



Contact: Marc Nelson (908) 692-6586

For Immediate Release

“Mighty” Mike: Dribbling Sensation and Inspiration

Secaucus, NJ – At most basketball games, halftime can be considered a relatively quiet, boring time. It’s a time to stretch your legs. A time to go to the concession stand and get a snack. But, at a Harlem Wizards game, this is not the case at all! Thanks to “Mighty Mike” Simmel’s dribbling display during the Harlem Wizards halftime show, halftime is a time to get on your feet and watch in amazement as this “ball handling Wizard” does tricks that will drop your jaw and leave you mesmerized. A word that the Harlem Wizards have been using to describe this year’s show is “awe-inspiring” and in taking into account the fact that Mike was diagnosed with epilepsy at the age of two, nowhere is that word more applicable than in the case of “Mighty” Mike Simmel.

Mike’s early life was defined by obstacles and using his creativity, indefatigable work ethic, and the love of his parents to overcome them. With his epileptic condition, a brain disorder that is characterized by repeated, spontaneous seizures, Mike noticed by the age of six that he couldn’t hop or skip like the other children. His father then came up with an idea, to give Mike a basketball to help him improve his coordination. A young Mike took a liking to this idea and started to dribble the ball with him wherever he went. By his teenage years, he became even more determined to make the ball become part of him, so he would even sleep with the basketball. This hard work paid off and by the time he entered high school at Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey, NJ), Mike was already known as a ball handling genius.

During his high school career, Mike displayed other talents on the hardwood, as well. He was a three-year starter on the varsity team, led his team in assists each of these three years, and by his senior year, he was named team captain, a testament to his leadership skills. He was named to the All-NNJIL team during his senior season, and his unselfish nature carried over to the college level, as well. At SUNY Purchase, Mike led his team in both assists and steals during his last two seasons there and was also named a team captain. Mike was also fortunate to play at SUNY Purchase because at that time, it was the training facility of the New York Knicks. Always a “gym rat”, Mike would often linger in the gymnasium long enough to share the court with some of the Knicks players to the point where they asked Mike if he was interested in working as a ball-boy with the team. In 2001, Mike accepted their offer and developed lasting friendships with Knicks players and personnel.

2001 was also a milestone year for Mike for other reasons, as it marked his debut with the Harlem Wizards. By this point, Mike had already become well-known on the basketball camp circuit by speaking at camps across the country about the importance of overcoming obstacles. The Wizards gave Mike a chance to speak at their camp in the summer 2001, and it was an opportunity that he made the most of. In addition to wowing the crowd with his words and ball handling abilities, the Wizards gave Mike the opportunity to scrimmage with the team and he impressed them with his basketball talents and showmanship. The Wizards then invited him to join the team and luckily for Mike, his first game was played at Northern Highlands High School in his hometown of Allendale, New Jersey. Mike put on a special show that night and made it clear to everyone in attendance that a Wizards star was born.

Mike describes his Harlem Wizards career as a blessing. As he said, “All the best things in my life have happened over the last nine years as a member of the Wizards.” Indeed, Mike’s list of accomplishments is almost as large as the size of his bravery and courage in battling a debilitating disease. For starters, Mike has spoken at over 450 basketball camps including the University of Connecticut, Seton Hall, Rutgers, Georgia Tech, and Providence and has performed at NBA halftime shows for the New Jersey Nets and Toronto Raptors. He also left a lasting imprint on the minds of viewers across the country who watched him perform on NBC’s “Showtime at the Apollo”. Mike is also a national spokesman for Epilepsy Awareness, speaks annually at the Epilepsy’s Foundation of America’s Kids Speak Up, and also speaks and performs for the Special Olympics. As a Yankees fan, Mike was especially touched when he was honored at Yankee Stadium during Disability Awareness Night. In 2005, Mike started the Bounce out the Stigma Project, a non-profit grassroots campaign to educate the public, teach healthy lifestyle choices and empower youth, based on his personal experiences. This initiative was highlighted by Mighty Mike’s Basketball Camp, which he holds each summer for special needs youth. In September of 2009, Mike was honored with a TOYA (Ten Outstanding Young Americans) Award, presented by the US Junior Chamber of Commerce, which is a prestigious honor as past recipients include Presidents such as Bill Clinton, John Kennedy, and Richard Nixon. In the Fall of 2011, there is a book coming out detailing his life, titled “Mighty Mike Bounces Back,” and Mike’s aim in co-authoring the book is to provide inspiration for children with disabilities.

Mike is also a key player on the Harlem Wizards team. As Wizards Owner, Todd Davis said, “Mike is unique. He is passionate and 100% committed about his desire to perform, be the best, and support others. I am proud and thrilled to bring Mike to our fans and give him a platform to highlight his many skills and showmanship.” Mike continues to work on his craft and spends countless hours in the gym preparing for his one-man halftime show and Wizards team performances. His goal for the upcoming season is to give the audience a dribbling show better than any they have ever seen before.

As a member of the Harlem Wizards, Mike delivers powerful, positive messages to youth across the country. As Mike said, “The biggest thrill of my life is being able to turn something negative and turn it into a positive. We all have gifts and how you use those gifts and talents is up to you.” Standing at only 5’9, Mike has used his gifts and work ethic to overcome his limitations and make his dreams in basketball come true.

Awe-inspiring, indeed.

Health and Fitness Fact- To stay in shape, Mike uses an elliptical machine, stationary bike, stair master, treadmill and takes his medications. He keeps a “lean diet”, filled with carrots, salad, pasta, chicken, fish, and other proteins and makes sure that his diet is regular and regimented.