

Paris Game: Nets vs Cavaliers

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Paris, France

Accor Arena

Commissioner Adam Silver

Press Conference

ADAM SILVER: Welcome, everybody. Thank you for being here.

We were just talking about the fact that it's been 30 years since we played our first preseason game here in Paris. At that time, to the best of my recollection, there were no French players in the NBA.

So jump ahead 30 years, we've now played a series of preseason and now regular-season games in Paris, and we have 14 French players in the NBA, of course including last year's first pick in the Draft, Victor Wembanyama, who is off to a terrific start. His first triple-double last night, in fact. The team, I'm sure, is not winning as many games as he'd like to see, but a great future ahead of him.

On top of that, we now have the Paris Olympics only six months away. We anticipate that there will be approximately -- team rosters aren't set yet, but at least based on past experience, 65 or 70 current and former NBA players who will be participating in the Olympic Games.

As many of you know, in the Tokyo Olympics, they added three-on-three basketball competition. That will be here in Paris. So when you combine the five-on-five and the three-on-three, there will be as many events for basketball as virtually any other sport. Maybe volleyball has a few more because they have beach as well, but it will be a mainstay, of course, of this Olympics. I'll be back. We can't wait.

I know Grant Hill, who is the general manager of our USA Basketball team, coming off a difficult competition in the Philippines, is ready to field our best team possible. I think a love of competition and a love of this market, seemingly all the marquee U.S. NBA players want to participate. As I said, we're going to have stars from around the world participating as well.

I said yesterday in an interview that this seems to be a golden era of French basketball. I firmly believe that. It's



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been wonderful here in the last couple days to see the amount of interest that French basketball is generating, activities we've had in the community throughout this week.

When we were here for this game last year, we met with President Macron and the head of the League and Federation, and there was an agreement that we could do even more. We've done all that over the last year in terms of activities in the community, and we made a new announcement yesterday to yet amplify those efforts even more.

I just ran into Tony Parker at a reception here, and he said he's never been busier. He's gone from event to event over the last several days. I said, you're going to be even busier in the Olympics and wait until we're back next year. That hasn't been confirmed yet, but we're very likely to be back next year. We're very excited about that.

I'll just add by saying these great French players who are coming into the NBA, of course are not just great French stars or great stars in their markets in the United States, but are increasingly global stars. No better example of that than Victor. He had a dunk last week that, last I looked, it had led to something like 700 million views [in total for Wembanyama on social media this season]. The expression of breaking the internet is overused, but it came close to breaking the internet. That's just the beginning of his career.

The United Nations passed a resolution several months ago announcing a World Basketball Day. We saw our first one just this past December 21st. I think in the U.N. resolution they talk not just about this global game and what is likely the fastest-growing game in the world, but the values of the game and what we've been able to do to transcend borders and unite people around the world. I know that's something that we at the league are particularly proud of.

Lastly, I just want to thank the Brooklyn Nets and the Cleveland Cavaliers for being here and engaging in such an intense way over the last several years. The heads of their organizations, Joe Tsai from the Brooklyn Nets, the principal owner, is here and led the delegation, and Dan

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Gilbert from the Cleveland Cavaliers as well brought over virtually armies of people -- both because these are regular-season games and also so that people could take advantage of the hospitality offered here in Paris. We're again very thankful for those teams embracing this experience.

With that, I'm happy to answer any questions.

Q. I am glad to see you again. I am from Athens, Greece. Wondering if we would have an Athens game in the next few years. Giannis is pressing about this.

ADAM SILVER: Giannis is pressing about this every time I see him. Just because of the amount of planning that's required, it won't be in the next year, but it is something we'll continue to take a look at.

As you know, in prior years we had played preseason games in Greece. Again, it's something we'll take a look at, but we're very appreciative of the enormous support this league has from the people of Greece.

Q. Hello, Commissioner. What's the sense of the NBA Global Games? Do you think about possibly bringing on more games in the middle of the season as well?

