

Justin (1s):

Yeah, there's a handwritten note with every single order, which has been something that people seem to really appreciate. We can, you know, we can easily look back and we can tell if it's someone's first order or seventh order. And so as people become, you know, that that that's ordered from us five or six or seven times, we can look back and see maybe like what stickers or if they've ever gotten a pair of laces, you know, it's, it's, it's pretty easy for us to toss in a couple of extra things here and there to make sure people know we're paying attention.

Dave (32s):

That was Justin Fuller talking about the little things that sweetened the deal for Yokota customers. Another classic fly fishing founders episode today on the wet fly swing, fly fishing show. Welcome to the wet fly swing five fishing show where you discovered tips, tricks, and tools from the leading names and fly fishing today, we'll help you on your fly fishing journey with classic stories, covering steelhead, fishing, fly tying, and much more. Hey, how's it going today? Thanks for stopping by the fly fishing show. Did you know, you can read the entire transcript for this episode. So just in case you can't listen to it, we're providing that now. And I mentioned this before, but we've got new service that we've got going here, which is gonna make it pretty easy to do this.

Dave (1m 19s):

So you could check out that in the show notes, just click the link in the, in your app at the top, there'll be a show notes link, and they'll take you to the blog posts where you can grab a, you can grab the entire transcript. So check it out. Let me know what you think. Jason Fairman and Justin Fuller are here to share the Dakota supply story and some products they provide. We find out why the guide laces are the thing to have what their flight in is all about and the purple rain fly pattern. And we'll cut in with a little purple rain in the show notes as well. Just for those that don't know or know of Prince or don't know of Prince before we get started, let's hear from our sponsors turtle box is a new company I've been working with this year.

Dave (2m 6s):

They built an amazing portable speaker that is louder and more rugged than anything I've ever encountered. Unlike most other portable speakers out there, the Turo box was specifically built with the sportsman in mind. The quality of the speaker is truly unreal. I've talked with the guys at turtle box, saw dudes by the way, they love the outdoors and are all avid sportsmen. We all love to get outside and enjoy the peaceful nature of the river and woods, but who doesn't like some great music before after an adventure. This is a product I can truly say does not disappoint. Go ahead and check the guys out at turtle box, audio.com. So without further ado here is Justin Fuller and Jason Fairman from Yokota supply.com.

Dave (2m 49s):

How's it going guys?

Justin (2m 51s):

Good. Good. Thanks for having us.

Dave (2m 53s):

Yeah. Thanks for, thanks for making some time this morning for a, for a good chat here. We're gonna, we're going to dig into some good stuff. You going Some of the products and you guys have a little, a little variety of things. I didn't even realize at the start about the, you know, the fly selection stuff you have going. And I kind of learned that in doing a little bit of research, but before we get into all that, can you just talk about maybe how both of you guys first got into fly fishing and, and maybe Jason, we can just start with you since we first connected and, and we'll take it from there.

Jason (3m 23s):

Sure. Well, fly fishing came later in my, in my fishing life, if you will, I was taken vision, but my great-grandfather real early on, on a pier in New York city. And he passed early on in my life, but I wound up inheriting all of his gear, which real heavy tackle, you know, fishing and in long Island sound and, you know, in the waters there, but I've just always been infatuated with water. We moved out of the city later on when I was about seven and moved up to the Hudson Valley in New York, which is peppered with all sorts of glacial lakes and creeks and streams.

Jason (4m 12s):

And we lived in an area where I was always in and out of water, searching, finding salamanders, frogs, minnows, and just always had a fishing rod with me wherever I went. And it probably wasn't until I was in my mid teens where I wound up buying a fly rod and like a hula popper set and learn how to tie bass flies and, you know, experimented, fishing, or fly fishing with, you know, for panfish. It didn't really last, all that long. I'll be honest with you. But I moved out to Colorado when I was 21 and immediately bought a fly rod.

Jason (4m 55s):

And I've never looked back since then.

Dave (4m 59s):

Wait, what, what, why Colorado? What got you out there?

Jason (5m 4s):

I, I had a girlfriend who was going to school here at CU Boulder, and it was just time for a change and her brother lived in Breckenridge. She lived in Boulder and I came out and split time between both locations and found myself, you know, doing a decent amount of fishing, doing decent amount of skiing and doing a fair amount of travel around the state and just really enjoyed traveling and being able to get into the water and kind of get lost.

Dave (5m 36s):

Yeah. Nice, nice. Well, I'm sure we'll and we'll put, make the connection here a little bit, but yeah, Justin, maybe you can talk about how you, how you got into fly fishing and then take us to, you know, how you found yourself in Colorado.

Jason (5m 48s):

Yeah. I, haven't sort of a similar story, although I'm on the Texan to Jason's new Yorkers. So I grew up in North Texas had a great who had

Justin (5m 58s):

A small cabin on a Lake and kind of, kind of a similar story. He put a fishing rod in my hand when I was a kid, grew up fishing for bass with a spin rod, didn't touch a fly rod until I got to Colorado in high school. I had some friends that lived on this sort of, it wasn't a pond. It wasn't a Lake, but it was, it was a cool piece of water that had a bunch of terrain and topography. And so just spent days and days out there in high school, sort of learning how to fish different kinds of water. You could get around the whole Lake and, you know, an hour or two, but, you know, there were deep channels. There's a dam, there was some shallow water with reeds and docks and stuff.

Justin (6m 40s):

So just a really fun place to fish. And I moved to Colorado after college a little bit later than Jason did, but we've been here for about the same amount of time and fly fishing was something that I had on my sort of bucket list, but it took me a little bit longer to come around to it. But a good friend of mine, who's now a mutual friend of both of ours. That'll kind of come into, into play later when we kind of tell how we met, owns a fly shop here in Boulder. And he took me on my first day of fishing on a float trip down the Colorado. And didn't take long after that for that's, that's all I wanted to do with my spare time. So

Dave (7m 19s):

There you go. There you go. So, so basically there's a fly shop connection, which is great, which is a I'm sure a cool story. So, so you guys are there and then, so what is the, how is that story and what was the name of the fly shop? Is it still, still going there?

