

Castore: The British brothers looking to take on sportswear's biggest brands

Tom and Phil Beahon are pitting themselves against the likes of Nike, Adidas, and Puma with their homegrown, high-end sports brand Castore.

When Rangers FC lifted the Scottish Premiership trophy in May 2021, they toppled a near decade-long domination by the closest rivals Celtic. Brothers Tom and Phil Beahon saw this differently from most fans—a highly respected, 150-year-old football club winning their first league title in a decade, proudly sporting *Castore* jerseys.

Their rapid rise to the top has snuck under the radar. In their short lifespan, founded in 2015, the Beahon brothers and Castore have secured a slew of prominent athletes—including Andy Murray, England rugby captain Owen Farrell, and multiple Olympic gold medal-winning swimmer Adam Peaty—as well as some of the best sports teams—from Wolves and Newcastle in the Premier League, to the McLaren Formula One team, to the West Indies and South Africa cricket teams.

This impressive roster might feel like a pretty packed trophy cabinet to some: but for Tom Beahon, this is just the start. “I never want our past successes to slow us down. When you have those moments of success, if anything, that fuels the hunger even more.”

Founding Castore at a young age

Determined, competitive, agile. Key characteristics for any *founders aspiring for fast growth and success*. Tom and Phil innately embody all of these, although not from prior entrepreneurial experience, but rather from the sports field.

Tom spent his youth on the football pitch, playing for boyhood club Tranmere Rovers, before moving to play in Spain. Phil instead opted for the cricket field, racking up caps for Cheshire and Lancashire in county cricket. Drive and determination was in their DNA, so starting their own business never seemed out of the ordinary.

“For us, it would have always felt like a bigger thing to be an employee in a big company, where your success or failure is dictated by someone else. I don’t think that ever appealed to either of us,” Tom says.

When they founded Castore, Tom was 25 and Phil just 22. For Tom, being younger than the rest of the field never felt like a disadvantage, but rather the opposite.

“When you’re younger, you’ve got less to lose. We didn’t have kids, dependents, or mortgages. That gave us a real freedom of ambition, that we could dedicate ourselves to the company, be obsessive over it, and be incredibly passionate about it.”

Their sporting backgrounds meant that starting a sports company was a no-brainer. It wasn’t just that it lent them a competitive advantage, given their acute awareness of sportswear, merchandising, and what professional athletes want; they also felt deeply passionate about the industry and the endeavour. If they were about to commit their whole lives to something, at the very least they wanted to enjoy it.

This encapsulates the concept of founder-market fit (the idea that founders being deeply suited to the market they’re engaging is critical to their success), and is what Tom describes as a merging of passion with deep analytical focus.

Standing out in a crowded market

Nike has a global market cap of \$267B; Adidas' is \$50B. Any outsider would think any battle over the sportswear market was tied up and sealed long ago. Yet for discerning athletes, Castore's success will come as no surprise. In a crowded market dominated by global megabrands, they offer a clear alternative.

First and foremost, Castore is a high-end, product-led alternative to lower quality, cheaper brands. By nature of their scale, global brands are more mass market in their approach, adopting a 'one-size-fits-all' approach for products which sacrifices quality for broad appeal. Tom and Phil had an intuition that more discerning customers would be willing to pay more for performance-centric, longer-lasting products—and days spent in the rain waiting outside gyms to speak to their target audience confirmed this.

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So while Castore products sit at a higher price point than most competitors, this is fully backed up by product quality: using performance fabrics, rather than off-the-shelf materials, and manufacturing clothing in Europe, where capability is more technically advanced. Being a product-led business is not only critical to their success, it's ingrained in their ethos. "Unless we can offer a superior product, we have no reason to exist in this market," Tom says.

The second defining factor is being digital first. Compared to slower-moving, retail-centric brands, being digitally-native affords Castore agility and the ability to react quickly to changes and trends. There are parallels to be drawn with Gymshark, the Birmingham-born sportswear brand that reached unicorn status in 2020: founder Ben Francis has, until very recently, kept the company entirely online.

Tom is quick to stress that Castore is digital-first, not fully digital. They've opened three bricks-and-mortar stores (on London's Kings Road, in Newcastle city centre, and in Liverpool) over the past few years, with plans to have 15 stores in total by the end of next calendar year.

Counter to beliefs that the high street is dead, Tom believes physical retail stores remain critical to the success of up-and-coming brands like Castore. “If you want to get your name out there, it makes sense having a physical space where consumers can come to see and feel your product, speak to someone directly, and ask questions.” Crucially, this doesn’t compete with the success of the online business, it augments it.

Looking to the future

Key milestones for Tom include their first external fundraise (“the first time someone externally believes in your business”), and seeing their reputation grow quickly among trainers and athletes. Of course there’s the small matter of landing their first major partnership with Andy Murray to launch his AMC branded clothing range. He’d supposedly turned down lucrative contracts with some of the biggest sports brands in favour of a closer, bespoke partnership with Castore.

Tom is clear about their ambition—being the number one British sporting brand, and turning Castore into a billion-dollar revenue business. Each sport they tap into opens up a new audience for their clothing—so don’t be surprised to see the sleek Castore logo adorning golfers, boxers, gymnasts, and more.

Speaking to Tom, I’m struck by his humility, in particular the number of times he refers to luck. But it’s clear that Castore’s success and future prospects have nothing to do with luck. Their motto—Better Never Stops—is totally embodied by the Beahons, Castore’s athletes and ambassadors, and their whole company, who constantly aspire to build the best products on the market.

Outsiders may think their ambition to take on the global megabrands is crazy: but it just may be that the sporting world has found its next great underdog story.