

NBA All-Star 2025

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Commissioner Adam Silver

Commissioner's Press Conference



ADAM SILVER: Welcome, everybody. Appreciate members of the media for making the trip here to the Bay Area. Many of you from far away, so nice to see you. Kind of you to be here.

First, a few other thank yous from me to Joe Lacob and Peter Guber and the Warriors' organization. They've done an outstanding job planning for these events. As you all know, it's essentially a week's worth of events in the community, both here in San Francisco and Oakland. I've attended many of them over the last several days, community activities, clinics, fan fests, everything you could imagine under the sun related to basketball.

And for our NBA community, as you all know, because we don't have neutral-site Finals, it's a time that people can mark on their calendars in a coming together of our community. From that standpoint, it's always very meaningful to us to see a lot of old friends, partners of the league, and an opportunity, too, along with other leagues, WNBA is well represented here, the G League is, too. I came from a luncheon today celebrating the Basketball Africa League, and even our 2K League is represented here. So it truly is an epicenter of the basketball community.

I also want to thank Mayor Daniel Lurie here in San Francisco, the new mayor. I've had the opportunity to be with him at several different events over the last few days. There really is a sense of optimism in this community right now. Frankly, I felt it all the way in New York before I got here. I think the national media is covering the renaissance we're seeing here in San Francisco. I've had the opportunity since I've been commissioner to be here quite a lot, given the number of Finals the Warriors have participated in. I've always enjoyed coming to this community, but I do sense more energy these last several days here than I've experienced in a long time. I think just a true sense of optimism here that the city is turning the corner and that under Daniel's leadership that things are heading in the right direction.

I do also, though, want to thank London Breed, the previous mayor. She was instrumental to bringing the

All-Star Game here. I haven't had a chance to see her since I've been here yet, but I know she's in town. So I do very much appreciate her and want to thank her. Without her, these festivities would not be happening here right now.

With that, we've already had several events, as you all know. I've had an opportunity to attend them, from the Rising Stars to the Celebrity Game, many different competitions around the city, and everything has gone really well so far. So I'm looking forward to tonight and then the All-Star competition tomorrow night.

With that, happy to answer any questions.

Q. It's been a couple of weeks since the trade. I'm curious --

ADAM SILVER: The trade?

Q. Yeah, capital T, capital T is what we're calling it now. I'm wondering how you absorbed the initial news of the trade and how you've processed everything that's happened since, including the Dallas fans and the "Fire Nico!" (Harrison) and all those things happening. There's obviously a lot of anger. How is this good for the league when a fan base feels very, very jilted right now?

ADAM SILVER: So let me begin by saying -- and I've said this already. I was surprised when I heard about the trade. I did not know that Luka was potentially a player that was about to be traded. That was news to me. I followed it like a fan from that standpoint.

I've said before, that's the kind of confidential information that's generally not shared with the league in advance unless a team is publicly shopping a player, and to the best of my knowledge, that's not what happened in the case of Dallas and Los Angeles.

In terms of anger with the fan base, I'm empathetic. I understand it. Dallas was in the Finals last year. I've already said this before: I like Luka very much. I actually met him before he came into this league when he was at



Real Madrid, when we were over there playing a preseason game. It seems genuinely, truly authentic that he was stunned and disappointed. You could see it in his body language.

Having said all that, I also am sympathetic to the Mavericks' organization. I've known Nico Harrison for a long time from his prior tenure at Nike, and I've gotten to be close to Patrick Dumont, our new governor in Dallas. I can say one thing for sure: Whether or not history will ultimately judge this as a smart trade, they did what they thought was in the best interest of their organization.

I have absolutely no knowledge or belief there were any ulterior motives. There's no doubt in my mind that the Dumont and Adelson families bought that team to keep it in Dallas. I have no doubt whatsoever that they're committed to the long-term success of that franchise.

In terms of the Dallas fans, all I can say to them is again, time will tell whether it was a smart trade, but I think they should believe in their organization. Their organization truly made a trade that they believed was in the best interest of the organization, and in many cases, again, it doesn't mean they were right or wrong, but it's very difficult to put yourself in their shoes. They are living with the situation. They have a philosophical belief on what's necessary ultimately to win championships, and I'm not in a position to second-guess that.

Q. There's been some discourse this year about the state of the game, some of it unflattering, including from some high-profile members of your media partners, and you throughout some of your availabilities have talked about some tweaks, looking at the amount of three-pointers, which suggests that maybe that is a problem. But I did want to ask you what you feel is the state of the game today.

