

# NBA All-Star Media Day

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Eastern Conference

### Jayson Tatum

Media Day Press Conference



**Q. Jayson, you started the program in St. Louis with the single parents. Do you want to expand that? Can you kind of tell us a little bit more what went into the thinking of wanting to start that program and how important it is to you?**

JAYSON TATUM: Absolutely. My foundation is based in St. Louis. Obviously that's where I'm from. I'm very prideful about the city and community I grew up in and trying to impact and change those around me.

Yeah, the initiative will start in St. Louis, and hopefully as it continues to grow and we get bigger and get more resources, I would love to expand. As of right now, it just focuses on single-parent families in St. Louis at the moment.

**Q. You've talked about in the past wanting to win MVP, that being a big thing for you. You've talked this year about the importance of winning and kind of sacrificing, putting that above as your personal goal. Where does that lie for you, that MVP chase? Obviously people are talking about it more for you. How important is that to you at this stage of your career?**

JAYSON TATUM: Individual awards are important. I'm not going to say that they're not. Everybody wants to win a championship, but you want to be rewarded for the work that you put in, for the things that you go out there and do on the court.

They have individual awards for a reason. As a competitor, as a player, you grew up watching your favorite players winning MVP and First Team All-NBA and all that.

Of course you want to win those things. But you can't take precedent over playing the right way and doing the things that you have to do in order for your team to essentially be the best team in the league and have a chance to win a championship.

Would I love to win? Yes. But apparently us losing the

Finals two years ago affects what people think of me now, so I guess I've got some ground to make up. Everybody who has a vote, they vote -- the criteria is different. Everybody thinks differently. Right, wrong, or indifferent, it is what it is. You can't tell people what they should look for when they vote. That's the beauty of it.

**Q. How has your relationship with Paolo Banchero grown since his time in college at Duke up till right now, where we're kind of seeing him rise to stardom so early in his career?**

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, it's been great. Couldn't be happier for him. You see the things that he did while he was at Duke. That's when I first got to know him and be able to talk to him. Obviously since he's been in the league, got a chance to meet his dad, his mom, signed with Jordan Brand, so obviously we have that connection as well.

Just a great person, great kid, works extremely hard. Obviously only in the second year, and already an All-Star. So the work is there. The talent is there, for sure. I'm excited to see where he takes it. Couldn't be happier for him. This is only the beginning for him.

**Q. You've reached the point in your career where the All-Star Game is not news for you. At this point in your career, does the anticipation change for you at all?**

JAYSON TATUM: I'm not caught off guard by making the All-Star Game. I'm still very grateful to be here and thankful to get that because it's not something you take for granted, right? Only 24 of us get to be here every year. There's 450, 500 players in the league. So that's a really big deal.

It's a special weekend. You've got the best players in the world. A lot of retired guys come around, and you get to see them. It's great for the fans. It's great for your family.

So that's kind of my favorite part about the weekend, just being able to bring my son, obviously, my mom, and seeing all the retired guys I grew up watching and spend



time with them.

All-Star weekend is great. Very honored to be here. Look forward to making many more.

**Q. What about the All-Star Game makes it so great to play in?**

JAYSON TATUM: That's a great question. What's your name?

**Q. Jeremiah.**

JAYSON TATUM: What makes it special is just the history of it. When I was your age, watching my favorite players compete and play in the All-Star Game and make highlights, it was a very special weekend for me to watch. I can only dream and imagine of one day being able to wear that jersey and live out my dream.

Five years ago, I made my first All-Star Game, and I've been fortunate enough to make it every single year. Just everything about All-Star weekend is special, and the game is super exciting. You get to play with guys that you're normally competing against. So that makes it different as well.

You just get to share the court with some of the greatest players to ever play, and it's just memories you'll have for the rest of your life.

