

# Skooba-“totes” Suits

Founded in 1923 in the Cincinnati suburb of Oakley, So-Lo Marx Rubber Company moved in 1942 to Loveland, Ohio. Chicago businessman Brad Philips bought the firm in 1961 and renamed it Totes Incorporated after its flagship product, rubber overshoes. The name “totes” was originally chosen to emphasise how lightweight, handy and portable these rainboots were (totes, n.d.).

So-Lo Marx prided itself on the popularity, convenience and quality of its goods. The company made “the World’s Largest Selling seamless gum rubber waterproof wear for men, women, children and sportsmen”. Its slogan “easy on, easy off”, first applied to totes rubber footwear, was also listed as an advantage of the Skooba-“totes” diving suit, itself billed as “the World’s Finest Dry Suit”. Every Skooba-“totes” product was “backed by a 100% factory guarantee of satisfaction”.

## Skooba-“totes” Facts

Apart from sealing rings, rails and tubing, Skooba-“totes” suits and accessories were all made from pliable, smooth, seamless, tear-resistant, stretchy “pure gum rubber”. The basic suit cost around one-third of the price of a lined neoprene wet suit, which could serve as an undergarment instead of one or two pairs of long underclothing. The suit equipped wearers to dive longer in deeper and colder waters. Tom Rose’s account of its use in ice diving (Rose, n.d.) pays tribute to its thermal qualities when used with long underwear and undertaking strenuous work. After extensive research, William Sewell of Customworks Ltd of Boise, Idaho, currently manufactures a high-quality clone version of the Skooba-“totes” full-length waist-entry dry suit in three sizes, Medium, Large and Extra Large (PRWeb™, 2006; Customworks, 2006).



Detail from a “totes” suit ad (Gable, 2006)

- The man and the woman on the left are wearing Skooba-“totes” suits in solid red and “safety yellow”. The yellow version was dubbed the “Golden Tiger”. Solid green and brown were other colour options at different stages of the suit’s history.
- The basic suit, costing around \$20, was a full-length two-piece garment comprising footed pants and hooded shirt. A three-piece model with separate shirt and hood was also available. For a further \$10, a professional version offered reinforced feet and other refinements. For milder weather, there was the option of a yellow Apollo-“totes” short-sleeved shirt, which could be worn with matching swim trunks. Other accessories included protective boots, gloves with tapered wrists, a patch kit and a range of rings, rails and tubing designed to effect a watertight waist seal.
- Skooba-“totes” suits came in five sizes, Extra Small, Small, Medium, Large and Extra Large:

Size chart for Skooba-“totes” suits			
Sizes	Waist	Height	Weight
X- Small	24-32	5' 2"-5' 7"	110-135
Small	30-34	5' 5"-5' 9"	135-160
Medium	32-36	5' 7"-6'	155-180
Large	34-38	5' 10"-6' 1"	175-210
X- Large	36-40	6'-6'4"	200-240

## References

1. Customworks (2006) *Diving old style MOLDED dry suits*, <http://www.replicadrysuit.com>
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3. Gene Gable (2006) *Scanning around with Gene: Scuba Diver Chic*, <http://www.creativepro.com/story/feature/23839.html>
4. Tom Rose (n.d.) *Desperation drives us to ice diving and almost kills me*, <http://www.atlimp.com/icedive.htm>
5. PRWeb™ (2006) *They're back--the all rubber dry suits popular in the 50's are available for collectors and users alike*, <http://pdfserver.prweb.com/pdfdownload/336825/pr.pdf>
6. So-Lo Marx Rubber Co. (n.d.) *Skooba-“totes”: World's Finest Dry Suit*, Loveland, OH: So-Lo Marx.
7. Submarine Products (n.d.), *Underwater Catalogue*, Hexham, Northumberland: Submarine Products.
8. Totes Isotoner Corporation (n.d.) *totes story*, [http://tidir.com/about\\_us.html](http://tidir.com/about_us.html).

