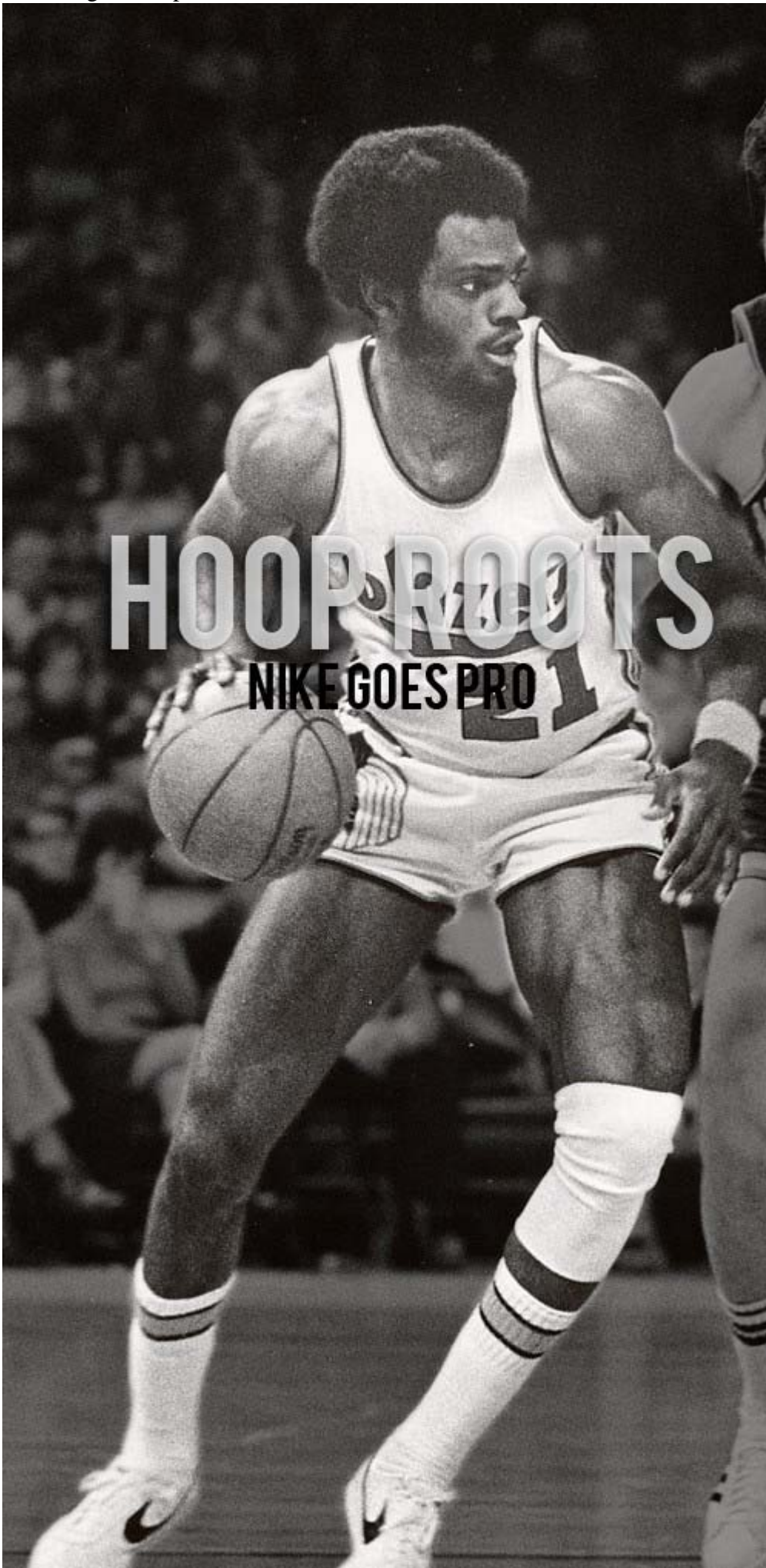


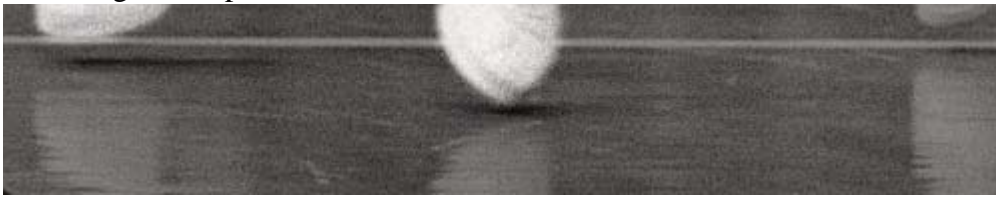
# Department of Nike Archives

- [Stories](#)
- [Artifacts](#)
- [Collections](#)
- [Shoebox](#)
- [Search](#)
  
- [About](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

## Hoop Roots: Nike Goes Pro / Front Page

- [01 Front Page](#)
- [02 The Foundation](#)
- [03 The First Shoes](#)
- [04 Opening The Club](#)
- [05 Road Games](#)
- [06 Expansion Team](#)
- [07 Service Matters](#)
- [08 It Wasn't The Shoes](#)
- [09 Posterized](#)





# The Foundation

## Nike's First Decade in the NBA

In the early 1970s, March was not yet Mad, Michael Jordan was in elementary school and Blue Ribbon Sports was a running shoe company. Track and field was Phil Knight's first love; tennis was his second, but Knight knew his company's new Nike footwear line needed to include a sport involving 10 men, an orange ball and (at least for a decade or two) tiny shorts.

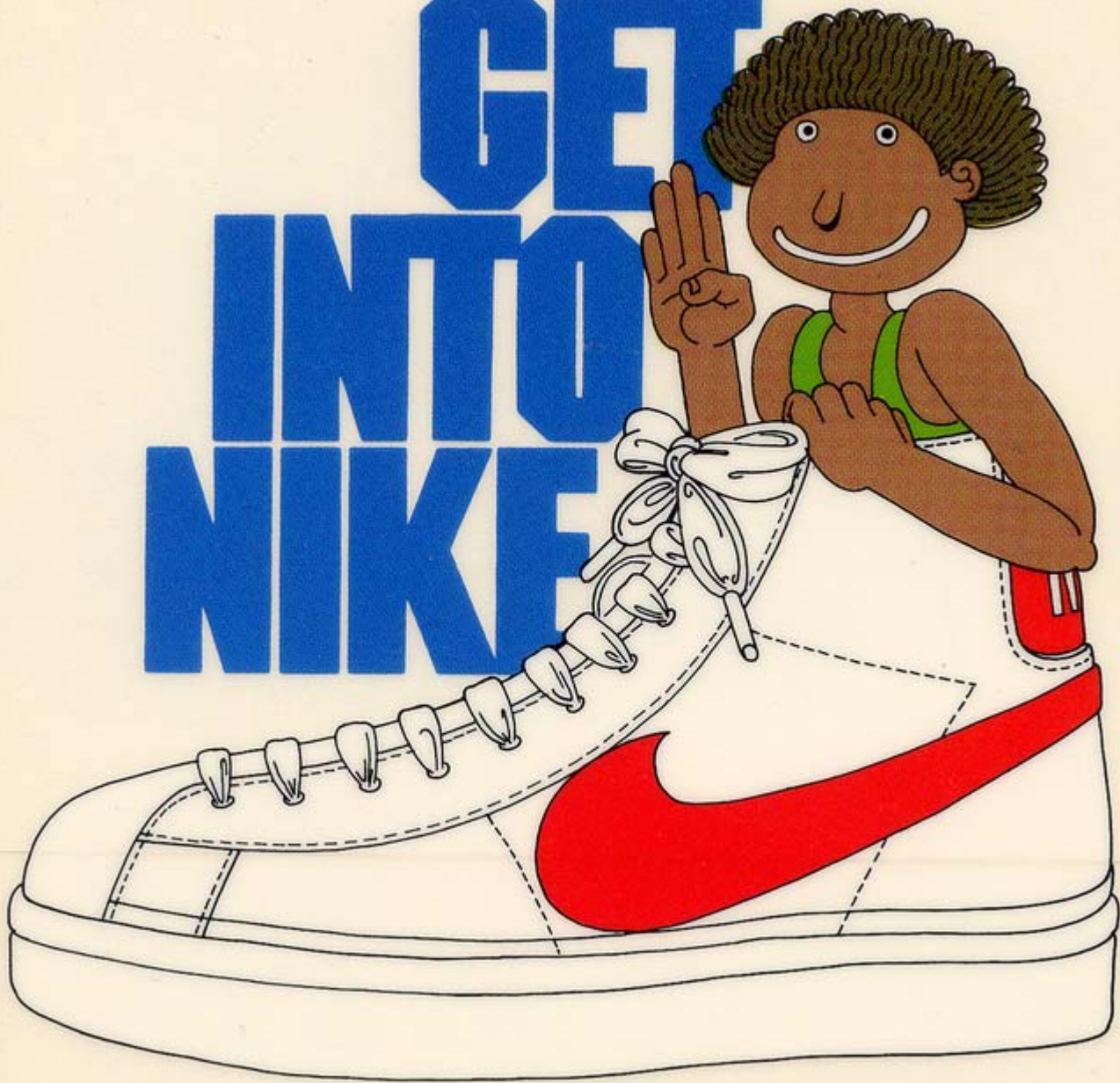
Knight understood what many others would later discover: Basketball is a perfect sport to showcase shoes. Unlike track and field, NBA players' shoes are easily visible to fans in the stands and on TV. Unlike football, there are only 10 total players on the court to focus on, and unlike cleats, basketball shoes can also be worn as everyday street wear.

