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**Metro Store to Raffle Free Globetrotters Tickets** > The Metro Store will conduct a free employee drawing for Globetrotters tickets. Three family 4-packs to any of the local games will be raffled off. Employees can enter the drawing from through Feb. 9 at the Metro Store, located on the Plaza Level of the Gateway Building. The winners will be chosen at 3 p.m. on Feb. 9. Globetrotters appearances are scheduled at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 17, at the Honda Center in Anaheim and 1 p.m., Monday, Feb. 19, at the Staples Center.

## Globetrotters Spin Basketball Magic for Metro Rail Commuters

PHOTOS BY JUAN OCAMPO



Globetrotters Nate Loftin, left, 6'9" center from southeastern Louisiana, and Anthony Blakes, 6'2" guard from Wyoming, dribble their way from the East Portal to Staples Center on board Metro Rail.

- Players Blakes and Loftin dribble their way to Staples Center

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Feb. 1, 2007) Metro Rail General Manager Gerald Francis may be able to make the trains run on time, but spinning a basketball on his index finger? Well, that needs a little work.

In fairness to Francis, it's hard to compete with the Harlem Globetrotters at basketball tricks, but he gave it the ol' college try, Thursday morning, during an event in the Union Station East Portal that tied the team's local

appearances and the benefits of using mass transit.



Rail GM Gerald Francis gives professional basketball a spin.

To help promote transit, Globetrotters guard Anthony Blakes and center Nate Loften dribbled their way from the East Portal onto a waiting Metro Red Line train, then to the 7th and Metro station where – still dribbling – they switched to a Metro Blue Line train for the short trip to the Pico Station near Staples Center.

Metro's Edith Goff-Youngblood bounces one off Globetrotter Blakes as the Los Angeles Times photographer gets the shot.



Some commuters stopped to take cell phone photos with the brightly dressed players, who also handed out free game tickets. With a squad of photographers snapping pictures, the Globetrotters performed their basketball magic as curious commuters filed past.

One routine had each player challenging the other to a series of intricate maneuvers rolling the ball around their shoulders and arms. It ended with Blakes balancing the spinning basketball on the fingertip of Metro's Edith Goff-Youngblood.





**Media Frenzy:** Globetrotters get the ball rolling in the atrium of the East Portal as cameras whirr, flash and snap.

**A Globetrotters game**

Francis, who played point guard on his high school basketball teams in Chicago and again for a couple of years at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., recalled attending a Globetrotters game as a kid.

The famous Meadowlark Lemon was chasing an opposing player around the court with what Francis and his buddy thought was a bucket of water. Lemon threw the contents over the crowd where the two were sitting.

“I didn’t know it was just confetti in the bucket, so my friend and I bumped heads,” Francis said. “We both went home with knots on our heads, but it was fun.”



**Metro Moment:** Globetrotters Anthony Blakes, left, and Nate Lofton share the court with TOS Luis Alcantar and TOS Jeannette Mayo of Bus Operations Control.

Francis may have to work on his ball spinning, but he can draw inspiration from the red, white and blue wristbands presented to him by Blakes and Loftin.

In a short address to the crowd gathered in the East Portal, Blakes noted that the Globetrotters earned the title “Ambassadors of Good Will” during their many years of appearances in venues around the world.

“Our scouts not only look for great basketball players,” he said, “they look for great people.”