

# NBA Media Conference

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Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

## Commissioner Adam Silver

Media Conference



ADAM SILVER: It's great to be here in Las Vegas for the Summer League. I'm looking at Warren LeGarie, mayor of the Summer League. Congratulations. I don't know if Albert Hall is here, but thank you to Albert, as well. You guys have done a fantastic job.

As we were saying the other night, sitting and watching a game, it's hard to believe this has been 20 years. Warren, correct me if I'm wrong, but 20 years ago we started with six teams here in Las Vegas at a time when I think certain other leagues weren't even taking advertising from entities in Las Vegas. This city has turned into, I think it's fair to say, the entertainment capital of the world right now.

Of course, we're here with 30 teams. We've gone from (13) games to 76 games. None of our games were nationally televised when we first came to Summer League. Now every single game is televised on one of the ESPN networks or NBA TV, not just in the United States but globally.

I've never been to a baseball winter meeting, but people always tell me this has become like the baseball winter meetings. They must be great meetings, because now we have our Board of Governors, our owners meeting, which I just came from, full day of meetings, committees and board meeting.

We had a two-day Competition Committee meeting here. We have separate meetings here with trainers, coaches, general managers, every aspect of the league. We have an innovation summit here, talking about technology as it affects sports. We use this Summer League for training our referees.

It's truly the NBA community comes here, so much so that we're now responsible, essentially these two weeks in July, for a quarter of a billion dollar economic impact on Las Vegas, which is something we're very proud of as well.

We finalized our arrangements -- the NBA in-season tournament, now known as the Emirates NBA Cup, will be back here in December for our semifinals and final game. We're excited again to be back in Vegas for those events.

All great news there.

I know there's a lot of interest in our new media deals. It's still an ongoing process. There was discussion of those at our board today. We did approve this stage of those media proposals.

But as you all know, there are other rights that need to be worked through with existing partners. I will say in advance there's going to be a fair amount that I'm not able to discuss yet about those media deals because they haven't been finalized, but I look forward to talking more about those.

Lastly, I'll say in terms of global basketball, of course we're seeing the number of international players in that 20 years since we've been coming here for the Summer League has grown exponentially to now we're getting close to a third of the players in the NBA were born outside of the United States.

I'm looking forward to going to France for the Olympics. Of course, the basketball competition will be taking place in Paris and Lille, in northern France near Belgium.

I'm excited to say we will have roughly 130 NBA and WNBA current and former players participating in those Olympics. I think that says a lot about the state of the game.

When we get to the knockout round of the Olympics and they do take place in Paris, I anticipate that's going to be one of the hottest venues in the city.

Remember, we now have 3-on-3 as part of the Olympics as well. It's comparable to indoor volleyball and beach volleyball. That's taking place at Place de la Concorde in Paris. I think that's going to be a very exciting venue.

For those who can make it, I hope to see you there. For others, those games will be widely distributed.

We're seeing basketball continue to ascend globally and grow leaps and bounds. Much of what I'm spending my time on continues to be centered around growing the game



globally.

Again, thank you all for being here. Happy to answer any questions you have.

**Q. Has the five-day window commenced?**

ADAM SILVER: I apologize. I can't get into the machinations yet about how those contracts work.

**Q. Getting through the Board of Governors, getting to this point, it's a significant step. We all know an idea of what the numbers are. How happy are the governors and what does it mean to you that now you're in theory on the brink of getting something so important done?**

ADAM SILVER: Fair question. I think without getting into the specifics of the deal, I'd say philosophically we set out with certain goals in these negotiations. Part of them were economic. Also, what are the best ways we can serve our fans going forward.

Part of it was to get additional broadcast exposure. Hopefully we will have accomplished that. Also to get more streaming connectivity with our fans because in terms of traditional television, while it is still vital, and by traditional I don't mean just broadcast, but cable and satellite.

There's a large portion of our fan base that no longer subscribes to those services. We want to continue serving them. At the same time, streaming has become predominant. We wanted to make sure that going forward our games would be accessible to our fans through various streaming services.

That's something that we've been very focused on in these deals, not just reach in the United States but reach globally as well, connecting to my earlier points about how broad-based NBA basketball is.

We also were looking at partners that had resources to promote the game. Again, economics are part of it. Part of the reason these negotiations have taken so long is that there are other critical terms that are important to us to make us more fan friendly.

