NBA team goes full court for Lunar New Year

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By Judy Zhu in Cleveland, Ohio |   
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The NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers celebrated Chinese New Year in style on Tuesday with the support of Chinese telecom company ZTE.  
ZTE marked its 20th Chinese New Year in the US at the basketball game between the home-team Cavs and the Brooklyn Nets, which the Cavs won, 129-123.  
It was the Cavs' third annual Chinese New Year Celebration and ZTE's second time celebrating with the Cavs, along with the more than 20,000 fans and those who watched a livestream on Fox and in China.  
The Quicken Loans Arena was decorated with traditional Chinese lanterns, and the in-arena signage and LED screens displayed "Happy Chinese New Year" wishes in Mandarin throughout the game. During the game, the players' recorded Year of the Dog greetings were displayed.  
ZTE offered a "Social Zone" on the arena's main concourse, where fans got a chance to win a Cavs Moondog Chinese New Year celebration poster, Axon M smartphone (a dual-screen foldable), or a limited-edition Cavs Chinese New Year shirt.  
Josh Malek, 30, a Cleveland native, went to the game to celebrate his 30th birthday. His party started with a Chinese New Year gift-hunt.  
"Today is the Chinese New Year of the Cavs. I went to several tables and got this," said Malek, waving his Chinese lantern. "And I also got a (toy) dog."  
The Cavs Moondog is their mascot and happened to be a great match for the Year of the Dog.  
"I think it's very exciting that the NBA connects all the countries, and it's super cool to see China getting more involved," Malek said.  
The Cavs fans also enjoyed the Red Panda Acrobat's halftime act in which she balances bowls while riding on a unicycle. (The Shanxi native, whose name is Krystal (Rong) Niu, was in the news herself in recent weeks when someone walked off with her $25,000 unicycle on Jan 24 at the San Francisco airport. The NBA's Golden State Warriors offered to buy her a new one.)  
Building on its sponsorships with the NBA's New York Knicks, Houston Rockets and Chicago Bulls, ZTE will expand its local approach by connecting with fans.  
Cheng Lixin, CEO of ZTE Mobile Devices, said basketball is popular in both countries and can be used as a cultural bridge.  
"This is the 20th Chinese New Year that ZTE has celebrated in the United States. We were proud to partner with the Cavaliers for this event and act as a Chinese cultural ambassador in celebrating the Chinese New Year with the Cleveland community," Cheng said.  
Sandy Maxson, 59, a Cavs' season ticket-holder, took a selfie holding a paper with her name in Chinese characters.  
"I got my name in Mandarin. Oh, and I am also a 'Dog,'" said Maxson, who was born in the Year of the Dog in 1958.  
"I know that the NBA is very popular in China. We also have some wonderful Chinese players here in the US. You are bringing new cultures here for us to enjoy," Maxson said.

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