

# NBA All-Star Media Day

Saturday, February 17, 2024

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Eastern Conference

# Giannis Antetokounmpo

## Media Day Press Conference



**Q. This time last year, you drafted Dame for your All-Star team. He is with you now as your actual teammate. You look back at that until now, how kind of different is this that he's here with you as your actual teammate, and maybe how has your relationship with him grown from that time to where you are today?**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: That time I drafted him, the relationship, I had a big relationship with him. I appreciate him as a player at the time, and I knew the value he brought to the game. It's a guy on the All-Star team that you want to have on your team. I think that's pretty much all.

Now having him as a teammate, I think it's unbelievable having the all-time great suiting up next to you and getting ready for the game. Our chemistry day by day is getting better and hopefully can get to a place that we can compete for the championship.

We've been teammates for 50 games, so four, five months. Now, as I said, game by game, day by day, we're getting closer, chemistry is getting better. Hopefully we can get to a place that we can lead the other guys to the goal that we've set in the beginning of the year.

**Q. You've been to a bunch of these All-Star games. What do you take from these experiences? Also, what does it mean to continue to be at an All-Star Game?**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: It's always a great feeling. I never take it for granted, and I'm never going to let it slide by without appreciating it. From my first one until my last one.

I'm happy that I'm here. I'm happy that I get to suit up and play, participate in this game in the best place in the world. I'm happy that I'm able to put on a show for the people.

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to come to practice. The plane was delayed. I know there's a lot of kids that come out to practice that don't have a chance to go to the game to

watch us play. I don't know if the NBA is that complimentary anymore. They have you pay for it, I don't know. But first time I was at the All-Star, it was free.

As I said, it's great to be here. I appreciate every moment of it. I appreciate that I'm able to put on a show here for the people in Indiana and for the people around the world that are watching. Suiting up with the best players in the world in the locker room, you get memories, great memories, from conversations that I remember that I had, with Carmelo, my first one, and conversations I'm going to have tomorrow with Dame, Tyrese, Brunson -- all these players that I don't always have the opportunity to sit in the same locker room with.

But it's fun. Every one that I was able to participate was fun, except for last year when I wasn't able to play.

**Q. Growing up, I know your reality was so much different than the one you live right now. Besides what it means to you to be here right now, what were your memories growing up from All-Star Games? Did you remember that? And is this your father on your necklace?**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: Oh, yeah, that's my dad. Growing up, I remember it was a game that the best players played. I think my first memories of the All-Star was in the video game. Now it's the NBA 2K is big. But back then from where I'm from the NBA Live is a different version. I believe in the 2006 version Manu Ginobili was doing well. I remember they were playing East versus West, and I used to compete with my brother in the video game.

That was my first memory. I thought all the best players coming to a game and they play against one another and it's fun.

Then you participate in some of them, and it's been a fun ride. I enjoy it. I hope the people that watch the game enjoy it as much as we enjoy it.

**Q. Giannis, as long as you've been in the league and been in the All-Star Game, LeBron has been a part of it.**



**He's been the face of it. As he's getting at least closer to the end of his career, if you look beyond whenever he does stop playing, who do you see as being sort of the next face of the league after he is done?**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: First of all, I think LeBron is going to play seven to ten more years. There's no sign of him slowing down. It's year 21, and he's playing incredible. I don't know, he's probably averaging, what, 27, 8, and 8. Close. I don't follow, but I think it's got to be somewhere up there.

I don't know. We have Victor. We have Nikola, but he doesn't want to be really the face either. We have Luka, Joel, Shai, on and off the court. There's a lot of people that can take his place after LeBron leaves.

**Q. Talking about LeBron, if you have to pick something about his game, what would you pick for your game and why?**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: His availability. 21 years he never got hurt. I think that's the biggest talent he has. He's able to be durable throughout his whole career. There's never been a player like that.

I think a lot of people have minor injuries, major injuries, and they come back. But he's always been available for his team. I think that's one of the -- first of all, that's one of the secrets that he's the all-time leading scorer, because he plays games, he plays minutes, he scores the ball. That's why he's been successful too.

I wish that I could be as durable as LeBron. That's the most important thing. All of the other things you can control, from being able to shoot better, be able to post up better, be able to dribble better, be able to run the floor better, all the other things you can control.

