

BUSINESS MARYLAND

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Opening this fall,
new line that the
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**definitely going to have a
success."**

La Tran, Tran Group

Under Armour offers mouth gear

Product protects jaw, boosts performance, Md. firm says

By Andrea K. Walker

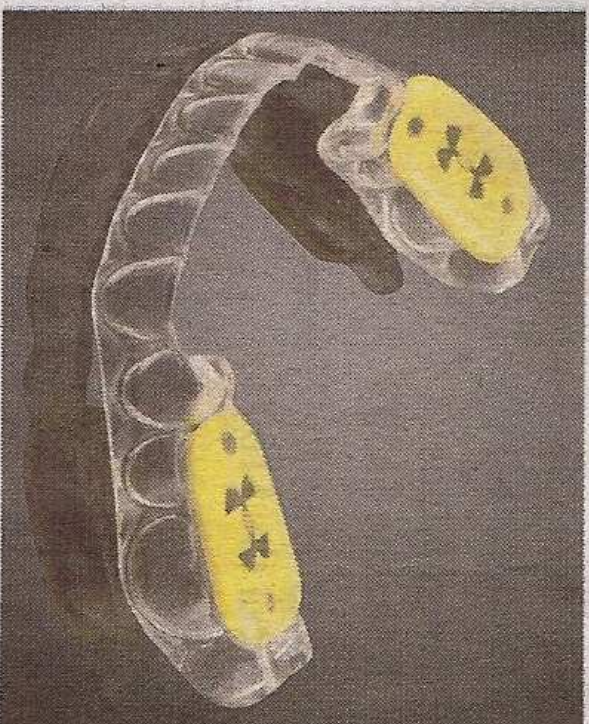
andrea.walker@baltsun.com

The Baltimore sports apparel company Under Armour is introducing a line of mouth gear that it says will not only protect the jaw from hits but will reduce stress to improve athletic performance.

UA Performance Mouthwear was developed by Bite Tech Inc., a Minneapolis company that has researched mouth products for athletes.

The mouthpiece is for noncontact sports such as baseball, running, golf and tennis, and costs \$495. The mouthguard for football, hockey, lacrosse and other contact sports costs \$450.

The mouth products, which are custom-made, can only be bought through Patterson Dental and will be available at the end of the month. According to Patterson's



UNDER ARMOUR PHOTO

The UA Performance mouthpiece is for noncontact sports, such as baseball, golf, tennis, cycling and running.

Web site, the sole Maryland office is in Laurel.

Athletes have been using mouth protective gear for years. Under Armour said its product is different because of its Armour-

Bite Technology, which prevents an athlete's teeth from clenching. Clenching triggers the production of stress hormones such as cortisol, which cause fatigue and can hurt an athlete's performance, the company said.

Andrew Tucker, medical director of Union Memorial Sports Medicine, said he could not comment specifically on Under Armour's products, but if the stress component works, it would be an innovation.

"I want to keep an open mind about it but haven't seen the research that supports it," said Tucker, who is also chief physician for the Baltimore Ravens football team. "I think it would be a novel approach, because I haven't seen these kinds of claims made about mouthguards and mouthpieces as it relates to these potential benefits."

Tucker said studies he has done with the NFL found that mouthguards do little to protect the brain if a player is hit in the head or jaw.