

# JetSkier &PW

# Line One

Celebrating 30 years of business this year, Line One knows the PW industry like the back of its warehouse. Spicer catches up with them.



Hard at work mending skis and making them go fast!

Line One traces its beginnings back to 1979 when Tony Walker, the owner of Jet Ski UK (the company that Line One eventually became), decided that the time was right to begin importing personal watercraft from the States into the UK. At first, he was told that Kawasaki wouldn't import, as they thought the British weather would be prohibitive. However, if Tony thought there was scope for it, he was allowed to do it by himself.

Fast forward to when Jez Crook joined the business in 1985. Coming from a ski

resort in Verbier, Switzerland, where he worked as a chef cooking for 55 guests in a chalet, Jez came across a lake in the Cotswold Water Park advertising Jet Ski hire, and decided to give it a go. They were hiring out Kawasaki JS300s with massive car tyres on the front to protect from collisions.

According to Jez, he had always been confident in the water, having windsurfed from an early age (specialising in freestyle), and had always been into skateboarding, roller-blading, skiing or snowboarding, so he took to jet skiing

well. So much so, that when Tony Walker approached Jez, he asked: "So you've done this before then?" To which Jez replied no. Following a ten-minute conversation-come-interview, Tony offered him a job helping to run the hire operation. Immediately, Jez dreamed of working with Jet Skis in the summer and at ski resorts in the winter.

## A SKI BUM'S FUTURE

However, things just got busier and busier. Initially, there was Tony and Annie Walker along with Tim Rochfort and

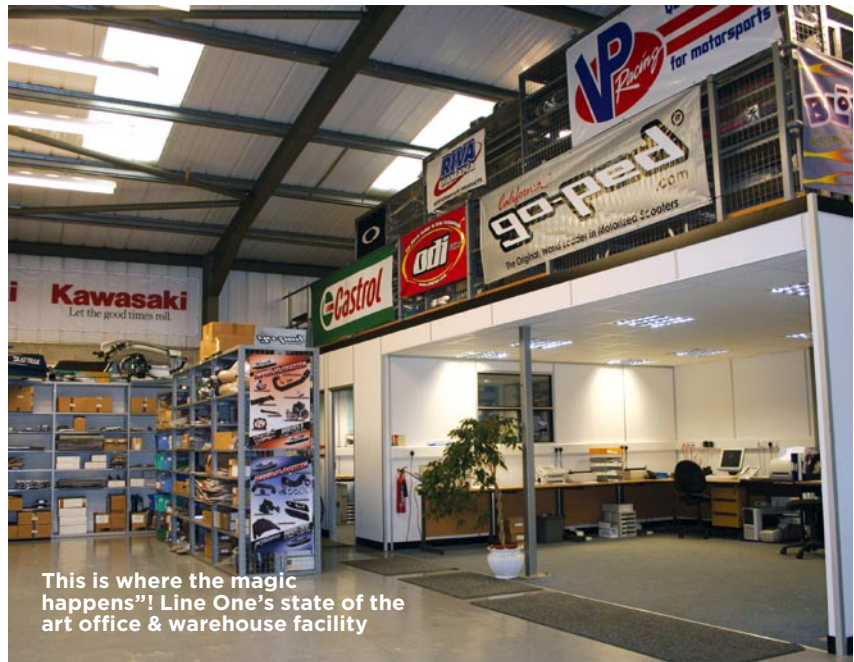


another guy called Kev Hughes. There was no job description, everybody just mucked in together and got on with it, whether it was hiring out Jet Skis, doing repairs on Jet Skis or selling Jet Skis. According to Jez: "It became pretty evident that the business needed a proper working structure and I thought to myself, being 20, what did I want to do with my life? Work in a kitchen? Not really. Be a ski bum? Tempting. Or start working for a company that I thought had good growth potential and was also good fun."

He continued: "At the time, the spare parts side of the business was pretty small, we only ordered parts for our own workshop jobs or for our shop. It soon became apparent to me that there was an opening in the market for a distributor to start supplying other PW outlets with aftermarket spare parts. That's when Tony and myself started to visit PW spare parts manufacturers in the States and build relationships. At the time, the biggest companies were Mariner, Westcoast and PJS. All of which have now have gone by the wayside. That was back in 1986 when the Jet Ski trade was pretty big. I remember back in 1988, we actually sold over 800 Kawasaki JS550s in one year. Times were good and we had plenty of cash to throw at the racing scene."

