



The Athletic: Russini Report Media Briefing Sheet Fanatics NFL Merchandise Trends and Sales Insights

ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY

Logistics:

- **Interview Date & Time:** Friday, April 17, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. ET
 - **ARRIVAL TIME: 9:30 a.m. ET**
- **Interview Duration:** 20 minutes
- **Interviewer:** Dianna Russini, senior NFL insider, *The Athletic*
- **Interviewee:** Alex Johnson, director of sports retail insights, Fanatics

About The Athletic:

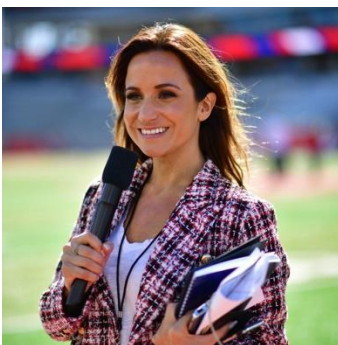
The Athletic is a subscription-based sports journalism platform that delivers in-depth news, analysis and commentary across professional and college sports. It is part of The New York Times Company and is known for long-form journalism and insider reporting.

About Russini Report:

Dianna Russini hosts 'The Russini Report' on The Athletic, a show dedicated to in-depth NFL coverage and analysis. The program focuses on breaking league news, player movement and trends shaping the NFL. Through interviews with players, coaches and insiders, 'The Russini Report' gives fans an inside look at the stories driving the league. The show also explores the business of football and fan engagement making it a go-to source for dedicated NFL audiences seeking both news and context.

Example Cheddar Paws Segments:

- [Russini Report: NFL News: Zach Wilson report, Tush Push, Trevor Lawrence injury update & more](#)
- [Russini Report: Why Atlanta Took Penix & Kirk Cousins' Frustration](#)
- [Russini Report: NFL News: Panthers firings, Jets, Browns, Cowboys & more with Dianna Russini](#)
- [Russini Report: Steelers firing, Anonymous Player Poll results & more with Dianna Russini](#)



About Dianna Russini:

Russini, a native of the Bronx, New York, brings deep sports insight and credibility to her NFL reporting. She is a senior NFL insider and reporter for The Athletic, where she covers league news, trends and in-depth stories about the NFL across written, video and podcast platforms. Prior to joining The Athletic, Russini spent eight years at ESPN as a top NFL reporter and analyst. At ESPN she was known for breaking league news, providing live reports from games and events, and delivering expert analysis on teams, players and trends in professional football.





About the Interview:

The Athletic is interested in a segment around Fanatics' leadership in NFL merchandise sales. Topics include how merchandise drives fan connection, top-selling teams and players, the impact of digital channels on shopping habits and strategies for meeting fan demand during high volume seasons. Those including, the draft, playoffs and Super Bowl. We encourage you to tie in Fanatics' exclusive NFL merchandise offerings, emphasize insights on fan behavior and trends that showcase Fanatics' expertise in delivering what fans want.

DAY-OF LOGISTICS

Location & Getting There:

- **Location:** The Athletic offices at 19th Floor, 620 8th Ave., New York, NY 10018
 - Fanatics team members to meet at The Athletic offices **by 9:30 a.m. ET** to check in and get settled in the green room.
 - If you arrive, check in with building security, and they will direct you to the 19th floor. We have shared the full list of attendees with the team at The Athletic.
 - Alex Johnson (interviewee)
 - Karina Beckham,
 - Andrew Lavella, senior account executive

Day-of Contact:

Patrick Stone, account director
202-456-9085
Pstone@gmail.com

What to Wear:


Interviewees on the Russini Report typically wear a business causal outfit. A company polo or shirt and khakis are recommended to keep the interview feeling conversational and laid back.

Products to Bring:

- No products needed at this interview. However, if you are going to wear a fanatics branded piece of clothing, ensure it looks in new or next to new condition. If a new polo is needed, please let us know as soon as possible, and we can have that provided.

KEY MESSAGES AND TALKING POINTS

Anticipated Topics of Discussion:

- Fanatics' leadership as the No. 1 NFL merchandise seller
 - How Fanatics anticipates and meets fan demand during major NFL event
 - Impact of digital retail and e-commerce on fan purchasing
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Tips to Consider:

- Fanatics' website, app and social media platforms are primary ways fans shop for NFL merchandise. Limited-edition drops and exclusive items generate excitement and can boost both sales and brand loyalty.
- Highlight loyalty like Fanatics Rewards, encourage repeat purchases and fan retention.
- Seasonal trends matter draft season; playoffs and the Super Bowl are peak times for merchandise demand. Top-selling teams and players vary year-to-year, so staying current on fan favorites is essential for relevance.
- The official NFL partner, Fanatics ensures licensed, high-quality merchandise compared to unofficial resellers.
- Shipping and fulfillment impact the fan experience be ready to explain how Fanatics ensures fast, reliable delivery during peak seasons.
- Fan insights and data can highlight trends: reference metrics such as most popular products, growth percentages and fan behavior patterns. Partnerships with the NFL and individual teams strengthen credibility and access to exclusive merchandise.
- The overall goal is to enhance fan connection. Merchandise is not just a product but a way for fans to express identity, loyalty and engagement with their favorite teams and players.
- Customer experience extends beyond the purchase. Be ready to emphasize how Fanatics focuses on customer support, easy returns and overall satisfaction.

TOUGH Q&A

Given the recent buzz around the growing unrest with Fanatics pricing, product quality and delivery speed, we recommend you to be aware of potential questions and how to properly respond. Listed below, we have compiled some questions and responses that you should be familiar with and ready to respond.

Potential Questions & Recommended Responses:

- **How do you respond to fans concerned about high prices for NFL merchandise?**
 - We work to provide fans with a range of options and exclusive deals while maintaining high-quality, licensed products. Our loyalty programs and promotions help make merchandise more accessible.
- **Some fans wonder about the quality of Fanatics merchandise. How do you ensure products meet expectations, and what happens if a fan isn't satisfied?**
 - Quality is our top priority. Every product we sell is officially licensed, authentic, and carefully inspected before it reaches fans. That said, we understand that sometimes issues arise, and we make it easy for fans to get it right. Our return policy allows fans to exchange or return items quickly, and our customer service team is trained to resolve any problems promptly.

- **Some fans complain about delivery delays during peak season. How is Fanatics addressing this?**
 - We continuously optimize our supply chain and use data-driven
 - insights to anticipate demand and ensure timely delivery, especially during draft season and playoffs. We know at times that is not perfect, and, in those instances, we have fantastic customer service relations people who are always available to call and try and sort out potential problems

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3/30/2026

“The following information is not intended to be factual but is a class writing assignment from January 2026 to April 2026 at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University. All information is intended to be sourced appropriately.”

