

GOOOOAAAALLL!!!
Big Ticket Items Score

Brace for the Top
Dealer Support Group

Sock Market
Paying Dividends in 2016

Team Tech
Dealers Tell Their Stories

TEAM INSIGHT[®]

NEWS & ANALYSIS OF THE TEAM MARKET

PLAYING IT SAFE

**The battle of the gridiron
continues across America.**

PAID
US POSTAGE
PERMIT # 191
ITHACA, NY

PLUS:
**PART 3: MADE IN
AMERICA STORIES**
SEE PAGE 58





UNDER ARMOUR.

THE TOUGHEST JERSEY WE'VE EVER MADE.

POWERED BY ARMOURGRID® TECHNOLOGY

STRONGER, LIGHTER & VIRTUALLY UNGRABBABLE.

This incredible new football jersey is built with ArmourGrid® technology—the strongest, lightest, most durable fabric in the game. Inspired by the engineering in reinforced concrete, we created it for one reason: to make you ungrabbable on gameday.

The result: **THEY CAN'T HOLD YOU. THEY CAN'T STOP YOU.**



- 1 SIGNATURE HEATGEAR® FABRIC & BUILT-IN MESH**
KEEP YOU COOL, LIGHT & COMFORTABLE ON GAMEDAY.
- 2 4-WAY STRETCH SLEEVES, SHOULDERS & SIDE PANELS**
DELIVER MAXIMUM SPEED & MOBILITY.
- 3 SUPER-DURABLE ARMOURGRID® FABRIC**
IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO GRAB & HOLD.



For more information please visit
TEAM.UNDERARMOUR.COM.



EYE ON THE LINE

WEAR IT LIKE THE PROS
WITH COLLEGIATE FIT JERSEYS

9565

9565

SNAP JERSEY

ADULT S-3XL YOUTH S-XL



9610

9610

INTERCEPTOR PANT

ADULT S-3XL YOUTH XS-XL

9615

9615

FOOTBALL BELT

ADULT/YOUTH



AUGUSTA
SPORTSWEAR®

TEAMS START HERE™ | WWW.AUGUSTASPORTSWEAR.COM | 1.800.237.6695

MAY 2016



FOOTBALL'S NEW GAME PLAN: PAGE 14

Trends 8

Bill Battle Is On Top of His Game; The State of Play in the USA; Rule Makers Meet In Indy

Red Zone 14

The battle of the gridiron is being fought across America.

Strength in Numbers 24

Seven factors that make braces/supports a healthy sports medicine category.

Paying Dividends 32

Dealers and vendors are both bullish on the sock market.

Game Changers 38

Five dealers talk about the impact of technology on their team businesses.

GOOOAAAALLLL!!! 48

Vendors look to score big with new products for 2016.

Quarter-ly Report 54

The forecast for team jackets is for fashion and function.

End Zone 56

Team Dealers To Meet; Shock Doctor Signs Cousins; Stahls' Protects Hotronix



**MADE IN
AMERICA
STORIES**

Part 3 of a series highlighting domestic manufacturing efforts in team sports. Page 58.

On the Cover: Super Bowl MVP Von Miller of the Denver Broncos depends on protection from Zamst braces and supports.

TEAM INSIGHT

Editor

Michael Jacobsen
mjacobsen@formula4media.com
201-396-7005

Editorial Staff

Tim Sitek, Senior Editor
Nancy Baeder, Correspondent
Mike May, Correspondent
Keith Lawrence, Research

Art Director

Francis Klaess

Associate Art Director

Mary McGann

Designer

Brandon Christie

Publisher

Jeff Gruenhut
jgruenhut@formula4media.com
404-467-9980

Advertising

Sam Selvaggio
sselvaggio@formula4media.com
212-398-5021

Mark Sullivan
msullivan@formula4media.com
646-319-7878

Jeff Nott
jnott@formula4media.com
516-305-4711

Troy Leonard
tleonard@formula4media.com
352-624-1561

Beth Gordon
bgordon@formula4media.com
949-293-1378

Production

Michael Jacobsen
mjacobsen@formula4media.com
201-396-7005

Subscriptions

www.teaminsightmag.com

Business Manager

Marianna Rukhvarger
mrukvharger@formula4media.com
516-305-4709

FORMULA4
MEDIA, LLC

PO Box 23-1318
Great Neck, NY 11023
Phone: 516-305-4710; Fax: 516-441-5692
www.formula4media.com

Formula4 Media Publications

Sports Insight
Outdoor Insight
Footwear Insight
Team Insight
Textile Insight
Running Insight
Trend Insight
Inside Insight
sportstyle

Team Insight ©2016 is a trademark of Formula4Media, LLC, Great Neck, New York. All rights reserved. The opinions expressed by authors and contributors to Team Insight are not necessarily those of the editors or publishers. Team Insight is not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or artwork. Articles appearing in Team Insight may not be reproduced in whole or in part without the express permission of the publisher.

Team Insight is published six times each year: January, March, May, July, September and November by Formula4Media, LLC, PO Box 23-1318, Great Neck, NY 11023. Subscriptions: one year, \$24.00 (U.S. Funds) in the United States. All other countries, \$54.00 (U.S. Funds) for surface mail.

Pukka

THE INDUSTRY'S #1 SOURCE FOR CUSTOM KNIT HEADWEAR

PROGRAM DETAILS: 24-PIECE MINIMUM (12 PER COLOR)
• UNMATCHED FLEXIBILITY • NO SET-UP CHARGES
• 30-DAY PRODUCTION • FREE FREIGHT

**NEW MARLED KNIT
CUFFED BEANIES**
Now Available



PUKKAINC.COM | 877.345.5110

FOLLOW US @PUKKAINC



www.hollowayusa.com



1-800-331-5156



 HOLLOWAY®

THE NEW RAIDER PULLOVER

In-Stock, Deep in Inventory, 10 colors, the
hottest new piece to sell now!



Examining the Wreckage

All of those retail bankruptcies are a lesson for the team business.



The real impact of these retail closings should be in lessons learned ... and they should serve as a warning for smaller team dealers.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

It's May. Time for warmer weather, baseball season, heading outdoors for some exercise and, in 2016, retail bankruptcies.

It is certainly a spring of discontent in sports retailing, but the problems actually began back in the winter when City Sports closed because it ran out of money. Then came the biggie, with Sports Authority filing for bankruptcy. And last month came news of the closing of all Sport Chalet stores as a precursor to a bankruptcy filing.

We don't write a lot about the big-box retailers in this magazine – we leave that to our sister publication, *Sports Insight* – but the recent spate of financial problems among the largest chains undeniably is having an impact on smaller team dealers.

What exactly is going on here? The reasons are many – a shift in buying habits, Internet selling, too many stores, bad financial decisions – but the bottom line is that hundreds of retail locations have shuttered in the past six months, leaving vendors to try to collect on orders already shipped. It also left consumers searching for places to shop.

For team dealers, the impact will vary depending on location. Those that competed with a neighborhood Sports Authority will undoubtedly

pick up some customers, but those buyers are used to thousands of square feet of sports apparel and equipment. The typical team dealer cannot, and really does not want to, compete with those expectations.

None of those stores going out of business had much of an impact on the team business. The big-boxes have tried with varying degrees of success to sell to schools and leagues, primarily through team rooms. Their reach has been minimal and a minor part of their business. It is telling that among the first casualties of Sports Authority's bankruptcy were 16 members of its team sales unit at its Colorado HQ.

The real impact of these retail closings should be in lessons learned, because the financial problems of these seemingly smart and savvy businesses should serve as a warning for everyone.

Remember, our business was hit with its own rash of bankruptcies earlier in the year and more are certainly on the horizon as the shift in the team sports model continues. Add in the impending financial problems of some of our major vendors left on the hook by the retail bankruptcies and the full impact surely won't be felt until later in the year.

Smaller team dealers who have

seen these retail behemoths infringe on their local territories can certainly be excused for engaging in a bit of schadenfreude, but it is certainly no time to gloat. Whether big-box retail or a mom-and-pop dealer, we are all in this together in a changing sports environment.

So perhaps the number one lesson to be learned is something team dealers already practice every day – do what you do best. All of these bankrupt chains got too big or strayed from what got them there in the first place. Some expanded out of their home markets too fast, others grew primarily for the sake of growth. All of them failed to accurately gauge the full impact of the changing shopping habits of American consumers.

So even though the team business has had its own financial challenges, at least we can learn from the mistakes made by our retail brethren. Know what you do best – serve local schools and sports programs with personal service and product knowledge – and adapt to the changes in our little world of team sports.

And feel free to pick up a little business at the expense of these bankrupt competitors. After all, they are no longer in business. But you still are. ●

#1 CHOICE FOR FULL CONTACT SPORTS

STAHL'S THERMO-FILM® PRE-CUT NUMBERS

A JERSEY ALONE MIGHT LOOK GOOD,
BUT IT'S THE NUMBER STYLE THAT MAKES THEM LOOK GREAT.

Order the toughest heat transfer material at tinyurl.com/stahls-film

S STAHL'S STAHL'S.COM | 800.4.STAHL'S

A photograph of a football player wearing a blue jersey with the number 38 in white with red outlines. The player is wearing a blue helmet and a red wristband.

NUMBER:
10-inch
Titan Stenciled
Pre-Spaced
on Titan Pre-Cut
Background
White Thermo-FILM®
on Red Poly-TWILL™

T10516

Uni-Sport
One world, One passion.

Athletic Heat Transfer Graphics

SOCCER BASEBALL BASKETBALL LACROSSE TRACK & FIELD VOLLEYBALL HOCKEY CUSTOM

GEAR UP



WHO SAID GIRLS AREN'T TOUGH?

PROVIDING YOU WITH PROFESSIONAL ON FIELD QUALITY



Custom Logos / Pro-Weave / Uni-Print / Pro-Flex / Pro-Lite / Eco-Block
Team sport numbers - official name and number sets - ball customization
310-217-4587 or visit our website at www.uni-sport.com

On Top of His Game

Hall of Famer Bill Battle reflects on his career and his AD role at Alabama.



Hall of Famer Bill Battle has been in the middle of many celebrations in his role as athletic director at the University of Alabama.

Bill Battle has seen it all in his decades-long career in sporting goods. Now the athletic director at the University of Alabama, Battle is being inducted into the Sporting Goods Hall of Fame during the NSGA Management Conference and Team Dealer Summit in Hilton Head Island, SC, this month. Here he looks back on his long career and his high-profile role with the Crimson Tide.

Team Insight: What was your reaction when you found out you were being inducted into the Sporting Goods Hall of Fame?

Bill Battle: I was definitely humbled and very pleased to get the call. I immediately thought about giants in the industry like Mickey Newsome, Marty Jacobsen, Neil Stillwell, Jack Smith and so many others. It is a terrific honor and I am very proud to be named as a part of that distinguished group.

You were present at what was essentially the dawn of the modern sports licensing business. Did you ever envision it growing to what it is today, or were you just trying to sell a few T-shirts?

I believed the market for collegiate logoed products could be as big as the professional market if someone could get a large number of the right universities all pulling in the same direction in the niche of trademark licensing. The NFL model of

centralized management of licensing for all teams made a lot of sense to me.

How was it successful?

We believed that 50 or 100 universities could exert tremendous clout in both marketing and enforcement initiatives. And both were sorely needed at the time. Getting universities to agree on anything is a difficult challenge, but our model made so much sense that a few strong universities joined and over the years many others followed.

How have you seen the business change to what it has become?

When we started in 1981, the business for collegiate merchandise was almost exclusively on college campuses and five or six companies owned the market — Russell, Champion, Artex and Velva Sheen were a few of these vendors. The designs were pretty simple and the fashion was largely gray heather tees and fleece. With the advent of licensing, the market fairly quickly evolved to a robust selection of both apparel and non-apparel products that began to appear in virtually every distribution channel. Sales doubled or tripled in the first five to eight years. Competition caused apparel manufacturers to create new and better fabric choices with more dynamic designs and then to take them to geographic locations far from college campuses. They found pent-up demand from collegiate alumni and fans to be quite high.

What's the licensing situation at Alabama?

I am very pleased with the continued growth of our program and the quality of the licensees and the products. Our growth to some extent has been fueled by four national championships in football over the last seven years, but we, with the terrific help from our licensing agency, CLC, have done a good job of using those hot markets to extend our brand geographically. I was very pleased with what we had started at CLC, as we generated \$10 million in royalties that helped substantially with our budget.

Did you buy a few Alabama hats after the National Championship game in February?

Absolutely.

How would you define your role as athletic director at Alabama?

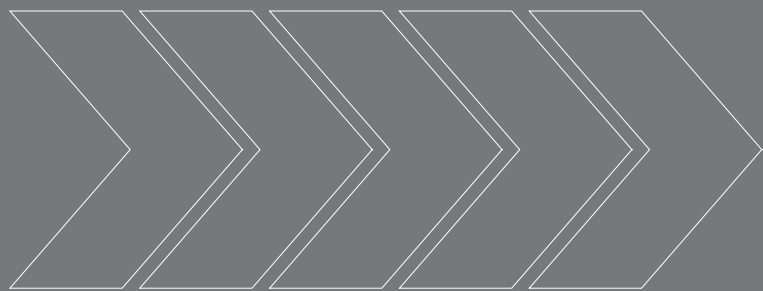
I see my role as CEO of the department. We have an incredible staff of coaches and administrators who know their jobs and perform them very well. My job is to make sure they have the resources to succeed.

Just how big is the job?

We participate in almost 400 events and host about half of them. Some events have 150,000 people coming to town to sit in 101,000 seats in Bryant Denny Stadium. There is a lot of work that goes into the event management side of our enterprise. I see my job as to make sure that we stay on track to accomplish our mission and make a difference in the lives



SHOW YOUR TEAM SPIRIT



**ROOT YOUR TEAM ONTO VICTORY
IN SPORT-TEK'S COLOR-
COORDINATED TEES, SWEATSHIRTS,
JACKETS AND ACCESSORIES.
MANY FEATURE GAME-CHANGING
PERFORMANCE TECHNOLOGIES.**

Sport-Tek[®]

FAMILY OWNED • CUSTOMER FOCUSED • SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE • AWARD-WINNING PRODUCTS • DEEP ON-HAND INVENTORY • SALES-BOOSTING MARKETING TOOLS



CATALOGS • ONLINE 800.426.6399 • SANMAR.COM

SANMAR_{45^{years}}

TEAM / TRENDS

of our student athletes, manage the business of the department and be a good steward of all resources of the department.

What's a typical day look like?

Every day we have a lot of balls in the air, both literally and figuratively. With 21 teams in 17 sports, 525 student athletes and more than 300 staff members, there is a lot to manage. Meetings take up time every day as communication is essential to good management. Luckily I get to watch a lot of great athletes practice and compete.

How much time do you get to spend with the team dealers who sell to your school?

I don't get to spend time with dealers. Our staff members do most of that interaction and I get to spend time with their CEOs or managers from time to time.

As an athletic director, what is your role in terms of dealing with your equipment and uniform suppliers?

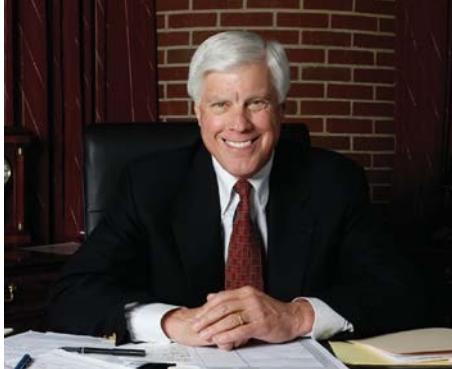
Our coaches primarily determine what their teams wear, in line with our philosophy of brand management. Our equipment managers and assistant and associate athletic directors get involved and Nike, as our on-field uniform supplier, is in contact with our staff pretty much on a daily basis.

How do the Nike brand and University of Alabama complement each other?

The University of Alabama is a great brand. The university has carefully managed its brand since the early 1980s and has developed one of the most valuable brands among colleges and universities throughout the country. Our relationship with Nike has been a mutually beneficial one. They are respectful of our brand, as we are of theirs, and we have worked together to make sure our branding efforts continue to add brand equity to both organizations.

Our readers and their customers are understandably worried about how safety concerns impact participation, especially in football. How much of an issue is it at your school?

We are concerned about safety of our players and do



THE BATTLE BIO

A native of Birmingham, AL, Bill Battle attended the University of Alabama on a football scholarship and enjoyed a successful playing career as a three-year starter at end for the Crimson Tide under Paul "Bear" Bryant from 1960-62. Battle was a member of Bryant's first national championship team at Alabama in 1961.

Following a coaching career that included being named to the top spot at the University of Tennessee when he was only 28-years old – Battle's seven-year tenure as head coach (1970-76) resulted in a record of 59-22-2 – Battle founded the Collegiate Licensing Company in 1981 and served as president and CEO until 2002. He also served as chairman of the board of Licensing Partners International, created in 2001 to represent the licensing interests of non-collegiate sports properties.

A 1981 inductee into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame, Battle was inducted into the National Collegiate Licensing Association Hall of Fame in 2000. He was the recipient of the 2005 Paul W. Bryant Alumni Athlete Award at The University of Alabama and was inducted into the International Licensing Industry Merchandisers' Association Hall of Fame in 2008. ■

our best to provide them with the best equipment and the best strength, conditioning and nutrition training possible. We also do our best to provide them with the best coaching possible, to teach techniques, tactics and strategies to be successful and minimize injuries. When injuries do occur we provide them with the best medical care available through great doctors and trainers.

How about the concussion issue?

There is much in the news today about concussions. Riding bicycles is the number one cause of concussions in this country. Actually football is fourth or fifth on the list as I understand it, but it gets so much attention because of its popularity. Today in college football we have a very manageable situation with concussions. We have a protocol that goes into place in every case of injury that is handled by medical staff, not coaches, and doctors determine further playing time and activity until the player is deemed safe to return to action.

Can you compare your athletic program now to when you played and coached?

When I was in school, there were 9000 students at Alabama and our stadium seated 35,000. Today our student body is 37,100 and our stadium seats 101,000. Our current student body couldn't fit in the stadium I played in.

What are you going to say at your Hall of Fame induction?

I'll be very appreciative and humbled by the honor. I may tell a few stories about my wildly diverse career.

Finally, where does Bill Battle go from here?

Good question. I'll worry about that when the time comes. As for now, we're in the business of winning championships and building champions. In addition to our recent football national championship, our gymnastics, men's and women's golf, and softball teams all rank in the top 10. ■

Rule Makers Meet In Indy

Many of the decisions made during a recent gathering of more than 90 sporting goods executives and governing body officials at the 10th annual SFIA/NFHS/NCCA Rules Conference in Indianapolis will have an impact on the team business. The goal of the conference was to address equipment and playing rules changes and interpretations under consideration for the coming year.

Key issues were sublimation/customization of uniforms, new product certification protocols, potential time frames for implementing rules changes and licensing programs such as the NFHS Authenticating Mark Program (AMP).

"The great thing about the Rules Meeting is that it keeps an open dialogue between the manufacturers of equipment and the governing bodies of the rules committees," says SFIA president and CEO Tom Cove. "If a rule comes up that could significantly impact the inventory of schools and equipment

manufacturers, this meeting provides a platform for the two sides to work to a possible solution."

One point made by Bob Colgate, NFHS director of sports and sports medicine, refers specifically to the size of numbers on football jerseys.

"The numbers must always be discernible from the press box in a variety of weather and lighting conditions," Colgate stressed.

Discussion around chest protection was a hot topic. NOC-NAE executive director Mike Oliver led an engaged conversation of chest protector equipment standards for preventing commotio cordis.

"Any sport with likelihood of the athlete being struck with a projectile has the risk of commotio cordis," Oliver said. "The design of products to protect against commotio cordis has to cover the cardiac silhouette and not just be symmetrical. Right now everything is on the table." ■

Companies and organizations in attendance:

Adidas, Augusta, Baden, Boombah, BSN Sports, Champro, Chesapeake Testing, Combat Sports, Diamond Kinetics, Diamond Sports, Dick's Sporting Goods, Easton, Gared, Gill, Guardian Innovations, Halo Sports & Safety, ICS Laboratories, Markwort, Marucci, Molten, NSGA, Nation's Best Sports, Nike, Performance Lacrosse Group, Performance Sports Group, Pop Warner, Rawlings, Riddell, Russell, SEI, Saranac, Schutt Sports, Spalding, True Temper Sports, Under Armour, United Sports Brands.

The State of Play in the USA

One of the highlights of the **Sports & Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA)** recently released Sports, Fitness and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report is that for the first time since 2007, a number of team sports actually showed growth in participation of at least four percent, from 2014 to 2015. Those team sports are baseball, cheerleading, basketball, ice hockey, lacrosse, rugby, indoor soccer, outdoor soccer and swimming on a team. In all, 28.6 million children, aged 6-17, are now playing at least one team sport.

"This is a really big deal," notes SFIA president and CEO **Tom Cove**. "This is great news for manufacturers of team sports gear."

Despite that good news, there are still more than 80 million Americans who are still physically inactive — 81.6 million people, to be precise, which is 27.7 percent of the overall U.S. population.

Among the report's findings:

- From a big-picture perspective, three of the fastest growing sports in the U.S. are stand-up paddling, pickleball and cardio kick boxing, none of which can be classified even remotely



as a team sport.

- Another revealing statistic: In 2015, the average child was playing 1.89 sports a year. As recently as 2011, the average child was playing 2.11 sports a year.

"This drop in the number of sports played per child is the direct result of sports specialization at a young age," notes Cove. "It is in the best interests of every athlete to play as many sports as possible and not focus on one sport, especially when they are 10, 11 or 12-years old."

- An impact on the sports industry is the overall attitude of Millennials. Unlike their parents, who enjoyed making a regular commitment each week to a Saturday morning golf tee time or a Wednesday night basketball league, Millennials want variety in their sports experiences and are not looking for a specific commitment on a daily, weekly, monthly or seasonal basis.

• From a category perspective, the fitness category draws the most participants, followed by outdoor sports, individual sports, team sports, water sports and racquet sports. In all, 23 percent of the U.S. population is currently playing team sports at some level.

