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The Santa Cruz Warriors' sea turtle mascot Mav'Riks dances for a gym full of Warriors season ticket holders at Aptos High on Sunday.

SC Warriors pick Mav'Riks the sea turtle as mascot

Season ticket holders treated to panel of basketball notables, including the great Jerry West

By CATHY KELLY

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APTOS — The Santa Cruz Warriors announced Sunday that the team mascot is none other than Mav'Riks, the warrior sea turtle.

Mav'Riks was revealed during an event for the Santa Cruz Warriors' 865 season ticket holders. Held at Aptos High School, it included an appearance by NBA great Jerry West, formerly with the Los Angeles Lakers.

The turtle received almost as much applause as West and really hammed it up for the crowd, busting some moves to rap, rock and even country tunes. He was chosen in a mascot challenge this summer, and was the suggestion of a Canadian fan, a team spokesman said.

If the mascot-unveiling was any indication, the Santa Cruz Warriors — who have quickly erected an arena in downtown Santa Cruz in about 100 days — will put on quite a show.

The first home game is Sunday for the Development League team affiliated with the Oakland-based Golden State Warriors. The game is sold out, though tickets remain for games later in the season.

SEE WARRIORS ON A2

ON THE NET

To view a video of the Santa Cruz Warriors' new mascot Mav'Riks dancing, visit santacruzsentinel.com and click on this story.

WARRIORS

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Sunday's event included a contest for five finalists hoping to become the team's public address announcer and a panel of basketball notables who took questions from the audience, including West.

Winners of the announcer contest were Kim Luke of Santa Cruz, who announces for the Santa Cruz Derby Girls, and Brian Day of Salinas, the voice of athletic competitions at Salinas High School. The delighted duo had been whittled down from a pool of 81 who auditioned in front of a celebrity panel of judges last week.

Panelist and Hall of Famer West received a standing ovation and stood at the front of a long line of fans after the event. He told the crowd Warriors basketball would be an inspiration to local youth.

"It's an opportunity to root for someone in your hometown," he said. "Be proud of this endeavor. We want this team to be magical for you. You will be watching some highly competitive kids as they try to live their dreams."

Other panelists included Dan Reed, president of the NBA Development League; Joe Lacob, an owner of the Santa Cruz and Golden State



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Warriors season ticket holders swarm around an autograph table at Aptos High on Sunday to get signatures on hats, T-shirts, basketballs and more from Santa Cruz Warriors players.

Warriors; Santa Cruz Warriors' General Manager Kirk Lacob; and Santa Cruz Warriors Coach Nate Bjorkgren.

The panelists mentioned that the Santa Cruz Warriors are first in the Western Division this year, drawing more applause from an appreciative crowd.

"Thank you for supporting what will definitely be a historic season in the NBA Developmental League," Reed said. "You're going to see some amazing basketball this year."

Team owner Lacob said the town's support for the new team has been "fantastic," mentioning how the first

game sold out in 40 minutes.

"That's actually really good news for us," he said, smiling.

Bjorkgren, the coach, said he looks for the best players, who play hard for each other, as a team. He tells the them the key to success is team defense, he said.

Mascot Mav'Riks made his debut with help from the Warrior Girls and team president Jim Weyermann, who called all the kids down to the gym floor and asked them what makes a good mascot. Later, the kids got to play with team members.

Matt Burns, 13, of Soquel said he liked Mav'Riks.

"I think he's a really cool mascot," he said. "And he's a great dancer."

Nico Hamlyn, 11, of Aptos, agreed.

"It's an interesting mascot," he said. "It's pretty cool, and I can honestly say I wasn't expecting a turtle."

Weyermann said it's been an intense 100 days of arena building. Lacob, the team manager, said they first started talking about bringing the former Dakota Wizards of Bismark, N.D., to Santa Cruz just a year ago.

The team is one of 11 NBA D-League teams that has a one-on-one relationship with its NBA parent team. Reed, the league president, said the 12-year-old league is growing. He likened it to the minor leagues in baseball, but said it is owned by the NBA. He said more than a quarter of NBA players were once in the D-League.

Lesley Harris of Santa Cruz said she is just glad the team is in Santa Cruz. Harris, an attorney, played basketball in high school and college, she said.

"This is good hype," she said. "I love that it's so accessible. It's exciting to see guys playing at this level."

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