visual customization (colours, graphics and lettering) into our mouthguards. A product feature which cannot be matched by stock over the counter products and if marketed to our customers in a clear rational way, can give us a distinct preferential point of difference in the consumers mind which, simply put, can help us sell more quality custom laminated mouthguards.

Techniques and materials

Graphics are generally placed on the anterior surface of the mouthguard, encapsulated under the outermost layer of a custom laminated mouthguard.

Of the two methods of producing custom laminated mouthguards (clear layer first and clear layer last) mouthguards with the clear layer outermost obviously have the advantage when it comes to adding visuals.

The effect on the strength of the mouthguard after inserting graphics has not been tested and in fact because of the variability of this customization would probably prove very difficult to quantify accurately. However anecdotally, if care is taken with the choice of materials used and sound techniques employed the effect on the mouthguard from a durability and protective viewpoint should be little altered.

Stripes, letters, pictures and logos are all possible. From experience the materials used for this must be thin, flexible and give





the best results if produced from vinyl based materials. Paper based graphics are definitely not suitable for this purpose, providing no adhesion with the EVA materials and are subject to tearing and wrinkling when the mouthguard is flexed.

Automotive pin striping tape works well for creating stripes as it is designed to withstand temperature fluctuations, has good flexure and seems to provide some degree of bonding with the EVA materials. Mass produced picture stickers are readily available and if chosen with the above criteria in mind can work well.

Marketing

We have powerful a tool with which we can entice the public to try our product. Our experience has shown us that graphics are mostly chosen by first time users and young players and then after experiencing firsthand the less tangible but more important benefits of custom mouthguards (the comfort and protection) will often select a more conservative colour scheme for their subsequent purchases. For us it's a also great feeling to see the "wow" on a clients face when they receive a mouthguard that's been made just for them, knowing

that although they are focusing on the look of their mouthguard they also have the best protection available.

About the author

Peter Herring is a dental technician and prosthetist based in Perth, WA. He is a regular contributor to eLABORATE on thermoforming and is the Australian agent for Erkodent thermoforming machines. He also runs a busy laboratory dedicated to thermoformed appliances. For more information, call 1800-242-634 or email pjh@erkodent.com.au