**Q. You have a huge fan community of kids in Mexico and Latin America. What piece of advice could you give them from your career?**

JAYSON TATUM: Always just follow your heart, follow your dreams. Never let somebody tell you what you can or can't do. If people are not laughing at your dreams, you're probably not dreaming big enough. So reach for the moon.

**Q. What do you think about the season of Victor Wembanyama? Do you think he deserves a Rookie of the Year title?**

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, he's having a great year. Unlike any other player we've probably ever seen. At this point, I think he, for sure, deserves to be in the conversation with some other great rookies out there. Chet Holmgren at OKC. I think those would probably be the two guys off the top of my head right now.

Yeah, I love watching him play. He's going to be incredible for a very long time. He's having a great year, and I'll continue to keep watching him do great things.

**Q. You have been bestowed with the powers of the commissioner. You can do anything you want. You can make one change in the NBA. What would you do?**

JAYSON TATUM: One change, that's a funny one. If you get a tech -- bear with me. If you get a tech for overreacting to a call and you were right -- if they go back and look, the coaches do the challenge and they overturn the call, that tech should be rescinded. You should get your money back.

If you get a tech for overreacting to a call that was deemed incorrect or whatever, you should get your money back.

**Q. I'm very surprised at your suggestion. I think it's a fair one.**

JAYSON TATUM: (Laughter.)

**Q. You mentioned before how you've been watching the All-Star Game for a long time, basically since you were a kid. LeBron has been front and center basically that entire time, basically as the face of the league. I'm curious, as you see him nearing the end of his career, who do you see stepping into his presence going forward, and is that something you've envisioned you potentially being able to do?**

JAYSON TATUM: Absolutely. And I think the league is in a great place right now, the amount of high-character guys, the amount of talent throughout the NBA. The fact that LeBron and KD and Steph are still considered one of the best 10 players in the league right now at their age and how long they've been playing is incredible.

As well as all the younger guys. Whether it's guys my age or the guys a little bit older, with the Jokices and Giannis, or guys younger than me. So I think the league is in a great place. When LeBron retires, the face of the league, that's tough. But we win a championship, I've got something to say about it, I know that.

**Q. At a young age, you earned respect of the Boston Celtics team. If you had one person to thank for who you are today, who would it be and why?**

JAYSON TATUM: If I had one person to thank?

**Q. Yes, a thank you for the person you are today, who would it be?**

JAYSON TATUM: My mom. Easy answer. My mom raised me to be the young man that I am today. I give her all the credit for all my good qualities.

**Q. Do you have an idol in basketball?**

JAYSON TATUM: Kobe. Kobe Bryant. That was my idol and the guy that inspired me to ultimately get to the point where I am today and strive to be the best version of myself.

**Q. This time last year you went for 55 points. You grabbed the MVP of the All-Star Game. Are you going for a repeat MVP here? Are you going for more than 55? If not, who's your favorite to win MVP tomorrow night?**

JAYSON TATUM: Hot take, I probably won't score 55 points tomorrow. It's a feel thing. Starting in the game tomorrow, you get into a good rhythm, get a couple layups, maybe a couple threes, you look up, now you've got 16 points, and it's like, all right, I might try to go get it again.

I wonder who's the last person to win back-to-back All-Star Game MVPs? I'm not sure I know that. (Russell Westbrook in 2015 and 2016.) But if it's not going to be me, I might say -- maybe like Donovan Mitchell, maybe so. Someone from our team.

**Q. Why Mitchell?**

JAYSON TATUM: Just feel like he's athletic enough, obviously. I think a key part of it is starting, right? Probably going to play a little bit more than the rest of the guys. Is he starting? Wait, is he starting? Shoot, I might be wrong.

**Q. I don't know who the new fifth starter is.**

JAYSON TATUM: I had, like, 55 last year, and I think he was on my team. I want to say he might have had 40-something, so he was close. (Mitchell scored 40 points.) He's just somebody that can get really hot. In the All-Star Game, if you can get hot, have some electric dunks and things like that, you have a great shot.

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