



Blocked, but not for long — Matenga in action during a national league match last year.

are Teanua Kamana and Poko Kora. Margie is related through her mother to the Maori people of the Wanganui area. A grandmother three times removed was a Malaysian and somewhere there is a little European influence.

Her husband, Teariki Matenga is also Cook Island-born and has Rarotongan, Fijian and Scottish origins.

The couple married in 1982, returning to Rarotonga for the wedding service. They had met at a Cook Island Christmas social in Wellington.

Matenga said her worse netball setback was a damaged archilles tendon which required an operation in 1982 and could have affected her career permanently. Another serious injury has been a damaged kneecap which is still causing bother.

Matenga listed her major highlights: Winning the 1979 world championships in Trinidad by beating the favoured home-team in the final. Winning the mini-world series in 1981 in Australia. Winning the Australian Games contest in January 1985. Beating the current world champions Australia to win the World Games in London last July.

"My biggest disappointment was losing the world champs to Australia in Singapore in 1983. On the day they played better than us. We made too many mistakes."

Last season, Matenga again captained the stylish Wellington reps to retain the national provincial title and a measure of Matenga's play was in the match against the strong Canterbury side where she took 43 shots and miss-

ed netting only 10. In the World Games final in London last July against Australia, Matenga converted 19 shots from 23 attempts.

Matenga was a finalist for the NZ Sportsman of the Year title in 1981. This writer nominated Matenga for the 1985 award.

Matenga said her netball ambitions are to get to the next world championships in Scotland in 1987 and for New Zealand to regain the world crown.

"Then I'll see how I feel after that. Teariki and I are thinking seriously of going back home to Rarotonga to live permanently within the next five years. I think I have reached my peak in netball and I'm currently staying at that level."

Matenga said the Swiss Maid national netball league is a good idea. "It strengthens the club competitors at a top level. It shouldn't be made provincial. The league as it is helps raise the standard of players far better than taking the cream from each association."

The player-coach of the PIC premier one team since 1983, Matenga says she enjoys the role.

"I've got Wai Taumaunu and Rita Fatialofa (both fellow NZ team members) to assist me. I feel I get a lot of response from the players because I'm associated with them. Apart from Wai, we are all Islanders. We have won the Wellington competition for the past two years but we didn't do very well in the national league. I have every hope we can improve next season with better preparation."

Matenga said Waikato Maori, Margaret Forsyth is the best shooting partner she has played with. "We have played together for New Zealand since 1979 and we have a wonderful understanding. Margaret is quick, she can jump and is a hard and determined worker who on her day can shoot from anywhere."

Matenga says netball is getting more popular with the countries that play the game. She acknowledges the increase in media coverage in New Zealand and hopes the sport will start to develop in other countries.

Apart from New Zealand which has 174,000 participants, the sport is played fairly extensively in Australia, Great Britain, the West Indies, the Pacific Islands, Canada, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

"It is a good sport for the Maori and other polynesians. It seems to be made for them through its ball skills and teamwork," said Matenga.

PIC is unique in New Zealand netball. It has the only premier one team which is entirely made up of Polynesians. The club has five teams which include a few pakehas.

"We all get along fine, all the different Island and Maori people and it is good for breaking down the Island racial barriers."