



Crane Authentication™

Case Study
Sports & Apparel

The Scottish Football Association

Safeguarding licensing income and preserving fan experience for supporters of Scottish football

Founded in 1873, the Scottish Football Association (FA) is the second oldest football association in the world. Crane Authentication is the exclusive supplier of brand authentication labels to the Scottish FA, protecting its official licensed merchandise, providing a range of sustainable merchandising components, and supplying data to help gain visibility into their licensing program.

Challenge

Scottish football has a long and proud history. Its national side has contributed some memorable appearances at international tournaments and club sides have won top European honors. The Scottish Football Association (FA) is the governing body for football in Scotland, with responsibility to promote and develop the game from grass roots to the professional game. More than 14,000 female players are now registered, and a successful women's national team signals a new era of expansion.

Legendary Scotland and Celtic manager Jock Stein famously said, "football is nothing without fans". As with any football association, fans continue to contribute an important source of income that serves to fund the development of Scottish football. Commercial activities at the Scottish FA include the iconic home of Scottish football, Hampden Park, but merchandising plays an equally important role.

Licensing a sporting icon, in particular one that represents the identity of the national sides, allows a passionate fanbase to connect with their teams

and heroes. These licensing programs require a brand authentication approach that gives fans the confidence they are buying genuine merchandise, as well as protecting the rights of licensees, across a wide range of products from socks to scarves.

But any industry worth 30 billion dollars a year is liable to come to the attention of counterfeiters and sports merchandise licensing is no exception. As such, brands such as the Scottish FA must contend with adversaries that are more determined and creative than ever, not just opportunistic threats. As in other industries, sustainability has also become the new normal for sports merchandising, with fans expecting responsible approaches to packaging and products, as they do in other categories.

Reconciling these challenges with operational and commercial realities requires practical solutions, to preserve the integrity and consistency of the licensed brand, whilst recognizing the interests of licensees. And all the while meeting the expectations of consumers that are, above all, loyal fans.

Solution

The Scottish FA turned to Crane Authentication, as a leading provider of sports licensing and brand authentication solutions, to provide a range of product merchandising and authentication measures:



Crane Authentication Protect: a product security label that incorporates optical technologies to secure against counterfeit and enable consumer authentication, along with serialization data



Crane Authentication Enhance: a range of distinctive hangtags, woven labels, and merchandising elements to provide a consistent brand look and feel and add more instinctive authenticity to products

Crane Authentication licensing and supply chain software also provides reporting, using data from the serialized labels, which is provided to the Scottish FA to help oversee licensee activities and reconcile royalties.

With a long heritage in optical security and design, as well as an unrivaled customer base in sports, Crane Authentication combines technology and creativity. Its portfolio of visual security features offers customers like the Scottish FA a range of options to suit their brand characteristics, as well as addressing more practical factors such as flexibility around order volumes. For the Scottish FA, it meant a secure holographic label, featuring the Scottish FA emblem, that also incorporates serialization data.

As a leading authority, the Scottish FA are committed to playing their part in sustainability, publishing best practice guidelines in 2021 and committing to reduced carbon emissions along with other key measures. To support these goals, Crane Authentication has brought eco product options and experience gained in working with leading brands and sustainability proponents from the sports apparel industry.

Merchandise hang tags and packaging items are made from FSC certified, 100% recycled board and paper and printed with chemical free, organic, recyclable inks. These provide licensees with preapproved designs to simplify adoption by new licensees and aid in brand consistency. Woven badges, sewn-on or heat applied to apparel and accessories, are made from 100% recycled polyester yarn that can later be recycled along with the product itself.

Results

National sports associations, such as the Scottish FA, face competing demands from fans, licensees, and other stakeholders. Effective, responsible merchandising programs connect fans to their national team but also generate the funds to further the game they love. Bringing robust brand protection to these programs serves to protect fans and funding from unauthorized products and poor-quality counterfeits, whilst the use of environmentally sensitive materials protects the planet. By taking a responsible approach, the Scottish FA and fans of Scottish football are safeguarding their game.

“Working with Crane Authentication has given me comfort and control – comfort in that I can easily identify potential infringing products quickly and control over the products my licensees are purchasing from Crane Authentication, from swing tickets to holograms. The team at Crane Authentication have been excellent to work with and I would recommend their services to any other brand licensors.”

Steven Romeo, Head of Retail and Kit at The Scottish FA

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