

SPORTS

Philly couple launches hoops board game

Game incorporates offensive, defensive moves of basketball players

By Ayana Jones

Special to Sentinel-Voice

PHILADELPHIA (NNPA)—On a boyhood whim, Wallace A. Ford Jr. came up with the concept for a basketball card game at the age of 12.

Twenty-one years later Ford has teamed up with his wife, Tracey J. Quarles-Ford, to market his creation under the title, "You Can't Check Me."

Ford first launched his home-based business, You Can't Check Me LLC, in Yeadon, Pa., in December 2002 as a clothing line featuring T-shirts with his designs and sports-like phrases. Now the basketball card game is the centerpiece of the business.

Geared towards children 8 and up, the card game was designed to capture the fast-paced nature of basketball. The game incorporates the offensive and defensive moves that players traditionally make on the court.

Elements of the game include cards featuring basketball terms and moves, a game coin, score sheets and game rules.

You Can't Check Me offers players educational components and promotes positive competitiveness.

"There are so many games and things that are out there that are so violent and don't have a lot of educational value and don't really promote social interaction between children," said Quarles-Ford, president and CEO of the company.

For Quarles-Ford, a 31-year old native of Norristown, designing the game was the easiest part of the process. Ford, a Southwest Philadelphia native, has a background as a graphic designer and has a degree in multimedia and Web design from the Art Institute of Philadelphia. Getting a trademark for the name and logo was just the first step.

"The hardest part was finding a manufacturer," Ford admitted. However, he persevered and hooked up with a Michigan-based printing company, DeLano Service Inc., to produce and package 5,000 games.

According to Ford, he and his wife have pumped about \$40,000 into their business venture thus far.

Ford officially introduced

his game to the scene during the International Toy Fair held in February in Manhattan, N.Y. The husband-and-wife team has been marketing the game at basketball tournaments and community-based events.

The "You Can't Check Me" game can also be found in select stores in Pennsylvania, Georgia, New York and Massachusetts. In the Philadelphia area the game can be found at Why Be Board? in Manayunk and Spa Bavu in Old City. The game and tee shirts are also available through their Web site www.youcantcheckme.com.

The biggest obstacle that the company must face now is dealing with parents who are concerned that their chil-

dren will not be responsive to a card game at a time when there is a saturation of video games on the market.

"Most parents are under the misconception that their children won't play a card game, that they're only into video games," Ford remarked.

After introducing various children to the game by visiting schools and tournaments, Ford has first hand knowledge of how children will take to the new product. "If you love basketball, you love basketball to the degree that you'll play it in any form or fashion," he says.

The Fords want to offer children a positive outlet to have fun as they banter back and forth like athletes do

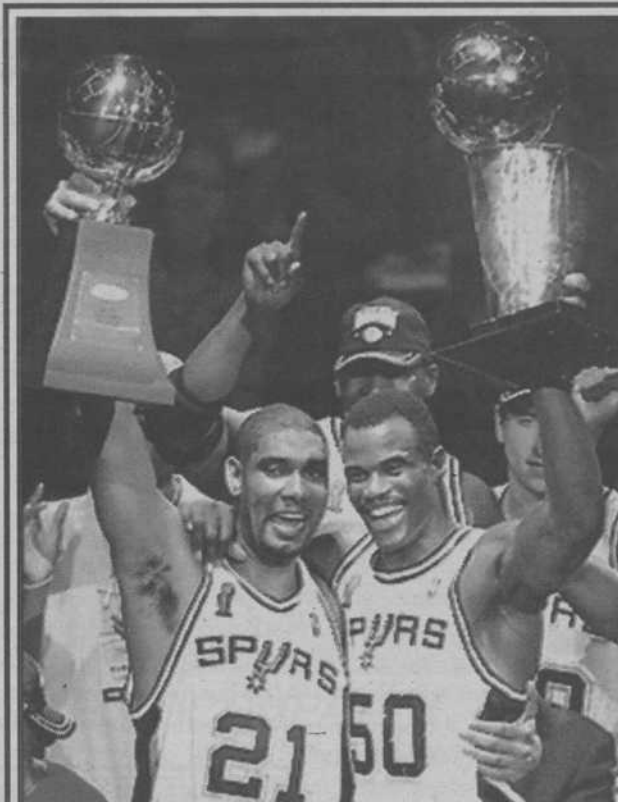
while handling the ball.

"It encourages you to use the phrase, 'you can't check me' but it discourages any type of profanity," he explained.

The couple plans to expand their business to include more sports apparel and add games with football, baseball, hockey and soccer themes to their product line.

"You Can't Check Me is not just a basketball theme per say, it's an attitude about whatever you do," Ford says. "I want You Can't Check Me to be a household name," Ford commented. "I want people feeling the attitude. I want this game to be a game in the household."

Ayana Jones writes for The Philadelphia Tribune.



TWIN TOWERS

San Antonio Spurs Tim Duncan (L) holds the MVP trophy as teammate David Robinson holds the NBA Championship trophy after the Spurs defeated the New Jersey Nets, 88-77 during Game 6 of the NBA Finals on Sunday in San Antonio, Texas.



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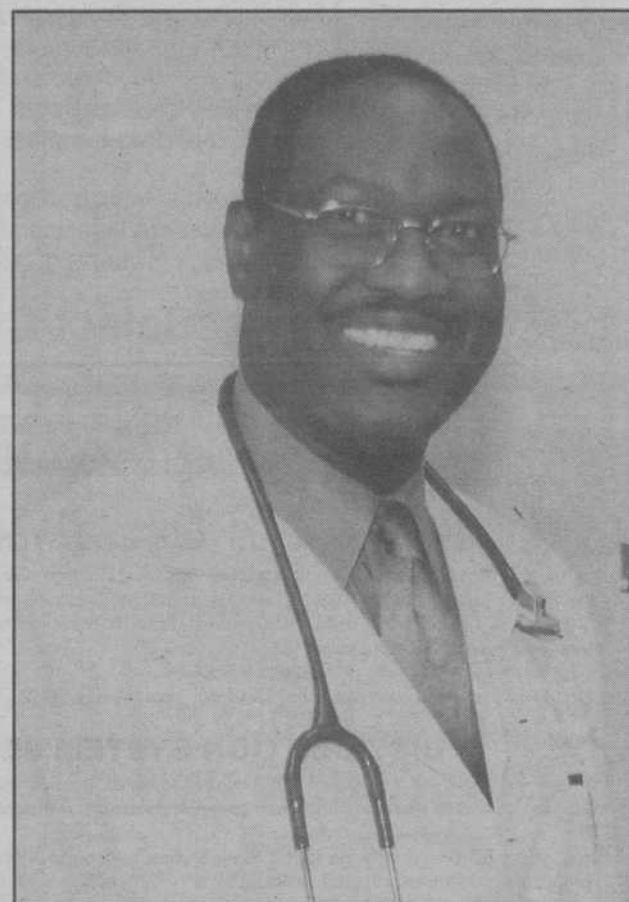


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