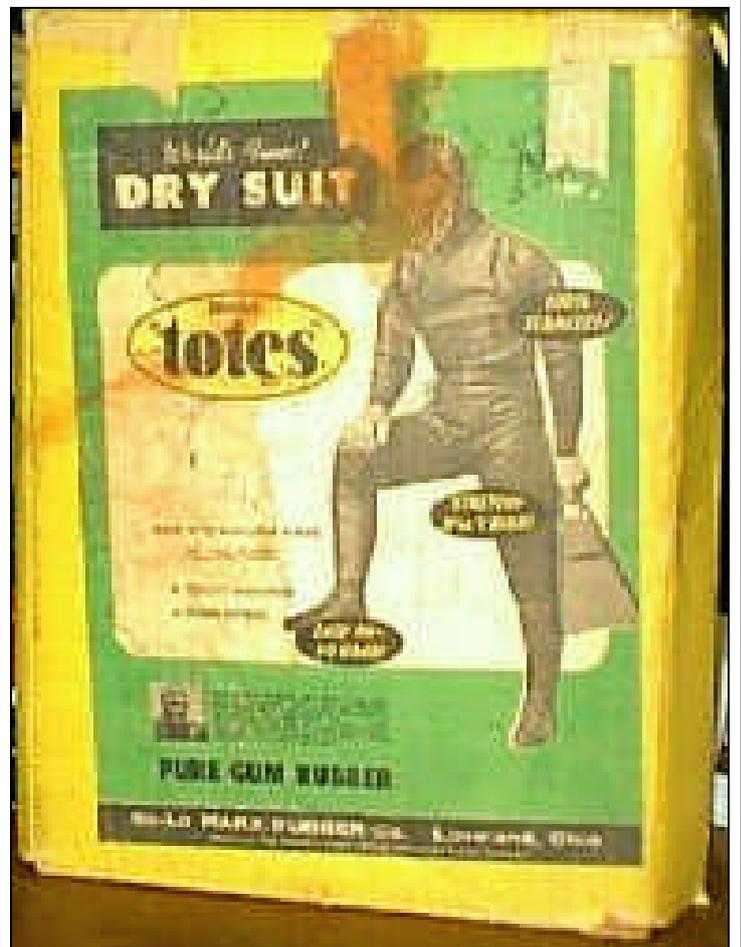


**THE NEW SKOOBA SKIN**—Made of gum rubber, the suit is remarkably tough and will withstand plenty of abuse. Easy to get into this new suit has not one seam. It can be stretched up to eight times its size without damage. Shown above is the standard three piece suit consisting of a seamless hood, seamless long pants with feet and seamless long shirt. No talc is needed to assist in putting on the suit as the rubber is a smooth anti-grab type developed by Joe J. Marx of Loveland, Ohio, long-time manufacturer of a complete line of waterproof rubber footwear, waders and suits. Price of the Skooba suit—\$34.95 in major diving shops throughout the country. For further information on the suit write: Mr. Joe J. Marx, So-Lo Marx Rubber Co., Loveland, Ohio.

Displayed above is another So-Lo Marx Rubber Co. advertisement, courtesy of Bill Sewell of Customworks Ltd of Boise Idaho, whose modern “Hydroglove” line of latex drysuits replicates the Skooba-“totes” model. The advertisement highlights the “totes” suit’s fitness for purpose, ease of use, seamlessness and durability. It also sets the suit in the context of the company’s full range of rubber goods.

On the right are illustrations of the outer and inner packaging of yellow Skooba-“totes” diving suits. The pictures date from summer 2005, when two “new old stock” suits were auctioned on eBay. One wonders how many more Skooba-“totes” suits may be out there, stored in attics or garages, relics of an older generation of skin and scuba divers who planned to pursue their favourite pastime all the year round in relative comfort.

The exact dates when production of Skooba-“totes” suits began and ended are a matter of conjecture. However, period diving equipment catalogues and advertisements in books and magazines suggest that they were on sale in the United States and, in their dark green version, in the United Kingdom, in the early and mid-1960s. After contacting the “totes” company, Bill Sewell found out that the original tooling used to manufacture the product line is very likely to have been sold as scrap.



