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Robinson opens with tennis show

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The Harlem Globetrotters have delighted basketball fans for decades, displaying a unique blend of fundamentals and flair.

Dan Aubuchon isn't much different. Except his act hasn't been around since 1927, and his tricks occur on the hard courts, instead of the hardwood floor.

Aubuchon of Palm Desert, Calif., will be in Port Huron for the 50th Annual Francis J. Robinson Memorial International Tennis Tournament, which begins Monday at Sanborn Park.

Aubuchon and five other members of Peter Burwash International, a tennis instruction and management company, will headline the opening of the Robinson tournament with the PBI Tennis Show.

"The easiest way to describe what we do is to say we're kind of like the tennis version of the Harlem Globetrotters," Aubuchon said. "We want it to be a fun show, but also give some tips that can help a person improve their game."

Aubuchon, who has traveled to 30 countries to perform the show, has headlined the act since 1979.

Later this summer, the PBI Tennis Show will be in China to conduct a show. It already has traveled to numerous pro tournaments over the years.

"The PBI Tennis Show is a unique sporting and entertainment event," Aubuchon said. "Describing it really doesn't do it justice. The most common way to compare it is saying it's similar to the Harlem Globetrotters with a musical comedy twist.

"We do a lot of racket juggling and we do fun skits that show racket skills, and all of the different strokes you use in tennis with a real sense of humor."

Jim Charron, chairman of the fund-raising committee for the Robinson tournament, said he wanted to do something special to celebrate the tournament, and bringing in PBI and Aubuchon was the way to do it.

"PBI is very well known for their teaching groups," Charron said. "They usually only do pro tournaments. They don't do small communities. But you don't see small communities have tournaments that run this long. They could tell that it's a special event."

Aubuchon and PBI will hold three group sessions today. They will hold a session with the Tennis House pros at 1 p.m.

From 2 to 4 p.m. they will hold a youth session for young adults 18 and under, and from 5 to 6 p.m. they will hold a session for adults.

The PBI Tennis Show will kick off at 10 a.m. Saturday on the front courts.

Charron said there will be no cost for the public for any of the events.

"We wanted to make sure that everything would be free for the community," Charron said. "The PBI Tennis Show should get people excited about tennis again. Maybe people who have stopped playing can come back to it and see the fine side of it."

Barb Lynch, the director of the Robinson, agrees with Charron about the impact the show could have.

"I've only seen the DVD of the show, but I think it's going to be awesome," Lynch said. "People are really going to enjoy it. It's going to be very cool way to start the tournament."

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