ADAM SILVER: I think the state of the game is excellent. I think it's the media's role, the fans' role, it's perfectly appropriate to be critical of the game, and I find it very helpful. I'm not one of those people who said I don't read criticism. I try to read it all, frankly, and we try to absorb it at the league office. Many great ideas have come from outside this league. Even some of the things that we've done recently over the last several years. Things like a Play-In Tournament, things like the In-Season Tournament, which became known as the NBA Cup. I can't claim those were original ideas. Those were things, whether we saw other leagues doing that, media talking about them. So we've made plenty of tweaks over the years.

In terms of three-point shooting, it was interesting, just yesterday I was listening to Steve Kerr interviewed by Bob

Costas. I actually was eagerly awaiting his response on the state of three-point shooting in this league, one of the all-time great three-point shooters when he played, and I would say, if anything, the three-point revolution of sorts was led by the Golden State Warriors and Steph Curry.

His reaction was, do I think there's too much three-point shooting? Possibly, yes. Do I think the state of the game is great? Also yes. Is there a fix that comes to mind that would improve the game and potentially reduce the amount of three-point shooting? There wasn't one that he had to suggest.

As you know, we have a Competition Committee. It's something we talk about all the time. And if there's a way to improve the game, believe me, we'll be all over it.

I've also learned, having been around this game for a long time, not to overreact. I think here that -- I do think it's a beautiful game. I think about 25 years ago was the last time we were in the Bay Area for an All-Star Game. The state of the game then, when many people were saying it was too physical, we were too dependent on the dunk, that players weren't sufficiently skilled as they were saying then in the old days.

The fact now that you can't play in this league unless you can shoot, that even seven-footers have to be able to shoot these days and have to be able to shoot at long range, I actually think that's a beautiful thing.

One of the things we pay a lot of attention to at the league and through the Competition Committee is where to the extent we have more three-point shooting, where are those shots coming from. They are not coming from under the basket. Roughly 50 percent of the points are still scored in that area. So what you're seeing is a conversion from two-pointers to three-pointers, and often those longer shots, as I said, do take more skill.

One thing I'll add, too, in terms of young people playing the game, I think it's a two-edged sword because sort of Steve Kerr jokingly was saying, if he goes to a youth basketball game and young kids are -- these days, boys and girls are throwing up long-range shots, throwing airballs and stuff and sort of pointing at the Warriors and saying, your fault.

On the other hand, it's a very egalitarian shot. You could say to the extent the game is played primarily under the basket, it gives primacy to size. Where that notion if you're a great shooter, you can succeed with differing body types, if you can consistently make those shots.

A long way of saying we're paying a lot of attention to it. I'm never going to say there isn't room for improvement.



We'll continue to look at it and study it, but I am happy with the state of the game right now.

Q. The topic is TV ratings, and I wanted to know, one, how your view of TV ratings has evolved over the years given the ever-changing means of consumption. Then when you talk to your executive board and your TV partners, what constitutes TV viewership success these days?

ADAM SILVER: Well put, I would say, in terms of all the different considerations that go into our thoughts about media. It's almost more media these days instead of TV ratings.

But I'll begin with the state of our ratings right now as they are conventionally measured. They're slightly down from last season. We had some weakness early in the season. We rebounded, and ratings are heading up right now. So I see that as very positive. And I will say, that's compared to last year's regular season, which were our highest ratings in four years. I actually think what was a somewhat negative story early in the season has now turned into a positive and trending upward.

Having said that, we don't just look exclusively at traditional TV ratings, and I think that's the basis of your question. One of the things we look a lot at is how do you measure engagement. Engagement can be measured in many different ways. One is attendance. We came off last season the highest-recorded attendance in the history of the entire league. I look at engagement through social media, and many different platforms, expanding number of platforms all the time. From that standpoint, record popularity. I don't even know what you could even compare to us at this time, where we're looking at a social media community that is estimated to be around two-and-a-half-billion people engaging in some way with our league and our players.

And then there's new platforms like podcasts, which are becoming increasingly popular. It's remarkable, and I'd just make an analogy to the most recent presidential election. We saw in many cases by candidates going on podcasts, they were reaching far more people than traditional media.

Now, how do you blend all those things together? I think that's the really tough question and I think that's something we are focused on right now.

I will say having just entered into three new long-term television partnerships, our current partner Disney, which is ABC and ESPN; NBC Universal, which is NBC and Peacock; and then of course Amazon, we're spending time with them looking at holistic engagement overall as

opposed to what is just the classical rating on a streaming service or on a traditional network.