The outer packaging of a Skooba “Totes” suit



The inner packaging of a Skooba “Totes” suit



World's Finest Dry Suit

# WARMER than any other suit!

You stay comfortable in water temperatures from freezing upward. That's not all. With this suit there is no "cold shock" when you get in the water and no "evaporation chill" when you're out of water in the cold wind.

Made of pure gum rubber, 100% seamless! Tough! Hard to rip or snag. Yet they are pliable and stretchy. Won't bind arms, legs. Easy to put on too! The smooth, anti-grab rubber pulls on like a sweater. No talc is needed. Tapered wrists and contoured face provide watertight seals.

With this completely dry, warm suit . . . you can dive longer, deeper, and in coldest water. Even the "wet suit" boys are turning to this warmer, more comfortable way to dive. Compare with suits selling at double their prices—and more!



EASY ON -  
NO TALC  
NEEDED

STRETCHY  
WON'T  
BIND

TOUGH!  
HARD TO  
RIP OR  
SNAG!

100%  
SEAMLESS  
PURE GUM  
RUBBER!

New!  
Double-  
Reinforced  
Non-skid  
feet.

Suit includes Hood, Shirt, Pants with foot and Speed Patch Kit. Color: Brown.  
#2020-K (with separate hood)  
#2120-K (with hood and shirt in one piece)

**\$ 29.95**  
Retail

Formerly \$34.95

## "WORLD'S FINEST DRY SUIT!"



Says Ernie Ryckman, commercial diver of Key West, Florida: "The Skooba-'totes' tough, seamless rubber makes it the ideal suit for rough salvage work . . . or for pleasure diving. The only suit for diving at greater depths and in coldest water. I wouldn't work for hours underwater without Skooba-'totes' and, there's nothing like it on the market at any price."

## YOUR GUARANTEE

Skooba-'totes' are made by the makers of the World's Largest Selling seamless gum rubber waterproof wear for men, women, children and sportsmen. Every Skooba-'totes' product is backed by a 100% Factory Guarantee of Satisfaction.

## LOOK! COMPARE!

No Other Suit Offers All These:

- EASY TO PUT ON...even without talc because it's made of special anti-grab pure gum rubber.
- NO SEAMS to rip... NO LEAKS!
- TOUGH! Hard to snag or rip—because they S-T-R-E-T-C-H!
- 100% FACTORY GUARANTEED!
- CONTROLLED WARMTH! For extreme cold wear two suits of underwear.
- BETTER FIT! 5 sizes to choose from and they stretch to fit perfectly... yet won't bind.
- NOT A KIT! A ready-made suit complete and ready to dive.
- TAPERED WRISTS and contoured face to provide water-tight seals—won't cut circulation.

SIZE	WAIST	HEIGHT	WEIGHT
Extra Sm.	24 to 32	5'3" to 5'7"	110 to 135
Small	30 to 34	5'5" to 5'9"	125 to 160
Medium	32 to 36	5'7" to 6'	155 to 190
Large	34 to 38	5'10" to 6'1"	175 to 210
Extra Large	36 to 40	6'0" to 6'4"	200 to 240

Made and Guaranteed by  
**So-Lo MARX RUBBER Co., Loveland, Ohio**

The front side of a Skooba-"totes" advertising flyer (So-Lo Marx, n.d.)

This side of the flyer illustrates a brown professional Skooba-"totes" suit comprising footed pants and hooded shirt. There was also a separate-hood version. A patch kit came as standard. One improvement to the original suit was the fitting of "double-reinforced non-skid feet".

"Skooba-"totes" claim to be the "World's Finest Dry Suit" was endorsed by a commercial diver in Key West, Florida, Ernie Ryckman, who recommended the suit for extended periods of deep- and cold-water professional and recreational diving.

So-Lo Marx sets particular store here by value for money and the quality of its materials and workmanship. The suit is easy to put on without talc. It is manufactured from tough, stretchy, anti-grab, tear-resistant, seamless "pure gum rubber". It fits well because there are five sizes to choose from and the tapered wrists and contoured face provide watertight seals without cutting circulation. It was delivered in ready-to-dive condition at an affordable price with a factory guarantee.



