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DOW JONES	S&P 500	NASDAQ	CRUDE OIL	10-YR. NOTE	GOLD	SILVER	COPPER	EURO
24,189.45	2,642.19	7,069.03	\$66.82	2.79%	\$1,356.50	\$16.738	\$3.1120	\$1.2362
▼ 218.55	▼ 14.68	▼ 25.27	▲ \$1.31	▼ 0.01	▲ \$14.50	▲ \$0.172	▼ \$0.0190	▲ \$0.0001

Knights already win battle of merch

While logo drew derision, winning changed it all

By Eli Segall
Las Vegas Review-Journal

When the Golden Knights unveiled the team's uniform last year, it got mixed reviews.

"It is hideous," The Washington Post wrote, summarizing reactions online.

But the Las Vegas team proved phenomenal on the ice, posting one of the best records in the NHL — and its merchandise sales have led the pack.

The expansion club, now starting the first round of the Stanley Cup playoffs against the

Los Angeles Kings, leads the league this season for merchandise sales through online retailer Fanatics' network, which includes the NHL's and Golden Knights' official shopping websites.

Fanatics spokesman Brandon Williams declined to give comparisons to other teams or the Knights' total sales revenue. But he said that Knights merchandise sales rose 60 percent in the past two weeks compared with the prior two weeks, and that Fanatics has sold Knights gear to buyers in nearly 90 countries

since the start of the season.

"It's really safe to assume that we've never seen this kind of response" to an expansion team, said Jack Boyle, co-president of Fanatics' North America retail sales.

Restocking the shelves

There is always early excitement for a new sports franchise, Boyle said, but what's "compounded the power" of Golden Knights sales is the team's on-ice performance.

See KNIGHTS 68



Illustration by Las Vegas Review-Journal photojournalist Sergio Ramirez
Sergio Ramirez shops at the Vegas Golden Knights' official team store at City National Arena on Monday.

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Merch mania

Popular items on shop.nhl.com



Note: Highlights added to screen grab taken Wednesday



Wes Riedl/Las Vegas Review-Journal

► KNIGHTS

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NHL expansion clubs can be among the worst in the league. But the Knights set a record for first-year victories and captured the Pacific Division title.

Their merchandise sales have "definitely accelerated" throughout the season, Boyle said. Among the top items: goalie Marc-Andre Fleury's #29 jersey is the best-selling on the team and in the top five overall for the NHL.

At Miracle Mile Shops on the Strip, tourists and locals alike buy Knights gear, said Wendy Albert, the mall's senior director of marketing. She said a Lids store has to restock its Knights merchandise "every few days."

Knights chief marketing officer Brian Killingsworth, who previously worked for NFL and Major League Baseball teams, said on Wednesday that he's "never seen a market get behind a team like this one."

Southern Nevadans "had a hunger for a major professional sports team," but the Knights' on-ice success has had "a huge effect" on sales of jerseys, shirts, hats and other merchandise.

He said that at T-Mobile Arena, even fans of the visiting teams are lining up to buy Knights' gear. And when the Knights recently sold limited-edition posters — 702 were available at \$70.20 each — at its practice rink, City National Arena, "we had lines around the building for a good eight hours straight. I've never seen that type of fever before."

The doors opened at 10 a.m., but Killingsworth said six people showed up at 3 a.m., and 20 were there by 6 a.m.

All this for a team that, because of its name and colors, became embroiled in a trademark dispute with the U.S. Army, and whose logo initially didn't get universal rave reviews.

'Bad, bad team'

When the team announced its name in fall 2016, The Guardian reported that its medieval-style helmet logo was being compared to, among other things, movie villains and Pokémon. "It's not the best logo in the league, but it will do," the publication wrote.

(The Hockey News, meanwhile, said the logo was "fantastic.")

The Washington Post, in its write-up on the uniform last June, said

the apparent consensus that it was hideous was based on reaction on Twitter, where users panned it.

Sports news site Deadspin said the uniform was "not that bad," adding it was "so unflashy" that it looked straight out of a video game.

The next day, after the Knights filled their roster through the expansion draft, Deadspin also wrote that the club was "a bad, bad team" that "isn't going to have more than a dozen regulation wins."

By season's end, the Knights had the fifth-best record in the NHL.

Contact Eli Segall at esegall@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0342. Follow @eli_segall on Twitter.

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