But by the time Blue Ribbon Sports was in a position to look beyond the track, Knight wasn't the only one who saw opportunity on the basketball court. For decades prior to the late 1960s, Converse's canvas shoe, the Chuck Taylor All-Star, was the universal shoe of choice. In the early 1970s adidas began offering leather basketball shoes, and Pro-Keds and Puma, which popularized suede basketball sneakers in 1972, were also major players in the game.

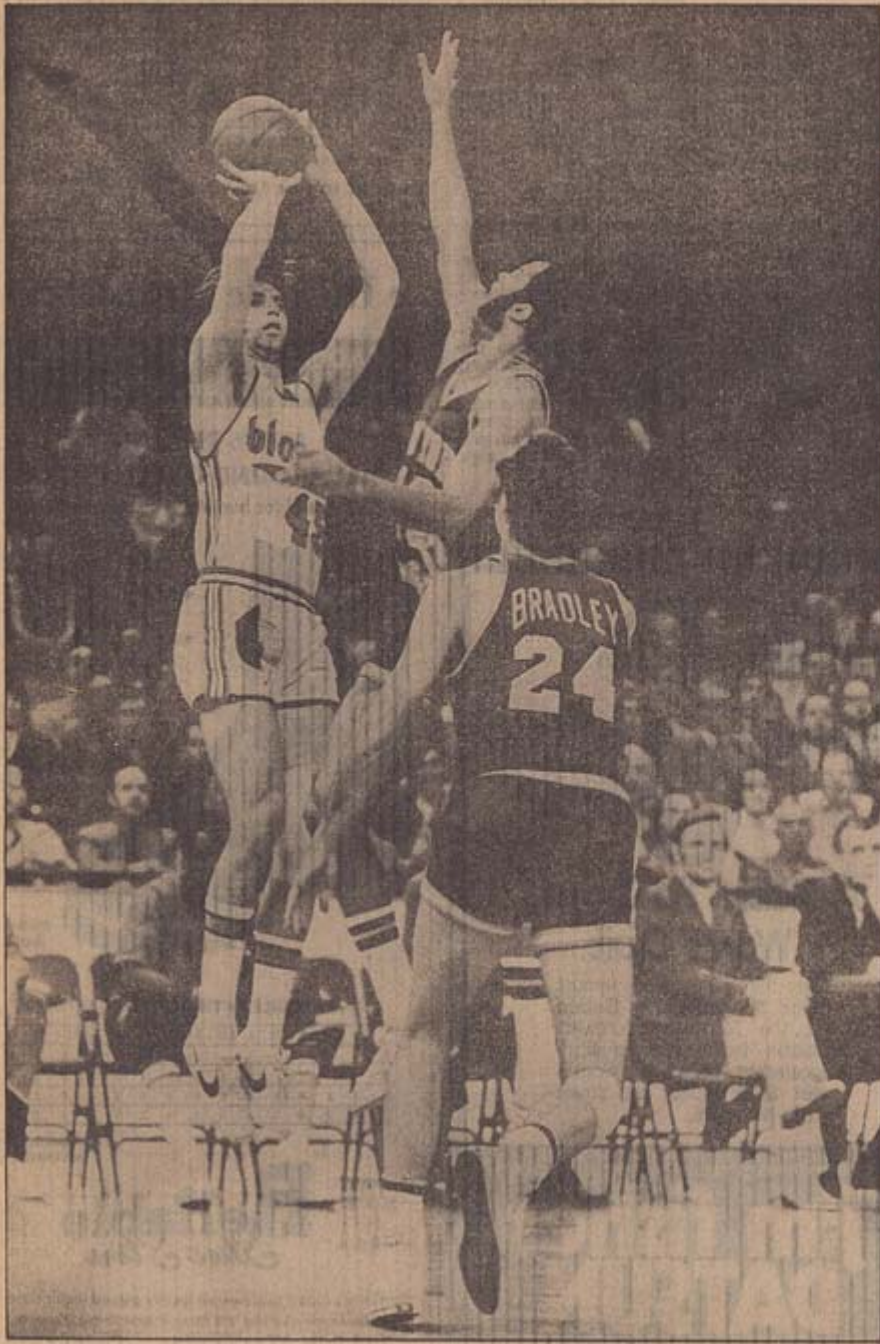
adidas had a major impact with its Superstar shoe, and by the mid-1970s, it claimed to have about 80% of the players in their shoes. But for the most part, the basketball field was open for business. Save for a few big names, NBA players were happy to receive free equipment for their services, and when they were paid, it was next to nothing. The first player selected in the 1976 draft, John Lucas, was paid \$1,500 by Converse to wear their shoes, while at the same time, tennis pro Stan Smith earned more than \$200,000 a year endorsing adidas shoes.

That would soon change. In the early 1970s, Knight tipped off Nike's entry onto the NBA hardwood, which involved a Club of Pros, an assortment of shoes, and a serious infusion of cash.

**GET  
INTO  
NIKE**







what's so great  
about nike sport shoes?

ASK A PRO WHO WEARS THEM! geoff petrie, outstanding player with the portland trailblazers, will be in the boys shoe department at our lloyd center store tomorrow, september 8, from 9:30-10:30 a.m.; at our eastport plaza store from 11-12. he'll be happy to sign autographed action photographs for trailblazer fans, and answer questions about athletic footwear in general, and specifically, nike shoes. what's so great about nike . . . why not ask a pro tomorrow? be sure and see our line of nikes. available downtown, lloyd center, eastport plaza.

nordstrom  
UOLQZTLOW

# HOT & NASTY

**ILIE NASTASE**  
 WINNER BRITISH OPEN  
 WINNER FRENCH OPEN  
 WINNER ITALIAN OPEN

The World's Hottest Tennis Pro wears "Nasty Nikes" on his feet when up against the best of competition.



FREE: 3 tennis balls with purchase of a pair of Nasty Nikes.

- ★ Nike Tennis Shoes
- ★ Add-In Tennis Apparel
- ★ Hot-Colored Liberty Action Sportsuits at

**the athletic department**

855 OLIVE OPEN FROM 9:30 A.M. - 7 P.M. MON.-FRI.  
 SAT. 9:30 TO 5:30 • PHONE 343-5010

Some people call it a tennis shoe . . .  
 We recognize it for what it really is!

The finest Marathon and Road Flat in the World!



### THE NIKE NYLON OBORI —

- Race-Bred and worn by the winners of:
1. BAA Marathon, Boston
  2. Trails End Marathon, Seaside
  3. Western Hemisphere, Marathon Culver City.

The Nylon Obori is sold at the Athletic Dept. whose staff has over 80 years of combined running competition and experience to back up their recommendation.

Her husband, Jeraman, was in charge of the mill's operation.

## FOR CROSS COUNTRY TRAINING

**cortez**  
 Originally designed in the mid-1960s by Bill Bowerman, the 1972 U.S. Olympic Coach and coach of more than 200 elite runners, the CORTAZ was a new approach in long distance training shoes. The CORTAZ combined a thick, long-wearing rubber sole with a full length wedge insole to absorb road shock and reduce leg fatigue; a soft rubber heel wedge automatically kept the heel off the ground and reduced the strain on the Achilles tendon. The resulting shoe made a significant contribution to long distance running by reducing the incidence of foot and leg injuries among high mileage runners.



