

NBA Legends Awards

Sunday, February 19, 2023

Salt Lake City, Utah, USA



(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: No, please, sit down.

Good morning, everybody. Welcome to Salt Lake City, which I imagine if you're Mac McClung, life is pretty good today. How outstanding was that performance last night in the Dunk?

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: Jeez. We welcome you. It's the 23rd Annual NBA Legends Brunch. Today is about the legends of basketball, their contributions on and off the court. And there are so many NBA legends in the audience. Kenny "The Jet" Smith and I have talked about it before. It's like you open up a box of basketball cards, come to life. It's really, really a special morning.

I've had the pleasure of hosting this event for many years, and to me it is the highlight of the weekend. Our host city has some deep roots in basketball history. It is the birthplace of Wat Misaka, the first person of color in the NBA, and his family has joined us here today.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: You all remember Mark Eaton, of course, a former board member, director of the RPA, who we lost in 2021. Played his entire career in Utah, many of those years playing for the legendary Jerry Sloan. We are joined here today by the widows of Mark and Jerry, Teri Eaton and Tammy Sloan.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: Now, to tip things off today, we have a two-time Peabody Award-winning comedian, best known for his breakout Netflix special "Homecoming King" and his critically acclaimed political satire show "Patriot Act," which won a Peabody, an Emmy, and a Television Academy Honor.

He was a senior correspondent at "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart." He headlined the 2017 White House Correspondents' Dinner. This guy is awesome. Please welcome Hasan Minhaj.

HASAN MINHAJ: Thank you. Hello! How are you? Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much. How's everyone doing?

(Applause.)

HASAN MINHAJ: I need more than that. How's everyone doing?

(Cheers and applause.)

HASAN MINHAJ: All right, thank you so much. Welcome to the NBA Legends Brunch here in Salt Lake City. You know, it's really fitting the NBA is honoring its legends in the state of Utah. Utah, the one state where people aren't ashamed of having multiple wives. Some of you know what I'm talking about.

One more time for Ernie Johnson. Let's give it up for EJ, huh? Ernie Johnson, host of a show where we're all waiting for Shaquille O'Neal to trip. EJ, I gotta say, buddy, I love the bow ties. I just personally want to say as-salamu alaykum. You're a devout Christian, but you dress like you're a member of the Nation of Islam, and I respect that.

It's 11:00 a.m., we're in an empty convention center, and I can smell Bill Walton's Bengay. It only bears one question: What the hell happened to my career? I asked the organizers who's going to be here tonight. Well, not even tonight. It's today. MJ? Steph? LeBron? KD? They were like, Nah. Spencer Haywood.

(Cheers and applause.)

HASAN MINHAJ: That's right. That's right, Spence.

The Legends Brunch is brought to you by NRA TV -- Sorry, NBA TV. Karl Malone, don't get too excited. Okay? We don't need a Gilbert Arenas situation up in here.

Now, you know what I realized? NBA TV is kind of like your drunk dad. Every time you really need him, he has a regional blackout. But it's kind of refreshing to do this roast on NBA TV because even if I don't do great up here, rest assured, literally zero people will see it.



(Laughter.)

HASAN MINHAJ: Now, why are we here? We're here to honor two of the greatest players of all time, John Stockton and Karl Malone. Give it up for John and Karl.

(Applause.)

HASAN MINHAJ: One of the greatest one-two punches in sports, and it all happened here in Utah. Now, I've always wanted to ask you guys: What's it like being a millionaire in Utah? I bet it's like being a millionaire in Thailand. Super fun if you know where to look.

Now, John Stockton is here, one of the greatest point guards of all time. We have never seen a combo like you and Karl in the league.

(Applause.)

HASAN MINHAJ: Look at you, John. You had the passing ability of Pistol Pete and the face of a regional manager at H&R Block.

(Laughter.)

HASAN MINHAJ: I got to give it to you. You're the all-time steals and assist leader, and no one's even getting remotely close. So take that, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

Kareem, listen, man, I got to say this. The media, they never get you. They've always said you were antisocial. You're not warm. People don't like you. That's because these people are too dumb to read your Substack. You're thoughtful, erudite, well spoken. You wrote for "Veronica Mars." These jocks and idiots aren't going to get it. But I do.

Back to John. John, as a kid who grew up in Sacramento, I love your loyalty to a small-market team that obviously never won an NBA championship. And I respect that. People say winning is the ultimate test of mental fortitude. I disagree. I think losing is.

Now, Karl Malone is here. "The Mailman." Karl, yes, Karl.

(Applause.)

HASAN MINHAJ: Karl, you're like everyone's insane aunt. She's into guns, she randomly spent one year in L.A., and no one is ever going to put a ring on her finger. Please don't kill me for saying that. You're built like a freight train, and you're 59 years old.

Isiah Thomas. Let's pivot. Now, Isiah, I got to ask you a question that everyone is wondering. Why the hell did you do "The Last Dance"? Did you think it was going to be the "Friends" reunion?

You know, John, you know this. Point guards have intuition. How could you not see the passing lane here? The director calls you up and goes, Hey, Zeke, I'm doing an epic 10-hour Michael Jordan documentary where Michael Jordan is the main character. We're going to talk about how you and Bill Laimbeer would body-slam Jordan and Pippen like UFC fighters. Do you want to talk about it on camera? And you were like, "Yes."

Did you think that you would come off looking better than Michael Jordan in the documentary Michael Jordan made about Michael Jordan? You guys have been beefing for over 30 years. Y'all haven't been on speaking terms since the Reagan administration.

And guess what? I'll say it right here, right now. The fans love the pettiness. Every man around the world is watching that documentary enthralled, and every woman was like, "This is why my man needs to go to therapy. You could just apologize to one another, and then this could all be over." But that's not fun, ladies.

Pau Gasol is here. Let's give it up for Pau.

(Applause.)

HASAN MINHAJ: Thank you for being here, Pau, and thank you for taking a break from starring in every cologne commercial that's ever existed. Pau, you always look like you just came out of the ocean, dripped in Acqua Di Giò. You dominated around the rim, but you also look like you should be daintily sipping an espresso.

Now, I look around this room, this room full of legends, and I have to say: You guys really did it. You played in a league with hand-checking, fist fights. You earned your pay. There was no load management. You managed all loads.

