

Clairbourn Students Slam Dunk on Goals

By **NANCY WARD**
Special the Outlook

Clairbourn students are literally setting their sights higher than ever before after experiencing the high-flying gymnastic basketball stunt show and motivational talk given by the TNT Dunk Squad.

Known for their daredevil tricks and aerial stunts combined with precision basketball dunks, the TNT Dunk Squad impressed and entertained everyone who attended the show. Between tricks, they talked to students about how they achieved their athletic mastery with goal setting, intensive and consistent practice, leadership, and teamwork.

The Dunk Squad explained how important it is for each student to try their hardest and do their best --- even in the face of peer pressure.

The enthusiasm from Clairbourn students was unbounded, and many of them

were chosen from the audience to participate in the basketball tricks, skits, and stunts.

This event was made possible by the Majovski family who set up a fund to bring motivational speakers to Clairbourn every year in memory of their daughter Lindsay who attended Clairbourn. Speakers are chosen for their ability to inspire students in following their dreams and living life to the fullest as Lindsay did during her lifetime.



Students Natalia Ramirez and Matt Friedland and Dunk Squad members pump up the crowd with a brief square dance.



Clairbourn Student Daniel Erdody gets ready to hand-off the basketball to the Dunk Squad while Marisa Dragos prepares to score their trick on a scale of 1 to 10.



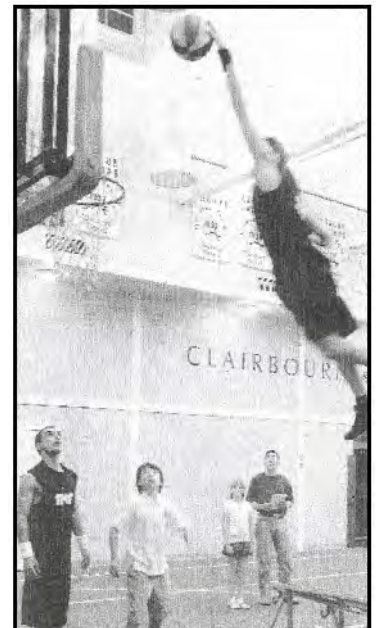
Clairbourn student Bradford Lee, on the shoulders of Arman Nazarian, gets help from Brian Smith to position the basketball for the next dunk trick.



Kristin Haegelin, Rex Roclord, Charles Sutherland, Justin Walker, Bradley Marelich and Daniel Blair are delighted with the performance.



Caroline Simmons, Marlene Rosado and Aaron Samuelson were among hundreds of enthusiastic volunteers screaming to be chosen to assist with the next dunk shot trick.



Arman Nazarian, Daniel Erdody, Marisa Dragos, and Headmaster Dr. Nafie watch in amazement as Keith Cousino performs his dunk trick.



Jimmy Miller, Nicholas Merritt, Benjamin Poon and Jack Steele celebrate an amazing dunk-shot trick.

Dunkers put on air show

TNT Dunk Squad brings well-traveled act to Chandler School for afternoon of high-flying entertainment.

By Charles Rich

PASADENA — There's plenty to digest while briefly suspended in mid air clutching a multiple-colored basketball.

For Brian Smith, Keith Cousino and Armen Nazarian, who make up the acrobatic trio known as the TNT Dunk Squad, it's enough time to woo a roaring crowd with dunking a ball after jumping off a custom-made mini trampoline and gliding to the basket in a couple of seconds.

It's their career and they've taken their daredevil act across the globe from Los Angeles to Tokyo to London to entertain millions of fans.



TNT Dunk Squad co-founder Keith Cousino gets airborne during an exhibition at Chandler School in Pasadena on Friday.

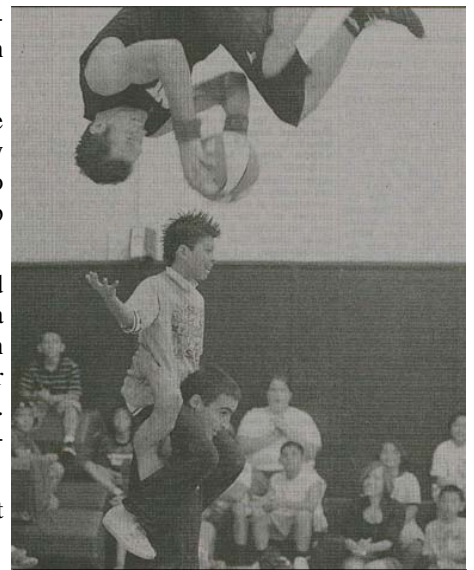
The trio performed in front of 50 people during a 45-minute appearance Friday at Chandler School, which overlooks the Rose Bowl.

It's a career that they haven't grown weary off despite the hectic travel schedule and having to constantly stay in shape so their acts are met with satisfaction. They also give the audience opportunities to volunteer to help them with part of the show.

"You want to be able to go out there and provide a good message," said the 42-year-old Smith, a La Crescenta resident and a co-founder of the eight-year organization that's performed at the Olympics, at an NBA All-Star Game and at halftime of Lakers games at Staples Center. "You want to tell them about being able to reach a certain goal or proper nutrition.

"It's fun to come out and perform for people. You want to give them a good show."

It's certainly not an easy process, since they must be up-to-date with many gymnastic techniques to help them with their agility so they can dunk multiple times per show.



TNT Dunk Squad member Armen Nazarian holds Gianni Carlo Medina, 12, on his shoulders as Keith Cousino flies overhead.

Keith Cousino, the other co-founder who, like Smith, was a member of the now-defunct Bud Light Dare Devils, said there's a lot to comprehend. It can range from the type of audience to how much time they have to complete their act.

"It's intimate and fun when you can perform in front of a small group," said the 40-year-old Cousino, who resides in Long Beach. "When we perform at an NBA game, we maybe get like eight minutes. You are always out there looking for ways to improve on the show. That can range from watching videos, to the music to just improving the entire skit."

Nazarian, 21, is the newest member of the TNT Dunkers. He joined the act about a year ago. Nazarian, a Glendale resident, said there's plenty to learn so he can get on the same page with Smith and Cousino. "It's an amazing feeling, because you are nervous and excited," Nazarian said. "For me, it's all about the gymnastics part and the ball adds something to it.



"It's still a learning process for me, but the one thing you always keep in mind is that you don't want to miss [the dunk]."

The TNT Dunkers have performed at prolific events, including the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, the 2000 NBA All-Star Game in Oakland and at colleges across the country. Most of the show includes the trio involved in the same maneuvers.

Gianni Carlo Medina, 12, caught a glimpse of the TNT Dunkers during Friday's show. He left the gymnasium in awe after helping them on some of their routines. "It's cool to see," Medina said. "It's exciting for me that I could help them out, and I want to see them again."

Left: TNT Dunk Squad co-founder Brian Smith leads audience volunteers in a cheer.