ADAM SILVER: We have thought about bringing on more games. In terms of the efficiency, given the scope of the operation bringing two teams over here, we've had conversations with teams that, once they're here, would they potentially play a second game against each other before returning to the States? And that's something we're looking at potentially even for next season.

Q. We are quickly approaching your ten-year anniversary as commissioner. I was wondering if you can share with us your best moment and your worst moment as commissioner.

ADAM SILVER: Oh, I don't know. There have been a lot of great moments and some low moments as well. I'd have to think more about that.

I will say the great moments are the ones around the impact we've had in communities, as I was mentioning earlier. One of the things we're fortunate, our NBA Cares program travels with us everywhere we go.

Ultimately, I think it's what the United Nations recognized in this World Basketball Day, that we have the opportunity to continue to grow this game and impact young people globally. I'm so encouraged by the fact that girls now through the WNBA and as fans of the NBA are embracing this game in the same way.

I think one of the things I'm particularly proud of -- you know, I'm not sure how it translates. In the States, we're calling it mind health these days. But the fact that NBA players are increasingly embracing the fact that, while you have to be in top-notch physical health to compete, that focusing on your mind is just as important.

I think in the same way that this league can be a platform for young people to focus on health and fitness physically, that as our players continue to talk out about issues that impact them, the stress of being in the league, the stress of just living their lives, which maybe people who don't play in the league would be surprised to hear aren't that different in many cases than the issues that all of us deal with.

But I think the opportunity for the league to have an impact in that area through our programs, destigmatizing some of those issues, making people more comfortable talking about them, that's something I'm particularly proud of.

Q. Many of the recent MVPs and upcoming superstars in the NBA are international players. Is the NBA and you yourself looking forward to welcome a new generation of American players? And can one of them be Cooper Flagg, a future player for our beloved Duke Blue Devils?

ADAM SILVER: I am a fan of the Duke Blue Devils. That's where I went to university, Duke University. He looks like a fine player.

But beyond that, we're getting close to 30 percent of the players in our league were born outside the United States. When you think about the amount of basketball being played globally -- and the U.S., of course, is less than 5 percent of the world -- that population is only going to increase. At the same time, U.S. players are recognizing they have to pick up their game. There's just a larger pool of players competing for every spot on the floor, and just look at the level of competition we have right now.

David Stern, who began this international movement, if he were here today, he'd be incredibly proud of that number and that he seeded this growth, this notion early on, even before he brought the Dream Team over to Barcelona in 1992, that this is truly a global game.

Originally, it was by distributing home videos around the world. Then it was through broadcasting games. Now with our phones, we carry televisions everywhere we go, digital media. It's quite amazing that anywhere you are in the world, that you can be watching NBA games.

So I think you'll only see more kids, boys and girls, who are



turned on to this game and the love of this game. It's just increasingly becoming global, and I'm thrilled to be along for the ride.

Q. Do you have an update on the TV contract negotiations? I guess my specific question is when do you think those might be done?

ADAM SILVER: I don't have an update. It's very public that we have an exclusive negotiating period that hasn't begun yet. It doesn't mean we're not already talking to our partners. We probably started talking to them the day we finished the last deal. So those discussions are ongoing.

I wouldn't set a specific timeline on it. We have plenty of time. We have the remainder of this season and all of next season before those domestic TV deals are up. My sense is over the next month or so those conversations will become more intense as we focus on this exclusive negotiating period, and we'll see whether we can get them done during that period or whether we end up having further discussions beyond that.

Q. Last year we were talking about a potential In-Season Tournament when you were here. Now year one is done. It was a huge success in our eyes and yours probably as well. Vegas only had a one-year contract for the In-Season Tournament finale for the final four. You said back-to-back games would likely be welcome for new teams to come to Europe if you broaden the Global Games. Is there a possibility to maybe have a city in Europe host the final four of the In-Season Tournament, not next year, but in the near future?