Think about it, dude, Larry Bird broke his back building a driveway for his mom. Can you imagine if Steph Curry blew out his ACL delivering Uber Eats? It wouldn't happen.

Now, I have to ask you guys: How upset are you that all of the benchwarmers in today's NBA make \$638 million a year? Just kidding. We all know how upset you are because, literally, you complain about it every time you're on TV. You guys are all so obsessed with young players' money. It feels like we should stop calling you NBA legends and start calling you Tyler Herro's baby mama.

Now, I want everyone on their best behavior today, okay? No shenanigans. No silly stuff. NBA Commissioner Adam Silver is in the building today. Let's give it up for the Commish.

(Applause.)

HASAN MINHAJ: Adam, I got to give it to you, man. You have one of the hardest jobs in sports. Back in the day, all David Stern had to worry about was dress code. No Timberlands, no Jordans, no Yankee fitteds. He was basically a bouncer at a nightclub. He's like, "Fellas, no velour suits. Please come dressed like you work at Wells Fargo."

Now, you know what Adam Silver has to do now? He has to manage the league and solve international political conflict. Okay? He's basically basketball's Secretary of State. He'll pull up to ESPN "First Take," and they'll be like, "Here to talk about the trade deadline and the conflict in Ukraine, it's NBA Commissioner Adam Silver."

Which is why I have to ask you, Adam, what the hell is going on with those spy balloons? Tell us now, Adam. Everyone in the room deserves to know. The nation deserves answers.

But I have to give you your flowers, Adam Silver. You have ran this league far better than the NFL. Now, the bar isn't that high, but it's still a bar. The NFL, the only league where your favorite quarterback will get CTE, shill cryptocurrency, and potentially steal money from kids on welfare.

I can say with absolute pride and certainty that no one in this room, or at least most of the people in this room, have killed an orphan or stolen a bone marrow transplant from a child. And for that, I salute you.

Now, let's get sincere here. I want to tip my hat to everyone in this room, and I want to thank all the legends. You all paved the way for what we have in the league now. You risked everything -- your knees, your back, even your reputation.

And I want to thank the late Bill Russell and his family for their sacrifice and everything they've done. Let's give it up for them.

(Applause.)

HASAN MINHAJ: Bill Russell battled racism throughout his career. He was active in the civil rights movement, and he ultimately became the first Black coach in the NBA.

Not only that, he won eleven NBA championships. He was the ultimate legend and the ultimate winner. And now current NBA players don't even care about winning, and they dress up like they're in "The Cat in the Hat."

Thank you for your time, everyone. And, Karl Malone, please don't kill me.

And now, please welcome back Ernie Johnson.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: Appreciate you. Another hand, please. Hasan Minhaj. I'm going to take a little bit different tack...

(Laughter.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: I always find it funny as I'm wandering around All-Star Weekend and I see folks who are going to the brunch, and I don't know why, but they always bring up, "Hey, so did you write a poem for this thing?"

And so, yes, I did. So this is -- as we prepare to get this program started in earnest, allow me just to knock this out in tribute to all who are in this room today.

We welcome you to the crossroads of the West, where we celebrate the NBA's best of the best and where NBA personnel strap on their skis and promptly hurt hammies, achilles, and knees.

Thankfully, we have this time to unwind, and if it's your first Legends Brunch, you will find this day can uplift and it can inspire. It hits the high notes, like this town's famous choir.

For so many years I have relished this view, looking out at these legends, this star-studded crew. But a regular guest is not with us this year. He approached every game and his life without fear. We're thankful for 88 years of Bill Russell, this league's greatest champ, equal parts grit and hustle.

Pause now and let silence alone fill the air. Bill's table this morning has one empty chair.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: Love you, Jeannine.

Now, what we've done in the past and we'll do in this ditty is recognize guys who played in this host city. Four names will be called, and if you would stand, the folks here would just like to give you a hand.



He wore No. 8, was the No. 3 pick. His style, tenacious. His skill set was slick. Twice an All-Star in Utah, watch him play, you'd see how. Deron Williams, stand up, my friend. Please, take a bow.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: You just could not keep this big guy off the floor. Games missed in his first nine Jazz seasons? Four. Dependable, popular, this man earned his stripes, and Thurl Bailey will sing today, the man's got some pipes. Thurl Bailey.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: Now, while records are made to be broken, they say, the steals and assists mark may not be in play. The leader in both was a Jazz cornerstone, skilled and deceptive and bad to the bone. His running mate seemed to be chiseled from granite. Their pick and roll game was the best on the planet. One of the best duos this game's ever known, here are John Stockton and Karl Malone.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: The game's greatest legends possess superpowers. It's vital we constantly give them their flowers. We were witnesses recently when in L.A. LeBron broke the scoring mark, a 14-foot J. That record had stood since 1984, since a feathery skyhook on a Las Vegas floor. That signature shot that was feared near and far authored by one Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Kareem.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: So now you've just seen what this day is all about. These guys paved the way, and of that there's no doubt. So let's celebrate them, reflect in their glory. It's a rich narrative, it's the NBA story. Let's get going.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: The boss is in the house. Commissioner Adam Silver.

COMMISSIONER ADAM SILVER: Thank you very much, Ernie. And that poem -- not only is the Legends Brunch one of my favorite events, but of course Ernie's poem. We all look forward to it every year.

I want to thank the Retired Players Association for hosting this brunch and the roughly 150 legends who are here in town. That's also a highlight to see them on the streets

and the arena, just they become part of the fabric of these events, and makes it so worthwhile.

One of those legends who loved attending this event was Bob Lanier, who we sadly lost nine months ago. Bob was an intimidating center, but he was also known as a gentle giant around the league.

And over 30 years ago, post his playing career, he joined the NBA under David Stern as an ambassador. And then when I joined the league, we became close friends.

And Bob literally traveled, over 30-plus years, millions of miles representing the NBA everywhere, not on charters, not even always in first class, squeezing that big body into all kinds of planes, all kinds of cars, trains, buses, to represent this league everywhere.

He took incredible pride in that role. For some of you who ever attended his events, his marquee moment were his one-clap and two-clap moments where he usually brought the house down and only as Big Bob could.

And so let's take a look back on this video on some of -- a little bit about Bob Lanier.

(Video.)

