

**With Husband Looking On**

**Pat Caldwell Tries Out For National Women's Basketball Association**

By Jalyne Strong  
Post Staff Writer

It's pretty exciting being a spectator at a professional basketball scrimmage. There's the sound of sneakers squeaking on the hardwood floor and the incessant rhythm of the ball dribbled down court. Then, when one of the players makes a great pass followed by a fantastic move to get a shot at the hoop, your heart leaps at the swish-sound of the basketball falling through the net.

It's even more exciting when you're watching your wife play as she's trying out for the National Women's Basketball Association (NWBA).

That's what Bernard Caldwell was doing at the recent NWBA tryouts held in Charlotte's Marion Diehl Recreation Center. His wife, Patricia Walker Caldwell, was one of approximately 150 young women who were doing their basketball best to be considered for the professional league.

Wearing a red jersey, which distinguished her from the other scrimmage team in blue jerseys, Pat was making some impressive moves on the court. Sitting in the bleachers, Bernard watched silently, his anticipation evident only in his steady concentration on how well his wife was handling the ball. He smiled when Pat made a swift pass and seemed proud of the way she'd hustle down court when the play turned over. Once when narrowly saving a ball that was sailing out of court, Pat slammed into a folding table against the gymnasium wall. Bernard didn't even wince, as did all the other spectators. He probably knew, as did happen, that his wife the basketball player would jump up in a second, get right back in the game to play ball.

"Basketball is something Pat really knows how to do," Bernard points out. "I've looked forward to seeing her play seriously."

Pat has been playing serious basketball for quite some time. She was a notable freshman player at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 1978. Unfortunately, a near-fatal car accident meant she missed a year at the games. But this spunky sportswoman came back in 1980. Surprising everyone, she surpassed her previous statistics. From '80-'81, playing guard and forward positions, Pat averaged 16.6 points per game; 45 percent field goals; 64 percent free throws and over seven rebounds per game.

However, since Bernard met and



Patricia Walker Caldwell  
.....Vies for the NWBA

At the recent NWBA tryouts held in Charlotte, Bernard Caldwell watches his wife's progress on the court as other women basketball players, in background, prepare for a scrimmage. (Photo by Calvin Ferguson)

married Pat after her heyday as a college basketball star, he'd never seen his wife play with the zealotness to win.

In college, Pat was pushing to win for the UNCC 49er team. This time around she's hoping to win a spot on the NWBA's North Carolina team, the Carolina Blaze.

When a man's wife wants to play professional basketball; considering it will entail intense training, away games, tight schedules, fatigue and possible injuries; he might consider it an intrusion on their lifestyle. But Bernard has a supportive and positive attitude about his wife's ambition.

"I think it's about time for women's professional basketball," he states. "To show how incredible women athletes can be."

"I had some reservations when

because I thought we'd have to move," Bernard confesses. "But when I learned that the league headquarters were in Lake Wylie,

my reservations turned to anticipation. I had her out practicing the next day."

Bernard claims it's "great" being married to a basketball player. "She's every bit a lady—a real lady," he assures. "And it's nice being with someone who has the same interests as I do. We never argue about watching sports on TV," Bernard smiles.

He and Pat have also engaged in a couple of games of husband and wife one-on-one. "The first time I beat her. But the second time she beat me," Bernard says about the outcomes. He laughs, "I think the first time she was just making me feel good."

That most certainly could be the case, taking into account Pat's prowess on the basketball court

during the tryouts. That was the first hurdle to make it on a roster of 12 players for the Carolina Blaze. According to NWBA Commissioner Wayne Fulcher, the better players at the first tryouts will be asked back to a second round of tryouts in early August. "We haven't evaluated all the players yet. But Pat looked good," Fulcher revealed. "And it looks like she'll be invited back."

Bernard describes his wife as being "a little nervous but more excited than anything," about the NWBA.

And the competition among the women wanting to play professional ball is stiff. In all, more than 300 hopefuls converged on the four

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Pat first told me about the NWBA

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