- Cove does expect to see a significant surge in interest and participation in a few sports because of their presence at the Olympic Games this summer in Brazil, namely swimming, gymnastics, basketball, rugby and track and field. — *Mike May*



reusch

www.reuschusa.com

VENT
SHOCKSHIELD
EFT

ESS™ CATCH CONTROL™ 2.0

KEEP CONTROL™ PRO WRIST FLEX™ PRO FLEX™

G2 ULTRASOFT +11 +8 +9 +7

PULSE DELUXE G2 ORTHO-TEC

36 70 900

THE WHOLE LOAD OF KNOW-HOW AND EXPERTISE FROM REUSCH COMES TOGETHER IN THIS EXPLOSION OF POWER! THE REUSCH PULSE DELUXE G2 ORTHO-TEC, REUSCH'S TOP GLOVE STYLE OF THE SOCCER COLLECTION 2016, IS BUILT TO RAISE THE TENSION ON INTERNATIONAL SOCCER FIELDS! DEVELOPED WITH THE HIGHEST STANDARDS IN TERMS OF FITTING, TECHNOLOGIES, MATERIALS AND DETAIL SOLUTIONS, THIS TOP-OF-THE-LINE REUSCH GOALKEEPER GLOVE IS MADE FOR WORLD CLASS GOALKEEPING PERFORMANCES. GET YOURSELF ELECTRIFIED BY ITS LOUD AND SHOCKING COLOURS AND GET READY FOR THE BIG SAVE. THIS IS FULL TENSION! SIZES: 7-13



REUSCH PHANTOM

36 11 101

BREATHABLE POLYESTER THAT HAS REUSCH MMS(TM) MOISTURE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM. THIS KEEPS THE PLAYER DRYER AND COOLER WHILE PLAYING. PRINTED DESIGN ACCENTS HELP THE KEEPER CONTROL THE BALL. AIRMESH INSERTS AND ELBOW PADS. ACCENT STRIPE ON SHOULDER AND ARMS. SIZES: YL-AXL.

Visit the Reusch NA Goalkeepers Blog!
www.reuschna-goalkkeepersclub.weebly.com

DEEP IN COLOR LOADED WITH INVENTORY

OUTFIT YOUR LARGE LEAGUES CONFIDENTLY
WITH THESE KEY SOCCER STYLES

22730
GENESIS JERSEY
16 COLORS
YXXS-YL & AS-A2XL



22780
LIBERTY JERSEY
17 COLORS
YXS-YL & AS-A2XL



22870
HAWK JERSEY
20 COLORS
YXS-YL & AS-A2XL



 **HIGH FIVE®**

GLOBE

INTERNATIONAL JERSEY

**BRING A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE TO YOUR LOCAL RECREATIONAL PROGRAM
WITH INTERNATIONALLY BRANDED JERSEYS.**



**• 18 COUNTRIES • SIZING: YXS-YL & AS-A2XL •
ORDERS SHIP SAME DAY • VOLUME PRICING AVAILABLE**

800-222-4016 • HIGH5SPORTSWEAR.COM

THE BATTLE OF THE GRIDIRON IS BEING FOUGHT ACROSS AMERICA.

RED

By Mike May

For a sport so firmly entrenched in the fabric of America, football sure has been forced to respond to a lot of criticism — much of it self-inflicted, some media-driven. Safety concerns certainly continue to impact participation — and, in turn, the money spent on gear and uniforms by schools, town programs, players and parents — but the sport is working hard to write a new playbook.

Despite those issues, the sport and the various organizations that have a vested interest in its existence have been able to respond with solutions and a pledge to make the sport as safe as possible for its players, the majority of whom are under the age of 18.

While the concussion issue has been receiving its fair share of attention in recent years, it's important to realize that there are other factors in play that are negatively impacting playing interest in the game. It's also worth noting that spectator interest in football, especially at the collegiate and professional levels, remains at re-

cord levels. Football retains its hold on American life on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in the fall.

To borrow a phrase from the sport of baseball, for football, if you build it (as safe as you possibly can), they will come (to play, to spend and to watch).

Number One for Dealers

Football undeniably remains the top-selling category for the majority of team dealers from coast to coast. But questions remain on just how much the issue of sports specialization and the fear of injury are affecting business this year for the team dealer community? Surprisingly, the outlook around the country is fairly positive.

In Georgia, where football has always reigned supreme, the sport is a strong number two category for **Fayette Sporting Goods**, Fayetteville, GA. Owner **Howell McElroy** says baseball is now his top-selling category because “they are playing baseball all year round.” McElroy notes that football participation at the youth level

“Football is a big part of our business, both equipment and apparel,” according to national sales manager **Brian Pepper**. “We have always strived to provide our customers, both at retail and wholesale, the opportunity to buy the best and the newest in player protection and safety.”

While the concussion issue has generated some unexpected attention to the sport, there has been a silver lining to all of the media attention.

“One thing that has come from the raised awareness of concussions is that all manufacturers, I feel, have stepped up their R&D efforts to provide better products,” says Pepper. “From helmets to shoulder pads to mouthguards to rib protectors, we are seeing the best products that have ever been made.”

While teams and athletes all now have access to state-of-the-art products, team dealers and football equipment makers must never stop educating and informing the buying public about what it has to offer. Complacency could be a kiss of death to the business, Pepper feels.

“Manufacturers need to continue to bet-

“We cannot forget that more players die due to heat stroke than actual football injuries each year, so the proper hydration of athletes, the length of practices and the time of day of practices need to be looked at by coaches and administrators,” says Pepper.

Short Season, Big Sales

In the greater Denver area, football is big business for **Sportline**, Arvada, CO, but the relatively short season does impact its revenue potential. Baseball and softball generate more business for Sportline simply because the seasons are longer.

“From a numbers perspective, we do more football business with youth leagues, which are buying helmets, shoulder pads, pants, socks and jerseys,” notes Sportline owner **Tom Jacobsen**. “And, I’m pleased to report that our football equipment business will be on the rise this year because we are picking up more teams and leagues.”

Jacobsen says that high schools are purchasing similar items — helmets, uniforms, shoulder

ZONE

TO USE A BASEBALL PHRASE TO DESCRIBE FOOTBALL IN AMERICA IN 2016, IF YOU BUILD IT (AS SAFE AS YOU POSSIBLY CAN), THEY WILL COME (TO WATCH, TO SPEND AND TO PLAY).

has taken the biggest hit in his area, but it’s not always because of a fear of concussions.

“We have athletes who are specializing in baseball or basketball and walking away from football,” adds McElroy, pointing out that it does work both ways. “In some cases, football players are specializing in football and walking away from other sports like baseball or basketball.”

Local football teams – both youth and high school – are still buying large quantities of helmets, shoulder pads, protective padding and accessories from Fayette Sporting Goods, along with spirit packs that contain a T-shirt, shorts, gloves and sweatpants.

McElroy adds that parents are helping his bottom line, too, as they are buying – both in-person and online – team-themed T-shirts, caps and sweatshirts to wear while watching the games.

In Montana, don’t let the sparse population give the impression that football is not a big deal. It is the exact opposite and **Universal Athletic**, Bozeman, MT, is there to provide the product and the service.

ter educate the sales forces and we need to continue to educate the coaches, parents and players,” he notes. For example, he recently attended a function for women at Montana State University where the head football coach talked about how important it is for women, in particular, to understand the game of football — not just the X’s and O’s, but the techniques of the game, too.

“They actually did tackling drills to show them what is being taught to the players and what is the right way to tackle to avoid some of the injuries that happen,” Pepper says. “I think more events like this need to happen at all levels to better educate the parents.”

For many reasons, Pepper is bullish about football sales this year.

“Right now, we are having a big equipment year in protective football equipment,” he reports. “Sometimes it is just cyclical, but I can’t help but think that all the talk about football and concussions has something to do with it.”

There are other safety issues at play that influence participation concerns in football and the business of selling football to local teams.

pads and various accessories. Spirit packs are popular with high school football players and their parents.

As for any trickle-down effect of the Denver Broncos winning the Super Bowl in February, Jacobsen does not foresee an increase in the number of football players in Colorado. But, he says, many people have walked into his store seeking to buy licensed products from the Broncos; unfortunately, Sportline doesn’t carry that merchandise.

In south Florida, high school and youth football remains big business, but maybe not as vibrant as it once was.

“Because of the concussion issue, I’ve seen a depletion in tackle football among younger kids, but a pretty decent increase in flag football,” reports **Kevin Licata**, manager of **Medallion’s Sporting Goods**, Jupiter, FL. A new spring youth football league in the area did help his football business this year.

Another plus for business is that the enthusiasm from fans usually leads to sales of team T-shirts, hats and sweatshirts to parents.

“Every team seems to have a team mom that



High School By The Numbers

INTEREST IN HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL HAS remained steady and strong for nearly 10 years. Since the 2008-09 school year, overall participation in tackle football has hovered around 1.1 million players. Football remains the only high school sport with more than one million participants, according to the NFHS.

From a participating schools perspective, 11-player football is the fifth most popular high school sport for boys, with 14,154 schools offering 11-player football. But it is the most popular high school sport from a participation perspective — in the 2014-15 school year, there were 1,083,617 boys playing football.

For those schools that don't sponsor traditional 11-player tackle football, the game of six-player football is played in five states (Colorado, Montana, Ohio, Texas and Wyoming) by 4403 boys; eight-player football is played in 18 states by 19,423 boys; and nine-player football is played in four states (Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio and South Dakota) by 5112 boys.

There are an additional 1565 girls playing 11-player football on teams in 32 states and 133 girls are playing six-, eight- or nine-player football on teams in 14 states.

It's worth noting that flag football is played by nearly 1000 boys in four states (Alaska, California, District of Columbia, Michigan and Ohio) plus the District of Columbia — and by more than 9000 girls in five states (Alaska, California, Florida, Michigan and Nevada). Note of interest: More than 6000 of those flag-football playing girls are from Florida, where flag football has full-fledged high school varsity status.

Because of issues like pay-to-play and school consolidation, many observers feel that interest in 11-player football will probably decrease while interest in eight- and nine-player football will continue to grow. ■

helps generate team spirit wear sales," reports Licata, who says he is selling football to four local youth leagues and nearly a dozen high schools.

"With my local youth program, the leagues are usually ordering the helmets and shoulder pads," adds Licata. "Then, each family buys the rest — cleats, socks, pants, mouthpieces and other accessories."

One negative impact on his business has been the larger footwear and apparel companies entering into agreements with some of his high-profile high school programs, which means that jerseys, pants, socks and cleats are sold directly to the schools. That eliminates Medallion's and other team dealers from a traditionally strong part of their business.

In northeast Louisiana, the concussion issue has had no apparent negative impact on participation, according to **Glen Hendrix**, owner of **D&H Sports**, Bastrop, LA.

"Parents and players just want a better helmet," Hendrix notes of the 73 high school and middle school teams he services in his area.

"Football kind of runs year-round down here," notes Hendrix, with spirit packs keeping the spirit going 12 months a year. "I put whatever they want in the spirit packs — T-shirts, socks, mouthpieces, shorts, practice shirts."

In his neck of the woods in northeast Louisiana families rely upon the local schools to buy all the equipment for their sons to play football because they generally can't afford to buy all the necessary gear and accessories.

Good News from the Midwest

In southern Indiana, the football business this year will be very good, according to **Jim Brown**, a salesman at **Kratz Sporting Goods**, Clarksville, IN.

"Football is strong and we do a little better every year," he reports. "By now, most of the major items have been ordered by our area football programs. Now we are putting together spirit packs and packages for summer programs."

As for the trickle-down effect from prominent local college and professional football teams, Brown says he noticed a positive impact.

"When the Indianapolis Colts are doing well, the level of awareness and interest in football is quite high," he says. "The University of Louisville also has had some great success in football in recent years."

Even way out in the Hawaiian Islands football rules the roost, according to **Stanley Costales, Jr.**, owner of **Sports Line**, Hilo, HI. Costales sells football to 40 high schools in the Hawaiian Islands and when they come knocking their gridiron wish list is everything from head to toe — helmets, shoulder pads, jerseys, pants, mouthguards, socks and cleats.

He focuses on the high school programs because that's where the investment in time and resources best pays off, leaving the youth leagues to other suppliers. "The youth football business is big, but we don't chase that business," adds Costales.

The concussion discussion certainly has had an impact, albeit minor, on the Islands.

"It is on top of everyone's minds, but it has not had that big of an effect on participation in high school football," says Costales.

Interestingly, even though the Hawaiian Islands are isolated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, Costales says that his football business has been affected by the Internet. "With free shipping, we are not so isolated," adds Costales. "We lose the business when it comes to selling small, personal items for the football players."

Costales spoke highly of the impact of having a recent Heisman Trophy winner (Marcus Mariota) come from Hawaii. "It makes the dream (of playing football at the highest level) very believable," he notes.

State of the Game

If anyone should have a feel for the state of the sport of football in America, it would be **Bob Colgate**, director of sports and sports medicine with the **National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)**. And he feels confident about it in 2016.

"The state of our game is good," he says, while admitting that work remains to be done on risk minimization and that concussion education remains a priority.

Colgate says it's important to know there are other issues that are impacting participation in high school football:

- Pay-to-play as a financial barrier to playing football;
- Sports specialization that is causing some athletes to turn their backs on football in favor of focusing on another sport;
- Consolidation of schools that is causing some students to lose playing time and others to lose interest in the game when two schools merge their sports programs;
- Lack of interest, because many of today's youngsters lack the motivation to play a high-demand sport such as football.

Moving forward, Colgate says that the biggest service the NFHS can provide is to remind coaches that they must teach and instruct players about how to play the game of football properly and to do it according to the high school rules.

"They must be keepers of the game," says Colgate. "Some people feel that we need more rules in high school football, but I disagree. Instead, we need to enforce and administer the rules that we have."

Those rules include issues that are of interest to team dealers. Among them:

**SUPERIOR QUALITY.
UNRIVALED VALUE.**

BLITZ

SECOND SHIP BLOCK HIGHLIGHTS VS. 2015 BLITZ:

FREE GOODS STILL
INCLUDED WITH
PURCHASE

DEALER DISCOUNTS

INCREDIBLE VALUE
ON TOP QUALITY
RUSSELL ATHLETIC
UNIFORMS



TEAM.RUSSELLATHLETIC.COM

888.606.5520



Von Miller: From Super Bowl MVP To Team Insight Cover Model

Already a star in the NFL, Von Miller took a giant leap to the next level on Sunday, February 7, 2016, when the Denver Broncos' linebacker was unstoppable and earned the Super Bowl MVP Award after leading a dominant defense that shut down the NFL's number one scoring offensive player, Carolina Panthers' Cam Newton. Now, in addition to that honor and a starring role in the 2016 season of "Dancing With The Stars," Miller has hit the trifecta by making it to the cover of the May issue of *Team Insight*.

Miller, who recently suffered a knee injury, demonstrated nothing but pure speed and strength as he recorded six tackles, 2.5 sacks and forced two fumbles in the 24-10 win over the Panthers.

Miller was drafted by Denver in 2011 as the second overall pick (Newton was the first pick) in the 2011 NFL Draft and went on to be named the 2011 Defensive Rookie of the Year.

After tearing his ACL in 2013, Miller turned to Zamst, a maker of protective equipment, to provide support during his rehab process. His unique combination of speed and strength undoubtedly helped earn him the Super Bowl 50 MVP title, and Zamst is certainly making sure everyone knows he is on the company's Elite Force Team.

"We know that by keeping athletes healthy, we allow them to reach their full potential in their game and this is especially true for Von Miller," says Bryan Smeltzer, GM of Zamst US.

"Von has worked through adversity and we are honored to have supported him with Zamst throughout the season and ultimately to a Super Bowl victory." ■

- Mid-cut jerseys are not allowed in high school football;
- Team nicknames or special names are not allowed on the front of jerseys;
- Jerseys must cover the shoulder pads;
- Overbuilt face masks are allowed;
- The knees must be covered by knee pads at all times. (That issue with the knee pads is confusing to many young players who see college and pro players on television playing without knee pads.) "Having the knee covered by knee pads is a non-negotiable issue at the high school level," adds Colgate.

One organization that has responded in a first-class fashion to the concussion and injury issues is USA Football, the national governing body of the sport in the United States.

"Football never stands still," says **Steve Alic**, senior director of communications for **USA Football**. "We're establishing new and important standards rooted in the best available science."

He points out that third-party research shows that its Heads Up Football program, which is endorsed by leading medical associations and experts across athletics, is making a difference.

"Education changes behavior for the better, Alic says. "This is true in so many ways and it makes sense that it applies to football."

Heads Up Football is a significant change and modification to the sport, making the game more fun while changing, for the better, how it is taught and played.

"This is more than a widely endorsed tackling technique," stresses Alic. "It is a comprehensive coaching education program comprised of an array of resources and medically approved protocols put into motion on high school and youth levels. As Heads Up Football evolves and raises the bar on player health and safety in football, it's also making a positive difference in other youth and high school sports."

Working On a National Basis

The Heads Up Football program is working and generating words of praise from across the country.

"USA Football's Heads Up Football program has been invaluable to us and we are so happy to have had the opportunity to become a part of the program," says **Kirby Whitacre**, athletic director, **South Bend (IN) Community School Corporation**.

The Fairfax County (VA) Public Schools, the eleventh-largest school district in the United States, is the first U.S. school district to adopt Heads Up Football for its high school football programs. Since adopting the Heads Up Football curriculum and hands-on training, football injuries are

down 16 percent and concussions have declined by 28 percent across the district's 25 high school football programs.

In addition to the Heads Up Football program, USA Football has established a set of procedures that impact how much contact is allowed in youth football practices.

"On the youth side, USA Football has implemented our medically endorsed National Practice Guidelines for Youth Tackle Football, which define levels of contact and set a 30-minute time limit on full contact within a practice session," Alic explains. "The guidelines also provide youth football organizations with heat acclimation procedures set forth by the Korey Stringer Institute."

A Focus on Education

While Alic and his colleagues at USA Football are delighted about the group's contributions to the sport of football, this is no time to be complacent.

"For our sport – and for every sport that our kids play – we need to continue to focus on coaching education and coach training innovations that advance player safety," says Alic. "This is happening in football."

Another established governing body in youth football is **Pop Warner Little Scholars**, which has 225,000 players in 40 states, serving children age 5-15. What many people don't realize is that only 50 percent of youth football programs in the U.S. are actually sanctioned by Pop Warner.

According to Pop Warner executive director **Jon Butler**, the game of youth football is in great shape.

"While the overriding theme of our work is focused on reducing and eliminating concussions, I am pleased to report that our football program is the safest that it has ever been," reports Butler. "We've made the game safer and we'll continue to do so."

The biggest change to the Pop Warner program in recent years has been the adoption of the Heads Up Football program. The results have been remarkable.

"Overall injuries in practice have been reduced by 92 percent and incidents of concussions have dropped by 82 percent," reports Butler, who credits the coaches for understanding the importance of the Heads Up initiative. "Not surprisingly, our parents, especially mothers, are happy and relieved that we have implemented this program."

At Pop Warner, further change is in the air — this year it is eliminating kickoffs for its younger age groups.

Youth football players are not the only athletes benefiting from Pop Warner's upgraded emphasis on safety.

Butler notes that his organization's new safety and concussion policies are also being applied to 125,000 female cheerlead-

STG **FUELGARD®**

Mouth Guard with Electrolytes

FUEL YOUR GAME!

Ca

Calcium

Mg

Magnesium

K

Potassium

Na

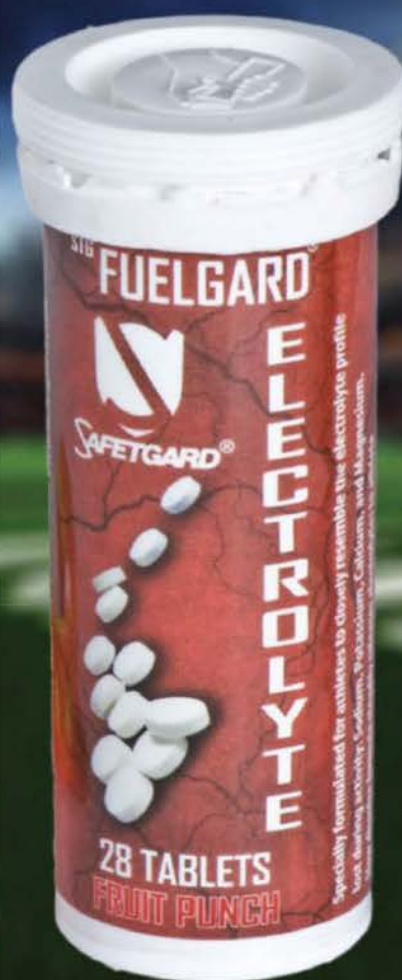
Sodium

Maintain Hydration

Fight Fatigue

Prevent Cramps

Slow Dissolve
Electrolyte Tablet



Replenish Lost Electrolytes
and Stay in the Game



www.safetgard.com OR CALL: 1-800-356-9026



ers and dancers who participate under the Pop Warner banner.

From a national perspective, the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) reports there were 6.2 million tackle football players in the U.S. in 2015. As an aside, the SFIA study reveals there are 6.5 million touch football players and 5.8 million flag football players as well.

Dissecting the Demographics

Of the 6.2 million tackle football players, 3.4 million of them are classified as core participants, who play the game at least 26 days a year. In other words, nearly 55 percent of tackle

football participants actually play the game a great deal.

When looking specifically at the youth football playing population, there were 1.23 million youth (ages 6-12) who played tackle football in 2015, which is up slightly from 1.216 million in 2014, according to the SFIA.

In 2015, there were 991,000 youths who were core football participants, which is up 3.3 percent from 2014.

The data from SFIA also reveals that participation in flag football among 6-13 year olds has experienced a slight increase — from 1.086 million players in 2014 to 1.142 million

players in 2015.

From a spending perspective, football keeps the cash registers ringing. According to the SFIA's Manufacturers Sales by Category Report, wholesale sales of football gear (footballs, protective gear, blocking sleds, goal posts and accessories) reached \$547 million in 2015, up from \$530 million in 2013.

Sales of football uniforms and footwear also showed growth. In 2015, wholesale sales of football uniforms were \$382 million, up slightly from \$376 million in 2013. Football footwear (cleated) sales were \$196 million in 2015, up from \$170 million in 2013. ■

Get Ahead of the Game

Even though summer is just getting underway, now is the perfect time for team dealers to start thinking about customizing football uniforms for the fall. No matter how you remind your previous teams or promote to new ones, it's best to think ahead and provide coaches and players with decorating and customization options as early as possible.

With respect to football jerseys, keep in mind they have additional numbering and lettering areas to decorate than other sports. Numbers are most often applied to the front, back and shoulders and can range anywhere from 10-12 inches for front and back and four inches for shoulders.

Typical number styles on football jerseys will be bold, block or interactive styles, which are increasingly popular. (Interactive styles use different left and right digit shapes that complement or "interact" with each other, so they can be mixed and matched to provide teams with unique looks.)

The easiest and most efficient way to personalize jerseys is with heat transfer materials. It's important to keep in mind that, due to the physical nature of football, you'll want a heat transfer material that is durable and abrasion-resistant.