**the athletic department**

855 OLIVE OPEN FROM 9:30 A.M. - 7 P.M. MON.-FRI.  
 SAT. 9:30 TO 5:30 • PHONE 343-5010

**THE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT**  
 Open From 9:30 A.M. - 7 P.M. Mon.-Fri. - 9:30 A.M. - 5:30 P.M. Sat.  
 855 Olive Phone 343-5010

## NIKE Great new shoes

**BASKETBALL**



Worn by great new players. The NBA's youngest and finest players are switching to Nike. The 1971 co-rookie of the year, Geoff Petrie, and the NBA 1972 rookie of the year, Sidney Wicks, both wear Nike basketball shoes.

These great young players are entrusting their jumping, their very livelihood to us on the market. We have enjoyed our two fine players and are constantly assisting help improve the shoes that they are wearing with a steady stream of new shoes.

**THE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT**  
 Open From 9:30 A.M. - 7 P.M. Mon.-Fri. - 9:30 A.M. - 5:30 P.M. Sat.

The Athletic Department Print Ads Featuring Ilie Nastase and Geoff Petrie



# The First Shoes

## Lacing Up The Bruin and Blazer

The first pros to wear Nike basketball shoes were Portland Trail Blazers Geoff Petrie and Sidney Wicks, both of whom wore Bruin prototypes during the 1972 season. Although not under contract with Blue Ribbon Sports, Wicks and Petrie wore prototype Nike Bruins during a 133-86 drubbing of the New York Knicks at Portland's Memorial Coliseum. *The Oregonian* published a photograph of Wicks driving on Phil Jackson with the Nike Swoosh clearly visible on Wicks' feet, believed to be the first time an athlete wearing a Nike shoe is shown in the media.

Wicks won NBA Rookie of the Year honors that year, and Petrie, who Nike's 1973 catalog declared "tests dozens of shoes in season and out," enjoyed two 51-point games in 1972-1973. Petrie would sign an endorsement contract with Blue Ribbon Sports to wear Nike shoes, while Wicks opted to switch to another brand.



The Blazer, a high-top, was named after the local NBA franchise, which joined the league in 1970. The low-cut Bruin's moniker came from the best college basketball team in the country, John Wooden's UCLA Bruins.

Both models were essentially taken "off the shelf" from Nippon Rubber, a Japanese factory, meaning Nike made essentially no design modifications other than to affix the Swoosh trademark.

Products of the autoclave (a massive oven that heated cemented the upper and rubber outsole together), the sneakers did feature a few design elements of note: Spenco insoles, full grain leather uppers, ankle and blister protection and an extra layer of rubber on the front toe piece to guard against drag.

By the 1973-74 basketball season, the Bruin was available in five colors (red, royal blue, green, gold and natural) and the Blazer in three (red, royal blue and green). But they weren't problem-free. According to the book *Swoosh*, in the early days, Bruin suedes would stain carpets and white Bruins were blowing apart consistently. Even a few years after their first release, the shoes worn by North Eugene High's defending state champions had to be reglued three times.





**Nike Bruin Suede****Nike Blazer High Suede from the Blue Ribbons Collection**

In those early days, Blue Ribbon Sports wasn't exactly leading the industry in terms of research and development when it came to basketball. As the company moved from autoclave production to stitched cupsoles, the shoes got lighter, but they still weren't state of the art.

"The majority of the shoes we put into the marketplace were just at parity with market," said early developer Kirk Richardson. "If you look at the cupsole Bruins that were an evolution of the autoclave Bruin... and the Blazer, again, moving from autoclave and canvas to leather and then to cupsole, they were just incremental improvements on average. From how the product was being sold and placed in the marketplace, I think as a company, we were taking the path of least resistance."



## Geoff Petrie Adds an Assist

Portland Trail Blazer Geoff Petrie did more than run the floor in Nike shoes. He also could work a room, as seen at this appearance at a Blue Ribbon Sports booth.

## Opening The Club

### The Nike Pro Club: A New Take On An Old Game

Aside from Geoff Petrie and Sidney Wicks of the Portland Trail Blazers, Blue Ribbon Sports' early Nike basketball marketing efforts were scattershot. BRS enjoyed a bump when promo man John Phillips arranged for several Golden State Warriors to wear Nike shoes in the 1974-75 season, which culminated with the Warriors' winning the NBA championship.

But Phil Knight knew he needed to make a bigger splash. He believed the successful model of the company's efforts in track and field, where the elite athlete is the best possible spokesman, advertiser and driver of sales and innovation, could be applied to basketball. Knight envisioned signing a group of high-profile NBA players who would wear Nike basketball shoes and, hopefully, inspire a young generation of hoops fans to follow suit.

The group, first dubbed the NBA Club and soon to be known as the Pro Club, began to form in late 1974. On December 30, 1974, Knight sent a memo to Phillips that consisted of a wish list of 15 names, based not only on talent but what market they were in. "To the outside observer this makes little sense," wrote Knight. "Obviously, Jim Price is as good as Lucius Allen. Allen, however, is more important than Price or Earl Monroe or Phil Chenier because he is in a critical market area [Los Angeles] that we are zeroing in on."

By late March, 1975, Nike had signed nine players to a two-year agreement: Elvin Hayes, Spencer Haywood, Rudy Tomjanovich, Alvan Adams, Phil Chenier, Charlie Scott, Paul Silas, Lucius Allen and Austin Carr. Nike execs hoped the 10th player would be Earl Monroe, with John Drew in mind as a backup, and indeed, Drew became the 10th and final member of the Original Pro Club roster.

The players were wooed not only by the fact that they'd actually get paid to wear Nike shoes (at a clip of about \$2,500 a year) but also by the promise of a free, all-expenses paid trip each summer to thank them for their loyalty. The first trip was a golfing/tennis affair to SunRiver resort near Bend, Oregon in August of 1975.

In 1977, faced with increased pressure from other companies, Knight sweetened the pot and instituted a royalty pool that gave each of the members an equal share in a fund that grew by 20 cents with each basketball pair sold. The theory was simple: as the company grew, the pool grew, and everyone benefited. "It was like man, that is amazing," Tomjanovich told DNA. "We get a good shoe and they're going to take care of us and make sure it fits well, and then give us some money, too? That was pretty cool."

In the fiscal year that closed May 31, 1975, Blue Ribbon Sports' \$8 million in sales included \$2 million in basketball shoes. In 1978, Nike had grown to fourth in the industry, and its basketball business was doubling every year. And just as the plan had dictated, as Nike grew, so did the player's checks.

In 1977, each player received about \$12,400. A year later, that figure was up to \$29,330, and by 1980 it was \$45,230. "Those checks started becoming bigger and it was like we'd died and gone to heaven," said Tomjanovich.

In 1981, as Nike's popularity skyrocketed, so did the royalty deal. It was estimated to be \$61,240 a player, based on a Pro Club that included 27 members, not the original 10. "I think we really felt special that we were the guys picked for the group, and that it was a privilege," said Tomjanovich. "And then the company kept getting more and more recognized. To be a part of that is something to be proud of."



# *nike* NEWS

FALL 1975

A REPORT OF CURRENT EVENTS IN THE NIKE WORLD

VOL. 2, NO. 1

## THE NEWEST TEAM IN TOWN — NIKE'S NBA CLUB

"Tonight's starting line-up: Elvin Hayes, Spencer Heywood, Rudy Tomjanovich, Phil Chenier and Charlie Scott." What coach doesn't dream of a starting line-up like that? This dream team is the newest team in town: The NIKE NBA Club. How can you top that? Well, add John Drew of Atlanta, Paul Silas of Boston, Lucius Allen of Los Angeles, and Austin Carr of the Cleveland Cavaliers, and you have the toughest team in town. In fact, the toughest team in the world. That's NIKE's NBA Club.

famous Sun River resort in Oregon. Here they got to view Oregon's beautiful countryside without looking through a constant sheet of rain.

The world's best basketball players stake their skills and their careers on the performance of their NIKE shoes. But the NIKE NBA Club represents just part of the continuing success of the NIKE basketball shoe line. Demand for the NIKE "Bruin" and "Blazer Hi-Top" models has been so great that Blue

Ribbon Sports has introduced a new series called the "MVP". The "MVP" brings a new dimension to basketball shoes, with a new, patented "brick" sole design for superior cushioning and durability, along with a sturdy, comfortable cotton mesh upper. The newest team in town depends on the innovations from NIKE — one more reason why many champion athletes are changing to NIKE during the seventies.

