

With These Shoes— Some Say—

EVEN WHITE MEN CAN JUMP!



“Banned by the NBA!” the headline screams. What are we talking here—Steroids? Gambling? Methamphetamines? Black socks? No—we’re talking shoes. Specifically, \$300 Concept 1 basketball shoes from Athletic Propulsions Labs (APL), with its patented Load ’N Launch technology and claims that the shoes will add a minimum of three, and up to five inches to a player’s vertical leap. Whether they work or not still appears to be an open question, but the NBA was sufficiently impressed with their performance that it took the rare step of banning the shoes just prior to the beginning of the 2010–2011 season.

The NBA proclaimed: “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 last time the league banned a specific shoe was in 1985, when it restricted Air Jordans, citing an unacceptable color combination.)

How do they work? (After all, there has to be some kind of power transmission relevance here, or the Power Play Team wouldn’t be reporting it.)

As APL 23-year-old founders, brothers—and twins—Adam and Ryan Goldston, describe it, their Load ’N Launch concept seems simple enough.

“When you apply pressure to it,

it compresses,” Adam Goldston says. “And when you go to jump it propels you upward and releases. It’s a mechanical device. There’s no other technology in shoes that works that way.”

Or as the APL site states, “The Load ’N Launch device is implanted in a cavity of the shoe’s forefoot, which 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.”

The “technology” is in fact a spring incorporated in the front of the shoe. The Goldstons have compared the effect to that of a diving board—the more pressure exerted on the spring, the higher the leap.

But one thing cannot be denied—news of the NBA ban has provided a mother lode of free advertising and publicity for the shoes, even if there doesn’t quite seem to be a market out there for them.

“In terms of marketing, this is probably the greatest thing that could have happened to our company, because it basically blew us up overnight,” says Adam Goldston.

But who will buy them?

“No player has asked to wear these shoes, so it’s a non-issue,” NBA spokeswoman Kristin Conte announced. “However, we determined that they don’t conform to our rules, based on the company’s representation of what they do.”

Nevertheless, upon news of the ban, Google was soon tsunamied by

Concept 1 search queries of where to buy the shoes. However, no college athletic programs have yet to reach out to APL, due, the Goldstons say, to their existing contracts with other shoe brands.

But there is also a *Jerry Maguire* “show me the money” dynamic at work here. Just ask Adam Goldston.

“I think the major problem the NBA has to deal with is the fact that the majority of NBA players are under contract to other footwear brands, and would be at a competitive disadvantage to players who would wear the Athletic Propulsion Labs shoes, Adam Goldston stated in a press release. “The intriguing question is what would NBA players choose to wear if they were spending their own money, and there were no footwear endorsement contracts?”

So, is the controversy all about the money, or about preserving the competitive integrity of the sport?

If it is the latter, here’s a solution the Power Play Team is certain will please the Goldstons:

Why not outfit every NBA player with Concept 1s?

Short of that, maybe there’s a practical household use for the “Load ’N Launch” technology. Perhaps for washing those hard-to-reach windows around your place? Or cleaning the gutters? (*For more information, go to www.athleticpropulsionlabs.com*)