

It's Gotta be the Shoes

By Reg P. Wydeven
November 20, 2010

In 1985, I was in the seventh grade and I got the very first pair of Air Jordan sneakers. They were the coolest shoes ever, being solid black and red. I wore them with a pair of Chicago Bulls tear-away pants. After several ninth graders tested their tear-away-ness, I quickly learned to wear shorts under them.

The shoes were different than anything that came before them, and they were shrouded with mystique. There were rumors that kids were shot and their Jordans were stolen. Plus they were even banned by the National Basketball Association because the shoes' vibrant black and red colors violated the league's uniform rules and Michael Jordan was fined \$5,000 every time he wore them during a game.

Fittingly, on the 25th anniversary of the banning of Air Jordans, the NBA is banning another shoe: Athletic Propulsion Labs' Concept 1. However, while Jordans were banned because of their color scheme, the Concept 1 is the first shoe in the 64-year history of the NBA to be banned because it violates the league's rule against an "unfair competitive advantage."

Athletic Propulsion Labs claims its Load 'N Launch™ Technology causes players who wear the Concept 1 to increase their vertical leap. The shoe manufacturer was informed by the NBA that, "League rules regulate the footwear that players may wear during an NBA game. Under league rules, players may not wear any shoe during a game 'that creates an undue competitive advantage (e.g., to increase a player's vertical leap).' In light of that rule...players will not be permitted to wear the APL shoes during NBA games."

The Concept 1s were introduced in July and immediately garnered the attention of Sports Illustrated, ESPN and even CNN. Before the sneakers were banned, many players were interested in a shoe that would purportedly increase their ups. Several NBA rookies even tested the shoes in summer leagues.

A leading West Coast university laboratory even conducted biomechanical testing on the Concept 1s. They discovered that the shoes actually did increase players' vertical leaps by up to 3.5 inches compared to a leading competitive brand's most expensive basketball shoe. The shoes should deliver, seeing as they retail for \$300. Altitudinal-challenged players can most easily get the shoes at Athletic Propulsion Labs' website (www.athleticpropulsionlabs.com), however the manufacturer is looking to sell them in athletic shoe and sporting goods retail stores.

APL co-founder Adam Goldston stated, "The Load 'N Launch Technology not only provides an instant and dramatic increase in vertical leap, but the biomechanical testing showed that the players exerted far less energy as a result." Goldston founded the Los Angeles-based company with his twin brother, Ryan. The brothers played hoops at the University of Southern California.

"Our proprietary Load 'N Launch Technology has managed to accomplish something never before achieved in the athletic footwear industry: a product that makes you jump higher instantly," according to Ryan. "The Load 'N Launch device is implanted in a cavity in the forefoot of the shoe and serves as a 'launch pad' by taking the energy exerted by the player and increasing lift with the aid of an intricate, spring-based propulsion system."

When I was in high school, I was known to have a "Darboy phonebook" vertical leap, meaning you could barely slip the two or three page list of names of the sparsely populated area under my feet as I took off. Because of my advanced age and mass, not to mention Darboy's population explosion, I may need to shell out \$300 for that insult to remain true.

This article originally appeared in the Appleton Post-Crescent newspaper and is reprinted with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. © 2010 McCarty Law LLP. All rights reserved.