

The Roof Test



By Tom Lincir,
President and Founder,
Ivanko Barbell Co.

This is not an advertisement. It is a public interest article.

Ivanko philosophy has always been to improve our products each year. Some years there are internal improvements or minor cosmetic changes that may only be known to us. Other years, like this one, we have made major technological breakthroughs. Improvements are derived from an ongoing testing procedure and careful observation and monitoring of how our products, and other company's products perform over time.

Nothing worries our competitors more than when they get word that Tom is on the Ivanko roof doing some kind of "roof test!" I think our sales guru, Chet, spreads those rumors to gain some kind of psychological advantage over the competitors. Once, in fact, a company even sued Ivanko (for fear of exposure, I imagine) before they finally realized that it was our own products on the roof and not theirs. Anyway, that is behind us now and so I am on the roof again learning how to make better products.

I got the idea of a roof test back in the mid 70's while visiting our factory in Taiwan. On the top of the slopping roof was a white OCB-15KG Olympic bumper plate. "When did we start making white bumper plates?" I wondered. When I asked, everyone started laughing and said "that is the roof test!" The bumper plate was originally yellow, "we just wanted to see how long it took to fade out...the company that we bought the rubber from said they added ultra-violet protectors, we don't trust them." That's when I first realized it is commonplace in Taiwan and China to cheapen formulas to increase their profit margin, at the expense of quality. I am not saying it doesn't happen here but, it always seems to happen there.

This experience sparked my imagination and I

have been using the roof test ever since. Not only for rubber and urethane testing but also for various kinds of metals and various plating applications of those metals. For example, I read an advertisement that claimed hard chrome (chrome directly on steel) was a better rust inhibitor than decorative chrome (copper, nickel, chrome, on steel). This is exactly opposite to what I learned in school and from life experience. However, I try to keep an open mind because you are never too old to learn. Besides, over the years, we have had requests from the Navy (among others) to make products that did not rust in a high humidity environment. To satisfy my mind as to what material or process Ivanko would use, I decided to head for the roof! I chrome plated bars with a hard chrome of various thicknesses. I did the same thing with decorative chrome, and even put up some stainless bars and plates. One year later all of the chrome parts from my roof test were rusted. As I expected, the decorative chrome parts were less rusted than the hard chrome parts. Neither would work well in humid environment. One thing; however, was obvious, the stainless steel had no rust and was in a class of its own.



100% Solid stainless steel bar and sleeves. 100% Made in U.S.A. 1 1/8" Diameter 57" long, no bolts, no end play (slop) in the rotating sleeve. Perfectly balanced.

You will feel the difference over 38 years of Ivanko manufacturing expertise makes immediately when you hold this bar in your hands compared to other bars in the market. Some of the reasons that this bar feels so good is because the ends of the bar are in perfect alignment and parallel to each other and the bend is 40 degrees...a full 10 degrees more the most other E Z Curl bars.

Urethane Update. . .

a). Plates

Ivanko has been producing and shipping U.S.A. made urethane barbell plates for the last three years. We decided to manufacture in the U.S.A. for quality control reasons. Fortunately, we met the right people that were kind enough to teach us the basics; the rest was learned with time and money. Our EZ lift barbell plates have been a winner from the start. Customers tell us they like the look, feel, and performance of a round plate. Additionally, Ivanko EZ Lift urethane plates received a design patent, a registered trademark, and have two utility patents pending. Only high-impact urethane is used and it is fused to the iron core inside by a method called chem-fusion that creates a bond that is stronger than the urethane itself. Even though we have had zero complaints so far, as we gain experience, the product keeps getting better and better. We recently decided to engrave and fill all urethane plates with the Ivanko name and the weight, at no extra charge.

b). Dumbbells

Anyone that has read my previous articles knows that I am not a proponent of welded dumbbells, especially when rubber or urethane covers the welds. I do concede however, that welding is the cheapest and fastest way to make dumbbells. It is, in my opinion, just not the best. The reason is that over the last 40 years I have seen too many of them break...including one's we used to make. In fact, I collect them! I have over 50 in my collection. If you have any interesting ones lying around call me, I will buy them. My idea is to collect 100 broken welded dumbbells and make a collage that is the background for my new article entitled "WHAT'S YOUR FACE WORTH?"

