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Sports-equipment designer Morgan Matthews plays hockey seven days a week and tests his own prototypes on the ice.

This designer uses his head

OBSESSED WITH HELMETS

Aims to develop next-generation hockey equipment

BY PAUL BRENT

As a kid at Christmas, Morgan Matthews asked for glue guns, duct tape and mattress foam to make his own road hockey equipment.

Now 27, and a veteran industrial designer, the former college hockey player who still hits the ice seven days a week is spending his days developing next-generation hockey equipment that is lighter and protects better.

The biggest hurdle for Mr.

Matthews' company, Impact Machine, is not in the creation of gear that offers superior performance, but in getting equipment makers and notoriously conservative hockey players to accept his innovations.

"Helmets haven't changed since they came out," said the designer in his Toronto workshop which is decorated with vintage hockey equipment and futuristic prototypes. "You can still buy the same one Paul Henderson wore in '72 when he scored his goal against the Russians. I used that same one through all of college."

Designing a helmet that actually fits wearers' heads and will prove acceptable to hockey traditionalists is Mr. Matthews' abiding obsession, and his prototype is a closely guarded secret.

Among the helmets on the market that offer the best protection,

is the one worn by NHLers Daniel Alfredsson and Phil Housley, which is derisively called "the Swedish meatball." It's not popular because it's too big and too round, Mr. Matthews said. His next-generation helmet will be smaller, tighter-fitting and lined with softer foam than existing models.

Mr. Matthews knows all about substandard headgear. As a teen he played with a Jofa model made famous by Wayne Gretzky.

The lightweight helmet had no internal padding and was not CSA approved. "It wasn't even made for hockey, it was designed for canoeing," he said. "Jofa used to send Gretzky letters begging him not to wear it." Waiver forms for hockey leagues still refer to it as the "Gretzky Jofa" and warn that players can't wear it.

Besides building a better helmet, Mr. Matthews, who used to be a designer with hockey equipment maker Itech, has successfully produced shoulder pads and pants for various manufacturers and is working on a skate that protects its wearer from slapshots.

One of the advantages his company has, he said, is his willingness to try out his innovations before he takes them to the manufacturer. His hockey teammates

are often willing guinea pigs, too. "They like being a part of the process. That is one of the ways I am trying to differentiate from other designers. I don't think you can design a hockey product without having it on a hockey player."

Canada is a major hockey-equipment exporter, selling \$112-million of gear in 2000 to the U.S. and Europe in the form of ice skates, inline skates, hockey sticks, and protective equipment such as pants, gloves and helmets.

Mr. Matthews is also looking at designing products for the expanding participation in hockey by women. With the exception of a few pieces of equipment specifically designed to protect vulnerable parts of the female anatomy, serious female players have to settle for "junior" models of equipment for boys, which don't offer the protection or durability of "adult" gear.

"Women players would like to have a product line that is sort of in between," he said. "They don't want different skates, they don't want different helmets, but they do want gloves that aren't as big and bulky, the want sticks that are more flexible."

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SUMMARY

END OF AN ERA
The creation of the world's biggest beer merger may go unnoticed, but it is one of the most significant events in the industry since the 1980s. It marks the end of an era of consolidation and the beginning of a new one. The merger of Molson-Coors and InBev will create a global giant that will dominate the market for years to come.

MERGER FRENZY
The beer industry is in the middle of a merger frenzy. InBev, the world's largest beer producer, is acquiring several major U.S. brands, including Molson-Coors. This move is part of a larger strategy to expand the company's global reach and increase its market share.

THE NEW COKE SAGA
Coca-Cola is facing a new challenge in the soft drink market. The company's market share has been declining in recent years, and it is looking for ways to revitalize its brand. The introduction of new products and marketing strategies will be key to the company's success.

WE ARE FAMILY
The world's largest family of companies is looking for ways to grow. The company's focus is on innovation and customer service. By investing in research and development, the company aims to stay ahead of the competition and provide the best products to its customers.

SHOW AND TELL
A new wave of entrepreneurs is making their mark in the business world. These young leaders are bringing fresh ideas and energy to the marketplace. Their success stories are inspiring others to start their own businesses and pursue their dreams.

PIPELINE
The pipeline industry is facing a new era of growth. The industry is investing in new technologies and infrastructure to improve efficiency and safety. This investment is expected to lead to significant increases in production and revenue.

Designer aims to get ahead with new hockey helmet



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ANALYSIS

BEER MERGER SAVINGS A TOUGH SELL

WOLSON AND COORS TOUT LISTENING TO CUTS
Analysts, investors not impressed as previous retooling leaves little fat to trim

By Paul Brent
The creation of the world's biggest beer merger may go unnoticed, but it is one of the most significant events in the industry since the 1980s. It marks the end of an era of consolidation and the beginning of a new one. The merger of Molson-Coors and InBev will create a global giant that will dominate the market for years to come.

Pipeline plan key to aboriginal economy
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