

## ***Angels add Oakley to stadium line up***

Lisa Liddane, Orange County Register, April 2, 2013

<http://www.ocregister.com/articles/oakley-502278-store-angels.html>



The Big A is reflected in Oakley sunglasses worn by Mark Carlstrom at Angel Stadium in Anaheim where a new Oakley store is now open. The shop creates custom glasses and can even engrave the tiny Big A logo seen at bottom right in the lens. Carlstrom is senior construction manager for the new shop.

An Oakley store debuts at Angel Stadium, the first of its kind for the athletic eyewear and apparel company.

This season at the Big A, there's a new option in seat-side delivery to add to hotdogs and beer: custom-built sunglasses.

In a major mashup of Orange County sports brands, Oakley Inc. on Thursday opened a signature store devoted to all things Angels at the team's Angel Stadium of Anaheim.

The 1,000-square-foot shop is the only Oakley store dedicated to a baseball team and the Foothill Ranch-based accessories manufacturer and retailer's sole retail location inside a sports stadium.

Oakley has an ongoing licensing contract with Major League Baseball for team-themed sunglasses, but this shop is the first to showcase new co-branded lines under a separate licensing agreement with the Angels. The Angels last week named Oakley as the team's official eyewear brand.

"It's a good marriage," said Dennis Kuhl, Angels chairman, while browsing the store several hours before the start of the preseason freeway series against the Dodgers last week.

Oakley officials won't say whether the stadium-store concept will be expanded to other major league baseball venues. However, it is part of a significant retail expansion that will include 15 to 17 new stores in the United States and six international shops this year, said Erik Searles, vice president for retail at Oakley.

Searles also said Oakley is testing optician counters at select locations to boost its prescription-eyewear business. The Oakley store at the Irvine Spectrum Center will be among those locations.

Oakley's Big A stadium shop is at field level, mere steps away from the official Angels store. But Kuhl said that "the two (stores) are not competitive." Oakley's core business is in sunglasses, and those are a major focus at the new shop. Prices are comparable to those at other Oakley stores, with sunglasses starting at around \$170.

The creative challenge was to create Angels apparel and accessories and design an Angels-themed store that "had the Oakley DNA," Searles said.

Examples of synergy between the two brands abound. Dark gray hoodies are offered with Oakley's signature elliptical O in white with red baseball stitching, and stitching down the side of the hoodie. White baseball bases have been converted into barstool seats atop minimalist frames and legs that reflect Oakley's industrial aesthetic.

Those stools flank the centerpiece of the shop: the company's first in-store custom eyewear bar, where fans can personalize frame and lens styles and colors. The eyewear bar is designed to have the feeling of a sports bar, Searles said. Fans can further personalize their sunglasses with countless options for what to etch on the lens, including the Angels logo, players' names and numbers, and monograms.

Although Oakley offers eyewear customization through its online shop and other brick-and-mortar stores, the selection at the bar is tailored for Angels fans, said Matt Moss, Oakley director of marketing. A shopper can choose the Gascan frame in Angels white, add Oakley's O icon in red, which snaps into a niche in the frame, then have the team's logo etched on the lens.

Once those choices are made, it takes less than 15 minutes to assemble and customize a pair of sunglasses. Customers can watch the game on flatscreen TVs at the store while the sunglasses are put together, or have the finished product delivered to their seats.

The stadium bar will serve as a de facto lab for Oakley before it opens a larger custom eyewear bar at an undisclosed flagship store, Searles said.

The store took about a year to get off the ground, but the Angels and Oakley have been linked for years. Ballplayers, including Mark Trumbo and Mike Trout, sport the company's sunglasses on and off the field. Last March, at a company-hosted fan event during the team's spring training in Tempe, Ariz., Trumbo autographed baseballs and posters.

The stadium store is a natural and logical progression for Oakley's retail business, said Mark Francis, sports business instructor at the UCLA Anderson School of Management. "Fans will want to wear the same sunglasses that the players are wearing. Oakley has such strong brand recognition.

"Now that they've done it, I said to myself, 'Wow, I'm surprised this didn't happen before.'"

### **Custom Oakleys**

Here's the approximately 15-minute process for building a pair of personalized Oakleys at the Angel Stadium custom eyewear bar:

- The customer chooses a style and color from store inventory using a tablet.
- Words, numbers or logo are selected to be etched on the lens.
- A machine produces tags with bar codes to tell staff what parts to assemble.
- The lens is placed on the engraving machine and etched.
- The lens and frame are assembled at the counter.

Source: Oakley, Inc. [Contact the writer: [lliddane@ocregister.com](mailto:lliddane@ocregister.com) or 714-796-7969]