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Comprehensive Exam 2026: DICK'S Sporting Goods EARNED

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Thought Leadership Piece

Headline: The Future of Sports Retail Isn't Just Performance, It's Responsibility

Walk into any sporting goods store, and you'll see the promise of sport everywhere, running shoes built for speed, soccer balls built for precision, and backpacks ready for the next adventure. What you don't always see is the environmental footprint behind those products.

As leaders in sports retail, we have to ask a harder question: How can we inspire athletes while also protecting the playing fields, parks, and outdoor spaces they depend on?

At DICK'S Sporting Goods, we believe the answer is simple, even if the work is not: sustainability must become part of the retail game plan.

The truth is that sport and the environment are inseparable. Rising temperatures, worsening air quality, and extreme weather are already changing how and where athletes compete. Youth leagues are canceling games because of heat waves. Wildfires are closing hiking trails. Coastal storms are damaging community sports facilities.

If the places where people play are disappearing, the entire sports ecosystem, from athletes to retailers, has a stake in the outcome.

That is why sustainability in retail can't be a marketing tagline. It has to be an operational reality.

For us, that means rethinking how products are made, sold, and used over time. We're working with partners to increase the availability of more responsibly sourced materials, improve packaging, and

reduce waste across our operations. But just as important, we're thinking about how retail can extend the life of sports gear.

Too often, equipment that still has value ends up unused in a garage or worse, in a landfill. The sporting goods industry has an opportunity to rethink this cycle through resale programs, gear trade-ins, and community equipment initiatives that keep products in circulation longer.

This is particularly important for the next generation of athletes. Young consumers, especially Gen Z, are deeply aware of sustainability. They're asking tough questions about where products come from, how they're made, and what happens to them when they're no longer needed.

Retailers shouldn't fear those questions. We should welcome them because the future of our industry depends on transparency and accountability.

We've seen firsthand how powerful this shift can be when we engage communities directly. Through initiatives tied to youth sports platforms like GameChanger, we're helping families stay connected to the games they love. But we're also thinking about how digital platforms can encourage smarter equipment usage and community sharing.

The same philosophy applies to how we show up in culture. Whether it's experiential retail concepts or new community-focused activations, our goal is to meet athletes where they are and to ensure those experiences reflect a broader commitment to responsible business.

A single company will solve none of this. Brands, manufacturers, leagues, and retailers must work together to reduce environmental impact across the sports ecosystem.

But leadership has to start somewhere.

Sports teach us that progress rarely comes from standing still. It comes from pushing forward and sometimes faster than feels comfortable.

The same is true for sustainability.

Protecting the future of sport means protecting the places where sport lives, and that's a responsibility none of us can afford to sit out.

Lauren Hobart is currently the President and CEO of DICK'S Sporting Goods. She has been the CEO for over five years and the President for over 15 years. Hobart studied at the University of Pennsylvania and earned her MBA from Stanford University.

Strategy Note

This thought-leadership piece focuses on environmental sustainability, positioning DICK'S Sporting Goods as a responsible leader within the sports retail industry rather than simply promoting products. Writing from the perspective of CEO Lauren Hobart establishes authority and credibility. At the same time, the tone is reflective and forward-thinking, appropriate for major publications such as The New York Times or Fast Company.

The messaging aligns with the brand's mission of inspiring athletes while connecting sustainability to the future of sports itself by protecting fields, parks, and outdoor spaces. This angle strengthens brand storytelling by showing that DICK'S Sporting Goods recognizes its broader responsibility in the sports ecosystem. By emphasizing responsible sourcing and youth sports engagement. The piece builds credibility and reinforces the brand's long-term commitment to environmental stewardship rather than short-term marketing.