

Globe trotters a hit

Apology for last week's article for calling the California Chiefs the California Cheats - it was a long-distance telephone call (him to me) and the connection was bad.

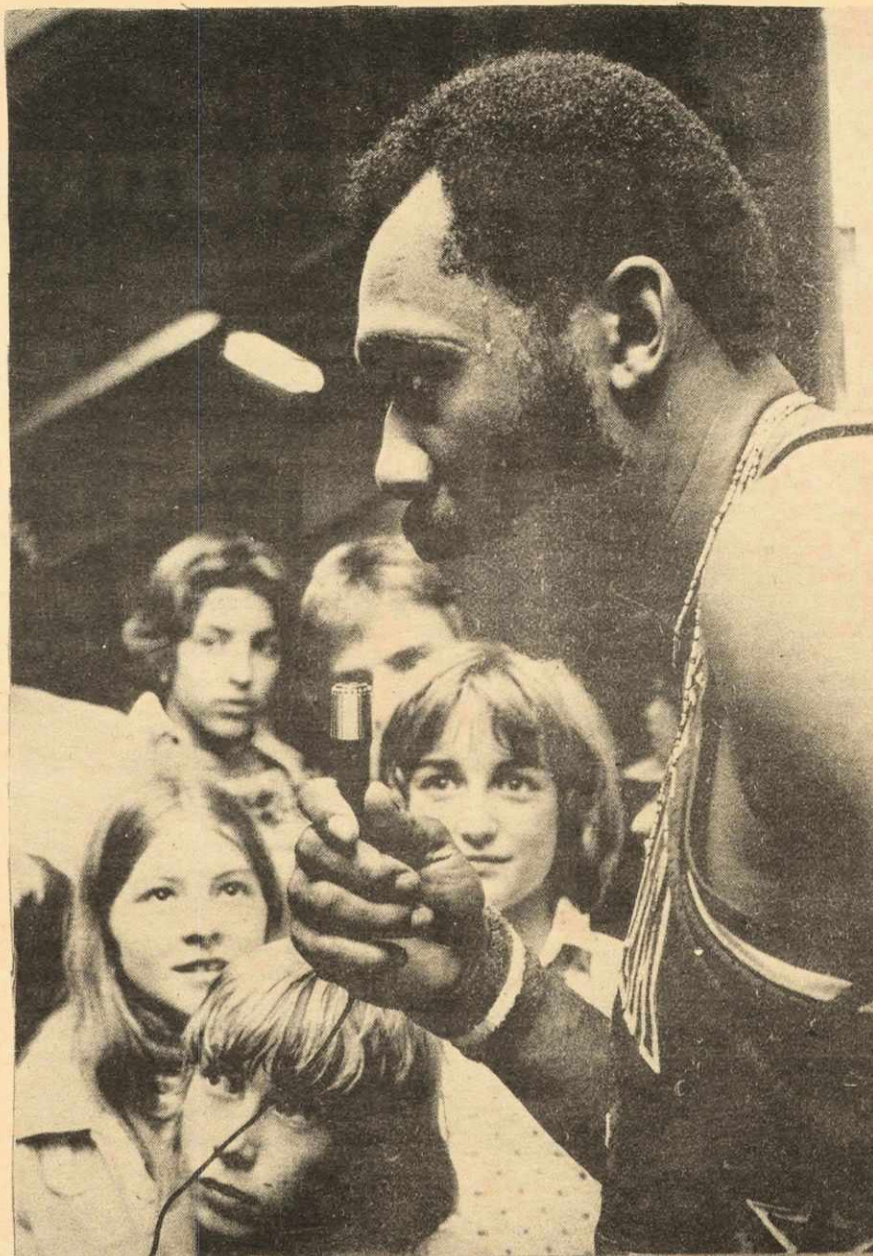
by rab pittman

There was something unifyingly electric in the Forum Friday night - for the first

time in all my years here I saw Haligonians from all walks of life attracted and brought together by their admiration for about twenty basketball players. A capacity crowd, each one of them there to view the most spectacular game of basketball they'll probably ever see. (Despite all the malice directed towards the Americans, isn't it ironic that they should be the ones to melt Halifax's social barriers?)

