



# ALL EARS!!

*The Litchfield Fund  
Weekly Newsletter*

“We just don’t hear it on the street, we have our ears spread across all the fields!!!!”



**Litchfield**

**As *The Madness* descends upon us**, we watch intently, bracket sheet in hand, just to see a Buzzer Beater. Less than a second on the clock! Against immense pressure, the ball is somehow inbounded. A quick turn then a full court shot! The ball arcs hopelessly into the sky! The buzzer sounds & the backboard-light flashes! But somehow, miraculously solving the difficult physics problem, the ball finds the rim & the net! The crowd erupts! The players hug & cry as you scratch a team off the bracket sheet! All because of a fantastic athlete with incredible skill who endlessly practices his game! Or is it just a matter of *luck*? *It’s Madness!*

**Good’n’Lucky:** Was it really just luck or years of preparation & practice? The variables do seem immense! An 80-foot plus toss using a 9.5” ball into an 18” circle! All the variables of timing a jump & release, under unimaginable pressure, with the crowd roaring, all while on national TV! No wonder it drives us into a *Poe-induced madness!* Philosophers, authors, politicians, generals, businessmen, coaches & athletes will tell you it’s preparation & opportunity! Yet F. Scott Fitzgerald felt there was “*nothing as obnoxious as other people’s luck!*” Perhaps that is why humans have so many symbols, signs & talismans for *Good Luck!* With St. Paddy’s Day upon us, we of course think of a 4-leaf clover, a one in 10,000 find! Horseshoes, dreamcatchers, rainbows, coins, keys, circles, bamboo plants, ladybugs & a rabbit’s foot are all lucky, except of course for the rabbit! Ancient Egypt believed scarabs were lucky! The chirp of a cricket is good luck, as a cricket stops chirping when there is danger about! So, is it better to be *good*, or *lucky*? I, for one, would prefer to be *Good’n’Lucky!*

**Industry News:** Congratulations to Jeff Grogg & all our friends at *JPG Resources*, whose *Snackwerks* venture raised \$2M in funding. Also, Mr. Grogg has partnered with *Reynolds & Company Ventures* to form *RCV Frontline Fund* to invest in emerging food & beverage companies. Switzerland’s *GP Investments*, a private equity firm, will acquire *Bravo Brio Restaurant Group* for about \$100M. Coconut water *COCO5* completed a \$1.5M raise led by *Spiral Sun Ventures* & *Loop Capital* CEO Jim Reynolds. *Clorox* will buy *Nutranext (NeoCell, Rainbow Light, etc.)* supplement brands for \$700M. *Sonoma Brands* led an \$8M round in premium skincare brand *True Botanicals* along with *Unilever* & *Cue Ball Capital*. *S2G Ventures* led a \$3.26M round in *Hazel Technologies*, which develops packet inserts for fresh produce packages that can extend the shelf life by 300%. Lead investor *VMG*, along with *Prolog Ventures, KarpReilly & RiverPark Ventures*, added \$20M to their existing stake in *Spindrifit*. *KEEN Growth Capital* has taken an undisclosed stake in organic India-style lassi & yogurt *Dahlicious*. Subscription box service *NatureBox*, having previously raised \$60M, has laid off a third of its staff & is seeking additional investment.

Amazon disclosed they will be committing \$24.2B in unconditional supplier obligations for *Whole Foods*, mostly with *United Natural Foods*. Meanwhile, *Whole Foods* is meeting with its top suppliers who are upset with changes in merchandising fees & the centralized buying. *BJ's*, *Aldi*, *Kroger*, *Walmart* & others continue to expand their delivery options. *Walmart* is adding in-store pickers to complete customer orders. Also, *Walmart* has applied for six farm tech drone patents to help improve its supply chain. The drones will identify pests attacking crops, monitor crop damage, spray pesticides & pollinate crops. *PCC* will open a new flagship market in a development at Rainier Square in downtown Seattle. *Supervalu* announced it is selling 21 *Farm Fresh* stores to *Harris Teeter*, *Kroger* & *Food Lion* for \$43M & will look to sell 17 remaining stores. *Southeastern Grocers* will close 94 stores as part of its Chapter 11 agreement with creditors. *Dollar General* will open 900 new stores & expand produce to 450 more stores as 4<sup>th</sup> QTR sales & comparables came in higher. *BevNET* reported that *Essentia* alkaline water, **The Litchfield Fund's** water of choice, had \$124M in 2017 sales & now has 60K outlets that cover 100% of the USA population. *Dean Foods* will end their contracts with more than 100 dairy operations in 8 states due to the oversupply of raw milk, plant-based beverage growth & *Walmart's* new Indiana milk facility. *Stonyfield* cofounder Gary Hirshberg is returning to the now *Lactalis*-owned company as Chief Organic Optimist to promote the brand, its initiatives & partnerships.

*Weight Watchers* will launch a new grocery store meal kit line as part of their healthy lifestyle rebrand. *Blue Apron* may expand into retail outlets to counter shrinking subscriptions. *Kraft Heinz*, through its new *Springboard* platform, has reformulated & rebranded their *Boca Burger* to be more plant-based. *Coca Cola* will release *ZICO COCO-LIXIRS* (*Lemon's Sake*, *Unbe-leaf-able* & *Turn Up the Beet*), a mix of organic coconut water & organic, cold-pressed juices. *PepsiCo's Frito-Lay* will introduce *Off the Eaten Path*, clean, better-for-you snacks made with rice, black beans & chickpeas, using the tag line *Snacks for the Curious*. *Publix*, *Sprouts Farmers Market* & *Natural Grocers* have new on-trend deli, prepacked lunch snack & appetizer offerings.

Chicago's Rush University Medical School found that eating as little as 1½ cups of lettuce daily may slow the decline of age related memory & thinking skills, with lettuce eaters' brains functioning as well as people 11 years younger. Nutrient dense leafy greens seem to stand out from other brain helpful foods, such as beans, berries & nuts. In a case of government overreach & ignoring supply & demand, Iowa is considering a law forcing stores to carry caged-eggs.

**Market News:** The Nasdaq struck record highs midweek in a choppy market. Manufacturing reached a 20-year high & consumer sentiment a 14-year high. More Americans are employed than ever before in our history, but many called in sick this week, suffering from *The Madness!*

**Seeds, Sprouts, Grow, Harvest!**

The Litchfield Fund

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