

# Save Yourself the Headaches!

## Learn the Secrets to Buying Soccer Uniforms & Field Equipment

The fifteen minute investment that will save you time money and tons of stress!

Buying soccer uniforms: the only place where 99% correct equals an "F"  
The 1% means little "Johnny" or "Susie" can't play today!

## Why do you know the secrets?

- Over the past nineteen years, Jerry Macnamara, Owner of Totally Soccer, has worked in the soccer industry in team sales, as Vice President of a soccer specialty company where he opened stores all over the country, as a Management Consultant to a soccer manufacturer, and as a Board Member. As a result of his experience, he has been certified as an expert in the US Soccer Market. Learn from his experience.
- During his tenure, he has seen the inside of the soccer industry at work - and not at work. He's been the guest of international soccer companies for events such as the FIFA World Cup (he's even held the World Cup - amazing - it's pretty heavy too!), MLS Cup and Youth Regional Championships. He's witnessed the game at every level. He loves this game as much as you do!
- Since soccer in the US is dominated by the youth market, Jerry has always held, "It's all about the kids!" He's created this Insider's Guide because ultimately, it results in better opportunities for players and makes the buying process for volunteer buyers an easier and (at the very least) a more informed process.
- We hate watching clubs (read: parents and soccer players) get ripped off when there is a better way to buy soccer uniforms and equipment.

## **You're a Soccer Uniform Buyer and You:**

- are a volunteer parent - the person who raises his or her hand for everything. Welcome to the continued world of a thankless job at best. Want some recognition? Mess this up and everyone will call you!
- have little to no experience in making a bulk purchase - I mean who buys in bulk other than at Sam's Club? And even if you buy wrong, the only upset people are in your family - you can handle that
- can't figure out what to wear each day. And, while women look great by the time they're finished changing a million times, men aren't as fortunate. I mean, c'mon, we've all seen what you wear out on the soccer fields. Now, imagine making a "cool" decision that meets your budget for your entire team or club.
- have significant budget responsibility. We're not talking Ginsu knives here that you can pass along to your "favorite" brother-in-law for his birthday if you don't like them. We're talking about a minimum of a couple hundred bucks for a team and thousands of dollars if you're lucky enough to buy for the entire club. Depending on your means you're probably making one of the top three or four biggest purchases in your life (house, car, boat or motorcycle and soccer uniforms)
- are nervous about making the "right" choice because you realize your reputation is on the line in the community.

Does this profile look familiar? Psst, take a peek in the mirror.

## **Could you imagine buying a car if there was no guarantee that you could get replacement parts?**

"No way", you yell out loud? "That's crazy! I would never do that." Of course you wouldn't.

Guess again. If you buy uniforms from international companies like adidas, Nike, Puma and diadora, you've committed the error you just called crazy. You're right; no sensible individual would buy a car if there was no guarantee of replacement parts. I mean one breakdown - one blowout - and - poof - the car is in the garage. Why am I making such an analogy? Here's why:

These brands import their products from the Far East - just look at any tag anymore - it is as diverse as the United Nations. They import from lower cost nations to save money - not save you money, but to line their own pockets. When was the last time you saw adidas or Nike uniforms go down in price? I haven't seen it.

When brands import product, it takes between 6-18 months for an order to arrive in the United States after being placed with a factory in the Far East. This means when they run out of product, they are out of product for a long period. There is no ability - nor do they care that you've just spent hundreds or thousands of dollars - for them to get you more product quickly. But as a buyer, you care.

What do you tell the club when you can't get more uniforms as teams change, new players are added and kids grow - all the normal progressions of a soccer club? Just think about it: you only need one more uniform to complete the team, but you can't get it. Are you going to have kids run on and off the field switching jerseys? What can you do to get another one? Absolutely nothing. It is a joke. So, what do you have to do: buy something else. Not so bad for those supplying the uniforms, huh?

Willing to take the risk and still want to buy into the marketing message?

