

Fanatics Acquires Italian Sports Retailer EPI

Jean E. Palmieri : 9-11 minutes : 05/04/2023

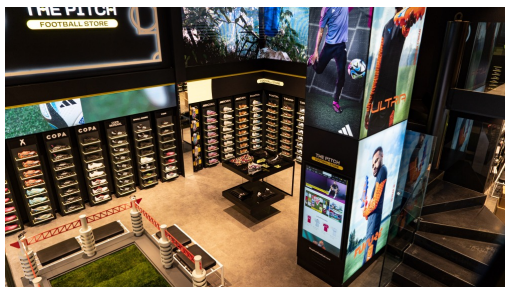
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Fanatics Expands International Footprint With Acquisition of Italian Sports Retailer EPI

The Milan-based firm operates e-commerce and physical stores for several Italian soccer clubs as well as the NBA.



The Pitch Football Store will also become part of the Fanatics family. *courtesy*

Fanatics is expanding its global reach.

On Wednesday, the digital sports platform completed an acquisition of EPI, a Milan-based sports retailer that operates the official online and retail stores of several top Italian [soccer](#) clubs and international sports brands.

Terms were not disclosed.

Now that the deal has been completed, EPI will soon be rebranded as Fanatics Italy. Current EPI owner Lorenzo Forte will continue to lead the business and will report to Chris Orton and Jack Boyle, global copresidents, direct to consumer, for Fanatics Commerce. In addition, EPI's 150-plus employees will be retained and join the Fanatics team.

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As part of the purchase, which was made with Industry 4.0 Fund, the private equity fund of the Quadrivio Group that was the majority owner of EPI, Fanatics will also acquire The Pitch Football Store, an omnichannel [soccer](#) retailer within the EPI family.

Founded in 1996 and based in Milan, EPI is an omnichannel licensed sports retailer that manages the official online and physical retail stores for Italian soccer clubs including AC Milan, Atalanta, Bologna, Fiorentina, Inter Milan, Juventus and Lazio as well as the Italian Football Federation FIGC.

The company also works closely with international brands and leagues including Nike, Adidas and Puma; it partners with Italian basketball team Olimpia Milano, and operates the NBA retail store in central Milan.

EPI's business capabilities include e-commerce operations, digital marketing and fulfillment, in-venue and physical retail store operations as well as buying, merchandising and staffing.

Over the past several years, Fanatics has been moving deeper into international markets. It has more than 60 offices, manufacturing and distribution facilities around the world and partnerships with a number of sports clubs and organizations including Paris Saint-Germain, Manchester United, Chelsea, Atletico Madrid, Formula 1, the International Olympic Committee, Tokyo Giants, UEFA, the England, Germany and Belgian National Football Teams and others.



EPI partners with many of Italy's top soccer clubs. *FABRIZIO FORTE*

This acquisition allows Fanatics to expand its reach in southern Europe and the company will integrate EPI's Italian soccer portfolio into its offerings.

"I am thrilled to welcome Lorenzo and the EPI team to Fanatics — we share an entrepreneurial mindset, a passion for delighting sports fans and a love for innovating for sports teams and leagues, which makes for an exciting future together," said Doug Mack, chief executive officer of Fanatics Commerce and vice chairman of Fanatics. "By combining EPI's local expertise and relationships in Italy with Fanatics' leading-edge capabilities and global reach, we are excited to accelerate business for EPI's current partners while further advancing our unrivaled offering for new global partners ahead."

Forte said: "Fanatics is one of the fastest growing and most exciting companies in sport and we are ready to tap into its increasingly global presence and bring a more extensive digital sports experience to global fans, both here in Italy and across the world."

Quadrivio Group acquired EPI in November of 2020 to establish its position in the e-commerce and sports retail arena, and in just over two years, the company increased its sales by about 125 percent to 45 million euros from 20 million euros in 2022, a spokesperson said. Profitability also more than doubled, with EBITDA rising to 4.5 million euros from 2 million euros in that same time frame.

According to Alessandro Binello, group CEO of Quadrivio Group, “The exit of EPI and its sale to an international industrial group confirms the strategic value of our investment and the great potential for the development and internationalization of Italian SMEs if adequately supported. This transaction demonstrates how private equity funds can produce strong returns for our investors while adding value for the portfolio firm.”

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