NEW GOLDEN TIGER SKOوبا "totes"

\$19.95

IN SAFETY YELLOW

Solid bright yellow gum rubber for top-water safety. A beauty! Made lighter. No sacrifice in toughness, stretch, or ease in putting on. Don't let the price fool you. This suit compares with others at \$35.00 and more. 100% Factory Guaranteed.

#2020 suit includes: shirt, pants ... \$19.95

#2130 includes: hooded shirt, pants \$22.95

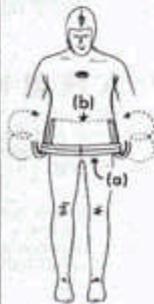
\$2027-H Seamless Hood Only ... \$ 3.00



SIZE CHART

SIZES	WAIST	HEIGHT	WEIGHT
Extra Sm.	24 to 22	5'2" to 5'7"	110 to 135
Small	30 to 24	5'5" to 5'9"	135 to 160
Medium	32 to 26	5'7" to 6'	155 to 180
Large	34 to 28	5'10" to 6'1"	175 to 210
Extra Large	36 to 40	6'0" to 6'4"	200 to 240

HOW TO MAKE WAIST SEAL



USING RING AND RAIL #21. Put on pants first. Fold top of pants down to (a) leaving fold at waist (b). Next, put on shirt and pull down as far as it will go.

Next, place rail over shirt and pants at base of hips as shown. Fold shirttail up over rail. Then fold pants up over rail on top of shirt. Keep both shirt and pants free from wrinkles.

Grasp the rail with shirt and pants stretched over it and twist it inward and upward ONE COMPLETE TURN (360°) toward waist. Put ring on to hold suit in groove of rail and the seal is complete.

USING WAIST-SEAL TUBE #30. After adjusting shirt tail and pants top to (a) as described above place TUBE over shirt and pants near bottom edge of shirt tail. Then fold edges of shirt and pants up over tube. Grasp tube (with shirt and pants stretched over it) and roll upward to waist. Keep free from wrinkles and this will provide a highly satisfactory seal. NOTE: You can trim RAIL to size desired with hack saw and miter box as guide.

#2022 SWIM TRUNK SKOوبا "totes" Form-fitting, pure gum rubber swim trunks. Just like swimming with no suit. Easy on—easy off. No buckles or drawstrings. Won't pull off when diving. Provides more support than cloth suits. Dries in seconds out of water. Sizes: Small, Medium, Large. Color: Brown. Retail ..... \$4.95 ea. #2022-Y (Same as above but Safety Yellow)



#401-3D SHORE BOOT SKOوبا "totes" Seamless, pure gum rubber boots. Extra reinforced to protect suit and feet against sharp rocks and other shore litter. Pliable form-fitting! Fits comfortably into fins or ski bindings. Sizes: Small (7 1/2 to 8 1/2), Medium (9 to 10), Large (10 1/2 to 12) Color: Blending Brown with Black reinforcing. Retail Price..... \$2.50 pair



#2023 RIVER'S GLOVE SKOوبا "totes" Pliable, pure gum rubber gloves with tapered wrist seal. Soft enough to pick up tiny objects. Rough-grip outer surface. Protect hands from coral and other sharp objects. Wear over wool gloves in coldest waters. Sizes: Small, Medium and Large. Color: Brown with black rough-grip, outer surface. Retail Price..... \$3.50 pair



#21 WAIST RING AND RAIL

Positive seal for professional waist entry suits. Easiest of all seals to apply. Holds suit away from waist for easy in-labelling air from suit. Consists of hard rubber rail with stainless, spring steel prongs, and stretchy rubber ring. Rail can be trimmed to fit any waist size. SIZES Small, Medium, Large, Extra Large. Retail ... \$5.25 per set



#30 WAIST SEAL TUBING

A pliable ring of stretchy, pure gum rubber tubing. Can be trimmed to fit any waist size perfectly. Recommended for making shirt and pants roll on waist entry suits. Lightweight! Provides added compression making extra water-tight roll. SIZES Small, Medium, Large, Extra Large. Retail .. \$1.95



#229-3 QUICK PATCH KIT

For permanent, on-the-spot repairs in case of accidental damage. Contains BIG 2 oz. tube of quick drying waterproof cement especially compounded for repairs on pure gum rubber, and a large piece of brown gum rubber patching material. Retail Price ..... \$1.00



#229-1Y (Same as above but Safety Yellow)

Form No. 3 60

So-Lo MARX RUBBER Co. Loveland, Ohio

The reverse side of a Skooba-“totes” advertising flyer (So-Lo Marx, n.d.)

