

U coach, director take on the Wheelin' Jazz

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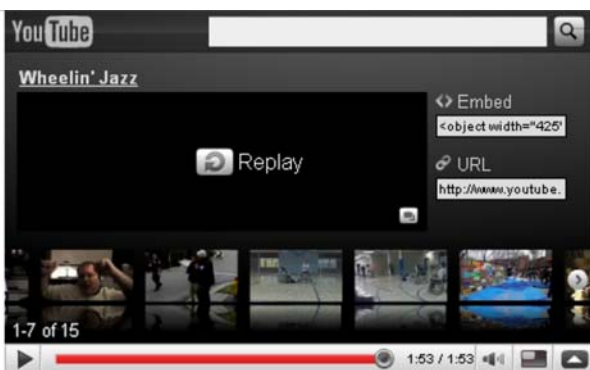
Even after starting with a 20-point lead, a team of local celebrities was barely able to come away with a victory over the Wheelin' Jazz.

The celebrity team, which included Utah's Attorney General Mark Shurtleff, assistant U football coach and former player Morgan Scalley and U Hinckley Institute of Politics Director Kirk Jowers, won the game by three points, 83-80, when they bombarded their opponents and audience members with streams of Silly String.



Lennie Mahler

Jeff Griffin of the Wheelin' Jazz and Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff battle for a rebound during the first annual Celebrity Wheelchair Benefit Basketball Game Wednesday night at Jordan High School. The celebrity team won 83-80 after receiving a 20-point lead to start the game.



The game was organized by the Hull Foundation's Neuroworx, the foundation's rehabilitation clinic for paraplegics, to raise awareness and money for the Wheelin' Jazz, part of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association.

The team is currently ranked fourth in the NWBA Championship division and went on to the playoffs in March to compete for the championship.

The benefit supports the team for next year's season and raised awareness about the Hull Foundation, a non-profit organization for individuals with paralysis. The organization provides therapy and rehabilitation for paraplegics in Utah.

Jowers said he has a lot of respect for members of the Wheelin' Jazz team.

"They've mastered life on new terms," he said.

To watch the basketball game, audience members paid \$5 per person or \$25 for a family, which went to the Hull Foundation's adept sports program, which includes the Wheelin' Jazz team. Shurtleff donated \$1,000 to the foundation.

Taylor Viafuna, a singer who competed on American Idol, scored multiple baskets for the celebrity team. The singer sold CDs on the sidelines and donated all of the proceeds.

The celebrity team was given a 20-point head start at the beginning of the game.

"(It's) because (the Wheelin' Jazz) are just that good," said David Hull, one of the main organizers and founder of the Hull foundation.

During halftime Viafuna sang the Star Spangled Banner and the Jazz Dancers and Dance Impressions, a youth dance group in Salt Lake City, performed.

Despite having team members with zero experience in wheelchair basketball and losing KSL sports anchor Rod Zundel to a spill early in the game, the celebrity team was able to keep the lead throughout the game, although the Wheelin' Jazz brought it within a few points in the end of the second quarter.

As the final buzzer sounded, the teams hugged and laughed, congratulating each other on a game well played.

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