

# HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS, MASTERS OF TRICKS, PLAY A DOUBLEHEADER AT ARENA

Originally published in The Blade on Thursday, December 24, 2009

BY RYAN E. SMITH  
BLADE STAFF WRITER

A Harlem Globetrotter's work is never done.

Not because the Globetrotters each play more than 150 games a year or because they spend seven or eight months a year on the road. For third-year player Blenda Rodriguez, it's because there are always new tricks waiting to be invented.

"I'm just glad to be making up tricks every day," he said. "I basically try to be David Blaine with the basketball."

When Rodriguez comes to town with the Ambassadors of Goodwill for a doubleheader Tuesday at the Lucas County Arena at 2 and 7 p.m., he'll bring a bevy of special skills with him: trick shots off his head, the ability to dribble three basketballs, and a half-court shot that he can make 60 percent of the time. He's also perfecting a stunt doing a forward roll while spinning a basketball on each hand.

"I can do a roll with one hand but with two it's like the next step forward," said Rodriguez, 31. "It's giving me a hard time."

The 5-foot-8-inch guard from Manhattan grew up idolizing the antics of the Globetrotters and tried to mimic their moves. Since joining the team, Rodriguez has been to more than 27 countries, including China, from which he recently returned.

The Globetrotters may be known for their amazing shots and funny antics, but they have a proud tradition too. Formed in 1926, the squad's roster has included some legendary names, including Curly Neal and Hall of Famers Wilt Chamberlain and Meadowlark Lemon. The entire team was enshrined in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2002.

This year, two players - Flight Time Lang and Big Easy Lofton - gained fame of a different sort by competing on the CBS reality show The Amazing Race. They will not be at the Globetrotters' Toledo appearance.

Over the years, the team with the theme "Sweet Georgia Brown" has lost 345 games, but balanced against more than 23,000 wins it still has the best winning percentage in professional sports, according to its Web site.

Rodriguez, whose real first name is Kenneth, got his nickname Blenda (as in blender) because his ball-handling "made a smoothie" out of a couple of opposing players during one game.

He said the players think of themselves as athletes first and entertainers second. After all, they have to be good enough to get a comfortable lead before they start cracking jokes or pull down the pants of some opponent from the Washington Generals, their regular foe.

"If we start fooling around too soon, then we might lose," Rodriguez said.

Still, it's not the score that fans will remember following Tuesday's games, he said. It's the jokes, silliness, slam dunks, trick shots, incredible ball handling, and autographs that are signed afterwards.

As he put it: "You don't have to be a basketball fan to come to a Harlem Globetrotters game."

*The Harlem Globetrotters and their "Magical Memories" World Tour will be at the Lucas County Arena Tuesday for shows at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$17 and are available through all Ticketmaster outlets,*



Blenda Rodriguez will be with the Harlem Globetrotters when they come to town Tuesday.

*ticketmaster.com, 800-745-3000, harlemglobetrotters.com, and at the arena box office. Information: 419-321-5007.*

Contact Ryan E. Smith at: [ryansmith@theblade.com](mailto:ryansmith@theblade.com) or 419-724-6103

[< previous](#)

[next >](#)