

Conveyor Moves Shoes to Finish Line

Finish Line, one of the largest athletic specialty stores in the country, prides itself on offering a wide variety of the latest styles at good values. However, along with the company's commitment to offering the most up-to-date athletic footwear and fashion accessories comes pressure to replenish supply quickly to keep 425 stores in 42 states fully stocked. To ensure that stock is adequate, 250 employees work in a 260,000-square-foot distribution center (DC) located in Indianapolis, and rely on more than 6,183 feet of conveyor from Mathews Conveyor to keep stock moving quickly and efficiently.

Don Courtney, executive vice president of information systems and distribution for Finish Line, explains, "Everyday we move approximately 120,000 units of footwear and fashion accessories from Indianapolis to all parts of the country, so our DC is truly the heart of our operation. We have a series of inbound and outbound docks, which have become more elaborate since our first installation in 1991. We have quadrupled in size over

the past nine years and have relied on Advanced Handling Systems to assist us in the continued smooth operation of our facility for the majority of that time."

Recently, Advanced Handling Systems Inc. (AHS) of Cincinnati, with the help of Mathews Conveyor of Danville, Kentucky, was asked to completely renovate the Finish Line facility. Two of the main considerations Finish Line had when choosing a new conveyor system for the renovation were low noise levels and high reliability.

"With our previous distribution system the rollers vibrated, which generated a lot of noise and complaints from workers," stated Courtney. "One of the primary features of the Mathews' zero-pressure conveyor is that the rollers lock down into a plastic device that holds the axle, which greatly reduces noise throughout the facility."

To accommodate the seasonal variations in the size, shape and weight of cartons, a zero-pressure conveyor was installed to handle the variations with-

out conveyor backup or jamming. The zero-pressure live roller conveyor consists of a series of zones that permit accumulation of conveyed products, without line pressure build-up. The zones are created via a mechanical actuator that acts on the weight of the carton. These conveyors are offered with a variety of release modes.

Sequential release discharges product in a progressive fashion with gapping between products. Slug release offers a higher throughput and releases product simultaneously. High output sequential release is also available.

The new conveyor system allows Finish Line to ship to stores every three days. Courtney said he is particularly pleased with the flexibility of the conveyor system because it is able to grow with the needs of the company.

As the company continues to flourish and expand its offerings, which ultimately leads to increased sales, so too will the needs of the DC continue to grow. According to Courtney, "We are considering purchasing more conveyor from Mathews. We would recommend Mathews' products to other companies."

Zero-pressure conveyor by Mathews Conveyor.