Brightly colored or sublimated jerseys are also increasingly popular, so if you find yourself heat applying white names and numbers on these garments, be sure to use a durable heat

transfer material that also inhibits dye migration. This property will essentially block the dyes in the garment from bleeding through the transfer. For instance, if it's a white number on a red jersey, the number can turn pink if the material used doesn't have any dye inhibiting properties.

Additional durable material options include sewn numbers and letters using the classic look of twill. Though twill is offered with tack adhesives for heat application, sewing them is always recommended to ensure permanent adhesion. If you're looking for an alternative to sewing, but still want the classic look and feel of twill, there are options available that provide a heat transferrable twill that has a simulated, laser-etched zig-zag pattern around the edges. This option allows you to still achieve a classic look, but with all the ease, convenience and economy of using heat transfer methods.

No matter which of these material options you choose, they all provide durable, permanent applications best suited for the wear and tear jerseys will endure in this full contact sport.

But don't stop with decorating team jerseys. Team jackets and practice garments all provide opportunities for personalizing, as do hoodies and T-shirts for fans. A popular option to consider offering is lightweight varsity style jackets, where the sleeve color contrasts with the body to provide the look of a letterman jacket. The aforementioned heat transfer twill

with a simulated zig-zag "sewn look" is a great way to personalize these and other items that hold a higher perceived value, but will still keep production costs at a minimum.

Hoodies remain a mainstay for spiritwear, as they're great for fans

and players alike to wear around town, to the gym, school, even at practice. Personalize them with a team or mascot name and pair with a football graphic and player number. Names can also be added to the back of a hoodie. Hoodie decoration can be done quickly and easily using heat transfer materials, so note the fiber content and search out your favorite material best suited for it.

Performance and practice wear can also be personalized using heat transfer materials, despite their complex fabric make-ups. The ideal heat transfer material will feature a soft hand, will be lightweight, have high stretch and recovery properties and can be heat applied at lower temperatures; some as low as 275 degrees F. This will still ensure proper and permanent application without potentially ruining the garment or affecting the athlete's comfort and movement when wearing it.

Keeping these things in mind early will help your efficiency when team orders start to roll in and will show your clients that you're worth every penny — especially the ones you're saving them. ■

This article was written by Paul Sabatini, sports marketing coordinator at Stahls'. With 21 years of sports industry experience, Paul Sabatini is the product line champion for letters and numbers for Stahls' and the go-to guy for all things sportswear and uniforms.





**Custom Sublimation
Better & Faster**



Badass Uniforms in 3 Days*

personalized designs | no minimums | free graphic uploads | instant online proof

Teamwork Athletic Apparel

1.800.333.6063

ProSphereSports.com

*Standard manufacturing is 10 days. Expedited fees apply to 3 & 5 day service.

TEAM / FOOTBALL NEW PRODUCTS



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10

1. The Adidas Techfit Primeknit seamless, lightweight, compression fit football jersey includes engineered body mapping with integrated ventilation.

2. Powers' Select Custom Columbia jersey features a technical stretch knit fabrication for the yoke, body and sleeve with a tech mesh lower body front and back.

3. A4's Drills practice jersey is a 100 percent polyester small porthole mesh with a double layer Dazzle Cowl.

4. Game Gear's 468 football jersey has a panel down the side to make it as tight as possible, but still allows full range of motion.

5. Gradients and subtle texture fills give the new Nighthawk ProSphere football design from Teamwork a fresh and current look.

6. The lightweight exoskeleton of the CarbonTek Gen II Shoulder Pad from Russell Athletic is now constructed with 10 layers of 100 percent aerospace grade carbon fiber from the Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

7. McDavid's Hex 7-Pad three-quarter length girdle comes with Tefx technology to provide durable resistance suited to withstand repeated scuffs and skids on all surfaces.

8. BowNet's Solo Kicker Pro net stands at a massive 11'6" tall x 8' wide, the largest net of its kind and the only net specifically designed for kickoff practice.

9. Three designs are now available in Shock Doctor's Max Airflow Printed Lip Guard — American flag, fangs and camo.

10. Cutter's Rev Pro 2.0 gloves are available in team colors, solid color options and new special edition metallic and camo styles.

11. The Xone Body Shield football pant features X-Dri technology along with ultra-light weight padding and core compression.

12. Fisher Athletic's tackle wheels come in a variety of sizes — from 28 to 54 inches — depending on the age level of the program.

13. Augusta Sportswear's Snap Jersey features a 100 percent polyester heavyweight tricot mesh body, 100 percent polyester dazzle yoke and sleeves and 90 percent polyester/10 percent spandex neck, bottom sleeve and side inserts.

14. Under Armour Eyewear visors feature distortion free ArmourSight lenses with anti-fog and anti-scratch coatings for superior sight lines on the field.

15. The Epic Youth helmet from Xenith features the same protective and fit technology as the Epic Varsity, including Aware Flow Shock Absorbers, compression liner, Fitlock retention system and airflow cooling shell vents.

16. Roar Athletic Performance XG4 insoles are made from aerospace-grade carbon fiber to help athletes run faster while also reducing the chance of foot and lower leg injuries.

17. RIPT shoulder pads from TAG Athletic Goods are billed as the lightest pads on the market, with a resistant impact performance technology shell.

18. Under Armour's Highlight MC football cleat provides light, super-streamlined, fully locked-in speed.

19. The FuelGard mouthguard from SafeTGard is designed to hold FuelGard slow dissolve electrolyte tablets, keeping players hydrated.



11



12



13



14



15



16



18



17



19



GUARDIANS OF THE GAME

WE ARE THE DETAILS INSIDE YOUR GAME. WE ARE FOOTBALL-SAVVY AND SPORT-SCIENCE SMART. WE ARE THE CONFIDENCE ONLY A PLAYER IN A PLAYER'S HEART CAN KNOW.



Three strong brands have been made more powerful by collaboration and teamwork.

- + Shock Doctor for the world's number one mouthguard and innovative protection.
- + McDavid for SportMed® leadership and the highest rated HEX™ protective technology.
- + Cutters Gloves for the go-to, grab-on, must-have gloves of the pros.

Shock Doctor, McDavid and Cutters Gloves are proud members of United Sports Brands.

SHOCKDOCTOR.COM | McDAVIDUSA.COM | CUTTERSSPORTS.COM | UNITEDSPB.COM

©2016 All Rights Reserved

Strength in Numbers

Seven factors that make braces/supports healthy.



With player safety and protection at the forefront of sports technology in 2016, the makers of braces and supports for the modern athlete have answered the call for better, safer and lighter products. The goal is simple: To keep the athlete on the field. Here are seven issues facing the category and what the leading manufacturers are doing about them. By Michael Jacobsen

1. THE ROLE OF DEALERS

“The role of the team dealer has evolved over the years as they have become the front line of communication. Most dealers who focus on these categories take the time to become educated to the product’s benefits. Today the dealer needs to be proactive in making product recommendations prior to the need.” *Steve Sheridan, Senior Vice President-Sales/Hickory Brands/New Balance*

“The team dealer already has the captive audience and relationships in place. They have the opportunity to educate on the importance of this category.” *Dawn Ferriera, Senior Product Specialist, Zamst*

“With the changing regulations in health care reimbursements, more consumers are looking to retailers for guidance about purchasing bracing and support products over the counter. This makes the role of retailers vital in bringing the best, medically effective product options to their customers.” *Warren Colter, CMO, Bauerfeind USA*

“The opportunity to self diagnose at home with more accuracy is leading to a massive shift in the way health care and sports medicine companies are servicing consumers. The role of the team dealer is

to be educated on product to ensure consumers are buying the right product for their need.” *Matt Williams, Senior Director, DonJoy Performance*

“It’s the dealer’s responsibility to stay informed and encourage their customers to pursue the best equipment for maintaining the health of the athlete.” *Debbie Shannon, VP-Marketing, ING Source/OS1st*

“Team dealers are vital to the success of this category. For injured athletes looking for the proper wrap and/or brace, team dealers can help make sure that the athlete is getting the proper item with the proper fit.” *Chris Miller, Director of Retail Sales, United Sports Brands*

“Team dealers can help potential buyers by explaining the differences in the options available.” *Craig DiGiovanni, VP, Medi-Dyne (Cho-Pat)*

“Dealers are the conduit to the athlete. They are the boots on the ground and the critical component of truly presenting the idea of bracing as a protective element.” *Neal Fink, VP-Sporting Goods Channel, Performance Health/Active Ankle*

2. THE SAFETY ISSUE

“We focus on over use-related injuries and therapy to chronic conditions that plague athletes involved in repetitive motion sports.” *Steve Sheridan, Hickory Brands/New Balance*

“Lost playing time is a critical issue regardless of the level of play. In organized settings, it impacts the team and their results. For recreational athletes, the loss is measured in time away from something they love.” *Neal Fink, Performance Health/Active Ankle*

“While major injuries are a current hot topic, minor damage that recurs over time can lead to long-term injury and potential sidelining of the athlete. Braces and supports exist to protect the athlete from the inevitable damage.” *Debbie Shannon, ING Source/OS1st*

“Our goal is not only to help injured athletes recover and get back on the field, but also to ensure that healthy athletes are performing at the highest level possible.” *Chris Miller, United Sports Brands*

MVP PERFORMANCE

TECH DECK:



Exo-TECH QUAD



Flyweight TECH



i-Fit TECH



Kneecap Stabilizer



ROM-TECH



V-TECH

THUMB GUARD PRO SUPPORT

THE ART OF DESIGN IS ENSURING ALL PARTS SERVE A PURPOSE...

WHEN CREATING PRODUCTS SPECIFIC TO EACH ATHLETE'S NEEDS, WE ADDRESS BOTH THE FUNCTIONAL AND ANATOMICAL FEATURES OF THE HUMAN BODY. THIS ASSURES OUR ATHLETES HAVE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WHILE PROTECTING THEM DURING COMPETITION.

VON'S RELENTLESS DETERMINATION TO COME BACK FROM INJURY WAS DRIVEN BY HIS PASSION TO ACHIEVE GREATNESS.

IN SUPPORTING VON'S ULTIMATE GOAL TO BUILD HIS LEGACY, ZAMST PROVIDES STRUCTURAL REINFORCEMENT PRODUCTS CREATED WITH PRECISION ENGINEERED DESIGN.

THE "ART OF DESIGN" IS CREATING PRODUCTS THAT PROTECT, WHILE NOT INHIBITING AN ATHLETE'S PERFORMANCE.

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF Z-PERFORMANCE!

ZAMST IS

A MACHINE

VON MILLER

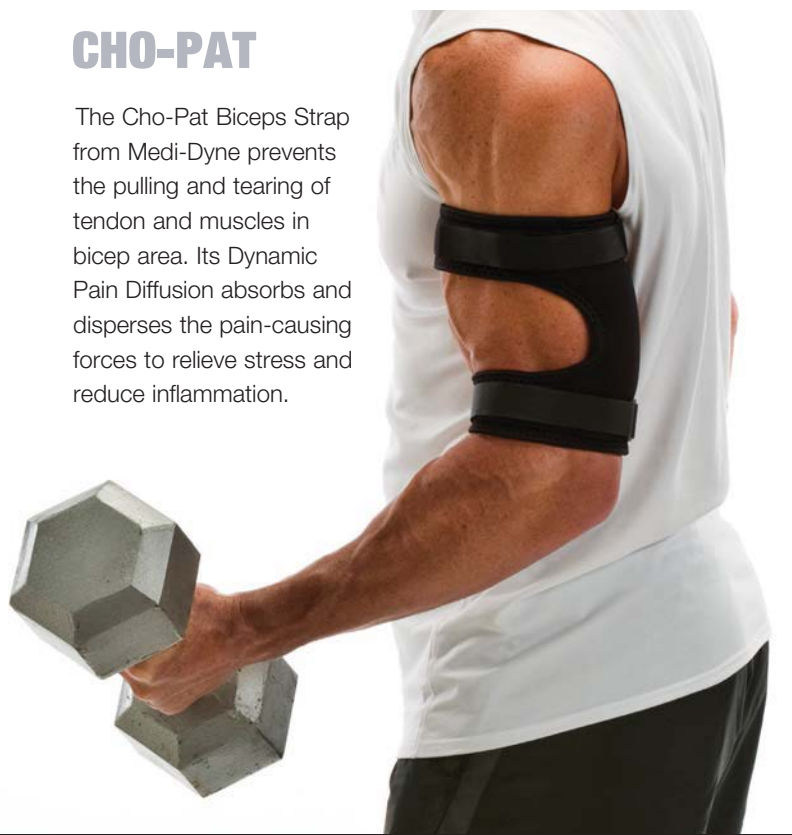
4X ALL PRO LB/SUPER BOWL MVP
ZAMST ELITE FORCE TEAM MEMBER

ZAMST.US
877-ZAMST.US



CHO-PAT

The Cho-Pat Biceps Strap from Medi-Dyne prevents the pulling and tearing of tendon and muscles in bicep area. Its Dynamic Pain Diffusion absorbs and disperses the pain-causing forces to relieve stress and reduce inflammation.



BAUERFEIND

Bauerfeind Sports Knee Support offers optimal knee support with freedom of movement. It improves circulation and stimulates muscle regeneration. The Air Knit fabric is lightweight, comfortable, moisture-wicking and washable.



ACTIVE ANKLE

Active Ankle's new line of rigid ankle braces includes the Eclipse II Dual Upright Ankle Brace, which provides protection in a rigid ankle brace through its solid U-shaped design and multipoint strapping system.



3. THE SALES PITCH

"Steph Curry suffered multiple injuries before using the Zamst A2-DX support to come back from injury and stay in the game." *Dawn Ferriera, Zamst*

"The sales pitch is very real. The dealer is selling peace of mind. The personnel who are responsible for the health and safety of these athletes demand product they can count on." *Steve Sheridan, Hickory Brands/New Balance*

"Sports medicine is not a sales pitch category. It should be treated with a high degree of consulting with the athlete. Team dealers should take the time to understand the degree of injury and not over promise effectiveness of braces and supports. Always suggest going to a physician for a professional opinion with every brace provided." *Matt Williams, DonJoy Performance*

"Offering a good-better-best showcase gives retailers an opportunity to maximize the category. When you offer a medically effective product, your customers will identify you as a subject matter expert and will continue to seek you out." *Warren Colter, Bauerfeind USA*

"The sales pitch depends on what the customer is looking for and whether they are looking for preventative items or if they are recovering from injury. For those already injured, the primary goal is to get them back on the field or court as soon as possible. For athletes that have been injured in the past and are looking for preventative products, many products will provide the support/stability needed, with little to no reduction in freedom of movement." *Chris Miller, United Sports Brands*

"Protection now can mean injury prevention later." *Debbie Shannon, ING Source/OS1st*

"Using this support or brace is the best option to keep your discomfort away so that you can continue to do what it is that you love to do. Braces are also a more cost effective option to taping." *Craig DiGiovanni, Medi-Dyne*

4. THE CHALLENGES

"Consumer perception is a huge issue. Once the brace category starts to be presented on a regular basis as preventative or everyday equipment it begins to open the whole category up to a new, everyday user." *Neal Fink, Performance Health*

"The multitude of options available and one-size-does-not-fit-all mentality to reduce SKUs on the shelf is a challenge. One-size-fits-all generally means it doesn't really fit anyone very well." *Craig DiGiovanni, Medi-Dyne*

"The primary challenge in this category is the potential number of SKUs. Our recommendation is to go deep in ankle and knee items and expand from there depending on space." *Chris Miller, United Sports Brands*

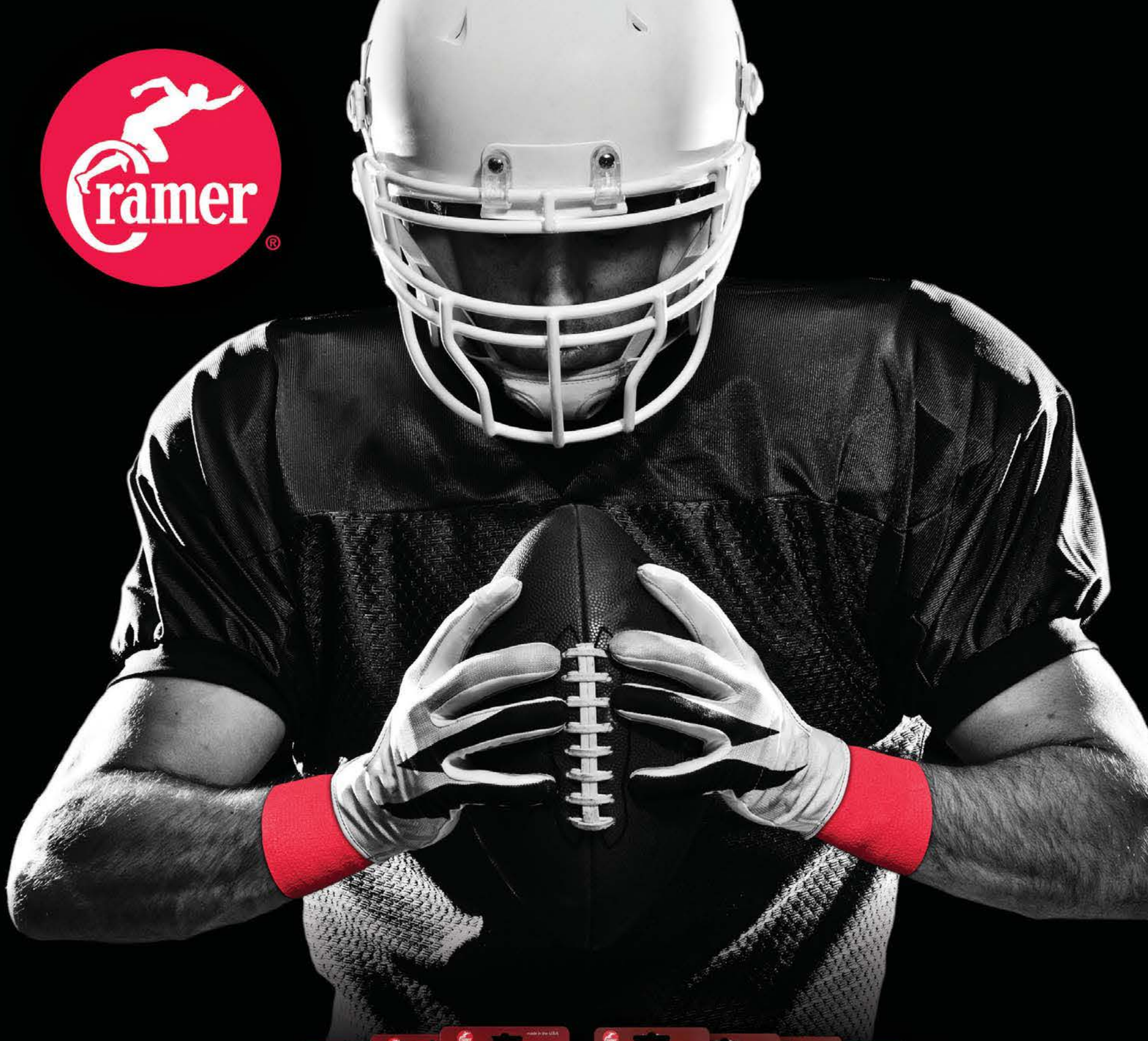
"Most of these devices focus on low cost and old technology. Athletes simply will not get the bracing benefits because the products interfere with play, are too hot and uncomfortable and often are too bulky to coordinate with the apparel and equipment of the sport." *Debbie Shannon, ING Source/OS1st*

"In most cases dealers and retailers do not have a background in athletic training. Bottom line — don't fake it. Partnering with local athletic trainers and physicians is a great way to get a better understanding." *Matt Williams, DonJoy Performance*

"There are so many options that the challenge for dealers is to find and sell truly medically effective products. The key to cutting through the clutter is educating your sales force." *Warren Colter, Bauerfeind USA*

"The challenges are to increase both the dealer's and the customer's understanding of the products. This is done at the point of sale and through packaging and online education." *Steve Sheridan, Hickory Brands/New Balance*

"The challenges with selling this category are understanding the technical side of the category and features and benefits." *Dawn Ferriera, Zamst*



Cramer Athletic Tapes and Wraps

High Quality. Superior Comfort. Enhanced Performance.

Leaders in Sports Medicine since 1918

Cramer® and the Cramer® running man trademarks are property of Performance Health and/or its subsidiaries and may be registered in the United States and other countries. Unauthorized use is strictly prohibited. ©2016 Performance Health. All rights reserved.

**PERFORMANCE
HEALTH**

HICKORY BRANDS/NEW BALANCE



A new ankle support for ankle sprains and strains provides compression and warmth and may help in reducing inflammation. An adjustable feature offers flexibility for desired level of support and compression and Ti22 thermal therapy keeps muscles warm.

DONJOY

DonJoy Performance's Bionic Fullstop hinged knee brace provides the ultimate in ACL protection during recovery from injury, as well as helping to prevent future ACL injury. Fullstop dampening hinges engage at 145 degrees and stop fully at 170 degrees to help prevent hyperextension and improve joint mechanics in both surgical and non-surgical knees. Its four-strap design features easy-pull tabs to simplify the on/off process and provide an optimal fit.



MCDAVID

The Elite Engineered Elastic Ankle Sleeve (left) is for minor to moderate support and relief from pain and sprains associated with ligament instabilities. The Elite Engineered Elastic Knee Sleeve (center) with gel buttress and stays is for minor to moderate support and relief from pain associated with ligament instabilities. The Elite Engineered Elastic Achilles Tendon Sleeve (right) is for pain relief from minor to moderate Achilles tendonitis.



