



TEAM EFFORT ASSISTS XO ATHLETIC AND ITS SPORTING MOVE TO PCR

Collaboration has long been a hallmark of successful packaging efforts, but **NextLife Packaging Group** is taking that approach to the nth degree in the name of sustainability.

An innovative effort launching in June 2010 with **XO Athletic**, Union, NJ, brings one-stop shopping to a project that involved no less than four vendors. This can be a daunting task for many companies looking to make their packaging more sustainable.

In this case, the process was streamlined and uncertainty was reduced by three of NextLife Packaging Group's certified partners: **Integrated Packaging Films** for the post-consumer recycled PET (RPET), **First Choice Packaging** for the thermoformed rPET (recycled PET) components, and **CardPak** for the printed paperboard inserts. XO also utilized their design partner, **LucDesigns Engineering LLC**. The project was set into motion in June 2009 and a month later a pilot production run was made.

XO Athletic, which dominates with 80% of the U.S. athletic cup market, is revamping the lineup for the *ProCup* and *ProCS2* product lines using a more sustainable solution that's



XO Athletic used packaging suppliers to change the look of its athletic cups from the old version (left) to an updated look (right).

also easier to open. The company claims the packs conform better to the product and hang better on peg displays. It features a clear, two-piece package made of 0.025-inch thick 100% post-consumer rPET sheet that replaces packaging made of PVC. The new packaging will be used for six package sizes and approximately 32 SKUs.

The new packs boast a patented, easy opening *Virtuweld* design from First Choice that eliminates radio-frequency sealing. The tamper-evident *Virtuweld* snaps quickly together for sealing, yet looks and performs as a clamshell with the insert and product locked inside.

The project's environmental benefits include annual savings of more than 120,000 pounds of virgin polymer and 18,000 KWH of energy due to the elimination of RF sealing.

Packaging Strategies Perspective: Besides the move to "greener" packaging, the other victory for XO Athletic is that the snap-together "clamshell" eliminates the need for RF-sealing equipment. That allows the company to bring production in-house -- with little capital investment -- that had been contracted out before. **PS**