



Marilyn Fitchett editor/591-2300

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Bad Boys' death greatly exaggerated?

By Noroen Fleck
special writer

Bad news is still good news for Athletic Supporter Ltd. of Farmington Hills.

Although sales of Detroit Pistons world championship T-shirts have fallen off since their peak shortly after the Pistons beat the Los Angeles Lakers for the NBA title, sales of Bad Boys shirts have increased, according to Sandy Berris, company vice president.

Undaunted by the death sentence given to the Bad Boys nickname by Piston captain Isiah Thomas, the company, which holds exclusive rights to the Bad Boys logo, will expand its marketing efforts by offering Bad Boys coffee mugs and water bottles. And it will start campaigning on Friday by providing retailers with free buttons bearing the plea, "Save Our Detroit Bad Boys."

The Bad Boy best-seller T-shirt is designed on black, a basketball with a skull and crossbones in the center, and the lettering — BAD BOYS — across the top. The T-shirt sells for approximately \$13 retail.

Employees are still working "around the clock" logging 75-hour workweeks. They'll get their first chance to spend some of their overtime pay this weekend when the company closes for four days with employees receiving Monday and Tuesday off as paid holidays.

Maybe then they'll be able to reflect on the Herculean task they performed.

"We're making as many as 15,000 T-shirts a day," said Bill Berris, president, at the height of the frenzy. "Everyone wants their goods the next day. Department stores are physically running here and picking up merchandise. Bad in this instance certainly means good."

Forty-eight hours after the championship, Berris was working six hours of sleep, trying to keep up with T-shirt demands from distributors. Demand will continue for at least a couple more weeks, Berris said.

So far, Sandy Berris' prediction of brisk sales despite Isiah Thomas' comments to President Bush during the team's visit to the White House last week have been correct. Thomas said the Bad Boys image is dead because the original Bad Boy, Rick Mahorn, is headed to the Minnesota Timberwolves as a result of the NBA expansion draft.

"We think to the fans the Pistons will always be the Detroit Bad Boys. The fans sort of gave them that name and image, and I don't think they want to give up on that," Sandy Berris said.

ASSISTANT PRODUCTION manager Debbie Bottomly clocked more than 80 hours in a recent workweek. She said employees are determined to meet all requests.

"I just keep seeing cases and cases of shirts," Bottomly said. "This is the first time this company has experienced this type of growth and the growth problems that come out of this."

"But I'm more concerned with

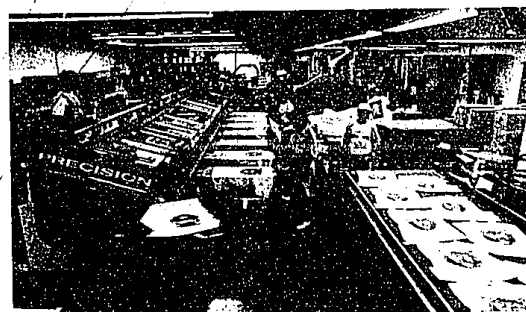


Bill Berris, president of Athletic Supporter Ltd., is standing in the showroom of his company wearing a

T-shirt with the Bad Boys logo that his company developed. Other Pistons T-shirts visible in the back-

ground also are designed and manufactured at the Farmington Hills facility.

staff photos by RANDY DORST



This is a portion of the assembly line at the Athletic Supporter Ltd., a Farmington Hills company that produces T-shirts with Detroit Pistons logos and designs.

getting the work done and making sure things are running." Bottomly said. "It's like taking a puzzle and making all the pieces fit."

With a shortage of skilled workers, Athletic Supporter Ltd.'s 40 full-time employees were joined by 20 new

hires, Berris said.

Todd Robinson, screen printer, expects to work 80 hours during each week until business slows down.

"The monotony gets to you," Robinson said. "But I hope we can get something like this going again in

the future. Just one design and you can make \$1 million."

"How well a team does definitely affects the business," Bill Berris said. "Michigan has had a fantastic year with the Red Wings winning the National Hockey League Norris Di-

vision and now the Pistons. Sales have skyrocketed. We have had a 400 percent increase."