I like the challenge, frankly, because I think for the league, and together with our partners, we have to up our game at the same time. There's a lot more competition for attention than there used to be. Just think of all of your habits in the room for people who grew up watching more traditional television. I don't think there's any question you're spending, just as I am, more time watching programs on streaming services, but then there's also just the time we all spend online with those social media platforms.

People are using screens more than ever, but there's only so much time in the day. So if you're on X or if you're on Facebook or you're on Instagram, whatever else, or on Reels, that's time you might have otherwise been watching television. I think it's incumbent on us then to reach our fans wherever they are. That kind of engagement is really important to us, as well.

I'll just end by saying I don't think that kind of engagement through social media is necessarily a substitute for watching live games, because I think that comes up all the time. Some suggesting, well, isn't that bad you're training the next generation of fans who might never watch live games but only watching highlights. I actually think it's additive. I think we have a much better chance of moving young fans, in particular, to live games if they become engaged with various forms of our content, whether it's things that our players are doing off the floor, music they love, fashion, or highlights.

But I think what the challenge for the league is then, how do we move those viewers, those fans to live games. I think part of it is by being smarter in the way we go about creating a lot of that content, working with a large community of people out there who are creating it independently of us. But then there's also upping the quality of the broadcasts themselves. That's something I'm really excited to work on with ESPN, as they move to direct to consumer, NBC and Amazon. They're starting to experiment with other sports. Amazon is doing some unique new things with the NFL, for example. I watched Peacock in the Olympics, how they were presenting almost in a RedZone type style various events.

So we at the league are working directly with them. We're building out a capacity ourselves just to become a lot more sophisticated in that, because once you move to streaming, which is as I've said before is essentially internet television, you have all kind of interconnectivity that you don't have through traditional television.

So whether it's using artificial intelligence, whether it's other



forms of engagement to better understand exactly what people want, so you can customize those feeds, so if people want social media engagement, if they're interested in the latest shoe drop from Nike, if they bet on sports or they don't want to bet on sports, you can eliminate that, we can find ways to create more engagement directly with our fans by creating better production.

Q. What is the future of the HBCU Classic going forward? And also I know you had an emotional reveal today about Dikembe's court. Can you sum up what he meant to you, the league, and to David Stern?

ADAM SILVER: Yeah, sure. I'll begin first with the HBCU Classic. We're incredibly proud of the HBCU Classic. We've been doing that for a number of years now. It's different schools coming in every year, just highlighting what's happening in basketball at HBCUs. Again, we're excited about that. We love our relationship with the HBCUs. So we're pleased about how that's going.

In terms of Dikembe Mutombo, we announced at the Africa luncheon today that we're creating a new award: the Dikembe Mutombo Humanitarian Award. He was close to so many of us at the league office. You mentioned David Stern, David was the one who first named Dikembe our global ambassador.

I think Dikembe, it was something where David was only following what was already obvious. Dikembe, we were all calling him Ambassador Mutombo before he had the official moniker because it wasn't just in Africa, as you know because you travel so much with us, all around the world he was an ambassador of the game, and he devoted so much of his life to humanitarian efforts. He famously built a hospital in the Congo and that was very public. But I'm looking at Kathy Behrens, who worked directly with him. There was so much he did that was completely out of the bright lights that nobody had any idea.

He was a constant fundraiser. I used to sort of joke when we traveled with him, he had his card as the NBA ambassador -- these days when I take out my business card, young people say, what is that piece of paper? But when people still had business cards, he would start with his NBA ambassador card, and then he'd wait until I walked away and out would come four other cards of all these other programs that he would be raising money for. He was so committed to it.

His spirit was infectious. I think part of it just being a seven-footer. We all knew when we traveled with him, whether it was to Mumbai, a place where people might not know much about basketball or Dikembe Mutombo, I think because of his size, because of his laugh, just because of

his presence, they instantly would know he was somebody important and he'd create those connections, something we all talk about so much these days.

I know David loved him. I loved him. We miss him tremendously. We think a lot about his wife, Rose, and his children. This award was the least we can do.

You mentioned the courts, as well, and of course Dikembe was No. 55. So we've already, working with our partners in Africa, built many courts, but we announced we were going to do an additional 55 courts with special branding on them associated directly with Dikembe Mutombo.

So thank you for that question.

Q. In contrast to the Luka Doncic trade, there was the Jimmy Butler long, drawn out --

ADAM SILVER: I thought that was "the trade."