Lastly, I'd say innovation is a large part of that. Just like we've seen innovation around the game, whether it's the Play-In Tournament or now the NBA Cup, we need to innovate in how we deliver our games. A lot of that comes through all the benefits of streaming technology and the way you can customize the games, personalize them, make other services available, make them easier to find

frankly when you're on different networks, make them available in multiple languages, multiple angles.

It's something earlier in my career I spent a lot of time on when I was in NBA Entertainment. I'm looking forward to the ongoing investment in resources to make this an even more fan-friendly product.

**Q. The last big deal you negotiated, in my perspective, is the Collective Bargaining Agreement. From your and the teams' side goal, the upper spending limit that was thrown out, you came away with the first and second aprons. From what the original intent and ideas were, I'm curious about the early feedback you've received from team executives now that we're through the first offseason, how has the outcome compared to what the original intent was?**

ADAM SILVER: The early feedback is that the system appears to be working in that we are very clear that we set out to put more pressure on the high end; that while we're not looking to completely flatten salaries throughout the league, part of the goals we set in collective bargaining was to ensure that every team was in a position to compete for championships and had the resources available to do so.

I think what we're seeing in the new deal is it's going above the second apron, for example, doesn't just have financial consequences. Those financial consequences are pretty severe, but they have impact on your ability to sign players and draft players.

What I'm hearing from teams, even as the second apron is moving to kick in, the teams are realizing there are real teeth in those provisions.

I don't know how to view this, but I know reports have come out that the summer was boring from a fan standpoint. I don't certainly think it was. We still saw a lot of critically important players moving from one team to another as free agents.

But at the same time, I think this new system, while I don't want it to be boring, I want to put teams in a position, 30 teams, to better compete. I think we're on our way to doing that.

I'll just say lastly what I've learned over the years of having been part of the negotiation of many different deals is sometimes the impact is difficult to project and anticipate because ultimately it's hard to model precisely how teams and players will respond to certain systems.

I would say it's still early days. Again, from what we want

to see happen, we're pretty happy.

**Q. Adam, I know you talked about the different ways you're trying to do this TV deal. Yesterday ESPN reported that James Dolan had sent a letter with some grievances about that. Your response to that?**

ADAM SILVER: Well, my response is that we try to keep these issues in the family. Yes, Jim Dolan did send a letter to his partner teams and to the league office, and that was discussed certainly at our meetings. But I don't think it's appropriate to get into the specifics about what was discussed.

**Q. Esoteric question about the second apron and all the impacts. I've seen in recent weeks where fans are throwing up their hands. You don't create a CBA for fans or a normal human being to understand, but it's gotten so confusing with each iteration. Do you ever worry the fans themselves who love to track all this stuff, that they're kind of being left behind in some of this? We've all written explainers trying to help, but it's tough. Does that concern the league on any level?**

ADAM SILVER: First of all, the articles that you have written have been very helpful, I know, to our fan base. We read them all.

I would say certainly yes, always try to find that balance that we want a system both that substantively serves its goals in terms of putting every team in a position to compete, but at the same time you're right, we want it to be understandable to fans, and to the media for that matter as well, and to our broadcasters as they're explaining it.

Again, it's early days in this deal. This whole notion of a second apron, unfortunately by definition it gets fairly complicated. Sometimes simple rules -- while we'd all like to deal with that, the nuances, life is complicated and the systems become inherently more complicated.

But we're paying a lot of attention to it and we'll see. I think in the first instance, there's still a learning curve for our teams, as I was saying earlier. Not that our teams didn't understand it, but when you see it in actual operation, see how it's affecting general managers and their ability to move certain players, then it really begins to sink in.

I think, like everything, we're in constant discussion with our teams and the Players Association, and to the earlier question of are we achieving the results we set out to.

**Q. You mentioned the existing partners still there. Without getting specific, how treacherous or difficult is this last stage going to be to kind of finalize this deal?**

ADAM SILVER: I don't have a sense of that. Much of it is outside of my control. We'll see.

**Q. Your reaction to the Celtics being for sale? When a benchmark franchise goes up for sale, rare that happens, what is your participation or what do you plan for your participation to be in facilitating the sale?**

ADAM SILVER: In terms of my participation, I'll play whatever role Wyc Grousbeck would like me to. I try to be helpful in facilitating the sale of franchises, dealing with potential buyers, whatever information they may need from a league standpoint.