COMMISSIONER ADAM SILVER: It's hard to watch that. And to honor Bob, we've created the Bob Lanier Community Impact Award, recognizing a legend who has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to his community.

Nobody is more deserving to win this award than our very first honoree, another No. 16, Pau Gasol.

(Applause.)

COMMISSIONER ADAM SILVER: Just this past Friday, Pau was named a finalist for the Basketball Hall of Fame. Congratulations on that, Pau.

(Applause.)

COMMISSIONER ADAM SILVER: And in addition to being an accomplished big man, just like Bob, Pau, you're known for your kindness and basic humanity throughout the league.

You founded a foundation with your brother Mark, and together, even over this relatively short amount of time, you two have impacted literally millions of kids, not just in your home country, but around the world. Let's also take a look at this beautiful video.

(Video.)

COMMISSIONER ADAM SILVER: The first winner of the Bob Lanier Community Impact Award, let's welcome Pau Gasol.

(Applause.)

PAU GASOL: Oh, man. Thank you. Thank you for everything, for being here. I have so much to be thankful for in my life. You know, just being here today, being recognized with the Bob Lanier Award is something that I will forever cherish and remember.

But before I start, I also want to thank everyone in the room, all you guys that made my journey possible, all you guys that came before me as players, executives, owners, fans, the NBA, thank you from the bottom of my heart. I truly respect you. I truly love you. You know, I'm very humbled to be here with all of you today.

It is an honor, obviously, to receive this recognition because it does go beyond what I always thought, sporting achievements, sporting career, you know, basketball is just -- it's been my passion, the game. I believe -- I'm a big believer in sports and what it does to the world, what it contributes.

But, you know, I think as athletes we have to be able to transcend that. And that's what I've been trying to do because when I first realized early on in my career that I needed to use the recognition, the fame, the love that I was getting to make it something better, better, something bigger, something more meaningful, to help those less privileged, to help those that needed a voice, that's been my mission.

Coming from my parents, a medical family, I wanted to be a doctor at some point because I understood the power of healing, the power of helping.

We do have, you know, a privileged position in this, you know, many of us or all of us in this room. And, you know, I just want to encourage all of you to continue to affect, to inspire others, you know, to spend a little time thinking about how you want to impact other people's lives.

We are examples, whether we like it or not. You know, playing in the NBA, we have a platform. Kids are looking, people are looking, the world is looking, is cheering for us. So we become role models, and we got to set a good example for all the ones that are looking at us out there.

During my first years in the NBA, everything that I did was

trying to also give back to the community, worked with St. Jude. Every city that I played for, I worked or partnered with a pediatric hospital. It just brought me so much joy.

I partnered with UNICEF. Since 2003 I've been a goodwill ambassador for UNICEF. And in 2013 we created our foundation with Marc, fighting the childhood obesity pandemic, promoting healthy habits in our world, which our children are in danger, are threatened by this pandemic. So that's something that it's -- it's very close to my heart.

In the foundation, we focus on sleeping well, eating well, being physically active. In a world with so much technology and all our kids are hooked to devices, it's so important that we remind them how it is important to keep a healthy lifestyle.

So that's what we're going to continue to do. We're talking to governments, we're talking to local countries to be able to implement programs and have a healthier society so we can become healthier, healthier adults and a healthier world.

Also, I don't want to finish without acknowledging Bob Lanier and how amazing he was. I had the chance to interact with him, and he touched my life. He inspired me to be better as well. So he obviously served as the president of the NBA Players Association in the final years of his career but also helped to start the NBA Stay in School campaign.

So as he said, there's always so much need out there. There's really a lot of need out there. And we can all, whoever you are, wherever you are, wherever you live, we can all always do a little more for them.

Unfortunately Bob left us last year. It was a big, big loss, but it's our time to take the torch and follow his example.

So I'm very thankful. Thank you to my family, my team, my wife for being here. I'm a father of two now. I will forever try to be the best example and man that I can be for my family and everybody else that I get in touch with.

So thank you very much.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: Congrats, Pau. Well deserved.

You know, when -- for everybody who's here today, I know all of our attention kind of gets drawn to these tables here in front and all these guys we've watched play. But what's cool this year is that something we haven't been able to do for various circumstances over the last few years, we're



doing it again today.

So I'm looking at these tables, but then it goes all the way over to this far right corner. We got three tables for Make-A-Wish here today. And so if we could please have Zane and Ryan and Jaden and Logan and RC stand up, we'd love to recognize you and welcome you to All-Star Weekend.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: We're calling them the Make-A-Wish Starting 5. Great to have you with us today.

You know, a guy who's been here a lot, at so many of these, and we're happy to have him back again today, the Reverend Jesse Jackson is in attendance today.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: And now to present the Hometown Hero Award, the talented young point guard of the Utah Jazz who's been all over the place this All-Star Weekend, a great ambassador for the game and for the league, give it up for Collin Sexton.

(Applause.)

COLLIN SEXTON: Good morning. Good morning, everyone. For coming out today, just want to say thank you. Thank you, guys, for showing the legends how important they are to this game and how important they are to the NBA. To have 150-plus legends in one building, it just shows why the NBA is the best league.

Every guard who plays here in Utah is playing in the shadow of John, the retired Jersey No. 12. John Stockton, a 10-time All-Star, MVP, and one of the pure, smoothest, point guards there is in NBA history. And they're a better pick and roll -- there's no better pick and roll than Malone and Stockton.

I just want to say thank you, everyone, for coming again. And I would say John is somebody that I've watched so much film of, watched many hours, me and my dad, and he just showed me how poised he was when he played the game. No one could rattle him. To play 100, to play 15-plus seasons, no games missed, 609 games, that's amazing right there. Let's take a look at the video board.

(Video.)

COLLIN SEXTON: Can we give a warm welcome for John Stockton.

(Applause.)

JOHN STOCKTON: Thank you. Thank you. And welcome to Salt Lake City. It's been a home for me and a home away from home for a long time, and it's great to be back. The community values that they brought here just made it so special for us to grow the family. The hard work and their love of basketball just I felt like makes it the best stop in the NBA.

Before I forget and go any further, I better introduce my family, because I have a tendency to forget, including their names, but my wife, Nada; Houston; daughter, Lindsay; her husband, Blake; and my -- one of our grandchildren, Bryant. See, I almost forgot his name. So thanks for joining us here today, guys.