(continued on p. 2)



Lucius Allen of the Los Angeles Lakers displays a mean forehand, while Atlanta's John Drew and friends go fishing.

Blue Ribbon Sports' President, Phil Knight, initiated the idea and John Phillips, NBA Public Relations Director for NIKE, went into action. By June the NIKE NBA Club, including the top players in professional basketball, was formed.



The easy part was convincing these top players to join. The quality and performance of NIKE shoes was reason enough. The toughest problem was getting the players and their families together for a one week vacation at the

Blue Ribbon Sports  
6175 S.W. 112 th  
Beaverton, Oregon 97005

BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO.  
106  
Beaverton, Ore.



1979 NBA Nike Pro Club Logo Sheet

This logo sheet reflects Nike's logo choices for the 1979 Pro Club: a Swoosh and a roaring lion.





## Jam Session from Hawaii

“Jam Session was shot in Maui at a high school, and I recall the startled looks on a few kids that were around on an August day as the buses pulled up,” said Nike baseball sports marketing director Bill Frishette.

“Nike paid for two weeks of partying in Hawaii - some of the players even brought their in-laws and grandparents,” said photographer Chuck Kuhn. “One of the reasons we were there to shoot a poster was so Nike could write off at least some of the trip as an advertising expense.”





## Pro Club Members

**Just who was in the Pro Club, and when? According to sources and internal documents, here are some lists during various points of the club's 10-year span.**

- March 21, 1975: 10 members—Elvin Hayes, Spencer Haywood, Rudy Tomjanovich, Alvan Adams, Phil Chenier, Charlie Scott, Paul Silas, Lucius Allen, Austin Carr, John Drew
- March, 1977: 12 members—Elvin Hayes, Spencer Haywood, Rudy Tomjanovich, Alvan Adams, Phil Chenier, Charlie Scott, Lucius Allen, Austin Carr, John Drew, Phil Smith, Paul Westphal, Adrian Dantley
- Summer, 1979: 21 members—Alvan Adams, Austin Carr, Phil Chenier, Robert Dandridge, Artis Gilmore, Lionel Hollins, Calvin Murphy, Campy Russell, Paul Westphal, Gus Williams, Bernard King, Rudy Tomjanovich, Phil Smith, Truck Robinson, Elvin Hayes, Maurice Lucas, Lloyd Free, Dennis Johnson, John Drew, Spencer Haywood, George Gervin
- 1980-81 season: 32 members—Alvan Adams, Austin Carr, Bill Cartwright, Darryl Dawkins, John Drew, Lloyd Free, George Gervin, Artis Gilmore, Darrell Griffith, Elvin Hayes, Lionel Hollins, Dennis Johnson, Larry Kenon, Bernard King, Maurice Lucas, Calvin Murphy, Moses Malone, Norm Nixon, M.R. Richardson, Truck Robinson, Dan Roundfield, Campy Russell, Rudy Tomjanovich, Paul Westphal, Scott Wedman, Ray Williams, Robert Parish, Reggie Theus, Phil Smith, Gus Williams, Bob Dandridge, Mychal Thompson
- January, 1984: 28 members—defined as players whose sneaker contracts pay them a minimum of \$30,000 a year.

# Road Games

## Inside the Pro Club's Summer Trips

The Pro Club's royalties were the biggest perk, but far from the only one. When Phil Knight formed the Pro Club in 1975, he brainstormed the idea of an annual summer getaway that would reward the players and allow them to build relationships with the staff—strengthening company ties even further. And as the years went on, so did the size and scale of the trips.

Usually taking place the second week of August, the Pro Club trips spared no expense. First-class accommodations for players, family members, and sometimes even extended family members was the norm. Players would arrive at their hotel rooms and find Nike gear laid out for them for the week, alongside an itinerary that included golf, tennis, hula lessons, fishing—anything but basketball. “I was a city guy, so being on horseback on the side of a mountain—that was pretty cool,” said Rudy Tomjanovich.

The first trip took place in August of 1975 in SunRiver (near Bend, Oregon), but Knight soon realized they needed venues with an exotic pull. Trips to Hawaii became common, and the group even made a jaunt to Mallorca, Spain, in 1982. In the early days, as is common in Nike lore, things were wild and alcohol fueled—ad exec Denny Strickland remembers breaking into a pool at 2 a.m. with Knight and a bunch of players to go swimming.

In Sun Valley, Idaho, Rudy Tomjanovich remembers the night winding down and players heading to bed when they got a knock on their doors. “It's Phil saying, ‘Grab your broom, we've got a hockey match.’ Everybody runs down to the skating rink with just our shoes, and we're running around and sliding, playing with a tennis ball and brooms. That was pretty cool.”





## Nike Pro Club Sunburst Polo



### Nike Pro Club Cap

The trips served precisely the purpose Knight had hoped. “It was like Nike was the underdog and going to take over the world,” said Strickland. “Even the players thought they were something special because they wore Nike.”

“I just thought it was great that you actually felt like it was a family outing, with relatives who’d been together every year. That was really, really nice,” said Tomjanovich. (Even though there are internal memos referencing George Gervin and Paul Westphal getting special treatment, it appears that most riffs or jealousies among the Pro Club members were kept to a minimum.)

Sometimes a little business even got done on the trips. The crew met for an hour or so to talk new shoe releases, measure feet and give feedback, and it also afforded an opportunity to do some marketing. Strickland’s ad agency, John Brown & Partners, took advantage of the gathered masses to shoot group posters, most notably Nike’s hit Supreme Court poster, which was taken on a golf course in Reno.

But really the trips were all about enjoying the company's successes, together. "The meetings were for [Nike], they weren't for the players," said Maurice Lucas. Strickland, who went on a couple of the early trips, said, "Half those guys got so loaded at night that the next day some of them would show up for the meeting and some of them wouldn't."



In 1982, the Pro Club went to Mallorca, Spain, in conjunction with the World Cup and Nike soccer efforts. There were two exhibition games, in Madrid and Barcelona, including one against the Spanish National team, but reported off-court hijinks that involved the Spanish police overshadowed the trip. "That was one of the downfalls," said Maurice Lucas. "Phil had probably had enough by then."

Indeed, after that trip, the Pro Club trips were discontinued, though several NBA players were invited to join the college coaches trip, which continues to this day.



## Membership Had Its Privileges

**Each August, Nike took their big name pros on an all expense paid trip to a warm, sunny locale.**

- 1975: Sun River. Activities include fishing, tennis.
- 1976: Sun River. Activities include tennis, golf, horseback riding.
- 1977: Maui.
- 1978: Sun Valley, Idaho
- 1979: Reno. Shot the Supreme Court Poster during the trip.
- 1980: Molokai. Activities included charter boat fishing, hula lessons, golf tournament, softball.
- 1981: Wailea Beach, Maui.
- 1982: Palma de Mallorca, Spain. The trip involved two exhibition games, one of which was against the Spanish National team.



## PHIL KNIGHT ON THE COURT

Phil Knight was a regular presence at the Nike Pro Club's summer vacation, and on at least one occasion went toe-to-toe with the NBA's best. Here he is (in hat), on a Hawaiian court.



## Expansion Team

### Nike Builds Its Roster

While the Pro Club was gaining steam, Nike had already decided to expand its player portfolio beyond a few select players. John Morgan, Nike's first sports marketing head, remembers meeting with Knight, promo man John Phillips and a few others at a hotel along the Columbia River and discussing whom to sign to individual contracts.

The first was the Detroit Pistons' Kevin Porter. "It escalated very quickly," recalled Morgan. "We signed him for \$2,500 and before the year was out, I remember we had eight to 10 players on the contract." (Memories can be cloudy, however; another source says that by 1977 Nike had 45 pro players under contract, though it's unclear if all received a stipend or some were merely given free product.)