The things that you can't control is how durable this guy has been, how the way he takes care of his body. A lot of people work hard, but there's only a few of the players that recover as hard, too, as LeBron. So probably that.

**Q. What do you think about playing against Nikola Jokic? I think in 2018 Charlotte, you were on the same team. How competitive is it going to be tomorrow night? Do you think the Nuggets and Bucks will be the Finals this year?**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: It's fun. It's always fun playing against the best players. Now, if we are going to be in the Finals, I don't know, time will tell. Denver has a very, very good team, probably the favorite in the West, probably going to make it all the way. But we have a lot of

work to do, talking about our team. We have a lot of work to do.

Hopefully, if we get there, it will be fun. But at the end of the day, you've got to get there first. We have a lot of work to do, and it's very far down the road to even think about that.

But it's always great playing against Nikola, playing against the best players in the world. It's always fun.

**Q. My question is about Parker. He's playing great in Barcelona. He made a crazy dunk yesterday. What do you think about how he's playing in Barcelona?**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: Oh, Jabari Parker? I love it, man. I watch all of his highlights, and he's found a place that he's happy. I feel like, when I played with him, whenever he was happy and he felt comfortable in his environment, he will thrive, and you can see he's playing really well.

He had this crazy buzzer beater a couple weeks ago. He's leaned out. He's healthy. I'm just happy that he's enjoying the game again. Barcelona definitely have a good one -- good one. A great one.

Great guy also.

I'm happy. I'm happy to see him out there. I'm very, very happy to see him out there.

**Q. What kind of improvement about the game of Wemby have you seen since your last game against him?**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I'll be honest with you. I don't watch basketball. I didn't watch any game of Wemby before that, and I didn't watch any game of Wemby after that. Not just Wemby, but in general, I don't watch basketball. Stats, highlights, how people play, I have no idea.

And I love it. I love when I go to the game, and I have no idea who I'm playing and what they do. It makes it harder.

**Q. We have learned how inspiring your history has been. With everything you have experienced, what is the most valuable thing that the life of basketball has taught you?**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I really don't want to go there. Just never give up. Keep on believing. Keep on going. And be a hard worker. That's all I can say.

I don't give up. I believe in myself. I believe in my dreams and what I'm trying to accomplish, and I know that I've got to work hard. That's what I've done my whole career, and that's what I'm going to do in basketball after I retire. It's something that's allowed me to be the man that I am today.

So, yeah, be a hard worker, don't give up, believe in yourself.

**Q. Speaking of your story, your documentary is coming out on Monday. As an immigrant and coming from West Africa, coming from Nigeria, and even looking at the Super Bowl, they highlighted Ghana, what do you hope that your story in this film inspires other immigrants that are coming from Africa and specific countries in Africa, but also immigrants from around the world that are coming to America?**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I hope it can touch as many people as possible, inspire them in the best way. But for me, I'm just -- when I'm doing stuff like that, I try to be myself. I don't have in mind I'm trying to inspire. I just try to be myself. I try to be as authentic as possible.

I understand that I have a platform that allows me to do that, and I have to be a role model for a lot of people around the world that look up to me. I try to be myself as much as possible. I was inspired by many people before me, and I hope that I can do the same for them. Not just for immigrants, but for a lot of people around the world.

**Q. What is something that fatherhood has taught you?**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: Be patient. You've got to be patient. They're not always going to do things that you like. Be patient because they're kids. I think that's the most important thing.

**Q. I'm just curious what your patterns or phases of reflection throughout your life and career. Obviously you look back at a season, stuff like that, but how often do you look back at where you were 10 years ago, 15 years ago, and reflect on how much growth you've had, both you and your family?**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I think that during the day I might take two seconds and kind of, oh, this is my eighth All-Star. Oh, wow, I did that. That's pretty much it. Then the rest of the day is me trying to figure out how can I make this last? How can I be here again next year? How can I take care of my body? How can I be better? How can I help my team be successful? How can I be a better father?

I can say, yeah, 2020 was the first time I was a father, but

okay, I'm a father now of three. Today what can I do to provide for them and be the best example for them today?

