

DC Metro Sports

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WNBA All-Star Weekend is Eye Opening Experience

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Basketball fans packed the Verizon Center in Washington D.C. Sunday afternoon to witness the 8th WNBA All-Star game. The best women's basketball players the world has to offer assembled to participate in a three point contest, skills competition and the main event East vs. West game. But the eyes of a four year old took center stage on this beautiful summer day

For years, covering sporting events has been both fun and rewarding. The only job better than covering a sporting event; is participating in one. Among the many fans packed into the phone booth Sunday was a 4 year old girl, who could one day be one of the best forwards ever to play the game. She is tall for her age, has a quick first step and isn't afraid to post up daddy and spin for the dunk. If she can only get her ball handling skills together, (I still haven't been able to convince her to dribble) she may well be on her way to the Association. For the first time in my career as both a daddy and journalist, I got to see the game through the enthusiastic eyes of my four year old daughter.

What a treat the WNBA is for both my daughter and young women everywhere. For decades young girls have been told "you can do anything boys can do". However, until 11 years ago, women had no where to do what boys can do when it came to professional basketball in the U.S. Thanks to the WNBA women are now afforded the opportunity be a professional athlete in their own country. Kara Lawson can come home as an All-Star and play in the city where she grew up. Cheryl Ford can grow up with a dad who is one of the NBA's 50 greatest players of all time and then become a great professional player in her own right by winning an All Star MVP, Rookie of the Year Award and a Championship.

"Daddy, those are girls playing basketball!" The love affair began one evening when my little girl saw women playing basketball on television the first time. Watching basketball was no longer a way for my daughter to convince me to let her stay up a few minutes later. She was interested in knowing more. She would ask me repeatedly to take her with me to games. She has been to basketball games before. But she would not be satisfied until she had seen the WNBA in person. The women of the WNBA provide young women with sports role models in a way that players like Tim Duncan and LeBron James cannot. The WNBA has "girl power"!

The Athletes in the WNBA offer young women positive sports role models who can be extensions of what impressionable young women are being taught at home. Name the last scandal involving a WNBA player. There aren't any stories of superstar women's basketball players "making it rain" at the male exotic dancer review. The athletes in the WNBA have purpose; they are pioneers who will be revered like Russell, Cousy and Chamberlain. They understand what they and their careers mean to not only their own

daughters, but to the daughter of many throughout the country. A rookie this year was only 10 years old when Lisa Leslie and the Los Angeles Sparks tipped off against Rebecca Lobo and the New York Liberty in the inaugural first season of the WNBA. Imagine, ten years from now, people discussing the league celebrating its 21st season and bringing up names like, Cooper, Hampton and Witherspoon. And discussing how Taurasi, Catchings and Bird took the league to the next level. The WNBA offers young women the hope that one day; they too can take center stage and play amongst the best that the sport has to offer. Today, I saw basketball through the eyes of a 4 year old girl and the game never looked better.