

# Double Play

Dick's Sporting Goods enhances display attractiveness and increases security for vulnerable merchandise

by PETER JOHNSTON

Two things are immediately obvious upon walking into any big sporting goods store. One, there's a lot of stuff in there — thousands of items on display, and more in storage that there's no room for on the display floor.

These merchants carry gear for dozens of sports, from baseball through yoga. Each accounts for several product categories, including apparel and essentially consumable items like golf balls and tees.

The second thing is that it's very specific stuff. Sports enthusiasts don't browse in the classic sense; a dedicated kayaker isn't going to walk into the store one day and walk back out with a bowling ball.

This doesn't mean that sports enthusiasts don't browse at all. Whatever their particular sport, many weekend athletes have at least one piece of gear they aspire to replace with a better, more expensive version — the ski, pole, oar, skate, crossbow or whatever of their dreams.

## PRO STOCK GLOVES

"Pro stock" gloves — top-of-the-line products made by companies like Wilson, Rawlings or Mizuno — are key among aspirational equipment for baseball players. One of these gloves on display in a store will attract the attention of the most skilled and knowledgeable amateur players in the place.

Unfortunately, that's not the only kind of attention it will attract. "This is the kind of thing you'll see on pro baseball players," says David Lund, vice president of loss prevention for Dick's Sporting Goods. Ranging in price from \$250 up to \$700, they're "very attractive both to the opportunistic shoplifter and the professional."

Dick's Sporting Goods was founded in 1948 — with a \$300 cash assist from his grandmother — by 18-year-old Dick Stack, who wanted to open a bait and



tackle shop in his native Binghamton, N.Y. He turned out to be good at the bait and tackle business, not to mention hardworking and ambitious, and by 1958 had expanded his product line to include

the core of Dick's Sporting Goods' current inventory selection.

The company, under the leadership of Dick's son Ed Stack, today has more than 700 Dick's locations. Headquartered in Coraopolis, Pa., it also owns and operates Golf Galaxy and Field & Stream stores.

Until recently, Dick's had a couple of different approaches to protecting the pro stock gloves it kept on display. One was

an alarm module connected to the glove with four separate wires coming out of it. Another, which offered even greater security, was to tie the glove down with aviation cable and padlocks. Both these approaches were unattractive.

They were also customer- and sales-unfriendly. If a customer is about to lay out \$600 for a baseball glove, they don't just want to look at it padlocked to a wall, they want to touch it. They want to put it on and smack their fist into the pocket. They want to experience the product.

Retailers want them to be able to do all that with a minimum of cumbersome intervention by an associate. At the same time, of course, they still want the glove to be hard to steal — along with everything else.

“Shrinkage is something we take very seriously,” says Lund, a 26-year loss prevention veteran. “External theft is on the rise throughout the industry, and Dick’s Sporting Goods is no different.”

## TWO-PART PROTECTION

Dick’s Sporting Goods has a longstanding relationship with

Unlike earlier security arrangements for displayed pro stock gloves — the padlocks, the aviation cable, the protruding wires — the system is invisible to browsing shoppers.

Checkpoint Systems, which specializes in both inventory management and loss prevention systems. While Checkpoint was not involved in Dick’s earlier approaches to security for its top-end gloves, it knew of the problem — and had a system for an entirely different application that could be potentially adapted for this one.

“I came to Dick’s Sporting Goods and happened to show them a solution that was originally designed for the protection of power tools in a [do-it-yourself] environment,” says Tim Kasper, national account manager for Checkpoint High-Theft Solutions.

“After I was finished describing it, they brainstormed and suggested a few modifications in order to use the solution to protect their baseball gloves.”

The result was the Checkpoint

Alpha Bug Tag 2 Snare. Unlike

earlier security arrangements for displayed pro stock gloves — the padlocks, the aviation cable, the protruding wires — the Bug Tag 2 Snare is invisible to browsing shoppers.

The glove rests on a wooden plaque, in the center of which is an alarm module, connected to the glove by a coiled cable with a lanyard on the end of it. The cable is tucked out of sight under the glove, and only becomes visible to the customer when they lift the glove from the plaque. If the customer, or any unauthorized person, attempts to disconnect the cable from the glove, an alarm sounds.

An associate, however, can disconnect the glove from its plaque and allow a prospective customer to handle it, including putting it on and smacking a fist into the sweet spot in the center of the pocket. Meanwhile, it still has a traditional electronic article surveillance tag attached.

“Once the glove is detached from the display, the customer can take the product to the point of sale,” Lund says. “The EAS tag would alarm at our pedestals if somebody tried to defeat it there. So we have an alarm at the display, and we’d also get an alarm at the door, in case an otherwise honest customer decided to take a different direction.”

## THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Dick’s Sporting Goods and Checkpoint Systems have worked together for nearly 20 years, and both companies agree that it was this long relationship and the resulting level of trust and communication that enabled the development of the system — along with a certain willingness to experiment.

“This solution originally looked a little different, and as I say, it was for power tools,” Kasper says. “We modified it for baseball gloves, and that modification is now working for some other retailers on high-end handbags. It was an idea that had some legs.”

At Dick’s Sporting Goods, meanwhile, the Bug Tag 2 Snare is further expanding its territory. Lund says about half the company’s stores use it now, with plans for more.

“We worked with Checkpoint on this to protect our baseball stock,” he says, “but we see it as a product we can use in other parts of the store.”

Among the other products the security system may be adapted for are top-end fishing reels and crossbows — like the pro stock gloves, relatively small, expensive items. “It’s pretty versatile,” Lund says, “and it works with our existing detachers. It’s something I see expanding to other stores, and maybe not just for ball gloves.” **STORES**

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