Q. Secondary trade. It was long, drawn out, suspensions, mudslinging on both sides. All of these trades seem to have the constant theme of longer money, second aprons. Are you concerned that the new CBA is going to create more contentious player-franchise standoffs like we've had?

ADAM SILVER: No, I'm not concerned that that will be the result of the new CBA. I actually think that what the CBA was designed to do, honestly, is to force teams to make difficult decisions. I think teams are still finding their way a bit through this new second apron and what it means. But for us, it's no secret that part of the design of that CBA and pushing down high-end spending was to create more parity in the league and to do a better job distributing our best players around the 30 teams. I think you're seeing that to a certain extent already.

I'll note, and I think new CBAs are always difficult to predict, I think it was only a few months ago when the conventional wisdom around the league seemed to be that we sort of spoiled the excitement around the trade deadline. That the day and age of these great trades at the deadline weren't going to happen anymore. I think we just saw more players moved before the trade deadline than anytime in the history of the league.

Look, I think there's two sides to every trade, and for the best aspect of trades is that it potentially creates a sense of renewal in some markets, a sense of excitement in others. There, of course, is a downside from a player standpoint. Putting aside a contentious situation, park that for a second, I know because I talk directly to players, as do you, it's incredibly disruptive in a player's life to get traded.



Many players are of the age where they have young children and kids potentially get dislocated mid-year from school. I think it's part of the grand bargain of playing in the NBA, in return for guaranteed contracts and strong union representation and a lot of money, honestly. It's all in the back and forth, sort of, that is part of playing professional sports. Certainly that's not unique to the NBA.

So I don't think it's bad. We always, looking at our CBAs, it's like I talked about before with the game, will there be opportunities to improve it? Presumably yes, and I feel like through successive collective bargaining agreements, we've always found ways to tweak things and make things a little better in certain cases.

I look now most importantly at the level of parity we have in the league. Of course six different champions over the last six years. But just look at the season so far, where you have Oklahoma City and Cleveland with top records going into All-Star. I mean, that's without anybody -- the great news is, I don't hear many people saying, oh, and by the way, they're smaller markets. The goal is that that no longer becomes part of the discussion, that you have a 30-team league and teams are judged based on quality of management, desirability for players. Luck will play into that, as it always does, but that's what we're trying to create here at the league office.

Q. Now that Alex Rodriguez and Marc Lore have won their arbitration case earlier this week, do you expect the Board of Governors to ratify them as the new owners of the Wolves?

ADAM SILVER: My expectation is that will move forward, but first, Glen Taylor does have a decision to make as to whether to appeal that arbitration decision. I mean, that's Glen's decision to make. I haven't talked to him directly about that.

I think, though, that A-Rod, certainly Marc Lore, are well known to the league at this point. They've already been vetted and approved as minority owners. I think they understood that the league had no role in this arbitration. That was something they had agreed to as part of their purchase agreement. I think now that the arbitration has been resolved, they will -- as I said, Glen Taylor has a decision to make. If he chooses to appeal it, obviously we will wait until there's finality as to that process, and if he doesn't, we will move forward right away and continue the remaining part of our vetting process and then it will go to the governors for a vote.

Q. If he doesn't appeal, would you expect them to be ratified after this vote?

ADAM SILVER: The only reason I'm not going to answer that is that I don't want to turn the Board of Governors role into a rubber stamp. That is a decision they need to make. We should conclude the vetting process. I know Marc and Alex understand that. That's a process that every governor in this league has gone through. I will say standing here today, I don't see any reason why it won't be approved, but again, we need to follow the process.

Q. A bunch of your All-Stars today were asked if they had your job as NBA Commissioner, what they would do, and given any topic in the entire league being open to them, the topic that most of the guys hit on was officiating, and Steph Curry, Anthony Edwards, Damian Lillard, Cade Cunningham, a handful of other guys talked about different aspects of that. Steph Curry was talking about transparency. I know you already do the last two-minute report, but he would like to see the official grades and the way that system works for each official. Ant Edwards was talking about techs and how he'd like the standard for that to change.

I guess what I wanted to know from you is, how much do you want or need to be responsive when some of your top players are talking about this kind of thing? And again, given any topic out there, this is what they kept talking about today.

ADAM SILVER: I remember David Stern used to say when he was asked about officiating when he was Commissioner, he said a hundred years from now, whatever changes, somebody is going to be standing here and someone is going to be standing here and they are going to ask them about officiating and be unhappy with it, so that issue obviously isn't going to go away.

