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Dyehard Makes Inroads in College Space

By Michael Smith

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Dyehard Fan Supply didn't exist six months ago. Now the online and at-event retailer owns the merchandising rights to 12 college properties.

The business launched in July with the backing of Teall Capital and wound up winning five of the six properties where it bid on the rights, according to CEO Rex Hough. Its other college rights were obtained through acquisitions.



Photo: dyehard fan supply

Among the schools where Dyehard now owns merchandising rights are Arkansas, Auburn, Columbia, North Carolina, Pittsburgh and Rutgers. Not all of the rights are the same from campus to campus. Dyehard owns all of the retail rights, including online, brick-and-mortar and at-event, at Arkansas and Auburn. At North Carolina, Dyehard has the at-event retail rights only, but that has given Dyehard the opportunity to transform all of the points-of-sale at the 21,750-seat Smith Center.

Looking ahead to 2019, Hough said he'd like to add 10 properties. The big prize in college will be Texas, which is preparing a request for proposal on its in-venue and online merchandising rights. That likely will put Dyehard head to head for those rights against industry leader Fanatics, as well as other potential suitors.

Hough said he was especially proud that sales at Arkansas during the 2018 season exceeded the previous season despite an average attendance drop from 67,752 to 61,291 amid the Razorbacks' 2-10 campaign. The difference, he said, was more variety and a better shopping experience.

"The fans who were at the game really spent," Hough said.

Outside of college, Dyehard made several inroads in horse racing, picking up the merchandising rights at the Kentucky Derby, Preakness, World Equestrian Games and Pegasus World Cup, the richest horse race in the world.

As part of the build-out of Dyehard, Hough said the company has brought on two regional vice presidents who will give Dyehard more of a consistent presence on campuses where it has rights. Both Jon Sirico and Tyler Stinnett have prior experience working in college athletic departments.

Dyehard Fan Supply

What it does: Official retailer specializing in team store, online and in-venue merchandise sales

Headquarters: Winston-Salem, N.C.

Top executives: CEO Rex Hough; Finance Director Ryan O'Callaghan; EVP Jim Decker; EVP Ben Erps; EVP John Knudson; VP Anna Kolda

College clients: Arkansas, Auburn, Columbia, North Carolina (above), Pittsburgh, Rutgers, Big East, Arizona Bowl, Independence Bowl, Military Bowl, Music City Bowl, Redbox Bowl