Thirty-nine years ago I was drafted by the NBA -- or by the Utah Jazz. Might have been a few boos in the -- on the draft day. Why would you draft a 6'1" white guy out of Gonzaga, they called it. Gonzaga wasn't Gonzaga at the time. So I'll take it.

Frank Layton, I think he took some tremendous risks doing that. He's the head of the franchise. It's an up-and-coming franchise. They won the Midwest Division championship the year before. And I think how he kind of softened the blow was his line was: He's Irish, he's Catholic, and his dad owns a bar, so of course we drafted him.

So I came to a team owned by Sam Battistone, who moved the team from New Orleans, yet another heroic effort. And then it was solidified by Larry Miller. Larry came in and made this our home for perhaps ever. And I'm forever grateful to these two men for taking the chances to do so.

One thing they both did, and especially the Millers, throughout our career, they made family the most important thing. It was important to them, and they not only encouraged it, but they put money where their mouths were.

We had family rooms. They made it popular to be a family man in this community. And I don't know if -- I don't know if I can survive anywhere else than I did here because it was a pretty special environment to grow up in, I guess.

My first day here, first day I met -- two people walked straight up to me in there, one is Thurl Bailey, who you met today, and put that big long arm around me and put me under his wing right from the start. Another one was Mark Eaton, who blocked out the sun when he walked in. And they made me feel right at home, and true friends, and they long endured.

Very soon after, I started learning the ropes from Rickey Green, who's here today, was an All-Star with the Jazz. I learned so much from him in my young years. Adrian Dantley I believe is here, also teaching a young kid the ropes when they didn't have to do so.

Frank Layton, everybody knows about his sense of humor. He always said a good point guard and a scorer go together, hand to hand -- I'm going to goof up the joke -- go hand in hand, but not into the showers.

Luckily, very soon I was teamed up with the great Karl Malone, who -- who -- Karl, you know, we're always in this for the long haul, buddy. And I consider him one of the greatest of all times, regardless of position or place, and I think that his stats and what he did for our team would indicate that.

Frank handed the reins over to Jerry Sloan, who we heard talk. It's (tearing up) -- what a wonderful man. He was the soul and the personality of our team. And I miss him.

These men set us on a journey that we were all proud of here in Utah. Horny, Bryon Russell, Ostertag, we rolled through some amazing things, and I'm so grateful.

Grandpa. Yeah. Thanks, Bryant.

What I really want to get to today as I look out, and I've had a chance to bump into many of you here this weekend, is how grateful I am to all of you, you players, you men that laced them up with me or against me or before me. Competitors. Tough. I learned so much from you.

How many times do you get a chance to play against the best people in the world every night, and you get to challenge yourself, you get to learn. It's the greatest time of my life. So thank you, everybody. Thank you for this honor.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: Congratulations to John Stockton. And, man, it was just -- you could see it in his eyes, it's just a nice morning, a huge moment. And, again, richly deserved.

Let's bring to the stage the executive director of the National Basketball Players Association, Tamika Tremaglio.

TAMIKA TREMAGLIO: Good morning, good morning. And thank you, Ernie. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be here. As you all know, this is actually one of my favorite events, although it even looks larger in this room

today when there are tables and chairs and food. But it is one of my favorites because it gives us the opportunity to really celebrate the men who paved the way and allowed us, today's players, to actually reach new heights.

And as we were thinking about that with Pau and Karl and John, our team, the collective 450, who make up actually today's union, have a responsibility to live up to the legacy of those legends.

When the Great Bill Russell passed away in July, I remember finding a couple of his quotes that actually stuck with me since that day. "The most important measure of how good a game I played," he said, "was how much better I'd make my teammates play." Let me say that just one more time. "The most important measure of how good a game I played was how much better I made my teammates play."

When I heard that quote, I was reminded. You see, I actually grew up in the country, so we walked through the woods. And I was walking through the woods with my aunt one day, probably at the age of eight, and she said to me -- it's not exactly a proverb, but it has sort of stuck with me, much like I hope that the things that I tell my boys will stick with them.

But as we walked along the path, I bent down to pick up these sticks off the ground. Because, of course, that's what you do when you grow up in the country. And there were sticks, and some were dark and some were thicker, et cetera. And she told me to break this stick. And, of course, I did that fairly easily.

Then she told me that I should start to break different kinds of sticks. And, of course, I did that too. Again the sticks broke easily.

She then asked me to gather up a bunch of twigs all of different kinds, quite frankly, even thinner than the twigs I picked before. And I did. And some were dried out, so you expect those to break quickly, some were fresh, et cetera.

But my aunt asked me to gather the twigs together in a small bundle, thin enough that my little hands could actually reach around the whole bundle. And I did.

She asked me to hold the two ends in my two hands and try to break the twigs as a group. And I tried, and I tried, and I couldn't do it. And then, of course, I asked her, "Why don't you try it?" And as strong as she was, she couldn't break them either.

Now, I think that may have been a little bit for dramatic effect, but we laid the twigs back down on the ground and

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

aunt started walking again. She didn't explain. And, quite frankly, she didn't need to. She just let me think about what had actually happened.

It meant that no matter how hard we try, the twigs in a bundle would not break.

There are stars in basketball, and Bill Russell, CJ McCollum are certainly one of them; however, no man can be a star without his teammates. Truly we know we are stronger together. And Bill Russell, Spencer Haywood, they know this.

This is one of the legacies that I know the men in the league today hold near and dear to their hearts. They work, striving to reach their best aspirations, climbing to new heights, while trying not to allow their individual pursuits to come before that of the team.

And I'm proud of how well they demonstrate this day in and day out. Although I have to say, as we come off a trade deadline, I'll allow them to deviate from that just a bit.

This truly is a brotherhood where no individual comes before the collective. Because as we know, as my aunt knew, and as Bill Russell knew, an individual's strength is only as strong as the strength of those that are around them.

We are clearly better together, particularly when we offer each other just a bit of grace, which I think we all practiced a little bit this morning.

Teams in our league rely on the talents of individuals, much like what we are celebrating here this weekend. That's what All-Star is about, the individual. This is all blended into one force that represents their collective strength.