5. WORKING WITH VENDORS

"Education is key from vendors. Flip books, signage and videos and anything the vendors can offer to educate the staff should be taken into consideration. The goal is to educate and inform store associates to guide consumers to the right decision for their specific need." *Matt Williams, DonJoy Performance*

"Dealers expect intuitive point-of-sale items. The days of team products having little or no sense of style are gone. Packaging must be both eye catching and aid in the sales process." *Steve Sheridan, Hickory Brands/New Balance*

"If a vendor is serious about the category they will be able to assist with information about common

injuries and conditions and how their products treat those conditions." *Debbie Shannon, ING Source/OS1st*

"The key is to create a destination within the store for sports medicine." *Chris Miller, United Sports Brands*

"Vendors are the optimal knowledge base for the products." *Craig DiGiovanni, Medi-Dyne*

"Every vendor has a wealth of knowledge. Regardless of whether it is anecdotal information or a medical study, we all have the knowledge to support any initiative that a team dealer wants to implement." *Neal Fink, Performance Health*

6. TECHNOLOGY

"Bracing technology has to adapt to the athlete and their sport, not the other way around. Lighter, thinner and more playable bracing devices will continue to be important as a category." *Debbie Shannon, ING Source/OS1st*

"The sports medicine category is evolving from standard neoprene wraps and supports to elastic/knit products. Neoprene wraps have been around for years, but provide some limitations when it comes to range of motion and temperature — they are hot." *Chris Miller, United Sports Brands*

"We are focused on material and design — lighter, faster, stronger. The misconception is that bracing has to be restrictive or clunky to work. We have set the bar at eliminating that misconception." *Neal Fink, Performance Health*

"Maximum support with the least amount of restriction through better design and materials." *Craig DiGiovanni, Medi-Dyne*

"Athletes are now proactively

looking to these products for injury prevention, not just rehabilitation. This is driving demand for lighter, thinner, more breathable braces and supports that can be worn during rigorous activity." *Warren Colter, Bauerfeind USA*

"We will focus on the integration of textile technologies that provide greater wellness benefits than general compression. The use of connected technologies will provide feedback for real-time analytics of the injury or events that may have caused re-aggravation." *Steve Sheridan, Hickory Brands/New Balance*

"Brace technology continues to become lighter and more comfortable, allowing for a complete range of motion and a second skin feel." *Dawn Ferreira, Zamst*

"Sports medicine at retail is going to be filled with technologies that were once only available to athletes competing at the highest level. Smart tech will soon be a part of the equation, allowing consumers to track movement in countless ways." *Matt Williams, DonJoy Performance*

*Sports Compression
Sleeves Arm*

**FOR YOUR
PERSONAL
BEST**

Dirk Nowitzki
13-time NBA All-Star
Bauerfeind Brand Ambassador



*Sports Elbow
Support*



*Sports Knee
Support*



*Sports Ankle
Support*

INTRODUCING THE BAUERFEIND SPORTS SUPPORT LINE

**Same premium Bauerfeind
supports, optimized for sport**

- 3D Airknit Technology for lightweight, breathable support
- Added gripping zones for secure fit during rigorous activity
- Medical-grade compression for increased oxygen transfer and maximum muscle performance

**The Result: Better endurance,
less fatigue and faster recovery times**

ZAMST

The Zamst Filmista ankle support integrates a dual layer fusion stabilizer technology with a flex film construction to achieve a combination of super light variable compression support with a second skin feel. By engineering these two technologies into the design, the Filmista simulates the taping process and offers a unique, micro thin support solution.



OS1ST

The OS1st KS7 Performance Knee Sleeve (left) is powered by Compression Zone Technology with gel stabilizers that fully embrace the knee and patella in seven zones of graduated compression for stay-in-place power. The OS1st AF7 Ankle Bracing Sleeve (right) features patent-pending Kinesio Zone Technology to support and stabilize the ankle without immobilizing for relief and balance while active.



7. ADVICE FOR DEALERS



“Create a destination within your store and make sure that all customers know you carry sports medicine items even if they are not currently injured.”

Chris Miller, United Sports Brands

“We find our best dealers are those who take the time to research the needs of their customer base. They listen to their customers and provide suggestions.”

Steve Sheridan, Hickory Brands/New Balance

“Allowing athletes and coaches to experience, try on and feel the product in action is key. Good products will sell themselves.”

Dawn Ferriera, Zamst

“Retailers should educate themselves on the science and technology behind medically effective bracing and be able to relay that information to the consumer.”

Warren Colter, Bauerfeind USA

“Be honest, educate your staff and guide your customers to make the best decision for their need. And never be afraid to say, ‘I don’t know.’ If a question is asked you don’t know, tell them to ask a doctor. If customers feel as if they were supported and not just sold, you’ll have a long-term customer.”

Matt Williams, DonJoy

“Convey the need for injury prevention from the start and how playing smart now can mean a longer, healthier and more enjoyable sports experience over time.” *Debbie Shannon, ING Source/OS1st*

“Selling a support or brace that will actually help the athlete is of primary importance. You want the athlete to return to you when the need arises. Don’t get caught up with the most elaborate or expensive options without knowing if the functionality and dependability meets the athlete’s needs.”

Craig DiGiovanni, Medi-Dyne

“Commit to the category. When it becomes a focus you will find that it is a category that you can grow with and see real results.”

Neal Fink, Performance Health ■

GET MORE INSIGHT

DIGITAL ISSUES NOW AVAILABLE



Full issues of Team Insight are now available digitally at teaminsightmag.com in a format that replicates the magazine reading experience on your iPad, computer or other digital device.

Team Insight is where you are.



Follow Team Insight on Facebook

teaminsightmag.com facebook.com/teaminsight

For advertising or subscription information, please email Publisher: Jeff Gruenhut at jgruenhut@formula4media.com.

FORMULA4
MEDIA, LLC



PAYING DIVIDENDS

Dealers and vendors are both bullish on the sock market.

By Nancy Baeder

Who would have thought it a few years ago? But it's true — socks continue to be *the* hot category in team sports. Once a slouchy, scrunchy afterthought, socks today deliver major athletic cred and help players make a statement in an otherwise uniform team market.

Part performance, part fashion, it has come to this — a crowded and competitive vendor market that is using technology to create unique features and benefits and a custom look. As a result, dealers have many options to energize their own sock market with strong margins and great appeal.

The motivation to purchase a team sock varies by sport, market, coach and budget. "Generally the performance aspects are not what interests teams anymore, Now It has more to do with the look," says **Gene Stokes**, sales manager, for **T&T Sports**, Columbia, SC. "Teams select socks to dress a uniform better and to stand out, versus wearing a run-of-the-mill Nike sock."

With performance features a given in nearly every athletic sock, the market today is dominated by style. "Performance is simply an expectation and almost an afterthought," says **Brad Davis**, national sales manager at **Twin City Knitting**. "It's all about creating a product that can be worn on the field or court, but gets the attention of others when worn as casual wear. The key is finding that perfect balance of design and functionality."

Fiber and construction technology have made

great leaps forward and vendors are all weaving a tale of distinctive looking sock lines and promoting their unique benefits.

"Visual interest plays a role in the overall athletic sock market. Socks that can start a conversation are very evident at sporting events and fun runs," says **Margaret Newhard**, director of product development at **Wigwam Mills**.

Much like athletic shoes, color, bold, digital design and distinctive patterns sell socks, especially as technology allows for customization in sublimated socks and knit-in designs.

"The sock companies are so much more advanced with patterns, designs and fibers and in their capability to knit in intricate designs and logos," says **Julia Sherman**, owner of **Frank Bashor Supplies**, Portland, OR.

That's because athletes like the opportunity to choose color and fun designs to express their personality, while taking their performance characteristics in stride. "Our socks are carefully constructed to eliminate hot spots, blisters and other problems that cheap alternatives just can't offer," says **Michael Foley**, president and CEO of **SockGuy**. "But they're also very good looking."

What Teams Buy

Sock vendors know that combining sleek design with performance benefits is the way to win. "We see an increase in patterns and designs on socks," says **Katy Holmes**, athlete and public relations coordinator at **Swiftwick**. "The technology in our socks delivers managed compression, moisture wicking, blister-free and anti-odor benefits, as well as answer to emerging trends."

The multi-sport solid color performance sock

continues to be the bread and butter of team socks, as dealers look to strike a balance between performance aspects, design and cost.

"Most of the time the coach chooses the sock and the color. It's typically a team purchase at the high schools, while rec leagues and travel teams make it an individual purchase," says **Eric Wheeler**, owner of **Compass Athletics**, Woodward, OK. "We like to order a sport-specific performance sock when it's a team order, but at retail we stock multi-sport socks because everyone will buy a multi-sport sock. We've found that basketball players won't buy a sock labeled football, and vice versa."

To outfit teams for football, basketball, baseball, softball and soccer, Compass Athletics sells socks from Under Armour, Nike and Twin City Knitting. "For us, Twin City outsells everything six to one. Their price point is affordable to teams and schools and you can count on the quality. They also have a great custom sock that is still affordable," says Wheeler.

That's important for Compass Athletic, because with the Oklahoma economy hurt by a downturn in the oil industry booster money is tighter. "We see Twin City coming on strong with an excellent fit and good price. You can buy three pairs for the price of one Nike Elite."

The over-the-calf sock is the choice for baseball, soccer and some football teams, while the crew length is popular for basketball. "Nike Elite owned it for so long, but that trend has cooled, though they always have new socks coming out," he says.

Additional socks are sold in team packs and as fund-raisers. "The bulk of the time team packs will include a Twin City one-color per-



SOCKS

Being first in the market to produce polypropylene custom socks firmly established **Pro Feet®** as a leader in the custom sock business. With a sock that has nine unique performance features – *none compare.*

- Endurall® to prevent Blisters with added durability in the heel & toe
- Sta-Cool® nylon for moisture wicking performance
- Arch support zones for added comfort, better fit and better circulation
- Ankle support zone for added stability
- Achilles wrap for added protection
- Vented foot zone to release heat and moisture throughout the foot
- Full foot support system for superior all around support
- Performance welt top for a secure and snug fit
- Hi Performance polypropylene for moisture wicking and to provide bacteria and odor resistance



- Low Minimums
- Low Lead Times
- High Quality Sock
- True Performance

- Low Minimums
- Low Lead Times
- 360° Design Capabilities



First and Only in our market with Custom Sublimated socks, continued to establish **Pro Feet®** as a leader in; not only the custom sock business; but in technology as well.

But we haven't stopped—we listened to what the market demanded;

- Lower minimums • Faster Lead times • Same high quality sock as our knit-in
- High digital quality graphics.

The Future is Now!



Our **Pro Ink®** Custom sock program gives you everything you asked for and more!

PROFEET.COM

800-334-1101

APPAREL / SOCKS



Left to right: 2XU, Mueller, Pro Feet, Sock Guy.

formance sock. Sometimes we also offer one of their patterned socks,” says Wheeler.

At T&T Sports, the multi-sport performance sock is the mainstay for six roadmen selling to high schools, colleges, rec leagues and travel teams, along with its small retail operation.

“These are solid colors, over-the calf socks for football and baseball. Basketball is a crew sock,” says Stokes. “Twin City Knitting is our main sock supplier and they do a great job with lots of stock colors.”

He finds that the best time to sell team socks is when making a uniform sale. “Teams paying \$100 for a uniform usually don’t notice a \$12 sock,” says Stokes. “For example, we show them a sock with wolves down the back in their team colors and it usually sells, as long as they’re okay with the minimum quantity of 24. It is sometimes an issue with a softball team with 12 girls that may not want to meet the minimum order.”

Educating coaches is an important part of selling socks. “Socks are essentially an afterthought and we’re trying to change that,” says Stokes, who stresses to his sales guys to trade teams up to a better sock.

“The cheaper socks stretch out and fall down; pay a little more and get a much better sock,” he advises, and the strategy has worked with several accounts. “This is the first year we’ve done that and we were able to upgrade some high school baseball and softball socks to per-

formance socks. It comes down to brass tacks and budgets.”

Online team stores certainly generate additional sock sales. “We add socks to the sale whenever we can. It might be a Twin City or Adidas sock that complements the shoe,” he says. “It’s hit or miss on the sales, depending if the coach makes it a required purchase or tells the kids to get a blue sock.”

Selling Technology

Frank Bashor Supplies makes a concerted effort to sell new sock technology to teams, a market that makes up 90 percent of its business.

“We find that coaches are willing to spend more for a better sock once you educate them on the differences,” says Sherman. “We sell a lot of Twin City sport-specific performance socks to school teams. And we always try to bring in new socks that reflect all the technology now available from Twin City and other brands such as Strideline and Under Armour.”

Most teams purchase socks with the uniform, but basketball is an individual purchase. “For whatever reason, we almost never sell team socks in basketball. Kids buy their own, usually the Nike Elite or something comparable,” Sherman says. “No one wants socks that slouch and scrunch. They’re looking for a performance sock with a smoother knit and tighter fit that wicks moisture. In general, people are willing to spend the \$8 or \$9 dollars on a sock that is perfor-

mance based.”

Team stores provide another sales opportunity. “Occasionally we sell socks in the online team stores, but it depends on what the coach wants. Socks do sell well when we have them on the site,” says Sherman.

At **McU Sports**, Boise, ID, most teams purchase a solid color performance sock. “The goal is to make the team look uniform and for most teams that means a solid color performance sock in the \$4 to \$8 range. Money and budgets dictate this purchase, unless they go for a custom logoed sock,” says **Wes Phillips**, team buyer at Rich Urresti’s company. “We sell a lot of Twin City because they have a strong product, good service and turnaround time that’s quicker than most. We also sell their custom logoed sock, more to guys than girls, and the little girls love their KraziSocks.”

Custom socks are gaining traction as more teams order and more vendors offer favorable programs. Opportunities for additional revenue attach to special events, fund-raising and retail.

“Custom socks continue to grow at a very healthy pace in the team market and we continue to grow and sharpen our tool kit. Design online, submit online, track online and get them on time,” says **Taylor Wilson**, VP-product development at **Pro Feet**. “Our custom sock portal allows for 24/7 access to custom orders, including knit-it, sublimated and ProInk, with a custom sock builder online.” Pro Feet also offers an app that will be available to qualifying deal-

Left to right: Twin City, Gildan/Under Armour Socks (red and blue), Wigwam, McDavid, Zamst.





UNDER ARMOUR®

INTRODUCING

THE UA FOOTBALL CREW

DESIGNED TO MAKE ATHLETES BETTER

DEMARIUS THOMAS
WR, Denver

HIGH-DENSITY ANKLE AND ACHILLES CUSHION FOR
IMPACT PROTECTION AND RESPONSIVE SUPPORT

UNIQUE BLEND OF ARMOURDRY™ MOISTURE
WICKING FIBERS ACCELERATE EVAPORATION

TOP OF FOOT MESH VENTING ENHANCES
BREATHABILITY

MEDIAL COMPRESSION ARCH SUPPORT

SEAMLESS TOE CONSTRUCTION

SELECTIVE CUSHION ZONES INTEGRATED
WITH CHANNEL VENTILATION

ERGONOMIC CONTOURING FOR TRUE ANATOMICAL FIT

ARMOURBLOCK® TECHNOLOGY HELPS PREVENT
GROWTH OF ODOR-CAUSING BACTERIA IN THE SOCK

GILDAN®

1980 Clements Ferry Road • Charleston, SC 29492, USA

Order Line: 1.800.438.9127 + Option 3

Main Number: 843.606.3606

Email: CTM-CS@gildan.com

©2016 GILDAN USA, INC

Gildan is an Official Licensee of Under Armour, Inc.

UA.COM

ers. Downloadable at the app store, this app will allow online ordering, online quotes and inventory information.

Vendors know that easier access and shorter lead times fuel custom sales.

"We notice an increase in the need for a quick mock-up as well as high-resolution graphics. We see the need to simplify the process and styles and an increase in demand for more detailed logos, as well as quicker turnaround times," says **Richard Shulman**, CEO at **PearSox**.

And apparently, if you build it they will come. "I believe it's inevitable that custom sock orders will grow as time frames shorten. We're an economy of last-minute shoppers, so six weeks is something most people don't get," says Stokes. "Selling a better sock is good for us."

Teams looking for socks to dress up a uniform or to stand out want custom socks. "People are definitely interested and we hope to see more

growth in custom socks. It's still not prevalent for teams to spend \$10-12 for socks, but about 15 percent do," he says.

While every customer has a different perspective, Stokes finds girls' teams are more open to custom socks. "Girls tend to be very specific about what they want. It's about making a statement and they're willing to pay more," he says. "The flip side is that it's difficult to stock items, when one coach wants over the calf for his softball team and another coach wants an all-over ball design for volleyball."

Give Them What They Want

When you can give teams the look they want with their color and their logo, it's an easy sale.

"Customizing a sock for a team or club is still the key for every sport," says Davis. "Dealers should make sure they hit every sport. Socks are an inexpensive item that almost any team

can afford every year. Retail can be driven by custom as well; catering to local schools/clubs by stocking custom socks is one way dealers are being successful competing with big-box retail."

Wheeler stocks and sells custom socks for local teams in his retail store. "We approach the basketball coach way ahead of time so we can get a custom sock by season start. For example, we'll do a white initial on a purple sock," says Wheeler. "We recently saw sublimated socks at a show, with so many different designs, and I can see them selling well for us."

Sherman is having success selling custom logoed socks to football teams and a few softball teams, as well as Twin City Baseline patterned socks and logoed socks for fanwear. "The lead time for custom is about six to eight weeks and this is mostly not a problem for us. Reorders turn in four to six," she says. "We also stock a lot of breast cancer awareness socks." ■



Compression Impressions

A NEW SUB-CATEGORY of team and sports socks has evolved in the form of compression socks and sleeves, an individual purchase primarily at retail. Dealers can educate their customers in order to help guide athletes to socks with specific performance benefits, active and recovery.

"Education is critical. Those working directly to solve the needs of athletes must be ready to explain the difference between levels of compression, full lengths versus sleeves, and truly match the product with the individual," says **Brian Koons**, director of marketing at **Mueller Sports Medicine**.

"We see socks as protective armor and believe that the compression category should be treated like essential equipment rather than apparel," says **Richard Verney**, director of products at **2XU**. "Team dealers can better address the compression sock and sleeve market in this way."

As retail space shrinks or is non-existent, many dealers do not consider the compression sale. They often don't have the retail volume to stock compression socks and sleeves and cannot justify carrying them.

"It's not that there isn't a market for those socks, but we cannot justify carrying them in our store because there isn't enough

demand," says **Eric Wheeler**, of **Compass Athletics**.

Still, athletes see these products on college and pro teams and dealers and players alike would benefit from the solutions compression products provide.

"We sell quite a few compression socks in at retail in the \$18 to \$20 price point," says **Wes Phillips**, of **McU Sports**, which stocks compression and Under Armour performance socks.

As the science advances, dealers can open the door for sales by understanding the products available, educating coaches and athletes and offering products either in their online team or retail stores.

"Advances in manufacturing methods and materials are helping to create even more tailored solutions," says Koons. "This trend is only likely to increase, be it for different activities or physical needs."

With today's technology, a quality sock supports and protects the foot.

"We believe function trumps form and fashion. Compression socks protect the contact areas between the foot and the ground, whether it's a straight line or lateral movement," says Verney. "The shoe has all the glam, but once people experience a good sock it changes their whole perception."

The idea is to help athletes perform at their best and prevent

injury, improve blood circulation in their calves and feet during activity and then enhance recovery.

"Once athletes discover how great these socks help them perform, recover and overall feel, they want more variety in terms of color and design," says **Mary Horwath**, senior VP-marketing at **United Sports Brands**.

The science of recovery continues to advance, including recovery with compression innovations, according to Horwath.

"For example, within our collection of targeted compression socks we've added zinc and seaweed elements for quick drying and enhanced comfort and incorporated mercury measurement to ensure precision compression," she says.

Zamst stresses the benefits of its HA-1 compression sock. "Compression socks enhance blood circulation and reduce vibration, thus reducing fatigue and soreness post workout," says senior product specialist **Dawn Ferreira**.

But performance doesn't mean style takes a back seat. "Bright colors and bold patterns are popular in the marketplace right now and Zamst HA-1 compression socks come in an array of colors," she adds.

Its hottest color for women today? Hot pink. ■

Custom Team Socks



**Ships in
as little as
10 days**

**Add your
Team Name/Logo**

- Available in Any Color and Any Style
- Durable & Lightweight
- Moisture Management
- Reinforced Heel, Toe & Arch
- Mesh Ventilation
- Arch/Ankle Support
- Reinforced Welt



**1-800-776-9787
orders@pearsox.com**

Stock Socks Available for Immediate Delivery.

www.pearsox.com

Made in U.S.A.



GAME CHANGERS

Five dealers talk about the impact of technology on their team businesses.

By Tim Sitek

While personal relationships remain the bedrock of the team sports business, technology continues to drive the dealer's ability to build business and survive in a changing landscape. To their credit – and to the benefit of their bottom lines – team dealers have embraced custom team stores for customers that run the gamut, from colleges to corporations, from schools to booster clubs. Those microsites have allowed many a team dealer to expand its business and provide a competitive edge. As one team dealer notes, “Technology has changed the entire landscape of the business. It’s been a game changer.” And another adds, “It’s completely revolutionized how everyone should do business.” But while technology drives business, people still make the difference. After all, “technology is only as good as the people who use it,” another dealer notes. What follows are insights into how five team dealers from across America use technology to better their businesses, while always making sure high tech doesn’t replace high touch.

Tech Drives Champion's Choice

Technology has moved **Champion's Choice** from the back of a car to the leading team supplier for Adidas in the United States.

Back in 1999, the business started by traveling to schools in the New England area. Load up with some samples. Stop in to see the coach or AD. Bring back sample designs if instructed. And then wish for an order or a call back. After all, gas was a lot cheaper back then.

While Champion's Choice grew to include a retail presence, the business really took off eight years ago when it began using the Web to build sites for schools. Since then, the business has grown to become the top team supplier for Adidas, says **Dan Hughes**, part owner and general manager of the team dealer in Wilmington, MA.

“Our business model is that we

only do business with institutions where we have agreements,” Hughes says, noting that they have those deals with 100 of those academic institutions.

To do that, Champion's Choice forges relationship with the many D2 and D3 colleges and prep schools throughout New England. And the bulk of the business is with colleges. “We are in the greater Boston area, where you can throw a rock and hit a college,” he quips.

That includes names such as Division 2 Stonehill, University of New Haven and American International, and D3 MIT, Endicott College, Salem State University and Mount Holyoke College. It’s been able to work with schools across all sports, which may mean business with all 33 teams at MIT as an example, Hughes says.

But the area is also rife with

private prep schools, some 260 such schools throughout New England. Champion's Choice reaches more than 30 private prep and public schools with well-known names such as Middlesex School, Milton Academy and Kimball Union Academy. The only difference is that the college business draws from a larger pool and is much more predictable, Hughes says.

It’s honed the business by offering turnkey apparel and footwear for teams and fans.

Using the Adidas team uniform builder, Champion's Choice often sets up sites that cover from head to toe for teams, along with player packs and spirit packs.

Typically, it reaches out to the athletic directors and then its account managers work with the coaches or other responsible parties to pick out the items and designs.

“We have account managers, not salespeople,” Hughes notes. “They have to know the timeframes. They don’t have to go through the sales process per se. It’s a much different role. Your role is to build relationships.” Technology has greatly streamlined that role.

Hughes says the account managers form the backbone of its customer service. “They are just farmers. Most team dealers depend on hunters and farmers. It’s very tough to find someone that can do both of these.” Consequently, each account manager typically provides the main contact for eight or so schools.

Those account managers work out all the details — from product selection and design, down to sizing when requested to order tracking to final delivery. “It’s a full-time job,” Hughes notes.

On the back end, Champion's



TECHNOLOGY

The Future is Technology!

