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Phillies center fielder Shane Victorino signs autographs for fans before a Spring Training game against the Pirates at McKeechnie Field in Bradenton, Fla last week. Photo Kathy Willens/AP

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Cover photo The Cardinal's Kolten Wong drives in the winning run during the ninth inning against the Braves in Jupiter, Fla last week. Photo courtesy Patrick Semansky/AP

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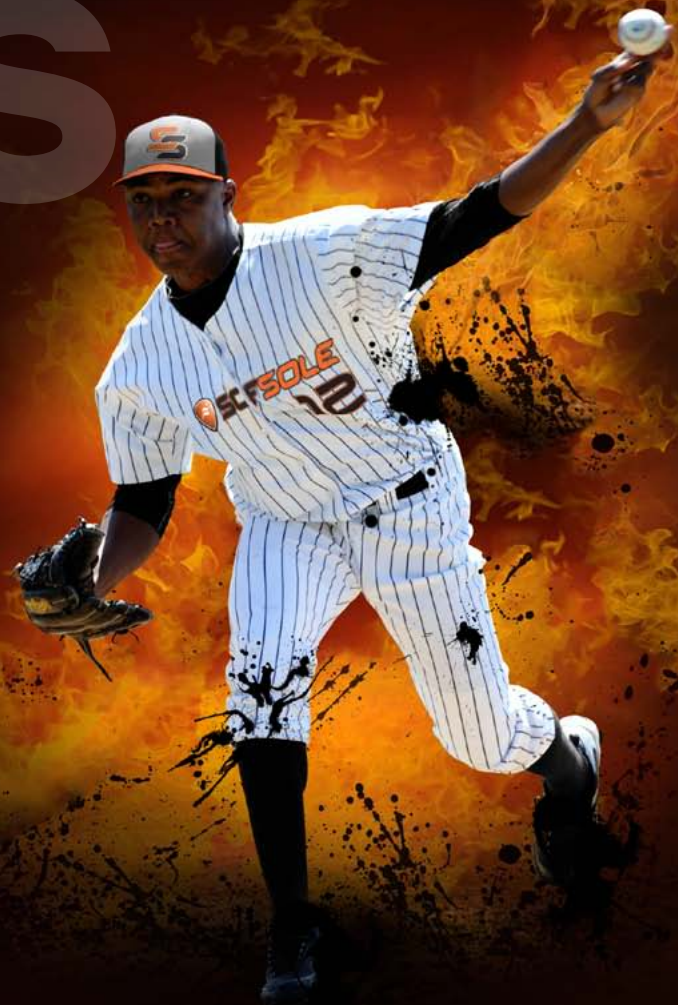
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SGMA, NCAA, AND NFHS TO HOST EQUIPMENT RULES CONFERENCE IN INDIANAPOLIS ON APRIL 25, 2012

The Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) will host the 6th Annual High School & University Equipment Rules Conference on April 25, 2012 in Indianapolis, IN.

Main topics for discussion will include an update on all planned rule changes regarding equipment, updated concussion research, and a status update on the Children's Sports Safety Act currently in Congress. Tom Cove, SGMA president and CEO, will present updated research on the economic state of the team industry, Mike Oliver, executive director of National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE), will provide an overview of NOCSAE's activities and Dr. Dawn Comstock, Ph.D. will present updated data from the high school injury surveillance study.

"It's a great opportunity for the rule-making bodies of high school and college athletics to have some input from the manufacturers of equipment before rule changes are made that might impact equipment, especially if the rule change has nothing to do with safety," said Mike May, SGMA's director of communications. "You certainly don't want a rule change being made and implemented, within 12 months, when it might take 18 to 24 months to make that new piece of equipment. You don't want to compromise the time frame it takes to produce the new item and get it to market. Also, if a rule change is made that has nothing to do with safety, the rules-making bodies have been great about asking manufacturers and retailers how much existing inventory is in stock in the country that needs to be purchased, used, and consumed before we start making new product to a new standard or policy. You don't want manufacturers to be carrying millions of dollars of inventory that gets outlawed immediately."

