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For Immediate Release

“Tomahawk” Throws Down for the Wizards

The pure joy that comes with seeing your first child born. The exhilaration of a rim-rocking slam dunk. TJ “Tomahawk” Stukes knows both of these feelings well. As a first-time father in September of 2010, this also marked the dawning of Tomahawk’s second season of a blossoming career with the Harlem Wizards. With all of these positive feelings and happenings going on in his life, you can be sure that Tomahawk will be ready to bring the thunder for the Wizards this season!

Coming from humble beginnings in the Bronx, New York, TJ had an illustrious career at Bronx Regional High School. In standing 6’8 and weighing 230 pounds by the time he was a senior, TJ was a massive force and played the role of intimidator during his high school career. In fact, he averaged 16 points, 15 rebounds, and 5 blocks per game, was a two-time PSAL Defensive Player of the Year, and most importantly, led his team to two PSAL state championships. His dominance continued at the college level, where at Pitt State (KS), his game-changing defensive presence provided the impetus for him to win the Jayhawk Conference Player of the Year. In also being named an Honorable Mention All-American, TJ averaged 12 points and 15 rebounds per game. While always putting a “hurtin” on the rims, the irony of the situation is that TJ earned his Bachelor’s Degree in Physical Therapy. One can only hope that one day, he can cure some of the opponents that he terrorized as a menacing shot blocking presence during his time at the high school and college level.

It was during his time playing in the New York City summer leagues that he earned the reputation for dunking on people and the nickname of “Tomahawk.” This title was bestowed upon him for his penchant of throwing down tomahawk slam dunks, in which he reaches far behind his head and throws the hammer down, much like LeBron James. Speaking of LeBron, he also saw the star quality that Tomahawk possessed by selecting him as one of the 20 contestants that competed on the Nike Battlegrounds Show that aired on MTV in 2005. The Harlem Wizards also saw this star quality in him, and through the buzz that Tomahawk created in the New York City area by dominating summer league play, they selected him to join their team in 2009.

Upon joining the Wizards, Tomahawk immediately displayed his multifaceted personality that has made him a fan favorite across the globe. What was once a fearsome paint protector is now a world-class entertainer and

engages in tricks, dancing, and hilarious comedy routines. While he can still be serious when he has to be, Tomahawk has now emerged as one of the funniest players on the team. Luckily, for Wizards fans, he has still maintained his rim-rocking capabilities. In fact, last year, during a game in Florida, Tomahawk went up for a dunk and got up so high that he hit his head on the rim, an incredible athletic feat that drew raucous laughter from his teammates and the audience.

His family and friends are pleasantly surprised to see TJ displaying the lighter side of his personality. They are also extremely proud of him. As TJ said, "This is the best thing I could have done with my life. Where I come from, a lot of people aren't able to overcome their tough circumstances. I not only did that, but I made a career out of making people smile. For that, I am truly blessed."

Tomahawk hopes to make it a very long career with the Wizards. During his first season, he spent countless hours in the gym working on his tricks, which he described as more difficult to learn than the casual fan would think. He also spent a significant amount of time soaking up knowledge from his more experienced Wizards teammates, Tojo, Broadway, and Swoop. As a rookie, he learned just how appreciated the Wizards are for the work they do in the community and in this vein, he went out of his way to forge a friendship with an autistic boy during the Wizards stay in Massachusetts. The boy, John, is now entering sixth grade and calls Tomahawk his favorite player, which Tomahawk feels is his proudest accomplishment as a Wizard thus far.

For this season, Tomahawk's goal is to expand the Wizards' popularity. He also wants to continue to spread the message to children that, "Anything is possible with hard work. Dream big and don't let anything stop you from reaching your goals." His long term goal is to be a physical therapist for children, so he can heal them and continue to share his engaging personality with them in the same way he does as a Wizards player. Basketball wise, Tomahawk wants to continue to make the adjustment from imposing post presence to successful showman, which he described as a welcome change. As Tomahawk said, "It's a liberating experience to have fun on the basketball court without getting chewed out for smiling."

Keep smiling, Tomahawk. With you on their team, the Wizards know that they have a budding show basketball star on their hands. Just make sure to keep your head away from the rim.

Health And Fitness Fact- Despite his massive frame, Tomahawk does not lift weights. Rather, he builds up his strength through push ups, pull ups, and calisthenics. In describing himself as a high-energy guy, Tomahawk has a high-carbohydrate diet consisting of pasta, rice, and potatoes to keep him energized on the court. As a result of the Wizards' fitness focus for this season, Tomahawk has cut all junk food and fatty foods out of his diet.