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CONSUMER / LIFESTYLE

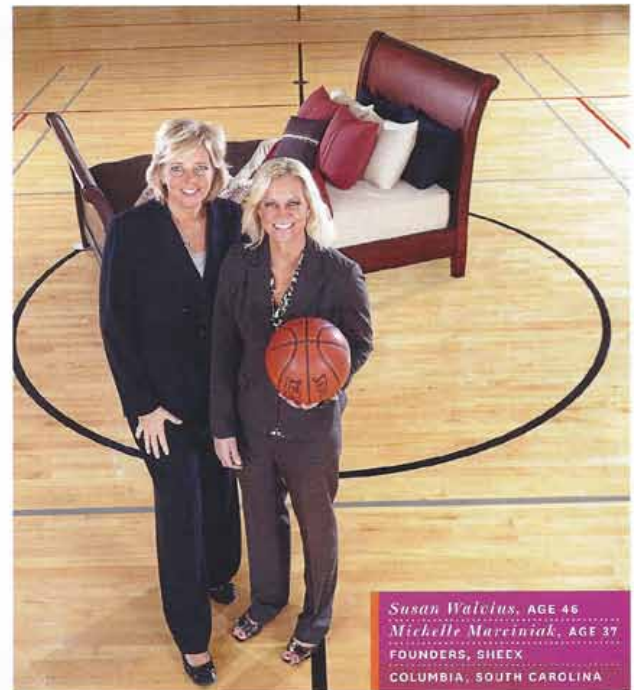


Live  Life



From Slam Dunks to Sweet Dreams

A pair of former basketball coaches use athletic gear to achieve a perfect night's sleep.



Susan Walvius, AGE 46
Michelle Marciniak, AGE 37
FOUNDERS, SHEEX
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

IN AUGUST 2007, University of South Carolina basketball coaches Susan Walvius and Michelle Marciniak were wrapping up a long day of drills at an off-season camp when the conversation turned to the obsession-worthy brand of athletic shorts they'd recently discovered. The shorts were silky but not slippery, sumptuous yet practical, ridiculously soft. "I'd like to make sheets out of this fabric," Walvius mused. Marciniak stared at her boss. "Let's do it!" she said.

It was an impulsive suggestion—but Walvius, who was ready for a new challenge after 18 years as a head coach, found herself calling the dean of the university's business school the next day. Soon the lifelong jokes were meeting with students to conduct market research. "I had never taken any business classes—I was a psychology major!" says Marciniak, a onetime National Championship MVP at the University of Tennessee. Yet by the following spring, they'd quit their jobs to focus full-time on Sheex: luxury bedding made of breathable, cutting-edge performance fabrics that keep sleepers from overheating in the night and waking up sweaty.

The women admit it was hard to abandon the financial security of Division I coaching gigs, and even harder to lose "the opportunity to make an impact on young people's lives" as Walvius says. Their learning curve

was steep, she adds, whether they were researching factories ("We got hideous sample after hideous sample—stuff would come back with gold trim") or making an ill-fated attempt at "sexy, suggestive" marketing materials ("My mom was appalled").

A factory in Southern California finally sent them sheets that turned their dreams into perfect reality. "That was a big day for us," says Walvius, who monitors the Sheex bottom line while Marciniak builds relation-

ships with business mentors and investors. (Or, as Marciniak puts it, "Susan is the play-by-play announcer and I'm the color analyst.") This spring Sheex rolls out in Bed, Bath & Beyond stores and on HSN, and the founders are also planning a sleepwear line. "We asked ourselves, 'Are we going to run a small business or build a championship-caliber company?'" says Walvius. The answer was obvious. "In our culture, we compete."

—MEREDITH BRYAN



Get Carrie's Sporty Style

Celebs' Favorite Recipes

New Year
NEW YEAR
CINDY CRAWFORD SHARES HER
SURPRISING RULES FOR A LIFE
OF HAPPINESS



Researchers say that reading at night (as Sarah Jessica Parker and Chris Noth are doing in this scene from *Sex and the City*) is a good way to help your body unwind before bed.

Seven tricks to help you stop tossing and turning

Adult Sleep Services at University Hospitals Case Medical Center in Cleveland. What if you've been in bed for more than half an hour and are still wide awake? "Don't stay in bed, because you'll stress about not falling asleep," Dr. Mehra explains. Instead, leave the room and walk around or listen to quiet music until you feel drowsy, then try again.

Myth #3 NAPPING HELPS ME SLEEP BETTER

THE TRUTH According to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), two-thirds of the world takes a daily nap. But while a short power nap can provide a late-afternoon energy boost, a nap of 45 minutes or longer will likely interfere with your nighttime sleep pattern. "And the later you take the nap," says the Foundation's chairman Thomas J. Balkin, Ph.D., "the later you will have to go to sleep." Thus, if you're going to nap, do it early in the day and keep it to only 30 minutes or less.

3 Products to Help You Sleep

Turn your bedroom into a sleeproom with a fan, wicking sheets and an eye mask



MAKE WHITE NOISE
▲ Vornado V6 Flippi Personal Fan, \$22.85; amazon.com



KEEP YOU COOLER THAN COTTON SHEETS!

STAY COOL
▲ Sheex high-performance fabric queen sheet set in Paprika, \$275; sheex.com



BLOCK LIGHT
▲ Glo to Sleep Eye Mask, \$49.95; glotosleep.com



registry

what's your STYLE?

There's a whole world of bedding out there. Dress your matrimonial mattress in a pattern that plays to your personalities.



CLASSIC// Your entire house is one timeless decor statement. "Azure" queen sheet set, \$99.99; and decorative pillow, \$49.99. Simply Vera Vera Wang, kohls.com.



MOD// Groovy graphics do it for you: two "Samovari" standard pillow shams, \$39.95 each; and full/queen duvet cover, \$129. Marimekko for Crate & Barrel, crateandbarrel.com.



BOHO// You adore bold hues and global motifs. "Tangka" standard sham, \$135; queen flat sheet, \$200; and standard pillowcases, \$135 for two, Natori, bloomindudes.com.



ROMANTIC// A couple of lovebirds like you demand a design that's one part fantasy and two parts tradition. "Chinoiserie" full/queen duvet set (as shown), \$280, dwelstudio.com.

these babies will keep you snug for many winters to come



WARM UPS

CUDDLE WITH YOUR CUTIE UNDER ONE OF THESE FAB BLANKETS

- 1. Throw blanket** | Good for accepting the foot of the bed and adding a little extra warmth. Cashmere throw, \$198, wshome.com.
- 2. Cotton blanket** | The lightweight open weave breathes, so you won't overheat. It also layers well with heavier covers. Pastel full/queen, \$50, companykids.com.
- 3. Wool blanket** | Back in the day, this natural insulator came exclusively with "dry clean only" tags. But today, many wool blankets (like this one) can be washed at home. "Eco-Wise" queen, \$178, Pendleton, garnethill.com.
- 4. Fleece blanket** | Hypoallergenic, supercozy, and deliciously plush, it's just the thing for snuggling. "Velux" queen, \$26.99, jcp.com.
- 5. Down-filled blanket** | Thinner than a duvet but still totally toasty. "Essential" double/queen, \$158, garnethill.com.

sheet glossary

THREAD COUNT refers to the number of threads per square inch. Go for at least 200. (There's no need for more than 400.) Feel and durability depend mostly on cotton quality: Look for 100 percent Egyptian, supima, or pima.

PERCALE sheets are smooth and crisp—think fancy hotel.

SATEEN sheets look lustrous and are satiny to the touch.

FLANNEL sheets feel fuzzy and cozy.

MICROFIBER sheets are ultrathin and dry quickly; go to sheex.com for options that wick moisture from skin.

pillow talk

THE BEST PLACE TO LAY YOUR HEAD DEPENDS ON YOUR SNOOZING STYLE



{ BACK }

Choose a semifirm pillow of medium loft. This pick will go a long way toward supporting those neck muscles, and keeping your spine properly aligned.



{ SIDE }

Pick a firm pillow that's contoured with a mound that fills the space between your shoulder and ear—often called a "side sleeper."



{ STOMACH }

Opt for a soft and low pillow. This shape will position your head at a comfortable angle and relieve pressure on both your neck and your back.



luxuryportfolio.com

luxetrends®

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RELAXATION

FIRE FEATURES

Outdoor living areas are favorite spaces of sanctuary and the centerpiece of the tranquility is often the fire pit. Creative fire features from Colombo Construction Corp., many one-of-a-kind, add a showpiece focal point to any exterior living environment. FireFeatures.com



SOPHISTICATED SHEETS

A blend of premium athletic performance fabrics and luxury found in only the finest bedding, SHEEX Performance Sheets fuse breathability and temperature control with maximum comfort for more restful sleep. SHEEX.com



“Every good thing that ever happened in your life happened because something changed.”

