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For Immediate Release

M&M- The New Reason to be “Like Mike”

Secaucus, NJ – The sweet sound of music. As an avid drum player and a former member of his school’s high school marching band, Mike Mathews knows this sound well. Fast forward a few years and now, “Big Mike” Mathews is a star showman for the Harlem Wizards and has a basketball game that is so sweet that he is nicknamed “M&M”. As he returns to the Wizards for his fifth season, he has now become accustomed to another sweet sound—thunderous applause and laughter from the audience.

Mike Mathews is what you would call a “late bloomer.” In standing 6’7 by the time was he was a freshman in high school, Mike was gangly and had little interest in basketball and was content to be a drummer in the Blountstown (Fla) High School marching band. That was until basketball coach, Albert Yon, noticed his size and potential on the hardwood and took enough interest in “Big Mike” to teach him the game of basketball. A hesitant learner at first, these lessons started to pay major dividends on Mike’s skill development. After a few months of practicing with Coach Yon, Mike transferred to Florida State University High School, became a defensive standout, and led his team to the state championship game. By the time he was a senior, “Big” Mike Mathews had grown to be 6’10, was considered to be one of the top fifteen big men in the country and was a highly sought-after recruit by most major Division I programs. After mulling his decision, Mike chose to stay close to home and became a Florida State University Seminole on a full basketball scholarship.

Mike’s dominance continued at the college level. For his career, Mike ranked 4th in Florida State University history in blocked shots with 118 and during his senior season, he was named 2nd team All-ACC. This was a prestigious honor for “Big Mike” as the ACC had at the time been considered the premier basketball collegiate basketball conference in the country. What Mike was even more proud of was the fact that he made the ACC Honor Roll and received his degree in Sports Management in 2003. Mike pointed out that he was one of the few people in his small rural town of Blountstown, Florida to graduate from college, much less while receiving a Division I basketball scholarship.

Mike's professional basketball experiences were extremely diverse, playing in countries ranging from Iceland to Uruguay. These travels allowed M&M to learn different cultures and gain international recognition for his countless hours spent working on his game. Mike recalled a story where he was watching television in Uruguay and a news story came on about him. As Mike said, "I didn't understand what they were saying, but man, it felt good to see that." From an awkward teenager that was reluctant to play basketball to an international basketball star, Mike's playing career had really taken off. Little did he know that in 2005, a chance encounter with a certain "Speedy" player would allow him to touch people's lives on an even deeper level.

In always returning to the United States in the offseason to play in summer leagues and further hone his craft, Mike ended up on the same summer league team as "Speedy" Williams, a Harlem Wizards legend who immediately took a liking to M&M. Speedy encouraged Big Mike not only to join the Wizards, but he spent the time to teach him the tricks of show basketball. M&M caught on quickly and discovered that he had a knack for bringing joy to others, especially children. As M& M said, "It's great to see how much the kids look up to us and they love what we do. They love to see our attitudes and our skills." Speaking of kids, Mike encourages them to work hard in school because education can open up so many doors to their future.

On the Wizards, Mike has the roles shot blocker and dunker, but he can also rely on his natural, "big tough guy" demeanor, which is used in a way to entertain the fans. For example, when he goes to visit schools, he often pairs up with A-Train, who is the shortest player on the team. The irony of seeing a 5'6 basketball player and 6'10 behemoth often makes for some hilarious situations.

Long term, Mike hopes to continue to mentor children in the same way he does as a Wizards player. In the offseason, Mike trains youth on basketball skill development. Mike has remembered the effect that Coach Yon had on his development and he wants to continue to influence youth in the same way. Mike hopes to get through to the kids that basketball can be extremely helpful in teaching youth dedication, perseverance, and team work.

Mike expects big things from the Wizards this season. While last season had the Wizards playing more games than they ever had before, Mike hopes to improve on that number this season. He also would like to do more promotion to have an even higher attendance, which leads to more people's lives being positively affected by the Wizards. Standing at 6'10, you can be sure that he won't fall short of expectations.

Health and Fitness Fact- In the offseason, "Big Mike" plays in basketball summer leagues to stay in shape and goes to the track and runs two miles per day. Dietary wise, he practices what he preaches; he doesn't eat junk food, eats fruits and vegetables, and takes his vitamins every day. His hands and ears may still be his most active body parts as Mike is still an avid drummer and has recently taken up bass guitar.