

The Case of the Exploding Shoe

Name _____

College basketball experts, fans, and students had waited for the night of February 20th, 2019, for a long time. It was the long-awaited renewal of the timeless rivalry between Duke University and the University of North Carolina. Both teams were among the top ten in the country, and Duke's Zion Williamson, a 6'7" 285-pound phenom, was considered the top player in the nation, and likely the number one overall pick in the 2019 NBA draft. Tickets for the game reportedly spiraled to upwards of \$5,000 a piece. Former president Barack Obama and other celebrities traveled to Cameron Indoor Arena at Duke University to witness the titanic matchup, but mostly to watch Zion Williamson, who some call the next LeBron James, live!

It was a raucous scene at one of the nation's most iconic college basketball stadiums, that would abruptly deflate a mere thirty-six seconds into the game, when Williamson pivoted and crumpled to the floor. As cameras zoomed in, it became apparent that one of his shoes had completely ripped apart. Williamson was able to leave without assistance and it was later revealed that he had sustained a mild knee sprain. Nonetheless, Williamson was ruled out for the remainder of the game and missed the next six games as well. Duke would fall to North Carolina 88-72, in what became a lopsided game without Duke's star player. Without Williamson, Duke would fall to Virginia Tech and North Carolina for a second time.

As word spread about Williamson's injury, people's fury turned toward Nike – the company that produced the shoes. In fact, on the day following Williamson's injury, Nike's stock dropped more than a billion dollars in value. People also blamed the rules that prohibited Williamson from making the jump right from high school to the NBA. Why should a player clearly ready to play in the NBA risk a catastrophic injury in college that could ruin his career and earning potential?

For Nike, however, the "collateral damage" of such a high-profile product failure could prove destructive to the brand. Would people stop buying Nike shoes? Would high school and college teams that wear Nike shoes demand answers? Would Nike's star endorsers continue to support the brand? These and others were legitimate questions. Immediately, Nike's crisis management team went to work. Their first step was to apologize and to ensure the public it was an isolated incident. Next, Nike sent a team of product designers and engineers to their shoe factories in China to oversee the production of shoes specifically designed for Zion Williamson.

Luckily for Nike, and for Duke, Williamson returned to the court wearing his customized Nike shoes on March 14, and scored 29 points (on 13-13 shooting) in its 84-72 victory over Syracuse in the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament. For his part, Williamson harbored no hard feelings and even publicly thanked Nike for producing his new kicks. At least for now, it looks as if Nike averted what could have become a complete disaster.

1. Which of the following best summarizes the introductory paragraph?

- The Duke University of North Carolina match-up would prove exciting
- There was a lot of anticipation for the Duke University versus University of North Carolina match-up
- Zion Williamson was one of the top college basketball players in America
- Barack Obama and other celebrities were in attendance

- 2. Which best describes the injury to Zion Williamson?**
 - a. Relatively minor
 - b. Serious
 - c. Career-threatening
 - d. Totally insignificant

- 3. What was the effect of Williamson’s injury on the Duke basketball team?**
 - a. There seemed to be little or no effect
 - b. Surprisingly, they would win their next six games
 - c. They would lose their next six games
 - d. They were clearly a lesser team without him

- 4. For which of the following questions could the answer be “the company’s stock value dropped more than a billion dollars?”**
 - a. What was the effect of the exploding shoe on the company that made them?
 - b. What was the effect of the exploding shoe on college basketball?
 - c. What was the cause of the exploding shoe?
 - d. How did the company that produced the shoe react after it exploded?

- 5. Which of the following best describes the meaning of the phrase “collateral damage” as used in the first sentence of the fourth paragraph?**
 - a. Causes and effects of the coming crisis
 - b. Physical injuries to those who wear the shoes
 - c. Financial losses as a result of the exploding shoe
 - d. Unintended side effects of the exploding shoe

- 6. Why did Nike send a team to China?**
 - a. To propose a new shoe design for Zion Williamson
 - b. To open a new shoe factory for Zion Williamson
 - c. To close the factories that made the exploding shoe
 - d. To supervise the production of shoes made especially for Zion Williamson

- 7. Which of the following debates was revived following the shoe incident?**
 - a. Should big brands such as Nike be able to sponsor college sports teams?
 - b. Should big brands such as Nike be held responsible when players get injured?
 - c. Should athletes be able to skip college and play in the NBA if they’re ready?
 - d. Should big brands such as Nike make their shoes in foreign factories?