I just will say that we welcome direct feedback from all players in the league, whether they're top players or not, and it is an ongoing discussion, and we're always looking to improve officiating.

NBA players are members of our competition committee, so we talk directly about it there, and we have our own conversations with Andre Iguodala and the Players Association about how we potentially can improve officiating.

A couple other points: I'm hopeful that there will be some technological solves when it comes to officiating. People are familiar with Hawk-Eye technology owned by Sony. It's used in tennis. We've been working with them for the last few years about creating the objective ability, for example, out of bounds calls. As I said before, there's 100 fingers on the floor at any point, different body parts.



So it's not as technically straightforward or easy as I might have been thought it would have been as a non-technologist, but they are working hard on that. Foot on the line, et cetera, goaltending, anything like that that can be objectively decided, I think to the extent we can do that, and we will. We'll get that done in the next couple of years. It will then allow the officials to be more focused on the truly subjective calls, blocks/charge, et cetera, is there a foul, the sufficiency of the content.

So we're working on that. What's hard is on some of these calls -- you said Anthony Edwards mentioned technicals, it's very hard to have bright lines on some of those things. There's a little bit of you know when you see it. I know that's not always satisfying to our players, but we work directly with them. We look at a lot of tape with them. Players and teams on occasion will come into the league office and say, we want to talk about the way a particular player is being officiated and maybe there's something that the officials are missing.

Lastly to your point about transparency, I think that's one that the officials also have their own union. Everyone in this room is familiar with human resources issues, and nobody necessarily wants to have their employment record published, and I think we just have to find the right balance there.

Q. No one ever asked you, if you were a player for the day, what would you do?

ADAM SILVER: I would stop complaining about officiating. [Laughter]

But thank you for asking me.

Q. A lot of people tuning in tonight were probably hoping that they would see a sequel to what a lot of people considered the highlight of last year's All-Star Game, the Sabrina and Steph Shootout. Can you shed a little more light on why after a lot of anticipation and ideas being floated of what was going to happen, the league could not make that come about? Also, what's your level of disappointment that something that groundbreaking and that cool wasn't able to be recreated?

ADAM SILVER: The issue there, and it goes precisely to the last point in your question, and I did speak directly to Steph and Sabrina about it. Last year was so magical, that competition, that it started to feel forced. I think there was concern from all of us that we just weren't feeling it, that we were at the point where it felt like we were -- even though I had been public, I had said that I was very hopeful or said

it was going to happen again, and I think, so had they, that it just got to the point where I don't know how to say it other than we just weren't collectively feeling it.

Just that, that it was such a unique moment last year, I think it wasn't that people were anticipating, and they both shot the lights out in that moment.

It just seemed like coming back here, as exciting as it might have been, that this just wasn't the right time to do it. There's no more to it than that. They're both friends. They're wonderful people. I'm sure there's a part of them that recognizes they may be disappointing people, but I think they all felt, and I agreed with them, that it just didn't feel right in the moment.

We looked at different permutations and ways to do it, and as I said -- I'll be the first one to say, at the end, it just felt forced. It lost that special feeling that it had last year.

Q. Charlotte and the Lakers had a trade for Mark Williams that was rescinded. Has Charlotte filed any formal protests in regards to this trade? And moving forward, in a world where sports science and predictive medicine takes on a bigger role in organizations, what options are there when something like this occurs?

ADAM SILVER: The answer to your first question is no, Charlotte has not filed a protest of any kind.

I think that the larger issue reflected in your question, in this day and age of sports science, is there a different standard of sort we should be applying in terms of players passing physicals in trades, and it's something we should look at as a league.

I will say this issue does not come up that often. I can't even remember, and certainly I don't think in my tenure a trade has ever -- there's never been a challenge because a player has failed a physical, but almost by definition, you get into a certain level of subjectivity in where that standard is.

But I think let's see what Charlotte decides to do here, but I think either way, it's gotten our attention. We understand that in the back and forth of teams and trades that to the extent we can reduce uncertainty, that's a positive thing, and obviously I mentioned before that for players who are involved in trades how disruptive it can be. I am sure it's equally disruptive to think you have been traded then not to have been traded, disruptive for the player, disruptive for their teammates.

We'll look at it. I'd say it's one of those areas when it



comes to the health and well-being of our players, medical science, there have been incredible developments, and this is a rule sort of as interpreted now, hasn't changed for many decades at the league office.

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