BERRIS AND art director Robin Brant designed the Bad Boys logo in November 1988 and began to market the design on T-shirts.

"We were sitting around trying to come up with something," Berris recalled. "We were thinking of this tough, serious image."

"I know a lot of the players and they are tough, strong winners. This Bad Boy thing got right behind them."

AS MUCH as the design has complemented the team and pleased Detroiters, Berris' marketing strategy does not limit the Bad Boy logo to the Pistons or to the Motor City.

"Initially it was meant for Detroit," Berris said. "But now it has gone nationwide. We're selling Bad Boys stuff all over the world."

Athletic Supporter Ltd. also manufactures a series of character designs for Pistons Joe Dumars, Bill

Laimbeer, John Salley and Dennis Rodman and Rick Mahorn.

Other championship T-shirts include "We Beat LA," "Bad Boy NBA Finals 1989," "CityScene," and "The Sweep."

Berris started Athletic Supporter Ltd. in 1978 designing full body imprints, which graphically illustrate the anatomy and are marketed for the medical industry. Another popular design is the tuxedo shirt.

Athletic Supporter Ltd. is licensed with the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, the Detroit Tigers and the Red Wings.

The company also distributes jackets, caps, sportswear, sweats and pants, with distributors as far away as Hong Kong and Europe.

And although Athletic Supporter is still hoping the Tigers catch fire, workers have begun working on new Red Wings designs.

Anyone for a Berris Federko T-shirt?

Marilyn Fitchett contributed to this story.

What to save, where to store it

You've just been accepted for a new job. Your employer asks you to report to work with your Social Security card, Opa. You can't remember if it's in that manila envelope in your desk or in the shoe box at the bottom of your closet. The Farmington Hills-based Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants believes you have a record-keeping problem.

Every day, in every city, people are thrown into a state of panic when asked to produce anything from an original birth certificate to documentation supporting tax deductions. The answer to such problems is simple: Get out of the shoe box and into the file cabinet.

Organized records can make life a lot simpler and, in the long run, less costly. Efficient record keeping can help you track investments, support insurance claims, protect your family's financial security, shave hours off your tax preparation time, cut your tax bill and make it more difficult for the Internal Revenue Service to disallow your tax deductions.

Considering the results of good record keeping, the means can be quite simple. First, invest in a safe deposit box or a fireproof filing cabinet to safeguard your permanent records and those papers that would be difficult to replace. Don't let the cost of a safe deposit box dissuade you from renting one. As long as you use the box to store papers related to

practically speaking

your investments, the fee is deductible as a miscellaneous expense, subject to limitations.

EXAMPLES OF ITEMS that should be kept in a secure location include documents concerning how much you pay to purchase and improve your home, forms indicating the amount of your non-deductible Individual Retirement Account contributions and photographs or a video inventory of valuables in your home (for insurance purposes). An unsigned copy of your will, a letter of instructions listing the location of your original will and any vital records or phone numbers a beneficiary may need if you become severely disabled or die should be stored in a fireproof container at home rather than a safe deposit box — which may be sealed after an owner's death.

Your next priority is weeding through your other more temporary papers. Start by tossing any papers that are unnecessary, such as cash register receipts for small, daily purchases. The simplest guideline is: If you can't use the document now, during an audit, after a casualty,

when making investment decisions, or after selling your house, you probably don't need it. If you need additional guidance on which items fall into these categories, consult your CPA.

Other temporary papers, such as credit card bills or receipts for withdrawals from a bank, should be kept long enough to back up your monthly statements.

As you sort through your papers, devise a meaningful filing system. Some people merely separate their papers into those related to income and those related to expenses. A more efficient system is to establish distinct categories, such as tax materials, insurance information, investment records and homeowner documents.

IF YOU NEED help in organizing your tax records, review your most recent tax return for clues on what information you should have on hand. Remember, you should be able to document every item listed on the return, including all sources of income and any tax-deductible expenses. Most tax records — includ-

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