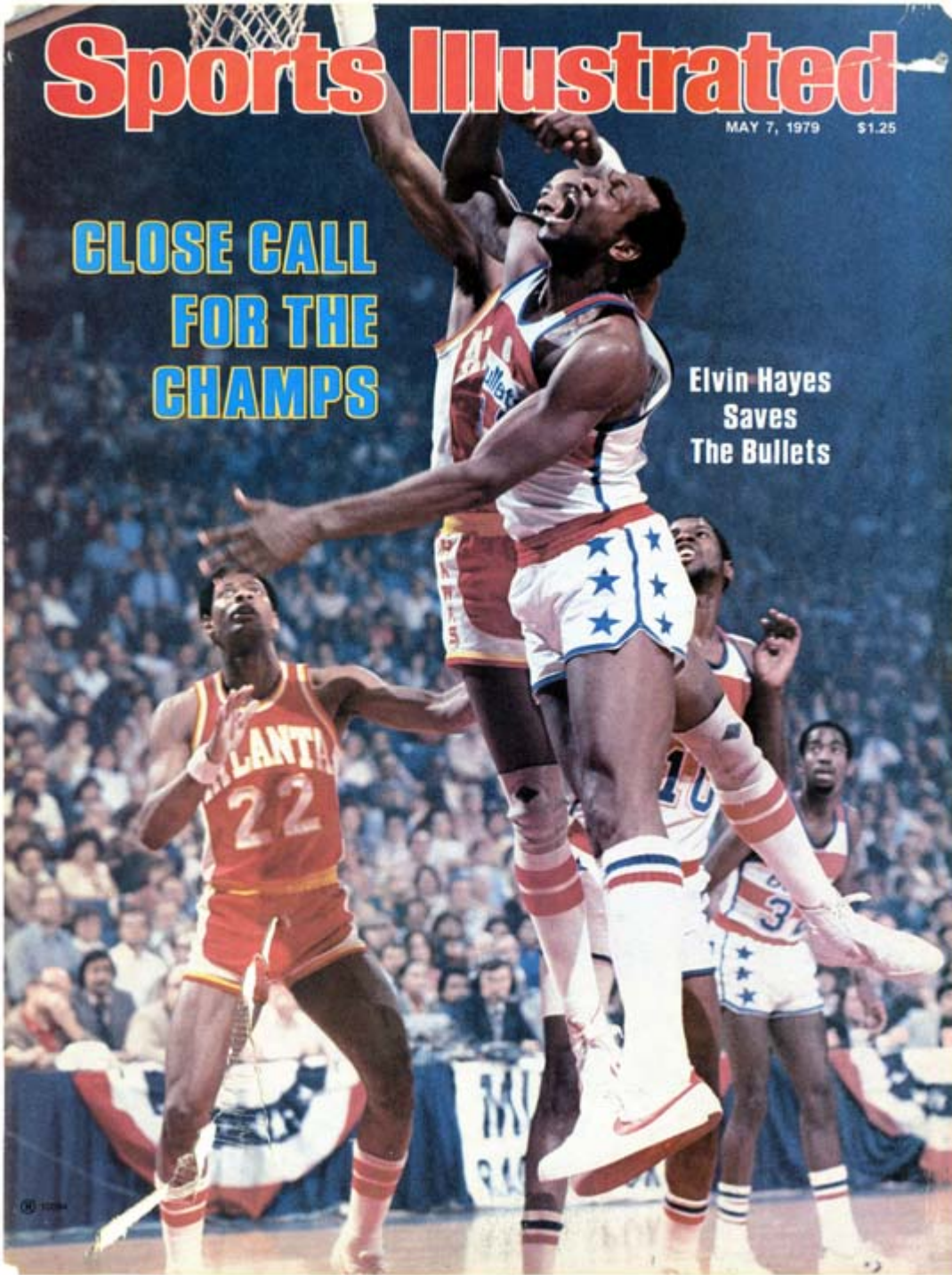


“That basketball program and presence went from nothing to being a big player in basketball in probably a three-year period of time,” said Morgan. In the 1976-1977 season, Nike signed nine of the 12 Blazers, who went on to win the NBA championship.

Nike is credited with getting the money flowing, but other companies weren't afraid to fight back. The late 1970s brought a whole new level of competition between shoe companies. Pro-Keds, Pony, Puma, adidas, Converse ... everyone wanted in. One shoe veteran estimated there were 120 to 150 shoe companies in the country looking for a piece of the pie.

In April of 1979, the *L.A. Times* reported that every player in the NBA had an arrangement with a shoe company except for Bill Walton, who deemed it unethical but accepted adidas product for free. At the time, Converse was the No. 1 seller of basketball shoes, with adidas a close second, and Pro-Keds, Nike and Pony right behind them.





Elvin Hayes on Sports Illustrated



In 1979, Converse had about 100 players (including big names like Julius "Dr. J" Irving, Magic Johnson and Larry Bird), Nike had about 80, Pony claimed about 60 and adidas, losing steam in its basketball division, was down to about 30. Rookies were paid about \$1,500 a year, established players were in the \$5,000 to \$10,000 range, and big names like Dr. J, Kareem and David Thompson earned more than \$100,000 a year.

Of course, as the stakes got bigger, the money skyrocketed. When Maurice Lucas' contract with adidas was up for renewal in the summer of 1977, Nike went after the All-Pro forward, adding him to the Pro Club. He remembers his contract for adidas at about \$2,500, but his relationship with adidas ended when Nike made its offer: \$25,000. "I thought I struck it rich," he said.

By the end of the decade, things were looking up. Nike's 1978-79 NBA roster included 83 players. According to the book *Swoosh*, by the spring of 1979, basketball was 22 percent of Nike's business. And one of its own, Moses Malone, was named the 1978-79 NBA MVP.





## Service Matters

### Doing The Little Things

By the late 1970s, NBA basketball had garnered big-time interest, with its top stars earning \$100,000 in sponsorship deals. Just how did Nike consistently grow in such a competitive market? Willingness to spend was number one, obviously, but the answer was also found in one of Nike's core tenets: service to the athlete.

Nike's basketball people were constantly communicating with players, meeting with them when their teams came through Portland or Boston and ensuring they were happy with their product. "I think we tried to make the athletes feel much more special than the other companies did," said John Morgan. "I don't think they had applied a value to that concept yet."



Nike soon was known for going the extra mile. One internal document, discussing taking Philadelphia's Bobby Jones to Nike's Exeter plant for a fitting, gives a good snapshot of the phenomenon: "Jones seems very excited and overwhelmed by all of this attention. One thing for sure, this fanfare helped us in obtaining Jamaal Wilkes."

Rudy Tomjanovich's first meeting with Nike took place at SunRiver near Bend, Oregon, where he was flown for a fitting and to finalize Pro Club details. When he arrived he was told to go pick his fill of golf shirts and pants for the duration of the stay, free of charge. It was a small gesture, but meant a lot.

"I just said, 'There's something special going on here, how Phil Knight was so approachable,'" he told DNA.

The attention went down to the smallest details. Pro Club members (and some non-members) enjoyed customized nicknames on their shoes' heel tabs. Fred Brown had "Downtown," George Gervin had "Iceman," John Lucas had "Cool Hand" and Elvin Hayes had "Big E."

His Rockets teammate Calvin Murphy had requested "Little C" on the back of his shoes, but according to Tomjanovich, his request got lost in translation. "They thought he literally meant a little 'C', so when he opened up his box, there was a tiny 'C' you could barely see on the back of his shoe," recalled a laughing Tomjanovich. "He was like, 'Oh, this is bull.' Elvin really gave him a lot of stuff about that. But he eventually got that straightened out."





Phil Knight with Elvin Hayes and Kevin Grevey at Nike Georgetown Grand Opening



Elvin Hayes



Nike also put together a catalog of apparel for athletes only, which included warm-up suits of crushed velour. “All the athletes were going crazy because they were getting these really nice warm-up suits, leather travel bags with the Nike brand on it,” said Morgan. “We gave them top-shelf product. Not just T-shirts. It’s something that ended up being real positive, because they carried their stuff around the country and the Nike brand was on it.”

“I’ve worn Converse, Pony, adidas, Brooks and Nike, and Nike is the leader in fringe benefits,” Milwaukee Bucks’ guard/forward Junior Bridgeman told *Sports Illustrated* in 1984. “They sent me jogging shoes, tennis shoes, warm-ups, T-shirts, shorts, everything. They even sent the kids who attended my basketball camp things like bags and key chains.” More than a few times, the extra swag made the difference as to whether a player would sign or not.