This side of the flyer shows the basic “Golden Tiger” Skooba-“totes” suit in safety yellow and provides directions for sealing the suit at the waist using the excess shirt and pants material folded over a tube or rail. The page also displays several accessories, purchasable separately.

- “Form-fitting pure gum rubber swim trunks” were available in brown or safety yellow colours and small, medium and large sizes. They were easy to don and doff, dried rapidly after leaving the water and provided greater support than their textile counterparts.
- Short boots could be bought in three sizes (small, medium, large) in “blending brown” reinforced with black to protect the feet of the suit. They were designed to fit comfortably into fins or water-ski bindings.
- Small, medium and large brown pliable gloves with tapered wrist seals were offered with roughened black palms to aid finger dexterity.
- There were waist rings, rails and tubing to make seals extra watertight, and a patch kit for on-the-spot repairs.



## Thermal Principle Keeps You Warm



Commercial divers say, "Skooba-'totes' hold body heat in . . . keep you 100% dry. Long underwear provides thermal air space and absorbs perspiration. With Skooba-'totes' there is no 'cold shock' when you get in the water . . . no 'evaporation chill' when you're out. You see **WARM** is or out.

**LOOK! COMPARE!** No other suit offers all this • Easy to put on—even without tail because made of special anti-grab pure gum rubber. Feel the difference. • No seams to rip . . . no leaks! • Tough! Hard to snag or rip. • Controlled warmth! For extreme cold, wear two suits of underwear. • Better Fit! 5 sizes to choose from and they stretch to fit perfectly . . . yet won't bind. • Not a kit! A ready made suit—complete and ready to dive. • 100% Factory Guaranteed.

**PROFESSIONAL SKOوبا-'totes'** suit includes Shirt, Hood and Long Pants with feet. Feet are double-reinforced for protection. Color Blending Brown. Choose yours with separate hood or, with hood and shirt in \$29.95 one-piece. Only . . . . .



### New! Apollo-'totes'

For milder weather wear this new short-sleeve shirt. Seamless, pure gum rubber. Pulls on like a sweater. Covers to your hips. \$9.95

Matching Swim Trunks . . . . .

**AT MOST SKIN DIVING SUPPLY STORES.** Write So-Lo Mark Rubber Co., Dept. SD-5, Loveland, Ohio for Free catalog and sample of stretchy gum rubber.

A Skooba-"totes" advertisement

This advertisement is designed to market "professional" Skooba-"totes" suits, which feature a "blending brown" colour, "double-reinforced" feet and the choice of an integrated or separate hood. The main selling points are the warmth and the dryness of the suits when combined with long underwear. These higher-priced suits were intended for commercial divers.

For milder weather, another option was a safety-yellow, "shorty" Apollo-"totes" suit, comprising a short-sleeved shirt with matching swim trunks.

## For Deepest Dives In Coldest Water



*America's Largest Sellers*

### THERMAL PRINCIPLE KEEPS YOU WARM!

Commercial divers say Skooba-  
"totes" hold body heat in . . . keep  
you 100% dry. Long underwear pro-  
vides thermal air space and absorbs  
perspiration. With Skooba-"totes"  
there is no "cold shock" when you  
get in the water . . . no "evaporation  
chill" when you're out.



### LOOK! COMPARE!

No Other Suit Offers All This: Easy to  
put on even without talc because made  
of special anti-grab pure gum rubber.  
Feel the difference • No seams to rip . . .  
no leaks! • Tough; Hard to snag or rip  
• Controlled warmth! • Better Fit! 5 sizes  
to choose from and they stretch, won't  
bind • Not a kit • Complete, ready to  
dive • 100% satisfaction is guaranteed.

