

"It's been so boring around here without hockey," said 26-year-old Joshua Sheppard, who wore a B's T-shirt while manning the counter at North Station Liquors on Causeway Street. "The Bruins are a big draw to the neighborhood."

Many retailers in the area described Bruins fans as being especially loyal, more so than those who visit the Garden to watch the Boston Celtics play basketball.

And, "hockey people spend a lot more money across the board," Sheppard said.

Standing beside Sheppard and wearing a Bruins jacket, the store's owner, Smitty Patel, 37, of South Boston, estimated that sales to those who come to the area for hockey account for 10 to 15 percent of business.

Inside the Garden's shop that sells official Bruins and Celtics gear, one worker said that sales of Celtics items tend to "fluctuate based on whether they're doing good or not."

But "Bruins fans are pretty much loyal the whole way through," said the worker, who declined to give his name because he is not authorized to speak to media. "It's crazy how much money Bruins fans will spend on merchandise."

Laurel Ryan and Jen Parisi said that they often do not hold back on spending to cheer on their beloved B's.

The friends, each wearing a Bruins T-shirt, said they do not follow any other sports, rarely watch television unless they are watching hockey, and buy as many Bruins tickets as they can afford.

Ryan, 19, of Abington, showed pictures of her bedroom wall, which is plastered with Bruins memorabilia.

She held out her wrist to show off a bracelet charm of the team's spoked-B logo.

Ryan pulled out a Bruins-themed Dunkin' Donuts gift card that she said she was given during the team's 2011 Stanley Cup victory parade. She has hung onto it since, reloading money on it instead of getting a new one.

She said she had a hard time sleeping Saturday night as reports swirled that the lockout could soon end. She woke up Sunday at 7 a.m., checked Twitter, and saw a tweet from ESPN hockey columnist Pierre

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