



Small Cap Value Equity

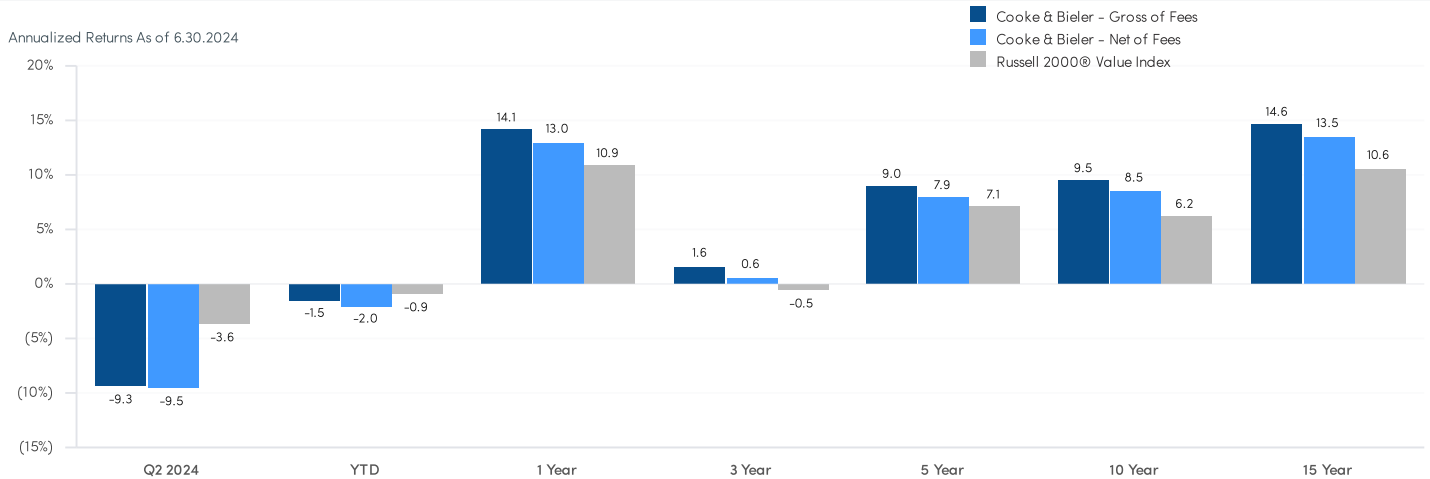
Overview

As inflation showed itself to be stubbornly persistent and interest rates appeared to weigh more heavily on the economy, investors became less optimistic in the second quarter that the Federal Reserve would be able to engineer a soft landing. Expectations for rate cuts were pushed further out and 10-year interest rates fell slightly, deepening the yield curve inversion that has held for most of the last 12 months. Large cap capitalization-weighted indices such as the S&P 500® and Russell 1000® posted solid gains for the quarter, 4.28% and 3.57%, respectively. However, these headline numbers belie the narrow nature of the advance, which was driven by a handful of mega cap stocks – primarily NVIDIA, Apple, and Alphabet – that are seen as the big winners from rapid progress in artificial intelligence. Returns across indices not dominated by those high-flyers were much less impressive. The Russell 1000® Value and S&P 500® Value indices both declined for the quarter as did mid and small cap indices regardless of style orientation. Reflecting investors’ current mindset, Utilities, a classic hedge against difficult economic times, outperformed across the capitalization spectrum while Information Technology, a seemingly impervious sector due to the demand for artificial intelligence, also generally outperformed across styles and sizes.

Portfolio Performance & Developments

Cooke & Bieler’s Small Cap Value Strategy underperformed the Russell 2000® Value Index during the quarter, posting a -9.28% return gross of fees (-9.51% net of fees) against a -3.64% return for the benchmark. Stock selection effect was the main driver of portfolio underperformance, though sector allocation effect also posed a drag. Stock selection among Consumer Discretionary holdings detracted most, with homebuilder Dream Finders Homes moving from a top contributor in Q1 to the top detractor in Q2. Winnebago and American Eagle Outfitters also weighed on results. Outside of Consumer Discretionary, Health Care and Energy holdings were additional detractors. Stock selection within Consumer Staples holdings provided a slight tailwind to results.

Small Cap Value Equity Composite Performance



Source: FactSet and Russell®

Returns greater than one year are annualized. Past performance is not indicative of future results. All investing involves risk, including loss of principal.

