

NBA All-Star Game

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San Francisco, California, USA

LeBron James

Press Conference (Pregame)



Q. Last night after the Dunk Contest, Ja said he might be willing to give it a shot. Giannis chimed in. Zach LaVine also mentioned it. Is there any part of you that regrets never doing it? And with a procession of people maybe saying they might do it, would it propel you to give it a chance at next year's All-Star Game?

LEBRON JAMES: No, there's no part of me that has regrets about not doing it. Obviously, I had a couple moments where I wanted to do it, and it just never worked out that way going into the following season, either, because of injuries or I just wasn't up for it.

But I don't know. If those guys do do it, those are superstars in our league, and obviously we know the athleticism of the guys that you just named. It would be pretty cool. We'll see.

Q. Obviously your team, the Lakers, made a huge deal a couple weeks ago to trade for Luka Doncic. I'm wondering if in any way having a 25-year-old talent like that makes you think about the end of your career and if it could be extended further than year 23, et cetera?

LEBRON JAMES: No, I have not given it that type of thought. Just the excitement of being able to add a caliber player like that, a generational talent like that to our franchise, it's something that's given me energy.

I'm looking forward to seeing what we can do. We only had two games so far, and I believe he's been on a minutes restriction since he came back from the calf. He hasn't played since Christmas, I believe. As he continues to get in form, I think we could be really good going down the stretch. But we'll see what happens.

Q. Curious your thoughts of the overall state of the league. You've been through a lot of stuff in your two decades. Where do you find the game to be right now? What ways could it be better? What ways maybe is it better now than it was when you started?

LEBRON JAMES: Well, the fact of how many international channels and places and players that come into our league

and viewers we have all over the world, the game continues to expand, and that's a great thing for our game.

We love our game. The game of basketball is beautiful. It's done so many things for us players and everybody in this room, as well, to be able to cover it. We're always just trying to figure out ways how we can continue to build the game, how we can continue to make it better and better. It's better from when I entered the league in 2003, and hopefully it continues to be even better when I'm done playing, as well.

Q. You had said a couple months ago that you had thoughts about where the game was going and you talked about threes and things like that and you said this wasn't the proper forum to discuss it. I wonder if today is a more proper forum to discuss it. Ideally if you could have the game look the way you think is the best way to play basketball, would it look like it's played now, or would there be differences?

LEBRON JAMES: I mean, the game can always continue to get better and better. But that's just for all of us to try to figure out what's best for our sport. We want to continue to engage in our viewership, continue to engage in our consumer that loves our sport and continue to understand that the guys that play the game and have their minds on how we can continue to improve the game.

To answer your question, no, this is definitely not the room. There's too many faces I have no idea who it is in here. I would not open up to this room about that.

But I'm definitely always trying to have thoughts and questions and hopefully solutions. That's the most important, of how we can continue to build our game. That's what's most important.

Q. This is not the how-many-years-left question, but now that you're 40, year 22, all these accolades, obviously, how do you balance still being in the moment and trying to win championships and doing all the things that you're wired to do versus knowing that the finish line is obviously closer and appreciating what you've done and where you are?



LEBRON JAMES: I think they merge right into one another. I think I have a great appreciation for the moment because I understand that it's not going to be a lot of moments going into the future, whenever that time comes.

You have an opportunity to really, really truly appreciate every single moment and take it all in, no matter the good, the bad, the adversity, whatever comes with the day-to-day process of being a professional and still trying to play for championships, but more importantly just engaging in every single day and every single moment of being able to do what I love to do, and I've been doing it for such a long time, been a professional for 22 years. I've been playing the game at a level where coaches and referees was involved since I was eight. So, this is something I've always dived into and always loved the process.

I think they just intertwine together.

Q. You have a huge fan base in China; do you have any plans to visit China? What's your message to show the fans there who adore you?

LEBRON JAMES: Yeah, I've been to China a lot, and I've always had a great deal of respect for the culture, for the way they love the game of basketball, and every time I've went and left, they've always welcomed me with open arms to come back. That's always been a fun trip for me. My message to them, like it's always been, if you love the game, play it as much as you can, enjoy it, play free, and be around the great people that love the game, as well. It makes the game that much more fun.

It's always been a treat, either if I was going there for Nike or the NBA or for the Olympics. I've always had a good time.

Q. Wemby said that he had a list of questions that he wanted to ask you. What advice would you give him and the other young guys who are hoping to have a career that resembles yours?

LEBRON JAMES: Well, obviously it always dictates on what the questions that he wants to ask me. But as far as Wemby, I mean, it seems like from the outside looking in that he has a great head on his shoulders. He seems like he loves the game, that he takes care of his body, the process and everything.

You're going to get out of the game what you put into it. I've seen one quote that he says that nobody better call him past 9:00 at night because he's either reading or he's asleep. I think that's super cool. I think that's super dope. That lets you know where his mind frame is at, where he is at intellectually, and I think he's been great, obviously, for

the franchise with the Spurs, but he's going to be great for our league for so many years to come.

