

Sneaker feens: is it the shoes? Gotta be the shoes

BY ALI KRANTZLER
STAFF WRITER

Air Jordan, Zoom Kobe VII, LeBron X and KD V are the names of National Basketball Association superstar sneakers that are sponsored by leading athletic brand Nike.

Nike caters to a particular demographic: sneaker fanatics. On campus, they sport flashy shoes and title themselves "Sneaker Freaks" or "Sneaker Feens."

Sophomore Tyler Griffis might fit this model. Around campus he wears a variety of kicks that appeal to his personality.

"Mostly because of the history, the majority of my shoes are Jordans," said Griffis. "When I see a shoe coming out, I think Michael Jordan wore this shoe back in the dunk contest, or it is the last shoe he wore before he retired."

Feb. 17 marked Michael Jordan's 50th birthday. Arguably, he is one of the most prized innovators who has dominated his sport and the shoe game.

"The greatest basketball player of all time ... he is an icon," said Griffis.

This notion is popular among many aspiring athletes among the sneaker world and leading pop culture sneaker articles.

According to Complex Magazine, when it the Air Jordan line was introduced in 1985, it not only changed everything about "signature

shoes," but also let professional basketball players express themselves in ways not dictated by the sneaker companies and the NBA.

Michael Jordan and Tinker Hatfield created the sneaker revolution that has impacted consumers globally. Each edition of Air Jordans has a different meaning to all who sport them.

"Because of the style and creativity, each shoe is different," said sophomore football player Satiir Stevenson. "I can hoop in the 10's."

Around Guilford you can see ladies contribute to sales and share the addiction as well. Though Jordans were first distributed in men's sizes only, Jordan has released a women's line.

Sophomore basketball player Brittany Drew claims to own 10 or 11 pairs of Jordans.

"If a girl can rock J's, then just imagine what she looks like in heels ... damn," said Stevenson.

With so many pairs of sneakers, it is a calculated decision when trying to choose what pair to wear.

"It depends on the weather," said sophomore Malek Williams. "If it is rainy with a high chance of mud around campus, then I'll just wear a pair of shoes I can dog. It also depends on the mood and what you are wearing."

Jordans are comfortable, stylish, and released in a plethora of editions. The inflation is attributed to the limited supply and great demand.

As retro Jordans are re-released, most stores only carry two sizes, causing a ruckus among customers and employees.

"The price is getting a little out of hand," said Griffis. "Nowadays when you go to the mall, you might have to spend the night waiting for the shoe to come out."

The cost depends on the specific model, like the Air Jordan V Premio. Different editions are released weekly, making the addiction difficult to afford.

"A lot of times you can find a shoe that you like but is not popular in the sneaker world," said Williams. "So it will go down after a while, maybe by \$20 dollars, but then you could have another shoe, like an exclusive Jordan; then that price is going to go up the longer you wait."

Investing in sneakers has become a trend.

"Teenagers have the largest amount of disposable income of any age group, so it makes sense for their target market to skew young," said Digital Communications Director Donna Rasmussen. "Their products also seem to have a lot of customization options available directly from their website, which makes sense because younger consumers expect options

like that."

Other than a good marketing strategy and using professional athletes like Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant or Kevin Durant as figureheads, there must something deeper that lures our demographic into spending over \$250 dollars on one pair of sneakers.

"I feel like when I put a pair of shoes on, it gives me a sense of confidence," said Griffis. "It gives me a way to interact with someone else. I can talk about shoes all day long."

Whether on the court or around campus, take a second look the next time you see someone walk by with flashy sneakers. You might become a feen yourself.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JACQUE JANNER

Controversy with NCAA conference realignment

BY CHARLOTTE HUDSON
STAFF WRITER

Imagine yourself watching "SportsCenter" on ESPN, waiting on your favorite college basketball team to play an important conference game. You see the trademark Breaking News. The Atlantic Coast Conference has just announced that it voted to add Louisville to the conference next season.

Louisville is the latest Big East program to move to the ACC following Syracuse, Pittsburgh and Notre Dame (non-football).

How do you react?

Face it, college sports are changing with big name conferences switching members. Even though conference realignment has been around since the beginning of college sports, the latest batch of schools switching conferences is due to different, controversial reasons.

"In general, realignment is misguided for two reasons," said Robert Malekoff, associate professor of sport studies in an email interview.

"One: It will increase travel and missed class time for many students who participate on sports teams. Two: the primary reason most schools switch schools and conferences look to attract new members is in hopes of generating more revenue.