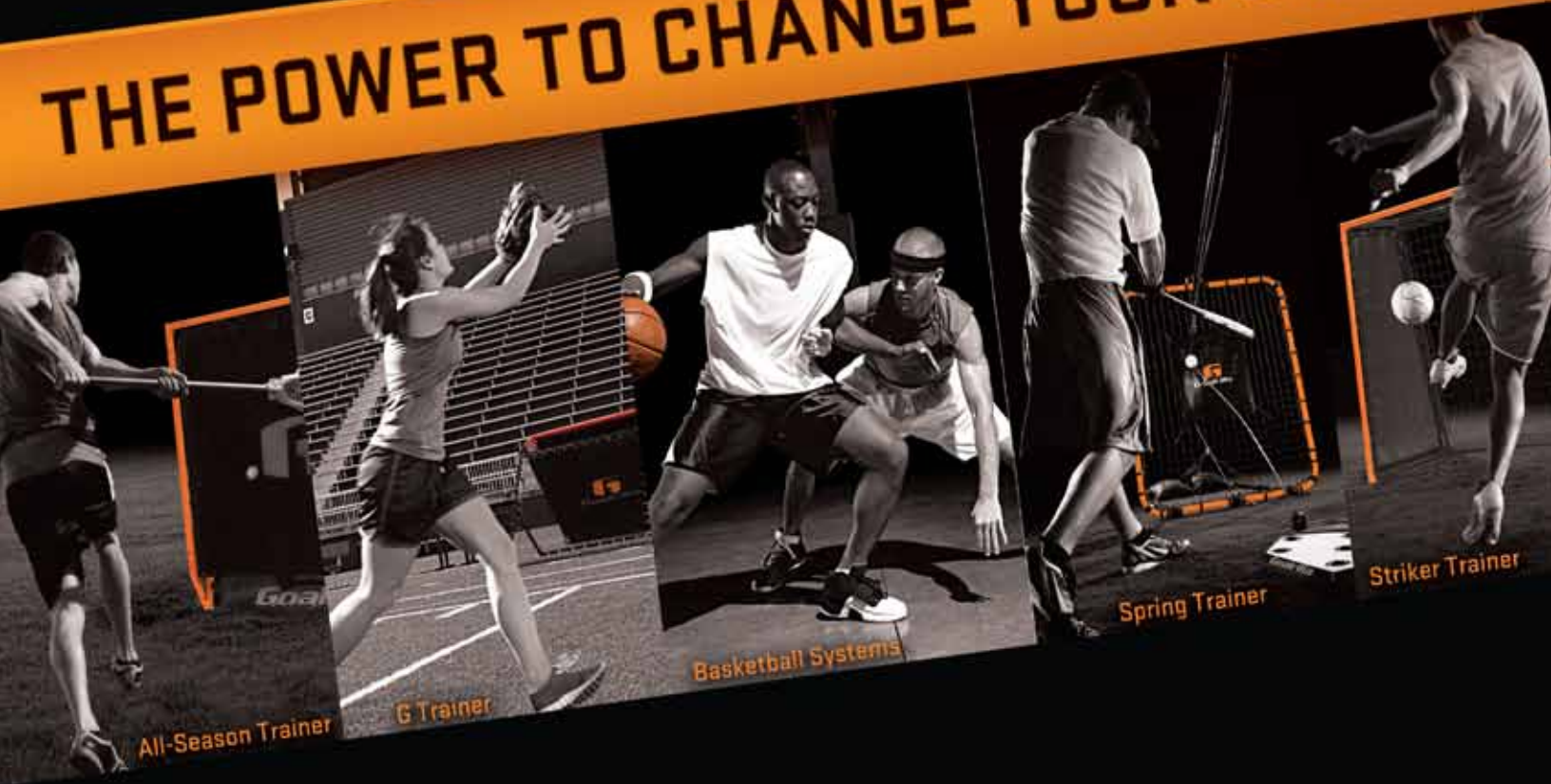
More than 60 industry executives representing 33 companies attended last year's conference.

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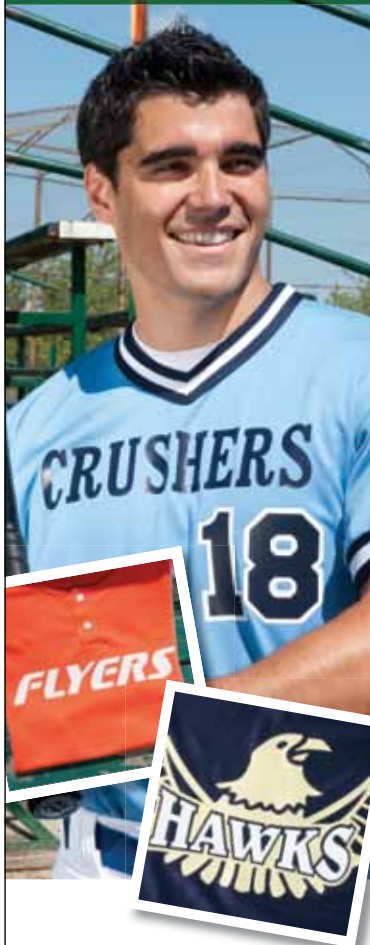
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NEWS



NOCSAE BOARD MAKES DECISIONS ON YOUTH FOOTBALL HELMET STANDARD AND BASEBALL/SOFTBALL FIELDER'S HELMET STANDARDS

Two significant youth sports standards, among other equipment issues, were addressed at the winter meeting of the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) Board of Directors on January 20 and 21. The most immediate decision of the NOCSAE board was a change to the status of the proposed Youth Football Helmet Standard. The second decision was made for youth baseball/softball equipment, pertaining specifically to a standard for fielder's helmets.

The NOCSAE board voted to change the proposed Youth Football Helmet Standard to draft status. Mike Oliver, executive director of NOCSAE, shared some of the reasons behind the move in an interview with TEAM Business. "We are putting quite a bit of resource and energy behind the standard, and we're trying to advance it as quickly as we can consistent with the science and the data," said Oliver. "We felt that, under the circumstances, if we followed our traditional pathways, it might not get there as quickly as it otherwise could." Oliver stated that, had the standard stayed in proposed status, the usual NOCSAE procedure for drafting and approving new standards would subject the Youth Football Helmet Standard to time constraints, making expeditious passage more difficult. "We took the standard out of the proposed status, and put it back into draft status, which allows us to place it on a separate track," he explained. "It allows us to get our Scientific Advisory Committee to work as information becomes available, and to respond to data. That was the reason for changing the status back in January."

Oliver added that some timely developments had occurred since the January status change. "One of the missing points on youth helmets is the understanding of what the actual impact forces are in the field of play in youth football. It's a very under-studied area all the way around," he noted. According to Oliver, NOCSAE will be able to take data from recent and developing studies regarding concussions and impact hits to the

Scientific Advisory Committee, and apply the information to inform the youth-specific football helmet standard. The change in status of the standard is ideal because it gives the Committee freedom to address matters as they occur, instead of waiting for semi-annual board meetings. "It should tell us where the youth standard should be different from the adult standard, if at all," he said. "We need the data behind it to tell us what's going on." NOCSAE is also waiting on the collection of injury epidemiology by Dr. Dawn Comstock, Ph.D. at the Nationwide Children's Hospital at the Ohio State University, the data from which should further help shape the standard.