So our ability actually to drive forward in pursuit of living up to the legacy of those who came before us comes from the strength of our collective and from the strength of giants for whom shoulders we actually stand upon.

When we welcome a new rookie class that we did last year into the union, we tell them that they are now part of this brotherhood for life. They become part of a brotherhood where each member remains steadfast in their dedication to something greater than themselves.

Our guys stand up for each other and they push to make the league better than it could have been without each and every one of them. They afford each other and themselves a little grace, and I ask that you do too.

John Wooden, who was the legendary UCLA coach, had a rule that whenever a basket was scored, the first thing his team would do is acknowledge the person who gave the assist. A player once asked him, "Coach, won't that take up some time?" And Wooden replied, "I'm not asking you to run over and give him a hug. A simple nod will do."

It is just that. It doesn't always need to be a big gesture, but there are times when you need to give yourself and others a nod, just a little bit of grace. That is what makes our players exceptional, and that is truly what builds a legacy.

There is no doubt that the men who make up today's union have benefitted tremendously from the legacy of the men before them, and they are really grateful, and many of you are sitting here in this room today.

They learned kindness, which you know is near and dear to my heart; selflessness; yes, a little bit of grace; and certainly very much gratitude. And I have no doubt that amongst their goals is to fulfill their responsibility to live up to the legacy that these men leave behind, a legacy actually of their own.

I thank you, I welcome you, and I'm grateful to be here today. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: I don't know exactly how many years I've been doing this, but I -- it always amazes me when I'm backstage and I'm just bumping into these guys. You know, you turn around, you get a cup of coffee, you turn around and you bump into Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Julius Erving.

And it really -- it would be a great, like, silent auction item at some point at an event, say, hey, we're going to give you two laminated passes backstage at the Legends Brunch. Be the best time of your life. It's an amazing morning and, again, one of the reasons that this day always stands out for me.

This time always stands out for me. It's kind of like this oasis in the midst of the craziness that is All-Star Weekend. So I hope you all are feeling the same way as you listen and watch today.

Look, we're reminded on a daily basis when you watch games around the NBA when you see the No. 6 of who we lost in July. And we'd like to hear from a legendary figure in this game to talk about another legend. So with thoughts on Bill Russell, here is Dr. J, Julius Erving.

(Applause.)

JULIUS ERVING: Thank you, and good morning. I think it's still morning. I don't have a watch on. Is it afternoon or is it morning? Morning still? All right. Then good morning.

A few facts. Few athletes are considered the greatest champions in their sport. Fewer still take their athletic spirit to be champions in their communities.

Bill Russell was the rarest of all. More than anyone else, before or after him, he was a champion both on and off the court. If he had never picked up a basketball, we would still be celebrating his accomplishments in life and his contributions to mankind.

Bill Russell succeeded athletically at every level -- high school, college, and in the NBA. In fact, taking home 11 NBA championships with his teammates, two NCAA championships with the University of San Francisco, an Olympic gold medal, and five NBA MVPs.

William Bill Russell succeeded off the court in ways that are still felt by all of us. Everybody in this room has been affected by the life of Bill Russell. And we're grateful for the strength and determination of the man whose shoulders we stand upon.

Personally, I cherish the times that I spent in his home with his family and the hours that he spent in my home with my family. He extended a hand of friendship to me when I was 21 years old. That was a long time ago, 50-plus years, because my next birthday I'll be 73.

And one of my great joys and things that I cherish was the time that we spent on the golf course, neither one of us being great players. But the game is not for everyone.

I remember the hours that we spent in restaurants, dining together, chatting about things, some things serious, some things funny. And every time something funny came up, there was that loud cackle (cackling). And everybody knew that William Felton Russell was in the room.

I cherish those times. I cherish the times that we spent at NBA All-Star Weekend. And he always sat in front, there or there, and he would always say, "Man, it's getting hard being the oldest person in the room." He'd say, "You're going to feel that one day." Well, I'm starting to feel it already with this sciatica over here in my right calf.

But as long as Kareem is around, I'm not going to be the oldest guy in the room. And a few others, mind you.

But William Bill Russell, what a sad loss. As Ernie said,

there's one seat vacant. And the irony of all that is no one could ever fill that seat up. Thank you, and God bless you.

(Video.)

JAYLEN BROWN: Before I get started, I would like to give a special shout-out to Bill Russell's family. And Jeannine Russell, if you're in the building, give a special shout-out to her, please.

(Applause.)

JAYLEN BROWN: I hope that we can become great friends.

My respect for Bill Russell is eternal, and I'm grateful to have been able to shake his hand.

Bill Russell was a giant amongst men, as a Celtic and human being. We should all strive to live up to the example that he set.

In the midst of my appreciation for his life and his legacy, I realized that his sacrifices wasn't intended to be a bar that was unreachable, but to be a blueprint created for the next generation of athletes to follow, multiple champions, both on the floor as well as in the community. And as I walk amongst my peers, I see instances of the great Bill Russell's legacy being continued. May he rest in peace.

(Applause.)

GRANT HILL: They oftentimes tell you to never meet your heroes. They warn that reality won't match your hopes. In Bill Russell's case, I found that to be true. Because when I met this hero, the experience exceeded my expectations in every way.

Like many of you, what I know about Bill, I learned long before I joined the NBA. I knew about his dominance and his rings. I knew of his confidence on the court and his courage off of it.

I knew of his fearlessness he played with and lived by -- boycotting, demonstrating, marching, holding integrated basketball camps in Mississippi and in the face of death threats. Holding public establishments accountable to the Civil Rights Act. He spoke out over the span of generations, supporting athletes from Muhammad Ali to Colin Kaepernick.

And then I got to meet Bill Russell. It wasn't at all what I expected. While I had read about his strength and his seriousness, what I saw with my own eyes was his happiness and his humor. He was all of those things. And

that's what made Bill Russell great, great for the game, great for the country, just great to be around.

And most of the times we spent together were at homecomings such as this, here at an All-Star Weekend, and most of my memories of those moments are filled with laughter. I'm laughing, he's laughing, we're laughing at each other and with each other.

And what a lesson lies in that legacy. Not just the titles, but the joy. When they say Bill Russell was magnetic, it's not because he drew attention to himself. When they say he lit up a room, it's not because he stood under the spotlight.