**FREE!** Sample Of Amazing Pure Gum Rubber  
Stretch it . . . feel the difference. See for  
yourself why Skooba-"totes" are so popular.  
Just send your name, address to:

So-Le Marx Rubber Co., Dept. H1, Loveland, Ohio



**GOLDEN TIGER SKOوبا-**  
"totes". Illustrated above. In  
bright safety yellow pure gum  
rubber. Includes: Hooded Shirt,  
Pants with feet and  
Speed Patch kit. . . . **\$22.95**  
(Shirt, pants, no hood \$19.95)

**PROFESSIONAL SKOوبا-**  
"totes". Illustrated at left. A  
heavier gauge pure gum rubber  
suit with double-ply reinforced  
feet and other improvements.  
Includes: Hooded Shirt, Long  
Pants with feet, and Patch Kit.  
In Blending  
Brown. . . . . **\$29.95**  
(Separate hood, shirt, optional)

Skooba-"totes" advertisement in a "Skin Diver Handbook" (Borgeson & Speirs, n.d.)

The above advertisement focuses again on the warmth-giving properties of Skooba-"totes" suits worn with long underwear that "provides thermal air space and absorbs perspiration".

Two versions are featured in the advertisement. The first is the "Golden Tiger", named after the bright safety yellow material from which it is made. The second is a higher-priced "Professional" model in "blending brown", manufactured from heavier-gauge rubber with "double-ply reinforced feet" and the option of a separate hood. A free sample of the gum rubber suit material could be obtained by contacting the company.

## SKOOBA “totes”—the world’s finest ‘dry’ suit

Made of pure gum rubber and entirely seamless these tough suits are extremely pliable and stretchy. They are easy to put on too, and hard to rip or snag. The rubber is very smooth and there is no danger of binding arms and legs. Tapered wrists and neck on the tunic give watertight seals, and the separate hood has a contoured face.

For lengthy dives in cold water there is still nothing to beat a “dry” suit. A diver can wear as many sweaters underneath it as he wishes—or best of all a **SUPER TARZAN** as an undersuit, like the French Navy.

**2020P—Dark Green model**—3 piece jumper type suit consisting of trousers with bootees attached, jumper top and hood. Patch kit included. **£12 6s. 3d.**

**30—Rubber tube waist seal**—super stretch rubber tube held with a wooden dowel. Can easily be altered to fit any waist size. **8s. 11d.**

**229—Patch kit**—for permanent “on-the-spot” repairs in case of accidental damage. Contains big 2 oz. tube of quick drying waterproof cement and generous pieces of patching material. **10s. 9d.**

Sizes	Waist	Height	Weight
Extra Small	24" to 32"	5' 2" to 5' 7"	7 st. 12 lb. to 9 st. 9 lb.
Small	30" to 34"	5' 5" to 5' 9"	9 st. 9 lb. to 11 st. 6 lb.
Medium	32" to 36"	5' 7" to 6'	11 st. to 12 st. 12 lb.
Large	34" to 38"	5' 10" to 6' 1"	12 st. 7 lb. to 15 st.
Extra Large	36" to 40"	6' to 6' 4"	14 st. 4 lb. to 17 st.



Submarine Products Ltd Underwater Catalogue description of Dark Green model Skooba-“totes” suit (Submarine Products, n.d.)

Submarine Products Ltd of Hexham in Northumberland was the importer and distributor of Skooba-“totes” suits within the United Kingdom during the 1960s. The illustration above shows a page from the firm’s underwater catalogue. Although the suit was available in all five sizes from extra-small to extra-large, only the dark green model, consisting of booted trousers, jumper top and separate hood, was offered. The suggested “Super Tarzan” undersuit was a wetsuit made by Beuchat et Cie of Marseilles in France from “supple, form-fitting nylon-lined neoprene”, costing £44 1s 9d, well over three times the price of the Skooba-“totes” suit itself. The model wearing the Skooba-“totes” suit is equipped with a “Panoramic” mask, a “Silent V” snorkel and “Parallèles” full-foot fins, all Beuchat products.

Skooba-“totes” suits could also be purchased in England through Submarine Products stockists, e.g. Sub-Aqua Products of Eastleigh and the Whitstable Diving Company of Whitstable, Kent. Submarine Products has since ceased trading.