A change was also made pertaining to baseball/softball equipment during the winter meeting. The Board voted to move the proposed standard for a fielder's helmet for baseball and softball to final status. Originally developed at the request of USA Baseball, the standard for fielder's helmets will go into effect in January 2013. It is important to note that the requirement of a fielder's helmet will not necessarily be implemented by national or local governing bodies, but rather that any bodies that do mandate the usage of fielder's helmets will be required to follow the NOCSAE standard.

Currently, neither the NCAA, nor the NFHS, will mandate the use of a fielder's helmet for play in their respective sanctioned games. However, if a state federation, state conference or NCAA conference mandates the use of a fielder's helmet, it must meet the NOCSAE specifications. The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) may be the first state federation to mandate the use of a fielder's helmet in its sanctioned games.



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RETAILERS AND DEALERS WEIGH IN ON THE SALES IMPACT OF REQUIRED BBCOR BATS

By Fernando J. Delgado

As a result of the implementation of new Batted Ball Coefficient of Restitution (BBCOR) bat regulations by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) effective January 1, 2012, many retailers and team dealers had anticipated an increase in bat sales for both the 2011 holiday season and the months immediately preceding the upcoming baseball season. Given the low availability of BBCOR-certified bats last year, many industry experts expected a jump in sales during the recent holiday selling season, representing a potential boon for bat makers and sellers. However, while initial holiday sales figures confirmed improved sales, a survey of retailers and team dealers revealed that the buying schedule for players is different this year due to the new regulations. The subsequent dynamic between players buying new bats and sellers offering them may not be so clear cut.

Mike Miros, owner of First Team Sports in Greenville, SC, shared that sales in his store were strong for the holiday thanks largely to the new BBCOR regulations. "I would say sales were up compared to other years, and what was driving that more than anything was everyone needing to have a new BBCOR bat," said Miros. However, he noted that the post-holiday period was surprisingly slow. "I thought we saw a little spike there at Christmas, and then early January was slower. I was expecting us



to sell more," he stated. Miros added that the final weekend of January was "tremendous" for bat sales as baseball season started gearing up in South Carolina, and he anticipated that sales would continue to gain momentum as baseball season drew closer. "I think the trend is going to be up for the next three or four weeks [of February] – I think we'll see another spike in BBCOR bats as kids find out they made the team," explained Miros. "Now Mom and Dad will buy them the new bats, since they're required to have them." As a result, he expected the remainder of February to be a very strong selling period.

Miros saw an increase in sales of high school and college bats, while little league, senior league big barrel, and wood bats were fairly normal. He estimated that his business experienced between a 15 to 20 percent increase in bat sales, with Easton, Rawlings, DeMarini, and Marucci BBCOR bats proving to be his best sellers. "The surprise one for us was the Maruccis," observed Miros. "We had quite a few kids asking for them."

Industry-wide figures reflect Miros' store-specific sales. According to retail point-of-sale data compiled by SportsScanInfo, non-wood bat sales were up 25 percent for the 2011 holiday season, encompassing November and December. Average selling price dropped 1 percent to \$253. Full-line sales were up a third, and internet sales were up two-thirds. A closer look at higher price points revealed an even more drastic jump, as sales of non-wood baseball bats over \$200 increased 55 percent for the holiday.

Sam MacDonald, retail operations manager for Spokane, WA-based Kimmel Athletic, confirmed a more robust holiday selling season, but pointed out subtle differences brought about by location and buyer tendencies. "Being in the Northwest, our bat sales for holiday were definitely much bigger than what they had been in the past," he said. "Typically, being that it's cold here, people don't buy bats for the holidays. But knowing there was a change with BBCOR helped the bats that we had." According to MacDonald, Kimmel's bat sales were up approximately 10 to 15 percent for the holiday selling season. Sales were up and down throughout the month of December. "The people who were buying knew what they wanted, and they were just waiting for them to come in," he said. "As soon as they came in, they were purchasing. There are certain buyers that are worried that they won't get what they want if they don't buy right away. They're under the same impression that a lot of kids are going to need new bats. They don't want to miss out on the opportunity for what they want."

MacDonald also commented that some players are now using demos more often before deciding on their bat, pushing back their purchase from the holidays to later months closer to the baseball season. "The downside of the change is that a lot of people are still questioning it a little bit," he said. "We have demos of everything, so they're still testing trying to figure out which bat they really want to use." MacDonald said that players buying bats do their research before coming in, and usually have one or two bats already in mind. Kimmel allows customers to check out a demo bat for a three-day period to help them come to a decision. "Nothing has changed as far as performance," stated MacDonald. "Your DeMarini CF5's, your Easton Speeds, and the Exogrids from Louisville Slugger, they're typically the top-notch bats no matter where you look."