His greatness was that he shared his light with others and shined it on them too. He was a center who never sought to be the center of attention, and that's why he was the greatest team player in any sport to ever live.

I can't remember a single conversation with Bill in which he didn't ask about my parents and how they were doing. And every single time he would listen intently. And my understanding of leadership comes a lot from Bill Russell, from hearing how others talk about him, hearing how they revere and respect him.

Bill once said that, quote, "The only athletes we should bother with attaching any particular importance to are those who we can admire for themselves and not for their incidental athletic abilities," end quote.

So as the retired NBA players, none of us are in the box score anymore. There are no more points or blocks, but we are measured by who we are, what we stand for, what we speak up -- when we speak up, and how we care. And Bill Russell was our game's greatest winner in that regard too.

And just for the record, if I were part of the Hawks organization back in the day, I never would have traded him to Boston.

So it is fitting that after this year no one will wear his number on their back, but not before a season in which every single player wears it on their chest.

Bill Russell was powerful because justice is power, and joy is power too. And we might never meet another hero like him again.

(Applause.)

KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR: Bill Russell, my mentor, my role model he taught me how to be bigger, as a player and

as a man. I first met Bill Russell in 1961 when I was a 14-year-old freshman at Power Memorial Academy.

I had just arrived at the school gym for team practice to find the Boston Celtics practicing instead. My coach, Jack Donohue, let them practice there because it was so close to Madison Square Garden.

As I wandered into the gym, I saw sitting casually in the bleacher seats, reading the "New York Times," Bill Russell, the secretary of defense himself, my personal hero.

Coach Donohue, who'd been chatting with the Celtics coach, Red Auerbach, called me over. Auerbach gestured to Bill Russell, "Hey, Bill, come here, I want you to meet this kid."

Bill Russell dipped down his newspaper and looked me over with a frown. Then he snorted, "I'm not getting up to meet some kid." I shrank to about six inches tall. I just wanted to go straight home.

Auerbach chuckled, "Don't let him get to you, kid. Sometimes he can be a real sourpuss." He grabbed my wrist and walked me over to Russell. "Bill, be nice. This is the kid who just might be the next you."

Bill looked at me again, this time taking a little longer. I was already seven feet, two inches taller than he was. I stuck out my hand, "How do you do, Mr. Russell. Pleasure to meet you." He didn't smile, but his demeanor had softened just a little. He shook my hand, "Yeah, yeah, kid."

That's how I met my childhood hero. They say you should never meet your heroes --

(Laughter.)

KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR: That it's mostly disappointing, disillusioning, or disheartening. But that wasn't my experience. I was thrilled. He spoke to me. And I thought I saw in his eyes a recognition of someone like him who had a passion for the game that burned deep and hot and bright.

After that first meeting, every time I ran into him, he was more and more open and forthcoming. At each meeting, I made it my mission to try to make him laugh. He had a high-pitched giggle of a laugh, something between a warbling goose and a braying donkey.

(Laughter.)

KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR: And nothing brightened a room like his laugh. Come on. When Bill laughed, you

couldn't not laugh along.

I attended his games whenever the Celtics played the Knicks at Madison Square Garden, and I would watch them whenever they practiced at my school gym. Watching him, I realized that Bill seemed to know what each player was going to do before they did it.

He anticipated their moves like a chess master, then sprang into the air to block them before they knew what was happening. He didn't play one-size-fits-all defense. He customized his defense to fit each player.

In 1967, when I was 27 -- when I was 20 years old, football legend Jim Brown asked me to join what became known as the Cleveland Summit.

(Applause.)

KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR: Thank you. We were a group of mostly Black athletes, including Bill Russell, Carl Stokes, Walter Beach, Bobby Mitchell, Sid Williams, Curtis McClinton, Willie Davis, Jim Shorter, and John Wooten, tasked with determining the sincerity of Muhammad Ali's refusal to be drafted into the U.S. Army based on his religious views as a Muslim.

Several of the group were ex-military and didn't look sympathetically on Ali's stance. Bill was the most famous member of the summit, other than Jim Brown and Ali, but he never tried to leverage that to influence the rest of us. His approach was logical and dispassionate, encouraging us to listen with open minds to what Ali had to say.

That reasonable approach proved to be much more effective than trying to sway us. He knew Ali could speak eloquently and passionately for himself and that if we were open, we would see the truth in what he said. That was a huge lesson in humility and leadership that guided me for many years after.

I was 67 years old when I finally got up the courage to ask Bill for something I'd wanted since meeting him 53 years prior -- his autograph.

Bill, Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, and I were shooting a commercial for AT&T. We all had so much fun that day joking around with each other that I thought it would be a perfect time to spring into action.

We were taking a break between filming, and I saw him sitting comfortably in a chair, sipping coffee. I stalked him the way he taught me how to stalk players right before leaping up to block their shot.

I got closer, a big, disarming smile on my face. He looked up, unsuspecting. "Hey, Bill," I said, "wonder if you'd do me a favor." He looked at me, "Hmm." I whipped out the jersey from behind my back, his home jersey from the Celtics, No. 6. I held up a black Sharpie. "Mind signing this autograph for me?" "Sure, kid," he said. He had continued to call me kid since our first meeting when I was 14. I think that was his good-natured way of reminding me that he was there first and I would always be following in his giant steps.

When I learned that my friend Bill Russell had died, I tweeted this response: Bill Russell was the quintessential big man, not because of his height, but because of the size of his heart. In basketball, he showed us to play with grace and passion. In life, he showed us how to live with compassion and joy. He was my friend, my mentor, my role model.

Well, that's as much as I could fit into 272 characters. But there's a whole lot more truth and love and respect for my 60-year-old relationship with Bill Russell, not just as one of the greatest basketball players to ever live, but as a man who taught me how to be bigger as a player and as a man.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like everybody to recognize Karen Kenyatta Russell and her family. They're here. Karen, please stand up and be recognized.

(Applause.)

KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR: Thank you.

ERNIE JOHNSON: Thank you, gentlemen, for those words right from the heart.

Look, Holly Rowe works for ESPN. I work for TNT. But we're teammates because we have this shared experience of having had a doctor tell you you have cancer, and we've both fought it, and we're both still here today, which is awesome.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: So I've always had enormous respect for her and watched and was deeply inspired by her fight. And because of that, you're always pulling for her. And so when I heard this week it was announced that the Naismith Hall of Fame, the Curt Gowdy Media Award for Electronic Media was going to Holly Rowe, that's just good for my soul. And it's my pleasure to bring to the stage Holly Rowe.

