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AccuDock: 'It's an honor to be part of the Olympics'



BY JOSEPH A. MANN JR.

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The company: AccuDock designs, builds and installs a wide variety of floating docks and work platforms for residential, commercial and government use, as well as for rowing and boating venues in the United States and overseas.

Based in Pompano Beach, AccuDock supplied the impressive array of rowing docks being used at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, as well as docks used at the 2015 World Junior Rowing Championships in Rio, and the 2013 World Rowing Championships in South Korea.

"We were watching the Olympic rowing competition on TV," said John Harrison, AccuDock's founder and president. "We felt so proud to see our equipment there. It's an honor to be part of the Olympics."

One of the fastest-growing companies in South Florida's marine sector, AccuDock also designs and builds floating docks for marinas, public parks, residences, school rowing teams and individual jet skis, as well as work platforms for painting and refurbishing big yachts and ships.

"We build everything in house and all our parts come from suppliers in the U.S.," said Jason Harrison, the founder's son and AccuDock's general manager. "Many of our products are custom made and we supply customers all over the world."

AccuDock sells docks, parts and accessories directly to customers and works with a network of distributors. Prices range from about \$1,200 for a kayak dock to \$30,000 for a residential dock to millions of dollars for large systems used in international sporting events.

The docks are produced with marine-grade, welded aluminum frames built around a tough outer shell filled with buoyant EPS plastic foam.

Getting started: John Harrison, who grew up on the east coast of Massachusetts, moved to Florida in the early 1990s and saw a need for floating work platforms and other floating docks in South Florida's burgeoning marine industry. Harrison set up AccuDock in 2007. His son, Jason Harrison, joined AccuDock in 2009 after he received a degree in business from Florida State University. Together, they grew the company from five employees in 2009 to 30 today.

The difference: "What has enabled us to grow is our ability to build custom products that other companies do not make," Jason said. AccuDock works closely with customers wherever they're located, guaranteeing consistently high-quality products and customer satisfaction.

Sales: "Every year we've seen substantial growth in sales," Jason said. Net sales in 2015 were just under \$5 million and projections for full-year 2016 are more than \$6 million, he said. About 50 percent of sales typically go to customers in Florida, while the rest go to other parts of the U.S., and to international clients in Brazil, South Korea, India, Japan and other countries.

Competitors: EZ Dock, Connect-A-Dock, GatorDock, others.

Glitch: When the company was starting out, it took on a job at a property that was too exposed to wind, making it difficult to properly stabilize and use floating docks. "We learned that we shouldn't make sales to certain locations," Jason said.

Analyst: "AccuDock is a local company that has an impact on the global marine sector," said Phil Purcell, executive director of the Marine Industries Association of South Florida, the Fort Lauderdale-based trade group that represents more than 500 marine-related companies in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties and owns the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show. The company has supplied floating docks and equipment to the 2016 Olympics in Brazil, the 2013 World Rowing Championship in South Korea, and other domestic and international clients, Purcell said. "Their reach demonstrates how important South Florida's \$11.5 billion recreational marine sector is to the world. AccuDock could have located anywhere, but they chose to build their business here."

What customers say: "We purchased a floating dock with the capacity for 24 kayaks for our members, said Larry Demme, general manager at The Yacht & Racquet Club of Boca Raton. "They came out here to make sure that what we were thinking about would work for us," he said. The club chose AccuDock over a competitor. The dock was custom-designed to fit precisely into an existing area and can be easily used at both high and low tide. "They did a fantastic job," Demme said. "They are very honest and professional, met our time line and kept us informed. We do business with a lot of contractors, and when we find a good one, we keep them."

AccuDock sells to several dealers/distributors in the U.S. and overseas, and their largest is Custom Float Services, a major marine supply company in South Portland, Maine. "We've been a distributor for AccuDock since 2010," said Dale Dyer, who handles marketing for Custom Float Services. "We've purchased and installed most of their products, from 8 feet by 8 feet swim platforms for private customers to 12 feet by 120 feet custom rowing dock systems for educational facilities and municipalities," Dyer said. "We stock a lot of AccuDock inventory products, however, much of what they provide is custom-made. AccuDock products allow us to get closer to the customer's needs and wants," he said. "Their products and service are top notch."

Challenges and outlook: With demand for its products constantly increasing, "Our biggest challenge is to maintain growth at an acceptable rate and not grow too fast," Jason said. The company is committed to making the highest quality products and offering the best customer service. "We've turned down some projects," he said. "We know what we're doing and we can continue to grow, but at a more moderate rate."

ACCUDOCK

Business: Designs, builds and installs floating docks for large and small clients in the United States and overseas. Also makes gangways, ramps, railings and other accessories.

Headquarters: 1790 SW 13th Court, Pompano Beach.

Founded: Pompano Beach in 2007.

Leadership: John Harrison, president and founder; Jason Harrison, general manager.

Employees: 30.

Customers: Sports venues for rowing and kayaks, including the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro; camps and parks; marinas, private residences; companies that repair and paint yachts and other vessels.

Ownership: Owned and operated by the Harrison family.

Website: accudock.com

Source: AccuDock