

O'Neill

Over 50 years of surfing passion



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Understanding surfing is about being on the right wavelength – nature's wavelength. Feeling the waves, reading between the lines, doing your stuff, and more importantly, being true to yourself. Nobody understands this philosophy more than Jack O'Neill.

There's no getting away from the fact that surfing in the 'good old days' was uncomfortable and cold. No surfer then could have imagined today's high-tech neoprene wetsuits because goose-pimpled skin and chapped lips were part of the territory.

Back in the 1940s and early 1950s this was the driving motivation behind Jack O'Neill; his search for a material to protect him from the chilling waters of northern California, that wouldn't restrict his movements in the water. Jack finally 'struck gold' when he discovered neoprene on a plane journey in 1952 and realised that the material (used for insulating aircrafts and sealing car doors) would be perfect in the water because of its superior insulating properties. By bonding small pieces together with liquid cement Jack created the world's first wetsuit. It revolutionised the sport making it possible to surf in the winter, and giving watersport junkies a second skin which guaranteed – whatever the weather – it was always summer on the inside.

Later that same year, Jack left his job to open the first Surf Shop in a garage in San Francisco, selling wetsuits and accessories, as well as boards. As the

numbers of surfers grew the Surf Shop became a magnet for like-minded people and Jack began to develop different designs to meet the demand from the surfing fraternity. It was at this time that Jack changed the shop name to O'Neill's Surf Shop.

In 1959, Jack relocated O'Neill's Surf Shop to Santa Cruz, with more surfers and better waves. By then surfboards were being made out of foam – covered with fiberglass and resin – and it seemed that everybody wanted to surf. The success of the brand grew with the development of new styles, contemporary features and fresh accessories.

Today, O'Neill is the best-selling wetsuit brand in the world, as well as one of the top sportswear brands and O'Neill International has licenses and distributorships in over 70 countries. The company's presence in Europe is especially strong.

But while it continues to dominate the world's wetsuit sector O'Neill has also expanded into other boardsports, such as snowboarding and wakeboarding, to become a global player in both beach and boardsport lifestyle markets. O'Neill UK has 15 flagship stores and over 300 stockists throughout the country that offer an extensive range of menswear, womenswear and kidswear for surf, snow and 'street'. Today the brand caters for both the serious boarder and those who simply want to hit the beach in style.

O'Neill takes its reputation as an innovative boardsport brand seriously, constantly striving to improve the boarding experience. Ever since Jack glued his first wetsuit together his vision for the company has been steadfast: to make the best product to allow riders to ride longer and progress at their sport without being restricted by natural elements.

O'Neill sponsors several riders and events worldwide and O'Neill UK is particularly committed to supporting grass roots surfing, sponsoring a number of 'grommets' – young surfers – and events aimed at promoting surfing in the UK, and amongst the young. 2006 marks the launch of the brand's first all-year-round O'Neill Surf Academy in Newquay, Cornwall.

As pioneers of the modern wetsuit, O'Neill is continually pushing the edge of research to improve wetsuit performance. With O'Neill it really is 'always summer on the inside'.

