

NEW MEXICO BUSINESS WEEKLY

FACE OF BUSINESS Cricket Appel's path to green building embraced her talents and interests **10**

REBORN A Grants area millworks comes to life again as a sawmill and wood pellet operation **4**

M&A Roswell's PSM Holdings is hungry for acquisitions **5**



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SBS

It's go time at ABQ Indoor Karting a



GRILL MASTER

Disc-It grill looks like a wok, cooks up a storm a



Red hot Jolokia brings in the green

'World's hottest' chile stokes NMSU research; fires up the made-in-New-Mexico brand

BY KEVIN ROBINSON-AVILA | NMBW SENIOR REPORTER



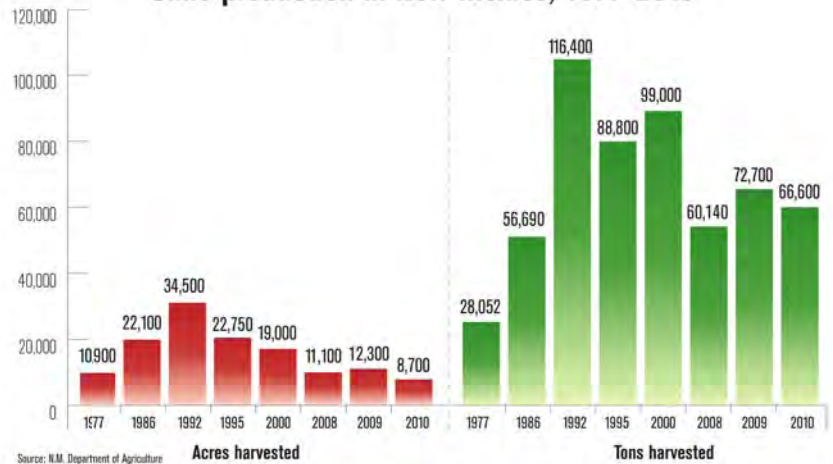
Holy Jolokia chile sauce is one hot item at Cajohns Fiery Foods in Ohio.

The wholesale and online retail business has sold 50,000 five-ounce bottles of the sizzling brew since 2009, when it inked a marketing deal with New Mexico State University's Chile Pepper Institute.

NMSU brought the Bhut Jolokia pepper from the remote highlands of India.

SEE JOLOKIA **21**

Chile production in New Mexico, 1977-2010



Source: N.M. Department of Agriculture



New Sports Tech. Inc. sprints to score a first down with its laser

BY KEVIN ROBINSON-AVILA | NMBW SENIOR REPORTER

Norman Harty has invented a new laser system he says could send the century-old tradition of hand-measuring football's first downs with two poles and a chain into retirement.

His company, New Sports Technology LLC, estimates the system could earn the National Football League \$100 million per year by saving an average of one minute per game. In the big leagues, advertisers pay \$1 million for each minute of TV air time, and the NFL broadcasts about 100 games a year.

Those are bold claims for a first-time entrepreneur who works as an appliance salesman at Baillio's in Santa Fe. But Harty has the NFL's ear.

He and his partner, Dave Magee, met with

SEE SPORTS **22**

NST's Norman Harty, left, (and his son Tyler Harty) sends a laser beam to the pigskin from the three-legged 'flag' he's gripping. Object above the ball is the laser detector 'flag.' See another view, page 22.

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Focus on **GOLF**

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SPORTS: NM Activities Association is discussing the laser's deployment at 25% of state's football games

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the NFL Competition Committee in 2007 in Indianapolis, where they demonstrated the technology to 17 committee members.

"We had a 45-minute slot with them," Harty said. "They said they'd never seen anything like it before."

NFL Vice President of Football Communications Michael Signora said the Competition Committee considers proposals from many sources and generally does not comment on those things.

"As a matter of course, the Competition Committee reviews and studies many ideas to help improve the game, including the introduction of new technology," Signora said.

But Joel Bussert, NFL vice president of player personnel/football operations, sent an email to Harty in 2009 requesting more information.

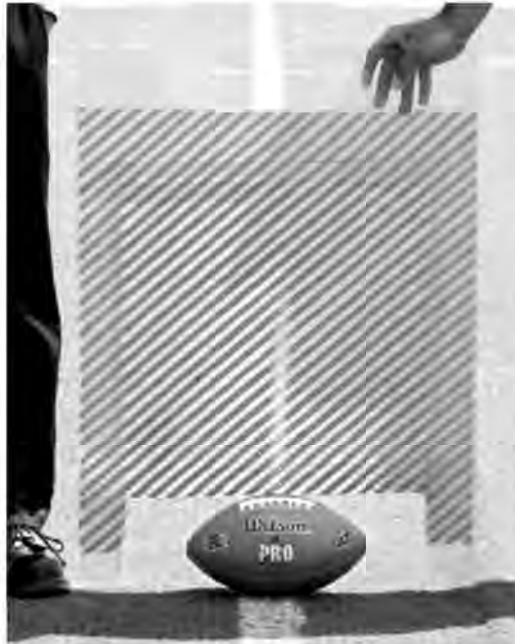
"Members of the committee have requested that you provide estimates of the cost of installation, the per-game cost of operating the system and the annual maintenance costs associated with your system," Bussert wrote.

Bussert said the committee wanted to see the results of beta testing that Harty plans for high school and college games.

The New Mexico Activities Association is discussing the system's deployment in 25 percent of football games statewide this year, starting in August, said NMAA Director Gary Tripp. The association oversees athletic activities statewide, including championship events.

