

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Globetrotters leave Convo crowd amazed, laughing

By Athens NEWS Staff

Editor's note: Anne Li, an eighth-grader at Athens Middle School, won the honor of covering the Harlem Globetrotter basketball game last Wednesday night for The Athens NEWS. Anne, 13, submitted the winning query letter for the contest.

We chose Anne's entry because of her well-written letter and considerable writing experience (relative to her young age). As the winning contestant, Anne got to write a story about the game, received four game tickets, a special press kit and a chance to meet the Globetrotters. She wanted to give Katie Wight special thanks for her help.



Fans cheering. Kids squealing with delight. The program sellers, shouting, "Programs! Get your programs he'ya!" Basketball players, in their red, white and blue, leaping all over the court, swinging on hoops or doing flips... the mascot Globie and his "little" brother dancing on the floor... Harlem Highflier acrobats from Kenya...

"And now... the Haarlem Globetrotters!"

Last Wednesday, the crowds at the Ohio University Convocation Center were as wild as ever over basketball as "Airport" Greenup, "Big Easy" Lofton, "Blenda" Rodriguez, "Flight Time" Lang, "General Grant," "High Rise" Brown, "Lefty" Williams, "Wildkat" Edgerson, "Sweet Pea" Shine and "Turbo" Pearson took the court. And you didn't have to be a basketball fan to enjoy it.

These "Ambassadors of Good Will" have been making audiences double over with laughter, performing their "Magic Circle" ever since 1929. And so far, nothing has changed.

The Globetrotters combined comedy and competition to conjure up a great night. Whether they were hanging from the basketball hoops or shooting alley oops, the Globetrotters not only kept the crowds choking with hilarity or gasping at the remarkable basketball tricks, but managed to play and win a great game, beating the Washington Generals 77-66.

"Big Easy" Lofton constantly came up with new antics to frustrate the refs and harass the Generals, who shot multiple foul shots that, as no surprise, were caused by Lofton. When he was "injured" while trying to attempt one of "Sweet Pea" Shine's impressive basketball plays right before halftime, "High Rise" Brown took over; the fun never ended. "Big Easy" returned a hero during fourth quarter, leading the team to victory.

The game wasn't technically 100 percent basketball, however, though the audience had no problems with that - they were also incorporated into the game/act. Often, kids (as well as adults) were invited onto court to shoot some hoops or to sing and dance... to just have a good time.

"It was one of the best games I've ever seen," said Rebecca Nichols, 9. "I liked how 'Big Easy' kept hitting the ref with the basketballs. I would definitely take my kids to a Harlem Globetrotter game when I grow up."

Alexander "A-Man" Showalter, 13, commented, "The Globetrotters were ballers. If you ever have a chance to see them, take it!"

"Globetrotter Football" was also played, with each Globetrotter performing ridiculous moves, causing the audience to laugh over the hilarity. The mirth was doubled when "Globetrotter Football" was accompanied by a live re-run.

How do the Harlem Globetrotters include comedy and competition all in one game?

"A lot of people come to have a good time," explained Derick "General" Grant, "so we do show basketball, but we always put some competitiveness into it, for balance."

Sometimes, though, the fun can be removed from basketball when players take the game too seriously, added Grant.

"In the end, it's just a game, whether you win or not. Money, fame and pressure... maybe [takes away the fun]. But it's not the sole reason - everyone's different," he said.

But comedy and competition isn't the real purpose of the Harlem Globetrotters. "Working together," "Helping out others" and "Being a good, all-around person," is what being a Globetrotter is all about, according to Kevin "Turbo" Pearson.

The moral of this fun-filled night? As three of the Globetrotters told a group of kids during "Globetrotters University":

"God gave us two ends. One to sit on and one to think with. Success depends on which one you use; heads you win, tails, you lose."