## It Wasn't The Shoes

### The Early Days of "Innovation"

In the late 1970s, Nike’s next generation of releases, the Franchise, the MVP, and a lower-priced canvas shoe called the All Court (which was marketed for basketball, tennis, handball and racquetball) came to market. Nike catalogs touted improvements, but any shoe released prior to Bruce Kilgore’s groundbreaking Air Force I wasn’t fueled by imaginative design.



John Morgan, who headed Nike basketball in the late 1970s/early 1980s, said the patternmakers in the Asian factories were largely responsible for the shoes' look and feel.

"I remember sitting and listening to basketball players and literally doing drawings on napkins and giving them to the factory to make," he said. Early Nike exec Ron Nelson agreed. "If you had an idea, you could get it in. No question about that. Our bills were being paid by the All Courts and Bruins and Blazers. We were selling tons of those, but they weren't fantastic."

Most interviewed, from developers to promotional people to athletes, say that the shoes available at the time were nothing to write home about. "It was strictly about the dough," said five-time all star Maurice Lucas. "The shoes stunk."

Lucas remembers his shoes flapping open at one point, and though he liked the leather uppers and the insole, they paled in comparison to adidas' offerings. But with the money he was getting paid, he just resigned himself to the fact that his feet would hurt for a few months.

"I hate to say this, but at one point, I had adidas shoes and I took off the stripes and sewed the Swoosh on them," he said.

"The majority of the shoes we put into the marketplace were just at parity with market," said early developer Kirk Richardson. "They were just incremental improvements on average. From how the product was being sold and placed in the marketplace, I think as a company, we were taking the path of least resistance."



# NOW YOU CAN HAVE NIKE BASKETBALL SHOES IN YOUR TEAM COLOR.



Introducing Nike "Jock Stock" basketball shoes.  
They have a neutral suede swoosh that can be  
colored with permanent markers in any color you wish.  
And they come in either hi or lowtop.



Nike Franchise Lo





All Court





**WE HAVE SALESMEN RUNNING ALL OVER THE COUNTRY FOR YOU.**

More and more of your customers want Nike shoes because they see more and more professional athletes wearing them.

Nike basketball shoes are the pick of many of the top pros in the NBA.

Nike All Courts, Nike Blazers and Bruins. In leather or suede. Hi tops and low cuts. In lots of colors.

You'll see all of them on NBA



players running all over the country.

And all the athletes who wear our shoes are influencing your customers to buy them.

So don't be out when they come in looking for Nike.

Better order a big inventory of Nike Shoes now, because they don't last long.



World Headquarters: 8285 SW Nimbus Ave, Suite 115 - Beaverton, Oregon 97005 - For more information, call 1-503-641-6453.



## WE BUILT OUR NEW SHOES TO MAKE THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FEET.

We've named our new low-cut the Nike Franchise. We're calling the hi-top the Nike Franchise Hi.

We're also calling both these new basketball shoes sensational.

Ask Austin Carr or Elvin Hayes, Alvin Adams or Paul Westphal. We asked them and the other NBA stars on our Nike Pro Club what they wanted in the "perfect" shoe.

Then we gave them exactly what they asked for. A new tread design for quicker stops and faster cuts. A new rubber sole that's super flexible.

Stronger leather uppers for better support and protection. Leather linings. And a more supportive arch bandage.

The NBA stars also wanted shoes that come in different widths for better fits.

We gave them that, too.

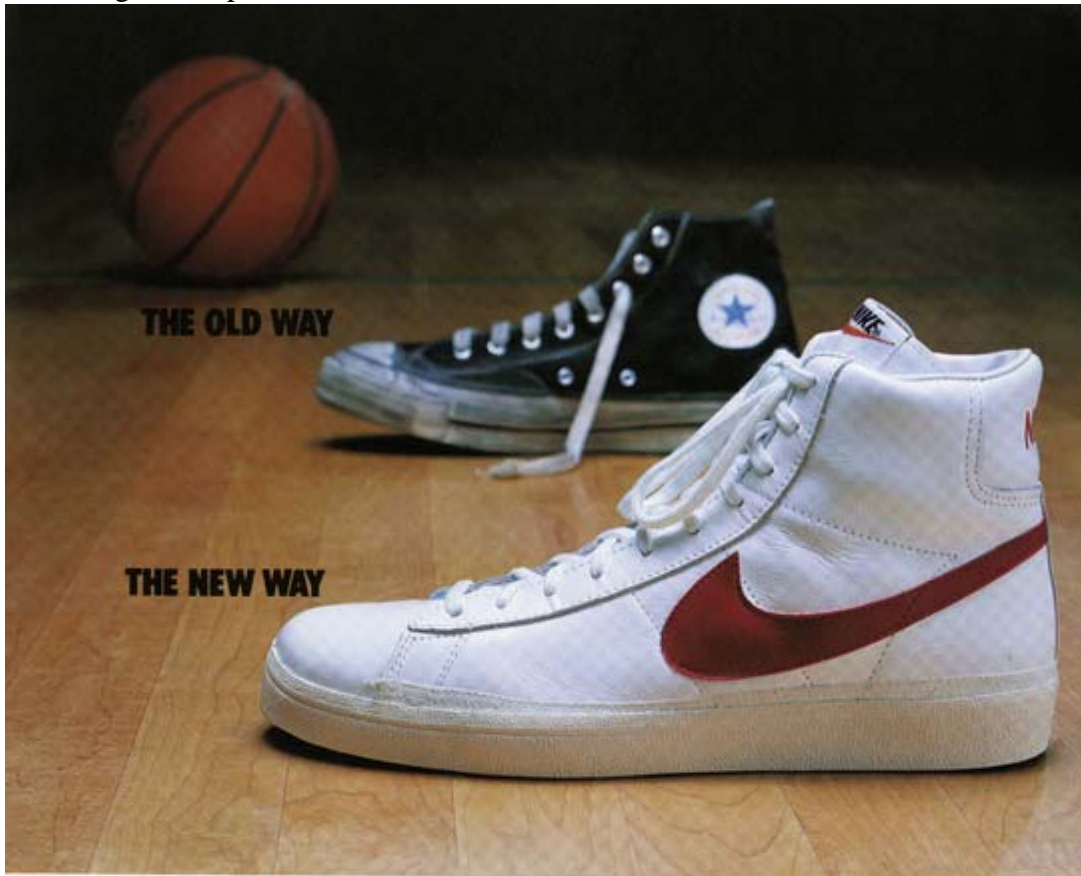
Now we're making their shoes available to you, at your Nike dealer.

And someday, you just might see them in the basketball hall of feet.



World Headquarters:  
8285 S.W. Nimbus Ave., Suite 115  
Beverton, Oregon 97005

Also available in Canada through Pacific Athletic Supplies Ltd., 2451 Beta Avenue, Burnaby, B.C., Canada V5C 5N1



**THE OLD WAY**

**THE NEW WAY**

## **TWO WAYS TO GO TO COURT.**

In the last 20 years a lot of things have changed about basketball.

Including shoes.

You don't have to settle for those old black and white canvas hi-tops any more.

Today more and more players are going to court wearing Nikes. Just look at the playgrounds, colleges and the NBA.

Take the Nike Franchise up there in the picture. Uppers of fine grain leather. Soles with a specially designed pattern for quick stops and sharp cuts. Light. Comfortable. And built to give extra support where you need it most.

Try the Franchise.

Or take your pick of our Blazer and Bruin models.