Here's the catch: order the "hot" product where brands tell you they have "deep" inventory levels and everyone around the country follows suit and is ordering that product too. It goes the fastest because it is the most popular. A bad situation. Or - order a lesser desired style that is supported by less inventory. You run the risk of them not having enough or an accountant deciding that the sales aren't there to profitably support the uniform, so he discontinues it. It means you can never get more - there are no more boats coming from overseas. An even worse situation.

Just like everyone knows a car will require replacement parts, a soccer club will require replacement jerseys, shorts and socks. Given what you now know, are you still going to buy the car with a great veneer finish and no engine to drive it?

I know you wouldn't buy that car. Neither would I. It is ridiculous once you know, but watch how many people commit the same mistake again and again and again. Imagine if our soccer players acted that way on the field - how would you react?

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## **Why didn't my Vendor Tell me about this?**

If you're buying from a soccer store, just look around and you'll have your answer. Brands like adidas and Nike dominate the soccer industry footwear market (+/- 75% market share) and continue to jam sales programs down the throats of store owners. Sales programs tell stores what product you must buy from them and in what quantities. They demand more and more shelf space and force owners to buy more and more product. It is endless. And, it has nothing to do with what is good or healthy for the stores or consumers - just what is good for them. By buying into these programs and filling their stores with adidas and Nike, stores get additional discounts on the product they purchase. And, as a result, are forced to sell you into product where they make the most money - not what makes the most sense for your team.

Do they care if you get screwed on your uniforms?

Down deep, not really. Sure, it causes some discomfort for them and extra stress when they tell you the uniform isn't available. BUT, they rationalize it by saying, "Darn that adidas or darn that Nike." You watch: they'll never say to you, "I should have told you NOT to buy that uniform. I knew this could have happened." Won't happen in a million years.

At the end of the day, salespeople know you need - must have - require - can't live without - and can't play - without soccer uniforms. Selling you into product that, "Well, hey, that is what you asked for", absolves them of properly informing you and servicing your account. And, not to mention, if you can't get more of what you currently need, what do you have to do? Buy more. That is right - spend more of your hard earned money. Who wins by not informing you? Brands and salespeople. Who loses? Parents and players who have to pay for new product. Instead of more training time or better fields or more tournaments - read: better opportunities for players- you have to replace equipment - and that just burns me up!

Ask a team salesperson about the risks you face when buying branded product. Ask them if they enjoy dealing with the branded companies. Ask them what guarantees they'll make on behalf of the brands - or if the brands make any guarantees. Ask them if worrying about product availability keeps them awake at night. Instead of counting sheep, these salespeople count orders that should be arriving. Knowing what you now know, you won't be surprised at the answers.

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# FOCUS ON THE ONLY THING THAT REALLY MATTERS

(In fact, it is the only thing that matters!)

## ON-TIME DELIVERY

No one will care that you picked the "coolest" uniform if players don't have it for opening day. It is the moment of truth: brand can't replace it, style can't replace it, fancy printing can't replace it. You need 'em by kickoff.

Have the uniforms for kickoff...

And no one will notice (or thank you)

Get the uniforms there late...

And everyone will know your name, number & address

(some may send you a bill for the "damage" you've done to their little Billy or Suzie - get a grip people!)

Just remember:

**"The Bitterness of poor quality or an untimely delivery remains long after the sweetness of low price is gone!"**

Speak with your vendor or (multiple vendors) about different companies or styles they recommend and why they recommend that company or style. Don't just pick a style and "go with it." Not all styles or companies are created equal. Keep the focus on the end goal: on-time delivery when you need it.

## **Before you Start your Quest**

Before you begin, there are certain questions you need to answer. An intelligent start is to schedule a Saturday lunch with the previous buyer (even pick-up the check as it will be well worth your while). Ask for his or her notes about purchasing. Since history repeats itself in soccer registration (and buying), looking at past year's performance will give you a good indication of what you're going to need to do. This little bit of preparation is like doing your wind sprints before the season - only a whole lot easier. Calling a vendor before you have these questions answered doesn't make a whole lot of sense because we won't know where to begin to guide you. Different clubs will have different needs - not everything is created equal.