For some retailers, the timing of BBCOR bat sales has been difficult to accurately predict, and not all sellers experienced sales increases in line with national averages over the holidays. "The hardest part was

trying to gauge when we were going to start selling these bats," said Matt Mitchell, buyer of baseball/softball equipment for Hibbett Sports. "Was the high school player going to make the purchase after he got through his season? Was he going to make a purchase closer to Back to School? Was it going to be after fall practice started? Was it going to be during the holidays? You have to err that he's going to buy at the earliest point. And he did not. That player didn't buy during the summer months". Mitchell said he knew to expect a jump in BBCOR sales because online retailers and dealers, who start selling bats earlier than brick-and-mortar stores, had started selling more BBCOR bats leading up to the holidays. Unlike many other retailers in the market that had a strong increase in holiday sales, Hibbett saw only a moderate jump. "For us it was really post-holiday. Through the month of January is when it really started for us," said Mitchell. "We knew it was coming, we just didn't know when. And that was — from a planning standpoint — a bit of a nightmare."

Interestingly, Mitchell thinks that many bat sellers may have overestimated the extent of additional bat sales as a result of the new BBCOR rules, while also underestimating the frequency at which players buy new bats. "At Hibbett, we assume the better high school kids - the College World Series types - buy a new bat every year anyway," he said. "I think that guys who planned for business to be up four, five, six times, might have overshot it."

Mitchell added that wood bat sales were stable compared to last year, an overall trend from the past several years. He predicted that

wood sales would continue to be steady going forward, since the players who purchase wood bats use them to train year-round.

From the manufacturer's perspective, the BBCOR change has provided an opportunity for brands to re-position themselves in the market. Jim Bel Bruno, VP of sales & marketing at Mattingly Sports, provided an interesting take on how customers view the various BBCOR offerings. "I think the market has reacted like we thought it would," said Bel Bruno. "It's given mid-tier brands like ours - in the big scheme of things - an opportunity to grab market share because a lot of these bats technically have to perform the same to the BBCOR requirement. It's allowed us to gain market share with consumers that might not have considered us in the past. It allows us to compete on graphics, balance, and feel of the bat. A kid that might have been loyal to one of the bigger guys in the past is now giving us a chance. It's been an interesting run. We think it's going to continue into the spring."

Ultimately, the effects of the BBCOR regulations on bat sales remain to be seen, even though increased holiday sales suggest an upside for bat manufacturers and retailers. Even with the uncertainty, many in the market believe that another surge in sales will occur as the high school baseball season approaches and players find out that they have made their high school teams. "It's almost a little too early to tell," said Kimmel's MacDonald during the first week of February. "Until we actually get through this selling season, it's hard to have all the answers." ■

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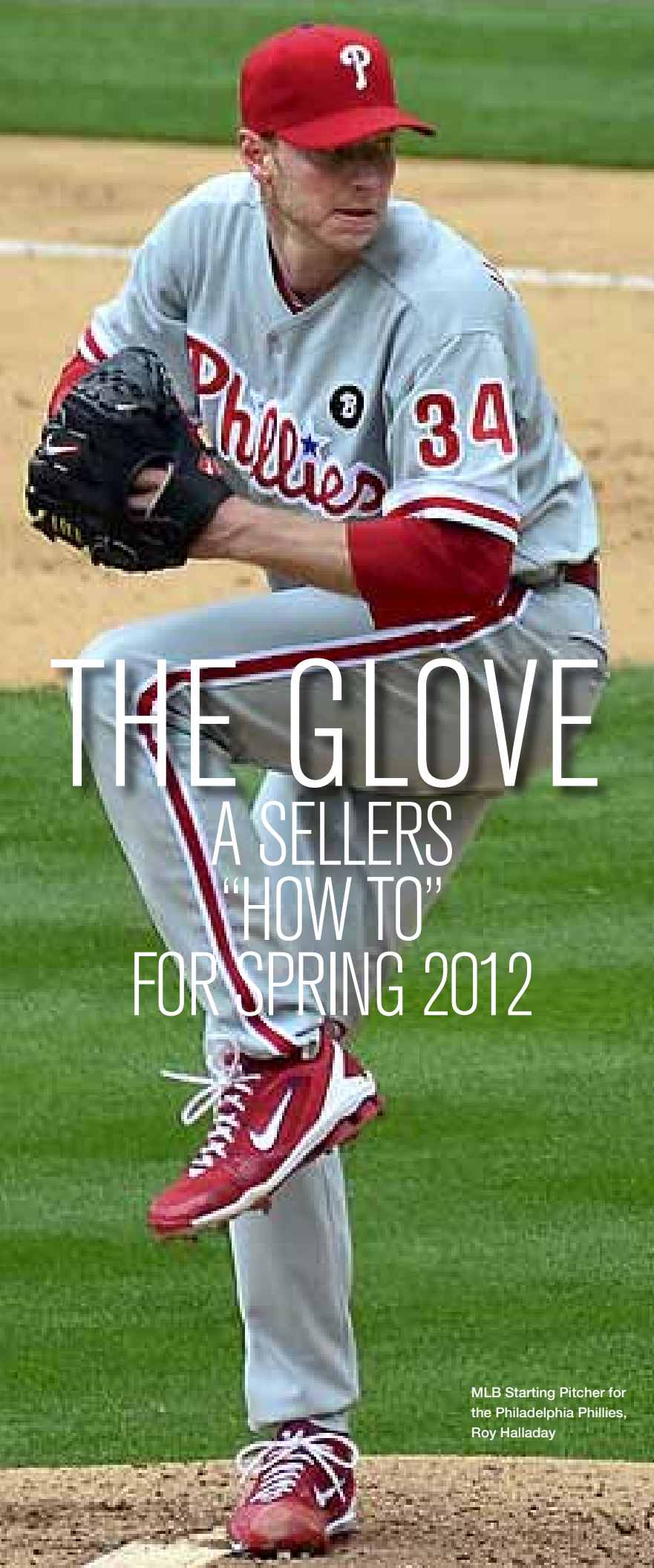


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2012



THE GLOVE

A SELLERS "HOW TO" FOR SPRING 2012

MLB Starting Pitcher for
the Philadelphia Phillies,
Roy Halladay

Performance, Feel, and Functionality are the focal points for baseball and softball gloves for Spring 2012. Sellers need to familiarize themselves with the current nuances in leather and recognize that the purpose of a glove changes as players become older and more experienced.

