

Fanatics bolsters Italian presence with EPI acquisition

SportBusiness Staff

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Global sports merchandising company Fanatics has strengthened its position in the Italian market with the acquisition of EPI, which operates the official online and retail stores of several leading football clubs in the country.

Milan-based EPI, which will soon be rebranded as Fanatics Italy, lists Serie A clubs AC Milan, Atalanta, Bologna, Fiorentina, Inter Milan, Juventus and Lazio among its clients. It also provides retail services for the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) as well as basketball club Olimpia Milano and the NBA.

The deal was agreed with the Industry 4.0 Fund, a private equity fund belonging to alternative investment company Quadrivio Group. Quadrivio acquired EPI in November 2020.

In November 2021, EPI purchased Free Time Management Group from Calcioshop, an organisation specialising in football equipment that is now known as The Pitch. Fanatics' deal to buy EPI will also include the acquisition of The Pitch.

EPI will become part of the Fanatics Commerce division and all of its approximately 150 employees will continue reporting to chief executive Lorenzo Forte, who will now serve as chief executive of Fanatics Italy. Forte will report to Jack Boyle and Chris Orton, Fanatics Commerce's co-presidents for direct-to-consumer services.

EPI generated more than \$50m (€45.7m) in sales in 2022, according to the *Bloomberg* news agency.

Doug Mack, Fanatics Commerce chief executive and Fanatics vice-chairman, said: "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.

"By combining EPI's local expertise and relationships in Italy with Fanatic's leading-edge capabilities and global reach – we are excited to accelerate business for EPI's current partners while further advancing our unrivalled offering for new global partners ahead."

Forte added: "We're excited to join Fanatics, a global company with the experience of serving millions of sports fans from some of the biggest sports clubs and organisations in the world.

"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."

The acquisition bolsters Fanatics' presence in European football, with the company listing Paris Saint-Germain, Manchester United, Bayern Munich, Atlético Madrid and Uefa among its clients.

It also recently agreed a [landmark deal with the National Hockey League](#) and will replace Adidas as the organisation's official uniform supplier and receive on-shirt branding for the first time.

In recent years, Fanatics has expanded its model into key international markets through partnerships with the likes of Formula 1, the International Olympic Committee, the NFL, the NBA and the Australian Football League.

Fanatics recently added to its international football client-base by agreeing a new deal with the [Royal Belgian Football Association \(RBFA\)](#).

The long-term e-commerce and merchandising deal, running through the Uefa Euro 2024 and 2026 Fifa World Cup national team tournaments, means that Fanatics has become the exclusive operator for the official RBFA online store.

The deal was signed after Fanatics extended and expanded its agreement with the [German Football Association \(DFB\)](#). The deal, including DFB retail operations during both Uefa Euro 2024 and the 2026 Fifa World Cup, will see Fanatics retain exclusive global e-commerce rights with the federation and run the official DFB-Fanshop, as well as operating DFB on-site retail during Germany home games and DFB-Pokal finals.