Justin (7m 32s):

Yeah. It's Rocky mountain anglers here in Boulder. It's owned by a guy named Randy Hicks, who, like I said, a good long time friend of mine and Jason's, and he's just known as a guy who kind of connects people and is really welcoming to beginners has been for a long time. I think that's, you know, becoming more of a trend now, but Randy has always been somebody who, you know, brings beginners in and, and kind of shows them, shows them the ropes. It's, it's not a very intimidating place to walk into. So yeah, Jason and I met on a, on a trip to Wyoming up to the North flat and Randy, Randy brings a group of people up there and, and he just kind of puts together these groups of people that he thinks might enjoy spending a few days together.

Justin (8m 20s):

So we spent, you know, probably a total of 15 hours in the car together and three or four days fishing and it was a great trip and that was kind of the beginning of our friendship.

Dave (8m 33s):

Nice. That's cool. So, so Randy, so the fly shop owner, Randy, he, so basically he put this trip together with just a bunch of kind of random guys. He knew he was kind of the connector and then said, I th I think these guys would have a good time and you guys all went out there and just kind of went fishing, right. Is that basically how it happened? Yeah. Yeah. That's basically it, he, you know, he does these fish alongs, not necessarily

Justin (8m 56s):

For the same timeframe, then mostly day trips. But on this particular occasion, you know, we went up to Wyoming and like Justin said, we spent a bunch of time in the car. We spent a bunch of time on the water and, you know, we stayed in the same room together. So invariably we just wound up talking about a lot of things. And when we came back from that trip, we continue to fish together. We continue to talk together and we continue to do things. And I think it was probably somewhere around nine months, 12 months later on a trip that Justin and I went on, where we started expressing some ideas for innovations or products that we had in mind.

Justin (9m 38s):

And I definitely remember the day pretty viscerally, you know, we, we were on this drive to this pretty incredible place. And there was just this moment where we had kind of opened ourselves up to one another talking about these different ideas that we've been kind of holding onto. And I, I just remember like looking at him and I don't know if necessarily know if he kind of registered the same thing, but it was like, do we want to like start something? Do we want to kind of do something? It was almost unspoken, but invariably that's what wound up happening. Yeah.

Dave (10m 10s):

Nice. So that was that. So basically Yokota kind of B began there. And then, so how long until you guys had your first product out after that, that period

Justin (10m 22s):

Nine months or so, is that right, Justin? Yeah, that sounds about right. We had kind of had an idea for a bag, you know, something that you can kind of stuff all your gear into in your garage there on your buddy's truck, go to the water, you know, keep your stuff separate from everyone. Else's keep it clean and keep your car from becoming a mess. And then, you know, haul it out of the truck, put it back in the garage and wait until next time. And, you know, we're, we're not product designers by training by any means. So it was definitely trial and error kind of wrapping our heads around what it would take to even make a, it turns out to be a

really simple product, but kind of laid the groundwork for the way we approach, you know, all the new products that we, that we come out with at this point.

Dave (11m 14s):

Nice. So I guess we're at, you know, I guess we're a product time, you know, talking about probably I love digging into the products because I've done a little bit of product design and I know the challenges of it, you know what I mean? And, and you guys have, I mean, maybe let's talk about that. So you got this bag and you got a number of different products, but so what is this bag? Is it, I mean, essentially it's throw all your gear in, which is great, right? You gotta have something to throw all your stuff. Is this like waiter bags for all your wet stuff together? Or is this more like a little more organized than that?

Justin (11m 43s):

It's a big, you know, substantial, high-quality durable carrier we've, you know, through the course of creating other products, we've kind of fallen into this place, whether it be accidental or not, where everything that we create is utilitarian and that anyone can use it for anything. You know, we've chosen to create a bag that we use for fly fishing, but that doesn't mean someone can't use it for skiing or mountain biking or anything else. And, you know, it has a removable changing pad. It's our flagship product, the Lakota, your transport, otherwise known as the drifter.

Justin (12m 23s):

It's a fantastic way to, you know, put your boots, waiters, beer, food, layers, your hip pack, and anything else that you need in it. You know, in Colorado, we deal with a lot more changing weather than, than most other States. So we always have the need or, you know, to, to be fully prepared for any sort of weather condition. And that's a perfect vehicle for moving our gear from place to place. You know, when things are wet, what's nice about it, not having a zipper or having a closure on it is that, you know, those items are still able to breathe. So if you forget about it in your car, which, you know, you get home from a long day efficient, you're exhausted.

Justin (13m 4s):

The last thing you want to do is like, hang your boots and waders up. But, but if you forget about it, you know, things aren't going to mold overnight. Like I would in a completely closed bag with a zipper.

Dave (13m 14s):

Gotcha. Gotcha. So, so it has no zipper. So how, so it basically, it closes by law or how does that, how does that work? Explain that a little bit.

Justin (13m 24s):

There's a handle system. It has a cinching handle it's stitched at different end points. And when you pull on the handles, it basically cinches itself up.

Dave (13m 33s):

Gotcha. Gotcha. Okay. So, but w it would be one of those things where you wouldn't want to just like Huck it around in the back of a pickup or a boat, or, or, or could you do that without stuff?

Justin (13m 44s):

It definitely does just fine in the back of a pickup, on a boat. You know, obviously you can get water in it, but if you were to roll the top over the material that we use is called X-Pack and it's fully waterproof, and, you know, your, your items would be kept dry, you know, they'd be protected in there.

Dave (14m 2s):

Gotcha. Okay. And I guess maybe before we get too far into the, you know, the product stuff, cause I know there's a few other things I wanted to touch on here. Maybe just for somebody who, you know, people listening that haven't heard of you guys before, maybe you could just give us a little bit of like an elevator pitch of, of what, you know, when somebody asks you what Yokota is, you know, what do you tell them?

Justin (14m 21s):

A lot of people want to know what the name means. Yeah. So it's a made up word, you know, especially, especially these days, it's, you know, when you're starting a business, one of the first things you have to do is decide what you're gonna call yourself. And we were, you know, we, we, we knew that there was kind of a feeling that we wanted to go for, but, you know, and there's a lot of vocabulary around fly fishing and most of it's been used and a lot of it's trademarked and some of it's a little cliché and, and, and obvious, and there's just so many, there's so many fly shops and things like that. And Outfitters a lot of the names are taken and there's a lot of great names out there that people have been using for a long time.