—Andy Andrews



bedsheets.” She was on a prestigious career path to become an NCAA college head coach after playing pro basketball and serving as an assistant basketball coach at the University of South Carolina. But that job would end with the resignation of her head coach, Susan Walvius, because the successor coach would bring in her own assistant.

Marciniak loved the game, especially as a player, but success as a coach hinged on motivating teens who didn't necessarily share her commitment. She considered herself better suited to the business world, where she could drive herself as hard as she wanted.

A pair of shorts inspired her business idea. “I was wearing a pair of shorts that I would literally wash, put on again, wash and put on again. I lived in them,” says Marciniak, who at the time was assistant coach working under head coach Susan Walvius.

One day she gave a pair to Walvius, who said, “I love this fabric; I wish I could have bedding made out of this stuff.” Marciniak says she looked at Walvius and said, “Let's do it.” Walvius contacted the university's business school, which did a feasibility study and helped formulate a business plan. When Walvius resigned from coaching in April 2008, the pair ran with the business. SHEEX launched its Web site this spring and was looking for retailers.

“We've been going full throttle,” Marciniak says. “We jumped in with all of our hearts, and we decided to go forward and haven't looked back since.” Working with business advisers, surrounded by good people and edified by lots of books, they both feel motivated to keep moving. “It kind of snowballs,” Marciniak says.

As a player, Marciniak saw positive results from the efforts she made, so she's pushing herself as an entrepreneur. “I see that as being very similar,” she says. It's as if a little person in her head drives her to write one more e-mail or make one more phone call as the hours wear on. And just like when she played basketball, “I sleep hard because I work hard.”

Creating a New Dream

Daryn Kagan says she spent a few months being sad about her CNN career ending after spending more than a quarter of her life there. It helped her cope to realize that everything has a beginning, middle and end. Every job must end. Some end in six months; some, decades later.



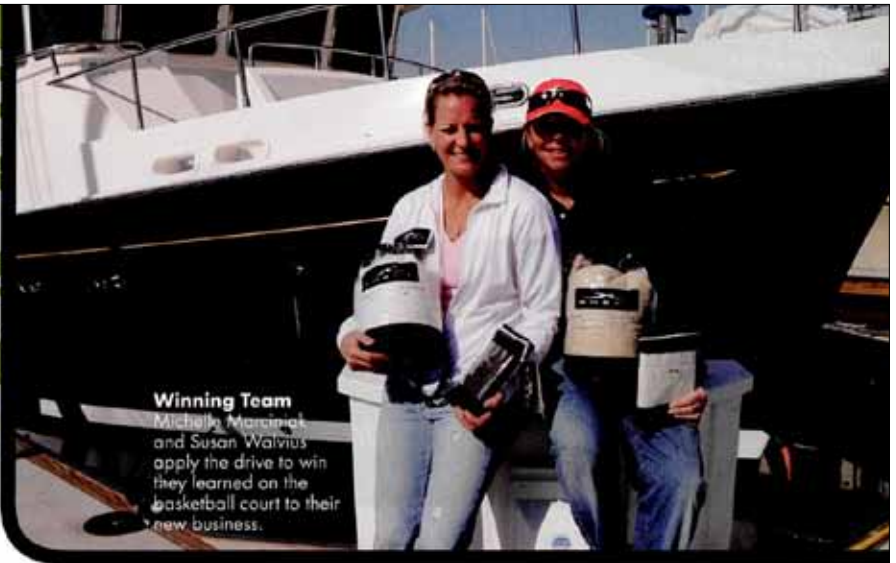
Creative Company
Daryn Kagan kept a running list of ideas until she came up with a winning one for her new Web site.



Getting Where You Want to Be

Jack Canfield is a motivational speaker, teacher and author who is best known as co-creator of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series, which has sold more than 100 million copies and has been translated into over 40 languages. His most recent book is *The Success Principles: How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*.

Read more of Canfield's insights about making the transition to your next dream at SUCCESS.com.



Winning Team
Michelle Marciniak and Susan Walvius apply the drive to win they learned on the basketball court to their new business.

Earlier in her life, Malakasis had done a little work at a culinary school and left knowing she didn't want to become a chef. Still, she says, "I knew my passion was food. I just didn't know how to put that in a physical form." At least until she stumbled upon Belle Chèvre.

She had never made cheese before, but she began to feel a calling to quit her 15-year tech-world career and return to Alabama to become an apprentice cheese maker at Belle Chèvre. So she did nearly three years ago.

"I could apply my business acumen that I, hopefully, had garnered, and combine my passion with food. For me, it just didn't get any better than that. Probably rather abruptly I just said: 'OK, this is it. I just quit my job today,'" Malakasis says. "I'm not sure that would be any advice I would give someone. I really jumped off the cliff."

But once she made the leap, she was fearless. "You just can't have any fear. If you do, you get paralyzed," she says. "Once you do something that's so out of the ordinary and risky in a way, there's a nothing-to-lose sort of mentality."

Malakasis, who draws inspiration from books such as Og Mandino's *The Greatest Salesman in the World*, went on to buy the seven-employee Belle Chèvre with her savings, even though, she says, "I knew nothing about food companies." But she did know about startups. Also, she learned in her tech career the importance of surrounding herself with knowledgeable people to learn from, so she's doing that now.

"It seems like you're jumping without a net, but there's always a net," she says, whether it's a networking group, industry organization or people with various expertise within your circle of acquaintances. In her case, she found support from industry organization Southern Foodways Alliance.

Malakasis' strategy: Keep moving forward. Not that you shouldn't give serious thought to major life changes, but she learned from the tech world that there's no "We'll get to that next week" or "That's a fourth-quarter thing." When it comes to work and decisions, "You do it now. You're serious, but momentum is important."

Malakasis keeps both business and personal journals. When something nags at her because it seems like it's not the right thing to do, she pays attention and tries to figure out what piece of the puzzle isn't right. She jots notes in her business journal at the end of the day when she has time for reflection. "I have a pretty regimented practice of soul-searching," says the recently divorced mom of a 5-year-old son. However, "I don't do the self-doubt thing. I don't think self-doubt is healthy."

Drive for Success

Michelle Marciniak similarly expresses no self-doubt about trading a lifetime in basketball to start a unique business—a company that uses athletic fabrics to make silky, breathable, wicking, "luxury performance

CONSUMER / ATHLETIC

Go Bare! The Ultimate Summer Skin Guide

SHAPE

SHAPE YOUR LIFE

Sexy Abs!

Get 'em in 15 Minutes

THE BIGGEST LOSER'S

Jillian Michaels

THE TV STAR SHARES HER

20

MINUTE WORKOUT



Lose Weight This Weekend

No Deprivation Required

Eat Your Way Happy

Mood-Boosting Munchies

SHAPE YOUR LIFE HOME

HOT TIP

Cool It Down

Steamy sheets aren't always a good thing.

Counting sheep too often? Join the club! In a recent poll by the National Sleep Foundation, just 42 percent of Americans say they regularly get a good seven hours of shut-eye a night. And the majority of those surveyed said a cool room was crucial for sleeping well. To put insomnia on ice, check out these new heat-zapping products.

SHEEX SHEETS (\$200 for a queen set; sheex.com) are made with the same temperature-control and moisture-wicking technology as athletic wear, meaning no more searching for the cool spot in the bed.

STRESS EASE COMFORT READER PILLOW (\$50; thegreatindoors.com) is equipped with a



removable cold therapy pack that delivers a refreshing chill directly to your neck—the perfect spot to lower your overall body temperature.

BROOKSTONE'S BED FAN (\$80; brookstone.com) blows a gentle breeze under your top sheet, so you can stay covered up without roasting.

The ideal bedroom temperature is 65 degrees, according to the Barbur Sleep Council.

Toss Up!

When you need to get rid of your old computer, DVD player, or printer, don't just throw it in the trash. Go to ecosquid.com, type in the product and your zip code, and you'll get a list of stores where you can recycle the electronic. You'll keep your home—and the earth—clean.

A ROOM WITH A PLAN

You want to redecorate—fab! But before you think about paint colors and sofa styles, consider how you'd like to use the space. "For many people, deciding on a 'look' feels overwhelming," says Meghan Carter, author of *The Meghan Method*. "Narrowing your options by activity helps you zero in on what you really need." Let's say you're tackling your kitchen: Do you want to have friends over for wine, host big dinners, or churn out loads of cookies? "The answer helps you choose the best layout and appliances—or even whether you want the wall color to be relaxing or energizing," says Carter. This way, you'll end up with a spot suited to the life you lead.

CHIC & CHEAP

Target Island

Calypso St. Barth—the go-to store for high-end, tropical-inspired home and fashion goods—is bringing its hot style to Target this month. Pick up colorful vases, bright throw pillows, and eye-catching dishes to give your space a beachy vibe for summer. Everything is less than \$60 and is available May 1 through June 11.



