

Movers & Shakers

Jordan O'Sullivan, managing director of Sportech



Jordan O'Sullivan and Gary Jermyn

When did you get into the sports trade and why?

During my school years, my only interest was sport and I played on every team in every sport available. The classroom was really not for me. After school, it made perfect sense for me to try to secure a job in the sports industry. I was lucky enough that an opportunity presented itself with HI-TEC as a sales representative in late 1989.

Who has been the biggest influence on your career?

Sales is in my family, so my grounding came from there, but from the start I always respected Frank Van Wezel, who built HI-TEC from nothing to what it is today. Also in HI-TEC, Ricky Chandler allowed me to just go out and sell without inhibitions.

Since February 1999 and the formation of Sportech, I have been lucky enough to have Gary Jermyn as my business partner. He is an accountant and provides Sportech with invaluable knowledge from his other business experience. Thankfully, Gary was one of those guys in the classroom, so I think between us we have made a good team over the years. We appreciate that we each possess different talents, and have great respect for what the other brings to the business. I think that respect has stood us in good stead over the last 11 years at Sportech.

What other brands do you admire and why?

When it comes to sports companies, Asics would be my number one. For years they have continued to lead a very competitive field by a long way.



It is a credit to them to launch one new technology after the next and stay at the top for so long. Through their consistently great product they have built a following so loyal that it is not matched by any other product group in the sports trade.

As a non-sports brand, and as an Irishman who samples the product from time to time, I admire what Guinness have done over the last 250 years, which has done wonders for Ireland both home and abroad.

Can you tell us about Sportech?

Sportech was founded in February 1999 by Gary Jermyn and myself. We have built a solid team around us and in 2007 moved to a state-of-the-art warehouse/showroom and office facility just outside Dublin. Our business model is a mixture of distributing brands for other companies and our own brands - the strategy being that the margin mix will be commercially viable. We carry a large range of product, from footwear through rainwear, bags, sports accessories and all shapes of balls, so it is fair to say we have something for almost everybody. In Ireland we deal with all of the multiples, but are mindful that our success has been built on our strong relationships with the independent trade in sports, outdoor and footwear.

What brands do you distribute?

Ridge 53 bags comprising backpacks, holdalls, rucsacks and wheeled range; Ridge 53 rainwear, hats and accessories; McDavid supports; Mikasa; Regatta footwear; Commandos; Sportech accessories such as studs, laces, whistles and grips; and PureLime.

What products have been your best-sellers in the past 12 months?

What drives our business is our Ridge 53 bags and rainwear, and we have been delighted by the response that we have had to our new range of hoodies and track pants. Regatta

footwear and fleece jackets also went very well. McDavid neoprene and woven supports continued to be a solid seller for us. We were disappointed that Webb Ellis lost out on the Heineken Cup sponsorship as this was a strong brand for us, especially given the success of Leinster and Munster in recent years.

How has trade been in Ireland during the past 12 months?

It has been a challenge for everybody. The general feeling seems to be anywhere from 15-30 per cent down on the previous year. The global downturn has hit Ireland worse than other countries. However, I personally think if trade can get through to April 2010 things will start to look brighter after that.

What plans have you got for 2010?

More of the same. I think keeping our cost base down and buying smarter is the way forward. We would dearly love to find a distributor for Ridge 53 in the UK. We had a rep before and product sold in and out well, but our carriage costs to the UK were prohibitive. We can send one pallet for the same cost as one carton, so we need to ship in bulk to be cost competitive.

We need a company with a sales force already calling on the trade who wants to add to its armoury a really cool range of bags that are great quality, well priced and with distinctive patterns. We also want to find other leading brands to distribute in Ireland, so if there are any brands that want a proven successful distributor, give us a call. **SI**