Personally, I was a bit let down. I expected to see a basketball game jam-packed with well-honed skills and a lot of fast action. What was presented was rather slick package of varying talents and gags lightly sprinkled with, I'll admit, enviable accurate passes and fancy ball-handling. The spontaneously outrageous scenes brought more laughter than the obviously contrived and scripted in which the ref and the Chiefs were the straight men. In spite of the referee being part of the plan - or perhaps because of it - it was a good show, very entertaining and exhibiting some definitely unique talents (i.e. backward one handed shots). A noticeable dark spot of the evening, however, was the floor - an overly enthusiastic Forum hand had waxed it so beautifully it resembled the rink normally there this time of year and both teams had trouble remaining upright.

Playing to standing room only, the Harlem Globetrotters took the floor to face the California Chiefs amid thunderous applause. With them were the diminutive (6') talents of first year rookie Tom 'Cochees' Brown, the mad-Indian whoop of Mel Davis, the unbelievable dribbling act of Marques Hynes and the incomparable antics of Geese Ausbie.



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The fun began during the introduction of the players, with a 7' spaghetti-legged Trotter attempting to influence the ref's decision with a kiss, immediately following that with the buffing of a bald spectators pate.

The pre-game warm-up drew oohs and ahs as man after man presented a series of extraordinarily accurate shots and new twists on the old lay-up. One apparently bored player had a habit of walking under the basket and unenergetically tossing the ball over his shoulder - full points every time. (It was gratifying, though, to see that even the best of the pros miss on occasion). All this to the whistled tune of Sweet Georgia Brown which, incidentally, was picked up and echoed by every adolescent in the place with the dubious talent of emitting two or more notes from pursed lips.

The starting line of Jimmy Blacklock (18), Mel Davis (19), John Smith (24), Wolfman Lee (34) and Geese Ausbie (35) took the jump off with ease. Accompanied by the unexpected whooping of Davis the Trotters got the first basket and made it quite apparent that it really wasn't necessary to pay much attention to the Chiefs (you'll note I don't even have their names).

The play moved swiftly with the most incredible display of passing I've ever seen. An attempt at a second basket was escorted by a driving Trotter who, about 2 yards before the basket, whipped the ball around his back and off to his team mate waiting in the corner. Only the receiver was watching the ball. The Chiefs carried the ball back down the court and it was nice to hear cheers for the oppositions play, even if the encouragement was not of equal volume (amplitude!)

It was quickly apparent that the efforts of the game were not quite as exhausting on the GTs as one might expect. Much of the scoring was effected by passing upcourt any offensive rebounds to No. 35 Geese Ausbie who would fool around til the others got there and then either shoot it or give it away. At the end of three minutes the score 13-4 for the GTs.

Geese was quite casual about the whole thing, being rather verbose in his opinions of the ref and taking time to involve the audience in his clowning. Once, however, he tempted the male pride of a thigh-high tiger and was driven back to center court by a flurry of (unconnecting) punches - move over Chris Clark. One wonders though, whether it was his star status or his sheer gall that let him get away with 'picking' on the audience (i.e. taking one kid's chips, opening a woman's purse etc.)

Evidently the show made way for him because if he was busy drawing attention away from the ball, well the ball would just have to wait. But, as they say, the end justifies the means and he did give two of the kids Globetrotters pendants and sang Happy Birthday (with the help of Halifax) for a boy in a wheel chair. Which made everyone feel pretty good.

After seven minutes of play the score was 25-18. John Smith had made several excellent drives for the basket and the audience had accustomed itself to the omnipresent yell of Mel Davis (something like ai yi yi yi ad infinitum). The buzzer (Avon calling) sounded and Marques Haynes took the floor, calmly throwing three swishes in a row from one third down the court. The score was 33-24 at the end of the first 10 minute period.

Fresh GT Players in form of No.'s 44, 25 and 27 took the floor, of whom Ron Knight (27) displayed the most refined talent at ball-handling. This second period was more or less a repeat of its predecessor with Geese still hanging around under the net ('How ya feel?') and assisting most of the points. With the score coming up to 63-42 Marques Haynes (20) finally dispalyed his amazing dribble techniques and proceeded to dominate the ball for at least a minute by twisting, turning, kneeling and being a general basketball magician. Both teams headed for the locker rooms at half time but only the Chiefs were decidedly sweaty.

The second half saw Mel Davis replace Geese Ausbie under the net and more of

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