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HARLEM WIZARDS IMPRESS AND INNOVATE IN CHINA

The Harlem Wizards just completed a 12 game tour traversing eastern China. This was the team's third tour of China in the last 12 months. Crowds from Beijing and beyond went wild for the Wizards style of basketball entertainment.

CCTV 5, the most popular station in China covered the Wizards game at Remnin University. An estimated 50 million or more people watched the highlights, in a one minute news piece. The Sports/Newscaster said that the Harlem Wizards brand of entertainment basketball was comparable to the entertainment of Brazil's brand of soccer.

On the tour the Wizards faced a variety of opponents, from Chinese College teams, to freestylers, and in the last game, an exciting exhibition match against on of the Chinese professional teams (The Changchung Tigers of the CBA).

The games were highlighted by slams, freestyle tricks, street ball flair and humor, in a breakthrough performance that reaches out to hip-hop teen and young adult audiences, as well as families.

And1 has created a niche of street ball shows that has an urban, hip-hop feel and whose audience is mostly teens and young adults. The Harlem Globetrotters, the first players in basketball entertainment, have stayed with their formula of family self contained shows, traveling with their opposition team the Nationals.

Harlem Wizards President Todd Davis said, "Our mission and goal is to provide awe-inspiring basketball shows every night, shows that leave everyone, from the audience to the players, inspired by the experience".

"We want to produce a show with heart, humor and warmth, but we also want to excite, and amaze, blending traditional show ball with freestyle, street ball and dunks that drive fans to get out of their seats."

Led by the showmanship, tricks and dribbling of Eric "Broadway" Jones, Arnold "A-Train" Bernard, and Chris "Handles" Franklin, the fans immediately connected with the Wizards, bridging any language barriers.

Each night opened, with a freestyle and slamming opening choreographed by Wizards Co Player Coach, Arnold “A-Train” Bernard.

Fans were treated to a mélange of competitive basketball, exciting up tempo play, punctuated by quick ball movement, slams, and more. Then the opponents get drawn into the show, and despite their competitive training, find themselves laughing at the jokes, some of which need no translation. A-Train, a New York basketball legend often leads the fast break, and also sets up another New York basketball legend for down low buckets, “The Franchise” John Strickland.

At the end of the first quarter The Wizards new streetballers enter the court for a one on one battle, featuring freestyle. Known streetballers, “The Yong One” also known as Exile, and “Pat Da Rock” go one on one with Chinese freestyles.

The show also incorporates an amazing high level dunk show. Highlights have included Anthony “Any Way You Want It” replicating the famous Dr. J dunk, running from the endline to the opposite foul line, and skying in for a slam dunk. Rashaan “The Rocket Man” Barner had the Wizards Chinese Sneaker-Apparel Sponsor Deerhui Athletic bring out its courtside advertising sign, and he leapt over it for a dramatic dunk. 5’11” Roberto Yong, positioned Wizard star, 5’7” Arnold A-Train Bernard under the basket and takes the Nate Robinson Dunk Championship slam to the next level by jumping over him and wind milling it home!

The Wizards concluded the tour in Changchun, in Northeast China, known as the movie capitol of China, and the first province where basketball was played. The game featured an exhibition matchup for 3 of the four quarters vs the Continental Basketball Association professional team the Jilin Northeast Tigers. The Tigers went to the quarterfinal of this year’s CBA Championship.

The Wizards have forged a five year promotion and touring partnership in China with Beijing Future Sun Sports and Culture and have signed a two year Sponsorship agreement with Deerhui a top 10 Chinese Sports Apparel Company.

Wizard President, Todd Davis said, “Our partners and the Wizards are in China for the long haul, which is what it takes to become known and accepted in such a big country. The fans have responded with amazing enthusiasm. I am thrilled with that and the way our players have responded, putting their heart, bodies and soul into their play and performance”.

Some of the cities covered on the tour included Beijing, Hangzhou, Fuzhou, Chengdu, Changchun, Wuxi, Nanjing and Zhouzhou.

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