

# Harlem Globetrotters who?

The world-renowned basketball team will be strutting their stuff at the Singapore Indoor Stadium tomorrow. We give you a crash course on the team that combine slam dunks with well-choreographed plays and awe-inspiring athleticism that make them more Cirque du Soleil than Cleveland Cavaliers.



### Acrobats on court

They are an American basketball team formed in 1926 – known for their amazing feats on court, incredible humour and generous acts of goodwill to entertain their fans.

### Harlem shuffle

The squad were born not in Harlem but in Chicago. Originally called the New York Harlem Globe Trotters, Harlem was chosen as it was considered the centre of African-American culture. In fact, the Globetrotters did not play in Harlem until 1968, four decades after the team's formation.

### Ball tricks

The team played hundreds of normal games and they got so good that they played in a national championship. They lost but discovered the crowd liked it when they did ball tricks and comic routines. The coach encouraged them to do more of that, provided they had a comfortable lead.

### Soundtrack

A version of Sweet Georgia Brown by blues musician Brother Bones was adopted as the Globetrotters' theme song in 1952.

### Hollywood fame

The Harlem Globetrotters proved to be entertainers off the court as well, starring in two 1950s Hollywood movies, including Go Man Go featuring Sidney Poitier. In recognition of their role as entertainers, they received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1982.

### The great Wilt Chamberlain

One of the greatest-ever NBA players, he joined the team after leaving university in 1958. He often said the year he spent with the Globetrotters, with which he signed a US\$50,000 contract, was the most enjoyable of his career.

### HONORARY GLOBETROTTERS

Some of the famous people who have been named honorary Globetrotters. Funnily enough, only one is a certified basketball player.



**Bob Hope**  
American comedian, actor, dancer, athlete, author.



**Nelson Mandela**  
South Africa's anti-apartheid hero and its first black president.



**Henry Kissinger**  
Nobel Peace Prize-winning diplomat, US Secretary of State.



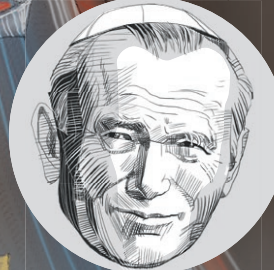
**Jackie Joyner-Kersey**  
US Olympic and world heptathlon and long jump champion.



**Jesse Jackson**  
American civil rights activist, Baptist minister, politician.



**Whoopi Goldberg**  
American actress, comedian, author, television host.



**Pope John Paul II**  
Polish archbishop. The first non-Italian pontiff in 400 years.



**Kareem Abdul-Jabbar**  
US basketball legend who played 20 seasons in the NBA.



### NBA calibre

How good are they? Good enough for the NBA it seems. In the 1950s, Nat "Streetwater" Clifton became the first African American to sign a contract by joining the New York Knicks. Together with Earl Lloyd and Chuck Cooper, they made history by breaking the NBA colour barrier. And there was the NBA great Magic Johnson, who famously played a single game as a Globetrotter.

### Savoy Big Five

They were founded by a 24-year old Abe Saperstein. He initially named it "Savoy Big Five" after the famous Savoy Ballroom in Chicago where they played many of their early games.

### Lifesaver

In the 1950s, the Globetrotters were already playing to full houses, while the newly formed NBA was struggling to draw crowds. To drum up interest, NBA teams scheduled games that featured the Globetrotters. As the NBA grew in stature, it could pay higher salaries than the Globetrotters, and the best African Americans began to opt for the NBA.

### Girl Power

The team signed two women, Olympic champion Lynette Woodard in 1985 and World University Games winner Joyce Walker in 1986, making them the first American female professional basketballers.

### GLOBETROTTERS FUN FACTS



#### How it started

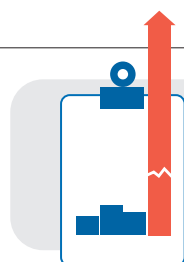
• One night in 1939, the Globetrotters were leading their opponents 112-5. The crowd was bored, so Inman Jackson started fooling around on the court, doing

finger rolls, making half-court shots, shooting from under his legs and throwing crazy passes. The crowd loved it. The owner told the team to do the same tricks every night.



#### Historic game

• In an exhibition match in 1948, the Globetrotters beat the NBA champions Minneapolis Lakers. The game is credited for leading the NBA to begin admitting black players in 1950.



#### Longevity

• They have played in more than 25,000 games, surpassing any sports team.



#### Paid professionals

• Their matches are exhibition games. But since the players are paid, they are considered a professional team.