Justin (15m 4s):

So I have a little bit of background in product naming and branding. And so, you know, we kind of went through some exercises where we looked at some words that we liked, and essentially we, we arrived at at sort of a, a sound phonetically that we were into. And there's a little bit of, you know, there's a little bit of meaning for us, that's kind of personal, that's baked in, but at the end of the day, you know, it started to started to really sound like a kind of like a place, you know, maybe a place on a map that you feel like you've seen before. Or to me, it kind of sounds like a place that I'd, you know, I'd like to go and fish. And so it really is that, I mean, there's this place that Jason mentioned that, that, that we were going to the day that we kind of decided to do this thing together.

Justin (15m 51s):

And it's a really, you know, it's a special spot. It's not too far away from here where we live, but it's a place that not very many people know about. It's a really wild place, you know, four or five miles in four or five miles out from the car rattlesnakes and bears and mountain lions and stuff. And just, just one of those places

that it's, it's, it's really crazy that more people don't know about it. And you know, we're pretty, tight-lipped about it. You don't go there without somebody that you've been there with before, and you don't take somebody there unless at least one of those other people are with you. You know what I mean? So for us, it's kind of like that place kind of embodies what, what your code is all about.

Justin (16m 36s):

You know, I guess the, the, the hope is that everybody kind of has a place like that or finds a place like that. And you know, when we're sitting at our desk at our day job, it's the kind of place that you can kind of daydream about, you know? Yeah,

Dave (16m 48s):

Yeah, yeah, no, I definitely, I remember the first time I heard it, you know, that was the thing, you, you hear it and you're like, well, I don't really know exactly what that means, but it sounds good. It kind of feels, I think you guys did well in that because it makes you, yeah. It kind of gets you thinking and then takes you to a good place. So that's, and I love the way you're, you know, where you want to take people obviously with, with your gear. So I guess, so, you know, we talked a little bit about the bag, you know, talk, talk about your other products. W when somebody talks to ask you guys about your products, well, what are the other things that come to mind first? You know, when you tell them what you guys have going.

Justin (17m 24s):

Sure. I know we're definitely known for our guide laces and our flights ends. And then in the last eight, nine months, we also came up with a relatively simple modular system, which incorporates our utility pouch, our utility wallet, and any of our tins. And, you know, we do a bunch of hiking, as Justin said, fly fishing gears already heavy enough. And

Jason (17m 50s):

We just, because we keep the designs of our products, simple, you know, this little modular system weighs next to nothing, but when we hike up to high country lakes in the summer, or back to this special place, you know, during the other seasons, it's nice to be able to bring our little modular setup that holds, you know, our Tippet, our, our weight, our indicators, our flies. And it's because of how we designed it. You can literally attach it to anything or anywhere on your body. And now there's a lot of great companies out there making beautiful gear, but it seems like they've either lost focus on simplicity and have been more concerned with creating the biggest or most feature rich products that they possibly can.

Jason (18m 50s):

That the space for creating simple products is basically untouched. And we just kind of found our niche being ourselves. We're not complicated people. And most people that fish aren't either, and it doesn't take huge innovations to make your day on the water better. It really comes down to organization, to be honest with you. And like our utility wallet is a perfect example of that. That's literally the simplest product that we make,

but as the person who kind of thought about it for a while, cause you know, we switch the places that we fish pretty often in any given week, we could fish three or four different places.

Jason (19m 30s):

And we always, I mean, I say we, I mean, I gotten to that place where I was jumping my tip it and my license and my weight and indicators from one set up to another and invariably I would always leave something behind and we're like, there's gotta be a way to create some sort of simple organizer that manages all this. And the utility wallet was born out of that. And what I love about design is now I know exactly where all my stuff is, every single time I'm going somewhere different. And I use that design exclusively for five shifts for fly fishing. But you know, my daughter uses it to put her change in her money into, so it's like, it just really talks to the utilitarian design in itself and how anyone can use our product or anything.

Jason (20m 18s):

Like we've got cyclists who put that utility wallet, you know, in their chest pocket when they're cycling, because that waterproof membrane protects the things that they're carrying from the sweat on their bodies. So there's just a lot of different ways to use our stuff. And it's really only limited by the person's imagination who buys it.

Dave (20m 37s):

Nice. Nice. And you mentioned also that the guy I was interested in that to the guidelines is so what are those? You see those and you think it's a shoe lace, but is there something different about it that makes it a guide lace

Justin (20m 50s):

There is, and it's, it's so simple that it's, it's kind of kind of silly. I was on a trip up in Wyoming with a friend of ours and, and we were fortunate to have met this guy who owns an outfitter up there and, and we're staying at this really cool property and, and, and fishing with him each day, it was early in the season and he was just kind of throwing us in his truck. And, you know, some of the spots that he takes his clients, it's sort of like a two hour radius kind of around the Sheridan Wyoming area. And he would, you know, he would take us to these spots and we really just Chuck in the water to see if it was fishable and he'd let us out of the truck to fish for 20 or 30 minutes and we'd hop back in and go somewhere else.

Justin (21m 30s):

So we got to see a lot of this area up there, which is incredible. I haven't been back since, but would love to get back up there. And this guy, you know, he'd been up there since he was in his early twenties. This was his life. You know, he, he guided in, in Wyoming, in the summertime and all over the planet, you know, and other seasons. And he happened to have, this was, this is maybe five years ago. He happened to have a pair of those Patagonia, Danner boots before they came out. So he, Patagonia had sent him a pair to test and, and they caught my eye cause I'd heard about them and they just looked different than anything I'd ever

seen. But what really caught my eye were these crazy, this guy was, you know, pretty, pretty conservative guy in terms of how he dressed and stuff.

Justin (22m 15s):

And he had these just crazy over the top laces in his boots. And, and I was like, Clark, what's up? You know, what's up with those laces is obviously didn't come from Patagonia. And he was like, Oh yeah. He's like disregard the color. And my wife ordered the material. It's pair cord, but he's like, I'll tell you a little secret. That'll, you know, that'll kind of change, change your life in terms of how often you have to change your laces and your waiting boots. And I won't reveal it, although it's very, you know, I think anybody could figure it out, especially if they bought a pair of laces and looked at them, but it's a, it's just a variation on some para cord, that one little trick, and he's like, you know, do this, do this to the, to the material.

