

# Baller Status

A talk with Harlem Globetrotter Kenny "The Blenda" Rodriguez

The world famous Harlem Globetrotters are part theater, part comedy act and all basketball. We caught up with 5-foot-8 guard Kenny "The Blenda" Rodriguez not long before the Globetrotters packed Matthew Knight Arena on Feb. 24 to entertain thousands.

**How did you become a Harlem Globetrotter?**

After high school I took a four-year break from basketball, but then I came back, playing street ball in New York and doing halftime shows. What got me onto the Harlem Globetrotters was a guy by the name of Black Jack Ron, a street-ball legend known all over New York. He got a call from one of the agents, and the agent asked him if he knew any talent in New York, and he told them about me.

So, a scout called me and asked for a highlight video, I sent the video over to Phoenix, Ariz. and next thing I know they say I look good, but they want to make sure I can really do all the stuff I did in the video – make sure there's no trick photography. So they invited me to Houston, Texas, with 10 other guys for a two-day tryout.

It was intense – people think Globetrotters are all about the tricks, but they looked for the tricks at the end. First they make sure you're a good ballplayer. Within 30 minutes I twisted my ankle. They taped it up and I was out there limping, thinking I wasn't going to make it. But I think they saw that I didn't give up, and

they liked my energy. And ever since then, in 2007, I've been a Globetrotter.

**So, why do they call you "The Blenda"?**

'Cause I make smoothies out of defenders and I shake people up on the court.



**Are all of the games scripted? Is it predetermined that you guys are going to win by a certain amount of points? How does that work?**

No, no, we never know how much we are going to win by, or if we're going to lose. People don't know: we've lost a total of 345 games. But we've won 24,000 in the 86 years we've been around. We try to get a 10-point lead over our opponents and then we bring the tricks in.

**So all theatrics aside, the teams you're playing against are seriously trying to beat you guys?**

Yeah, sometimes they have to fall back, like when we grab kids from the audience to do skits and stuff. They know they have to lay back for a minute and let us put on a show. But they're trying to beat us.

**How do the Globetrotters relate to the NBA?**

Well, a lot of NBA players now were motivated to play ball by seeing a Globetrotter game. Or they saw us on TV, on *Gilligan's Island* or *Fat Albert*. I recently had a chance to be on *Sesame Street*, and I remember being a kid and seeing the Globetrotters on *Sesame Street*. It was pretty cool to hang out with Elmo.

**What's the best part about being a Globetrotter?**

Traveling. I've been to 40 countries. I can't remember them all right now, but to mention a few – Italy, Belgium, the U.K., China, Japan, Bosnia, Turkey. Basketball is a universal language, and wherever we go people understand our antics. ew

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