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**World’s Greatest Comeptitive Eater Kobayshi and T.H.E.M.’s Neil Kozarsky… the not-so-odd couple**

**It’s All About Performance and commitment to excellence**

The President of T.H.E.M., Neil Kozarsky, often travels the globe far and wide in search of innovative packaging technologies to introduce to the American marketplace. That mission resulted in over a hundred trips to Japan, and a comfort level communicating and doing business with the Japanese. That’s why Neil got a call from a good friend in the sports/entertainment industry who wanted to book the legendary, Japan-based Takeru Kobayashi for a competitive eating event in Philadelphia back in 2011. A first meeting tied to that project went well, additional support was lent to the event, and before long, Neil forged an unlikely friendship with the global celebrity, Kobayashi. This alliance, developed amongst two men from seemingly polar opposite backgrounds, materialized because both share similar values – a commitment to preparation, performance and excellence. An otherwise unthinkable friendship has blossomed between the dynamic CEO and the competitive eating sensation because both possess an unending desire for achievement. They each believe in their noteworthy endeavors, hold themselves to the highest standards and endure at the top of their respective fields.

The indomitable Japanese competitive eater held the acclaimed title of Coney Island Nathan’s hot dog eating champion for six consecutive years. But he is no one-trick pony. His illustrious career has been validated by becoming the champion of devouring several other diverse foods including wings, meatballs, hamburgers, pasta and Twinkies. He rose to prominence on July 4, 2001 when he ate 50 hot dogs and shattered the previous Nathan’s Coney Island hot-dog eating contest record of 25. He is truly a beacon for the sport with a ferocious will to win.

Both Kozarsky and Kobayashi understand the importance of preparation and hard work. The battle is won before Kozarsky steps in the innovative packaging arena or Kobayashi steps to the competitive “dinner table.” Throughout the year and especially prior to competition, Kobayashi maintains a rigorous training regimen that involves grueling weight training. This pays dividends by increasing his metabolism and keeping him in tip-top shape to perform at the highest level during competitions. His disciplined training and highly specific bulking diet has resulted in dominating victories over his competitors. This uncompromising approach is paralleled by T.H.E.M.’s propensity for reinventing global packaging trends and continually evolving as a leading edge company. It resulted in their introduction of the stick pack to the North American market. Kobayashi is constantly searching for different food competitions just as Neil and T.H.E.M. continue to seek new technologies and forms of packaging to bring to consumers and product manufacturers. The parallels are considerable and this unlikely friendship validates the notion that hard work and strong preparation can be ingredients for success in any field, from innovative packaging to competitive eating.

“I was really impressed by Kobayashi’s desire to succeed no matter what the challenge,” said Neil Kozarsky, President of T.H.E.M. “He really shares my worldview that innovation, a strong work-ethic, determination and mental resolve all pay off in the end. We’ve worked hard to achieve the type of success we’re having at T.H.E.M. and the commitment to excellence that Kobayashi embodies really resonated with me.”

T.H.E.M. is approaching 40 years of providing proven packaging system solutions to the world’s leading consumer goods companies. Kobayashi has more than a decade of experience dominating competitive eating. Neither T.H.E.M nor Kobayashi subscribe to the theory of doing one thing great instead of doing a lot of things good. They think it’s possible to be great in many aspects and they’ve exemplified this by diversifying their skill sets and achieving the highest form of excellence in a wide-ranging group of areas in their respective professions. T.H.E.M. has been a leader in packaging trends, innovative formats and complementary support technologies for an array of international markets. Kobayashi has been victorious in the mecca of competitive eating at the Coney Island Nathan’s hot dog eating contest, but has also been successful consuming fourteen Twinkies in a minute; 58 bratwurst sausages in 10 minutes; and 41 lobster rolls in 10 minutes.

“It was terrific to be able to see how packaging is really made,” Kobayashi said. “So many fonts, images and shapes – the imagination that goes into creating something that looks good and is also packaged to be most minimal and useful, is exactly what I aspire to be when I package myself to eat.”

They are both innovators. T.H.E.M. helped create a revolutionary packaging innovation that combines the best features of traditional paperboard cartons with the convenience and functionality of zippered pouch packaging, the Zipbox. To expedite the eating process, Kobayashi pioneered the Solomon method where he breaks each hot dog in two, dips them into water and then stuffs both halves in his mouth.

Kobayashi is often the smallest amongst competitors in a sport where size was once perceived as a prerequisite for success. He is listed at 5 feet, 8 inches and 128 pounds, but has bested competition like former 350 pound NFL star William “The Refrigerator” Perry. T.H.E.M., a medium-sized company, has a similar track record of defying the odds and rising above the strongest of competitors. There’s a misconception that the giant corporations in the packaging world are the only ones eligible to achieve major success, but this is not necessarily true and T.H.E.M. has proved it.

Both T.H.E.M. and Kobayashi believe their best work has yet to come. They will continue to work hard, prepare rigorously and compete with more determination than before, to achieve peak success in their respective fields.

**About T.H.E.M.**

T.H.E.M. (Technical Help in Engineering and Marketing) was founded in 1973 as one of the first providers of innovative packaging solutions in North America. The company is best known for commercializing Sanko Stick Packaging in the U.S. Working in conjunction with select packaging and equipment manufacturers, T.H.E.M. offers a comprehensive array of packaging solutions designed to take brands from initial concept to full-scale national or global production. T.H.E.M. has a fully operational, on-site R&D center located at its Marlton, New Jersey headquarters, with pilot production to scale-up capabilities. For more information, please visit: [www.them.net](http://www.them.net).