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### **Former Racer Revs Things Up at Wave Industries**

With his race-car-driving days now a thing of the past, the new president of Wave Industries, Alex Whitman, is putting the East Texas-based lure company's future growth on the fast track.

Whitman took the wheel at Wave in October 2006 after spending several years as a professional race car driver and, most recently, General Manager of a new NASCAR Nextel Cup team (Hall of Fame Racing) owned by legendary quarterbacks Roger Staubach and Troy Aikman.

Now he's leading the 6-year-old company in rounding out its Wave Worms line of soft plastic baits with new technique-specific bass baits, adding new saltwater baits to the line, and preparing for possible new ventures in different segments, including hard line and hard plastic baits, rods, and terminal tackle.

"I've had a couple of months now to evaluate the strengths of our Wave Worms brand and assess our potential growth with new products in new markets," says Whitman. "This is a really exciting time for Wave. We've got products that people love, a growing market share, and an incredible brand, so I'm ready to get rolling with our new initiatives."

The Tiki-Monkey creature bait—one of four new Tiki baits for 2007—is currently gaining the most traction, says Whitman. "The 3-inch Tiki-Monkey has already become a huge hit in the Northern market and we've seen the same effect with the 4-inch version in the South."

While Wave Worms' Tiki baits are a staple among bass anglers, this year the company has paved the way for new growth in the saltwater market with the addition of the 9-inch Tiki-Shadick and Tiki-Kickin' Shrimp. Wave also recently introduced the new Tiki-Finesse series for Carolina and Texas rigging, drop-shotting, flipping, and other finesse styles of bass fishing.

Wave's first soft plastic bait, the Tiki-Stick, remains its best seller. The Wave Worms line now offers 16 different plastic Tiki baits in a variety of colors, including solids, swirls, laminates, and dips. In addition to unique actions offered by their various shapes and sizes, Wave Worms Tiki baits' claim to fame is their secret ingredient, "Molopo," which is short for motion-lotion-potion.

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The Tiki-Tube made history in 2005 when it helped professional bass angler Pam Martin-Wells win the inaugural event in the Women's Bassmaster Tour. Martin-Wells caught all of her bass with the 4-inch Watermelon Candy Tiki-Tube. "I'm a die-hard Wave fan," says Martin-Wells. "Wave Worms are the only soft plastics I use. The fish will not let go of these baits, they just eat them up."

Before becoming General Manager for Staubach and Aikman's NASCAR team, Whitman was a professional race car driver for 7 years, racing formula cars, stock cars, and everything in between. During that time, he also served as a professional driver and consultant for Automotive Marketing Consultants Inc., assisting Mercedes-Benz, Lexus, Chrysler, and Jeep with their new vehicle launch campaigns. "I was teaching sales and marketing tactics and demonstrating vehicle performance to everyone from high level executives and VIPs to dealers and consumers," Whitman explains.

From these experiences, Whitman gained a healthy respect for the value of marketing. "It's not enough to just develop great products, you have to market your products well to get your brand recognized," he says. "One of our biggest strengths at Wave is how our brand exudes a fun, relaxing lifestyle, which is what fishing and outdoor sports are all about."

His former General Manager stint is most comparable to his position at Wave, Whitman says. "At Hall of Fame Racing, I was assisting in the day-to-day operation of the team, working out contracts with vendors, handling sponsor relations—basically a lot of blocking and tackling," he says. "I see my new position in much the same way. The retailers, distributors, and customers are all out there, we just need to be strategic and aggressive in continuing to get our products in front of them. I want Wave to be the first brand people think of when they go shopping for outdoor products."

Whitman, who grew up with Staubach's children, also discovered useful lessons in leadership from his former quarterback comrades, he says. "One of the things I learned from working with Roger (Staubach) and Troy (Aikman) is how important it is to surround yourself with great people. Fortunately I'm surrounded by people who don't just consider their employment with Wave as simply a job or a paycheck, they believe in the brand and they'll do whatever it takes to elevate the company to the next level." (Wave now has 20 employees.)

In its short history, Wave has solidified accounts with major retailers like Academy, Bass Pro Shops, Cabela's, Gander Mountain, Sportsman's Warehouse, and Wal-Mart, as well as with more than 1,000 independent dealers nationwide. Internationally, Wave products are distributed in more than 10 countries, including Australia, South Africa, Japan, and Canada, as well as several in Europe, such as Italy, England, France, and Spain.