Inside Chrissie Wellington's Mind.
Vision Metron Shifters: First Look.
Bike: Trek Speed Concept 9.9.



Sheex Performance Sheets

A new category in recovery, Sheex Performance sheets are designed for athletes and are the world's first performance bed sheets, crafted from the finest in pro-quality athletic fabrics for unrivaled comfort and superior fit. Designed to offer the optimum environment for better sleep, Sheex features breathable fabric for ventilation and temperature control, quick-dry engineering that provides comfort by wicking moisture away from your skin and a soft, sumptuous feel. **CLICK:** Sheex.com



NEWS

'Fire and ice' coaches take on business world

By Thom Patterson, CNN

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Ex-college, WNBA guard Marciniak, ex-head coach Walvius team up for business
- "The biggest similarity between coaching and what we do now is raising capital," Walvius says
- Marciniak often is asked about 2002 suspension, fine after fight on the court
- They say sports has gender-based differences, but bottom line matters most in business

(CNN) -- You could say that a simple pair of running shorts was the trigger that launched a multimillion-dollar business and radically shifted the lives of basketball coaches Susan Walvius and Michelle Marciniak.

In August 2007, Walvius, who was then the head women's basketball coach at the University of South Carolina, and her assistant, Marciniak, had just finished a long day teaching at a summer basketball camp. They sat exhausted in the gym, looking forward to a good night's rest.

Then Walvius -- thinking about her comfy running shorts -- experienced what she describes as an "aha moment."

"I looked at Michelle and said, 'I love this fabric, and I'd love to have bedsheets from this stuff.' Michelle said, 'Let's do it.' " And with zero formal business experience, the two women stepped boldly into the world of entrepreneurship.

They paired with South Carolina's International Business School to research the market, quit their coaching jobs, formed a business and took their battles from the basketball court to business boardrooms.

"The biggest similarity between coaching and what we do now is raising capital," said Walvius, who took USC's women roundballers to the Elite Eight for the first time in 2002. She compares raising capital to recruiting players. Instead of selling the school basketball program, they're selling bedding -- heavy on the marketing side -- complete with PowerPoint presentations and glossy poster boards.

Their business -- SHEEX -- makes and sells "performance" sheets and pillowcases made from specialty fabrics that wick moisture and transfer heat. They sell online and at upscale sporting goods stores, trendy home stores and other retail outlets.

After working together as coach and assistant coach for five years -- and now as business partners -- the duo has developed a kind of unwritten playbook for themselves.

"We're great friends, and we have different strengths," Walvius said.

"Susan and I complement each other really well during presentations," Marciniak said. "If I get stuck, she fills in, and if she gets stuck, I fill in."

Crisscrossing the country to build their business team and garner support, the two often find themselves working together for 16-hour days, said Marciniak, who gained attention as an All-American point guard on the University of Tennessee's national championship team in 1996. Local media nicknamed Marciniak and a teammate "fire and ice."

"I look at this team in a similar way," Marciniak said. "I bring a more 'fiery' personality to our team, where Susan brings a calmer one."

Meetings are very calm they say. The fire and ice come while grinding through everyday decisions.

Marciniak proved on the basketball courts of the WNBA that she can play with fire. In a 2002 altercation that's ranked by FOX as one of the "most outrageous moments in sports," a player with the Los Angeles Sparks hit Marciniak in the face with the ball, prompting Marciniak to charge toward the player, who then knocked her to the floor.

Both players were suspended and fined "a couple thousand dollars," Marciniak said.

Recently, during meetings for SHEEX, the fight has come up in business conversation several times. "I am amazed how many guys see the fight after we meet with them and then comment on it during the next meeting or in a follow-up e-mail," Marciniak said. "They think it's cool."

"I just smile and tell my side of the story," she said.

Eventually, Marciniak learned to channel and focus that intensity, her former boss said.

"Michelle isn't emotionally popping off in a meeting like she was on the basketball court," Walvius said. "She was such an emotional basketball player, and it was one of the reasons why she was highly successful. But with this, everything is about preparation and running our team."

Do they fight amongst themselves? "Oh, we fight all the time," Walvius said with a laugh. "We fight about business decisions and the pace of our business. I want to research everything." Sometimes, she said, when they realize they can't resolve their differences, they just put them aside and move on.

Do they see any parallels between male-dominated college and professional sports, and competing in the male-dominated business world? Not really, they say.

"In sports, there are constant reminders that you're not the same," Walvius said. She mentioned gender-based differences in "practice times, modes of transportation, facilities -- you live that every day." But in the business world, she said, they're "competing in an arena today where that's not the case. It's truly about the bottom line."

The two say they don't have time anymore to shoot baskets or even talk basketball. It's all business as they prepare for a major retail launch at upscale department stores and sporting goods stores.

"What we're doing is trying to change the face of bedding in the world," Marciniak said. "What we want to do is win a 'national championship' with SHEEX."

Now that they're playing ball with business barons, do Marciniak and Walvius miss their days on the hardwood?

"I miss some of the players who will really go to the wall for you," Walvius said. "I miss the strategy of the game. Every once in a while, I'll see a game on TV and I'll see something that pulls me back there."

Postcards

From the pinnacles of power by Fortune editor at large Patricia Sellers

DECEMBER 15, 2009

Entrepreneurs who never let you see 'em sweat

by Patricia Sellers

New-product innovation tends to be 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.

Here's that 1% that led to the creation of a hot little company called Sheex: One afternoon in the summer of 2007, Susan Walvius, then the head women's basketball coach at the University of South Carolina, was at practice and wearing a pair of oversized, super-soft, performance-fabric shorts. "I'd love to have bedsheets made out of this stuff," Walvius said to Michelle Marciniak, her assistant coach.

"Let's do it," Marciniak replied.

The 99% perspiration: These two athletes took their idea—"performance bedding," if you can fathom that—and ran with it.

They lined up R&D help from the Darla Moore School of Business at USC.

They figured out how to apply to bedsheets the moisture-wicking and heat-transfer technology that Nike (NKE) and Under Armour (UA) use to make athletic clothing—and patented the technology for sheets and blankets.

They quit coaching last year. They raised \$1 million from friends and family, picked a name, Sheex, and after hustling far and wide to find a manufacturer that could produce the high-tech fabric in the form of sheets and pillows, they contracted with a factory in California.

They started selling Sheex online in April. The tagline: "Sleep Better. Play Better." It appeals to professional athletes, weekend warriors, and—though Walvius and Marciniak would never say it—menopausal women.

In September, Fortune selected this duo to be among 10 Most Powerful Women Entrepreneurs—a new program that we recently launched with American Express (AXP). The Sheex founders and nine other honorees attended the Fortune Most Powerful

Women Summit. There, Walvius, 45, and Marciniak, 36, appeared on an entrepreneurs panel along with SBA Administrator Karen Mills and Gilt Groupe CEO Susan Lyne.

Ever since, they have ferociously worked the network of MPWomen Summit participants—meeting with Allen & Co. investment banker Nancy Peretsman, Jones Apparel Group (JNY) COO Cindy DiPietrantonio, bank-industry analyst Meredith Whitney, and others. Today, I asked Marciniak how many nights in the past two months she and Walvius have been back home in South Carolina. "Three nights since September," she replied. "Six total since June."

They're constantly on the road, running their business from planes, trains, automobiles, and even buses. Constant hustle. Two weeks ago, in a meeting with Heidi Ueberroth, the NBA's head of global marketing partnerships, the Sheex women struck a game-changing deal to distribute their products in the NBA's flagship store in midtown Manhattan. That could lead to distribution on the NBA and WNBA websites and team sites and stores as well.

Full disclosure: I first met Walvius and Marciniak in July at the LPGA U.S. Open in Pennsylvania—and learned that Marciniak went to my high school, Allentown Central Catholic, where she was the top-ranked high school player in the nation. They called her "Spinderella" back then. She went on to play for the NCAA champion Lady Vols at the University of Tennessee, where she was MVP. I've come to know Marciniak and Walvius fairly well and have given them a few leads that have helped them with their business. It's important to acknowledge that, but it shouldn't detract from their achievement.

Here they are on video talking about their hustle to build Sheex—though as long as they're using their own product, I guess you'll never see them sweat.

P.S. Another window into Marciniak's raw ambition is a 1998 cover story in Sports Illustrated about her relationship with her former coach at the University of Tennessee, Pat Summit—who today has more career wins than any other coach, woman or man, in NCAA basketball history.

Posted on Sat, Apr. 09, 2011

Former USC coaches hit it big — in sheets

By KRISTY EPPLEY RUPON
krupon@thestate.com

Susan Walvius and Michelle Marciniak appear to have nailed a slam dunk with their Columbia-based Sheex bed sheets.