Q. I just wanted to follow up on tonight's game. You've got Stephon Castle and the Rising Stars team going against the OGs, you, KD, Steph. What's your approach to that new format, and what will we see from you tonight?

LEBRON JAMES: You won't see anything from me tonight, unfortunately. I will not be in uniform tonight. Still dealing with ankle and foot discomfort, so I will not be playing tonight, unfortunately. I hate that, but I'm looking forward to seeing the format.

This is the first year for it. I know we've got a lot of great -- calling us the OGs, that's hilarious. We do got a few guys with gray hair, so that makes sense. So that should be fun.

I saw the quote the other day with DK [Dalton Knecht] say he was going to play against me. So I guess I'll see him in practice and we can go at it then.

Q. Back in 2007, you hosted Saturday Night Live. You were the last active NBA player to host that show. We've got All-Star, but they're also celebrating their 50th anniversary this season. What's it like to be a part of that show's legacy, and what NBA players should host that show next?

LEBRON JAMES: To be a part of the Saturday Night Live legacy is something that -- a dream come true. It's been on, obviously, my entire life, and seeing so many great actors grace those skits every single Saturday and so many entertainers that come there and do their bits, as well, it was fun.

It was super fun, and hopefully I get the opportunity to do it again. I would love to do it again. I was so young. You said 2006? 2007? I was 21, 22 maybe. It was super fun.

I don't know. I don't know. Kevin Love is hilarious, by the way, and he's a great friend of mine, and I could definitely see him doing Saturday Night Live for sure. He's one of my great friends and he's hilarious. But it was definitely a treat and something that I can always look back and say I was on a show that Will Ferrell has been on and so many great guys. Bill Hader is a good friend of mine. It was pretty cool.

Q. Can you talk about the state of the Lakers-Celtics rivalry and rivalries in the NBA more broadly?

LEBRON JAMES: When it comes to rivalries, if it's that deep rooted, then it will always live on. The Celtics and



Lakers, you look at Ohio State-Michigan, you look at Yankees-Red Sox. There's just certain matchups that no matter who's out on the floor or who's on the gridiron or -- it is what it is because of the tenure and the legacy of it. That's what stands with the Lakers and the Celtics, for how many years we've been competing against that franchise and whatever, and both have had so much success. It will always stand the test of time forever.

Q. You're not playing tonight; that's going to be a record that ends that'll probably never come down, consecutive All-Star starts at 20. My question was when you were 30 and we were talking about who is coming behind you, that discussion may have been a little premature. But now that you're 40 and you're talking about the end at some point, do you have a player in mind who will be the best player in the league in five years?

LEBRON JAMES: I don't, to answer that question. I do not. There are too many great young players right now to just say, well, this one guy will be the best player in the league. Our league is filled with so many talented players, so many guys that can transcend the game on the floor and off the floor, and I think it's in a really good place.

It was definitely premature at 30 to ask me that question, but our game is in a really good place.

Q. We go around the world reviewing different basketball courts and we started in the UK and we went to the I Promise School, traveled all the way there, reviewed that. I want to know from you, one basketball court that means the most to you or you played on growing up that we need to check out and review.

LEBRON JAMES: Wow. That's a great question. I've played on so many indoor and outdoor courts growing up in Akron, Ohio, that they all have a special meaning to me. I played at Elizabeth Park projects when I was growing up. I played Summer Lake Recreation Center. I played at the YMCA downtown. I played at the Urban League. I played at outdoor courts like Perkins Pool, Hawkins Court, Ed Davis, as well, in my hometown.

Me and my best friends, who we're still best friends today, we went all over the city either on our bikes or we walked around and we would go look for a game and see if guys were playing ball either indoor or outdoor, and we wanted to get a run in no matter what.

It's a lot of courts in our city that I don't know if they're still, like, actively playing ball. I know a lot of kids don't really be outside as much as we did when we were younger, but

there's a lot of courts that hold a lot of meaning to me because it started the whole love of the game for me, just being able to go out and play just for the love of the game and the freedom that we had.

Q. To follow up on the foot and the ankle, you played on Wednesday in Utah. There's a game scheduled this Wednesday. Because of the fires and rescheduling. Do you anticipate being available at the start of this week? Or was this more kind of a maintenance type of wear-and-tear situation?

LEBRON JAMES: I mean, it's a little bit of both. I was hoping that it would feel a lot better this morning, but it's not where I want it to be. With 30 games left and us trying to make a playoff push in the wild, wild west, I feel like it's important for me to take care of myself and understand what's coming on.

I don't want to say it's maintenance -- well, it is maintenance, but at the same time, it's like, I have to look out for myself when it comes to this injury that I've been dealing with for years.

I hope to be available on Wednesday. We have to have a makeup game. So, I am headed back to LA tonight. There will be no vacation for me, so I head back to LA tonight and back to rehab tomorrow and getting ready for practice on Tuesday, and hopefully I can play against Charlotte on Wednesday and hopefully play against Portland on Thursday. It's a big stretch for us.

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