I'd also say personally, Wyc has been involved with the league now for roughly 22 years. He's been a leader in terms of our committee system at our board. He's been intimately involved in every aspect of the league, from collective bargaining to revenue sharing to media.

I understand the family circumstances and why he and his family have elected at this moment to sell the franchise. I'm frankly saddened by it, just because not only have they won two championships, but beyond that they've operated the team in a first-class manner and he's been a first-class owner in this league.

Again, I respect the decision that his family has made that it's time to sell the team. I think it's bittersweet for everyone. Hopefully the successor owner or owners will be as fantastic stewards of the team as they have been. They've been a model franchise with model ownership.

**Q. The last we heard from the Raptors-Knicks lawsuit was the court said that you would determine whether or not you should arbitrate it. Has there been a determination from you on that? Also wondering your reaction and response to the Knicks claiming you couldn't objectively arbitrate that?**

ADAM SILVER: The second part of your question I won't respond to. The first part, we are in receipt of the District Court's decision and in the process of working through those issues at the league office right now.

**Q. You're riding a wave of six champions in six years. I would assume there's 24 teams that would like to make that seven in seven years. Is this the new ideal? Do you get the sense that anyone is pining for dynasties again?**

ADAM SILVER: I get asked that question a lot, whether we're set out not to have dynasties or whether we've created a system where we don't have repeat



championships. My answer is that as long as we can create something close to a level playing field in terms of the tools available to teams to compete, I'm absolutely fine with dynasties and I'm fine with new teams emerging every year.

I think what the fans want to see is great competition. And for fans of whatever team they're rooting for, they want to believe that their team, regardless of the size of the market or the depth of the pockets of ownership, are in a position to compete in the same way the 29 other teams are.

So from my standpoint, as long as teams are emerging through strong management, great players, great chemistry, through great coaches and great management of the organization, let the results happen however they play out. I don't have a predetermined view.

I do think, though, the fact that we've had six different champions over the last six years does speak to the system. I mean, it does suggest that through successive Collective Bargaining Agreements, through changes in our revenue-sharing programs and other things we are able to control at the league, statistically the league has become more competitive over time.

**Q. With the broadcast rights deals kind of winding down here, I'm sure expansion is next on NBA's agenda. Talk about where that sits now and where does Las Vegas sit within that realm.**

ADAM SILVER: Well, I mean, as you're alluding to, I have been saying for the last several years: Let's let collective bargaining finish up, then the media deals. As I said earlier, we're not quite done with our media deals yet. But once we are, we will turn to consideration around expansion.

I will say it's a bit more complicated than is suggested sometimes, because just think of the new media deals, for example. Once they're completed, when you bring in new partners, you're diluting those payments, of course, to teams. Sometimes it seems as if we're printing money when we expand. Actually, it's no different than selling equity in any business.

I think there needs to be a fair amount of modeling at the league office, working with existing owners and really thinking through the long-term prospects, again not just economically but also for potential of dilution of talent.

Having said that, I think we will engage this fall in earnest in the process of making those determinations. Should we expand? If we were to expand, how many teams should we expand and what markets should we be looking at?

**Q. I know the media rights process is not done, but if Warner Bros. Discovery doesn't get a piece of this next media rights deal, what happens to NBA TV and the linear properties that are managed with them?**

ADAM SILVER: I don't know yet.

**Q. Has there been any thought given to what will happen?**

ADAM SILVER: Yeah, lots of thought. But there's too much still in play to answer your question.

**Q. On the Las Vegas question, we have not one but two NBA arena proposals on either ends of the Strip. What role does the apparent availability or willingness of a community to build NBA-ready arenas play in the criteria which you'll be studying the Las Vegas situation?**

ADAM SILVER: The availability of first-class arenas plays a big role in making those determinations on expansion. We have not engaged in any direct conversations with either property owners here or those who are considering buying arenas, with the exception that to the extent that groups that are looking at arenas have asked the league office for our specs on what makes an arena NBA-ready, of course we're forthcoming with those provisions in our operations manual.

Short of that, we're having no direct involvement.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

ADAM SILVER: Well, I'm not sure which groups, frankly, have asked us for information. Anybody who is interested, we provide it. But we have not gotten directly involved with any of those groups in Las Vegas.