ADAM SILVER: Hosting games over here or an All-Star-type game or a final four is something we've continued to look at. Even for the In-Season Tournament final four in the U.S. in Las Vegas, it's still a bit of a scheduling conundrum in terms of the days required to take out of our schedule for the In-Season Tournament, how we then reschedule games for teams that don't make it through the knockout stage to that final four. Travel to Europe somewhere else or outside the United States would only further complicate it.

Again, one of the great things about traveling that you can't do through technology, there's no substitute to physically be in a market and just to feel the energy and the enormous interest. Certainly that's my sense from the last few days here in Paris.

I think, when I go home and I'm talking to my colleagues, Mark Tatum, deputy commissioner is here, to think more long term how can we, as I talk about this being a global

game, physically bring the game over to more markets.

Everything is on the table, I think, and to Joe's question about our television deals, increasingly our existing partners, Disney through ESPN, Warner Bros. Discovery through their streaming service Max, these are global services. So they're very focused on building audiences country by country, just as we are.

Now I'm looking at Chrysa Chin from the Players Association. Maybe it means at some point sitting down with the players and talking about structuring the schedule a different way so it's not about back-to-back games. We can build in travel.

Also, a comment I made yesterday, I've been reading lately about a next generation of supersonic jets. Frankly, if it were three hours or 2 1/2 hours instead of seven hours or eight hours, that would change our ability to move from continent to continent as well.

It's an amazing opportunity. I think to continue to be more global, as this game is being just adapted to continent by continent, country by country, it's a really exciting opportunity. It means at the league office we constantly have to be rethinking the way we do things.

Q. The Brooklyn organization has been very vocal about trying to establish an international presence. They now lead the NBA in games played overseas. What benefits have you seen from that effort? And where do you think those efforts could go for the Nets?

ADAM SILVER: Related to my last answer, I mean, number one, the Brooklyn Nets have done a fantastic job. I would say it began with Mikhail Prokhorov, an international owner who embraced travel. Of course, he was from Russia, but also bringing his team to Europe. We brought the Brooklyn Nets to China at the time. I think Joe Tsai has picked right up on those efforts.

I think by them embracing it, it helps the entire league because, of course, any game that's being televised, they're playing another team. Any interest they're creating, they're creating not just in the Brooklyn Nets, but all teams. And other teams have followed in their footsteps.

Where it could go -- again, as I was saying in response to the last question, I think one of the big changes that I've seen over my time in the league, there used to be a lot of arm twisting to get teams to travel, particularly during the season. It was even hard for preseason. Because of disruptions in their usual routines, it wasn't something they were pleased to do.

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Now it's very different. Even in the last few days that I've been here, I received several text messages from general managers whose teams are back in the U.S. saying, how about us? Who is planning to come next? We'd love to take those trips. They become great bonding experiences for teams. Often it's an opportunity to bring business partners, family, et cetera.

So the Brooklyn Nets have been one of the teams that have led the way. We're thankful for that. This game is only going to become more global, and this league is only going to become more global.

Q. I'm sure you've seen the comments earlier this week from Draymond Green about the conversation with you when he was suspended from the league. Do you mind telling us a little bit about the conversation from your side? Also, just on the In-Season Tournament, can you tell us anything about where you take it from here after the success of year one? Not European specific.

ADAM SILVER: I'll do the In-Season Tournament first. We just came from a meeting back in the States with all our team presidents and talked about potential changes to the In-Season Tournament, everything from how to break tiebreakers to what the courts look like to maybe even the name of the overall tournament. All those are things we're thinking of.

We are pleased with the success after the first season, and no doubt it will be back next year, probably with just a couple of tweaks. Then beyond that, as we're talking to television partners and maybe figuring out when exactly the best time of year is to do it, maybe it will make sense to make some other modifications to the format. Those are things we'll look at.

