

Active Interna & SMP Establish Alliance

Text & Photos: Editorial Dept.

Founded in 1970, Active Interna specializes in the manufacture of saddles. It owns the three brands Active, DDK, and BMB, and is also a partner of the well-known Italian saddle brand SMP. Active Interna and SMP have now teamed up to introduce the "STRace" brand and respectively serve as the general agents for Europe and Asia. This alliance puts the two companies at the forefront of the saddle industry.



▲ Shown here are Willi Huchthausen of SMP's German agent Ferrometa (second on right), SMP GM Franco Schiavon (far left), and Active Interna GM Tsai Wen Jui (right).



▲ Active Interna GM Tsai Wen Jui has a business philosophy of "what is taken from society should be used for the benefit of society."

Radical Improvements

According to Active GM Tsai Wen Jui, as Taiwan's conventional industries became outdated in the 1990s, production costs rose swiftly, and manufacturers started moving offshore in search of greener pastures. This set up a rush by Taiwanese

firms to relocate in China and the ASEAN countries. Active Interna, which was then still in a growth stage, gradually established a modern production management system, actively trained manpower, strengthened its in-house R&D capabilities, implemented a demanding quality policy, and made a number

of breakthroughs. The company ultimately adopted a TPS production management system, and drafted a series of operating procedures encompassing product R&D, mold production, plastic injection, painting, foaming, stitching, printing, stamping, and saddle assembly. These procedures dramatically shortened the



▲SMP's 4bike saddle has a characteristic arched shape, and relies on the pumping action of the rider's thighs to function. The saddle's long ventilation holes ensure good air flow and keep the saddle from feeling hot and sticky.

▲The highly air-permeable material used in the B&B AC-01M saddle channels air under the rider's crotch, and guides the heat produced by the rider toward a rear exhaust hood.

company's production cycle and ensured consistent quality.

Aside from competing with other saddle manufacturers, Active Interna also relies on collaboration to seize business opportunities. This policy motivated Active's joint establishment of the STRace brand with SMP. STRace targets the middle of the market, and emphasizes "Italian design, Asian production."

Aftermarket Expansion

"SMP is a global brand, and SMP's 4bike saddles are the

world's highest unit price product of their kind," said GM Tsai. "Regina Schleicher, the winner of the women's championship at the 2006 World Cup, uses a 4bike saddle. Today Active Interna sells its saddles chiefly to assembly plants, but we hope to expand our aftermarket sales in the future. SMP is extremely satisfied with our production technology, and we hope that our collaboration with SMP will enable us to quickly enter the aftermarket channel. Our two companies have a complementary relationship. SMP has an

all-round saddle market in Europe, and Active Interna enjoys the same situation in Asia. Our cooperation is a win-win move for us, and will allow us to carve out large shares of the European and Asian markets. The next step will be a move into the US market."

Looking at the World from Vietnam

According to GM Tsai, who is also the head of the Association of Taiwanese Firms in Binh Duong Province, Vietnam, and has run a plant in Vietnam for nearly ten years, he had originally contemplated establishing a plant in China, but felt that it was too late. Furthermore, at that time a fair number of Taiwanese firms wanted to open plants in Vietnam, and its ASEAN membership made it an attractive starting point for expansion into the entire Southeast Asian market. Exports from Vietnam enjoyed low-duty privileges in Europe, and a Vietnamese saddle manufacturer could supply its products to local assembly plants. Although things went awry at the beginning, GM Tsai, knowing that he had burned his bridges, pushed ahead resolutely, and ultimately rescued the situation and achieved success.



▲The landscape at Active Interna's plant in Vietnam's Binh Duong Province.