On the other hand, we did not want to use an Allen bolt or a nut on the end of our dumbbells (even though we know and trust this technology). This is because we wanted to use the complete end as a billboard for engraving logos.

To come up with a new idea was not that easy. We drew not only on our years of experience, but asked everyone we could think of for ideas. Finally, we used computer simulation (finite analysis) to determine the force of impact and test our ideas. What we ended up with was a simple, yet unique, idea that must be made to exact tolerances to work correctly. It may, in fact, be the best way ever devised to make strong dumbbells. Time will tell.

The bad news is...it set our production schedule back one year. We will be shipping in February 2006. But don't get too excited...we have at least 60 days of orders "in line" waiting for these dumbbells.

The good news is...the wait will be worth it.

c). Custom logos

We have been doing custom logos almost as long as we have been molding urethane Olympic plates. This is the fun part of the business. So far, we have done about 50 logo jobs. The most complex was a four cut, 5-color "chicken hawk." Actually, it was supposed to be an eagle but it came out looking more like a "chicken hawk"...but the high school liked it so much that they changed their mascot to the "chicken hawk!"



Is it an eagle or a chicken hawk?



Ivanko's new urethane dumbbells. 100% Made in U.S.A. Feature no welds, no allen bolts, and the thickest urethane in the industry. Choice of stainless steel or hard chrome handles.

Comments from readers of previous articles

Dear Tom:

We don't know each other from Adam... probably have met casually a few times over the years... but I have always admired the integrity of your company, and it was particularly brought again to mind as I read the article you wrote in Wally Boyko's "National Fitness Trade Journal" about "passion."

As a fellow warhorse of this industry (this is my 30th year... 15th at consulting and advising clubs worldwide), I find that, from time to time, I "forget" what I am doing this for. And usually some form of "wake up call" is issued from somewhere that reminds me.

You did it this time. Thanks for your wonderful article and for reminding me of my passion for this great business of our.

Regards - MICHAEL

Michael Scott Scudder
President, FITNESS FOCUS

Tom,

I would like to comment on the feedback given to me by one of my customers. The Miami Hurricanes football athletic program purchased their strength facility equipment from us based on their unique needs as a high level producer of world-class athletes. Their situation required giving attention to large, VERY strong athletes doing high volume work in a humid, salt laden climate that is unforgiving to typical equipment and weightlifting bars in particular. Your bars have and continue to provide the service this wonderful facility requires. After two years all the stainless powerbars are dead straight, rust free and rotate smoothly as the day they were first put on the racks. As a follow-up, we have just finished a second strength room for U. Miami for their basketball program and their first order of business was to order more Ivanko stainless bars. I pass on their thanks for a fine bar and from us as vendors having your support and great products to provide to our valued customers.

In Strength,
Richard Sorin
President
Sorinex Exercise Equipmen

Ivanko Barbell Company was founded by Tom Lincir in 1967, and it is the leading provider of professional and commercial grade barbell and dumbbell products worldwide. Your comments or questions are welcome. Contact Tom Lincir at Ivanko Barbell Company, call toll free 1.800.247.9044 ext. 205, send correspondence to P.O. Box 1470, San Pedro, CA U.S.A. 90733, or e-mail tom@ivankobarbell.com

"Price is what you pay. Value is what you get."

- Warren Buffett



Buying refurbished equipment from a reputable refurbisher means double the value. Not only has someone else taken the initial loss, but many high quality refurbishers tend to build to like new condition."

- NATIONAL FITNESS Trade Journal Winter 2004

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