- What does the club currently own? Take a full inventory of the clubhouse (or garage)
- How many players are in the club: travel side? recreational side?
- What do you need to purchase?
- Apparel: full uniforms or jerseys only?
- How many will you need?
- Do you need youth and adult sizing of the same style?
- What are the club colors?
- What is the budget?
- Field Equipment: Goals, nets, balls, cones, corner flags
- Coaches Gear: Bags, First Aid Kits, Clipboards, whistles
- What is the total budget for all purchases?
- What did the club purchase last year? Was the buyer happy with the service? Did the vendor make it easy for the buyer?
- What other vendors did the last buyer speak with?

## **Time Saving Tips**

- Register Early - parents will register when you tell them to and not a minute sooner
- Hold Tryouts early - form teams promptly
- Use a standard sizing matrix to size the players - use the extra jerseys you order to accommodate the few small kids and few big kids; otherwise you'll lose control to the coaches for "sizing"
- Buying as a club saves coaches or team parents tons of time
- Limit the number of buyers on your committee. Make it a committee of 3 and make your decision when the other two are absent!
- Think forward about other needs the club will have and address them (home and away jerseys; new corner flags - who steals them anyway?; bags, warm-ups, etc.)
- If you are printing sponsors on jerseys, use full front, block art sponsors only
- Select a vendor who will guide you through the process not just take your order! It doesn't make a whole lot of sense to spend time researching styles that aren't available in the sizing or colors you'll require. Use an expert to help you!

## **Money Saving Tips**

- Buy as a club instead of team by team - you'll read all the reasons why on the next slide
- Buy full uniforms for your players. Not only does it look great, but you'll get a bulk purchase price instead of buying shorts and socks at full retail. Plus, they'll all look different - it is called a "uniform" for a reason
- Buy extras for the club when you make the bulk purchase. You save on printing setup fees, the extra shipping and will take advantage of the bulk pricing. On any purchase over 100 uniforms, we recommend that you purchase 7%-10% additional. Why? You're going to end up ordering them anyway - you watch.
- Print your sponsors locally. This will give you the control of having the uniforms when you need them as you continue to solicit sponsors up to the last minute.
- Print sponsors as full front sponsors in block letters. Don't waste your time running around trying to get business cards and stationary. Go get more sponsors!
- Buy a style that you know you can get more. It just makes sense to protect your club's investment

# **BULK PURCHASING: SAVE AND**

If your club is currently purchasing "jerseys only" or if you are allowing teams to order on their own, you are missing a significant advantage of being a club:

- Bulk Purchase = More Efficiency & Purchasing Power = Better Pricing = Money and Time Saved! Nirvana.
- Club concern over "increased fees" is unwarranted. Clubs that purchase jerseys only in the spirit of "keeping fees low" force parents to run around town to buy shorts and socks at full retail price (read: more time & more expensive). You can actually save them money by charging just a little bit more in the beginning and consolidating your purchase. Parents are spending the money anyway - why not save them a few dollars and the hassle?
- Uniform means just that - a great club look for every player and every team; this simple decision can take your club from a club of "individuals" to a more united club with real spirit

# **PROBLEMS YOU'LL ENCOUNTER AND SOLUTIONS**

## **Problem #1: "Availability"**

Buying soccer uniforms is a tricky business; just because you can see it in a catalog doesn't mean that you can actually buy it. Say What? That's right - we live in the days of imported product, so unless a product is produced domestically, you run the risk of a product not being in-stock or "available for sale" when you need it. And, the next time a boat is arriving with your particular style, color and size might be months away. Rest assured, Murphy's Law rules: it will always be "out of stock" when you need it most.

### **Solution #1: Order Early, Order Extras, Order Domestic**

**Order Early:** If your club makes the decision to buy from brands that import, order as early as humanly possible. Remember, everyone plays soccer - and needs uniforms - at the same time of year. If you don't order early, you run the risk of not getting what you need. The Fall window is wide open on May 15th and slowly closes every day as you get closer to August 15th - waiting means you may be on the outside looking in.

