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Sports retailer opts for sortation system

Automated handling of returns using KNAPP technology is a key feature of 3PL Fiege's operation to serve its client, SportScheck.

SportScheck is a multi-channel business with turnover of some 319 million euros. The German facility of its 3PL Fiege has 40,000 sq m of floor space and features three levels kitted out with the overhead sortation technology of Dürkopp Fördertechnik, a member of the KNAPP group. The firm's Pocket Sorter is a key product in the installation.

Dürkopp Fördertechnik pioneered pocket sortation technology and over 1.75 million pockets have been sold by the KNAPP group to date. With each pocket capable of carrying goods weighing up to 3kg and sized up to 500x380x150mm, the solution is suitable for a wide range of products.

The pockets are connected to a rail system via a 'rolladapter' that the pocket hangs from, which features an RFID transponder. The pockets are manually filled at seven loading stations, where warehouse staff push the goods over a scanning area and into the pocket, supplied by the system. From this point on, the goods can be

identified in the system at any time through RFID.

Returns given priority

As in any e-commerce operation, there are significant numbers of returned goods that need to be dealt with. After being checked, returns are given top priority to leave the warehouse again. New goods and returns are loaded into the Pocket Sorter system in separate areas, with returns then stored in a dynamic buffer to minimise the picking time. New goods are only moved out of the stationary storage area to the Pocket Sorter system when requested.

3-step matrix sortation

The heart of the Pocket Sorter solution is the sortation that sequences the individual pockets, sorting them into the precise order required by the packing stations. The solution uses a three-step matrix sortation process based on a mathematical algorithm. The solution is scalable, with up to 7000 units being sorted per hour, per module.

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The Pocket Sorter system feeds orders to 35 packing stations – 23 for the direct-to-customer business and 12 for store replenishment. Like the loading stations, the dispatch stations are ergonomically designed, taking into account the various processes that need to be performed by the warehouse staff. E-commerce and catalogue customers receive their orders in cartons, whereas goods for the stores are delivered in roll cages.

The system is also capable of handling the peaks of SportScheck's seasonal business.

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