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Five Largest Contributors/Detractors

	Avg Weight (%)	Net Total Return (%)	Net Contrib. to Return (bps)		Avg Weight (%)	Net Total Return (%)	Net Contrib. to Return (bps)
Woodward	3.5	13.1	42	Dream Finders Homes	2.3	-41.2	-119
Enerpac Tool Group	2.5	6.8	17	Winnebago	3.4	-26.3	-101
Commerce Bancshares	2.6	5.1	15	American Woodmark	2.9	-22.9	-72
WSFS Financial	2.2	4.2	12	Dentsply Sirona	2.5	-24.7	-70
BrightView	1.2	11.5	11	American Eagle	2.6	-22.4	-63

Source: FactSet

Past performance is not indicative of future results. All investing involves risk, including loss of principal. The performance attribution is an analysis of a representative Small Cap Value institutional portfolio's net of fees return relative to the Russell 2000® Value Index. Security net total returns equal the security's gross return less the portfolio-level fee effect. Security net contributions to return are equal to the security's gross contribution to return less the security's average weight times the portfolio-level fee effect. The portfolio-level fee effect is the difference between the portfolio's gross and net of fee returns calculated using the highest published fee. The representative Small Cap Value institutional portfolio returned -9.21% net of fees and -8.97% gross of fees during the quarter. The holdings identified do not represent all of the securities purchased, sold, or recommended for Cooke & Bieler's Small Cap Value clients. To obtain the calculation's methodology and a list showing every holding's contribution to the overall account's performance during the quarter, contact your client service representative or email your request to contact@cooke-bieler.com.

Largest Contributors

Woodward (WWD), a supplier of energy and motion control systems to the aerospace and industrial industries, was the largest contributor. WWD is well positioned to benefit from the ongoing commercial aerospace recovery thanks to its strong content on narrowbody aircraft and positioning in the aftermarket. WWD's industrial segment performance has improved due to strength in on-highway natural gas engines in China as well as the current CEO's productivity improvements and SKU rationalization.

Enerpac Tool Group (EPAC), a leading global manufacturer of high pressure hydraulic tools and controlled force products, was the second-largest contributor. The current CEO continues to execute on an impressive business transformation plan that's driving structural improvements in profitability, free cash flow, and organic growth. Additionally, EPAC's conservative balance sheet provides optionality for disciplined M&A and continued share repurchases.

Commerce Bancshares (CBSH), a Missouri-based regional bank, was the third-largest contributor. In an environment where bank investors are concerned about rising deposit costs and potential losses on commercial real estate loans, CBSH posted reassuring first quarter results with relatively stable funding costs and extremely low credit costs. Management also announced the tax efficient use of a large gain on the sale of their Visa shares.

Largest Detractors

Dream Finders Homes (DFH), a top 15 U.S. homebuilder with a concentration in the Southeast, was the largest detractor. With fewer interest rate cuts now expected in 2024, along with general apprehension related to the consumer backdrop, the shares retreated from their very strong start in the first few months of the year. However, DFH reported solid progress toward its full year guidance for double-digit delivery growth, margins and community count continue to expand, and the company's land-light strategy should permit it to grow at an above-average rate for the next several years while maintaining one of the highest ROE profiles in the industry.

Winnebago (WGO), a leading North American manufacturer of recreational vehicles, was the second-largest detractor. WGO continues to operate in a soft retail environment for recreational vehicles. While the wholesale dealer destocking cycle seems largely complete within its towable division, its motorized and marine segments are still in the process of right-sizing inventory levels. Although the industry is clearly cyclical, WGO has a conservative balance sheet, is repurchasing shares, and possesses a handful of company-specific initiatives that should benefit mid-cycle earnings power as volume trends ultimately normalize.

American Woodmark (AMWD), a leading kitchen and bath cabinet manufacturer with a focus on value price points, was the third-largest detractor. AMWD delivered weak topline results during their fiscal Q4, though numbers showed improvement. Margins also declined against a very difficult comparison given start-up costs at the company's new manufacturing facilities. That said, AMWD has been progressing toward its long-term margin targets and expects volume growth in the upcoming year, giving us increased confidence in the company's long-term earnings power. Enhancing our conviction are the company's low financial leverage, ample free cash flow, and a large repurchase authorization.