We at **Pro Feet®** know that Technology creates our future,
we also know that custom socks are Hot!



Not just custom;

Knit-in

Not just custom;

Sublimation



But Pro Feets newest technology

Pro Ink® Custom Socks



Crazy low minimums with super low lead times.

**Build yours today on our Sock Builder®
or download our new app.**



only available
for iPad



PROFEET.COM

800-334-1101

Three New Tools for Team Dealers in 2016

The Challenge: Right Product, Right Time, Right Person, Right Way!

The Solution: Three new tools that seamlessly work together to share specific, relevant products to the decision makers and streamline online store creation and institutional orders for dealers.

1. Catalogs...

allow vendors, vendor reps, dealers, and dealer reps to bundle a selection of products specific to their customer group. It's easy to add products to a catalog using OrderMyGear's database of verified products, complete with accurate product descriptions and product images. Catalogs can include products from multiple vendors to be shared with coaches and decision makers using the other two new tools: Store Requestor and Bulk Order Stores.



2. Store Requestor...

allows a coach to browse an online catalog and select the products they would like to include in an online store for their team. The store request is received by the dealer to review and automatically launch the team's store with just a few clicks.



3. Bulk Order Stores...

allow coaches and other institutional order decision makers to browse a special view of a shared catalog. These coaches and other decision makers can then place a bulk order for equipment or other products directly to the dealer. The dealer receives a Purchase Order detailing the quantities of each item.

Vendors Leveraging OrderMyGear

- Brands and vendor reps are now using OrderMyGear to better package and promote their products to OrderMyGear's dealers.
- OrderMyGear is creating vendor programs specific to dealer and dealer reps.
- OrderMyGear provides valuable metrics on program adoption and product sales.



ORDERMYGEAR BY THE NUMBERS

- 32 employees

• 50,000 stores
launched to date
in last 12 months

- \$85 million in
volume in last
12 months



ORDERMYGEAR

2211 Commerce Street • Suite 300 • Dallas, TX 75201
214-945-4000 • info@ordermygear.com • www.OrderMyGear.com

Sell More Gear.



ORDERMYGEAR

Call for a demo
214-945-4000

Create A Store

Get your team or group sale up and running in minutes. Add photos, descriptions, pricing, terms, and more.

Custom Catalogs

Quickly create and share online catalogs using our extensive verified product data or add your own products.

Manage and Market

Easily share and promote an online store with your group and monitor the sale success in real time.

Collect Funds

Secure, trusted credit card processing that protects your customers from fraud and security headaches.

Automatic Reporting

Save time with detailed fulfillment reporting and the ability to quickly generate purchase orders for your vendors.

You Sell, We Build

Use our service team to build and launch your stores for you, complete with mocking up art on garments.

WHAT DEALERS WANT



Team dealers count on suppliers to provide technology tools that support their efforts. Here's what they say on those tools from suppliers, as well as a wish list for more.

"On-line insight to inventory, orders and tracking help. Those are key to have access to information. We won't put anything out that isn't in stock. We won't put something on the site if we know it's not available, usually the odd sizes," says Dan Hughes, at Champion's Choice.

What more could suppliers do? "If they really enabled their sites for mobile that would be a big benefit. They've done it with tablets, but it's not yet there with smartphones," Jeff Rappaport, at Team Gear Inc., notes.

"Their B-to-B sites have been greatly improved. We have the information we need to start placing orders. We don't lose much time to build those items," says Mark Osborne, at Team Gear International.

He has a simple request on improving the tech tools. "If we could export and import the files rather than manually import the data, it would make life a lot easier. I understand that there are compatibility problems between systems, so it's not easy and it gets expensive,"

Osborne notes.

"Many manufacturers offer uniform builders and cap designs," says Justin Miller, at Scholastic Sports Sales. "These help because the customer can send a design. Some are user friendly and some aren't. Some can turn right into an order."

Plus, Miller says it's helpful to check inventory online, but sometimes these simply aren't accurate. Team dealers need real-time information on inventory.

"The B-to-B sites are pretty good," says Rappaport. "You need to do your due diligence before setting up the stores. We check the inventory availability. It's not perfect, but you can do your job and take steps to reduce the risk. And there are vendors that are more reliable than others."

"Online ordering with stock in real time helps," says Amy Schumacher, at Lettermen Sports. "It's a huge advantage. It makes it easier. The supplier sites that are easiest to work with are the ones that get the most business."

She also sees suppliers doing a better job with digital imagery and catalogs to make the team dealer's life a little easier and more productive. ■

Choice uses Team Uniform Orders (TUO) for its platform, a move it made three years ago after using another vendor. "It's much more dynamic," Hughes says. "We can do our own artwork. We build our own sties. We used to hand it off and it took a week to 10 days. The speed today is much better since we build the sites in-house and rely on TUO for the back end of payments and security."

Timeliness and timeframe are critical, since most sites open and close over a narrow window, Hughes notes. Schools receive the information on accessing their sites, usually with a user name and password. Orders are then gathered and decorated in-house. "We want to do it all at once to keep our costs in check," Hughes says.

Player packs and spirit packs form the core of its revenue. "We try to capture every dollar from our stores," Hughes adds.

As part of this, Champion's Choice books product and holds it at its 8500-square-foot facility. It mitigates the inventory risk by having a good understanding of what will sell. "We are very good at booking core product that we know will sell," points out Hughes.

And while it focuses on Adidas' apparel and footwear line, it also carries several other lines and its own Champion's Choice private label line. "We have our brand for lower cost items, primarily practice wear."

With some 1000 sites a year, Champion's Choice continues to build a solid business online. Technology allows it to do so, with many benefits beyond just handling the volume.

"The major thing is that it's helped our cash flow," Hughes notes. "That's the bane of all small businesses. We collect the money on the front end."

Plus, it streamlines a difficult process. "It gives you significant accuracy in what you do. You know the sizes, the quantities, the decoration. There are so many issues when we used paper, such as someone saying they sent in an order or a check that didn't clear. We have all the information right there."

While this has moved Champion's Choice from the back seat of a car to the front of the technology curve, Hughes still credits people for

making it work. "Technology is only as good as the people who use it."

Team Gear Moves Into High Gear

With a background in graphic design and computer software training, it was a natural for **Mark Osborne** to move **Team Gear International** farther into the technology world. The team sales manager for the Midvale, UT, team dealer and retailer also has another passion that fit: His love for the beautiful game. Yes, the German-born Osborne has played or been involved in soccer for more than 30 years. Today, with the help of technology, Team Gear is kicking up sales as a soccer specialist in Utah.

"With our online presence we have set ourselves apart from our local competition by meeting a need of our current customers as well as any new clients we are presenting what we offer," Osborne says. "The advantage of offering soccer apparel online as well as in our local brick-and-mortar store has been well

"We won't put anything out that isn't in stock."

Dan Hughes, Champion's Choice

received."

Started officially in 1993, Team Gear now caters to more than 200 clubs, schools, recreation centers and independent teams throughout Utah and the surrounding regions. It pretty much covers the entire state for high school soccer teams, Osborne says.

Its online presence is making it even more prominent among the soccer crowd.

"The ability to go online has changed our business for the better," he notes. "We've been a small single store for 25 years. We've handled hundreds of thousands of uniforms going through our doors. The world of online has pushed us into high gear."

Team Gear shifted into this gear without any roadmen, relying on its reputation and service, along with some grassroots efforts. It uses e-mail campaigns to promote its ability to customize team stores. "We also do good, old-fashioned phone calls," Osborne says. And once it has interest, it provides either onsite



SELL SMARTER. NOT HARDER.



GET YOUR GROUPS, LEAGUES, CLUBS AND TEAMS INTO ONLINE ORDERING.

ONE OF THE INDUSTRY'S MOST ADVANCED, AUTOMATED, ONLINE ORDERING SOLUTIONS
FEATURING BEAUTIFUL NEW STORE DESIGNS.

CALL FOR DEMO
888-428-5188



TECH CHANGES TEAM GEAR INC.



TEAM GEAR INC. is no stranger to technology. The Whippany, NJ-based team dealer built its own platform eight years ago to sell and service schools and clubs, says **Jeff Rappaport**, partner and salesman for the team dealer that primarily covers the Northeast.

"Technology changed the entire landscape of the business," Rappaport notes. "We are no longer just a provider, we are a logistics provider," with Team Gear servicing teams with micro-sites. "Most volunteers need this. What we can give to our customers has changed dramatically. It's been a game changer."

Team Gear mainly targets schools and club sports, working with schools on player packs and booster clubs on "whatever goods the customers require."

And it does this without roadmen, building its business on word of mouth and relationships. In particular, it has close ties to USA Hockey and USA Wrestling. It also leverages its relationships with key suppliers such as Under Armour and Alleson Athletic to cater to niche sports such as hockey, wrestling and lacrosse. It also goes after and gets business for the big sports such as football and baseball, Rappaport adds.

But it doesn't rely entirely on word of mouth. Team Gear markets through e-mail blasts and marketing its own website.

Team Gear works with customers on product selection and design. "The most difficult part

of this is product selection. You have to narrow it down; otherwise, it can be overwhelming," Rappaport says.

To help with this, Team Gear is developing a core catalog that will feature its top suppliers. "We know which products to recommend and offer on our stores. We provide a service. We have a lot of production capacity with screenprinting, tackle twill and embroidery. The technology is great, but you still have to produce it. You have to control the production."

To do so, it uses ShopWorks software to manage the production cycle. "We aren't pushing paper. It goes from order entry to receiving and shipping."

While customers want design tools and uniform builders, that sounds good in principle but not in practice. "I'm not sure it's as easy as people want you to think. We have a full art department with four graphic designers to help with this," he says.

Faced with a decision to upgrade its technology, Team Gear decided to align with OrderMyGear to handle its platform for ordering and payment. "We decided to focus on the production, selling and service and let OrderMyGear handle the technology," he says. Such focus has helped the team dealer operate some 500 team stores a year.

Such success still depends on people. "I look at it as taking orders and keeping it organized," he notes. ■

demonstrations on laptops and tablets or sets up online meetings that allow it to remotely showcase its capabilities on computers while talking to potential customers on the phone.

Before jumping into the online world, Team Gear did some research to make sure it was a viable way to do business. It then hooked up with Team Uniform Orders to handle the technology platform.

It's worked well, allowing Team Gear to stand out among soccer specialists that haven't adopted technology and to go toe-to-toe with bigger full-line team dealers. "The technology allows us to compete and keep the business here," Osborne says.

It currently works with teams and clubs to primarily buy uniforms and other apparel. The retail presence allows players to come in for sizing, if they wish. "Most players want to try the shoes," he adds.

Team Gear sets up specific sites for teams and clubs. They then go out and promote the sites to their players.

It's worked so well for clubs, in particular, since it makes ordering easier and relieved those soccer moms and dads of the work involved. Just think what it takes to get 200 to 300 players in the right size, much less collect the money and distribute the orders.

"Now that we have made the ordering easier and taken the burden from our clients, we are moving forward to grow our business with the ability of doing spirit wear as well," Osborne says. "This new aspect of the business is very exciting and again answers a need for our customers."

And soccer fans are certainly known for their spirit. "We also have wear for the parents and families. We believe it's going to be huge," Osborne says.

"The majority of the time we have logos and decorations from the organizations," Osborne adds. "I've helped the smaller organizations with designs for spirit wear."

Team Gear does most of the decorating in-house, unless it is sublimation, which then is handled by its suppliers such as Nike and Adidas.

It also works with suppliers on bulk orders in advance. "We secure inventory six months in advance. We already have the shipment coming

in. We have a good idea of sizes, but it's not an exact or a perfect science," he adds.

That does pose a challenge in making sure they get as much information as possible up front, not to mention when it comes crunch time. Plus, change can be difficult for some. "Trying to convince people to change to an online system can be a challenge," Osborne says.

Technology provides a tool, but people make it work, he adds. "We wanted to make sure we didn't lose that personal touch. We focus on staying in front of the client. That's what sets us apart from the big dealers. The customer always knows they can reach up in crunch time. Our customer service sets us apart from the competition."

Scholastic at Head of the Class

Admittedly, **Scholastic Sports Sales** still does a lot of business the "old-school way," says **Justin Miller**, VP-operations for the Manlius, NY-based team dealer. In business for 36 years, he knows that you still have to sell and service accounts. That's part and parcel to its longevity and success as one of central New York's largest team dealers,

"The ability to go online has changed our business for the better."

Mark Osborne, Team Gear International

with more than 1000 high schools, colleges, youth organizations and coaches primarily through upstate New York relying on Scholastic Sports to outfit their teams with apparel and equipment.

But to stay ahead of the game, he knows the team dealer must still adapt to the times and embrace technology to move its business forward. "The biggest thing we use are the online stores," Miller says. "We've been doing them for the past five years and have shown steady growth."

A family business for three generations, Miller's father showed some initial hesitancy in setting up the team stores, but he and his brother saw the potential and proved it. "We saw the benefit for the end user. The team moms in particular who had to

CALLING ALL DEALERS

CUSTOM WRESTLING GEAR



ADDRESS OF CHAMPIONS

www.myhousesportsgear.com

#MYHOUSESPORTSGEAR



INFO@MYHOUSESPORTSGEAR.COM

PHONE: 1-866-609-7263

deal with the orders really needed this to relieve some of the workload. Now, it's all up to us. It streamlines the process."

In fact, the team dealer's three roadmen would use order forms to help those moms organize and then promote sales of T-shirts and sweat-shirts. The move online simplifies the process for those overworked moms and builds business for Scholastic Sports. And spirit wear remains the biggest draw, while online player packs and uniforms for travel teams are picking up as well.

Now, Scholastic Sports runs 70 sites a year and climbing, including 23 stores just around the Christmas season. As for the latter, "almost everybody wants a store to sell spirit wear around Christmas."

To help its clients, Scholastic Sports employs other technology as well. Rather than lugging around catalogs, iPads and tablets carry the load and provide access to uniform builders. E-mail and smartphones

provide support, too, but that's a mixed blessing. "That's a blessing and a curse since people expect you to respond immediately," Miller notes.

What's really helped is InkSoft, an online design tool to help customers create the graphic look they want. "Customers go right in and design their uniforms and spirit wear. They can go in and see the templates, fonts and clip art. It's easy to use," Miller says.

It's also cut down on the headaches, since many clients would go to Custom Ink, design something, print it out and hand it to their roadman. Of course, Scholastic Sports still needed to do the graphic design to ready it for production.

"Now, we have the back end with all the artwork ready to go," Miller says of the production-ready graphics produced with the new design program. And, yes, it still needs to adjust some of the artwork to make sure it's both feasible and affordable

for clients.

Once it builds the sites, using Team Uniform Orders as its technology platform, Scholastic Sports relies on its customers to promote the site. "That's where the contact matters. The team mom has to step up. We put together a flyer. You

"It's helpful to stay in touch."

Justin Miller, Scholastic Sports Sales

can auto generate these, but we prefer to design our own. I usually e-mail a flyer or I'll print these. We've found, though, that a printed copy usually works better in selling items on these sites," Miller says.

"Everything that we've implemented has been helpful," Miller adds about its technology push. The biggest challenge has been tempering instant gratification with realistic deadlines.

It also means training staff. "They usually see the benefit quickly. We have two guys that have been with us for 18 years. It was a learning curve, but they have adapted," Miller adds.

And he never loses perspective on maintaining those all-important personal relationships. "The sales guys say we can do more in the office, but it takes away from the relationship. It's helpful to stay in touch, especially to make sure the contact person knows you. You still need to be out there," Miller says.

Lettermen Chooses Technology

"It's completely revolutionized how everyone should do business," Amy Schumacher, COO and owner of Lettermen Sports, Blaine, MN, says of technology. "About 10 years ago we tried to create a version of online team sales through our POS system. It was easy for the consumer, but not for us. We still did a lot of work on the back end. There was an awful lot of paperwork to track and process orders."

But that has long since changed for the team dealer that started in 1982 as a hockey shop and then found another niche in decorating letter jackets. After making patches with chenille, Lettermen then added embroidery and eventually got into screenprinting.

Now, it focuses on custom team and retail apparel, with hard goods only committed to its hockey roots.

Technology now drives its services. "There are so many cool tools on the market now to streamline the process," Schumacher says. "We have completely customized this through our order tracking and POS systems. We are now paperless. All of our machines now have iPads with details for the orders. All of our systems talk to each other. It's allowed us to cut down turnaround and on mistakes. Everything is tracked in real time."

Sure, it takes time, energy and money, Schumacher notes, but the process no longer depends on a person to have this in his or her brain. "We want everyone to have the information and knowledge."

She calls it "the Rubik cube of custom orders," and as a reminder, she keeps a Rubik cube on her desk.

Using Team Uniform Orders as its technology platform for the past

PRACTICE JERSEYS



N4139/NB4139

N4260/NB4260

Visit A4.com for details
and color options

A4
pushing the limit

888 464 3824 | www.A4.com

three years, Lettermen does a large volume in youth and high school hockey, lacrosse, dance studios, corporate and elementary schools. It does hundreds of sites.

"It's the way people shop," she says. "Parents are busy. Those hockey managers are already so busy. Apparel just adds another piece to their plate. They don't want to have to take orders and collect money."

It's been so successful that Lettermen is test driving the same concept at retail, allowing customers to order a single item that may not be in stock. "We do so much community apparel, but some communities just don't have the demand. You can't offer it across every sport to every community."

As an example, a hoodie can be customized for the community swimming team, along with the person's name.

Word of mouth and relationships are the main way it promotes the

business, but Lettermen also markets those sites through posters and printed and digital flyers.

"We are now paperless. All of our machines now have iPads with details for the orders."

Amy Schumacher, Lettermen Sports

And Lettermen typically doesn't password-protect its custom team sites because it wants grandma and grandpa to visit. "It broadens the engagement. Now, the online world allows you to engage with everybody. You open it up well beyond the player. You offer something for everybody. It brings people together," she says.

The other piece is allowing the customer to assist with the design. "It allows them to create their own

graphics. It's a fun process. People want to engage and be a part of the creative process."

Surprisingly, people go simple, Schumacher adds. "We pretty much can do what they want." But the in-house art department assists to make sure any design works and falls within the budget.

There is still resistance from people going to a team store. After all, it's the way they've always done it. "They want to control the process."

Overcoming that resistance and working with customers requires helping them navigate through the right amount of goods. "You can't overwhelm your shoppers with too many choices. Less often produces a better result," she notes. Plus, it also helps control costs since it's more economical to produce 48 hoodies in one design than offering six different hoodies that produce eight orders each.

The other challenge is simply

speed. "We live in an Amazon world. People seem to expect it the next day. Anything we can do to streamline the process without sacrificing quality would be a benefit."

Customer service remains crucial to manage both expectations and the orders. "Great customer service always drives the process. We don't want the customer to be swamped by questions from 1200 players. We may have one point person with the hockey association, but that person can't have 1200 people asking questions. We take that customer service on. We are the point of contact. You earn the business with each customer and with every order."

Communication inside and outside also drives business. Inside, everybody must be working together, especially during the busy winter and holidays when orders skyrocket. Outside, "We still meet and help the customer walk through the process," Schumacher says. ■



Get Started Today! Call us 800.410.3048 or visit www.InkSoft.com

Selling Tool for the 21st Century Team Dealer

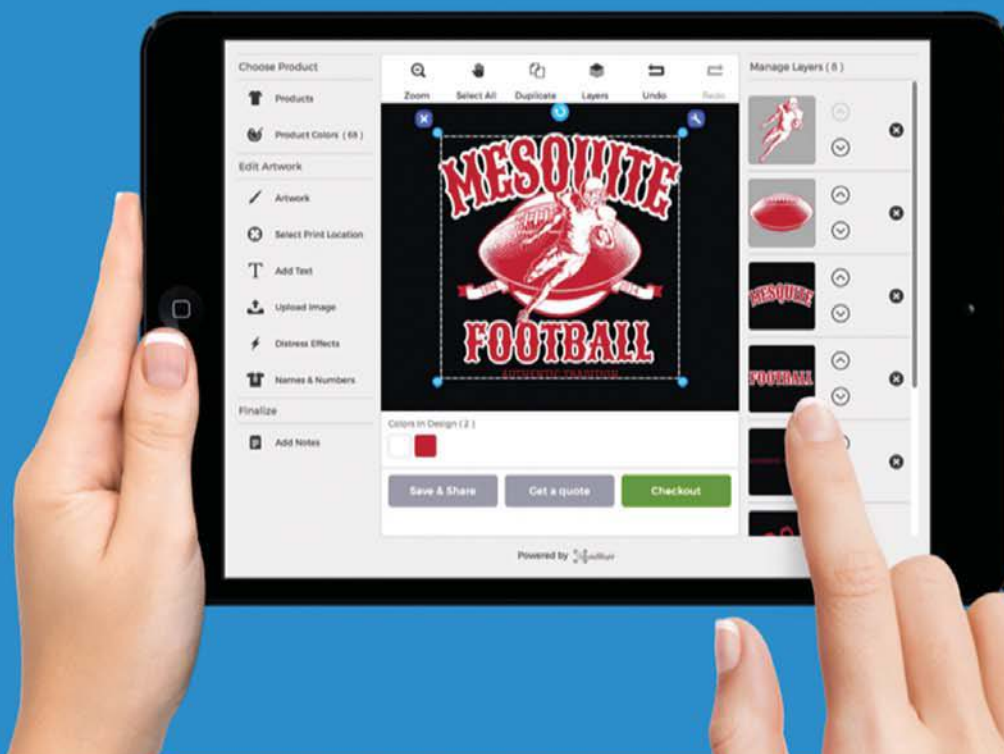
Used and trusted by thousands. InkSoft is serious technology for the serious team dealer.

Key InkSoft Features

- ✓ Interactive Online Designer
- ✓ Online Team & Spirit Wear Stores
- ✓ Virtual Fundraiser Team Stores
- ✓ 12,000+ Designs & Clip Art
- ✓ Web-based Art Approvals
- ✓ Art Approvals, Quotes & Invoices
- ✓ No Transaction Fees!

Learn more about InkSoft

Call us 800.410.3048 or visit www.InkSoft.com



GOOOAAAAALLL!!!

Vendors look to score big with new products for 2016.



Big-ticket items can significantly add to the bottom line of team dealers willing to make the effort to become the go-to guy for their schools and recreation programs. The need is there for not only new goals and nets, but for updates of existing systems as they age. Here, the leading manufacturers of soccer, basketball and volleyball systems and nets provide some insight and advice into the category. **By Michael Jacobsen**

GOAL SPORTING GOODS

What's Trending: Customers are trending back to U.S. domestic manufacturers, points out general manager Jon Fishman, because quality is better from U.S. manufacturers and costs are equal. "The customer can buy replacement parts easily versus very difficult or impossible when buying imported goals," he says. Another trend is towards high-end goals with portable wheels that will last longer. "Goals need to be portable due to multi-use fields requiring multiple sports on fields," he points out. Customization is also trending and Goal is supplying more goal posts, corner flags, benches and bleachers with team names, logos, sponsor names and colors.