**Order Extras:** Think you only need "x" number of uniforms? Guess again. When you are ordering, always order a few extras for add-on players, guest players and players that lose their uniforms. Typically, clubs should order 7-10% more than they anticipate needing. You'll gain bulk pricing, avoid any surcharges and save on extra shipping (or expedited shipping) by purchasing extras with your bulk order - plus you'll have them exactly when you need them!

**Order domestic:** Consider ordering from companies that produce their product in North America. Given a relatively small amount of time, these companies will be able to respond to your inventory needs at a far faster rate (days or weeks rather than months) than companies who import from overseas. With domestic producers, there is always a chance to get what you need no matter how ridiculous the request.

## **Problems and Solutions – Part II**

### **Problem #2: "Life Span"**

The "Life Span" of a uniform refers to how long a brand projects keeping a particular style in its line. This is only a projection. Life spans are ultimately decided upon by the company's own accountants. They make decisions based upon what is (and isn't) selling and will discontinue a uniform despite what you've been promised. In one fell decision by an accountant, a club's significant uniform investment may need to be made again far before you budgeted that money! If you expect to keep a uniform for more than one season (read: almost every travel club in the country), ask the vendor about the "Life Span" of your jerseys. If they don't know what you mean, RUN AWAY - RUN AWAY!

### **Solution #2: Check-in, None or Order Vertical**

**Check-in:** Call your vendor to see if there has been a change in the status of your uniform (November and April as this coincides with the unveiling of future new products). A great vendor will know the client's uniform expectations and will call you first. At that point, the only solution you can seek is to project out your needs and to immediately order the uniforms that the company has available. If you do, you may be able to salvage another season out of the uniforms; if you don't, other clubs (with their good vendors) are going to buy the remaining inventory so that there will be no more "available." Forever and ever and ever

**None:** When a brand is importing product and makes this decision, typically there is no begging or pleading or yelling that can help you. I've only seen this decision reversed twice in my lifetime. You are the last person to know: The Sales Manager has yelled, the Sales Reps have yelled and jumped up and down and the vendor has yelled and screamed and threatened to cancel orders. It doesn't help. Just be aware that if you are buying from an importer, your club's investment is always at risk. For what? An image? A check mark emblazoned on a jersey - a few stripes?

Order Vertical: A vertical company actually produces the product they are selling you (whereas brands outsource the manufacturing to Far East factories). This means the company owns the raw materials (fabric, neck trims, collars, etc.) and the factory itself. These companies can always make you more. This is a direct contrast from brands who are at the mercy of the next shipment from overseas.

# **PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS - PART III**

## **Problem #3: Late Registrations/Tryouts**

Why is it that every club holds registration/ tryouts imminently before the start of the season? Are you willing to move back the start of your season due to the impossible and stressful timelines the club is placing everyone under? I didn't think so – at least I've never seen it happen. As a buyer, time is the enemy - you must fight to have as much time as possible!

### **Solution #3: Register Early**

The easiest solution - and yet the least used solution. Every kid should have the opportunity to play; early registration does not change your ability to include everyone. Your participation numbers are not going to change based around when you hold registration: Why not hold it as early as possible and avoid all the stress? There are always going to be late sign-ups – even if you held registration one hour before the season! You can have sign-ups early, form your teams and place 97% of your order before everyone else – it will be out of the way and you'll ensure your success. The last 3% of your order (late sign-ups and new additions) can be placed as you get closer to the season. Why risk not having uniforms for opening day for the few stragglers in every club? If you can set the start of a season (i.e. kids will want to play soccer again), you can project how many uniforms you'll need using history and an early registration and tryout date.

