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Leyland takes shirt off his back to support Granderson's charity

Dana Wakiji / The Detroit News

Birmingham -- Tigers manager Jim Leyland showed his support for Curtis Granderson's charity event by doing more than just showing up.

With help from Leyland and teammates Edwin Jackson, Ryan Perry and even Gerald Laird, Granderson raised thousands of dollars for his Grand Kids Foundation on Thursday night at his wine tasting event and bachelor auction at the Big Rock Chophouse.

The evening was called "Passport to the Wines of the World" and featured more than 300 wines from all over the world, from as far away as South Africa and Australia to as close as some local Michigan vineyards.

There also was a silent auction of sports memorabilia, wine and entertainment packages, including a Steve Yzerman 8-by-10 signed collage; signed jerseys from Joe Montana, Barry Sanders and Magic Johnson; a signed Kid Rock CD; and a 2005 syrah wine from Curtis Winery, signed by Granderson.

But the highlight of the evening was the live bachelor auction. Comedian Jeff Dye, a third-place finisher on Season 6 of NBC's "Last Comic Standing," did a quick set of comedy before serving as auctioneer for bachelors Granderson, Jackson and Perry.

Perry, a 22-year-old rookie, was up first. During the bidding, Laird offered \$2,000. "I will not clean your house!" Perry yelled to Laird. Perry, who lifted his shirt sleeve to display his tattooed arm, went for \$2,700, to a woman bidding for her daughter.

Next up was Edwin Jackson, the 25-year-old All-Star whom the Tigers got from the Rays in an offseason trade for Matt Joyce.

Dye mentioned that Jackson, like Perry, had tattoos. Jackson's tattoos could only be revealed by removing his shirt, so he asked his manager's permission.

"You take your shirt off, I'll take mine off," Leyland yelled from the middle of the room.

Jackson obliged by removing his shirt and showing off his tattooed back and arms. He then demanded his manager keep his word. Leyland came up to the stage and said he would remove his shirt as long as the picture did not end up on TV or in the newspaper.

The final bid for a date with Jackson was \$3,500.

Finally, it was Granderson's turn.

"He had a triple today and had a huge triple and should have been MVP of the All-Star Game," Dye said.

The bidding was fast and furious and came down to a mother and daughter and another woman, who both bid \$6,500. In the end, Granderson offered to have dinner with both, earning a cool \$13,000 for his charity.

Sarah and Catherine Visintainer, of Ann Arbor, and LaShawna Carter, of Detroit, had the winning bids for Granderson.

After the auction, Jackson insisted Granderson remove his shirt. After getting approval from his mother, Mary, Granderson obliged.

Granderson blamed the shirtlessness on the tattoos.

"It started with tattoos, see what tattoos do?" Granderson said. "Good and bad. I don't have any tattoos and it started with Ryan Perry rolling his sleeve up and then Edwin Jackson. Once Jim Leyland, our manager, comes up, I can't get shown up by him. Very surprising, but I thank him very much for helping raise a lot of money. Hopefully the ladies loved it."

Granderson said the first-time event exceeded all his expectations.

"I was so afraid we were going to start everybody at 100 bucks and we might only get 2-250," Granderson said. "Then all of a sudden Gerald Laird just joking around threw 2,000 out for Ryan Perry and the next thing you know, 'No, I want him for 2,500.' Sure enough, it kept going. Edwin Jackson, same thing, with the amount of money he raised, and I got two people for 6,500. I definitely wouldn't have imagined it by any means."

Organizers estimated the event raised \$40,000 to \$50,000.

The Grand Kids Foundation helps provide school supplies for needy families and schools in need, in addition to establishing baseball programs and supplying baseball equipment in Michigan's inner cities.

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