

Securing the Game: How Hologram Stickers Authenticate Sports Collectibles at San Jose Sharks

Tips: authentication increases memorabilia value; tamper-evident stickers create a verifiable chain; streamlined process delivers game-used items in 15 minutes

SAN JOSE, CA, UNITED STATES, May 6, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In the thriving world of sports memorabilia, authenticity is everything. When fans purchase game-used hockey sticks or the puck that scored a winning goal, they're not just buying an object—they're investing in a tangible piece of sports history.



Pete Pensa (Left) and Justin Tang (Right) apply NovaVision holograms to San Jose Sharks game-used pucks / Aramark Sports + Entertainment

The global sports memorabilia market is experiencing remarkable growth, valued at USD 16.52 million in 2023 and projected to reach USD 52.62 million by 2032. This expansion is driven by fans' emotional connection to their favorite teams and athletes, and a powerful desire to own items associated with them. As Pete Pensa of Aramark Sports + Entertainment explains: "It's something tangible... the memory of 'I caught that puck on this date at this time.'"

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Justin Tang, Aramark Sports + Entertainment

However, this growth has created a significant challenge: counterfeiting. The Econ Market Research report notes, "The market's integrity is compromised by the abundance of fake goods, which erodes collectors' confidence. Potential purchasers are discouraged, and market trust is impacted by the possibility of inadvertently purchasing

phony artifacts."

This article examines how Aramark Sports + Entertainment, the retail partner of the San Jose Sharks NHL team, implemented NovaVision's hologram authentication technology to protect the integrity of their game-used memorabilia program: A solution that enhances consumer confidence, streamlines operations, and increases the value of authenticated memorabilia.

The Authentication Challenge:

For organizations like Aramark, ensuring authenticity is crucial to maintaining consumer trust and protecting brand reputation.

Pete Pensa describes the problem they faced: "There were a few times in the past where there were items that we knew were not game-used items, but they were on secondary markets being sold as game-used items." As Pensa notes, "We wanted to make sure that fans had the best experience possible, and that they were getting real merchandise."



San Jose Sharks - Game-Used Pucks with NovaVision hologram labels / Aramark Sports + Entertainment



NovaVision

Prior to implementing their current solution, Aramark used a basic certificate of authenticity, but it "didn't quite hit the level of security" they needed. As Pensa explains, "It didn't bring the same weight that the non-tampering holographic sticker really brought to the market."

The NovaVision Solution:

After evaluating several options, Aramark selected NovaVision's hologram authentication technology. NovaVision specializes in creating tamper-evident hologram labels that provide an additional layer of security to products.

These stickers feature unique designs and advanced holography techniques, making them extremely difficult to duplicate. As NovaVision explains, "When viewed from different angles, hologram labels refract light, appearing to shift and change in color and even design or features."

These labels may also include additional security features like microprinting, covert laser reveal, fluorescing inks, floating images, and more." [Samples are available.](#)

For Aramark, several specific features influenced their decision:

1. Serial numbering: Each hologram contains a unique serial number tracked in a database.
2. Barcode functionality: Holograms include scannable barcodes for quick verification.
3. Micro-text: NovaVision embeds microscopic text hidden within the hologram design.
4. Tamper-evident properties: Attempts to remove the hologram leave clear evidence of tampering, including adhesive residue on the surface.
5. Custom design: The holograms can be designed with team logos and specific security features.

As Justin Tang of Aramark explains, "Between the sizing, the serial numbering, the barcode, and the design, NovaVision really hit on all of the marks. You could always find someone that could offer a sticker, but they couldn't serial number it, or they could serial number it, but they couldn't put a barcode on it."

Implementation Process:

The authentication process follows these steps:

1. Collection: Game-used equipment is collected from the locker room.
2. Documentation: Staff keeps detailed records of each item, player, and game.
3. Transfer: Aramark staff retrieves the items along with their documentation.
4. Authentication: Hologram stickers are applied to each item.
5. Database Entry: Each item's details and corresponding hologram serial number are entered into a database.
6. Verification System: The database is accessible through the Sharks Pro Shop website.

The efficiency of this system is particularly evident on game days, when Aramark authenticates approximately 40 pucks that come off the ice. Pensa describes the rapid process: "We have to basically pull [them] off the ice, they're still stone cold, apply the stickers, scan them, and get them up to the fans before the national anthem ends. With the setup that NovaVision provides us, we're able to go from warm-ups to on sale in about 10-15 minutes."

Business Impact and Benefits:

1. Increased Value

Perhaps the most tangible benefit has been the increase in the authenticated memorabilia's value. According to Pensa, "With that extra value of trust and the lack of skepticism, we have increased the value in the theoretical resale value of each one of these items."

2. Enhanced Consumer Trust

The hologram authentication system has significantly improved consumer confidence in the

Sharks Authentics program. As Pensa explains, "There's a level of trust built into this now, where you know that it's coming from the locker room because we are adding that extra layer of protection."

3. Operational Efficiency

The NovaVision system streamlined Aramark's authentication process. The barcode functionality allows for quick scanning and processing, which is essential when handling large volumes of memorabilia.

4. Market Differentiation

Hologram stickers serve as a visible symbol of authenticity that distinguishes official merchandise from unauthorized items.

The Value of Trust in Collectibles:

Hologram authentication technology can address the challenges of counterfeiting in sports memorabilia. As Pensa summarizes, "It used to come from a certificate and trust. And now there are too many counterfeits. Fans want an extra layer of security."

The success of this implementation highlights several key lessons for organizations in the collectibles market:

1. Authentication creates value
2. Efficiency matters
3. Consumer trust is paramount
4. Documentation enhances value
5. Technology must serve the fans

As the sports memorabilia market continues to grow, authentication will remain a critical component of the ecosystem. For Aramark and the San Jose Sharks, the NovaVision hologram authentication system has proven to be more than just a security measure—it's an enhancement to the fan experience and a valuable business tool that protects both their brand and their customers' investments in pieces of hockey history.

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Gentry Perry
NovaVision, LLC
+1 567-225-0366

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)

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