Advice for Dealers: Margins are already excellent, Fishman maintains, so he advises dealers to pay attention to customer needs to ensure they are buying from domestic suppliers with a wide selection. Also, he suggests doing research with the customer as to what they are looking for. "Ask customers questions," Fishman says. "Do research before seeing the customer, so anticipate their needs based on previous purchase history and experiences." The dealer can also benefit by offering a complete range of both hard and soft goods — one-stop-shopping.

New for 2016: Goal has introduced its European L-shaped portable goals with 3x4-inch elliptical aluminum tubing throughout. Channeled tubing allows for easy and quick net attachment.



BISON

What's Trending: Sales of carbon fiber volleyball systems have jumped considerably over the past couple of years, according to national sales manager Chris Livingston. "The higher demand has allowed us to expand our line to four different distinct carbon systems, as well as allowing us to reduce prices so more high schools can fit these into their budgets."

Advice for Dealers: "The biggest factor in selling more basketball or volleyball equipment is knowing the product and knowing what questions to ask when dealing with a school or a facility," says Livingston. Bison provides videos on its website to help with the process.

New for 2016: The CarbonLite Composite volleyball system is billed as the lightest competition volleyball system on the market at 17 pounds per standard (non-winch end). The system has a three-inch carbon outer pole with a carbon inner pole along with the same features as all of its other volleyball systems.

The World's Best Portable Sports Nets, Goals & Training Systems

BOWNET[®] Football

NEW! Solo Kicker Pro

Twice as big as the Solo Kicker

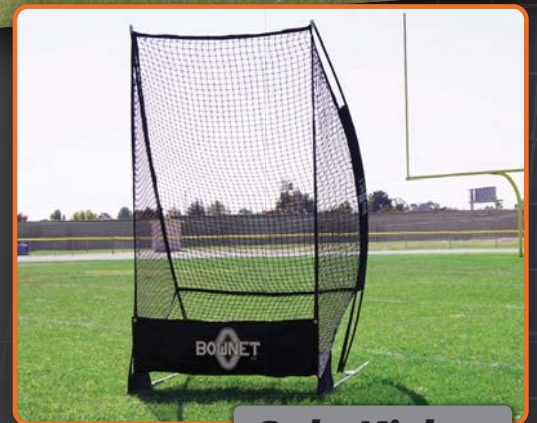
11'6" tall x 8' wide, the largest net of it's kind!



QB5



QB Fade



Solo Kicker

To Place Orders Call
866-950-6387



Email Orders to
orders@bownet.net

BOWNET SPORTS

What's Trending: The big story in soccer goals this year is the changes made by the USSF regarding goal training sizes, points out chief managing officer Jonathan Hayden. They are now 4x6, 6.6x18.5 and 8x24 — the 4x6 is a new size for Bownet. “They are selling fast as clubs and associations replace their current goals,” Hayden reports.

Advice for Dealers: “We talk about how our goals work as a system,” Hayden says and he suggests blending smaller goals with larger ones for specific types or training and for short-sided games, especially on limited field or indoor space. “This Bownet System approach has resonated with coaches and we recommend our dealers use the same approach,” he says. “Using this approach, dealers make more money selling multiple goals to their local teams and clubs instead of just one pair at a time. Dealers just have to reach out to their clubs and show them how goals can solve a lot of their training and field issues.”

New for 2016: The 4x6 soccer net fits the new goal training sizes mandated by USSF.



BLAZER

What's Trending: “Blazer doesn't do too much in trendy,” says product manager Joe Wewel. “We make good, solid aluminum soccer goals.”

Advice for Dealers: “Sell Blazer's quality goals and the word will spread when it comes time for another school to buy a new set of goals.”

New for 2016: Blazer has an improved Collegiate/High School (8' H x 24' W x 4' D x 8' B) goal and Junior Goal (6'6" x 18'6" x 4' D x 8' B). It is designed with a new back stabilizer and net attachment design.



JAYPRO SPORTS

What's Trending: “New goal size standards released by the U.S. Soccer Federation are an important change right now,” points out VP-engineering Wayne VanBenschoten. The standards take into consideration goal size, ball size and number of players per age group and are aimed at promoting individual skills and game knowledge.” Also trending, according to owner Michael Ferrara, is the significant discussion surrounding soccer goal safety and ASTM standards. “All soccer goals that are not permanently anchored must have a certain amount of counterweight, even when the goals have met all ASTM requirements,” he points out.

In lacrosse, Ferrara says the move to thicker nets, from 2mm-4mm to 5mm-7mm, is going hand in hand with lacrosse goals getting heavier, more robust and rugged. “These changes make sense when you consider that indoor/box lacrosse is increasing in popularity.”

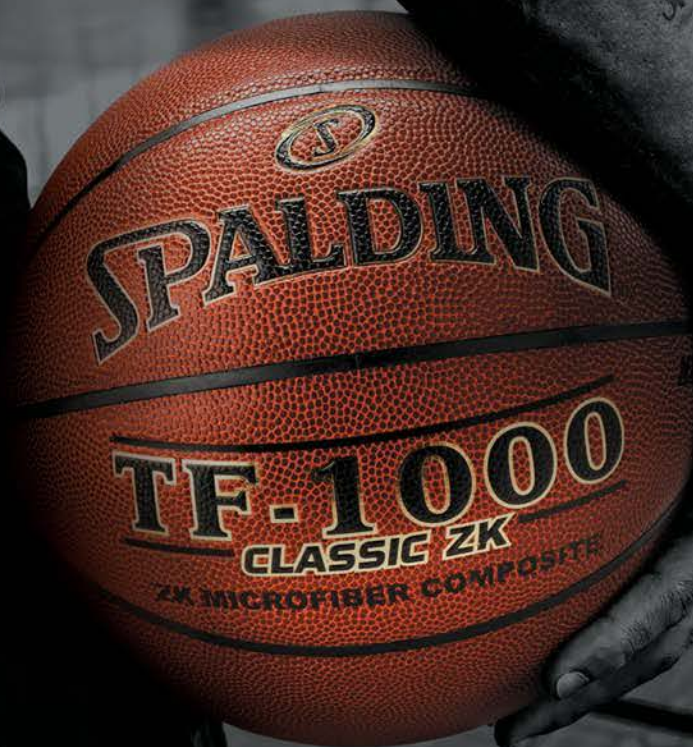
For basketball, national sales manager/custom projects Doug Morrow is seeing facilities moving away from big, bulky height adjusters and conversion boards to high-end conversions with 42x72-inch regulation glass boards and streamlined height adjusters that allow for clear view of play.

Advice for Dealers: “We suggest promoting higher-end, official and youth club soccer goals that offer a greater lifespan of the product in the field,” says Ferrara. Also, dealers can reduce costs and increase ease-of-sale by promoting package deals.

New for 2016: Jaypro's LG-1X field lacrosse goal is designed with the same safety features of the NLL-PX1 National Lacrosse League box goal. It features the secure anchoring of the net bottom with a flat cover plate. Jaypro is also evolving its Classic Square Club Goal to a three-inch round design with an integrated net attachment track. For the growing sport of indoor futsal, Jaypro Sports has developed a line of futsal goals that meet all levels of play.



WHAT YOU'RE — MADE OF — SPEAKS FOR ITSELF



Only the TF-1000 Classic ZK® has the exclusive ZK® Microfiber Composite Cover Material that creates the soft touch and durability all True Believers demand.

SPALDING
#TRUEBELIEVERS ARE TRUE TO THE GAME®

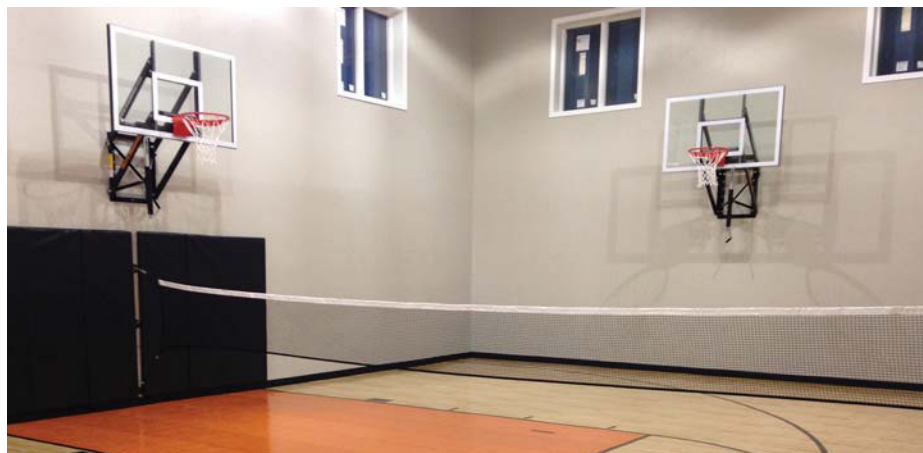
truebelievers.spalding.com

EQUIPMENT / GOALS/NETS

CARRON NET

What's Trending: "As anyone in the business knows, the popularity of individual sports tend to rise and fall over time," says president Bill Kiel, who points to pickleball having its moment in the sun now. "However, in terms of what's currently driving netting sales, clearly the focus on improving spectator safety is the biggest issue we're seeing," he adds. "While the changes enacted by professional baseball have garnered the majority of the headlines, the trickle-down need to make similar safety enhancements at every level is what's really creating opportunities to sell nets right now."

Advice for Dealers: Kiel believes that team dealers who are helping their customers evaluate their netting needs and find solutions are providing a significant value. "Not only does this create a sales opportunity for the dealer, it positions them as a valuable problem-solving resource with the customer," he says. And because selling nets for custom applications can be a little daunting, especially if a dealer hasn't done it before, his advice is to use the resources available. "A key to selling nets is to understand that all nets are not the same and, as with most things in life, you get what you pay for," he adds. As an example, he points to a recent situation where a customer ordered two batting cage nets from an online retailer. "Those nets lasted less than a season and this year they're replacing them with nets from us," Kiel says. "Investing a little bit of time and effort to familiarize yourself with netting will pay big dividends."



Sport Pride Graphic Wall Padding

Sport Pride Graphic Scorers Table and Chairs

Private Collection Customizable Recycling Receptacle

Sport Pride Graphic Windscreens

Covered No-Tip Portable Bench

800-247-7668
www.bisoninc.com

A GOAL FOR EVERY GAME

BASKETBALL • VOLLEYBALL • FOOTBALL • SOCCER • LACROSSE • FUTSAL
TEAM HANDBALL • RUGBY • TENNIS • TETHERBALL • BADMINTON • HOCKEY

PORTER ATHLETIC

What's Trending: Gym renovations are an ongoing trend in the basketball community and many older gyms still have the classic rigid goals that need to be replaced with new flex goals. "Another trend we see is the desire for 180-degree flex goals," says senior equipment specialist Matt Wells. "As it seems that more kids are dunking, this rim allows the athlete to dunk safer and take stress off the rim by flexing on the sides."

Advice for Dealers: "Ask the facility director or AD if you can take a walk in their gym," says Wells. "This will allow you to determine what their needs are. Look for goals that are beat up or outdated." Often the main court goals are taken care of, but the side courts need to be updated.

New for 2016: Porter's Orbit Flex rim flexes 180 degrees and is economically priced. It is targeted at high schools or small colleges that are looking for a performance rim without taking up their budget.





FIRST TEAM

What's Trending: "Coaches and athletic directors are asking for rims that will break away in the direction where force is applied when the basketball is dunked or a player grasps the rim," says president Wayne Unruh. "Televised basketball games often show close-up shots of these rims flexing in all directions."

Advice for Dealers: Unruh suggests that when walking through a gymnasium, team dealers should not overlook worn out/broken rims and backboard edge padding that needs to be replaced. Also, outdoor playgrounds at schools and parks often have bent, broken or even missing rims on their basketball equipment. "Those who are in charge of maintaining the equipment are thrilled to find out that replacement rims and backboards will provide better service and will be backed by a warranty," he says. "Replacing rims and backboards becomes an obvious visual improvement and a source of pride to a community."

New for 2016: First Team has introduced a portable basketball system that is an upgrade from water-fill tip and roll portables. Three different adjustable extension arms with an array of backboard options can be attached to a one-piece post that is anchored on a large poly base called the Omni Base. Any of the three systems – OmniChamp, OmniSlam or OmniJam – can be used in an elementary school gymnasium, church multiple purpose gym, recreation center or home court. Also new is a 180-degree breakaway FT196T.



GILL ATHLETICS

What's Trending: The biggest news in soccer goals is the new goal sizes mandated by U.S. Soccer — U6-U8: 4' x 6'; U9-U12: 6'6" x 18' 6"; and U13-and older: 8' x 24'. "This has caught some manufacturers off guard," according to sales manager Darren Clare, who points out that Gill Soccer has been building these sizes for many years.

Advice for Dealers: "Make every facility and club team aware of the mandated new goal sizes, as they are required to run a state-sanctioned tournament," Clare says. "Many facilities do not have the two smaller sizes and will need to buy them."

New for 2016: Gill's Essentials line of soccer goals includes all of the sizes required by the new U.S. Soccer rules.

Do you want this net...

...or a Carron Net?

**ALL NETS ARE NOT
CREATED EQUAL**

- ✓ Strong 100% Nylon Mesh
- ✓ Durable Continuously Sewn Border Edges
- ✓ Finest American Craftsmanship
- ✓ World-Class Customer Service

If you're not getting all of these,
next time **CALL CARRON!**



**QUALITY SPORTS NETS
& BATTING CAGES**



**CARRON NET
COMPANY, INC.**
Quality Nets Since 1934

1-800-558-7768

www.carronnet.com

QUARTER-LY REPORT

By Nancy Baeder

Team dealers sell a lot of outerwear and while versatile all-purpose iconic hoodies remain the benchmark, quarter zips get the team jacket headline this year. Their popularity is being pushed by technology and style trends that lean towards fitted cuts, lightweight performance fabrics and layered looks.

Most teams need some kind of jacket for travel and weather protection and teams dealers are stepping up with customized solutions that offer a unified look in the latest style trends and fabrications.

In Missouri, changeable weather means athletes need to be ready for anything. "We sell a lot of different team jackets," says **Don Fischer**, owner of **Fischer's Pro-Line Sports**. With two store locations in Florissant and Chesterfield, MO, Fischer's teams include colleges and junior colleges, high schools, youth leagues and select travel teams.

Hoodies and quarter zips are the most popular choices. "There is no question that the quarter zip is trending. We are selling more of them than ever," says Fischer. Key vendors include Holloway, Augusta, Alleson, Badger and Under Armour. "In hoodies we sell mostly cotton/poly, with an occasional Dri-Fit order."

Many outerwear items are sold in team packs. For high schools, online team stores are set up as booster club fundraisers or for individual purchases. "We always include jackets. The coach usually wants a hoodie, a quarter zip, maybe more than one style, and even a full zip. Fanwear items are purchased by parents as well," says Fischer. For youth and select club teams, jackets are part of the whole team purchase, with order forms organized by a team parent.

Sales of outerwear are also brisk

The 2016 forecast for team jackets is for fashion and function.

at **Red Rock**, Miles City, MT, where cooler weather prevails for much of the outdoor sport seasons. "We do really well with jackets for both team and individual purchases," says owner **Cliff Schantz**. "Teams always need some kind of outerwear. They may pick out a Holloway moisture management hoodie that we embroider, or a Russell 50/50 cotton poly hoodie. We also sell some De-Long and Champion hoodies."

Quarter zips are a popular choice, depending on the sport. "Tennis teams are looking for wind and water resistant quarter zips," says Schantz. "Basketball teams want a mid-weight jacket. We see everything from long and short sleeve shooting shirts, to travel quarter zips, and hooded and non-hooded sweatshirts. It just depends on what the individual team wants."

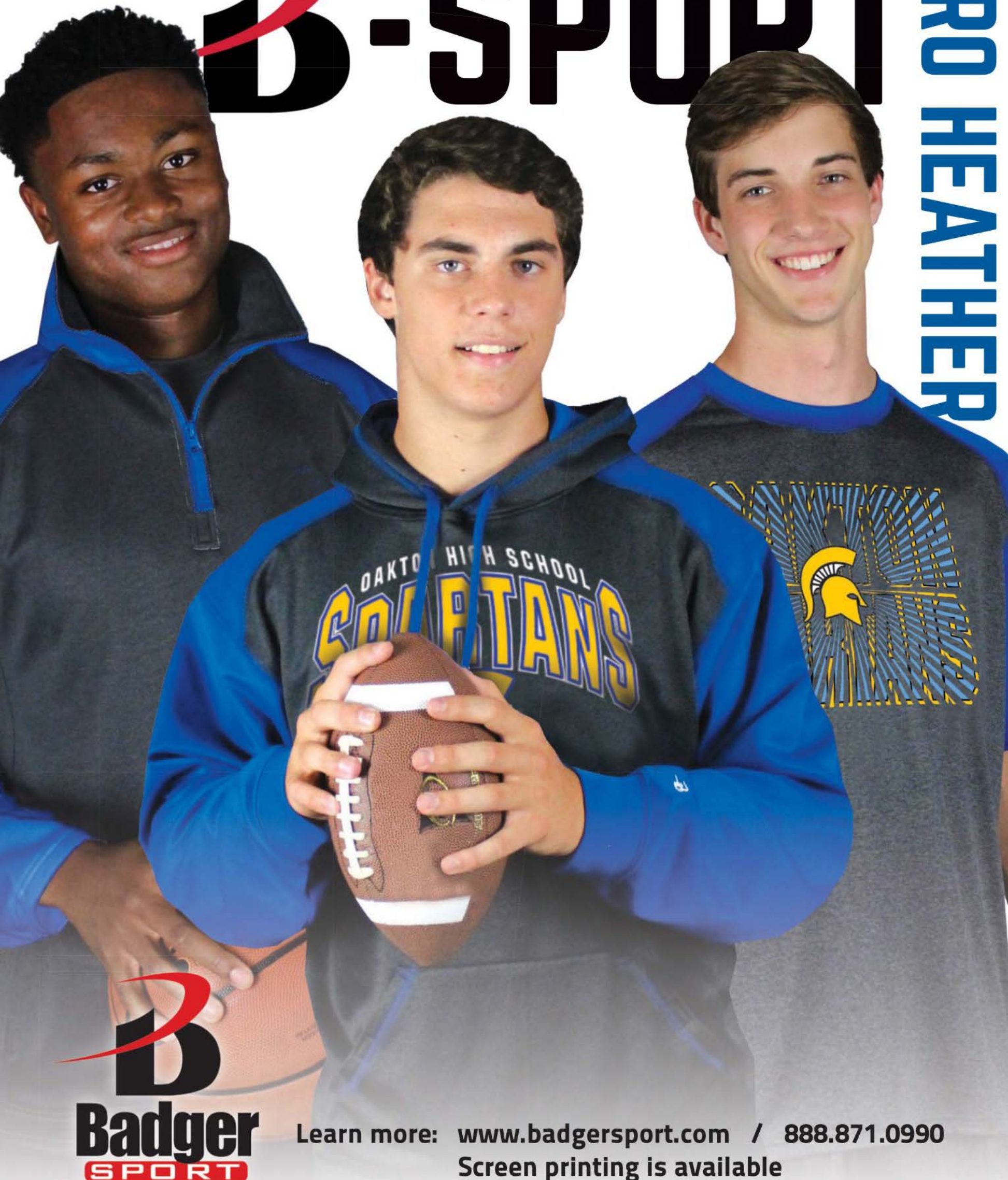
Red Rock sells a host of Holloway options, as well as Under Armour and Adidas brands. "We sell a lot of Under Armour and Adidas has really come on strong," says Schantz. "Some teams like to be consistent with all one brand, such as a hoodie and shirt, all Adidas, and others might pair an Under Armour shirt to a Holloway pant and hoodie."

Additional outerwear purchases are made to athletes in team spirit packs. "The coach decides what he or she wants include in the team pack and that usually means some kind of outerwear such as a hoodie. The kids pay for everything that isn't part of the actual uniform," he says.

Grand Rapids, MI, is a bastion for outerwear, with cold temperatures and the need to stay warm and dry. "It's cold up here, so we sell lots of outerwear for every season," says **Steve Kraai**, owner of **Holwerda-Snope Sporting Goods**. "The majority of it, 75 percent, is quarter zips and hoodies and we also sell a few warmer weight parkas and jackets."

Jackets are sold either in spirit

B-SPORT PRO HEATHER



Learn more: www.badgersport.com / 888.871.0990
Screen printing is available

APPAREL / JACKETS



The Tonix Midfield (left) is a mesh-lined, durable wind and water resistant windbreaker jacket with open back vent for breathability. The women's Run Away Jacket from Expert Apparel (center) has a water resistant fabric, open back vent and reflective print for safety and visibility. Traditional features sublimated on Teamwork's ProSphere hoodie (right) include an authentic faux twill font personalized with name and graphics. Below left: Holloway. Below right: Augusta Sportswear.

packs to individuals, or because a coach wants a coat for his team. "What the kids want is the Dri-Fit, tech stuff, quarter zips or hoodies," says Kraai. "The kids pay for them and keep them, whether it's a fundraiser or not. They like to wear them around and identify with the team they're on."

For hoodies, moisture management has taken over for cotton/poly. "We still sell the cotton/poly, but it's about 50/50 now. We sell a lot of Holloway, Russell and SanMar," he says. "I still sell a lot of warm-ups for track, cross-country, baseball and tennis. It's cold up here."

Long parkas from Holloway and Russell are

needed up north as well. "The parkas are cut longer to cover up more. Tennis, swimming and soccer teams all like the long parkas for standing on the sidelines and trying to stay warm," says Kraai. "These are usually purchased with school money or booster money and they are team property."

Down in the bayou, team jackets are an unnecessary extravagance. "We don't sell many jackets," says **Charlie Mathews**, owner of **Cenla Sports**, Alexandria, LA. "We sell a few the poly/cotton hoodies such as Gildan, but no name brands. There's not much call for outerwear down here."

The Outerwear Forecast

Team jackets are an ideal way to create a coordinated team look. Today's technically advanced jackets are loaded with features designed to keep athletes comfortable and ready for action, beginning with water and wind resistance. Moisture management technology is a given. Technology pockets and multi-use pockets add value and state-of-art appeal to these uniform pieces. Slimmer fits and tech fabrics complete the forecast.

