

Written by Admin

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NBA and WNBA Players, Legends, and Special Olympics Athletes from Around the World to Participate in a Unified Sports Game Prior to the 62nd NBA All-Star Game on Sunday, Feb. 17

The National Basketball Association (NBA) and Special Olympics today announced the NBA Cares Special Olympics Unified Sports Basketball Game, which will take place as part of 2013 NBA All-Star in Houston. With support from The Coca-Cola Company, the game will tip off on Center Court at NBA All-Star Jam Session on Sunday, Feb. 17, at 2:00 p.m. CST, prior to the 62nd NBA All-Star Game that evening. This year's Unified Sports Basketball Game will feature 12 Special Olympics athletes – some of whom are coming from as far away as China and Africa – playing alongside NBA Legends Dikembe Mutombo, Chris Mullin, Detlef Schrempf and Ron Harper, current WNBA players Candice Wiggins, Ruth Riley, and Nicole Powell, and WNBA Legend Ticha Penicheiro. NBA stars Harrison Barnes, Andre Drummond, Kenneth Faried, and Damian Lillard will serve as honorary coaches and NBA All-Star Jrue Holiday will participate in the honorary tip-off.

This Unified Sports® exhibition game, which was first held during NBA All-Star 2012, will combine athletes with and without intellectual disabilities as teammates to showcase the power of Special Olympics' Unified Sports®, which helps unite communities and foster an environment of acceptance and inclusion. Following the game, The Coca-Cola Company and NBA Cares will present Special Olympics with a \$50,000 donation. In addition, prior to the Unified Sports Game and only hours before competing in his third NBA All-Star Game, Oklahoma City Thunder's Russell Westbrook along with NBA Legend John Starks will host a clinic for local Special Olympics Texas athletes at Jam Session.

"The NBA is thrilled to once again join our longtime partner Special Olympics for the NBA Cares Special Olympics Unified Sports Basketball Game at NBA All-Star and we look forward to building upon the excitement and success of last year's game," said NBA Senior Vice President

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of Community Relations Todd Jacobson. “This great event highlights the role that basketball plays in bringing people together while emphasizing the importance of having fun and living an active, healthy lifestyle.”

The NBA’s global partnership with Special Olympics began more than 30 years ago when the league helped to introduce basketball as a new sport to the organization. The NBA has since provided sponsorship to Special Olympics basketball tournaments, created public service announcements featuring NBA players, and participated in major Special Olympics events. The NBA’s Basketball without Borders program has also featured international clinics for Special Olympics athletes in China, Puerto Rico, Russia, France, Greece, Italy, Brazil, Spain, and Mexico.

“We are so grateful to our longtime partners at the NBA, and also to Coca-Cola, for their support of this second annual Special Olympics Unified Sports basketball game,” said Peter Wheeler, Special Olympics Chief of Strategic Properties. “To showcase the power of Special Olympics Unified Sports on such a huge global stage like this presents an incredible opportunity for us to increase awareness and educate communities about acceptance and inclusion for all people.”

NBA Cares Special Olympics Unified Sports Basketball Game roster:

East

West

Krystle Bailey, NC

Nick Van Denburgh, MN

Jose Benitez, Puerto Rico

Ryan Higgins, TX

Jian Gong, China

Xue Mao, China

Abigail Johnson, IN

Massimiliano Priolo, Italy

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Michael Reed, NJ

Marinela Stefka, TX

Morne Reyeye, Namibia

Steven Tookes, LA

Chris Mullin

Dikembe Mutombo

Ron Harper

Detlef Schrempf

Ticha Penicheiro

Candice Wiggins

Nicole Powell

Ruth Riley

East Honorary Coaches: Harrison Barnes (Golden State Warriors) and Andre Drummond (Detroit Pistons)

West Honorary Coaches: Kenneth Faried (Denver Nuggets) and Damian Lillard (Portland Trail Blazers)

These 12 Special Olympics athletes will be treated to an unforgettable NBA All-Star experience including dinner with an NBA legend, in-arena recognition at State Farm NBA All-Star Saturday Night, and tickets to the NBA All-Star Game.

About NBA Cares

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NBA Cares is the league's social responsibility program that builds on the NBA's long tradition of addressing important social issues in the United States and around the world. Through this umbrella program, the NBA, its teams and players have donated than \$210 million to charity, completed more than 2.3 million hours of hands-on community service, and created more than 760 places where kids and families can live, learn, or play, in 24 countries and territories on five continents. NBA Cares works with internationally recognized youth-serving programs that support education, youth and family development, and health-related causes, including: KaBOOM!, Special Olympics, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, UNICEF, Make-A-Wish, Share Our Strength, and the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis.

About Special Olympics

Special Olympics is an international organization that changes lives through the power of sport by encouraging and empowering people with intellectual disabilities, promoting acceptance for all, and fostering communities of understanding and respect worldwide. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the Special Olympics movement has grown from a few hundred athletes to more than four million athletes in over 170 countries in all regions of the world, providing year-round sports training, athletic competition and other related programs. Special Olympics now take place every day, changing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities all over the world, from community playgrounds and ball fields in every small neighborhood's backyard to World Games. Special Olympics provides people with intellectual disabilities continuing opportunities to realize their potential, develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, and experience joy and friendship. Visit Special Olympics at www.specialolympics.org. Engage with us on: Twitter [@specialolympics](https://twitter.com/specialolympics); fb.com/specialolympics; youtube.com/specialolympicshq, and specialolympicsblog.wordpress.com.

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