

HOLDING COURT

Brianna “Hoops” Green shows off her Harlem Globetrotter skills at Westmount High School on Monday. The demonstration came with a three-point message, T’Cha Dunlevy reports: the value of hard work, how to deal with bullies and what girls can achieve.

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Brianna “Hoops” Green brought the Harlem Globetrotters version of hoop dreams to Westmount High School, Monday morning.



Green has been a Globetrotter for just over three months, but that didn’t stop her from sharing the legendary basketball team’s enduring message of good times and hard work with about 100 students in the school gym.

“How many of you guys have been to a Globetrotters game?” she asked. About 10 hands went up.

“Alright, those of you who haven’t, we’ve been around 91 years, since 1926. That’s a long time that we’ve been bringing family fun and smiles to the game of basketball. If you haven’t seen it, you’ll see some mesmerizing dunks and crazy trick shots, showcasing our ball-handling skills.”

Green showcased some of those skills for students, whom she invited up to teach combinations of under-the-leg, around-the-back, behind-the-neck, off-the-knee and along-the-arm tricks with the ball, along with some fancy dribbling techniques.

But first, the 5-foot-9 player gave the enrapt students a brief pep talk about the ABCs of bullying prevention.

“A stands for action, B stands for bravery, C stands for compassion,” she said, revealing that she herself had been picked on, growing up.

“When I was younger, I was a tomboy, always hanging around with the guys,” she said. “The girls would make fun of me, saying, ‘You want to be a boy,’ ” she told the crowd. “If it were up to them, I wouldn’t be the 15th female on the world-famous Globetrotters. I wouldn’t have played professionally in Spain, the Czech Republic and Mexico. I wouldn’t have been an all-American nominee. And I wouldn’t have gone to college in Texas.”

In an interview after the presentation, Green confided she was also taunted about the colour of her skin.

“Because my mom’s black and my dad’s white, I would hear different racial slurs,” she said, “people saying stuff like I was a mutt, or a zebra, stuff like that.”

She dealt with it by ignoring it, and by heading to the basketball court.

“Honestly, I just didn’t really pay attention,” she said. “I would hear it but I didn’t let it affect me. If I had let them hold me back or get in my head, I wouldn’t be as successful as I am today.”

A native of Lexington, Ky., Green began playing basketball at age 4, encouraged by her older brother. She excelled in high school and college basketball en route to a graduate degree in sports management at Southern New Hampshire University in 2015.

She is one of two women among the six new players who joined the Globetrotters in December, bringing the total number of women on the 31-player roster to four, the highest it has ever been.

“It’s a lot of fun letting girls know that they can do whatever they want,” Green said. “They can play with the guys. As long as you put in the hard work and the time, you can deal with anything.”

That message was not lost on Westmount High student Karlee Thomas, 17.

“It was really fun,” Thomas said of meeting Green. “I’ve been playing (basketball) for a couple of years . . . I learned about working on better ball-handling skills and ball control when you’re playing, and working on cardio to make sure I’m fit to continue pushing myself to play full-court.”

Thomas also appreciated Green’s message of empowerment.

“Watching her goes to show: if you put your mind to doing what you want to do, you can achieve success.”