

**Thank God It's Friday!**

**February 26, 2010**



I've always hated February: Always caught the flu. Got stuck in the rain.

Shoveled snow. Slipped on ice. Watching winter on television is just my style and confirms the logic of playing Olympic Games in February. I am happy to bid farewell to February!

That said, March can be problematic too. It comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. But that's just the weather. This year investors got an advanced preview of this metaphorical March phenomenon as February actually did come in like a lion. February started-out with a freefall and battled back to end the month strong with the Dow edging higher 2.5% and the S&P 500 notching a 2.9% gain.

This past week, stocks see-sawed as investors remain cautious after seeing mixed economic reports. The disappointment over languishing home sales was offset by solid GDP growth revisions: UP 5.9% in the fourth quarter of 2009 versus the 5.7% which was initially reported. This follows our expectations that the economy IS improving but real estate pain endures. Consumers are out-to-lunch on these mixed messages from the economy. They still act unsure of the future as evidenced by the recent Consumer Sentiment Statistics which dropped to 73.6 in February versus 74.4 in January.

As we head into March, we remain poised to face myriad clouds that still hang over Wall Street in the form of Healthcare Reform, European debt debacles, gnarly geo-politics and continuing joblessness. The key ray of sun that'll produce Spring blooms is MORE JOBS. For now though, the economic groundhog suggests a few more bouts of winter for job seekers.

Mergers & Acquisitions are heating up again, which underlines the intrinsic value still found in Corporate America. This should keep a floor under the Market and suggests stocks are still cheap. Corporate earnings have been solid and we anxiously await fireworks when Apple's iPad ships. Until then, curl up by the fire, and enjoy the finale in Vancouver. It's only 6 short weeks until those 2 magic words will be shouted from coast-to-coast; "PLAY BALL!"

By Jude Bedell