Home goods retailer Bed, Bath & Beyond is rolling out the "high performance bedding" in more than 850 stores nationwide, including its Harbison Boulevard outlet. The product will be sold on HSN at the end of May, and the Sheex story also was featured in the March issue of "O, The Oprah Magazine."

Walvius, the previous coach of the women's basketball team at USC, and Marciniak, her assistant coach and a former WNBA player, started the company just two years ago.

The sheets, which cost \$199 for a queen-size set, are made from Under Armour-like material, designed to keep sleepers cool throughout the night for a better experience. Traditional sheets trap heat, Walvius said.

"(The Sheex material) is soft and silky, but it's not slippery," Walvius said.

The idea for the product was a whim. The women thought it would feel good to have sheets made out of their sports uniforms.

But Walvius and Marciniak dove into serious business planning before launching the product, attending classes at USC's Moore School of Business and assembling a team of national advisers and investors.

"We understand the power of a team," Walvius said. "It's just like in coaching basketball. You don't want people shooting the ball that don't know how to shoot the ball."

The team started selling the product less than two years ago in sports stores, the Brookstone catalog and a couple of high-end mattress stores. It is manufactured in California.

About a year ago, they began talks with Bed Bath & Beyond, and the product began hitting shelves in the past couple of weeks.

"It's really exciting. It's unusual to have a retailer roll out nationally," Walvius said, adding retailers usually start with a test market of 20 stores or so. "They like to carry new and innovative products."

"The product is selling extremely well," she added.

The women have grown their business to include eight full-time employees — including former USC guard Bronna Dickerson, who has a master's in business from the Moore School and heads Sheex's marketing department. Sales could hit the \$12 million mark this year.

Shoppers can find Sheex at the Harbison Bed Bath & Beyond in Columbia. The other two Columbia stores are smaller and have more limited merchandise space.

Walvius said national commercials will begin running soon, with Marciniak serving as the face of the brand.

"We're looking to tell our story, too, as part of the brand," she said. "It's been really a fun journey."



After leaving the USC women's basketball program, former head coach Susan Walvius, right, and her assistant coach, Michelle Marciniak, left, have left the sports world for the business world. The women have started a company called Sheex, which manufactures and sells high-performance bedding. The women run their business in Columbia but travel across the country to make contacts and promote the product. The sheets are made from the same material as athletic clothing and the women say they will market it to athletes and others who want to buy high end sheets.

- file photos



After leaving the USC women's basketball program, former head coach Susan Walvius, right, and her assistant coach, Michelle Marciniak, left, have left the sports world for the business world. The women have started a company called Sheex, which manufactures and sells high-performance bedding. The women run their business in Columbia but travel across the country to make contacts and promote the product. The sheets are made from the same material as athletic clothing and the women say they will market it to athletes and others who want to buy high end sheets.

- TIM DOMINICK/tdominick@thestate.com.

Women Home Business

SHEEX: From Basketball Coaches to Multimillion-Dollar Bedding Business Owners

Posted By Lyve Alexis Pleshette On January 30, 2010 @ 4:38 am In Success Stories

Sometimes, the best business ideas are staring you right in the face; you only have to look hard to see them. Susan Walvius and Michelle Marciniak realized that the fabric used in the finest athletic wear would work just as well as bedding and bedsheet materials. These performance athletic gears use fabric that wick moisture and transfer heat, features that could also result in very comfortable bedding materials.

Both fitness fanatics, Walvius was working as head coach of the women's basketball team at the University of South Carolina, while Marciniak was her assistant coach. In August 2007, these women coaches just finished a long day teaching at a summer basketball camp. As they were resting, Walvius proclaimed that she likes the feel of her comfortable running shorts and thought that the fabric would make excellent bed sheets. Marciniak agreed, and their business SHEEX offering "performance bedding" was born.



Susan Walvius and Michelle Marciniak, Founders of performance bedding company SHEEX (Photo from Sheex.com)

As Walvius explained in their website sheex.com,

Five years ago, I wouldn't have thought of putting our athletes in anything but cotton. But today, elite athletes wear only the latest performance fabrics because of the fabrics' breathability and softness, as well as their moisture and temperature control. It makes perfect sense to introduce the finest of these fabrics to bedding."

However, the two women discovered that starting a business entails more than having a brilliant idea. They enlisted the help of South Carolina's International Business School to finetune their business plan, research their market, and do extensive research and development on their product.

They quit their coaching jobs to focus on their new business, using the strategies in the basketball court into their business. They raised \$1 million in financing, and as they describe the process in a CNN article.

"The biggest similarity between coaching and what we do now is raising capital," said Walvius, who took USC's women roundballers to the Elite Eight for the first time in 2002. She compares raising capital to recruiting players. Instead of selling the school basketball program, they're selling bedding — heavy on the marketing side — complete with PowerPoint presentations and glossy poster boards.

Today, SHEEX has grown into a multi-million dollar business, with Forbes Magazine named them one of the most powerful women entrepreneurs. Not bad for a business inspired by a pair of shorts.



MICHELLE MARCINIAK



The originators of SHEEX, a line of ultra comfortable sheets made from athletic apparel performance fabrics, stumbled upon their idea rather innocuously.

About three years ago when Michelle Marciniak was an assistant women's basketball coach at South Carolina, the former Tennessee All-American point guard gave head coach Susan Walvius a pair of workout shorts.

Marciniak loved the silky soft feel of the material and thought Walvius would too.

"She said, I love the shorts, I love the drape and feel of the fabric and I'd love to sleep in them," Marciniak remembered.

From there, the duo decided to create a line of bedding made from similar fibers and embark on a new career following the 2007-08 season.

Marciniak and Walvius took their idea to the students at the Darla Moore School of Business who helped them develop a business plan. Shortly after SHEEX, Inc., was born.

SHEEX have been sold online for almost two years and Marciniak says the line will soon be carried at Sports Authority and Bed Bath & Beyond stores.

In the future, Marciniak hopes to expand the line to include pillows, mattress pads, duvet covers and sleepwear.

"We wanted to create a new category in bedding and corner the market on performance home products," Marciniak said. "This is the first time anyone has ever attempted to take a boring product such as sheets and make them sexy, edgy-cool.

"Just like the food you eat, studies have shown the sleep that you get determines how you perform the next day."

"I had a good time — you almost have nothing to lose when you get to the championship game."



By Victoria Sun

As the floor general for the Lady Vols from 1992-96, Marciniak was always calm under pressure. She led Tennessee to the 1996 NCAA championship and was named the Final Four MVP and helped the Lady Vols reach the title game the previous season. She still holds the school record for most steals in a game (11) and finished her career with 1,004 points, 266 rebounds, 452 assists and 237 steals in 104 games.

Beating Georgia, 83-65, to win the national championship remains one of her fondest memories.

"I've lost a national championship and won one so I know what it feels like to be on both ends," Marciniak said. "I just remember jumping up and down in the end after we won.

"I had a good time — you almost have nothing to lose when you get to the championship game."

After Tennessee, Marciniak played three years in the ABL and three in the WNBA before becoming a coach with the Gamecocks.

Though sitting on the opposite bench of Tennessee Hall of Fame head coach Pat Summitt was difficult, Marciniak remains close to her former coach.

"Pat has been one of my biggest supporters with my product and my business," Marciniak said. "Pat has given her time and extended her hand in a big way to me and I'm very grateful to her for that."

To support the Kay Yow Cancer Fund, SHEEX, Inc., will have a booth at the Final Four and give about 500 travel items in SHEEX fabric packaged with the Kay Yow Cancer Fund logo to coaches.

Michelle Marciniak a driving force in the business world

Keith Groller

April 30, 2009

Michelle Marciniak drew a few giggles when she talked about "high-performance bedding" and "performance wear for the bedroom" at Saucon Valley Country Club on Wednesday.

Don't worry. It's not what you're thinking.

The former Central Catholic High School and University of Tennessee basketball star was talking about her new line of bed sheets which uses the finest in athletic performance fabrics.

"The reason you made the transition from cotton to performance fabrics in active wear is the same reason you'll make the transition from cotton to performance wear in the bedroom," she said as eyebrows arched around the room.

"I know it's a little different than basketball."

That's for sure.

But when Marciniak talked about SHEEX, LLC, the bed linen company based in Chapin, S.C., that she founded with former South Carolina women's basketball coach Susan Walvius, the same passion that made her one of the best basketball players ever to come out of the Lehigh Valley resurfaced.

Her SHEEX products, designed with athletes in mind, will be on display at the U.S. Women's Open at Saucon Valley from July 6-12, and Marciniak will be featured in the Celebration of Women in Sport event during championship week.

During Wednesday's press preview, Marciniak revealed she's pumped up about the U.S. Open, pumped up about the Celebration of Women in Sport and really pumped up about her bed sheets.