Justin (22m 59s):

And it'll it'll last forever. So kind of filed that one away. And, you know, a few years later we were kind of kicking around ideas for, for products because you know, the bag, we kind of founded the business on the bag and it's not an expensive product in the sense of what you would spend on a, on a piece of luggage or, or a bag at a fly shop. But, you know, it's still, it's still a high ticket item. That's a couple of couple hundred bucks, right? Yeah. It's \$189 and it's a great value, you know, you could spend there's there's comparable products that essentially do the same thing, but because they have, you know, waterproof zippers and stuff, they're \$400 products. So I think, you know, for, for what it does, it's a great value.

Justin (23m 41s):

But you know, in order to, to introduce people, to Yokota, without asking them to spend that kind of money, you know, we're always looking for, for products that are a little bit, a little bit easier for people to, to pull the trigger on. So that's where the laces came from. And it was just sort of like, man, I remember I remember this guy telling me this. I wonder if it's, you know, I wonder if it's true. So we bought some material, cut it up, kind of tested it. You know, it doesn't take long to figure out if, if your laces are gonna blow out. I mean, I think the clock starts taking on most of the stock laces. The first time you stepped in the water. So especially in Colorado where it's hot, it's cold, you know, it's dry typically. So when you're storing your boots, they're in a really dry, dry spot.

Justin (24m 23s):

So they go from being completely soaked to being, you know, bone dry and back. So, you know, typically apparel laces here will last, if you're fishing, let's say, you know, even 50 days a year, you might get through one season with a pair of laces. And you know, they usually don't break when you're taking them off. You know, at the end of the day, they usually break when you're putting them on at the beginning of the day, excuse me. And you don't have, you know, most people don't carry an extra year leases with them or worse. You're a in the middle of the day. And you're kind of going to sense things back up and you pull out a pair of laces, you know, a mile or two from the car. So, you know, we looked around, we realized that, yeah, you

can buy the same pair of laces that you got when you, when you bought your boots.

Justin (25m 9s):

But, you know, you're just setting yourself up for the same situation. So we fish a lot. I've never changed the laces in my newest pair of boots. They easily have, you know, 120 days on them. Jason's probably got more on his, we have guides that are going through multiple pairs of boots with the same pair of laces. So again, just like a really kind of stupid, simple product that, you know, is a great value. It's a great product for us because it helps us introduce the brand to new customers. It's it's the most popular in terms of volumes. So, you know, a lot of people, that's the first product they buy. A lot of people are buying two or three pairs at a time. So I think we've successfully reminded people that it doesn't hurt to have an extra pair in your bag or in your car, you know, just in case most people, you know, the official out on more than one pair of boots.

Justin (25m 57s):

So, you know, on one hand, you're kind of setting yourself up when you make a product that lasts. I won't say the last forever, but that lasts for a really long time. You know, we're not expecting, we're hoping that people don't come back very often to buy laces from us and less, unless they want to change up the way their boots look or they got a new pair of boots, you know? So

Dave (26m 17s):

That's cool. Yeah. No, I think it makes sense. I think you look at the, you know, I always think of the products I've had that have lasted a long time. One good example. I always love to think about is like the thermarest right. I've had this chair kit forever and, and I mean, I have torn it up. Literally the, the chair kit just ripped off recently. I, I probably had it for 20, 30 years or something, but I mean, well, this is old school. I got this like a 2000. Yeah. This is the one where your thermarest actually folds up into a, like into a chair. It's got the stays on. And then you, you know, it's, I think it's different than what they have now, but

Jason (26m 52s):

Yeah, essentially I have the same one for like 25.

Dave (26m 58s):

Yeah, exactly. And the great thing about, and the great thing about that thing is, is that even though I haven't bought a thermarest product in 20 years, I've recommended Thermarests do you know how many hundreds of times? So, I mean, th the traffic they've gotten from me, just talking about how good they are, you know what I mean? So I think that by far makes up from the person that doesn't buy multiple products, right? If you have a, if you have a high quality product.

Jason (27m 19s):

Absolutely. And I think if you use those laces for a year and you're like, man, these things are still going, you know, I think, I think you're going to come back and see what else is what's new.

Dave (27m 28s):

Exactly. So, yeah, the other thing I was thinking about, I was kind of looking through, you know, the, the Dakota green machine fly. I was gonna touch base to hear, you know, because that kind of segues into the flies and you guys, I didn't realize, you know, but you have the fly selection. Can you talk a little about the tin and that whole thing you have going?

Jason (27m 46s):

Yeah, sure. One of the things, you know, been fishing long enough and time flies long enough that we've developed some patterns that have just turned out to be incredibly productive. And you know, whether it's fish, I'm here in our local Creek, which is just minutes from our house or efficient, you know, hours away from her house. They, they work everywhere. And knowing that there's a lot of people that are intimidated by flies and fly selection and fly tying, we thought it would be cool to come out with, you know, flies that we specifically endorsed and specifically use, like were used basically a dozen patterns year round, you know, always using the same stuff, you know, even on different waters.

Jason (28m 33s):

And we just kind of came to the conclusion that there's a lot of people that probably would appreciate us creating a curated selection of bugs that goes in one of our flights ends and that they might enjoy buying that. And having basically, you know, people that know what they're doing on the water, create selections for them, that they can use on the water and hopefully have success with it. There really wasn't much else other to, you know, to it. Other than that.

Dave (29m 4s):

Yeah, I think, and I think I first saw that I think it was the Oregon fly fly shop down in Eugene. They were doing a little display of the 10 talking about how it kind of, it was, that was that you guys know. Did, are you connected with those guys? Yeah, Cadus

Jason (29m 22s):

Sure. Yeah. Chris is awesome. The owner over there, Chris daughters, they've been, you know, they were one of the first shops to bring us on and they really love the simplicity and innovation and its simplistic nature of our products and have actually done some cool stuff where they've actually created some short videos showing

Justin (29m 42s):

Our product and going through the features on them, which probably doesn't take them that long. Cause there's not a ton of features, but at least they're informative and we need to do a better job of that ourselves communicating design aspects to everyone, which is part of our plan in 2021.

