

Marietta Daily Journal

COBB'S LOCAL NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1866

MDJONLINE .com

SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 2009

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The 2009 Celebrity Wheelchair Basketball Jam fundraiser at Campbell Middle School, hosted by BlazeSports America and Dream Makers Youth Foundation, featured area wheelchair basketball athletes playing alongside other area athletes unaccustomed to using sport wheelchairs. Nearly 200 people attended the game on Saturday.

HOOPS & DREAMS

Professional athletes take on Paralympians during Celebrity Wheelchair Basketball Jam

By Marcus E. Howard
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SMYRNA — Professional athletes and Paralympians competed against each other on Saturday night in the 2009 Celebrity Wheelchair Basketball Jam at Campbell Middle School on Atlanta Road.

The annual event was a fundraiser to bring awareness to the importance of sports for youth with disabilities. It was hosted by BlazeSports America and the Dream Makers Youth Foundation, two non-profit groups that serve people with disabilities.

Those who participated in the game included professional athletes Sam Pellom, a former Atlanta Hawks player, Jason Allen of the Miami Dolphins, Ahmad Carroll of the New York Jets and former Sacramento Kings player Duane Causwell. The celebrities were in wheelchairs and played against non-celebrities such as basketball Paralympians Gavin Cloy, Teresa Lannon and Kathleen O'Kelly-Kennedy.

"By looking at (the players) it looks very difficult," said Pellom, who was a coach at Saturday's event.

"It's for a good cause, and I'm very pleased to be out here."

Wheelchair basketball has been part of the Paralympic Games since 1960. Today, both men and women with a

variety of disabilities, such as amputation, limb loss, spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, brain injury and other orthopedic and locomotor disabilities, compete in the games, according to the U.S. Paralympic team Web site.

The wheelchair game incorporates many of the same rules as traditional basketball. Besides rules that take into consideration dribbling from a wheelchair, plays and strategies are very similar.

"Sports is a great way that kind of puts everybody on the same playing field," said Cloy, a retired basketball player for the U.S. Paralympic team.

Mark Selbee, a former kickboxing champion who has competed at least five times in the event, said playing basketball in a wheelchair is an extremely difficult task.

"It's so hard. You can't move your hips," said Selbee. "As an able-bodied guy, I want to move my legs and get into it, but you're literally strapped into the chair and it's all in your elbow and arm."

About 200 people attended the game. Donations for the event will support BlazeSports, which assists people with physical disabilities, and Dream Makers, which serves children with cognitive disabilities.

Along with the athletes, Atlanta Falcons cheerleaders Devon Waits and Kierra Anderson were also on hand for autographs and pictures.



Staff/Think D. Nguyen

Above: Gavin Cloy, left, 2004 Athens, Greece, Paralympian and 2006 World Championships silver medalist, clashes with Mark Selbee of Vinings, former pro super heavyweight world champion kickboxer. **Below:** Quad-amputee James Adams of Acworth cruises down the court on a fast break.