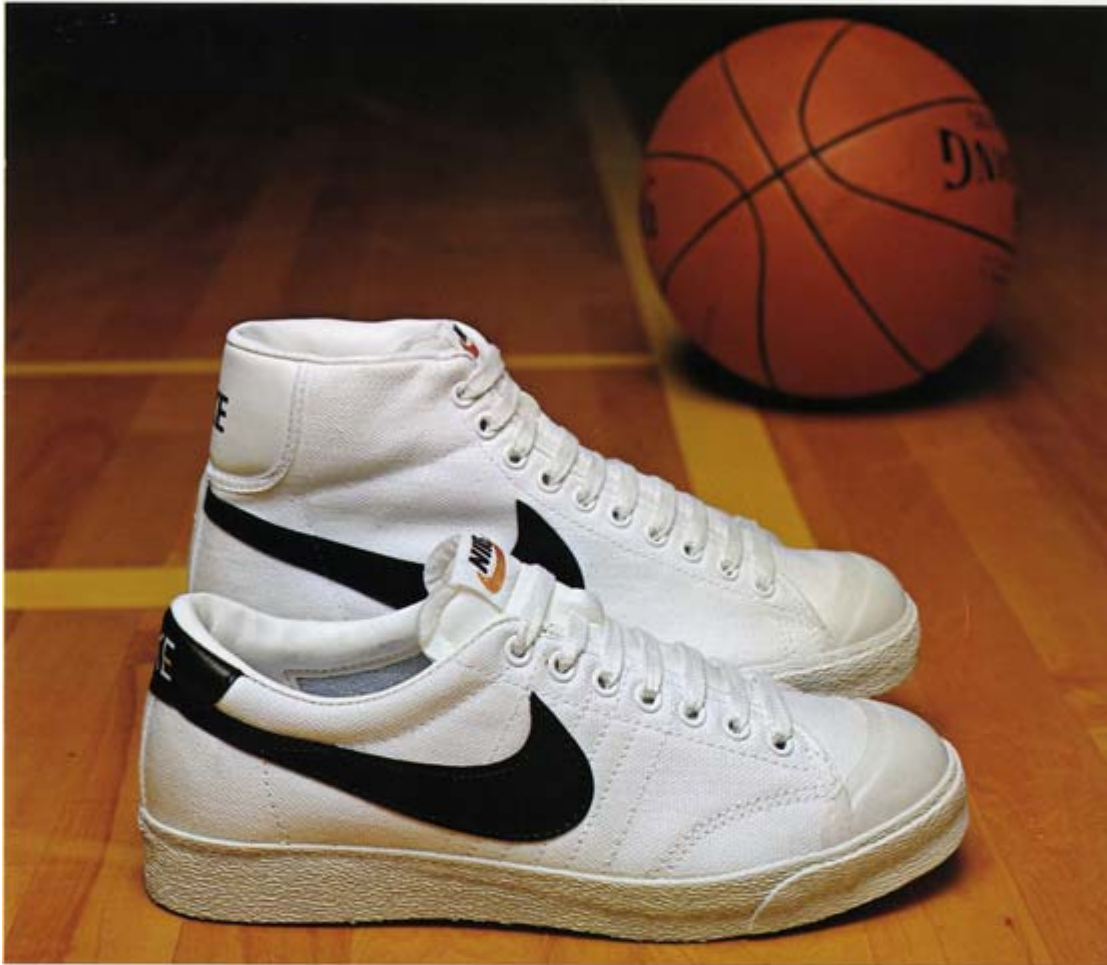
Nike basketball shoes. They're made to beat the competition.



Beaverton, Oregon



## NIKE GIVES YOU AN ALL TIME HIGH



## AND LOW IN BASKETBALL SHOES.

One on one against any other basketball shoe, it's hard to beat our Nike All Courts.

For one thing, they're made with long lasting canvas uppers. Which means they're lighter, run cooler and come clean in a washing machine.

For another, All Courts have a power traction sole pattern for quicker cuts and turns. Ankle collars for comfort. And arch bandages for extra support.

The Nike All Court. You won't find a better basketball shoe for the money if you look all over Canada, high and low.



Pacific Athletic Supplies Ltd.  
2451 Beta Avenue, Burnaby, B.C., Canada V5C 5N1  
(604) 294-5307 Telex 04-354701



**WE DON'T THINK WOMEN SHOULD BE STUCK WITH A MAN'S BASKETBALL SHOE.**

You don't wear men's dress shoes, why should you have to wear men's basketball shoes?

You may play with the same ball, and the same basket, on the same court, with the same intensity but you don't play in the same body.

Your feet are built different than a man's.

That's why we make a line of basketball shoes especially for women.

Like the low-cut leather Lady Bruins and Lady Bruin Hi-tops up there in the picture. Or our canvas Lady All-Courts in both hi-tops and low-cuts.

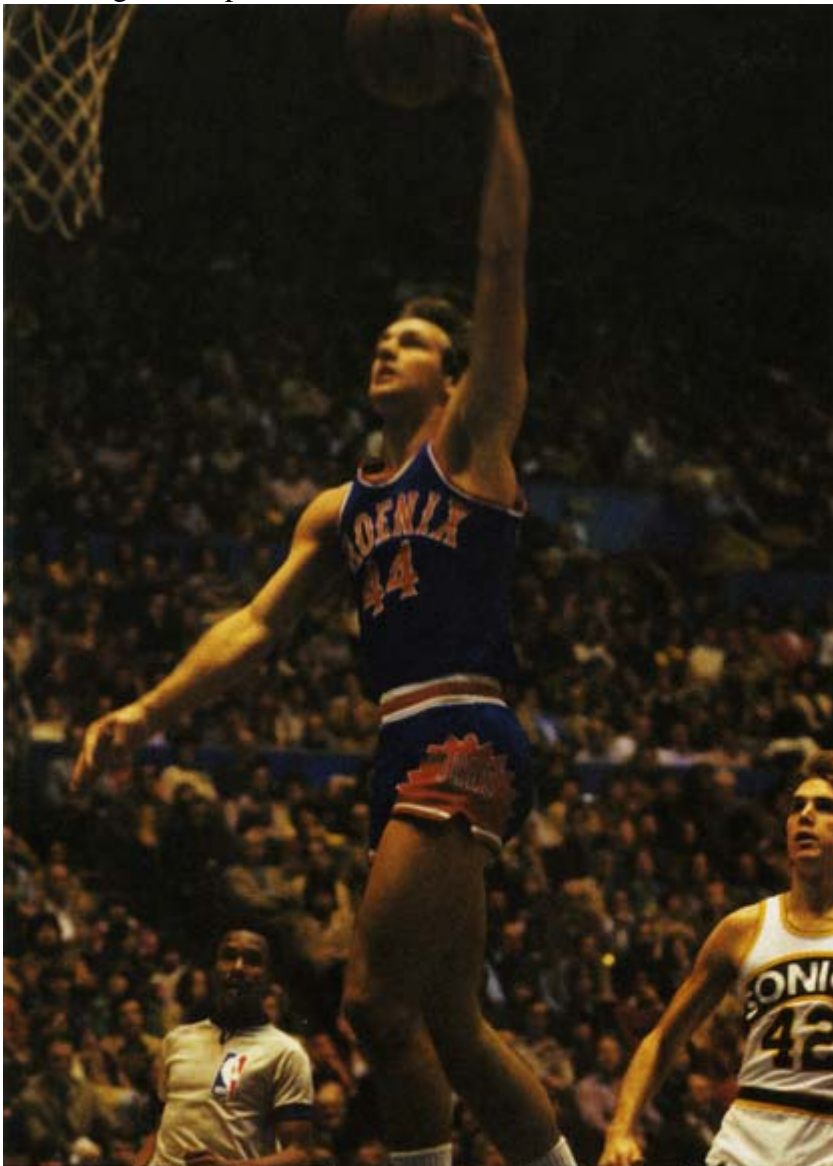
They're all designed to fit the bone structure in a woman's foot, and built with the same care for quality we give to all Nike athletic shoes.

So the next time you need a pair of basketball shoes, put your foot down.

Ask for Nike.



World Headquarters:  
8285 S.W. Nimbus Ave., Suite 115  
Beaverton, Oregon 97005



## FIVE WAYS TO SHOOT A LAY-IN, BY PAUL WESTPHAL.

One: Do it in Nike blue suede low top Bruins.

Two: Put it up wearing our All Court canvas low tops.

Three: Go up in white low top leather Bruins.

Four: Make it in red suede Blazer hi tops.

Five: Wear the Blazer leather hi top like Paul Westphal does every NBA game he plays.

Or take your pick of any other basketball shoe we make.

But no matter which way you go, you can't miss. Because Nike makes basketball shoes built to the exact specifications of NBA stars like Paul Westphal.

Matter of fact, Westphal and our other pro players help us build our shoes better. Year after year after year.

And it's working. For proof, watch an NBA game. Chances are, the guys you see swishing the net will have swooshes on their feet.

Nike swooshes.