# Understanding the Role of Price

- Pricing is A consideration not THE consideration; to make price the most important factor negates all of the other reasons to buy
- Do you believe the vendor can deliver as promised? Remember, not all brands or vendors are created equal.
- Is the quality representative of the pricing being extended? If we only bought on price, we'd all use 29 cent toilet paper; no one does that!
- Consider price in the overall context: Clubs make decisions driven by the price difference of a cup of coffee (or less!). Realize the difference per unit (price of a cup of coffee) compared to the overall magnitude of your decision (thousands of dollars for the entire purchase). Are you still confident in your purchase?
- Make sure you understand - and ask about - all of the "hidden" or "other" costs
  - Shipping
  - How do the uniforms arrive? Will you need to sort them?
  - Are the uniforms sorted by team to save volunteer hours?
  - Cost of artwork setups
  - Cost of printing
  - Everything else...ask, ask, ask!

When making a price comparison, consider the final cost after the other costs. Don't get hung up on a cheap jersey or uniform price only to realize that when it is all said and done (add up all the other costs) that what you are spending is more than other more prudent options. Take your purchase to the bottom line in order to make a proper comparison.

# **Help! I'm Holding Dynamite**

My Uniforms aren't here and I don't know what to do!

Even if you've run the "playbook" correctly, mistakes can happen and companies change direction and discontinue product, boats sink on the high seas from the Far East and product gets held-up. Of course, it always happens to your product!

1. Take a deep breath and relax; thank goodness, no one has ever died as a result of not having a uniform. I once played in white Hanes undershirts purchased at K-Mart fifteen minutes before a game (our opponent had the same exact jersey and we didn't have a second jersey). We creatively used a black sharpie to write our numbers on the back. Despite conventional wisdom, it is the player that makes the jersey - not the other way around. And, yes, amazingly, we won 2-1!
2. Consult with your vendor to assess the situation; is the delay short-term (you'll have them next week) or long-term (your uniforms sank aboard the ship)
3. Resolve the immediate need first
  - a. Travel/Club solution: Purchase t-shirts in your opposite or away color and put a number on the back; great for tournament use or as a makeshift second jersey
  - b. Recreational: Use pinnies to differentiate teams; play smaller sided games if you don't have enough pinnies and rotate the kids through the game
4. Long-term Delay
  - a. Who is responsible? Based on your assessment, consider a change in style, brand or vendor that can deliver in an "emergency" manner
  - b. Worst-case scenario: Look-up "Screen Printer" in your local phone book and buy t-shirts that will get you through the situation until you can re-group and re-consider at your next Board Meeting

## **How to Come Out Unscathed in the Buying Process (or less bloody!)**

- Buy from a vendor you trust who will guide you to meet your needs
- Order early - beat the rush for uniforms & equipment
- Order extras - "better to have and not need than need and not have"
- Order vertical - a vertical company controls its own manufacturing and can help you fulfill your needs - there is always a chance to get what you need, no matter how ridiculous your request

## **TotallySoccer.com – “An Easier Way to Buy Uniforms”**

Our unique experience in the marketplace enables us to help you be successful in the ordering process: we have selected vendors who have proven track records and are vertical manufacturers. We could represent a number of brands - we choose not to because we like to sleep comfortably at night. You will too!

We won't take on a project unless we can deliver it on your expected timeline. If we can't deliver, we'll let you know right up front when we can deliver it. If that timeline works for you, we'll proceed with the order. And, if it doesn't work for you, we'll recommend other sources you should consider.

Selling uniforms and equipment is all we do all day long - it is what we love to do. We don't have the normal distractions: things like customers walking in and out of our store; reps coming to show us product; orders to be placed to fill (or re-fill) our retail shelves or UPS at the back door with 100 boxes to be unloaded. It allows us the ability to completely service - and anticipate your needs.

We would love to speak with you regarding your opportunity and how we can save you time, money and tons of stress. The call normally takes about six and three-quarter minutes (including a joke), is totally free and heck, we're even good, fun people to chat with. Please call us toll-free at 888-660-8326. Or visit us at: [www.TotallySoccer.com](http://www.TotallySoccer.com)