Tim Rumer, business unit manager for ball gloves and protective gear at Mizuno USA, believes that selling a glove depends on a player's age and their experience level. Whereas a player under the age of 10, who is just beginning to play the game, needs a glove that helps them learn to catch and field a baseball, older players require gloves that are more specialized, comfortable, and durable.

"Age is the first factor, and the second factor is how often, and at what level, they are playing," Rumer stated. "We want beginning players to have more confidence and more success catching the ball." He said that intermediate players in the 10- to 12-year old age group tend to need a leather glove that holds up to usage for a year or more because players in that age group are still rotating around the field playing two or three different positions. However, as players mature and play travel ball, their needs change and with that they require a more specific glove designed for a particular position and frequent usage. "If they're playing a lot, they're probably going to want a better glove and they'll start moving toward a performance-based product," said Rumer.

Specialization, performance, and durability become increasingly important as a player matures. "If a kid is 13- to 15-years old and in high school, and he's playing a lot, then you start moving into pro-level gloves, because they're going to play anywhere from 50 to 100 games a year," explained Rumer. "Between practice and games, a player at that level will need a glove that can hold up to heavy use."

Rumer added that paying attention to types of leather treatment can help sellers distinguish gloves. Leather-softening processes and oil-based conditioners soften gloves for a better feel and more flexibility and also help a glove last longer. He said that Mizuno in particular hand-coats its leather so that the conditioner is absorbed from the inside out. "That's key, because the conditioner gets into every nook and cranny," Rumer noted.

Sellers who are aware of which gloves feature treated and conditioned leather will be in a better position to help customers who desire comfort and durability.

Quite simply, giving the customer a personal, individualized experience goes a long way, as gloves are often produced for the masses. "We work closely with our customers," said Kevin Barrett, sales representative for Akadema. "If you go into a retail store, sometimes you find cheap leather and lace. Approach it so that each product is made specifically for the user, and it's not just done in bulk." ■

BASEBALL



1. Akadema's USA102 (Patriot Series Glove) is made with kip leather and manufactured in the U.S.A. "Guys at the pro level like lighter gloves that are easier to break in, and because the leather is richer, it will last as long as regular thick leather," explained Kevin Barrett, sales rep for Akadema. **MSRP \$225**

2. Rawlings' Revo 950 Series Gloves are made with Timberglass leather from premium, pro-grade hides with player-preferred stitching and welting. The gloves feature Custom Player Technology, which allows players to match their catching style to one of three pockets: Deep, Standard or Flat. Model 9SC115CS is shown. **MSRP \$259**

3. Mizuno's Classic Pro Soft Infielder Glove – Model GCP54S is made of throwback leather. "What makes the glove stand out is the leather," said Tim Rumer, business unit manager for ball gloves and protective gear

at Mizuno. "It has a lot of pull-up and is oil-injected. If you scratch the surface, you'll see a scratch mark but when the oil comes back to the surface, the scratch mark is gone. The pre-oiled condition allows the glove to retain its shape with good memory." The glove features position-specific patterns. **MSRP \$170**

4. Old Hickory's OH Pro Gloves are made from U.S.A. tanned kip leather, with contoured finger channels, thick lacing and a sewn palm pad to reduce sting. Shown is OH115, available for infielders and pitchers. **MSRP \$205**

5. Easton's Pro Series EPG 459WB features Japanese-tanned professional grade Seto leather made from U.S. steer hide. The glove is built soft for comfort but can withstand pro level play. **MSRP \$200**

6. Mattingly's Hit Man Batting Gloves feature a knuckle line indicator for grip and goatskin

leather palm. "This will be the first spring we offer the Hit Man batting gloves in adult sizes. To coincide with our aggressive launch into the BBCOR-3 space for high school and college, we wanted a batting glove to go with it," said Jim Bel Bruno, VP sales and marketing. **MSRP \$25 (Adult), \$20 (Youth)**

7. Mizuno's Global Elite VOP Series Outfielder Glove – Model GGE7V is balanced and lightweight. "The vibration oil process is the big thing. It gives the leather a great feel with solid patterns," said Tim Rumer, business unit manager for ball gloves and protective gear at Mizuno. The finger and palm liner are made of the same leather as the shell. **MSRP \$205**

8. Louisville Slugger's Flare Design Type F Gloves are made of professional-grade, oil-infused leather for quick break-in. The flare design offers a larger catching surface with a flat, deep pocket. Model shown is FL1200CC and available for pitcher, infielder and outfielder. **MSRP \$210**

9. Wilson's 1786 11.5" Gloves are customizable both online and in retail stores with over 40 models available. A player can choose a custom color, leather, lace, logo and/or stitching. Model A2000 in Blue/White and Red/Navy is shown. **MSRP \$300**

BASEBALL



10

10. Akadema's ADV33 Outfielder (Torino Series Glove) "The biggest thing with the Torino Series is the leather," said Kevin Barrett, sales rep for Akadema. "We use a kip leather which is 20 percent lighter than regular U.S. steerhide leather. It makes the glove easier to break in, and lighter than some competitor's gloves, which tend to be heavy." Infielder gloves, pitcher gloves, and catcher's mitts are also available. MSRP \$225