But for sure during the day I take two to five seconds to kind of reflect, but I don't have time. I have to keep on moving forward. When I'm done, when I'm old and grumpy, my kids have kids and their kids have kids and I see them, maybe then I will sit down more and reflect through everything I've been through in my life and everything that I've accomplished.

But now it's go time, man. I enjoy it, I'm not going to lie. I enjoy every single moment of it. I live my life very, very hard. I live it to the fullest. Yeah, I don't have too much time to relax.

**Q. A lot has been made about your guys' 3-7 record with Doc Rivers. Quick two-parter. What has it been like to adjust to what he wants to do, and what are you hoping this weekend will do helping guys get on track in the last 26 games?**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: It's hard. It's hard. This is my fourth coach in the span of six months, from Coach Bud, Coach Griff, Coach Joe and then Doc. Different philosophy, different game plan. It's hard. It's training.

I am a student of the game. I try to -- when somebody asks me to do something, I try to do it in the best of my ability. I try to understand what we're trying to accomplish because, if I can understand it, I can also be there for my teammates if they ask me a question.

But I love working with Coach Doc. He's been very, very successful. We can talk all day about things he's accomplished around the league. He's won, I think, 1,100 NBA games. Some people have never played 1,100 games.

Yeah, he brings that level of -- how can I say? A championship level to the team. He won. He's coached a lot of successful teams in the past. When you have that guy in your bench, you have to bring your A game.

Now, things that we have to do to get back on track, I'd say, one, we have to get healthy, but that cannot be our excuse. We've played 56 games, which is a lot. We've played a lot of minutes. We've got to take care of our body, and hopefully we'll have a mental and a physical break now these six, seven days. Then we get back, and we are fresh, and we're able to go again and try to build new habits and play good basketball and try to win some games.

Yes, it's been a very, very, very hard season for everybody.



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Not just for the players, but for the coaching staff, and changes -- it's been a hard season. But through it all, I think we can get it done. We hope. We'll see.

**Q. Victor Wembanyama has kind of pointed at you as a role model that he's looked at from afar. I know you guys had a nice battle earlier in the season. I'd like to get your impressions of him so far and maybe what advice you would give him as he continues to try to develop to become a Giannis some day.**

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: Be a hundred times better than Giannis. He doesn't need to be Giannis. He's going to be Victor.

As I said, I don't watch a lot of basketball. I haven't watched him play a lot of the year, but obviously when we are in the bus or in the plane, you have guys going, oh, wow, that's crazy. Then it kind of draws your attention. It's like what happened? You want to know because I'm nosey, I want to know.

Then I see things that he does, and I'm like I've never seen anybody like it. I was thinking there's never going to be anyone else like him. People don't understand, it's not only that he's 7 -- he's not 7 feet. He's like 7'5". I was standing next to him. He's way, way, way taller than me. He can shoot. He can dribble, blah, blah, blah. We all know that, right?

But the feel, that's the first thing I noticed, like the feel of the game. You know what I mean? Like he knows, he understands the game. I watched him play before he was in the NBA in ASVEL when he was teammates with my little brother. So I had the chance to watch. Like, his feel of the game is incredible.

You can't really teach that. You have it, or you don't. You can get stronger. You can get faster. You can dribble better, shoot better, all of this. But the feel of the game, when to shoot, when to defend, when to sprint, when to help your teammate, when to not help, the timing on blocking shots -- that, you cannot teach. That's feel, and he has that. That's the scary part.

For him, the most important thing, I think, throughout his career is going to be health because, if he has health, he has everything. You know he's going to dominate on the court because he's unguardable. You cannot guard him one-on-one. I don't know if you can guard him two versus one or three versus one. We've tried, and we couldn't. A lot of people around the NBA have tried, and they couldn't.

But it's health. As long as that -- I don't want to say kid because he's a grown man. As long as Victor is healthy,

the league is his. LeBron is kind of like that. He's close to the end of his career and he retired, but we have to deal with this problem now moving forward.

No, I'm happy to see people thrive and do what they love. As I said, health is the most important thing. As long as Victor is healthy, he's going to accomplish everything. He's going to be a champion, be an MVP in this league, do all the things, the goals that he set for himself. That's pretty much it.

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