## OLD-SCHOOL RACERS

Fortunately, Tony was a real petrol-head and was happy to sponsor Jez, Tim Rochfort and Nick Dyer. Jez said: "If the racers of today think that they plough a lot of money into the racing, they should think themselves lucky." To compete for the overall title in those days, it was



This is where the magic happens"! Line One's state of the art office & warehouse facility

necessary to enter all categories. At the time, the only really competitive ski was the JS550, so racers would have had to compete in all four classes: Stock, Superstock (Modified JS440), Limited and Modified, as well as competing in the Slalom.

Jez said: "You had to have at least three highly-prepped machines, and if you worked out the cost for these machines you'd be looking at £40k plus, and then you had all your running costs like transportation and hotels, but that wasn't a problem because we were making enough money to justify it. Back then you could win a fair bit of cash if you did well in a day's racing. If you won all your races on just one round, you could collect £500 plus. In fact, I bought my first car with my winnings. I don't think that would be the case now."

The Line One crew were also pretty successful racers, with Jez becoming National Freestyle Champion in 1990 and Open Novice Champion in 1988. While Nick Dyer, Line One's mechanic, won the X2650 Championship in 1990. Jez said: "I think that customers and dealers feel confident talking to, and getting advice from us, as we've been involved with the trade for so long and because we're both British Champions."

Nick and Jez have known each other since they worked in a kitchen together in 1984. Then, when Jez joined Jet Ski UK, Nick started helping him run the hire operation at weekends, and was soon taken on as apprenticeship mechanic. Nick took to it well and became one of the most respected PWC mechanics in the trade.

## THE STARTING LINE

Fast forward to 1995. The spare parts side of the business was doing well and Jez had been promoted to director of the company. It was still based at the

lake, and space was limiting the growth of the spare parts department, so they made the decision to relocate the spare parts side of the business to a warehouse seven miles from the lake, at Fairfield. Naturally, the company diversified a little and started to sell other products not directly linked to PW.

Jez said: "It felt odd going into meetings and introducing myself as Jez from Jetski UK, and then start selling boat related products, so we decided to establish a breakaway company and call it Line One. Why Line One? Because the name means nothing in particular and we thought it lent itself to a variety of products."

Over the years Line One has built up very good relationships with US suppliers and the majority are now not just business associates but friends. Jez said: "I've known most of these guys for over 22 years. I normally go and visit my suppliers in the USA at least once a year, quite often it's when the World Finals" ➔



Poster on the wall of Jez riding the new 1990 Superjet for Yamaha



Line One's managing director Jez Crook



# LINE ONE



Goped Showroom with the entire range



are being held at Havasu but sometimes I go to their own facility, like visiting Dave Bamdas at Riva and spending time going through new products and projects. Talking over the phone and emailing is ok but I feel it's important to sit down and go through things face to face."

## THE LINE ONE FAMILY

Line One supplies PW spare parts to dealers within the UK and Europe, and also sells direct to customers through its website. They keep stock at the warehouse and can usually get a part out the same day to a customer

or a dealer. Line One maintains close relationships with the dealers, customers and suppliers. Other members of the Line One team include Nicola Sarson, wife of Kawasaki representative Steve Sarson, who has been connected with the company for 20 years, as well as Jez's wife Lueze, who help make the company run smoothly.

Line One is also UK Distributor for Goped Scooters. After seeing the Goped 15 years ago, Jez brought 10 over from the States but they just sat in the warehouse for 6 months. But before long, they started to get enquiries about them

and sales rocketed. In 2000, they sold 7,500 units and had to expand into the warehouse next door to cope with the amount units being sold. Castrol Oil is another product that Line One distribute, and not just for PW but for inboard and outboard boat engines.

Nick Dyer has also been working in the PW trade for 22 years, and works on all of the latest PW, having been on all of the manufacturers' courses, including Yamaha, Kawasaki, Sea-Doo and Polaris. But he likes nothing more than when somebody comes in with an older ski, like a Kawasaki JS550 or an old Yamaha Waveblaster. Nick says: "Just because they're old, doesn't mean they're doomed to the jetski graveyard!" And Line One have got parts available to service, re-build and modify all of the older machines.

Line One also has a lake on its doorstep for testing purposes, which is just half a mile away. Craig & Scott Cohoon (Waterski School) in Fairford are generous in letting Line One use their lake, which is where Nick tests all of the craft he works on, and sets up the carburettors 'under load' - the only true way you can set a carburettor up properly. Nick says: "Actually putting a ski on the water and thrashing it round for a good hour is when you find whether the ski has problems or not.

Jet Skier&PW highly recommends Line One as a company for your aftermarket parts and personal watercraft serving needs.

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