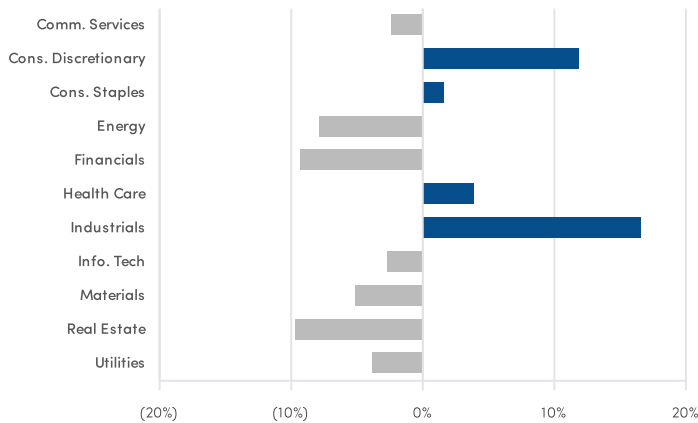


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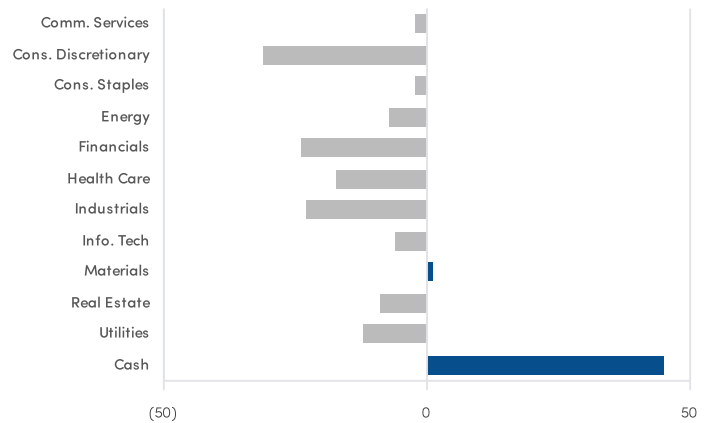
Sector Positioning

Sector allocation effect was negative during the quarter. An overweight to Consumer Discretionary, one of the worst performing sectors within the benchmark, detracted most as investors called into question the overall health of the consumer. The portfolio's underweight to Financials and overweight to Industrials also weighed on results. Conversely, an underweight to the poorly performing Materials sector provided a partial positive offset.

Avg Wt Relative to RUJ Index (%)



Allocation Effect (bps)



Source: FactSet

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Initiations

MSA Safety (MSA) is the largest pure play company in the safety and protection industry. The company's consistent focus and innovative practices, along with complementary acquisitions, leads to above industry average sales growth and the ability to increasingly attach services, connectivity, and software to its physical products. MSA's strong technology and brands, close partnerships with customers, engagement with regulating authorities, and global distribution allow the company to earn attractive returns on capital, and there is a positive mix effect as new products, detection, and connectivity and service solutions typically carry higher than company average margins.

Eliminations

BWX Technologies (BWXT) reached its price target and was eliminated.





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Outlook

With mounting trepidation among investors that the U.S. consumer backdrop is deteriorating faster than the Fed can gain traction on inflation, markets are no longer reacting favorably to negative economic developments – bad news is once again bad news. Meanwhile, valuations are becoming more compressed within Cooke & Bieler’s investable universe as positive returns elsewhere in the market have been narrowly limited to a subset of companies with increasingly demanding valuations. Said differently, we believe the outperformance of large growth stocks is unsustainable, and our portfolios are much more attractive in the long run. The current environment reminds us of past periods of sharp underperformance, including the third quarter of 2022, which have frequently marked a trough in relative performance as fundamentals reasserted themselves. Of course, this history does not guarantee a similar pattern will emerge now. Still, to ensure the portfolio is as strong as possible, we remain vigilant with scrubbing the balance sheets and economics of our current and prospective portfolio holdings, while eliminating holdings that fail to meet our exacting standards. As a result, we believe the portfolios’ holdings remain well capitalized and equipped to weather possibly adverse economic conditions, while also possessing long-term potential to compound earnings power at an above-average rate – all in the context of increasingly attractive valuations.

Sources: Bloomberg, FactSet

Past performance is not indicative of future results. All investing involves risk, including loss of principal. The material presented represents the manager’s assessment of the Small Cap Value institutional portfolio and market environment at a specific point in time and should not be relied upon by the reader as research or investment advice regarding any particular security or sector. The above commentary and portfolio attribution are based on a representative Small Cap Value institutional portfolio for the quarter ending 6/30/24. Certain client portfolios may or may not hold the securities identified above due to the respective account’s guidelines, restrictions, required cash flows, or other relevant considerations. The performance attribution is an analysis of the portfolio’s return relative to the Russell 2000® Value Index. The holdings identified do not represent all of the securities purchased, sold, or recommended for Cooke & Bieler’s Small Cap Value clients. To obtain the calculation’s methodology and a list showing every holding’s contribution to the overall account’s performance during the quarter, contact your client service representative or email your request to contact@cooke-bieler.com.

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