Dave (29m 58s):

Yeah. That's right. So what is the, I mean, looking out as you guys look at where you're at now, how long has it been? How many years have you guys been going?

Justin (30m 6s):

We're just a little over three years since we launched.

Dave (30m 9s):

Oh, perfect. Yeah. So you're still fairly, fairly young, I guess. I mean what, yeah, go ahead.

Justin (30m 16s):

No, I'm just agreeing with it. Yeah, I agree.

Dave (30m 20s):

Yeah, totally. I mean three years, it's like, I just think of, as you look out, you know, again, these questions, I always think about these things, you know, what is the next, you know, five years or so look like, and you know, as you guys plan for this, cause you could go a lot of different directions, right? I mean, you could kind of stay where you're at or you could keep adding people and maybe this would be a good segue after you answer that question and talk about your other staff, but yeah. Where do you guys think you're headed?

Justin (30m 45s):

I mean, I think Jason and I both see this as, you know, the next logical phase in our careers. We're, you know, we're a few years older than the guys that we work with. We're both pretty entrepreneurial. We've worked for ourselves for, you know, a long time and taking some of that knowledge, but also some of the, you know, frustration that comes along with that. And you know, when you're, you're, you're working for yourself, it's great, but you're not always necessarily, you know, doing exactly what you might want to be doing with your day to day. And the last thing we want to do is take fly fishing and turn it into a job.

Justin (31m 26s):

Yeah. But I think we see ourselves kind of transitioning into this full-time. I mean, we both still have full-time jobs. And so this is very much a side hustle and we're fortunate to have partnered up with a couple of other people that are really motivated smart guys who are good at things that we're not as good at. You know, so we have a partner, Rob Herman, who is a super talented photographer, works a lot in the outdoor industry. And you know, that's obviously something that's super important for any brand.

Justin (32m 11s):

These days is creating content that's engaging and kind of tells the story visually. And it's something that, you know, it's hard for a young company because it can be really expensive to create that type of content. And for a long time, you know, Jason and I were kind of doing it ourselves and shooting photos on our

iPhone. And, and I think we were fortunate early on to connect with a lot of people, you know, on Instagram and stuff like that. Rob has just really opened up, you know, the possibilities with, with visual content. So he's primarily focused on, on that piece of the business photography and videography and just content creation in general.

Justin (32m 56s):

And then our other partner, Lincoln ki

Jason (33m 1s):

He was our intern. Actually

Justin (33m 3s):

He answered a Craigslist ad, kind of came on and helped with our early email marketing and Facebook, you know, Facebook marketing stuff, and then took a short hiatus and then came back and has really, you know, being a, being a company that primarily sells our products directly to our customers. You know, we're growing the wholesale side of the business and being in fly shops is super important to us. Cause I mean, it's where the community happens. Like Jason mentioned earlier and you know, we'd always rather somebody go to their local flash shop and buy our products than buy it from us directly. But the reality is it's going to be a long time before we're, you know, we're in enough jobs where most people have had the opportunity to just go down the street and buy our products.

Justin (33m 48s):

So, you know, staying in front of people online, it's, it's, it's allowed busy place and someone like Lincoln, I mean, I don't know how you can run a business online these days without someone who, you know, really knows the ins and outs of that stuff. So, and then everyone contributes, you know, in a lot of different ways, we're all wearing a lot of different hats because it's something that we each get to focus on for a little bit less time than we'd like currently. So longterm, I think, you know, we'd like to be seeing each other every day. And you know, we all know that if we had a chance to sit down and really focus on this thing, you know, for 30 or 40 hours a week that, you know, the sky's the limit.

Justin (34m 31s):

So yeah. Yeah. That's awesome. So you brought these two, I guess, Lincoln and Rob on within the last year or two?

Jason (34m 39s):

No, no. Ron has been Robson working with us for about two and a half years. He reached out to us through Instagram, asked if he could photograph some of our product, complimented us on some of our designs and he and I kind of forged a friendship. We started fishing together and invariably it led to a position with, within utopia where now he's an equity owner and part of, you know, part of the team and same thing for Lincoln.

You know, when he came back after a brief hiatus, we recognize the value that he brought to the table and we offered him the same thing. So everyone's got ownership in the business, which really helps with kind of the self motivation of being driven to create and, you know, drive success in their individual departments.

Jason (35m 30s):

Now, you know, we work together real closely as a tight knit team. We, we speak every day. We have meetings once a week. We're constantly reviewing, you know, and forecasting and planning out into the future, but everyone does a good job of just doing their own thing. And then when we come together, everything kind of that's the glue is when we have those opportunities to, to, you know, all be on the call together, all go fishing together, you know, and COVID climate that's certainly been happening a lot less, but we've found ways to make it work. Yeah.

Dave (36m 6s):

Yeah. That's right. Has the, yeah, the COVID, I mean, I guess we're all hopeful that we're going to be pulling out of it, you know, as we go out through this year, but, but yeah. Do you guys see, I mean, how, how do you see that? Are you planning any, I've already noticed, you know, obviously trips and things like that. It's hard to plan, but what do you guys have on tap the next, say nine months or so? I mean, is it affecting your business currently?

Jason (36m 31s):

It's helping our business. I'd say because there's a lot of new people that are finding fly fishing and because of how we create and price our products, you know, we're focused on being an inclusive company, not to say that a guide or professional can't use our products and actually improve their day on the water because we have that as well. But you know, for, for beginners to come and spend, you know, less money on gear, I think that, that the barrier to entry with us as a company is something that we've been focused on. There's enough, high price stuff out there. And you know, whether it's through our digital marketing or through our content, we've seen a lot of newer anglers come into the sport and they've gravitated to us.

Jason (37m 21s):

I think more because of the simplicity in the way that we talk to them through our digital campaign and through our photographs.

