

Skins picks Boulder as its U.S. hub

Australian company planning aggressive national expansion

By [Alicia Wallace \(Contact\)](#)
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An Australian developer of cutting-edge athletic clothing has chosen to make its North American landfall in Boulder.

Sydney-based Skins is expected to announce today its launch into the U.S. market with Boulder as the headquarters for those operations. The 5-year-old company signed a lease at 5700 Flatirons Parkway, Suite B, where its offices and its warehouse for nationwide distribution will be located.

The city by the Flatirons came to mind as the perfect fit for Skins, said Patricia Babka, Skins' general manager for the Americas. Skins' garments — through a patented gradient-compression technology — are designed to improve circulation and provide performance, recovery and therapeutic benefits.

Boulder "has such a great number of not only active people, but elite athletes," she said. "(Skins) wouldn't go anywhere else, in my mind."

The establishment of Skins USA is another step in the expansion of the company that has products in 850 stores in Australia and more than 300 stores in the United Kingdom — a market where it launched last year.

The company, which brought in about \$16 million last year in sales, has its sights set on aggressive growth for the United States. The Skins sales force has been meeting with specialty retailers nationwide, efforts that could result in more than 300 specialty retail stores picking up the product by year's end, Babka said. Locally, Outdoor DIVAS, Fleet Feet and the Boulder Running Co. are expected to carry the products.

Along with making a U.S. version of the Web site www.skins.net and adding more stores, the company hopes to make a splash this spring with a national advertising campaign that will include television spots.

The anticipation is that the United States will be one of Skins' largest markets, she said, adding that the company already has a client base that includes Olympic athletes, cyclists, skiers and some members of the NFL, NBA and MLS.

Cari Higgins, a Boulder-based professional cyclist for Cody Racing, said she was attracted to the product because the technology behind the design was different than the skinware or leggings on the market.

"Boulder seems to set trends for the rest of the athletes in the United States," she said. "I think that will help direct a line of dialogue between the athletes and the company. You would never, ever, get that with a mass-produced company."

While athletes are one market, Skins' potential stretches much further, Babka said. The products, which have the endorsement of the Australian Physiotherapy Association, are expected to get a similar thumbs-up from the American Physical Therapy Association.

"Anybody with a pulse can benefit from Skins," Babka said.

And that includes a member of the vice president's Secret Service, who told the Camera that he wears the garments for standing on his feet for hours at a time, working out and taking long flights for his job.