That's because the once fiery athlete has found a new arena for competition.

Marciniak, once dubbed the "Ponytailed Princess of Hoop" by Sports Illustrated, is now 35. Her playing days are over and her No. 23 jersey hanging in the rafters at Rockne Hall has collected a lot of dust since she graduated in 1991 after scoring a still-staggering 3,025 points.

And while Pat Summit considered her a coach on the floor during the Lady Vols' 1995-96 national title run, Marciniak's coaching days are over, too.

Her last stop was as an assistant coach at South Carolina, where she worked for five years.

Marciniak once had visions of becoming a NCAA Division I head coach.

Those views changed when she learned that the players didn't possess the same commitment to the game she had since learning to dribble for Jo Kraft and Mimi Griffin's St. Thomas More youth teams.

"It was a great experience for me to coach; I wouldn't trade it for the world," she said. "But I'm better suited to the business world because I can drive myself as hard as I want to and not have to worry about driving somebody else."

No one has ever had to push Marciniak, but she found out how rare she was when she became a coach.

She said she would try to teach them, motivate them, "but they might have a headache that day, or they may just have broken up with their boyfriend or had to go home for a family emergency. There are things that are totally out of your control as a coach that you took care of yourself as a player."

So, coaching wasn't necessarily the antidote for her desire to compete and challenge herself.

She says she found what she was looking for in the business world, without totally leaving sports behind.

"This has connected me back to almost everyone I've ever met through sports," she said.

Among those people is Griffin, the former ESPN basketball commentator who is now executive director of the U.S. Women's Open.

"Mimi has given such an opportunity for my young company to allow us to be in the merchandise tent at such a huge event," Marciniak said. "It's going to give us such exposure and launch our product. Mimi's a basketball contact, but she's much more than that to me. She's a mentor, a coach, a friend."

Marciniak, who had a six-year pro career, believes that women's basketball -- the college and pro versions -- could use someone as innovative as Griffin.

"With the WNBA or college ball, you have to grow your brand," she said. "I've learned that even with my young company. You have to make it new and exciting and you can't rely on what you did yesterday."

"The challenge for the WNBA and the college game is to keep re-inventing itself and come up with new ways to bring new people to the sport. You need to stay creative. They could use a mover and a shaker like Mimi."

And clearly they could still use someone with Marciniak's competitive spirit.

Basketball's loss is bedding's gain.

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CHALLENGER BRAND NEWS

DEDICATED TO BRANDS CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO

SHEEX is Sleeping its Way to the Top

September 8, 2009

The most luxurious visits with the Sandman have been associated with high-thread count linens that are dreamily smooth to the touch. One company has come out from under the covers to challenge that assumption and encourage comfort-seekers to switch from sheets to SHEEX.

The SHEEX credo is that traditional cotton sheets, far from promoting good sleep, are a bit of a nightmare. Susan Walvius and Michelle Marciniak, company founders and former collegiate basketball players and coaches, were inspired by a pair of shorts fashioned from a fabric that was so comfortable that one of the founders wanted to sleep in it. An idea was born, and Susan and Michelle took their motivation, drive and competitive nature from the basketball court to the business world.

"Five years ago, I wouldn't have thought of putting our athletes in anything but cotton," explains co-founder Susan Walvius. "But today, elite athletes wear only the latest performance fabrics. It makes perfect sense to introduce the finest of these fabrics to bedding."

Brad Petit, Chief Research Officer for the company, sums up the SHEEX advantage: "We try to simplify things by getting to the heart of the matter - the actual benefits of the fabric. Our sheets and pillowcases offer enhanced breathability, heat transport, moisture management, four-way stretch and softness when compared to cotton."

- The company was founded in 2007, with the product reaching the market in 2009 after two years of research and development
- Sheet sets range from \$200 for twin to \$295 for king
- Independently-conducted research at the North Carolina State University Center for Research on Textile Protection and Comfort has confirmed the advantages of SHEEX in maintaining thermal comfort during sleep

The fabric's SLEEP•FIT technology boasts a number of features that differentiate it from traditional bedding: breathability is improved by 50%, while body heat is transferred twice as effectively. For sweaty athletes, the sheets dry three times quicker than cotton competitors, wicking moisture away from skin.

Challenging cotton and high thread counts as the industry standards is no small undertaking, but the founders of SHEEX feel that their product speaks for itself. As Petit puts it, "everyone who has used SHEEX has become a believer." When it comes to improving sleep and consequently improving athletic performance, SHEEX is a winner.

In a tribute to the company's athletic inspiration, the bedding was included in the gift bags distributed at the 2009 ESPY awards, acquainting athletes, celebrities, presenters and VIPs with the unique benefits of the product.

But, SHEEX is not just for athletes, Petit points out. Anyone who is interested in overall wellness and the advantages of high-quality sleep might consider purchasing a set of SHEEX - "the same benefits apply to everyone." Blending old-fashioned comfort with high-tech material, SHEEX is a company that won't be caught dozing.

Flashfree

Not your mama's menopause

Keep it cool: Sheex



[Image: sheex.com]

I am a huge fan of innovative solutions to keeping cool. Which is why I am a huge fan of [Sheex](#). Disclosure: the company did not contact me to write about them nor have I tried the sheets. However, I have written previously about alternate use of [fabrics](#) that were originally developed for athletes to promote a cooler, more comfortable sleep for flashers and sweaters.

According to the website, the technology breathes twice as well as more traditional bedding and transfers body heat twice as effectively as cotton does. It also claims to have three times the drying power of cotton. I also like the fact they've taken the time to develop sheets for travel, so that you can keep comfortable wherever you are. What's more, the company is owned by two women who were former basketball coaches, so clearly they understand women's needs.

Granted, the sheet sets are expensive. But can you really place a price on comfort and a good night's sleep? I'd rather spend a bit more money and a bit less time changing sheets or clothing because I'm drenched.

Hat's off Sheex! Thanks for thinking of us! And let us all "sleep fit" and not fitfully.

Possibly related posts: (automatically generated)

- [Wednesday Bubble: Cool like dat](#)

January 22, 2010 - Posted by [Liz](#) | [apparel](#), [hot flash](#), [nightsweats](#) | [high performance](#), [hot flashes](#), [night sweats](#), [Sheex](#), [Sleep](#), [Sleep Fit](#), [wicking](#) | [1 Comment](#)

Valley

By Lindsey Getz

The Lehigh Valley is filled with a wealth of talent and has produced many stars over the years. Recently, *Lehigh Valley Magazine* sat down with area natives Michelle Marciniak, Tommy Zito and Erica Grow to get the latest scoop on their careers and what they're up to when they find time to return to the Valley.

Celebs

MICHELLE MARCINIAK

For locals that followed Michelle Marciniak's basketball career at Central Catholic High School, it was no surprise that she was destined for success. Often considered one of the best basketball players to ever come out of the Lehigh Valley, Michelle went on to become a star player on the University of Tennessee Lady Vols women's basketball team, and then eventually a point guard in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). Following a successful career as a player, Michelle went the coaching route, most recently holding the position as head recruiter and assistant coach of the women's basketball team at the University of South Carolina. Today, however, she's launched an entirely new career as the co-founder and president of SHEEX, LLC, a company that produces bed

linens from advanced athletic-performance fabrics. Michelle took some time out of her busy schedule to tell us about this new venture, and to share some of her basketball memories.

Lehigh Valley Magazine: Was basketball a passion from the time you were young?

Michelle Marciniak: Basketball was always my passion from the moment I picked up a ball. I have photos of me holding a ball when I was one-year-old. I started playing basketball when I was eight and began carrying a ball with me everywhere I went. I was a gymnast at the Parkettes from ages three to eight, and I believe gymnastics helped me to develop the coordination to play basketball, soccer, baseball, golf and volleyball. Ironically, I began playing every sport on boy's teams because opportunities were not there for me on girl's teams when I first started playing sports. Eventually I transitioned into playing on girl's teams. I loved every sport, but had a passion for the game of basketball. I found myself wanting to practice all the time – before school, after school, before dinner, after dinner. I had no problem passing on the peer pressures that many teenagers face because I was so focused on basketball. I loved the fact that you could never perfect the game and that there was always something to improve on. I set my sights on being the best player every time I stepped out on the court. The harder I worked, the more successful I became. I developed my work ethic through basketball and learned to capture my dreams and goals by committing a determined focused energy and persistent effort towards attaining them. I continue to apply these lessons learned to my life today.

LVM: With all you've accomplished as a player, you must have had many memorable moments, but do any stand out in your mind?