Dave (37m 29s):

Yeah. I'm glad you said that I was going to ask you about that on the customer. I mean, this kind of goes back to just, you know, business one Oh one, but when you think about, you know, your target customer, I mean, obviously it sounds like you guys have a diverse, you know, group of people that, you know, like your products, but who is that person when you think of you? That, that if you had just picture what's that picture look like in your head.

Jason (37m 50s):

And like I said, man, it's, it's guides to beginners. It's everyone we think is super cool about our company is that there's something for everyone with what we design and what we make, you know, maybe pros aren't into our flies because they have their own flies that they tie. And that's great, you know, but they love our drift or they love our laces. They love the wallet because it helps improve their day on the water. You know, we've got a couple of guys that are friends that, you know, Chelsea and John messenger who probably have a half a dozen of our drift or bags between them because they use them for all their clients. And they absolutely love how much gear they can haul and actually knowing exactly where everything is. You know, when they bring in clients to the water,

Dave (38m 30s):

How much gear can you get less? I mean, what do you think about that thing? Like how much, what could you put in there? Like how many pairs of waders could you stuff in That thing

Justin (38m 37s):

You could put a couple of kids in it isn't really that big

Dave (38m 44s):

Now, what is that? I'm not good with the, so what is 95 liters? So like, like what would that be like gallon jugs say gallon jugs of milk or

Justin (38m 53s):

20. Oh, wow. Yeah. My mother-in-law uses it to, you know, haul her groceries from her to her house. So you can put like six or eight bags full of groceries and yeah, it's huge. This is awesome. You know, you don't, if you just throw, if you just throw a pair of waders in there, it would feel, it would, it would feel a little funky, but I mean, mine right now probably has. I mean, obviously it's got a pair of waders, a pair of boots, probably a couple of like warm beers, you know, kinds of jackets and you know, a couple of other smaller bags that I use to organize some stuff that I may or may not need on any given day.

Justin (39m 34s):

So a guide though would probably put, you know, three pairs of waders and three pairs of boots in there. Yeah.

Dave (39m 40s):

Okay. Gotcha. And on and on the warm beers, are you guys more of the type where you could drink a beer? That's been sitting in the bag, it doesn't have to be right.

Justin (39m 48s):

You gotta do what you gotta do something

Dave (39m 51s):

I've totally the way I'll, I'll take. I'll pretty much, I like a nice cold beer, but I'll take whatever. If I find a beer hidden in the back of the car, I wanted to touch on the Montana flight company, because obviously they're a, they're a big name out there before I get to that. I just had a question I was, as I was kind of checking in on you guys and looking at some of your social stuff out there, I noticed, you know, you guys both have like a personal social profile. And I was looking at, you know, Jason, you have like, it's almost all fish photos. And then Justin for you, there's a lot of stuff on, I think years go back years. It goes back quite a ways, but a lot more kind of non fish stuff. And now is that, you know, what, what does that saying? Something about you guys both or is that just a, just a difference of the way you use Instagram?

Justin (40m 34s):

I think I started my Instagram account for fishing and there's always been a designer and he started to existed.

Dave (40m 42s):

It's what it is. Yeah. So I was looking at a lot and it's cool. I mean, they're both awesome. I mean yours. Yeah. Jason, yours is like a pro like a, like a guide and then a and Justin, yours has a lot of cool. It's actually cool. Justin going back two years, because I guess that's the power of Instagram, you know, I don't know. You, we've never talked before this, but going back through your feed and I mean, just trying to get to know you a little bit. I mean, it's pretty cool, right? I mean, you got this kid who now I know now is I think like 10 years old, I'm guessing, you know, you got this. I mean, I don't know for me, I think people think social media, there's a lot of bad stuff about it, but for that, I don't know. That's kind of cool. What's your take on that?

Justin (41m 19s):

Yeah. I mean, that's kind of how I use it. You know, it's more personal. I haven't, I haven't used, I, I look at it all the time and mostly, mostly these days to keep up with what's going on with Dakota and fly fishing, but yeah. You know, it's, for me, it's more about documenting my time with my family and, and then, you know, occasionally, occasionally there's a fish photo that goes on there, but yeah, I, you know, I think it's great. I mean, I think Jason's account, you know, has been good for the business because there's great photography on there, you know, and it, it says a lot about, you know, I probably was standing 10 feet away for a third

Dave (42m 1s):

Or some of those photos. Yeah.

Justin (42m 4s):

But yeah, we're, you know, it's, it's cool when you have friends who are great fishermen, but almost would

rather put, put the rod down and pick up the camera, you know, and it's definitely not all about the, you know, the fish photos for us. I, I hope that comes through on, on the business side of things. You know, it's, it's more about those moments, you know, in between at the, at the truck drinking a beer after the end of the day, on the way, you know, super early in the morning, I think that's the stuff that's more, you know, more interesting. There's a lot of good fish photography out there. So I mean, that's, when you get to know your friends and know people is all those in-between times.

Justin (42m 47s):

Sure. The moment where you're holding a fish up, like that's, that's the apex of, you know, a particular moment, but there's way more space in between then there is when, you know, then the highlight reel and you know what I mean? Yep.

Dave (43m 0s):

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. That's cool. Is your, Justin is your, is your boy, is he in deficient in the fly fishing?

Justin (43m 8s):

Not yet just because he's that age where anything that I think is cool is not cool to him. You know, I'm proud of that, but no, he likes, he'll sit down with me when I'm time flies. And I actually had one of our flight tens that I'm just full of like crazy weird bugs that you and I tied together. I should probably try to fish a few up, but

Dave (43m 29s):

Yeah. Yeah. It's all I always look at. It's like he planted the, the seeds been planted, you know, there's no way that he'll ever, you know, even if he doesn't get into it, I had a brother actually, who was never got into fly fishing. I had three boys, two brothers that were in it. But yeah, it's interesting, man. I mean, I have two kids too, and they're, they're a little bit younger and you know, they're not fully into it yet, but I just, I kind of feel like, yeah, I feel like we do enough camping and stuff and fishing that eventually they probably will. We'll get a little more into it, but either way, it's all good. So I want to touch on this, this Montana. Can you talk about MFC, how that connected cause they're one of the big brands out there, the one of the big names, for sure. How did you guys connect with them and, and, you know, have this product going well,

Justin (44m 11s):

We're tying a lot of these flies ourselves for a while. Then we started using local tires and we literally just could not keep them on the shelf and available to the people that wanted to buy them. And I wound up doing a bunch of legwork speaking with a lot of different companies. And invariably the conversations

Jason (44m 32s):

That I have with Jake chutes over at MFC were they were easy. You know, like we had a great time dreaming together and I pitched them on some pretty crazy ideas and he probably thought that we were crazy, but thus far he has a hundred percent supported our process and has been a proponent of doing

everything in his power to help us get to where we want to be. And that's something that we really appreciate, but you know, we're fortunate to have forged a quality relationship with those guys.