(Applause.)

HOLLY ROWE: What a surreal night I'm having. About 10 hours ago I was at the University of Kansas doing a report next to the 13 original rules of basketball, the original documents from James Naismith.

His boss at the YMCA asked him to make up a game that would generate enthusiasm like the outdoor sports of football and baseball. And now here today I am, just a few short hours later with you. Everyone in this room, our lives have been impacted by those 13 rules. It's just a very cool, cool moment.

We're here today to celebrate the legends whose contributions, both on and off the court, have created indelible memories. We're also here to honor the memories of those members of the NBA family that we have lost this year. Each of them left their individual mark on the game and on all of us. They're missed, but they will never be forgotten.

And this year, to help us honor their memory, is one of the most incredible men I've ever met. He is my teammate. He is Big T, and the T stands for talent. Please help us welcome power forward for the Utah Jazz forever and my broadcast partner, Thurl Bailey.

(In memoriam performance.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: Thurl Baily, beautiful.

It's my pleasure now to introduce the president and CEO of the Retired Players Association. Please welcome Scott Rochelle.

(Applause.)

SCOTT ROCHELLE: The All-Star Weekend is always a special time for the players National Basketball Retired Players Association, and we couldn't be more excited to join the celebration in Salt Lake City.

Supporting former players in their transition remains at the forefront of our mission. However, our work has evolved beyond basketball and creates an amazing impact within our community.

This past year, our commitment to HBCU advancement grew to include our Legends of Basketball Classic, a college exhibition that raised over \$100,000 for the John McLendon Foundation. Additionally, we launched the Legends Showcase, a college quadruple-header that features teams coached by former players.

These initiatives support a myriad of transition programs, including, but not limited to, educational services, health

and wellness, career support for former players, and much more.

The legacy of our founders -- Oscar Robertson, Dave Cowens, Dave DeBusschere, Archie Clark, and Dave Bing -- is carried on dutifully by our board of directors. This weekend we welcome newly elected directors Mike Bantom, C.J. Kupec, and Nancy Lieberman to our team. They joint Grant Hill, Thurl Bailey, Sam Perkins, Jerome Williams, Shawn Marion, Johnny Davis, Charles "Choo" Smith, Sheryl Swoopes, Robert Horry, Chucky Brown, Caron Butler, and Dave Cowens.

We thank you all for supporting our mission and working to improve the lives of former players. Thank you to the NBA and NBPA for your commitment to the former player community. The historic advances in pensions and healthcare for former players is unmatched and sets us apart in former player benefits. For this support, we are so very appreciative and look forward to continued growth in our partnerships.

There is much to celebrate this weekend. And on behalf of the National Basketball Retired Players Association, I thank you for joining us in honoring our legends.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: Thank you, Scott. Time for the Legend of the Year award. And pretty good legend here to do the introduction too. A three-time NCAA Player of the Year, NBA MVP, Finals MVP, two-time All-Star, two-time NBA champion. Hopefully we can coax some words out of him this morning. Bill Walton.

(Applause.)

BILL WALTON: Karl Malone. Wow. Whoa. An all-time legend. Karl Malone, a man who I have the sacred privilege and honor of introducing here today. Karl Malone, a man who I have ultimate respect, appreciation, admiration and love for.

Karl Malone was a team guy. He played hard. He played to win. He did whatever it took to get the job done.

Karl Malone, he's not like Kareem and Dr. J. He didn't grow up with a silver spoon in his mouth. Karl Malone was born 59 years ago, 59 years ago when a small rural town, community, if you will, in northern Louisiana, very close to Arkansas.

Karl, the youngest of nine children. Karl Malone with his incredible mom, Shirley. Karl Malone on this farm, he grew up chopping trees, throwing hay, and wrestling hogs.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Wrestling hogs as his job was to insert the nose ring into the hog.

Karl Malone went to high school in a program that had never done anything. Karl Malone, his high school, won three state championships in Louisiana.

Karl Malone could have gone to a lot of different places, very big schools, tons of interest from all the SEC powers. Karl Malone, he wanted to stay home near Shirley, near his mom. So he goes to Louisiana Tech. Who had never done anything. And while Karl Malone was there, he did everything and took Louisiana Tech to the top.

In 1985, Karl Malone was drafted by the NBA with the 13th pick overall. There's a lot of dudes out there that wish they had that day to do over again. Karl Malone played 19 seasons in the NBA, 18 of them right here with the Utah Jazz.

In those 18 Jazz years, Karl Malone missed ten games. Three of them were because of suspension. But Karl went on to this remarkable career. Karl Malone made the All-Star team 14 consecutive times. Karl Malone, he made the First Team All-NBA squad 11 times, second most in history, only behind LeBron.

Karl Malone was a remarkable scorer. He was on his way to pass Kareem as the all-time scorer, but then he got hurt and he never could play again. Today, Karl Malone is the third leading scorer in the history of the NBA.

Karl Malone, he delivered. He delivered a lot of pain to the opposition and their fans. Karl Malone, he also absorbed a lot of punishment. Karl Malone was fouled more than anybody in the history of the NBA. Karl Malone shot more free throws than anyone in the history of the NBA. Karl Malone made more free throws than anyone in the history of the NBA.

And for any of you old enough to have been there, particularly when the Jazz played on the road, because I'm not sure of the educational development in Louisiana, but Karl had trouble figuring out how long 10 seconds was. And so you have 10 seconds to shoot your free throw. And when he played here at home, there was no problem.

But on the road, the fans would start counting the minute the referee would hand him the ball, and they would speed up the count, and Karl would just -- he would just stand there and look and breathe. And then finally, when they got up to eight or nine, even though they were going faster, he would just step right up and put it right in their face and get right back on defense and get the job done one more time.

Karl Malone was a two-time MVP, the highest individual honor that any player can get. Karl Malone was a two-time gold medalist in the Olympics.

Karl Malone, he has his No. 32 retired in the rafters right next door. Karl Malone is in the Basketball Hall of Fame. Karl Malone has a statue out in front of the building next door. We're going to get to the game on Karl Malone Drive.

