

## Boston Celtics Up 40% After NBA Lockout Said Resolved

By Philana Patterson

NEW YORK (Dow Jones)--Shares of athletic footwear makers and retailers were up on news that the NBA lockout has been resolved.

NBA players had been scheduled to vote Wednesday on a deal to end the lockout which began in July.

The strike has had a negative impact on sales of basketball shoes. When Nike reported second-quarter earnings in December, officials said the lockout removed a "critical runway" for the company. Before the strike, sales of athletic footwear and apparel had already been in a slump in the U.S. and in Asia.

"An easy way to see (the effect of the lockout) is the Air Jordan line," said BT. Alex. Brown Inc. analyst Marcia Aaron. "Historically, it's been Nike's best-selling line and would sell out in less than a week. This year it hasn't been enjoying the same level."

Shares of athletic footwear manufacturers rallied on hopes that a saved season will lift sales. Nike's NYSE-listed shares were up 5.4%, or 2 3/16, at 42 7/8, on volume of 1.9 million, compared with 1 million average daily volume. Reebok International Ltd. (RBK) was up 3.2%, or 1/2, at 16 3/16 on volume of 900,000, compared to 343,200 average daily volume. Converse Inc. (CVE) was up 16.7%, or 3/8, at 2 5/8 on volume of 238,800, compared to 53,600 average daily volume. Fila Holding SPA was up 4.5%, or 3/8, at 8 3/4 on volume of 222,600 compared with 77,475 average daily volume.

Athletic retailers also advanced. Just For Feet Inc. (FEET) was up 7%, or 1 3/16, at 18 1/4 on 880,600 Nasdaq volume compared with 405,000 average daily volume. Finish Line Inc. (FINL) was up 14.5%, or 1 1/8, at 8 7/8, on volume of 617,300 compared with 316,500 average daily volume. Venator Group Inc. (Z) was up 6.5%, or 7/16, at 7 1/8 on volume 2 million, compared with 1 million average daily volume. Footstar Inc. (FTS) was up 6.3%, or 1 1/2, at 25 1/8 on volume of 183,900 compared with 172,900 average daily volume.

Shares of NBA team Boston Celtics L.P. (BOS) rose 31.5%, or 3 5/16, at 13 13/16 on volume 164,400, compared with 6,500 average daily volume. Ascent Entertainment Group Inc. (GOAL) which owns the Denver Nuggets was up 8.6%, or 11/16, at 8 11/16 on volume of 66,500, compared with 113,900 average daily volume.

Although it appears that the basketball season has been partially saved, it doesn't mean that hoop fans will start running to sneaker shops, observers said.

"It goes back to the fact that the core customer group (young men) continues to move away

from athletic," said Footwear Market Insights President Mike Kormos.

Actually, it's people over age 35 that are driving athletic shoe sales, Kormos said. Those consumers typically don't buy pricey basketball shoes.

Additionally fans that felt spurred by the lockout may not be compelled to support the NBA.

"It took fans a long time to come back to baseball after that strike," BT Alex.Brown's Aaron said.

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