



Contact: Alisha Lubin (201)-271-3600 ext. 204

For Immediate Release

**Performing in all Six Wizard Decades , “Tojo” Still Brings the Show!**

Secaucus, NJ – Fine wine. Classic cars. There are some things that get better with age. Such is the case with Claude “Tojo” Henderson, a member of the Wizards since 1967 and one of the greatest performers in show basketball history. For 2010-2011, the Wizards are honored to welcome Tojo back for his record 43<sup>rd</sup> season, and Tojo is certain to add to his illustrious list of accomplishments all while creating unforgettable memories and raucous laughter along the way.

Born in Passaic, New Jersey in 1947, and nicknamed early in his life after the Japanese Emperor, Hideki Tojo, Tojo Henderson starred as a basketball player at Passaic High School. Standing 6’7, 250 pounds by the time he was a senior, he made his presence felt with his intimidating power game that was all about running the floor, playing stingy defense, and dominating the boards. He got his professional start in 1965 with the Harlem Diplomats, a comedy basketball team that was not actually from Harlem, but Canada. Then, in 1967, off of a recommendation from future basketball television analyst and Hall of Famer, Dick Vitale, Tojo was introduced to Howie Davis, the owner of the Wizards at the time, the two instantly hit it off, and the rest was history.

However, Tojo’s initial career with the Wizards was short-lived. Tojo joined the Army in 1968, went to Vietnam in 1969, earned a Purple Heart and Medal of Valor during his time there. In addition to being someone who gave his all to his country, Tojo also gave his all to the Wizards, as he rejoined the team promptly upon his return to the United States in 1970. 40 years later, he is still going strong today. As Tojo said, “The Wizards have provided me with the opportunity to communicate with America’s youth. The past 43 years have been incredible for me.” These years have also been incredible for the Wizards who have grown tremendously and now consist of three teams that can play in three separate locations at one time. The Wizards’ current Owner, Todd Davis, feels that Tojo had a lot to do with this because as he explained, “He brings the whole crowd into

the show, he wants to see everybody partying and having a great time at the game. He's a true throwback entertainer who brings a high standard of joy and energy to every performance."

Whether it is arguing with the referees in a hilarious way or running into the stands, Tojo stops at nothing to entertain the crowd. But, Tojo also delivers a serious message to youth: stay in school, don't smoke, or do drugs. The positive effect that he has had on children's lives has been Tojo's favorite aspect of being a Wizard since 1967. Tojo said, "I do many school assembly programs- perhaps we see 150,000 kids per year during the school year. We do a fun and exciting show as well as deliver a heartfelt message to the kids before we leave each show. I want the kids to know I'm a Harlem Wizard because I am so truly proud of the fact that I've had an opportunity to be a voice that impacts young people in a positive way." While one may think his favorite moment with the Wizards came on a high flying fast dunk or other entertaining play made when his legs were a bit more spry, Tojo actually pointed out that his proudest moment as a Wizard came in 2009 and happened off the court. This moment occurred when he was honored by the school system in Woodbury, New York for his dedicated service in putting on a memorable show there for the last 20 years. It is worth noting that his service to the community does not only include his participation with the Wizards; he is also heavily involved in volunteer work with the Children's Aid Society, an organization that provides adoption, foster care, health and education services to underserved children and families in New York City.

While he takes a year-by-year approach towards his future with the Wizards, he says that he can't ever see himself not being a part of the Wizards in some capacity. He now serves as an elder statesman for his Wizard teammates and also appreciates their energy and talent, which provides him with the motivation to keep coming back year after year. His secret to his longevity is loving what he does and his passion for the Wizards is evident every time he steps out onto the floor. In patterning his game after all-time greats such as Oscar Robertson, Elgin Baylor, and Dave DeBusschere, Tojo has not only the charisma and personality, but also the basketball ability which has made him a legend. He is one of the few professional basketball-playing grandparents in the world as he has three grandkids aged 12, 11, and 2 and he imparts in them the same message that he delivers to youth across the world as a member of the Wizards.

According to the Wizards' original Owner, Howie Davis, "Tojo Henderson was born to be a Wizard." To see the smiles that he is sure to put on children's faces during the 2010-2011 season, that certainly is the case. Tojo is the only player to have played in every decade of the Wizards since their inception in 1962! Thus, Tojo continues to prove that fine wine and classic cars have nothing over this show basketball legend when it comes to getting better with age.

**Fitness and Health Fact** – Tojo said that his body has held up for so long because of the change in his diet. Inspired by the fact that Tojo saw many of his basketball-playing counterparts developing health problems as a result of their poor eating habits, Tojo made a conscious effort to change the way he was eating. For breakfast, he used to eat bacon, eggs and sausage, but now eats oatmeal, watermelon, or citrus salad. He snacks on pears or apples, and often eats salad with lettuce, tomatoes, and cucumbers for dinner. He credits this dietary modification for allowing him to "feel so much better."