11

11. Easton's RVB1175 (Rival Series Youth Baseball Glove) The Rival Series makes use of a patent-pending, customizable back-of-hand fit system, as well as a back-of-hand strap that is adjustable, allowing a multiple fit range and easily replaceable to personalize with a player's name or number. Made of U.S. steer hide. MSRP \$100



12

12. Akadema's APM42 Praying Mantis Catcher's Mitt with patented "Stress Wedge" technology, located between the index finger and thumb, offers shock-absorbing protection for the hand against injury and sting when receiving the ball. MSRP \$225

13. Mizuno's MVP Prime Infielder Glove GMVP1102P strikes a balance between oiled softness for exceptional feel and firm control that serious players demand. "The MVP Prime is a great option for kids who want a pro-level, pro-style glove, but at a lower price point," said Tim Rumer, business unit manager for ball gloves and protective gear at Mizuno. The patterns feature a more neutral center pocket design. MSRP \$105



13

14. Wilson's Pro Stock Game Model Gloves were developed in tandem with Major League Baseball's Dustin Pedroia. Customizations include removing the heel felt for a low impact zone, rolled dual welting for quick break-in, extra-long laces, and Double X lacing to secure the H-web to the pocket. MSRP \$220

15. Louisville Slugger's HD9 Hybrid Defense Glove Series consist of hybrid leather/mesh and are made of professional-grade, oil-treated steerhide leather. The gloves use the same zero-gravity performance mesh as used by many professional players. Shown is the XH1125GG Infield glove. MSRP \$160



14



15



Right-handed Pitcher for the USA National Softball Team, Jennie Finch

SOFTBALL



1



2



3



4



5

1. Easton's Rival Fastpitch Series Gloves are made with U.S.A. steer hide, some of the strongest leather in the world. A patent-pending and customizable back-of-hand fit system tailors the glove for each unique softball player. The Rival is easily replaceable to personalize with name or number. RVFP1200 is pictured. **MSRP \$100**

2. Worth's FPEX Century Series Fastpitch Gloves have balanced patterns and webs that are designed to fit the hand and wrist size of the fastpitch player. The full-grain and oil-treated USA steerhide shell leather coupled with Poron® XRD™ technology allows the gloves to offer top performance Poron® XRD™ is a registered trademark of Rogers Corporation. Catcher's Mitt and First Base Mitt are also available. Pictured is the C120X 12" model. **MSRP \$100**

3. Louisville Slugger's Valkyrie Series Fastpitch Gloves feature premium grade, oil-treated steerhide leather for a soft feel and long-lasting shape.

The glove is the pioneer of exclusive female fit, including narrower fingerstalls and a smaller wrist opening for snug fit and better control. Pictured is the VK1250 12.5" model. **MSRP \$95**

4. Louisville Slugger's Catalyst Series Fastpitch Gloves are made of genuine, oil-treated steerhide leather for strength and durability, while still providing a soft feel. Cool Max finger linings wick perspiration and the Velcro thumb and pinking lock provides a secure fit. Pictured is the CAT1300 model. **MSRP \$75**

5. Louisville Slugger's Diva Series Fastpitch Gloves are designed for developing players. The top grade Buffalo leather palm provides durability with no break-in period, while game-ready ultra-soft materials are utilized for improved playability. Pictured is the DV1150 11.5" model. **MSRP \$35**



Carlos Santana, Catcher for the Cleveland Indians
Photo courtesy of Brad Mangin

PROTECTIVE GEAR

SELLING PERFORMANCE
AND SAFETY FOR
SPRING 2012

By Fernando J. Delgado

Finding the right balance between protection and performance remains the ultimate challenge in protective gear for baseball and softball players. Since prevention of serious injuries and concussions are top priorities for athletes, it is important for sellers to be aware how products in the protective gear category for Spring 2012 manage to provide the best performance without sacrificing safety.

THE MANTRA OF “LESS IS MORE” CONTINUES TO DEFINE PROTECTIVE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL GEAR.

“I do believe there’s a trend in preferences of athletes and the evolving market in place that, when it comes to protective, there is a mindset that less is more,” said Bill Best, VP of product development for Shock Doctor. “I think it’s evolving for a couple of reasons. One is that, as designs and materials are evolving together, there’s a recognition that you don’t need to have much over-sized, bulky padding extending out from your body.” It is important for sellers to recognize not only the growing trend of baseball and softball players seeking lighter-weight, more comfortable protective gear, but the emphasis manufacturers are placing on providing products which strike a difficult balance between maximum protection and the best possible performance. “Whether it’s baseball or any other sport, Shock Doctor looks at the performance of the athlete and how it integrates with the protection they’re looking for,” said Best. “There’s a lot of interesting things being done, but fit and flexibility is an interesting component of it. I think the performance aspect of using protective is in the athlete’s mindset more than ever before, and what that’s leading to is ‘less is more’, because athletes don’t want to be bulked up and not able to move.”

Tim Rumer, business unit manager for ball gloves and protective gear for Mizuno USA, also believes that players are looking for lighter, more comfortable gear without sacrificing protection. Today’s baseball and softball players have a more rigorous schedule than ever before, and the impact of more games affects their choice of protective gear. “I think light-weight protection is usually the name of the game,” offered Rumer. “Something that’s light-weight, breathable, comfortable, and has moisture management – those things are what a kid that’s playing travel baseball, or a girl who is playing travel fastpitch, are looking for. They’re playing all summer, and they might play three or four games a day. They’re wearing gear all the time, so it has to be something that doesn’t bog them down. That’s the juxtaposition of the gear. You want to be protective, but not cumbersome.”

