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A Dramatic Re-Telling of The 2nd Annual Fall Classic

BY NICK GRANT

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We were gassed. Out of breath. Disheveled. Bricking everything and on the brink of destruction when an angel appeared in the form of fifteen year-old high school basketball phenom, Nathaniel Pierre-Louis. With merely eight seconds left on the clock in regulation, Team Liberty Fairs was behind Team Blind Barber by three points when that angel took it upon himself to save us all from utter embarrassment, creating mayhem in the stands with a three-pointer to tie the game. At that moment, you could've sworn you were in alternate version of *Hoosiers*. But, this wasn't *Hoosiers*, it was the second annual Fall Classic NYC basketball game.

Instead of trekking up to Lincoln Center for a show, posing for street style, or hitting another fashion week presentation, two dozen of menswear's finest from all over the country swapped their hemlines for jerseys and took to the hardwood this past Saturday at Basketball City in New York. One team for the fashion trade show, Liberty Fairs, and one for the ultra-cool barbershop/speakeasy, Blind Barber.



It was just a year and a half ago the idea of this event was tossed around. Alex Maier of Tiger Agency and myself were conversing about some very important topics: Fashion and balling out on herbs. Being a former Division 1 basketball player, I had always wanted to bring the two together (mainly because I'm selfish and I want all things I like to be in one easy, accessible place). So in September of last year, we kicked off the inaugural Fall Classic NYC at the Tompkins Square Park courts outside of Blind Barber and had a hell of a time—good crowd, live music, and a killer after party. What more could one ask for? Well, for starters, how about bringing Ball Up streetball legends The Professor, AO, Special FX and Mr. Afrika into the fold? Dream come true.

The teams were represented by some men's style favorites: Eli Infante of North of MAN, Josh Kissi and Travis Gumbs of Street Etiquette, Christopher Rucker and Christopher Fenimore of Carson Street Clothiers and of course, Jake Woolf, Jace Lumley and Mark Anthony-Green representing *GQ*, just to name a few. Team Blind Barber had the looks (plenty of ooohs and ahhs for them), while Team Liberty Fairs had the size, athleticism, and intimidation factor. We also had the game-saving, nationally-ranked high school kid, which helps. But both teams wanted to win. They needed to win. Money was on the line. Money that the winner would be donating to a good cause: The Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC. So, we needed every advantage we could get. However intimidating we thought we were, Team Blind Barber didn't flinch and came out gun's blazin'. I think a lot of the guys were just trying to shake the rust off of playing in front of a crowd, which was upwards of 400 people. Most of these dudes hadn't played organized ball in quite some time while others hadn't played organized ball ever, and it was apparent. But clearly, that wasn't the point.

There was bloodshed. There was trash-talk. There were shouting matches. It was what you'd expect any competitive game to get like. But how many onlookers expected a competitive game from a bunch of menswear enthusiasts? Hell, how many Fall Classic players expected a competitive game from a bunch of menswear enthusiasts? AO didn't. Mr. Afrika didn't either. But they got it. Everyone did. All the way down to the 3-pointer to put the game into overtime. All the way down to the mayhem at the end of overtime that led to yours truly knocking down a free throw with 6 seconds left to put Team Liberty Fairs up by three and we won. When the game was over, everyone hoisted me up on their shoulders. OK, well, see, that didn't really happen but it should've probably, I think?

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