"The versatility of a jacket remains a top priority, as weather can change in an instant, and you may need it to keep dry or maintain warmth," says **Nino Phimpachanh**, a designer at **Expert Apparel**.

Layering is a popular trend. "The kids like to dress in layers. They may pair a compression T-shirt with a quarter zip over it," says Kraai. "Performance wear is also a fashion statement and we get them what they want."

Today's athletes expect more from their outerwear than just an oversized cotton hoodie. "Activewear is becoming the new everyday wear. Athletes want comfort, performance, style and

functionality, all in one," says **Annika Risher**, product manager at **Teamwork Athletic**. "We pay attention to little details that make a big difference to the customer, like the stitching of the thumb holes and smart use of reflective accent tape. Five years ago, most people probably didn't know what a zipper garage was, whereas today consumers are more educated on product features."

Risher says that the expectation is that jackets transition well throughout the day, whether worn to the gym, around town or to the game.



Lightweight fabric is an important and popular trend in jackets. “A lightweight garment is easy to travel with, before or after a game,” says Phimpachanh. “We work diligently to source the right fabric, those that perform well in cool, wet or humid/hot weather.”

Holloway also continues to focus on the jacket category. “Our deep assortment of fabrics are designed to fit a variety of climates and activities,” says **Brad Sullivan**, director of marketing. “Our recent styling updates elevate the looks of some classic silhouettes.”

Style Details

Today’s athletes want their jackets to fit — and that means no more baggy sweatshirts. “Our teams want their jackets to be soft and tight,” says Kraai. “I can remember not long ago when all I had to do was order a bunch of XXL because they all wanted them big. Not any more. The preference is for fitted cuts and when we can get them it makes them very happy.”

“A flattering fit is just as important as quality and functionality, if not more so. For most people, in order to love a jacket, it means that it has to make you feel good while wearing it. A flattering fit makes you feel good,” says Risher.

Women in particular pay heed to flattering cuts. “A jacket with style lines and feminine contour is in demand,” says Phimpachanh. “It’s important that the jacket doesn’t appear too boxy, but rather on-trend and fashion-forward.”

Styling details are key selling points. “We see more and more styling details come over from the retail market and we are paying particular attention to the yoga brands,” says Sullivan.

Customization also remains a hallmark of the team market.

Embroidery is the most popular choice for decorating quarter zips. “Most teams want embroidery on left chest, left leg on pant, name on back. Hoodies are full-front screenprints with names on the back,” says Schantz. He sells sublimated uniforms and jerseys, but no sublimated jackets yet. “Turnaround time has gotten much shorter for sublimated uniforms, but we aren’t getting orders for other types of garments.”

Kraai also decorates jackets, with screenprinting done in-house and embroidery off-site. “Either way, typically teams want a school logo and a team name,” he says.

Hoodies are most often screenprinted, though sometimes customers prefer embroidery or sublimation, according to Fischer. “We see more embroidery and sublimation with quarter zips in traditional school colors,” he says. “Once in a while we sell some fluorescent colors; for example, a neon yellow to a team with red and blue colors.”

Online jacket builders make customization easier than ever. “Sublimation delivers endless possibilities for color combinations and designs. From the dealers’ perspective, it makes it easy for teams to continue their on-field look to off-field apparel,” points out Risher. ■

Making Varsity



VARSITY JACKETS ARE the original custom apparel for athletes. The tradition that celebrates athletic accomplishment and team pride has always been made to the specifications of individual athletes. It remains the premier athletic jacket. In fact, varsity jackets are enjoying a moment as popular street fashion.

But anecdotal news from dealers is that varsity jacket sales are down. “At this point the wool varsity jackets have died,” says **Steve Kraai**, of **Holwerda-Snope Sporting Goods**.

“It’s a shrinking business for us primarily because of the cost,” says **Don Fischer**, of **Fischer’s Pro-Line Sports**. “The decoration alone can add up to \$100 to \$150 and that gets it close to \$400.”

“We still sell a handful, but that part of the business has really slowed down around here,” echoes **Cliff Schantz**, of **Red Rock**. “The custom jackets with leather sleeves, virgin wool, quilted lining, twill on chest, team name on back, year, quickly run up to \$400. We used to sell hundreds of them when the cost was \$200, but

once it passed \$250 sales really declined. It’s hard to justify the cost to wear it for one or two years.”

But stay tuned. Varsity jackets are a market in transition and, given all the technology that

exists today, are poised to emerge with state-of-the-art fabrics and processes, more customization options, updated looks and faster delivery.

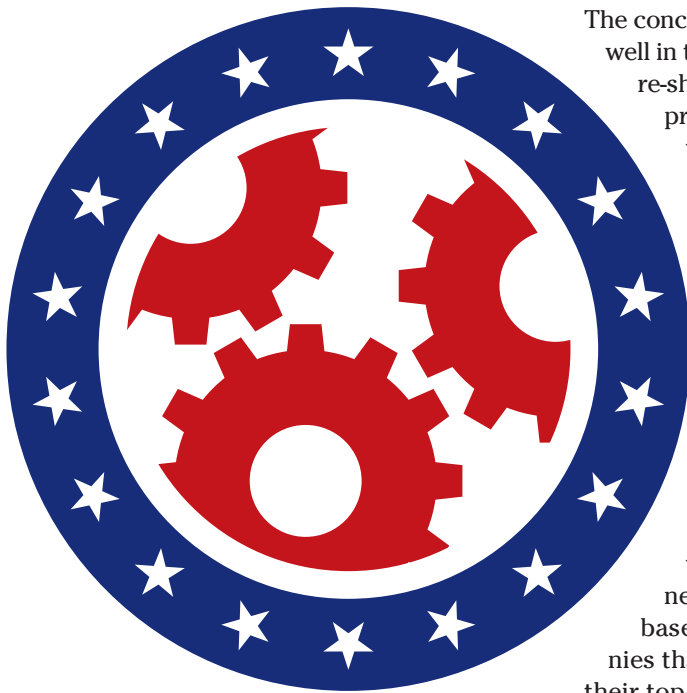
“The varsity jacket is the cornerstone of the **Holloway** line, constructed with the finest materials and attention to detail,” says **Brad Sullivan**. “Our online jacket builder, launched in 2014, allows customers to customize a jacket to their exact specifications and place orders, simplifying the ordering process for dealers.”

The fact remains that athletes today have many choices when purchasing outerwear, including new options that borrow from the tradition of varsity letter jackets. For example, **Teamwork Athletic** recently introduced a sublimated hoodie in a faux letterman design. “Our customers love this fresh take on a classic,” says Teamwork’s **Annika Risher**. “It delivers the letterman look but without the bulky cut, the weight and the expense. We offer a faux twill font for an authentic look, thousands of custom color combinations and the ability to personalize the jacket with name and graphics.” ■



MADE IN AMERICA STORIES

Companies Tell Us Why Domestic Manufacturing Is Alive and Well in 2016.



The concept of “Made in America” is alive and well in the world of team sports. Some call it re-shoring, as companies return to domestic production when they realize the advantages outweigh any other benefits they may have achieved by making their products overseas. Others never left, having built their companies over generations on the strength of their commitment to domestic manufacturing that has allowed them to survive in an increasingly challenging global business environment.

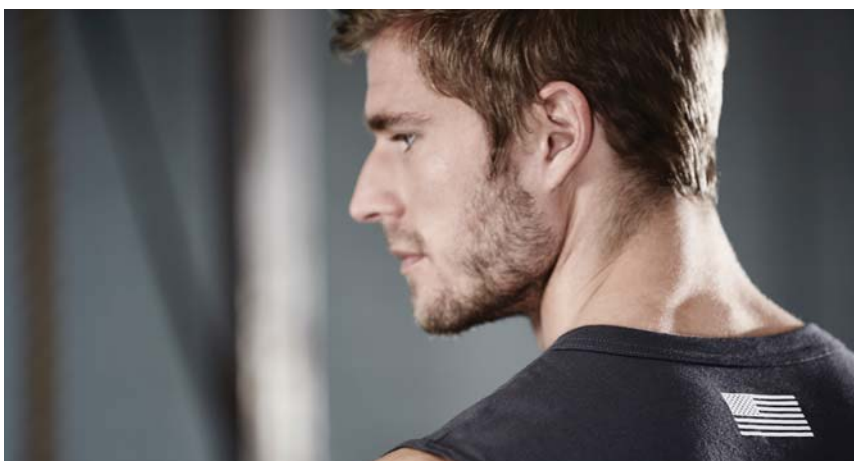
Either way, the team sports business has a host of Made in America success stories – from the footballs Wilson has always made in Ohio ... to track and field equipment engineered and manufactured domestically based on local talent ... to sock companies that remain committed to producing their top-of-the-line products here in the USA.

Sure, no one can remember the last time a coach or athletic director placed an order simply because a vendor’s products were Made in America. The reasons these products sell are more subtle — rapid turnaround and delivery, quicker response time to complaints or problems and improved quality, not to mention the simple act of supporting local communities.

Basically, it is better product and better customer service that keeps the concept of Made in America relevant.

We asked vendors to the team sports business to tell us their own Made in America stories and why they continue to make products in the U.S. The response from these companies was overwhelming and this simple project turned into a three-part series. The following pages tell their stories, while at the same time telling the story of domestic manufacturing in 2016. Enjoy Part 3. Parts 1 and 2 ran in the January and March 2016 issues of *Team Insight*.

From Military to Team



History: In 1946 Softe first hit the scene as a distributor to military exchanges and college bookstores. It has expanded to include activewear for all athletes and exercise. In 2003, Softe was acquired by Delta Apparel and today it is positioned as a lifestyle activewear brand for men, women, juniors and children.

Made in America: Softe’s headquarters is in Fayetteville, NC, which is also home to more than

700,000-square feet of warehousing, distribution, screenprint, packaging and sewing operations. Its prep/pack capacity is more than one million per month and its printing and decorating facility can produce up to 100,000 impressions a week. Softe has sewing and textiles facilities in Maiden and Rowland, NC. “Manufacturing domestically is a core part of the Softe DNA,” explains Paul Anderson, director of marketing.

Why MIA: Softe started manufacturing garments domestically in the 1960s and all of its military issued garments continue to be manufactured in the U.S. “We still have a family-run mentality, so supporting our soldiers and the local economies that benefit from domestic manufacturing is something we’re really proud of,” says Anderson. Domestic production has decreased on the retail side in order to stay competitive from a cost perspective. “However, the opportunity to manufacture here has picked up with both our wholesale customers and retail consumers appreciating the value of American-made products,” reports Anderson.

Pros and Cons: “Production proximity can make things easier to control from an environmental/social compliance and quality assurance standpoint,” says Anderson, who also points to shorter supply chain lead times. “Making product domestically comes with its challenges as

well,” Anderson admits. “Overall costing is always demanding, there are a limited number of suppliers, an aging workforce and government regulations can be cumbersome and costly.”

Selling MIA: Softe has traditionally focused its Made in America message on the military and team dealer channels. It is now gearing up for a large campaign for Fall 2016 that will also target its consumer and retail base. The campaign will have a grass-roots, digital and social media focus and center around Softe’s tagline and messaging, “The Strength Is In Us.”

Going Forward: “We have the confidence that our facilities and talent have the ability to manufacture and decorate apparel as well as anyone in the world, so our plan is to continue to expand domestic production as much as we can,” Anderson says. “Our foundation was built on it and it’s something we’re very proud of.” ■

“We have a wide and loyal customer base that sees the quality and value of our American-made products.”

Jenny Holmstrom, Hickory Brands

Lacing It Up In America

History: What started as the Old Hickory Shoelace Company more than 90 years ago is now Hickory Brands, Inc., a leader in shoelace manufacturing and a distributor of shoe care, sports medicine, custom-molded insoles and most recently, SecondWind performance socks. Located in Hickory, NC, it has been manufacturing in the United States since 1923.

Made in America: Domestically made products include its complete line of SecondWind compression and performance socks, New Balance headbands, New Balance Performance Sweatband products, thousands of New Balance and 10-Seconds shoelaces, and shoe care products.

Why MIA: In recent years Hickory has increased its domestic production due to advances in fabric technology such as reflectivity and Kevlar bullet proofing that it incorporates into its laces. Making products in the U.S. allows it to take full



advantage of these new technologies with its domestic partners.

Pros and Cons: The pros include quick turnaround time, creating domestic jobs, achieving a high level of customer service and developing products with the highest possible quality, according to sales and marketing specialist Jenny Holmstrom. But manufacturing domestically does mean competing with overseas pricing. “Fortunately we have a wide and loyal customer base that sees

the quality and value of our American-made products,” she points out.

Selling MIA: “American-made products tell a great story,” Holmstrom says. “They represent quality and support of this nation. Our conversations with customers, our marketing materials and our trade show booth all convey this message.”

The Sales Pitch: “We always make sure our customers know about the advantages of domestic manufacturing — the fast turnaround time, low

freight costs, exceptional customer service and low minimums,” Holmstrom says.

Does It Matter? Hickory Brands believes that Made in America matters because the country thrives when American dollars go towards American-made products. “Creating and maintaining American jobs is an investment back into our nation,” says Holmstrom. “For retailers specifically, Made in America matters because of the high level of customer service, low minimums and fast turnaround.”

Going Forward: Hickory says it stands strong in its commitment to American manufacturing. “With 93 years of success, we have built a history we are proud of and a strong foundation to grow on,” according to Holmstrom. As an example, she points to its new SecondWind brand, which features a line of compression socks, compression sleeves, quarter crew socks and double-tab socks, all made in North Carolina. ■

It's Game Time



History: Selling to the team sports market under the Game Time Fabrics name, Hornwood, located in Lilesville, NC, was founded in 1946 by Ken Horne and Fred Wood, in Wadesboro, NC. It initially did knitting for converting operations in the northeast U.S. and later became vertical through the addition of dyeing capacity. In the early 1970s, Hornwood built a plant in Lilesville, seven miles east of Wadesboro. Today, the plant

is 325,000-square feet and employs 340 people.

Made in America: Hornwood makes fabrics for an array of industries, including athletic and active wear apparel, automotive headliners and seating, banners, filtration and footwear.

Why MIA: Hornwood has been making its products domestically for 69 years and that capacity is increasing. “Recently there have been

re-shoring efforts made by several brands that have resulted in an increased demand for domestically manufactured products, particularly in the apparel segment,” says executive VP Wesley Horne. “Factors such as an emphasis on speed to market, freight cost, quality, higher wages in the Far East, and duties/tariffs have caused an increase in NAFTA/CAFTA business.”

Pros and Cons: Pros — Easier to communicate/visit with customers since most have headquarters in the U.S.; high-quality raw materials and dependable vendors; lowest relative utilities rates in the world and a reliable power grid; large labor pool. Cons — High wages, taxes and regulations; limited supplier base because many closed during off-shoring moment and now the initial capital investment is too high for potential entrants; limited amount of highly technical personnel will make it difficult to replace impending retirements.

Selling MIA: Hornwood places “Made in the USA” on all invoices, piece tickets, ID tags and product matrixes. The company also makes it a point of emphasis when advertising at any trade show or through print media.

Does It Matter? “Hornwood believes very strongly that Made in America brings real value to our customers through high quality products and quick deliveries,” says Horne. “We believe Americans are starting to pay more attention to where products are made. As a result, companies that are manufacturing in this hemisphere are gaining higher intrinsic value.”

Going Forward: Hornwood plans to continue to target companies that cut and sew within the U.S. and it recently partnered with a company in Taiwan named Kingwhale to utilize its fabric base. These technical fabrics will be manufactured and sold in the U.S. Potential expansions to the facility in Lilesville are likely. ■

“Manufacturing domestically allows us to ... implement strict quality control and establish shorter lead times.”

Brian Rush, Kwik Goal

Kwik To Market

History: Kwik Goal, founded in Long Island, NY, in 1980 and now located in Quakertown, PA, continues to operate as a privately owned manufacturer of sports equipment, primarily soccer goals and soccer related equipment.

Made in America: Kwik Goal manufactures a variety of sports goals in

Quakertown, with soccer goals still the dominant product. Also made domestically are lacrosse, field hockey and football goals, along with training devices, goal accessories and sideline seating.

Pros and Cons: “Manufacturing domestically allows us to work with better quality materials, implement

strict quality control and establish shorter lead times,” explains Brian Rush, head of Kwik Goal’s Research and Development team. “Kwik Goal can react to a sales run on a product and make more available for the same selling season.” In addition, he adds, “product development is often quicker for domestically manufac-

tured products because prototypes are quickly made with the same materials and processes that will be used in production.” The biggest challenge: Controlling costs.

Selling MIA: Kwik Goal products are labeled with “Made in the USA” and the company looks to promote the message more.

The Sales Pitch: “Our domestically manufactured products are produced in a timely fashion and undergo strict quality control while providing jobs for numerous individuals throughout the U.S.” according to Rush.

Does It Matter? To Kwik Goal, Made in America means better quality products and economic sustainability. No matter the country or industry, there is always a sense of pride in producing and purchasing domestically manufactured goods.

Going Forward: “Kwik Goal will continue to manufacture and source materials domestically as much as is economically feasible,” Rush says. ■



In Front of the 8-Ball

History: The Marena Group was founded in 1994 and has become a leader in medical-grade post-operative compression garments through innovation in textile science and manufacturing processes and in 2001 the company grew in economic terms to merit the Small Business Exporter of the Year award from the state of Georgia. The company was also named apparel manufacturing Grand All Star of 2006 by *Apparel* magazine. Today, Marena is recognized as a leading compression garment manufacturer with representation in nearly 80 countries around the world and is ISO certified. Its corporate headquarters are just north of Atlanta, GA, and it has distributors in 79 countries — all selling products Made in America with U.S.-made materials.

The Athletics8 brand is manufactured by The Marena Group, utilizing its proprietary



ComfortWeave material.

Made in America: Athletics8 offers a range of MIA products — post-operative compression girdles, bodysuits, bras, sleeves, vests and facemasks; Shapewear/Foundation wear; and athletic compression.

Why MIA: Marena has been manufacturing domestically for 21 years and reports that business has increased almost double digits every year. The company credits its patented fabric and its just-in-time manufacturing.

Pros and Cons: Pros — Fast turn for orders, short design to production cycle, quality and manufacturing control is 100 percent in manufacturer’s hands. Cons — High labor and higher material cost. “If we used imported goods, we could have lower material costs plus import/shipping. But we choose to use all USA made materials,” the company says.

Selling MIA: Marena and the Athletics8 brand rely on packaging and inside care labels.

Its shapewear and activewear brands state “USA made” often in social posts and ads posted on social media have the Made in USA symbol with small flag.

The Sales Pitch: The company emphasizes that its quality and domestic materials — its branded fibers — are superior to imported options, lower or higher cost.

Does It Matter? “Yes, if we can provide a superior performing product that is more comfortable at a better price and provide jobs to other American, it really should matter,” the company says.

Going Forward: Marena recently received an investment from an equity firm committed to manufacturing in the USA and it selected Marena to help it grow its domestic manufacturing business. In 2015 the company expanded its facility and it may soon have to move part of its team again to make more room for more Made in America production. ■

“By producing locally we have more control over production methods to reduce environmental impact.”

Katy Holmes, Swiftwick

A Swift Move

History: While training for mountain bike races, the founders of Swiftwick realized they were purchasing top-of-the-line bike gear, but were wearing low-quality socks. This realization launched the idea of Swiftwick to create a sock that was based on four pillars they felt were missing from current socks — compression, moisture wicking, blister protection and anti-odor. They also decided that their products would be 100 percent made in the United States to ensure their standards were met.

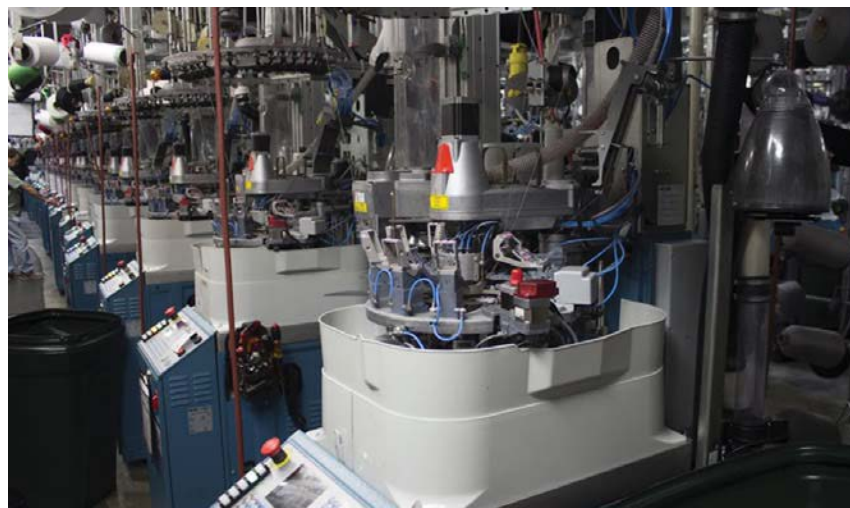
Made in America: All Swiftwick’s socks are manufactured in America and the company is based in Brentwood, TN.

Why MIA: Creating domestically produced products has been a core foundation of Swiftwick. “We have been able to increase our production of the best socks due to the desire for the higher quality of our made in America socks,” says Katy Holmes, athlete and public

relations coordinator.

Pros and Cons: “By producing locally, we have more control over production methods to reduce environmental impact,” says Holmes. “When you produce products over 8000 miles away, it takes a tremendous amount of fuel and other resources just to get those products to your warehouse,” she says. “Strategically, producing locally allows us to minimize our inventory investment and it allows us to be faster to market and increases our flexibility.” As for the cons, she admits it is difficult to find skilled technicians who understand the complexity of the machines to produce a 200 needle count sock.

Selling MIA: Swiftwick does not look at domestic manufacturing as a marketing ploy. Rather, it is based on the foundational philosophy of the business and because it has specific strategic advantages. “We believe the decision to make our products in America



is a core value of our business and gives our company strategic manufacturing advantages,” Holmes says. Swiftwick promotes Made in America on all of its packaging and literature.

The Sales Pitch: “We want to give people the best socks they will ever wear. However, we want to do this in the most sustainable way possible. We commit to excellence

and pack our passion into our products. That is why our products are 100 percent made in America,” Holmes says.

Going Forward: Swiftwick remains committed to manufacturing its socks domestically and is transitioning its accessory lines, such as cycling kits and running jerseys, to be produced domestically. ■

Uni-fied In Purpose



History: Uni-Sport, operating in the heart of the Los Angeles, CA, garment industry for the past 14 years and under the guidance of 30-year textile veterans, is a

leader in professional quality heat applied graphics for athletic wear. It offers custom and stock HT solutions for every sport. In addition, it supplies a large

selection of official licensed soccer names and numbers to its retail partners across the nation.