SELLERS SHOULD ALSO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THEIR CUSTOMERS’ INTENTIONS WHEN DEALING WITH PROTECTIVE GEAR.

Measuring the athlete’s need for injury prevention or rehabilitation is important, as well as identifying the extent which performance, ease of movement, and comfort are desired in context of the protection a product provides. Technology, materials, fit and sizing are other necessary factors to consider. “We try to take a performance approach to it, knowing that you’ve got athletes that aren’t just recovering or trying to help with an injury, but there are those that do things preventively,” said Best, who emphasized that Shock Doctor considers the application of its products as performance sports therapy. “We want to get them back in the game sooner, and then once in the game, get them to perform well. Within that mindset in our product development approach, choice of materials and sizing are areas we spend a lot of time in development and where we believe we have separated ourselves from the competition.”

Batting helmets, catcher’s gear, elbow sleeves and padding and are just some of the staple protective baseball and softball products that sellers can focus on when helping players. Given the influence of technology on the constantly adapting category, it will be interesting to see how trends evident in Spring 2012 progress moving forward. ■



Adams USA's CH4000 Hockey Style Catcher's Helmet is lightweight and meets NOCSAE standards. A ventilation system keeps the player cool and is built with a high impact ABS shell. Includes brushed polish finish. Available in six colors and two sizes. MSRP \$80-\$90



Shock Doctor's 804 Velocity ShockSkin Wrist Band Guards feature single density foam protection for coverage around the wrist and high impact dual density foam located in critical areas for added protection. 4" design means comfortable and low-key. MSRP \$30



Mizuno's Samurai G3 Chest Protector with Low Rebound technology and VN 600 high density foam. “The first thing people notice is it’s a very hard chest protector to the touch. Most people believe when you block a ball, it will bounce far away when it’s just the opposite. The foam we use is a special deadening, low rebound foam. When the ball hits it at speeds between 60-75 mph after hitting the dirt, the chest protector deadens the ball,” said Tim Rumer, business unit manager for ball gloves and protective for Mizuno. MSRP \$80

BASEBALL



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1. Adams USA's ACP Catcher's Chest Protector features removable and adjustable shoulder pads; open cell foam with CoolMax back liner for moisture management; lightweight and adjustable back straps for a custom fit; and memory foam to absorb ball impact. Treated with an antimicrobial bacterial shield. Available in six colors and four sizes from Youth to Adult. **MSRP \$60-\$70**

2. McDavid's Hex DD Arm Sleeve is 14mm of Hex protection for the upper arm, elbow and forearm. Features a contoured notch at the elbow for full range of motion. HDC Moisture Management fabric keeps players cool. **MSRP \$30**

3. Shock Doctor's 706 Velocity ShockSkin Baseball Youth Sleeveless Impact Shirt "When we developed this shirt with a protective upper chest, sternum and heart area, we took an approach of providing protection that would meet the impact and deflection of the ball at a level that would make a difference to minimize the type of injuries that can occur," said Bill Best, VP of product development.

ShockSkin technology allows for padding which has dual density foam layering to contour to the body. **MSRP \$50**

4. Easton's Natural Grip Batting Helmet meets NOCSAE standards and features a rubberized matte finish, slim profile, aerodynamic venting and soft urethane foam. Available in Adult and Youth sizes. **MSRP \$35**

5. Xenith's X1 Batting Helmet features strategically tuned shock absorbers to adapt to the hit, enabling it to pass the new NOCSAE Standard for baseball and softball batting helmets without an oversized shell. The patented Shock Bonnet suspension system offers ventilation and is resistant

to mold and mildew. Available in Adult and Youth sizes. **MSRP \$60**

6. Cramer's Coach's First Aid Kit is designed on two key principles – organization and ease of use. The interior bags are the same design as bags used by the American Red Cross. The individual pockets provide organization based on injury type and seal to protect the contents but open quickly for ease of use. Individually labeled pockets contain contents designed to meet specific needs. **MSRP \$27**

7. Cramer's ESS Arm Compression Sleeve has an articulated elbow pocket for fit and comfort while reducing bunching and irritation. Banded cuffs work with target compression rates to eliminate slippage

BASEBALL



during play. Seamless construction helps avoid pressure points and chafing. Available in Black and Pink. **MSRP \$15**

8. Wilson's The One Batting Helmet offers one-size-fits-all patented adjustment technology and the ability to customize the helmet's colors to match team colors. A decal system (available in 16 colors) allows colored stickers to be applied, changed, and re-applied. Available in Adult and Youth sizes. **MSRP \$30-\$35**

9. Schutt's Air Maxx T BB Batting Helmet with Aqua Tech Graphics offers cushioning leading to better impact absorption, heat management and hygiene. "The TPU cushioning makes it stand out. It doesn't change over the spectrum of temperatures. The hygienic nature of the TPU is also important. It's not going to absorb moisture or sweat that other cushion technologies do," said Schutt Product Manager Rob Ball. Twenty standard graphic designs with unlimited colors to choose from allow players to customize their helmet. **MSRP \$70 (Aqua Tech Graphics); \$40 (Standard Air Maxx).**

10. Louisville Slugger's PSET3 Catcher's Gear Set consists of the Pulse Static Chest Protector, PSET3 Catcher's Helmet, and Pulse Shin Guards. The TPX Helmet provides vision and protection for high school and college catchers. The Chest Protector offers memory foam padding to absorb ball impact with a Pulse form-fitting design. The Pulse Shin Guard has a tapered shin with high impact-resistant plastic to reduce weight and improve range of motion. **MSRP \$280 (Set)**

