



# THERE IS A JERSEY FOR THAT

Whether for St. Patrick's Day, *Fifty Shades of Grey* or *Star Wars*, Scott Gollnick makes jerseys fit any theme

**N**O TWO DAYS ARE EVER THE same for Scott Gollnick. That's because no two jerseys his company makes are ever alike.

Gollnick is VP of sales and marketing for OT Sports, a

Burlington, N.C., company that specializes in producing theme night jerseys for minor league teams. From special children's hospital charity jerseys that feature the art of a patient, to *Game of Thrones*

jerseys celebrating HBO's hit TV show, OT has designed and produced those and everything in between.

Gollnick founded OT Sports in 1992 with his brother, Chris. At the time, North American customers believed the heavier the jersey the better it was. Traditionally, all crests, lettering and numbers are stitched on after the jersey itself has been put together.

OT, however, specialized in sublimated jerseys, in which all the artwork, lettering and numbering is bonded into the fabric. Sewing on panels isn't necessary. "Sublimation was already commonplace in Eu-

## RUN OF THE MILL

OT Sports' facility is based in an old textile factory town in North Carolina.

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**WE'VE SEEN A HUGE SWING IN HOLIDAY AND POP CULTURE THEMES**

— Scott Gollnick

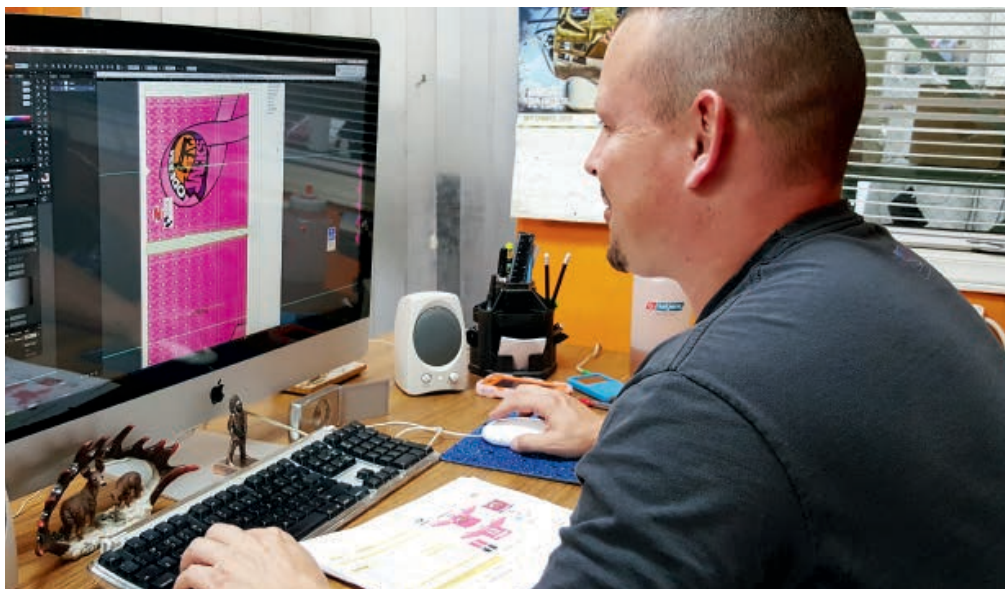
rope back then," Gollnick said. "That's where I became familiar with the technology in uniforms. It was not at all prominent in the U.S. The market is very traditional."

Sublimated jerseys are more durable because the heat-ing process bonds the ink to polyester fibers, creating crisp, photo-quality designs that don't bleed, crack, peel or tear.

The Gollnick brothers needed just a year to gain a foothold with North American hockey customers. (Cracking baseball took another seven years.) Now, their company works with more than 100 junior and minor pro teams, including those in the CHL, ECHL and AHL. Last season alone, OT Sports produced 200 special jerseys for team theme nights, ranging from St. Patrick's Day promotions to breast cancer awareness to a jersey celebrating the popularity of the book and film *Fifty*



SCOTT GOLLNICK



## Shades of Grey.

With the Dec. 18 release of *Star Wars: Episode VII: The Force Awakens*, more ideas are coming fast and furious. One example being floated is a home-and-home concept for archrivals, with one team wearing Jedi Knight jerseys and the other wearing Imperial Stormtrooper sweaters. Gollnick expects *Star Wars* to be big all the way into the spring.

An order begins with a phone call from a team targeting a special event on its calendar. Teams get free art design services to give them the look they want that best coordinates with their event theme, though some teams have designs made internally or by an outside graphics company.

After OT designers create the initial mock-up, a back-and-forth goes on until the team settles on the final design. Then it's off to the presses. Another set of designers takes the final mock-up and creates large-format printouts that are cut and fed by hand into a sublimation machine that bonds the ink onto bolts of jersey fabric. The fabric is cut and stitched into proper jerseys by one crew of sewers, while another crew adds nameplates, patches and any other embellishments the team wants.

About a month after the team approved the design,

finished jerseys are boxed and shipped from OT's unassuming factory on the outskirts of Burlington. It's no coincidence the company is based in an old textile factory town. The locals know what they're doing, which is important given their typical workload. The growing demand for special jerseys has the company constantly running at full speed. "We average over



**“ THIS TECHNOLOGY WAS ALREADY COMMONPLACE IN EUROPE...BUT IT WASN'T PROMINENT IN THE U.S. THE MARKET IS VERY TRADITIONAL ”** – Scott Gollnick

100 orders in our backlog on any given week,” Gollnick said.

And the workload should only increase this season with a major trend Gollnick said he's witnessing. “We have seen a huge swing in special events from holiday themes to pop culture themes,” he said. “This swing produced about a 20-percent increase in theme jerseys in minor pro baseball, and we predict that same pattern to carry over into hockey.” – **CHRIS GIGLEY**

## KITSCH IS COOL

From movies to patriotism, themed jerseys abound to attract fans to minor pro games.



BAKERSFIELD CONDORS

GREENVILLE WARRIORS

## NO IDEA TOO CRAZY

Gollnick's crew works with amateur and minor pro teams to bring their theme dreams to life.