Made in America: “American ingenuity provides solutions, value and quality,” says Uni-Sport president Tom Hebert.

Why MIA: Domestic production provides flexibility for quick turn production fill-ins as well as the ability to address unforeseen issues that inevitably arise, according to Hebert.

Pros and Cons: “As a part of the design process we are on the forefront of testing, as the newest fabrics typically find their way through our lab prior to bulk manufacturing,” Hebert says. “Our ability to combine the newest of raw materials ensures fresh designs for style conscious customers.” As a part of the design process, he adds, “We are on the forefront of testing and research and development of the newest fabrics and innovations.

He stresses that Uni-Sport is compliant with California legislation proposition 65, which states that all products – raw and finished – are manufactured and tested to be free of hazardous materials.

Selling MIA: Hebert maintains that Uni-Sport’s best assets are its employees and strong relationships built through after-work programs, including exercise programs and a soccer team, as well as a shared fondness of watching sporting events relevant to its industry. “Passion for our products and industry can be seen on the faces of each employee as they see our products on real time TV,” he says.

Going Forward: “The premium team sport market showcases our nation’s youth,” Hebert says. “Uni-Sport provides this on-field quality exclusively for Major League Soccer as well as many of our collegiate schools.” ■

“Made in America does matter because it directly affects the health of the communities team dealers serve and live in.”

Peter Derleth, Ripon

Tale of Two Companies

History: Ripon Athletic, Berlin, WI, is actually the story of two companies whose identities are linked by their long experience and passion for producing Made in the America products, with an emphasis on professional quality, product performance and customer service. The current company took shape when Sand Knit, which was established in 1921, and Ripon Award Jackets (1949), joined together under the Ripon Athletic label. Today Ripon Athletic, Ripon Jacket and Sand Knit brand products are sold through team dealers to high school, collegiate and professional customers.

Made in America: All of Ripon’s products are manufactured domestically, with a specialization in athletic uniforms and jackets for institutional sports.

Why MIA: “We have never stopped manufacturing products domestically,” says CEO Peter Derleth. “Starting with Sand Knit and continuing as Ripon Athletic/



Jacket since 1949, our focus has always been to supply Made in the USA products. The need for custom made jackets and uniforms is steady and we hope our Made in USA products continue to fulfill that need.”

Pros and Cons: On the pro side, Derleth points to better control over all stages of production along with more effective communication when it comes to product specifications and delivery. The cons: Increased government regulations on local manufacturers such as dye

companies, knitting mills and other domestic vendors, as well as limited domestic suppliers of raw materials.

Selling MIA: Ripon Athletic promotes its Made in the USA message via its website, Facebook account, all marketing tools, word of mouth and by proudly displaying the Made in the USA tag on all of its products.

The Sales Pitch: Professional Quality, Greater Performance.

Does It Matter? “It does matter, because it directly affects the health of the communities team dealers

serve and live in,” Derleth says.

“Made in USA is important to our country and communities. As we pay our employees to manufacture products, they in turn buy homes, cars, clothes and food, which injects original money into the economy. Manufacturing jobs are very important to the U.S. economy.”

Going Forward: “USA, USA, USA is where we will stay,” Derleth stresses. “It is good for our country, for our community and for our employees.” ■

A Unique Experience



History: Unique Sales Co., based in Los Angeles, CA, was founded in 1986 and today makes custom sublimated team uniforms for most sports. It is a 100 percent American-made company, with all of its team sports uniforms made directly in-house to provide maximum quality control.

Made in America: The majority of Unique Sales’ products are sublimated team sportswear. All of its garments are made in its 24,000-square-foot facility in Los Angeles.

Why MIA: “We’ve had some various ups and downs,” explains founder and owner Ron Kelfer in discussing the company’s Made in America efforts. “We find we have to constantly update our mix of goods to stay fresh and competitive.” This is made easier, he adds, by manufacturing domestically.

Pros and Cons: Pros — Provides maximum control of goods. Cons:

Price.

Selling MIA: Unique Sales stamps all of its promotional items with “100% Made in the USA.” It also sews in labels to its garments with the same message.

The Sales Pitch: The marketing and sales message for its domestic manufacturing is simple and straightforward. “Manufacturing in America keeps jobs local, while providing higher quality, faster turnaround times and quicker shipping than the imports,” says Kelfer.

Does It Matter? “It should matter more, but unfortunately price often dictates,” Kelfer admits. “As we have seen prices come up around the world, it has helped us become more competitive. Many of our dealers keep coming back because of our quality and commitment to our customers.”

Going Forward: “Moving forward and never stopping,” Kelfer says. ■



Intensity

Engineered with the athletes themselves, Intensity offers the best fitting and performing uniforms in the game.



FOR HIM

We've looked to our military heritage to channel the original athlete - the soldier. Tough durable, and dependable team gear



FOR HER

We continue to find inspiration in our cheerleading roots but have expanded to include must-have performance apparel for yoga, dance, running and more.



Get inspired and be a part of something bigger than yourself. Visit our new wholesale/dealer website.

SOFFEBUSINESS.COM

PRODUCT SHOWCASE / ADVERTISEMENT

A4



Yoga Pants

New women's Yoga Pants NW6196 from A4 are 88 percent polyester/12 percent spandex and provide great stretch without being see through and great recovery — no baggy knees. Also features an inside key pocket.

Nokona



Baseball Mitt

Nokona's elite performance, ready-for-play, position-specific series. This X2 Elite is made with Nokona's proprietary top-grain Stampede Steerhide and Kangaroo leathers so that minimal break-in is needed, but the glove has great structure and maintains its shape. A perfect combination of top quality and high performance. MSRP: \$400

Teamwork



ProSphere Custom Sublimation

A fresh take on the classic Letterman jacket, this customizable ProSphere hoodie design combines a timeless look with an athletic fit and personalization capabilities. Choose design colors, upload graphics, add zone and font fills and instantly proof product on-line. Three to 10 day manufacturing, no minimums. ProSphereSports.com

Augusta Sportswear



Football Jersey

Run the Option with Augusta Sportswear's Collegiate tight fit Handoff Jersey, Style 9570/9571. 100 percent polyester heavyweight tricot mesh body, 100 percent polyester dazzle yoke and sleeves and 90 percent polyester/10 percent spandex neck, bottom sleeve insert, side inserts. Other features include set-in sleeves with elastic cuffs and contrast color poly/spandex bottom sleeve insert.

Active Ankle



Ankle Brace

Eclipse II is Active Ankle's new rigid multi-sport dual upright ankle brace that provides maximum support and rigidity to stabilize and protect the ankle. The innovative multi-point strapping system optimizes support by applying compression across the entire brace. Ideal for athletes that need the highest level of ankle support.

Porter



Volleyball System

Porter's Powr-Sand volleyball system is perfect for NCAA and high school play. This semi-permanent system includes an in-ground sleeve component and removable standard for security or removal during the off-season.

Pro Feet



Sock App

Pro Feet takes a giant leap forward with the first of its kind, Pro Feet Sock App. It offers On line ordering, On line inventory, Asset availability, Hi Res images, All Pricing levels, Links to Custom Portal and Links to SockBuilder and it is totally mobile.

Under Armour



Jersey

Under Armour's Power Alley Jersey is made of a soft, lightweight knit fabric that delivers the perfect balance of comfort and performance. Its Signature Moisture Transport System wicks sweat, while anti-odor technology keeps gear fresher, longer. The jersey includes breathable mesh insets at the shoulder and along the back.

Stahls'



SimStitch

Save stitches and time with Stahls' SimStitch. Made from Perma-Twill material, each piece is laser-cut with a simulated zig-zag stitch. Apply using just a heat press for a unique embroidered look. Order now at Stahls.com/simstitch.

Soffe



Splitter Jersey

This 100 percent poly mesh jersey features one-of-a-kind sleeves that split at the opening to enhance comfort and optimize performance. It has a scoop tail design and moisture management to keep you cool and dry when the pressure is on. Available in adult and youth sizes.

Carron Net



Batting Cage Nets

Carron's top-quality American-made batting cage nets feature 100 percent yarn-dyed nylon twine with premium UV-resistant additives for maximum durability. Standard and Heavy Duty cages are available in four standard cage sizes and custom sizes are our specialty.

High Five



Half Court Jersey

The new Half Court Jersey from High Five features a polyester moisture management seed mesh front body and a blend of polyester/spandex pinhole mesh back body for added comfort. Available in 14 colors with both home and away options in adult, youth, and women's sizing. high5sportswear.com

SafeTGard



Mouthguard for Women

Specially designed to fit the female jaw, Lady Elite from SafeTGard is the latest mouth guard offering elite protection just for women. Lady Elite has several innovative features, including Upper Molar Guards to help stabilize the mouthguard, Lower Jaw Guards to help prevent lower jaw movement and Lower Molar Guards to help prevent lateral movement. Lady Elite is designed to fit teen through adult athletes and is recommended for any sport utilizing a mouth guard.

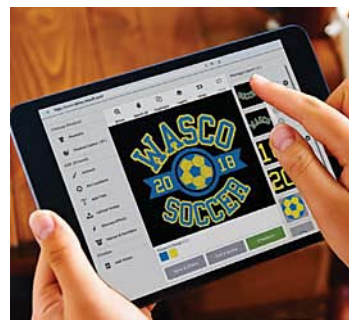
Reusch



Keeper Gloves

The know-how and expertise from Reusch comes together in this explosion of power. The Reusch Pulse Deluxe G2 Ortho-Tec 36 70 900, developed with the highest standards of fitting, technologies, materials and detail solutions, is its top-of-the-line goalkeeper glove made for world class goalkeeping performances. reuschusa.com

InkSoft



InkSoft Professional

InkSoft is a complete business solution custom built for the team dealer. Increase sales, boost productivity and run a better business. Speak with an InkSoft expert now by calling: 800-410-3048 or visit www.inksoft.com

Russell Athletic



Shoulder Pads

The lightweight exoskeleton of the CarbonTek Gen II Shoulder Pad from Russell Athletic is now constructed with 10 layers of 100 percent aerospace grade carbon fiber from the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. Additionally the entire exoskeleton is now one cohesive piece with a slightly narrower front, allowing for better range of motion while providing complete coverage. With these changes the Gen II pad remains on average 20 percent lighter and boasts significantly better impact management than comparable pads.

Bison



Built-In Soccer Goal Ballast
Improve soccer safety with Bison's No-Tip combination ballast and transport wheel system. Designed so that no one can forget to add the ballast and yet easy to move from storage to game position, these Shoot-Out portable soccer goals also include Qwik-Track net attachment, extra depth, and rounded edges. Add practice or game padding to minimize the risk of player contact injuries. www.bisoninc.com

High Five



Atomic Jersey
New from High Five Sportswear, the Atomic Volleyball Jersey features a lightweight blend of polyester/spandex four-way stretch fabric with pinhole stretch inserts for added breathability. The "fragment print" insert adds a unique look to seven of the 10 colors options available. high5sportswear.com

Pearsox



Custom Socks
Pearsox offers USA made custom socks with a blend of 100 percent moisture management stretch yarn. Each sock is constructed with an ergonomic design, breathable mesh instep, arch support, and reinforced heel and toe in order to keep feet dry and discomfort free. In 1992 Pearsox was one of the first to offer custom socks; 24 years later Pearsox still offers custom socks with the quickest turnaround time in the market.

Holloway



Raider Jacket
This lightweight, quarter-zip jacket is the perfect new sideline piece. Available in 10 colors, it features a tech print pattern detail on the sleeves, collar and shoulder inserts, a tech pocket with zipper and ear bud port on the sleeve as well as a front pocket.

Nokona




Baseball Mitt
The S-200 from Nokona is the number one selling travel ball glove on the market. It is part of the Alpha Select series, which is built with virtually no break-in needed using the highest-quality leathers. A position-specific, light weight, durable, high-performing glove for club and elite players. MSRP: \$300

Pro Feet



Custom Socks
Pro Feet introduces the newest technology in custom socks: Pro Ink Technology. It offers the highest quality performance sock in a moisture wicking shooter style, with 360 degree digital graphics, super low minimums and super fast lead times. Available in Black, Navy, Royal and Scarlet

OrderMyGear



OrderMyGear Online Team Stores
We simplify product selection for you and your coaches, automate building online stores for every team, and make order processing easy. On average, our dealers see their team sales jump more than 30 percent after using OrderMyGear. With more than \$100 million in sales and 100,000 stores behind us, we have the experience to help take your business to the next level. OrderMyGear.com; 214-945-4000 for a free trial.

Sanmar



Performance Tee
Contrast sleeve blocking enhances the athletic look of this colorfast, moisture-wicking, value-priced essential. 3.8-ounce, 100 percent polyester interlock with PosiCharge technology. Removable tag for comfort and relabeling. Set-in sleeves. Adult Sizes: XS-4XL

ADVERTISER INDEX MAY 2016

A4	46, 68	Pro Feet	33, 39
Augusta Sportswear	3	Pukka.....	4
Badger	55	Reusch	11
Bauerfeind	29	Russell Athletic	17
Bison	52	SafeTGard	19
Bownet	49	Sanmar	9
Carron Net	53	Soffe	63
Gildan/Under Armour Socks ..	35	Spalding	51
High Five	12, 13	Stahls'	6
Holloway	5	Teamwork Athletic	21
Inksoft.....	47	TeamUniformOrders	43
MyHouse Sports Gear	45	Under Armour	2
Nokona	67	Uni-Sport.....	7
OrderMyGear.com	40, 41	United Sports Brands.....	23
Pearsox	37	Zamst	25
Performance Health	27		



Archive issues are now available on our website.
Follow Team Insight on facebook.
teaminsightmag.com • facebook.com/teaminsight

Team Dealers To Meet

The eleventh annual **Team Dealer Market** will be held June 6-7 at The Big Chill Event Center in Charlotte, NC. The show is attended by team dealers and sporting goods stores from North Carolina and South Carolina and is the largest spring Team Dealer Market in the southeast, representing more than 50 sporting goods stores. There will be more than 30 sales agents in attendance, as well as factory representatives. The Fall Team Dealer Market will be held October 25-26, also in Charlotte. For more information: teamdealermarket@gmail.com.

Motionwear Sweats It

Renegade Brands has entered into a private label deal with **Motionwear** to bring its powerful laundry cleaning line into the cheer, dance and gymnastics market. Motionwear Laundry Cleaning Line powered by Sweat X, which includes a detergent, stain and odor spray, is designed to remove the toughest stains and odors from all activewear fabrics.

Shock Doctor Signs Cousins

Shock Doctor recently signed 2016 NBA All-Star DeMarcus Cousins as an athlete ambassador. Cousins will wear a custom Shock Doctor mouthguard and will participate in Shock Doctor's ongoing campaign to increase discussion among youth athletes, athletic governing bodies, youth leagues, travel ball organizations, high school federations and players' parents about the benefits of wearing mouthguards. Cousins will also be featured in advertisements and retail promotions.

Wilson Sponsors FHSAA

Wilson Sporting Goods has been named the official supplier of game balls for Florida State High School Championships across eight sports. The deal with the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) begins with the 2016-2017 school year. Every FHSAA member school participating in a state championship event

in football, basketball, baseball, softball, soccer, golf, volleyball and tennis will play with Wilson game balls. Wilson currently partners with 37 high school athletic associations for their respective state championship programs.

Stahls' Protects Hotronix

Stahls', the manufacturer, distributor and direct supplier of garment decoration equipment and materials, has successfully defended its intellectual property rights by reaching a wide-ranging settlement in a federal lawsuit. The three defendants in the case have agreed to cease their infringement of Stahls' patents, trademarks and copyrighted content related to its Hotronix Fusion heat press equipment, including a specific agreement to stop importation and sales of the infringing products in the U.S.

In addition, the defendants immediately requested settlement of the complaint with Stahls'. During the same time period, Stahls' worked with eBay, Amazon and Facebook to take down infringing auctions, store offerings and advertising content. Shortly thereafter, the defendants executed the comprehensive settlement agreement.

DonJoy Signs Harrison

DonJoy Performance has signed professional lacrosse player Kyle Harrison to its team of endorsers. Harrison, who plays midfield for the Ohio Machine, will be using DonJoy Performance bracing and compression products for injury prevention, perfor-



State Pride from Under Armour: Under Armour's State Pack cleats are part of a broader limited edition collection from the company. There have been different LE drops throughout the Spring with the State Pack story dropping in April. The LE cleat program was developed to ensure that Under Armour has bold, relevant product in the Spring football timeframe. With the growth of Flag Football and 7v7, high school athletes are shopping for more product earlier in the year. They are also able to wear cooler, personally relevant product during this time and utilize their footwear and gloves to show off their personality during the Spring.

mance enhancement and recovery throughout the 2016 season.

USB Brands Promoting Safety

McDavid has joined the fight for youth sports safety by partnering with Pop Warner Little Scholars, serving as the exclusive sports medicine category sponsor. McDavid is the third brand within the **United Sports Brands** family to join with this global youth sports organization, joining **Shock Doctor** and **Cutters** in a new multi-year partnership.

Highlights of upcoming plans from McDavid, Shock Doctor and Cutters include an interactive product educational area at the Pop Warner Little Scholars Super Bowl event at the Disney ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando, FL. They will also have on-site presence at various regional and local Pop Warner Little Scholars events. All three brands will utilize the Pop Warner Little Scholars logo on select product packaging and retail signage.

Cliff Keen Adds Martin

Cliff Keen Athletic has hired **Emily Martin** as its sales manager to manage and foster its growing sales in the wrestling and officials wear categories. Martin comes to Cliff Keen from the Detroit Tigers, where she worked in corporate

and group season ticket sales. She will also oversee Cliff Keen's program of sponsored wrestling events, athlete marketing, and other brand activation strategies.

Franklin Gloves Babe Ruth

Franklin Sports has signed on as the Official Batting Glove of the Babe Ruth League. As part of the deal Franklin Sports will provide all members of Babe Ruth League with special offers and discounts to purchase customized and in-stock batting gloves.

Riddell Sues Schutt, Xenith

Riddell last month filed lawsuits against rival helmet makers **Schutt Sports** and **Xenith**, claiming both companies with infringing several patents covering Riddell's football helmet technologies.

The Schutt complaint identifies its Vengeance line of varsity helmets, as well as all varsity and youth helmets that include the "Quarter Turn Release System."

The complaint also identifies Xenith's varsity and youth Epic and X2E helmets.

Riddell claims its patents include investments in developing key features of football helmets that provide athletes with benefits in protection and performance and the lawsuit is aimed at protecting these investments. ●



NOKONA[®]

AMERICAN BALLGLOVES

SINCE 1934



CHICAGO 3RD BASEMAN
TYLER SALADINO
BLOODLINE™ P5

NEW 2016 STYLES NOW AVAILABLE

BLOODLINE PRO™ • X2-POP • ALPHA SELECT™

WWW.NOKONA.COM / 800-433-0957



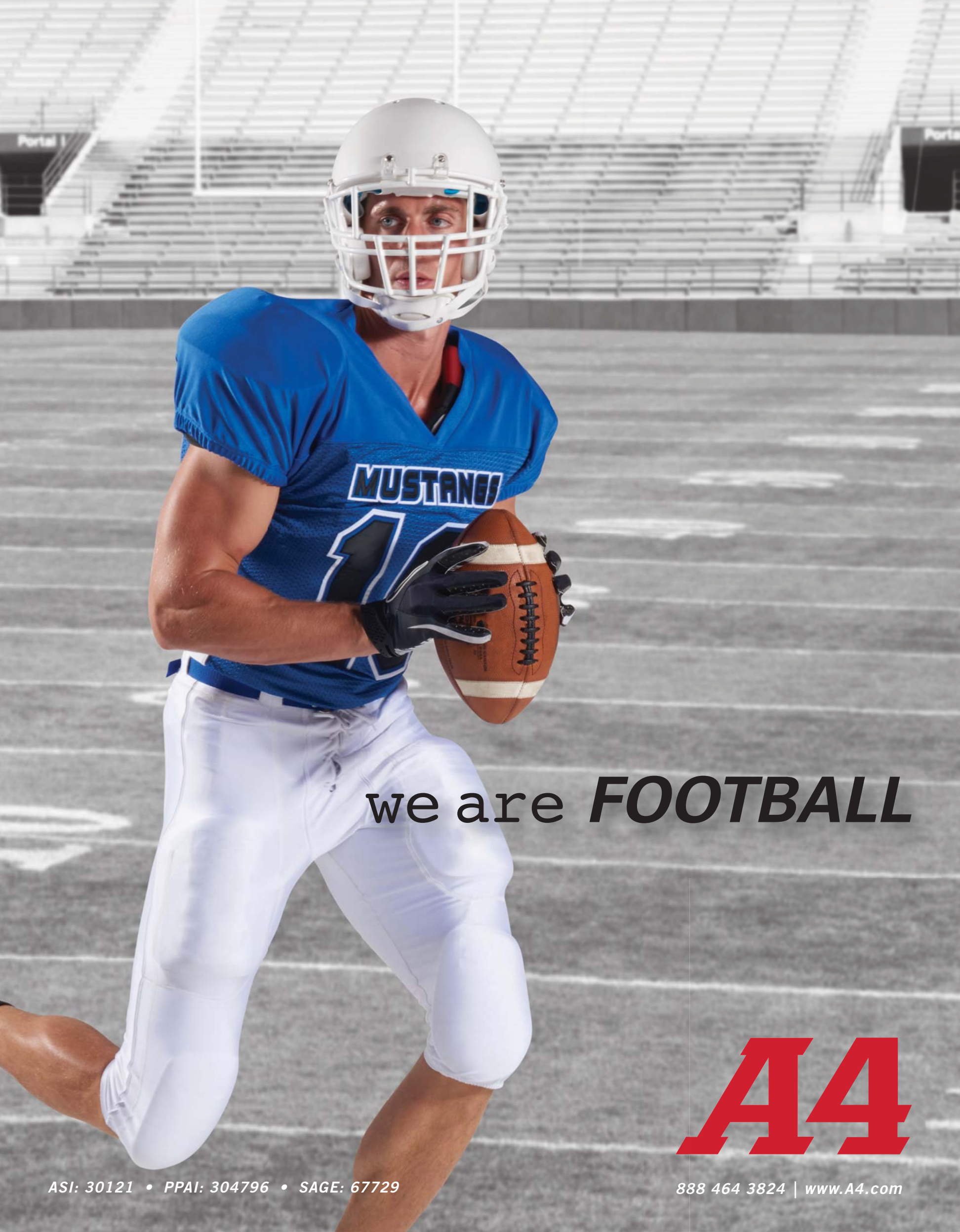
NOKONABALLGLOVES



@NOKONABASEBALL



NOKONABALLGLOVES



we are **FOOTBALL**

A4