

Just call this mom, coach, and author “Lady Magic”

BY BRIT MOTT

AT 18, **NANCY LIEBERMAN** BECAME THE YOUNGEST BASKETBALL PLAYER in Olympic history to win a medal. This fall, she is making history as the first woman to coach a men’s professional basketball team. Lieberman has taken the reins of the Texas Legends, the Dallas Mavericks’ affiliate in the NBA Development League.

At the time of this interview, Lieberman hadn’t met her team but said her relationship with them was going to be firm and fair. “I believe in 360° communication. I don’t believe in managing people out of fear.

“It’s like parenting,” she offers. “I use a lot of humor with my 16-year-old son, TJ. I’ll walk into his room and it looks like a tornado hit it. He loves hoops but when it comes to his laundry basket or garbage

can...I’m like, ‘TJ, you’re supposed to be such a great shooter. Are you kidding me? Does your coach at Plano West know this?’.... Humor with a definite point goes a long way, and you can apply that in the workforce.”

Lieberman’s book *Playbook for Success: A Hall of Famer’s Business Tactics for Teamwork and Leadership* gives women a line of defense (and offense) to score points in the workforce. She argues that sports connects women and men and puts them on the same playing field.

Lieberman has rubbed shoulders with a string of high-profile men. “Friends always ask, ‘How do you know Warren Buffet, Donald Trump, Mark Cuban...Harvey MacKay, or Larry Fitzgerald, and I’m like, ‘I probably insulted or

knowledge on how to integrate sports into their lives.”

Lieberman’s journey began on the asphalt courts of Harlem, near her native Queens, New

York. At 15, she was chosen to try out for the USA National Basketball Team, and on her way back home to New York, she had a heart-to-heart with coach Alberta Cox: “Now imagine me, a kid from Queens with my harsh New York accent...we’re in the car and Coach says, ‘Now, honey, we’re going to need you in 1980, because you’re going to be a very important part of USA basketball.’”

“I looked at her and said, ‘Yo, Coach, like, I’m not too smart or nothin’ but I do know ’76 comes before ’80, and I’m gonna be on the ’76 team, so you’d better get used to me.’”

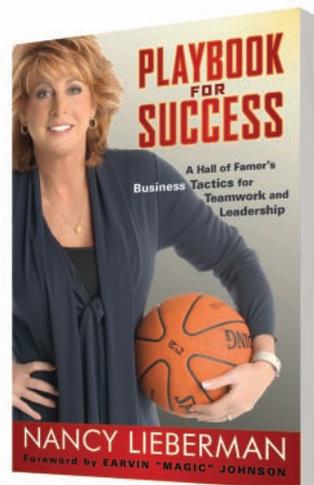
Lieberman laughs at the recollection. It was this attitude, along with her mad skills on the court, that earned her a silver medal at the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal.

She received a full athletic scholarship to Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, and drove the Lady Monarchs to two National Championships and a WNIT Championship. She also became the first two-time winner of the Wade Trophy, which recognizes the “Player of the Year” in women’s college basketball.

Lieberman’s professional career began with the Dallas Diamonds of the Women’s Basketball League, where she led her team to the WABA Championship and captured the title of League Most Valuable Player.

Another highlight of Lieberman’s career, as told so vividly in her book, was in 1993 when she played one-on-one with three-time NBA Most Valuable Player (and three-time World Champion) Michael Jordan. Her witnesses? Three hundred kids at a basketball camp. Lieberman was giving a lecture on a jab-and-go move when Jordan challenged her to a game.

My first thought was, “You’ve got to be kidding me! Why would he want to humble me in front of 300



Basketball Hall of Famer **Nancy Lieberman**, also known as “Lady Magic,” is head coach of the Texas Legends. Profile photo/Mike Newman

made fun of them somewhere,” she laughs. “No, there’s a respect there, but sports has been the equalizer.”

Did you know, according to the author, that we spend over \$20 billion a year on tickets to sporting events? We spend over \$90 billion on sports equipment, which is double what we spend on books.

“Of course, my book is not filtered into that,” Lieberman reverts, then laughs. “[To achieve success,] women have to have some working

EVENT INFO • The Texas Legends season opener is Sunday, November 21 against the Rio Grande Valley Vipers. The home opener at Dr Pepper Arena in Frisco is Tuesday, November 30 against the Austin Toros. [Visit nba.com/dleague/texas/](http://www.visitnba.com/dleague/texas/).

kids? But he was using our game as a teaching tool."

The game is now a teaching tool in Lieberman's book. "The minute I said I would play Michael, I became a winner," she said. "How many times in life, in the workplace, have we not accepted a challenge? I accepted his challenge and I raised my level of performance."

The score? Find out in *Playbook for Success* and note, Lieberman calls it "the best points I ever scored in my career."

After playing with the Phoenix Mercury in the WNBA, Lieberman was named General Manager and Head Coach of the Detroit Shock in 1998, where she helmed the team to the highest winning percentage of any expansion team in professional sports and was runner-up for coach of the year. A year later, she was inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame.

Her achievements go beyond the scope of this article, but who can forget July 24, 2008, when Lieberman came out of retirement to play for the Detroit Shock? At 50 years old, the move propelled her into history as the oldest player in the WNBA, breaking the previous record of 39 years old, which she established as a member of the Phoenix Mercury in 1997.

Today, Lieberman's eyes are not only focused on the Texas Legends but also on the Nancy Lieberman Foundation, and of course, there are a few "tornados" to dodge at home. How does she balance motherhood and a career? "It's easy. I make sure that every day starts and ends with being a mom. If I do that, then everything else falls into place."

Visit nancylieberman.com. 

excerpt

From *Playbook for Success*

The connection between sports and success is undeniable: Women who competed are far more likely to be successful in the workplace. They have confidence, they learned how to improve their existing talents, and they know how to turn their weaknesses into strengths.



read more of this excerpt on planoprofile.com

MARILOFF

D I A M O N D S

Jewelry Repair • Engagement Rings • Pendants
Earrings • Bracelets • Custom Remounts

Now Open in
Frisco!



1377 Legacy Drive, Ste. 105 • Frisco • Monday - Friday 10am-6pm

214-618-7800 • www.mariloff.com/frisco

WITH THIS COUPON RECEIVE FREE CLEANING
POLISH & RHODIUM

Family Medicine Associates of Texas, P.A.



Christina Thompson, M.D.



Gregory C. Moran, M.D.



Wes L. Hester, MD



Marla J. Lehmann, PA-C.

It's time to schedule your flu shot.

- The treatment of minor illnesses and major chronic disease such as asthma, diabetes, heart problems, high blood pressure and depression.
 - Programs in exercise, nutrition, wellness, health promotion, disease prevention, smoking cessation.
 - Board Certified in Family Practice

6300 W. Parker Road, #G20
Plano, TX 75093
972-981-8181

4333 N. Josey Lane, #302
Carrollton, TX 75010
972-394-8844

www.TexasMedicine.com