Jason (45m 14s):

They're helping us in, in the ways that they can with fulfillment and taking the patterns that I tie and send to them. And then, you know, our and Dina and making sure that they're replicating them properly and then, you know, providing us with high quality clones of the bugs that I tie. So it's, it's been awesome and we're, we're real grateful for them.

Dave (45m 42s):

Oh, that's great. That's it? I mean, it sounds like, I mean, obviously we all know if you're, if you're in business, it's, you know, kind of the partnerships, the networking, and you guys are figured that out as well. I mean, bringing on a couple of new staff, I mean, do you guys feel like with where you're headed into the next, you know, three, four or five years or so that you're going to have to bring on, you know, more people or do you think you guys, you know, where you're at, you're going to be good to go?

Jason (46m 5s):

Well, we have a staff member right now who handles all the order, fulfillment and inventory management, his name's Steve. He does a great job, you know, lately the speed at which we've been growing with our wholesale has been somewhat overwhelming, but he's been doing, he's been crushed and staying on top of things and you know, the goal is, yeah, certainly I don't necessarily know how many folks that we'd like to have part of the business, because that just means that we're probably growing bigger than we want to be. But, you know, we've kind of have a number in mind is, you know, where things would be comfortable where we can enjoy doing this and, you know, create each day, talk each day, be together.

Jason (46m 49s):

And I'm working on, you know, curating this business. That, that, we're all pretty select on. Nice.

Dave (46m 59s):

Yeah, this is, this is it's. It's cool to hear the story, you know, definitely where your guys are, you know, where you're at now. And I've talked to obviously a number of different people in different ends of the, of the industry. And so, yeah, man, I'm excited to watch you guys and see where you go. What what's next, if you look out say the next, you know, six months or so, anything new, you know, you got coming in, want to give, give a shout out to

Jason (47m 22s):

Lots more flies, more opportunities for people to buy, fly selections that are put for specific

Justin (47m 30s):

Purposes. We have a subscription model. So we have, it's called the quarterly flatten. And if you, if you subscribe to that, you know, you get a five 10 once every three months with usually about 20 flies. And at this point, most, if not, all of those are coming from MFC, but typically two or three of those patterns will be something that you can't get anywhere, you know, anywhere else. So they're, they're patterns that, that we've developed and that's something that we're going to continue growing sort of different iterations of that model, seasonals, boxes and stuff for people.

Justin (48m 11s):

And we have, you know, we have nothing but respect for, you know, the brands that we, that we've always supported, you know, Sims and Patagonia and everyone else out there, but, and, and, you know, we're, we're not, you know, we're not looking to get into the more technical side of the, of the business, but we do have some, some sort of semi-technical apparel that we're working on. That we're pretty excited about uncle

Dave (48m 38s):

Yeah. The, the quarter. So the quarterly 10, I think that's interesting. Cause there's a couple of different companies out there. I'm not sure how many, but they have, I think it's more like the monthly fly box, right. Or something like that. Why'd you guys did choose to correlate. What why did that make sense for you versus say monthly or whatever else?

Justin (48m 56s):

Monthly is a really fast cadence. And, you know, I thought about, and we thought about kind of the, what a customer would prefer and getting something every single month. I bet you after, like your third or fifth month were probably like, all right, I think I've got too much stuff now. Yeah, it's true. You know, Fisher still keying in on the same bugs, basically from one month to the next. And we just felt that we had the ability to create something that kept people engaged, kept their boxes fresh and still gave them a great opportunity to get on the water and catch a bunch of fish.

Justin (49m 38s):

I mean, we often, as a practice, we'll take one of our quarterly flight tins ourselves and not use any of our other bugs and just simply fish out of that box for a day. And, you know, not saying that we're pros because we're definitely not, but any person can pick up that box and have a killer day on the water, whether it's someone who's literally never been fly fishing before up to, you know, our friends that are guides that could definitely fish every single box or every single bug in that box.

Dave (50m 8s):

Yep. That's right. Yeah. And that, and that's part of the challenge, isn't it? I mean, when you guys choose what to put in there does that based on, I mean, are you guys getting some help from the, from MFC or other guides? Are you guys just, is that based mostly on you on your, your stuff?

Justin (50m 24s):

No. It's just, you know, understanding seasonal entomology and understanding bug life and

Jason (50m 28s):

What bugs or, you know, that fish key in on at certain times of the year. I mean, we've been fishing long enough that we, we we've learned a bunch, you know, like we still, every time we go to the water, we still turn over stones to figure out what bugs we're seeing the most of, you know, whether it's big stone flies to, you know, put a big, you know, green machine pad or on, or some of our CDC stones that, you know, can, we can use as a point fly followed by, you know, any sort of Cabot caddis Ninh for larva and then, you know, likely image behind that. So, yeah, honestly, you know, our philosophy of the business is to keep things simple and same thing with fishing and flies.

Jason (51m 10s):

Like there's nothing revolutionary about the flies that we tie. Most of them are simple. And I, every time I speak with Chris Keller over at MSC or Jake, you know, I'm always like, you know, we make simple stuff, like don't laugh at us, but, and they don't of course, you know, and maybe I downplay the effectiveness of it's of their simplicity, but these bugs work, I mean, our purple rain pattern, I've caught more fish on that one fly in the last five to six years than any other fly on my box.

Dave (51m 43s):

What's the purple rain. What, what, what type of bug is that?

