

# EISCO Swings for the Fences

The maker of cleaning products for big leaguers targets a nationwide market

By João-Pierre S. Ruth

Cleaning-products maker Eastern Institutional Supply Co. (EISCO) of Toms River stepped up to the plate last week by making its line of professional sports-equipment cleansers available to online retailers. Called Clubhouse Kit, the potent

solutions are used by the New York Yankees, the Philadelphia Phillies and the rest of major league baseball to rid uniforms and equipment of stains caused by grass, blood, pine tar and other substances encountered on the playing field.

Clubhouse Kit is already on the shelves at Modell's stores, a New York City seller of athletic apparel, footwear >> Continued on page 8

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and sporting goods. Now EISCO wants to score with a broader segment of the consumer market by offering the products through Websites for Modell's, Dick's Sporting Goods, Sports Authority, Fogdog Sports and Sports Chalet.

U.S. customers have been stocking up on sports equipment, according to the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) in Mount Prospect, Ill. Combined sales of the three major components of the market—equip-

ment, footwear and clothing—rose to \$51.3 billion in 2005 from \$49.3 billion in 2004, says Larry Weindruch, director of communications for NSGA, a trade group for dealers and retailers serving sporting-goods vendors.

The toil and abuse athletes wreak upon their uniforms and protective gear creates a laundry nightmare. Every base stolen or tackle made on a muddy field grinds in resilient blotches that the average detergent can't easily cope with. To save money or to ensure prop-

er handling, teams may choose to launder the uniforms themselves rather than sending them to a service.

"Nowadays, because uniforms are made of products that don't have to be dry-cleaned, teams may throw them all in the washer," says Weindruch. Bleach may harm uniforms, so teams are always looking for alternatives to keep their equipment looking new. Clubhouse Kit's Grass & Blood Eliminator, for example, uses enzymes instead of bleach to remove stains.

Founded in 1963 as a janitorial supplies company for schools, nursing homes and commercial institutions, EISCO branched



Singer has big-time plans for his growing business.

into the sports arena a decade ago. "We had gotten a phone call from the Philadelphia Phillies for a product to remove grass stains," says Brad Singer, EISCO vice president of sales and marketing and son of company founder Howard Singer.

The Phillies next requested a product to remove pine tar. As word of the products spread among major and minor league teams, EISCO's orders increased. Local users include the Lakewood BlueClaws, the minor league affiliate of the Phillies. Today all major league baseball teams use products from EISCO to clean their uniforms and equipment.

Singer, 40, says the New York Yankees are the largest customer among the teams. Other

Every big league baseball team uses EISCO products to clean uniforms.

users include major league soccer teams. Singer says the products can work on gear used in activities such as camping as well.

EISCO also works with "team dealers," distributors that resell the products to college teams. Last year EISCO named its entire sports division Clubhouse Kit when it began selling products to consumers through Modell's.

The company generates \$1.5 million to \$2 million in annual revenue and is profitable, says Singer. Family-owned, it has a staff of seven and outsources manufacturing to a plant in Paterson.

Clubhouse Kit's products for consumers include Grass & Blood Eliminator and Clay Mate Clay Remover, both of which retail for \$7.99 for a one-pound jar. The Protective Head Gear Disinfectant sells for \$3.99 for a four-ounce bottle.

Singer is currently negotiating for in-store shelf space with a nationwide sporting goods chain. "If you walk into a sporting-goods store, you're not going to find products to clean with," says Singer. He's preparing to change that. ♦

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