MM: I would have to say that winning the National Championship in 1996 was the highlight of my basketball career. What made it even sweeter was the fact that we lost the National Championship the year before in 1995. A lifetime of work went into that one game, that one moment. I personally felt a lot of pressure – a pressure that you not only put on yourself, but also included all the expectations of current coaches, university administration, past coaches, fans, family, hometown friends and



Michelle Marciniak,
photo by Sue Tougas

anyone who had followed my career. I felt responsible to come through. And when we won, it was the most incredible moment. It was a sense of accomplishment that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Another highlight of my basketball career was playing for Pat Summitt. She has a reputation of being tough to play for and I found that to be true first hand. As her point guard and the leader of her basketball program, she expected a lot from me. She told me that she saw me as an extension of her on the court, and she challenged me as she would challenge herself. I didn't understand why I needed to be pushed so hard then, but I certainly do now, after coaching at the same level for five years.

LVM: Your most recent venture is SHEEX. Tell us a little more about that.

MM: The response to SHEEX has been overwhelmingly positive. It's really cool to watch people get excited about something that I've had a large part in developing. Our performance bedding is really different. We originally created SHEEX because we fell in love with the ultra-soft feel and drape of the fabric. We have since learned, through two years of research, that breathable fabrics offer a cooler sleep environment, which leads to deeper better quality sleep. We have also learned that better quality sleep improves athletic performance and overall health. SHEEX enhances sleep for the same reasons athletes rely on the latest technology in performance fabric – to keep them cool, dry and rejuvenated for peak athletic performance.

LVM: You were back in the area promoting SHEEX at the US Women's Open this summer, what was that like?

MM: The US Women's Open was an incredible experience for us. We had an opportunity to watch the reaction of people who were seeing and feeling SHEEX for the first time. I am so thankful for Mimi Griffin, the executive director of the US Women's Open, and the opportunity she gave us to sell our SHEEX product in the merchandising tent. I have known Mimi since I was 10 years old (we attended the same church), and I grew up listening to the advice she frequently gave me. I've realized through the years that people give their time to you because they want to, not because they have to. That's what makes Mimi so special.

LVM: Do you get back to the Valley a lot?

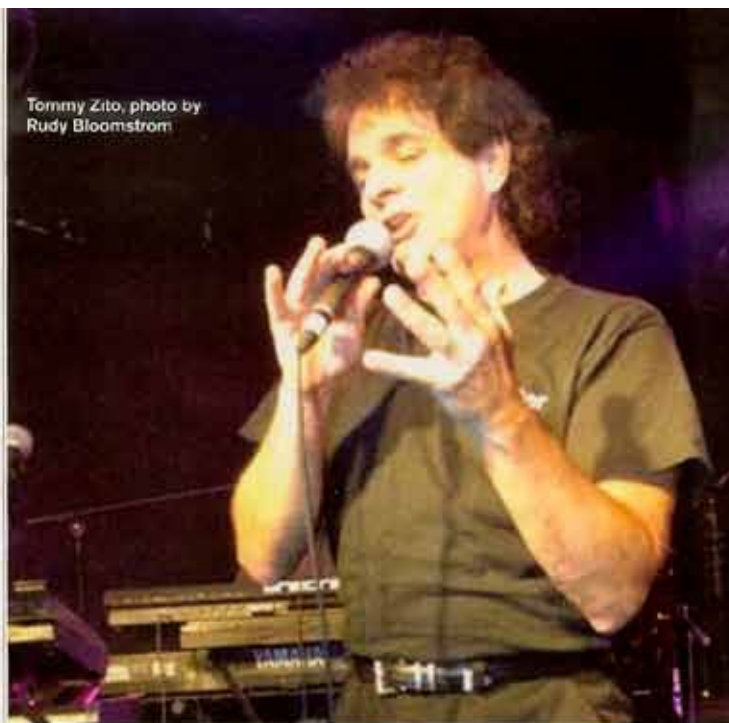
MM: I have come back home for holidays ever since I graduated from Central Catholic in '91, but only for a few days here and there. The US Women's Open being in my hometown allowed me to be home for several weeks and spend time with my parents and my brother. It was nice for me to have that quality time with them.

LVM: Do you have any favorite spots in the area from your childhood or that you return to when you're home?

MM: I loved to play basketball at Cedar Beach. I spent most of my childhood with my dad and brother at Wedgewood golf course. I also love my church, St. Thomas More along with Monsignor Murphy. I ate many meals at Perkins and Yoccas, and also Armetta's in Emmaus. And I can't pass up a sundae from Friendly's!

TOMMY ZITO

Entertainer Tommy Zito grew up in the Lehigh Valley, but his music has kept him traveling all over the country. His first major appearance was in Hazleton, PA, as the opening act for The Platters. Tommy has also been a member of three different groups: Uproar, Magnum and Aviator. Uproar was one of the Lehigh Valley's top bands of the 60s and 70s, whose single "Love is Gonna Keep Us Together" earned the group a spot in *Billboard Magazine*. Today, Tommy has had lots of success with his solo



Tommy Zito, photo by Rudy Bloomstrom

career and to-date has released three CDs, including *Lovers Lane*, the title track of which is still a top-requested song on Philadelphia's oldies and doo-wop radio stations. Tommy took some time to share fond music memories of his time in the Valley and beyond.

LVM: You recorded your first record when you were only eight years old, how did you get that opportunity?

Tommy Zito: I won a contest on WKAP radio. Shortly afterward, my first record, *I Played A Trick On Santa Claus*, was released – co-written by Tony DeSola and Lehigh Valley radio personality Les Baer. I was billed as the child recording artist. "Little Tommy." The instruction given to me by Les was invaluable, even at that early age. I carried his instruction, suggestions and advice with me from that time on.

LVM: You've shared the stage with a lot of famous performers, what are some of your most memorable moments on the stage?

TZ: There are so many, but opening for Bruce Springsteen, The Allman Brothers, The Platters, The Coasters and Survivor really stand out. Also, working for Merv Griffin as his summer entertainment at Resorts Casino for 10 years, and recording sessions in New York City with Ric Ocasek of The Cars, with Hall & Oates watching nearby, were also two very memorable moments. I was blessed to have had the opportunity to work at Resorts, and very much appreciated the company of talented musicians who often attended my performances before they had to put on their tuxes and get ready to perform in the showroom. I enjoyed those years and learned a lot. There is one moment in time, however, I wish I could return to and reconsider. That was in 1974, when Springsteen asked me to join his band. Being faithful to my own group and not taking the time to think about it, I declined.

LVM: You perform such a wide range of music, do you have a favorite genre?

TZ: I really don't have a favorite genre because I enjoy and perform all kinds of music, with the exception of rap. Although I consider it an art, I have never felt the need to do it, and it's not something fans have ever asked me to do either. I enjoy doing requests of the music people love because, for me, seeing happy faces is what it's all about. If I can brighten someone's night by doing an old favorite that brings back fond memories of days gone by, then I'm happy and it makes all the work, travel and sacrifices of a career in entertainment all the more worthwhile.

LVM: We know you're a native of the Lehigh Valley, but it seems you've been on the road a lot. Where has your career taken you, and do you get to come home often?

TZ: Yes, throughout my career I've traveled extensively, touring with

NEW

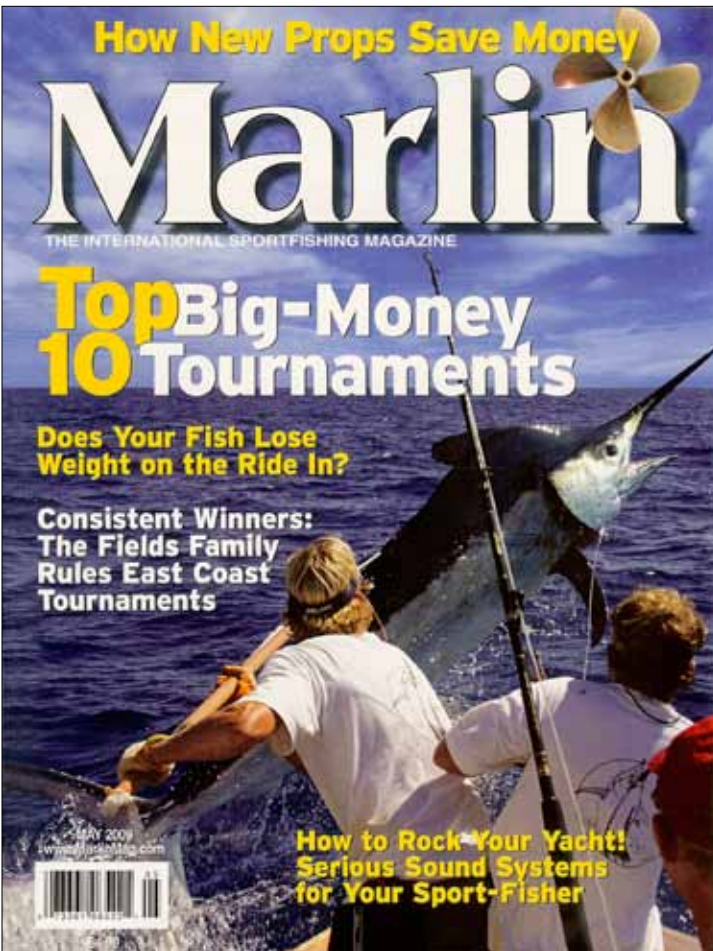
PRODUCTS

SWEET SHEETS

Let's face it: In our sport, almost every angler understands the need to seek out any performance advantage we can find, whether it be a new

boat mattress.)

