

# Takin' Care of Business



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## Stephon Marbury Reveals How Much Nike Sneakers Actually Cost To Make

Since entering the athletic shoe industry in the 2006 with his affordable brand of sneakers, retired NBA star Stephon Marbury has had to compete with more popular Nike shoes while confronting enthusiasts who don't find his product aesthetically pleasing.

Marbury, who currently plays in the Chinese Basketball Association, recently announced the resurrection of his Starbury sneaker line on social media, telling sneaker heads that, like Jordan's and other brands that come with a price tag of up toward \$300, his \$15 wares are produced in the same Chinese factories for \$5 a pop.

Marbury's comments come amid decades of conversation and criticism about the rising cost of the athletic footwear and string of sneaker-related deaths in the predominately black, low-income communities. More than 20 years after assailants took the life of teenager Michael Eugene Thomas during an Air Jordans robbery, urbanites of various ages continue to stand in line for new releases, even as the prices and stakes get higher.

In recent years, Nike has tried to quell tension by implementing RSVP and raffle systems that company heads said would make sneaker purchases safer. But little, if anything, has changed. In 2013, three men in Houston shot and killed a young father during a robbery. Just hours earlier, he purchased a pair of the newly

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Does it make sense that a shoe that costs \$5 to make retails for up-to \$300? If you are an athlete and you need to perform at your best, it is likely that these shoes are a good investment in your sports career. If a professional athlete can sell you the same shoes at a much, much lower cost (\$15 versus \$300), are we willing to give these lower-cost shoes a chance?

What would you need to see to feel confident that you were getting the same quality for \$15 that others may be willing to pay \$300 for? As an athlete, will you be able to confidently try the lower-cost shoes and determine if they really are as comfortable as the higher-cost shoes? As an athlete, can you feel that the lower-cost shoes are designed to help you perform just as well as the higher-cost shoes? Is it worth the extra money to feel better about your shoes?

released Jordan Gama Blue 11's for himself and his son during the Christmas holiday season. The next year, an Ohio couple got pepper sprayed during the release of the Air Jordan XI and another young man lost his life during an altercation at a similar event.

Such has been the case for other expensive shoe brands. A Virginia teen was robbed for a pair of Foamposites. Around that same time, a Chicago-area man lost his life when someone took his \$1,800 pair of Air Yeezys, a brand of Nike sneakers created by hip-hop superstar Kanye West.

Michael Jordan hasn't done or said anything to address it, even as the Air Jordan brand garners a 55 percent market share in U.S. basketball and more than \$2.25 million in annual profits, most from re-releases of earlier sneakers. In 2013, consumers spent \$6.46 billion on athletic shoes. While Air Jordan and other brands don't account for the total, experts say it's a testament to people's desire to make a fashion

statement rather than engage in physical activity. This happens to especially be the case for black consumers, who have come to know these shoe brands via hip-hop culture and movies.

Even so, Marbury has maintained that providing an affordable product would preclude people from taking violent measures to wear popular footwear. However, his message may be less potent because of a rocky NBA history that includes an average of 17.6 points per game during five lackluster seasons with the New York Knicks.

After three titles and an MVP trophy with the Beijing Ducks, Marbury may have a sudden boost of confidence. His tweet counts among his latest taunts at detractors. His Instagram post earlier this week showed a man purchasing four pairs of Starbury sneakers at a time with "When Those Starbury's About to Drop?" emblazoned across the photo.

By Sam P.K. Collins Oct 4, 2015