"The problem is that most schools tend to spend what they make (and in many cases, spend more than they make). Realignment promises even more focus on making money and less on an appropriate balance between athletics, academics and student life. Many schools will make more money, but, if history holds, they will also spend more money."

Generating more revenue seems to be the prominent goal of most major programs, regardless of other problems.

"I believe it is bad for colleges and universities because (realignment) overemphasizes the importance of athletics at individual institutions," said Dave Walters, sports information director, in an email interview.

On the other hand, Walters acknowledged that the realignment could enhance competition between teams. A strong basketball program in Syracuse can help the ACC,

which only has about three strong teams competing for the conference title each year and for poorer colleges to have the opportunity to earn more revenue if they move to another conference.

According to the Washington Post, Duke University head coach Mike Krzyzewski recently commented on the upcoming shake-up on his radio show, even going so far as to say that (Maryland's move to the Big Ten) will cause the Terrapins to be "outsiders."

The future of the Big East is shaky at best. Four teams have been slated to move to the ACC and seven Catholic programs are planning to bolt from the conference to form a new one, causing the Big East to be in danger of losing its strong presence in college basketball.

"It's not something I enjoy looking at," said Louisville Head Coach Rick Pitino in a news conference in December. "Although we're very pleased to be part of the Atlantic Coast Conference, I think what's happened has been extremely disturbing."

The Big East will try to make the best of a very crippling situation by holding the new members, including Boise State and San Diego State, in place. Although he faces daunting tasks ahead, Big East commissioner Mike Aresco is optimistic about the future of the conference.

"We still have quality football and basketball schools," Aresco told USA Today Sports in December. "And they are totally committed to making this league stronger and in helping us plan for the future."

How do these changes affect alumni, students, coaches and players?

"(The programs moving) did not get public opinion from their alums, from the people there," Krzyzewski said. "All these things are secret. It is not out there. Some of it gets leaked, but in Maryland's case, it was never leaked."

"I am really worried about that type of thinking. Kevin White (Duke University Athletic Director) said that you get people who make these decisions who will be in those positions for a few more years, and then they go. They may not stay at that school. They are gonna go maybe to a school that they've been to before, or retire or whatever. They don't have to live with that decision."

"This is an assault on tradition."

Powerful win for Nigeria

BY JOSH BARKER
STAFF WRITER

Nigeria's recent triumph over Burkina Faso in the African Cup of Nations made Stephen Keshi the second person to win both as a player and as a coach.

The game was played in Johannesburg, South Africa, before a crowd estimated at 87,000.

"The best players do not always make the best coaches," said Guilford Men's Soccer Coach Jeff Bateson. "I bet less than one percent of all former players — in any sport — have done what Keshi has done."

This was Nigeria's third African Cup of Nations and first in 19 years. The Super Eagles ranks 30th in the new Federation Internationale de Football Association, according to Goal.com. They were ranked 52nd before their championship defeat.

Nigeria won the Burkina Faso match 1-0. Sunday Mba scored the winning goal forty minutes in. "Winning this tournament is mainly for my nation," said Keshi in a press conference. "My dream is to make all Nigerians happy."

In the 89th minute of the game, Keshi brought veteran player and captain Joseph Yobo off of the bench so that he could help lift the trophy.

"It's a dream come true," said Yobo. "This is my sixth African cup. I said it was going to be my last. I'm short of words."

Nigeria had been favored

to beat Burkina Faso, globally ranked at 92nd.

"Everybody came through with a great match, and that is what we needed," said Yobo. "Everyone gave something extra, and it made the difference."

"But you know what that expectation does to the underdog, right?" said Bateson. "It makes them fight harder to win the game."

"Football is football," said Burkina Faso coach Paul Put to the Associated Press. "You have to be great when you win and humble when you lose. Congratulations to Nigeria. Maybe we showed Nigeria too much respect."

What does Nigeria's win mean and how will it affect soccer?

"I do not think it is much of an indicator for the World Cup," said senior Tali Raphael. "With so many nations and so few spots for Africa in World Cup qualifying, it is quite the crapshoot."

The Super Eagles' victory guarantees a first round spot in June's FIFA Cup in Brazil. They will face higher-ranked teams including Spain and Uruguay.

This was Burkina Faso's first appearance at the African Cup of Nations finals. Burkina Faso previously made it to the final four in 1998.

"I find the tournament to be a lovely break to get in some international soccer," said Raphael. "The Cup of Nations always provides some good Cinderella stories."