Karl Malone, when he was here, he lived in this big mansion on the hill, just on the north side of downtown, looking out over his entire empire. It was a spectacular palace.

And Karl Malone, who has made every team that he's ever been eligible for. So when the NBA 26 years ago named NBA top 50 players of all time, there was Karl Malone front and center. When they named the last year NBA 75 team, Karl Malone, right there, front and center, where he belonged.

Karl Malone has transitioned into the business world. Now, Karl Malone, known for his driving, not vehicles, but driving to the hoop, Karl Malone now has 18 automobile dealerships spread throughout five states. His goal is to get to his number, 32.

Now, in the perfect harmonic convergence that has been Karl Malone's wife and in the simple twist of fate, here Karl was in 1985, 38 years ago. He comes here for the first time, and they have a welcoming parade for Karl Malone. And while all the rigamarole is going on, that same day Miss Idaho from just up the road, she was here being Miss Idaho.

And so while she was going about her business of being Miss Idaho, she's noticing all the commotion over there. And she looks over, she says, "What's going on over there?" And some very proud, very probably hopeful face chirps up right away, "Oh, we're having a parade for The Mailman." Miss Idaho looks over, looks back at her entourage and said, "Well, how nice. Utah has a black mailman."

That harmonic convergence that day between Karl and Miss Idaho, Kay, has resulted in one of the glorious marriages that we've ever witnessed in the history of the world.

And so now Kay and Karl, they have six children and ten grandchildren. And they're just going through life. They moved back -- they still have a place here in glorious Utah, but they moved back to where Karl went to college, in

Ruston, still in Northern Louisiana, still close to Arkansas.

They have a beautiful place, not as nice as Kareem and Dr. J's childhood home, but here it was, Karl and Kay, they have this very beautiful place on the edge of town. And they also have their own private nature preserve that's not too far away. And I'm sure that Karl is still chopping the trees. I'm not sure if he's throwing hay still, and I really hope that he is not wrestling hogs any longer.

With a life like Karl Malone comes incredible responsibility. Karl lived up to that responsibility. The spectacular force of nature in every single way. He has come here today to grace us with his presence one more time, and I am just the luckiest guy in the world to be able to introduce him, to be able to present him to you.

We're all super lucky in that Karl is young enough that there is still video of his career. And a lot of it, I think, is still in color. So those of you who are our age, as Kareem and Dr. J, we could only wish that Ted Turner would colorize all the old stuff.

But for Karl Malone, please check out his unique special video of this remarkable person and spirit, incredible, and, fortunately to us, giving life and career.

(Video.)

BILL WALTON: I echo John Stockton's comments, Chris Mullin, all the other guys, Dominique. When Karl hit the floor, you felt bad for the floor. When Karl went into the weight room, you felt bad for the weights.

Ladies and gentlemen, Legends Brunch 2023, please welcome Karl Malone, as great as there's ever been, every way, every day.

(Applause.)

KARL MALONE: Wow. I don't normally write things down, and they say I got three minutes here. But I have some things I would like to express from the heart.

To my wife, Kay; my son, K.J.; and all my family that's here in town. It was almost 20 years last Sunday that I lost my mom. So crazy because one of the last time I talked to the legends in this room. I'm truly humbled by all the legends in the NBA and the WNBA. At times it don't seem real. Don't seem like I'm worthy.

So I don't want you to think I'm running for office, but I want to thank some people. My mom, my grandfather that instilled hard work, dedication, and realizing that whatever we got coming to us one day, we handle it like a man.

I would just like to say to all the legends in the NBA and WNBA, I'm humbled and I'm honored. I would like to say thanks to all the legends, Kareem, all of you guys.

But there's a person that I must pay homage to. This little young kid in northern Louisiana that wanted to fly the Harrier jet in the Marines, when my mom would always say I could do it. I drove strength from the man, and I get nervous every time I'm in the room with him. I'm an old cowboy, so I don't like anybody behind me except this man.

I'm bald now, of course, but back in the day when I was just a little colicky kid watching the Harrier jump jets go out, only the Marines flew them, turn on the TV one day, and this guy had a fro, and he wore the number 32.

And I would like to just say to him now, because I got more time in the rearview mirror than I do in the windshield, this reflection. They say when -- I'll be 60 July 24th, and they always say that things start to slow down or speed up. Well, mine is speeding up.

And I came here to this All-Star Weekend to reflect and say thanks. But my hero that got me through the things that I went through, I would like to pay special tribute to you, Julius "Dr. J Erving."

(Applause.)

KARL MALONE: I picked the number 32 because of you. Thank you.

I would like to say to my mom, she instilled in me a long time ago, as you go through this journey in life, we do make mistakes. Don't let that define you. "There's a lot of noise out here," she used to say. She said, "Go about your business and try to let your success be your noise." Also, "He that throw a rock at every dog that barkin' will never reach their destination."

So I just want to say I love you guys here. It means so much to me to have my family here with me. And to the Miller organization, thank you, and to Coach Sloan.

Well, John, you never judge me. You never judge me. Thank you. Words do two things in life. Only two. I'm no exception. I'm no rule. They either lift you up or they tear you down. Stock, thank you, Nada, for you to allow me with all my faults to treat me like a brother. I'm forever grateful.

I miss my legends. At times we let our pride get the best of us. I won't anymore. Respect me; I'll respect you.

Therefore, never be short. I am honored, and I am grateful.

And I just want to say to Commissioner Silver, thank you. To Commissioner Stern, who this week, this day, allowed me to heal. I'm forever grateful. God bless you. And let's go about, like Larry Miller used to say, let's do so much good in this world, there's no more good to do.

And I'm a cowboy from the South, and I want to say this. When you think you've done all the good that you can do, you just reach back and you just ride, baby, ride.

Thank you. God bless you.

(Applause.)

ERNIE JOHNSON: While you're still standing, don't sit down, please, because I'm going to dismiss you in just one second, but we have to do one more thing, and please take part in this, because there's a friend of ours who is watching today, and we want to send him our best. And we don't really even need to do it with words, but maybe with just his trademark gesture.

So for Dikembe Mutombo on this morning, can we all just give him one of these (waving finger).

We're thinking about you, Dike. God love ya, and God bless you, and thanks for being here today. See you later.

(Applause.)

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