Inspired by the finest in athletic fabrics, SHEEX created a lineup of cutting-edge benefits that include advanced moisture-wicking action, quick-dry engineering,



technique or a cool new piece of gear. With that same dedication in mind, SHEEX, a company that produced the world's first athletic-performance sheets, developed a line for the marine industry and the hard-to-fit berthing areas in all sizes of boats. (Just ask anyone who has ever tried to put sheets on an awkwardly sized

breathability for temperature management and above all, a luxuriously soft and sumptuous feel. And unlike cotton, with SHEEX there's no ironing necessary, so the fabric always looks beautiful.

And although the SHEEX perform well and look great, one of the main draws for boaters is how well



Selling a Good Night's Sleep

Tue, Jan 26, 2010

Small Business Success Stories



Are you ready to start a small business but unsure of what you could possibly do? One key to success is to choose a field that you already know well. The coach and assistant coach of University of South Carolina's women's basketball team did exactly this, and it has paid off immensely.

Like many athletes, Susan Walvius and Michelle Marciniak loved the latest innovations in performance apparel. One day Walvius remarked to Marciniak that she wished there were bed sheets made out of the soft, breathable fabrics that she wore every day in her job. Marciniak pointed out that this was an excellent business idea and the company **Sheex** was formed.

Luckily, the two women worked at a college and had access to business experts who advised them on how to open a small business. They set themselves to learning everything about performance clothing and the field of bedding in general, including how sports companies create moisture-wicking and heat-transferring garments. They then patented the idea to keep competition from springing up before they had even started.

This was the easy part. From there, the pair had to raise the one million dollars that it would take to launch the business, find a manufacturing facility equipped to make their product, and convince stores to carry it. Although it took constant phone calls and emails, just a few months from their land-breaking conversation they had a product ready to sell.

Sheex has been available online since this spring. The women have paid particular attention to branding, determining their market, and marketing in targeted, cost effective ways. The tagline, "Sleep better. Play better" makes it clear what benefit this brand offers athletes. Although athletes are certainly the target audience, many people are looking for any way to sleep better at night.

Fortune named these two women among the top entrepreneurs of the year for their drive and incredible gains in an economy that seems pre-set to failure. Determined to give back to the community throughout their trek to success, both women have participated in business summits. These commitments combined with marketing take them away from home almost constantly, but the work is worth the prize: a successful company.

Sheex's big break came recently, when the NBA asked to distribute the bedding in their Manhattan store. This opens the door for other sales through the well known basketball association, including in the many branded stores as well as on the website. However, if you need a cool, comfortable night of sleep, the bedding is currently for sale on its own website as well.

Do you have a great idea for a small business? Sheex is a good example of how to make it happen. Talk to experts and get to know everything about your field. Get necessary patents and trademarks to protect your company from impostors. Then, build a brand, complete with a professional logo, and market your product aggressively. If your product has any potential for success, these steps are sure to lead you there.

ONLINE



<http://rww.ncaa.com/news/basketball-women/2011-03-31/final-four-real-world>

 **Women's Basketball** [Div I] Div II Div III

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From the Final Four to the real world Starbird and Marciniak use basketball experience in career

Michelle Smith, NCAA.com
Last Updated - March 31, 2011 4:44 GMT
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TEXT SIZE T T



Marciniak helped to lead the Lady Vols to a title in 1996, and now has turned athletics performance fabrics into bedding.

Kate Starbird might have been the best basketball player in the country in the 1996-97 season. But she's always been a self-described computer "nerd."

Michelle Marciniak knew what it meant to play under the glare of legendary Tennessee coach Pat Summitt, and she knew how to take those lessons to the bench in her own coaching career. But she didn't know, until the past couple of years, that the things she learned in basketball would also apply in business.

Starbird and Marciniak have Final Four basketball in their past. Starbird played in three for Stanford from 1995-97, and Marciniak won an NCAA title with the Lady Vols in 1996.

But the game they loved has taken them in different directions.

Starbird, who earned her degree in computer science from Stanford and played in both the American Basketball League and the WNBA, currently is a graduate student at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

With a group of research partners, Starbird has helped to develop social media technology that aids workers and volunteers in a disaster.

The project is called "Tweak the Tweet." It involves specifically coded Twitter messages that match people who need help in an emergency with people who can provide it.

Starbird began her research by analyzing more than 50,000 tweets sent during the Red River floods in North Dakota and Minnesota, and also Oklahoma grass fires in 2009.

"Tweak the Tweet" was first put into action last year following the devastating earthquake in Haiti. It's since been deployed for more than 20 events, including the Haiti earthquake, the Gulf oil spill, the fires in Colorado last fall, several fall hurricanes, the cholera epidemic in Haiti, several winter storms 2010-11, the flooding in Australia and the New Zealand earthquake.

"We are still analyzing/evaluating different deployment techniques to try to figure out the best way to teach the format, get people using it and make it useful for them," Starbird said. "I've developed a ton of software that allows us to collect 'TIT' tweets, parse them into records, and map them in real or near-real time."

Starbird's academic advisor, Leysia Palen, did not know about Starbird's background as an elite athlete when they first began to work together.

"I met her as a graduate student and was immediately impressed by her abilities," Palen said last year. "I think what's so impressive about her is she brings all of the discipline she must have had as an athlete to her academic research."

Starbird has also branched out beyond "Tweak the Tweet" to work with other Crisis-Mapping efforts, including volunteering with a group called Humanity Road and the Standby Task Force.

"My current research is focused still on how we can leverage all of this data that people generate during disasters (using tools like mobile phones, social media and specialized platforms) and make it useful for people and responders," Starbird said.



WOMEN'S FINAL FOUR™ GEAR AT THE NCAA™ OFFICIAL STORE

"We plan to continue supporting TIT until we can transition it into either the public domain or into the hands of other volunteer communities or responders."

Marciniak walked away from a coaching career at South Carolina to follow up on a good idea.

The result is a company called Sheex, which has turned athletics performance fabrics into bedding that is about to be sold from coast-to-coast.

Marciniak said she was wearing a pair of workout shorts that she loved and she bought a pair for then-South Carolina coach Susan Walvius. That was back in August of 2007.

"She said, I'd love to have bed sheets made out of this and that was pretty much it, we said 'Let's do it,'" Marciniak said.

Walvius and Marciniak contacted the dean of the business school at South Carolina and handed the project to a group of graduate students for a class research project.

"At that point, it was just a fun exercise for us, but when the research and the materials came back, we knew we had to take a hard look at it. Basically, we said 'If we are ever going to do this, the time is now.'"

And Sheex was born.

For two and a half years, Marciniak and Walvius said they have "put our heart and souls" into the project.

"At first, it was a matter of looking at a pair of shorts and trying to figure out, how to make bed sheets out of it, but after that, you have to think about how you expand the product and how you make it a brand," Marciniak said. "I used my sports experience to connect with people. We've been able to cultivate relationships with a lot of people because of our sports background."

Marciniak said that Sheex products are about to be carried by a major national retailer and were featured in Oprah Winfrey's "O" Magazine.

"We're working on using athletes to help us tell our story," Marciniak said.

In her view, the transition from athlete to coach and coach to businesswoman has made complete sense.

"A lot of coaches write about business and they refer to it in their coaching," Marciniak said. "I've been both a coach and a player at a very high level and now I've gone out in the business world, and there are a lot of similarities."

Women Speaks, Women Magazine, Women Fashion

Fashion News, Fashion Trends, Beauty, Designer

<http://womenspeaks.com/sheex-llc-co-founders-susan-walvius-michelle-marciniak/>

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SHEEX LLC Co-Founders Susan Walvius & Michelle Marciniak

March 28, 2011 Posted by under Magazine

[2 Comments](#)



Fortune Magazine chose ten emerging female entrepreneurs to join the annual Fortune Most Powerful Women Summit September 14-16, 2009. The ten women joined 400 of the countrys most prominent women leaders in business, philanthropy, government, education and the arts for the series of panel discussions, on-stage interviews and interactive sessions over the course of three days in Aviara, California. This new program targets entrepreneurial women who are game changers, ground-breakers and innovators in their fields. American Express OPEN is the Founding Partner of Fortunes Most Powerful Women in Small Business Initiative. Fortune and American Express OPEN honored the 10 winners at a special reception at the summit. The Fortune Most Powerful Women Summit is the premiere gathering of its kind, bringing together the countrys top women in business. The 2009 theme was Betting on the Future—ideas about the key challenges—technological, geopolitical, and social—that are reshaping our organizations and our world. The program was built around five pillars: Leadership, Innovation, Finance and the Economy, Global Connections, and The Common Good.

