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New NBA video game features Obama and Palin

Article

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Jenni Dunning
Toronto Star

When Sarah Palin plays basketball, her perfectly coiffed beehive hairdo doesn't move an inch.

Even when the former Republican presidential candidate dunks the ball with so much rogue force the net bursts into flames, she keeps her cool.

And so does U.S. President Barack Obama, who runs down the court in a shiny blue basketball uniform, snagging the ball away to show off his athletic moves.

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EA Sports' latest Wii version of the video game *NBA Jam* pits these politicians against each other, along with others like George W. Bush, Hillary Clinton, and Dick Cheney.

"It's supposed to be good for people who enjoy sports and humour," said Steve Engels, a video game design expert and lecturer at the University of Toronto.

"I used to play this game a long time ago. It was one of those things you'd see in a wooden arcade box."

Times have changed since the game's inception in the early 1990s when it was a hot arcade item.

In the 1993 version of the game, Bill and Hillary Clinton were included as players.

They're back in the latest version, dunking and jumping and strutting their stuff on the basketball court with cartoon bodies and oversized heads.

But now they have some more modern friends with them.

So, which politicians are the next NBA superstars?

- Democrats: Obama, Joe Biden, the Clintons and Al Gore
- Republicans: Palin, Bush, Cheney and John McCain

To play with all the politico characters in the new version, released this week, gamers must unlock them after playing with the regular players first.

The game will be available for Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 this winter, according to EA Sports, which actually develops its games in Canada, Engels said.

"There's something about setting up the president of the U.S. for a slam dunk . . . that's just a lot of fun," he said.

But will there ever be a Canadian version, with Stephen Harper running a Conservative team and Michael Ignatieff bringing it on the court?

"It would be amazing to see it, but until they (EA Sports) get a market in Canada that rivals the States, I don't think it will happen any time soon," Engels said.

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