World Headquarters:  
3265 S.W. Nimbus Ave., Suite 115  
Beaverton, Oregon 97005

Also available in Canada through  
Pacific Athletic Supplies Ltd., 2451 Beta Avenue,  
Burnaby, B.C., Canada V5C 5N1



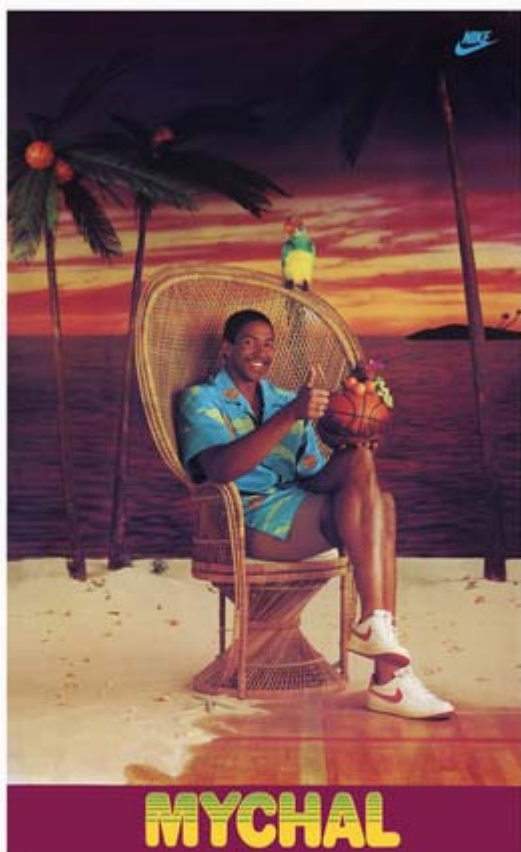
# Posterized

## The Power of the Poster

Player posters were not new in the mid-to-late '70s, but Nike was the first company to create “personality” posters—ones that weren’t straight action shots, but rather photo shoots that captured the players in amusing costumes or situations that befitted their nicknames.

Inspired by the success of the 1977 “There Is No Finish Line” concept poster, which didn’t promote any specific product, Nike decided to get creative in marketing its players (and their shoes) to retailers.

“It came out of the philosophy of Nike of promoting the athletes,” says Denny Strickland, art director for John Brown and Partners, which created “There Is No Finish Line” and Nike hired to do the early wave of personality posters.



Both Nike art director Peter Moore and Strickland remember well Nike’s first poster, George Gervin’s “Ice Man,” which portrayed the finger-rolling guard on a throne of ice, slyly holding a pair of silver basketballs.

Gervin was supposed to arrive at the Seattle studio of photographer Chuck Kuhn at about 10:30 a.m., so they had the ice throne ready. But he didn't show. The ice melted. Kuhn received word that Gervin was on his way, so they had a second throne ready. But he didn't show. The ice melted.

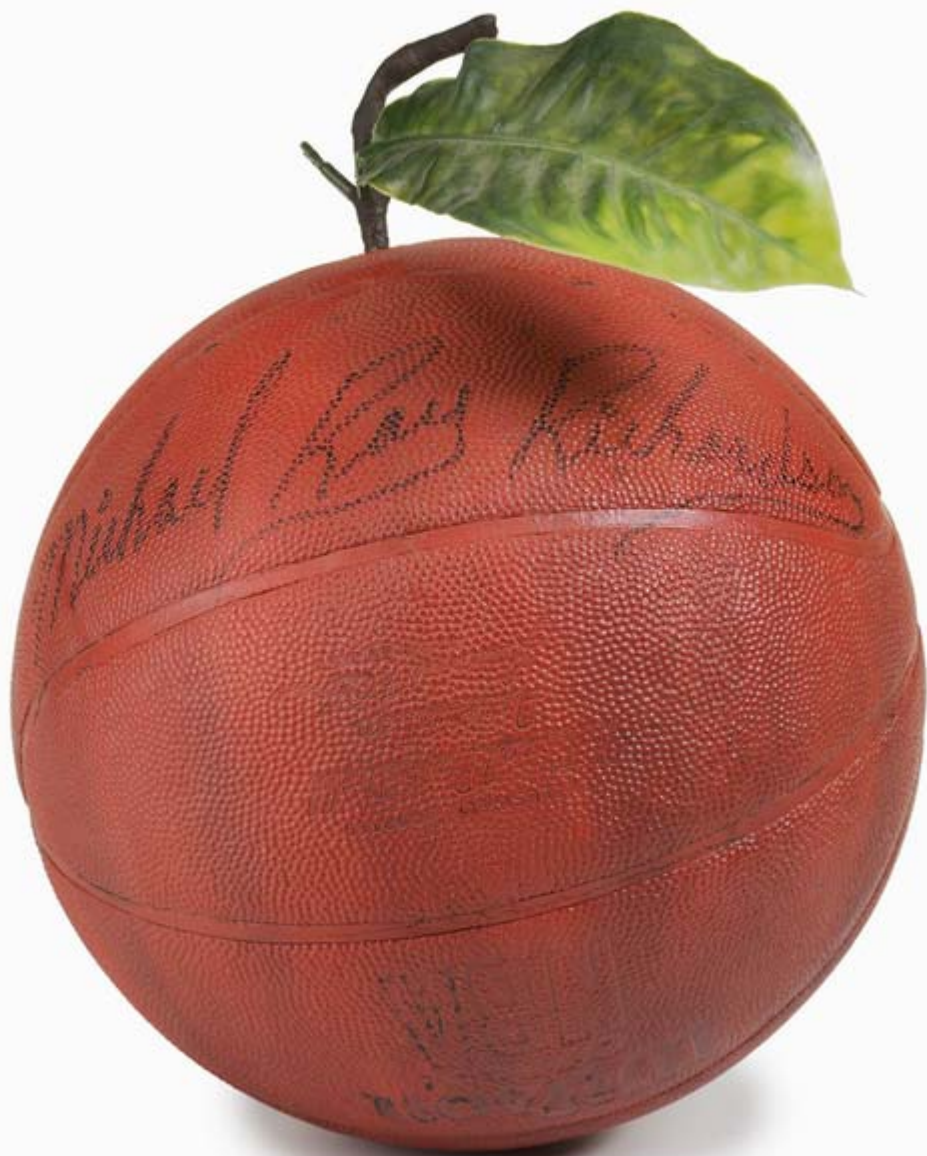
Gervin finally arrived at 6:00 that night, and the third time was the charm for "his majesty."

Once he arrived, "he was really good," said Strickland. "He sat on there as long as he could stand it. Maybe 10 to 15 minutes at a time, and then he'd go, 'My ass is getting sore.' So we'd get him off there."

Nike knew it had something on its hands when fans reacted to its "Supreme Court" poster, which portrayed 17 members of its Pro Club in justices' robes and white Nike shoes. Like several group posters it was taken on a Pro Club summer trip, specifically at a golf course outside of Reno in August of 1979. Moore, Strickland and photographer Bob Peterson, who had shot for *Life* magazine (and ended up doing lots of Michael Jordan's early material) worked with the group, who was, shall we say, relaxed.

"He shot probably 36 rolls of film that day and there was only one picture out of those 36 rolls that didn't have somebody goosing somebody or farting on somebody or putting his fingers behind somebody," recalled Strickland. John Morgan remembers the weather being dicey at best, with rain showers and intermittent lightning.

"Maurice Lucas kept going, 'Morgan, what the fuck did you get me into? This is nuts. What are you guys doing?' There was lightning. Peter Moore was freaking out. It was a riot." The stress paid off, as the poster was a smashing success and Nike was inundated with requests.







### Half Basketball, autographed by Darrell Griffith

Strickland's company only produced a handful of posters before they were let go, but Nike continued the trend well into the 1980s, shooting Darrell "Dr. Dunkenstein" Griffith in a doctor's garb, with a halved basketballs emitting steam; Moses Malone parting a sea of basketballs in his Nike Franchises; Leonard "Truck" Robinson resting in front of a Peterbilt in flannel shirt and countless more.

Not only did the posters become a verifiable revenue stream for Nike, they actually helped sign ballplayers, said Moore. "It became an easy way to sign an athlete, because the posters had become so famous that players wanted to have a poster. Now they want a TV ad."

Artis Gilmore's 1982 contract exemplified the trend. In a section that few could have contemplated a few years prior, it stated that he was to be paid 10 cents a poster if he was pictured solo, with the price going up depending on the number of athletes in the image.

"It became a bigger ball of wax then anybody wanted to deal with and I think the whole thing sort of died out, but in their day, they were a big thing to get an athlete," said Moore. "That's the first thing a guy would want or ask for—I want to know what my poster's going to be."

## KANGAROO COURT

In August of 1979, 17 NBA players invaded a golf course outside of Reno for a photo shoot. What resulted was the "Supreme Court" poster, one of Nike basketball's most significant early marketing efforts.