11. McDavid's Men's Hex 3mm Sliding Short uses Hex technology to add a layer of lightweight coverage to areas most impacted when sliding. The short is designed to protect and stretch. With hDc Moisture Management fabric and HexMesh, the short remains cool. **MSRP \$40**

12. Shock Doctor's 201 Bioflex Cup has a vented bio-shape body for airflow to protect vital areas. Its gel perimeter pad offers unrestricted movement and comfort. **MSRP \$9**

SOFTBALL



1. Easton's Two Toned Natural Fastpitch Softball Helmet with Mask provides protection, performance and comfort. The Natural has a slim profile and aerodynamic venting system combined with a high-grade ABS shell for strength and durability. EVA impact foam offers protection. The helmet also includes soft urethane comfort foam and a Bio-Dri moisture management liner. The tri-bar facemask design protects with maximum vision. **MSRP \$40**

2. Easton's Synge Chest Protector for fastpitch softball is designed for female fastpitch catchers. The protector's form fit with shoulder arch gives comfort and protection. The comfort form foam outer layer deadens the ball on impact and is boosted by an ultra lightweight protective inner foam layer. Airflow Release Channel technology and Bio-Dri moisture management liner offers cooling. **MSRP \$100-\$110**

3. Shock Doctor's 262 Women's Ultra Slider with Pelvic Protector Pocket is made with supportive four-way stretch, anti-microbial fabric that wicks moisture away from the skin. "This short is a low-rise cut with a length and inseam that's popular with female softball players...and offers extra protection when they are diving or sliding aggressively," said Bill Best, VP of product development. Pelvic protector sold separately. **MSRP \$40**

4. McDavid's Women's Hex 3mm Sliding Short for softball players offers Hex technology to protect high-impact sliding areas. The overall design also offers protection for more vulnerable areas. **MSRP \$40**

ROADMAN PROFILE



PAUL REYNOLDS

Cook's Sporting Goods
North Wilkesboro, NC

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A ROADMAN? I've been with Cook's for 30 years.

WHAT TERRITORY DO YOU COVER? The western part to about the middle of North Carolina. I also have a few schools down on the coast.

DID YOU PLAY SPORTS WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG? Baseball and basketball. Basketball was my sport and I didn't start until the 7th grade after North Carolina won its first NCAA title in 1957. I got a scholarship to Appalachian State University in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

WHAT WERE SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF YOUR SPORTS CAREER? I played in the East/West All-Star Basketball game in North Carolina in high school. I averaged 28 points a game in my senior year. In college, I averaged 15 points.

GROWING UP, DID YOU HAVE A DREAM JOB? Not really. I lived on a farm until I went to college and I didn't want to go into farming.

DO YOU SEE YOUR ACCOUNTS FREQUENTLY? I try to see each one at least once a month. Some I see every two weeks. It varies on what needs to be done. I'm in the store more now than I used to be. We recently hired my son as a roadman and now we have 11 roadmen in all. It used to be just the two of us. I'm 70 years old so it's time for me to start slowing down.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT BEING A ROADMAN? Being around young people. Dealing with coaches is very important to me.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE TEAM BUSINESS? I started out at the YMCA in North Wilkesboro, NC. I bought the first set of youth uniforms from James Cook, who runs Cook's. His dad operated a service station and a store but James decided to go into sporting goods after graduating from NC State in 1965. After 18 years at the YMCA, I went to work for Cook's.

HOW HAS THE BUSINESS CHANGED SINCE YOU GOT INTO IT? The competition is a lot tougher and I don't think the quality of the products are as good as they used to be with everyone going overseas for production. In the old days you could call a company and get what you wanted in a day or two. If you call these days, they're sold out before the season starts. With orders delayed by budget concerns, that makes it challenging.

HOW WOULD YOUR CUSTOMERS DESCRIBE YOU? I consider myself fair and honest, true to my word.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR ADVICE TO SOMEONE CONSIDERING BECOMING A ROADMAN? It's long hours but probably not as much pressure as an office job. And if you like sports, you're around it all the time. It's a very enjoyable business to be in. As far as doing well at it, I'd say service is 90 percent of the job. You have to be there for your accounts when they need you.

WHAT OUTSIDE INTERESTS DO YOU HAVE? I enjoy fishing. My wife and I like to spend as much time as we can with family. We have three children and eight grandchildren, two are freshman in college.

ANY THOUGHTS ON RETIREMENT? My boss won't let me. As long I can get to the store and drive, he says I've got to stay with him as long I can.

CALENDAR

For full year calendar go to sportsresource.com/events

MAY

6-9 NSGA Management
Conference and
Team Dealer Summit
San Antonio, TX

JUNE

20-22 NBS Outdoor Market
Austin, TX

28-30 Sports Inc. Athletic Show
Indianapolis, IN

29-1 TAG Spring/Summer Show
St. Charles, MO

JULY

9-12 NBS Summer Market
Indianapolis, IN

19-21 ADA Spring Show
Orlando, FL

AUGUST

9-11 Sports Inc. Outdoor Show
Indianapolis, IN

NOVEMBER

2-4 NBS Fall Market
Indianapolis, IN

7-9 TAG Fall/Winter Show
N. Charleston, SC

12-14 ADA Fall Show
Las Vegas, NV

18-20 Sports Inc. Athletic Show
Las Vegas, NV

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