"If the system can speed up the game and eliminate down time, that's good," Tripp said. "It could also be much more accurate than people running out there with a chain. That means a new standard of fairness."

The system debuted at a high school game in October at Milne Field in Al-



NST's laser (white 'line' above football) reaches the football, while the laser detector flag (rectangle with slanted lines) registers an exact measurement for a possible first down.

buquerque. The technology worked as promised, but referees lost time learning to use the system, Tripp said.

"The one issue really is training for the officials," Tripp said. "It doesn't take rocket science to work it. They just need to practice a bit."

Harty had his Eureka! moment in 1994, while watching an NFL game on TV. It

went into overtime in part because of time-consuming first-down measurements.

"I had to leave before it ended, and I said, 'There has to be a better way to mark first downs,'" Harty said. "That was the defining moment."

Harty spent more than a decade researching and tinkering with lasers before designing a system that worked in sunlight. He received a U.S. patent for it in 2005.

"Laser experts told me it was impossible, because the sun diffuses the laser and you can't see the beam," Harty said. "I tried dozens of combinations of lasers and reflectors. It took me about 12 years, hundreds of experiments and eight prototypes to get it right."

Harty mounted the laser on a pole that shoots a beam from field sidelines onto a detector flag placed next to the ball. Referees, players and fans can all see the demarcation, even in daylight.

The NFL Competition Committee asked Harty to make some changes to his original prototype, such as creating a more stable base for the pole and making sure fans throughout a stadium could clearly see the demarcation beam.

Harty redesigned his prototype and then took it to Marc and Paula Steger of Artistic Laser Productions in Escondido, Calif. ALP, which manufactures lasers and conducts laser light shows, completed the new prototype last year.

"We saw the brilliance of his system and immediately came on board," Marc Steger said. "We accepted payment in stock, because we think this technology can make millions."

NST is shooting for the NFL, but first, it's targeting high school and college football, said Vice President Magee.

"We want to get units into high schools in Texas, New Mexico and California," Magee said. "As more schools see their peers shooting laser first downs, they'll want it too."

Harty estimates that high school systems will cost between \$8,000 and \$10,000, and college systems about \$25,000.

"There are 12,888 registered high school teams in the U.S.," Harty said. "We think at least 75 percent can afford the system."

Funding is NST's biggest challenge. Harty invested more than \$100,000 of his own savings to build and patent his system, but NST needs about \$375,000 to start production and market to high schools, followed by \$500,000 to \$1 million to pursue the NFL and other markets.

The company is seeking private investors. It has approached Technology Ventures Corp. in Albuquerque for assistance, said TVC patent attorney Bruce Winchell.

"The company has some good patent protection," Winchell said. "That may help them corner some portion of the market."

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BARBECUE: Budweiser was first to place a large order for the wok-like devices, customized with its logo

FROM PAGE 3

the South Valley after the first three years in business.

Ned Montano, 60, said Disc-It sprang to life during many backyard family barbecues. Eventually, the idea led to a sketch of a crude version of the design, which became the incarnation now for sale at \$399. Montano said the patent for Disc-It was approved this year.

Nevin, 37, said one feature that excites customers is their ability to personalize the Disc-It. The personalization is done on each unit's four legs, base plate and handles. Montano has a database of about 450 designs, but a customer can customize his or her design with anything from a name or logo to the face of a family pet.

"If someone comes to me and says they'd really like a profile of [their] mother-in-law, we'll do it," Montano said, adding that the climbing elk, chile and palm tree designs are big sellers. "With Father's

Day coming up, we'll get lots of requests for designs for dad."

Montano also sells Disc-It accessories, such as a chile roaster, flat skillet, stock pot support ring and a wind ring to protect food from windy New Mexico afternoons.

Montano said another selling point is the Disc-It's cooking versatility.

"People are surprised to discover what kinds of dishes can be prepared on it. I've made Bananas Foster, lamb meat pops with jalapeño and apple mint sauce, and even funnel cakes," he said.

While Montano has no professional cooking background, he said he's learned over the years to develop his own recipes. He videotapes live cooking demonstrations that are posted on his website. Although Montano is usually the one in front of the camera, he also has hosted guest chefs from businesses such as Phil's Gourmet Sauces and AlbuKirky Season-

ings. In honor of Memorial Day weekend, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran will be a guest chef on the latest Disc-It web video on May 27, unveiling his Semper Fried Tacos.

The company also markets the Disc-It by participating in about 40 trade shows a year, 80 percent of those in New Mexico.

The business has sold about 20,000 units since 2005.

Budweiser was the first to place a large order, 365 units, personalized with its logo. Budweiser representatives met the Montanos at Rio Rancho's Pork & Brew event in 2007, and have purchased more than 1,000 of the units.

Montano said the recession has had an effect on sales, but that growth has occurred every year since 2005, with 40 percent growth in 2010. There are 48 Disc-It retailers in 29 states, 16 of them in New Mexico. In Albuquerque, the Disc-It

is only available at Affirmative! Solutions. Several New Mexico retailers that carry the units are propane businesses.

"If people are looking for a new and unique business to start, it's totally different than anything else they could be doing," Montano said.

Disc-It organizes and sponsors the Disc-It Round Up fundraiser for the Children's Miracle Network program at the University of New Mexico Children's Hospital. The hospital diagnosed Montano's daughter with vascular rings when she was four, later performing surgery, and he credits the hospital with saving her life.

This year's fundraiser takes place July 16 at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Albuquerque on Isleta Pueblo. A key element is a cooking competition using the Disc-It, of course. Last year, a blackened mahi dish won first place.

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