Tags: [Fortune Conferences](#), [Fortune Live Media](#), [Fortune Magazine](#), [Michelle Marciniak](#), [Pattie Sellers](#), [SHEEX LLC](#), [Susan Walvius](#)

<http://simplystated.realsimple.com/simplystated/2011/03/night-sweats.html>



Health

Wet and Wild: Coping With Night Sweats

Posted on Mar 10, 2011 4:38:34 PM | By [LizKrieger](#)

Fact: I sweat while I sleep. Honestly, I can't count the number of times I've gone to bed with sleek, blown-out hair and woken up to damp, frazzled, kinky strands or how many mornings I've found myself drenched in sweat, with sheets that are distinctly moist on my side of the bed. Not attractive, I know...but very common amongst women, and more so during certain times of the month, when hormonal variations can cause a spike in your temp.

Night sweats are also a frustrating side effect of tons of medications, and menopausal women are particularly prone to being hot under the sheets. (A 2002 study found that of nearly 2300 people who saw their doctor, 40 percent said they'd had at least ONE episode of night sweats in the prior month.)

Until I figure out a way to actually stop the perspiration—there are a clutch of **herbal remedies** to try—I've tried out some products that at least make the droplets less distracting or even cut down on the number of moonlit pajama changes!

Which brings me to **Bamjamz!** The name itself never ceases to inspire jokes and jabs from my husband—something about saying the word as a reply to "What are you wearing?" makes him laugh. But beyond that, these simple items of organic lounge-wear and sleep-wear, made of super-absorbant, super-soft bamboo fibers, are *actually* sort of awesome at making the sweats less disturbing! Now that I have tried them, I can't go back to my old cotton tees. The company says they actually can keep you two degrees cooler—and when it comes to one's inner thermostat, those two degrees can be the difference between drenched and dry!

Down the hall in my toddler daughter's room, it seems that she got the penchant for perspiration. She's often damp upon waking (her hair in a similar state of Einstein-esque glory) and so when **Sheex** sent me a new piece from their line of "performance" sheeting to test on her crib, I quickly swapped out the sheet. (I'm biting my tongue so that I don't crack a joke about "performance" sheets. This is a G-rated, "family" blog!)


Anyways, the pale-pink fitted crib sheet was soft and lustrous, especially silky compared to her standard cotton sheet, and after a few days under her clammy little body, I did notice that it didn't get as wrinkled or otherwise disturbed by her perspiration. As promised, the microfiber fabric dried super-fast, too—so when I put her back down a few hours later for her nap, there was nary a still-damp patch! **WIN!** (My only quibble: I wish it came in a fun pattern—in part because it disguises any small stains that accumulate during the week!)

Sheex—which was founded by two former women's college basketball coaches—also makes these super luxe sheet sets for adults in search of bedding that does more than, well, just lie there. Sure, the \$200 price tag (for a queen sheet set) is admittedly quite steep, but many people spare NO expense when it comes to making their bed a sanctuary. After all, we DO spend one-third of our lives in bed, so why not? While you can already buy them online, Sheex will also hit the shelves at **Bed, Bath & Beyond** in the first week of April.



LIGHTNING REVIEW

Sheex Performance Bed Sheets

 **Casey Chan** — You know those workout shirts that keep you cool and dry? Like from Under Armour and Nike? These Sheex "performance" bedsheets are made out of the same material. And they're pretty much perfect for any type of activity you do in bed.

PLUSSES

Holy baby bottoms, these sheets are *soft*. You definitely feel the roots of performance wear, but the softness is more similar to satin or silk (but obviously more durable). There's a purposeful weight and texture to it, which lets your body breathe while keeping you warm. It's fantastic really—I've slept on many a high thread count and on the cotton of Pharaohs but none were as versatile as Sheex.

The set comes with a fitted sheet, a flat sheet and two pillowcases all made from the same 87% polyester/13% spandex fabric blend. Once you put the Sheex on, your bed becomes one constant cool side of the pillow. For a person like me, who gets hot easily, and lives in a city that stays hot midyear, Sheex is an absolute oasis. Or I guess deodorant if you're a sweaty sleeper. Either way, I've been sleeping wonderfully since I started using Sheex.

But, um, how do 'performance sheets' perform when *you* perform?

You are who you are, of course, but let's put it this way: Sheex eliminates the messy variables of night time relations. The fitted bed sheet is tight and stretchy so it wraps itself perfectly around the mattress so there's no needless fabric flapping around. This is crucial, as it gives you a blank slate for your penetrative masterpieces: you can spin, tango, and switch gears any which way without ever getting your knees, elbows or any of your other body parts caught in your sheets. Cotton is for virgins, people.

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As for those who partake on solo missions, the flat sheet grooves itself onto your body, caressing its polyester around your knees and ankles while giving breathability to your backside. It's as easy as ever to find peace within yourself.

MINUSES

If you have any rough patches on your body (back of your heels, etc), rubbing against the sheets will make your rough skin feel like the carcasses of burnt alligators. It scratches and it's not fun knowing how gross your feet are. Also, because of Sheex's materials, it doesn't retain that 'fresh laundry' scent. And, lastly! The bed sheets might be so awesome that your impromptu one night bed dance partner (what was his/her name?) might want to stay with you through the morning after.



... *“As the world’s first performance bedding, Sheex was developed by two female athletes with one goal in mind – to help people sleep better so they can perform at their peak in life.” ...*

<http://www.active.com/gear/Articles/Coach-Jennys-11-Running-Gear-Must-Haves-for-Spring.htm?page=3>



... *“I love this fabric, and I’d love to have bedsheets from this stuff.” Michelle replied, “Let’s do it.” With no formal business experience, the two women stepped boldly into the world of entrepreneurship.” ...*

<http://lavamagazine.com/features/rinny-rolls-in-some-serious-sheets#axzz1MAyF28rs>



... *“I know this firsthand, having been awakened by an overactive mind at 4:00am and now double-checking to be sure I’m typing cohesive sentences! That’s why I believe the women behind SHEEX luxury performance bed sheets are onto something brilliant.” ...*

http://blog.womensrunningmag.com/womens_running/2011/04/sweet-dreams-with-sheex.html



... *“As the world’s first performance bedding, Sheex was developed by two female athletes with one goal in mind – to help people sleep better so they can perform at their peak in life.” ...*

<http://abclocal.go.com/wls/story?section=resources&id=8149149>



... "Sheex, the best sheets you will ever sleep on! When I received the sheets from SHEEX, I was so excited to put them on my bed, but I was pleasantly surprised" ...

<http://www.barefootmommies.com/2011/03/15/the-best-sleep-with-sheex-review-giveaway/>



... "SHEEX are made from athletic performance fabrics that wick away moisture and transfer body heat 2X better than cotton to help maintain a cool temperature for deeper more restorative sleep." ...

<http://momgenerations.com/2011/03/sheex-sheets/>



... "Feeling the need to up your athleticism in the sack. I think we might have something to help. Find out more about SHEEX bed sheets after the jump. Made from the same microfiber polyester/Lycra Spandex fabric found in dri-fit workout clothes," ...

<http://flisted.com/119625/sheex-the-bed-sheets-of-champions>



Tech Gadget Reviews

... "SHEEX are being called the first performance bed sheets, and seeing as they're designed by athletes we'd have to agree. So what makes them all that and a bag of Doritos?" ...

<http://gadget-reviews.findtechnologynews.com/sheex-performance-sheets-are-made-by-athletes-for-sex-athletes>

Golf Digest

... *"The company is Sheex, which touts its product as 'the world's first luxury performance bed sheets.' Sleep better, play better, it says."...*

<http://www.golfdigest.com/golf-equipment/blogs/newstuff/2011/05/better-golf-through-bettershee.html>



uncrate

... *"You sweat when you play sports or work out, so you wear water-wicking fabrics to help keep you dry? But what about physical activity that takes place in a more intimate area?" ...*

<http://uncrate.com/stuff/sheex/>



MotorBoating

... *"With three times the drying power of traditional cotton sheets and 50 percent more breathability, the Nautical Collection sheets from Sheex are ideal" ...*

<http://www.motorboating.com/articleHtml.jsp?ID=1000087218>



BOATING

WORLD'S LARGEST POWERBOAT MAGAZINE

... *"Woven of synthetics, as is performance athletic wear, these sheets flex and stretch to fit custom berths with the help of drawstrings to cinch them in place." ...*

<http://www.boatingmag.com/gear/marine%20accessories/sheex-nautical-collection>




SHEEX[®]
PERFORMANCE SHEETS