ARBITRATION
AND
MEDIATION CENTER

WIPO
WORLD
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
ORGANIZATION

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION
Renfro LLC v. vellux hen
Case No. D2026-0991

1. The Parties

The Complainant is Renfro LLC, United States of America ("United States"), represented by Enns & Archer LLP, United States.

The Respondent is vellux hen, China.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <thehotsox.com> is registered with Dynadot Inc (the "Registrar").

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the "Center") on March 6, 2026. On March 9, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On March 10, 2026, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent (Dynadot Privacy Service, Super Privacy Service LTD c/o Dynadot) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on March 12, 2026, providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and inviting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amendment to the Complaint on March 13, 2026.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amendment to the Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Policy" or "UDRP"), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Rules"), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Supplemental Rules").

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on March 19, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was April 8, 2026. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent's default on April 9, 2026.

The Center appointed Charles Gielen as the sole panelist in this matter on April 15, 2026. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. The Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

4. Factual Background

The Complainant is a designer, manufacturer, and marketer of quality socks and legwear products. The Complainant uses the trade mark HOT SOX for such products which are well known in the United States. The Complainant and its predecessor have owned the domain name <hotsox.com> since 1996. The products are not only sold through this website but also by retailers such as Walmart and Amazon.

The Complainant owns United States Trade mark Registration No. 0952063, registered on January 30, 1973, for goods in class 25.

The disputed domain name was registered on October 12, 2025, and resolves to a website on which HOT SOX branded products of the Complainant are being sold.

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

Notably, the Complainant contends that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the Complainant's trade mark. The disputed domain name contains an exact reproduction of the Complainant's trade mark HOT SOX, which constitutes the dominant distinctive element of the disputed domain name. The only difference between the trade mark HOT SOX and the disputed domain name lies in the addition of the word "the". The Complainant contends that the mere addition of this word is irrelevant and cannot be taken into consideration when assessing confusing similarity.

Furthermore, the Complainant contends that the Respondent does not have any rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. The Complainant has limited means to establish that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interest because the identity of the Respondent is concealed. But the website to which the disputed domain name resolves, tries to fraudulently impersonate the Complainant which is therefore an illegitimate use on its face. These circumstances preclude any possibility that the Respondent is using the disputed domain name in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services, that the Respondent has been commonly known by the disputed domain name, or that the Respondent is making legitimate noncommercial or fair use of the domain name.

Finally, the Complainant argues that the Respondent registered and is using the disputed domain name in bad faith. The Complainant gives several reasons for this. First, the Complainant states that the disputed domain name contains the trade mark HOT SOX of the Complainant, which mark has been in use for more than fifty years. This alone gives rise to a presumption of bad faith. Second, the Complainant states that the website of the Respondent clearly depicts the trade mark of the Complainant and products for which this trade mark is being used. The product listings shown on the site are actually links to third-party listings on <amazon.com> for genuine HOT SOX products offered by the Complainant or by legitimate resellers of the Complainant's goods. Also, the "Contact Us" page displayed at the disputed domain name provides an email address, <thehotsox@hotmail.com>, that is invalid. Furthermore, the "Customer Service Hotline" telephone number mentioned on the Respondent's website, is in fact the Complainant's main customer service number. Finally, the address mentioned on the Respondent's website is in fact the address of the Complainant's predecessor.

B. Respondent

The Respondent did not reply to the Complainant's contentions.

6. Discussion and Findings

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

It is well accepted that the first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the Complainant's trade mark and the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Select UDRP Questions ("WIPO Overview 3.1"), section 1.7.

The Complainant has shown rights in respect of a trade mark for the purposes of the Policy. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 1.2.1.

The Panel finds that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the Complainant's trade mark. It contains the term "hotsox" and the only difference between the disputed domain name and the Complainant's trade mark is that the disputed domain name has the additional word "the" in front of "hotsox". This difference does not prevent the finding of confusing similarity between the trade mark and the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 1.8.

Therefore, the requirement under paragraph 4(a)(i) of the Policy is met.

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the Respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

Although the overall burden of proof in UDRP proceedings is on the complainant, panels have recognized that proving that a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the difficult task of "proving a negative", requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent. As such, where a complainant makes out a prima facie case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, the burden of production on this element shifts to the respondent to come forward with relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the domain name (although the burden of proof always remains on the complainant). If the respondent fails to come forward with such relevant evidence, the complainant is deemed to have satisfied the second element. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 2.1.

Having reviewed the available record, the Panel finds the Complainant has established a prima facie case that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. The Respondent has not rebutted the Complainant's prima facie showing and has not come forward with any relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name such as those enumerated in the Policy or otherwise.

First, the Respondent did not show that it owns any rights to the name "thehotsox" nor that is has any license or other authorisation from the Complainant to use its trade mark HOT SOX. Second, the Respondent did not argue that it is commonly known, or that it has ever been known under the name "thehotsox". Furthermore, the Panel did not find any evidence that the Respondent has used, or prepared to use, the disputed domain name in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services. On the contrary, the website to which the disputed domain name resolves, tries to fraudulently impersonate the Complainant which is therefore an illegitimate use on its face. The links to products are in fact links to retailers of the Complainant. Furthermore, the email address used on the website is false and the telephone number mentioned on the website is the main customer service number used by the Complainant.

Such activities cannot be a bona fide offering of goods or services and do not create any rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name.

The Panel finds the second element of the Policy has been established.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

The Panel notes that, for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, paragraph 4(b) of the Policy establishes circumstances, in particular, but without limitation, that, if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith.

With respect to the registration of the disputed domain name, the Panel finds that the Respondent clearly had the trade mark of the Complainant in mind when registering the disputed domain name. This is obvious because the website to which the disputed domain name resolves shows the trade mark of the Complainant. The Panel finds that the disputed domain name is used in bad faith. This follows from the fact that the Respondent never received any authorization to use the trade mark HOT SOX. By using the disputed domain name, the Respondent intentionally attracts Internet users for commercial gain by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's trade mark HOT SOX as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of the website and the products offered on it. The bad faith of the Respondent in using the trade mark of the Complainant in its disputed domain name clearly follows from the fact that on the website a false email address is being used as well as an address on which the predecessor of the Complainant was established. Such use clearly is use in bad faith.

The Panel finds that the Complainant has established the third element of the Policy.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, in accordance with paragraphs 4(i) of the Policy and 15 of the Rules, the Panel orders that the disputed domain name <thehotsox.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Charles Gielen/
Charles Gielen
Sole Panelist
Date: April 22, 2026