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BUSINESS

Shirt Happens

Local business hits a home run with Bryce Harper T-shirts

By Kevin Tustin
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CLIFTON HEIGHTS » Bryce Harper already is proving to be a home run for one borough business.

American Marketing can't print T-shirts fast enough to satisfy demand for the shirts imprinted with the likeness of the top free agent in baseball, who last week signed a 13-year deal with the Phillies that will pay him \$330 million, richest contract in baseball history.

Round and round the T-shirts go on a large machine that looks like a manufacturer's merry-go-round, only the decorative horses are replaced with T-shirt-covered trays attached to arms full of silk screens for printing.

Blank, red T-shirts are flung onto the machine and a minute later a number of inks are applied to it. A few seconds later it is pulled off the machine as a perfectly created, licensed tee for Bryce Harper, the latest superstar to arrive in the world of sports-crazed

Philadelphia.

More than 20,000 of these shirts can be made in one day for Fans Only LLC at American Marketing Company, the Clifton Heights-based firm that has started to make the latest piece of must-have Philadelphia sports merchandise since Monday morning. American Marketing Manager Mike Mongiello said the company finalized the contract to make the shirts over the weekend.

The Harper tee's are a hot ticket item since the 26-year-old outfielder signed his contract last week with the Phillies after a successful seven-year run with the Washington Nationals that included a National League MVP award. Forman Mills, Clothes Quarters and Amazon are three options for Phillies fans to pick up the shirts, but more stores are in talks with American Marketing to carry the merchandise.

"It's good to be part of the community," said American Marketing's Account Manager Chris Mongiello about the company's involvement with the Philadelphia sports scene in this way.



KEVIN TUSTIN - MEDIANEWS GROUP

A newly printed Bryce Harper T-shirt waits to be packaged up for retail at American Marketing in Clifton Heights.

Philadelphia sports scene in this way.

"The Philadelphia community can get hyped up, pumped up," with Harper on the roster, Chris added. "It's great to see the Phillies get back."

Harper is not the first licensing contract for the

business, which regularly prints shirts for players across a number of Philadelphia teams, including in just the past few years Carlos Ruiz, Shane Victorino and Aaron Nola for the Phillies, the offensive blockers of the Philadelphia E-

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KEVIN TUSTIN - MEDIANEWS GROUP

Brothers Mike Mongiello and Chris Mongiello hold up two of the tens of thousands of Bryce Harper shirts American Marketing has already produced this week. Mike and Chris serve as manager and accounts manager for American Marketing, respectively.



KEVIN TUSTIN - MEDIANEWS GROUP

The shirts get a short trip through a heater to set the inks as soon as the printing is completed.

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Shirt

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gles in the 2004 Super Bowl, and even helping out with orders for the Baltimore Ravens during their 2013 Super Bowl appearance.

American Marketing also created Zach Ertz and Underdog shirts for the Super Bowl-winning Eagles last year.

After last year's victory, Eagles fans immediately flooded their local stores to grab as much merchandise as they could, snapping up shirts, hats, sweatshirts and banners with that ever-elusive Super Bowl Championship finally emblazoned on homegrown gear.

American Marketing is in the business of creating merchandise that will serve as a testament to great sports achievements, and people run to get theirs when their teams are riding on a high.

Doing that sort of business, according to Mike Mongiello, Chris' brother and manager of the business, changes it up a bit for



KEVIN TUSTIN - MEDIANEWS GROUP

The colors of the shirt get added on with each new screen it goes under. This one still has a few more colors to go.

the company, which also does embroidery work and other apparel services for corporate clients.

"It's something to be proud of," he said of the merchandise he produces. "It's something to do for the city you live in. At the bar, the mall or the park you see

it everywhere."

Wearing the merchandise is a sign of Philadelphia pride of the ride-or-die fans who follow the highs and lows of the biggest sports teams: the Eagles, Phillies, Flyers and Sixers.

"All four teams are capable," said Chris. "Everyone could

win, it would be good to see."

As the Phillies continue their spring training regimen in Clearwater, the hot factory floor of American Marketing will keep turning out the Harper shirts, just as fast as their silk screening merry-go-round can produce them.



KEVIN TUSTIN - MEDIANEWS GROUP

Bill McGroarty and Anthony Sulpizio hold up one of the new Bryce Harper T-shirts at American Marketing in Clifton Heights.



KEVIN TUSTIN - MEDIANEWS GROUP

Hot and fresh off the presses, the shirts make their way to get stickered with an official licensing logo for Fans Only LLC. In the background is where blank shirts get printed.

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