Jason (51m 46s):

It's a variation of Lancey against rainbow warrior. Yeah. It's a jig fly. We fish, a lot of jigs were, you know, LinkedIn's a urine infer where the rest of us aren't, we just love using barbless flies and how they hook up with fish, mostly in the upper lip. And more importantly, how it, you know, preserves the fish. It's not ripping their lips apart. You know, there's not barbs in them to damage the fish. And we feel, you know, passionate about protecting a resource. And that includes the handling of, of fish. So when you use a barbless fly, it, it definitely helps to prolong their lives. And most of the time, you know, you get the fish to the net and by the time you're ready to take the hook out, the hook falls out.

Dave (52m 32s):

Exactly.

Jason (52m 34s):

You know, it's just a variation of Lance's original rainbow warrior with different color thread, different color dubbing, and on a different hook.

Dave (52m 42s):

Yup. Yup. That's it, that's it? Yeah. There's a, and obviously the whole year Niffin game, I mean, a lot of those bugs don't necessarily look like anything specific, you know, hot spots and things like that, which is great. So if we're right now, what is it? It's, we're kind of mid February. So I was going to get a new flight tin. You would basically order now and you would get the next one and say like March or April.

Jason (53m 4s):

Yeah. We send them at every three months, every third month of the year. So March, June, September, and December people that are already on the subscription, get their boxes sent out. You know, in the beginning of those months, we tend to open up the ability for new people to jump on. You know, in right now we just opened it up yesterday and on February 10th where we released the spring box. So we've got folks signing up and those people will have their boxes shipped out within a week or two. And then when people subscriptions renew in March, then we'll send out the remainder of the boxes.

Jason (53m 45s):

Gotcha. Gotcha. We must point out. We hand pack every single one of those boxes, just like we hand-make every single pair of laces we sell. So we, we do all the work ourselves and, you know, have a good time doing it lately. You know, we spend a lot of time building product and Steve helps out with building product. And it, it's great to see that the demand increasing, which also means that everything that Lincoln and Robert doing is certainly helping in us expanding as a, as a young company.

Dave (54m 19s):

That's cool. Do you guys ever, you know, since you're so personalized, did you ever do anything to mix it up a little bit, throw in like a, like a note or a piece of chocolate or something in there with the order just to keep it,

Jason (54m 28s):

Yeah. There's a handwritten note with every single order, which has been something that people seem to really appreciate. We can, you know, we can easily look back and we can tell if it's someone's first order or seventh order. And so as people become, you know, that's ordered from us five or six or seven times, we can look back and see maybe like what stickers or if they've ever gotten a pair of laces, you know, it's, it's, it's pretty easy for us to toss in a couple of extra things here and there to make sure people know we're paying attention and appreciate customers. So,

Dave (55m 1s):

Yeah, I love that. I was just thinking, you know, in the, the online space are in business wise. I mean, the, the subscription model is like the Holy grail kind of right. You get these people on, but, but the challenge is, is the churn because you are going to lose people over time. Do you guys find, is that part of the, the strategy to, to keep people on is just providing that custom customer a custom service.

Jason (55m 23s):

I mean, nutritionist part of any business, right? It doesn't matter what business you're involved in. New people are going to come old. People are going to go, but we haven't seen a ton. You know, we've seen small amounts, more due to someone's card expiring and their card not running. Then someone saying that, you know, they have to cancel because they don't like what they're getting. You know, Covid has been a little bit different where some people have lost their jobs and they've had to pause their subscription because of that. And that's completely understandable. So we're here from whenever, whenever they want to come back. And maybe they've learned enough through, you know, when we send out a quarterly 10, we put together a thoughtful email that explains how to use the bugs and how to fish them as well.

Jason (56m 5s):

As, you know, Justin puts together a diagram that helps each person identify every single bug in the box. So we're providing the tools that hopefully are grooming anglers to learn more about entomology and how to fish. And maybe they've just gotten to the point where they feel comfortable now, maybe going into a flower shop and buying these on their own, which is fantastic.

Dave (56m 26s):

Well, okay, cool. Well, we're gonna, I'm gonna let, let Jason adjusted take us out of here. You guys. So while each of you do your own, take us out, or do you want to do it both at the same time? How do you wanna do this?

Jason (56m 37s):

Yeah, I don't know about that, but thanks for having us on, it's been fun talking about our company. It's the first time we've we've been able to do so, and we're all grateful for the opportunity to, to be interviewed by you. So thank you very much. Yeah. Thanks Dave. Much appreciated and thanks for doing what you do.

Dave (56m 57s):

So there you go. If you want to find all the show notes, all links, we covered, just go to wet flight, swing.com/two zero one. I gotta let that sink in a little bit. Two zero one, it's a, another milestone. We just passed 200 episodes. And I, every time we get hit, one of these big ones, it just makes me appreciate kind of where we've come from. And the fact that we haven't missed a week in a, since 2017, since we started this thing. So just want to let you know, you are the reason why I was able to do this, and I'm still doing this. So I want to thank you right now for your support over the years, whether you're a first timer right now, or a long-time listener.

Dave (57m 40s):

Just want to say thanks. I appreciate it. Also want to give you a heads up on a chance to subscribe, especially if you're brand new, you haven't subscribed to this podcast is the best chance. If you hit that subscribe button, you'll get the next, you'll get updated when the next podcast is out. And right now I'm not

quite sure which one is coming up next. I know we've had a pretty busy spring, but yeah, click it. And you can know, and if you don't want to listen, you don't have to, but it's the best way to keep up to date when we have these great episodes that are coming up here. So thanks for doing that. If you have a chance, that's a rough want to thank you again for stopping by today, to share some time with me, with us on this, on this chat, we've got another little thing going on here.

Dave (58m 26s):

There's a new app out there called clubhouse, and it's kind of like in beta mode. So it's not open to everybody right now, but if you are familiar with the clubhouse app, check, check me out on there. We're going to be doing some cool stuff. Potentially. We'll likely some live shows and things like that, where you can ask questions, you know, live on the air while we're going. So we're kind of stepping it up, getting out of that comfort zone if you will, and then doing some cool stuff. So definitely looking forward to catching up with you hopefully soon and maybe see you on the river or online. Thanks for listening to the wet fly swing five fishing show for notes and links.

Dave (59m 6s):

From this episode, visit [wet fly, swing.com](http://wetfly.swing.com).