Lastly, just on that point, I think now with the Play-In Tournament, which we view as having been successful, certainly the In-Season Tournament, as so much is changing around us, I feel that gives us a little bit more license with our teams to look at other forms of innovation. I think it's because there was a fair amount of resistance to both those initiatives, understandably, and nothing comes without some disruption. But I think there's a recognition then, as people are consuming media in different ways, the game is becoming more global, you have to look at other things.

In terms of Draymond, at the time we were having those conversations, certainly from my standpoint, they're private. That's his right if he chooses to make them public. There was certainly no agreement we had that everything

was private. But I'll leave it to him to comment on what we discussed. I certainly would be speaking up if he were saying something that wasn't consistent with our discussions.

I would just conclude by saying I'm pleased he's close to being back, and my sense is that he used his time away from the floor very productively.

Q. France is lucky to have many NBA players and outstanding ones. You've just talked about a screening, scouting program for the Olympics 2024. What advice would you give to French basketball players to one day hopefully join the NBA? What are the qualities they should have, the skills?

ADAM SILVER: My advice for those young players would be to work hard. As I said earlier, increasingly what we see in the NBA, it's so incredibly competitive, essentially 450 jobs and tens of millions of young people competing. Now I'm just talking about the men's side, but similarly on the women's side.

The best players, to me, are also the smartest players. And by smartest players, I don't just mean in terms of test scores. I mean the way they approach the game, the way that they bring to their practices discipline, an ethic of hard work, respect for the game, a willingness to be coached. All of those things matter.

I would also say to those young players that statistically let's recognize how incredibly difficult it is to make the NBA or the WNBA, but I often say to young players, you have much more control potentially over getting my job than you do being an NBA player. There's also fantastic careers in the business of sports, and that includes covering sports as a journalist.

It's been amazing -- and, again, I give so much credit to my predecessor David Stern, who was one of the founders, in essence, of this modern sports industry -- that we at the NBA represent thousands and thousands of jobs and increasingly globally. We started a new league in Africa, Basketball Africa League a few years ago, so we're seeing development there as well. Of course, there's our G League.

So the opportunities aren't just to play.

I think that, if you love this game, you can have a career in this league whether or not you actually make it [as a player]. Part of that is DNA and luck and many things that are outside of your control. But if you're determined to be in this league, there are other ways in through all the various business sides of the sport.



Q. Can you tell us what you think about Alexandre Sarr, the No. 1 in mock drafts?

ADAM SILVER: Once again, I remember last year when we were getting questions about Victor, and I think my response was that I didn't want to jinx him in terms of even raising expectations further. But I'd say Alexandre, again, I saw that same mock draft on ESPN, and in other mock drafts he and, as you know, two other French players have been floating around the top five in those drafts. I'm very encouraged.

I would say also to him: Don't get distracted by mock drafts. And at the end of the day, same thing I've said to many players since I've been in this position on draft day: Just focus on making the league. As we all know, while Victor, of course, was the first pick, there's great stories -- Giannis Antetokounmpo is another one, he was 15th in the Draft. I had a question about Draymond earlier. He was a second-round pick in the NBA Draft.

So there's amazing success stories of players who were drafted a little bit lower and came in even more determined players -- in the second round and even some undrafted players. To me, things like precisely what position you're drafted at is essentially out of your control, but what's in your control is your focus on the game.

Lastly, we're particularly now talking about the elite players, that discipline that's required because, just like all other young people, they're distracted potentially by social media. But once they're starting to get that type of global attention -- Alexandre is a perfect example. Even before he comes into the NBA, it's very easy to no longer be in the present and to be focused on being the very best player you can.

That's one thing that I think where Victor has been a fantastic example to other young players. With all this pressure on him, with the global attention on him, it just seems watching even his progress from -- I actually first met him when we were here for our game last year. Then spending time with him around the Draft and his family, and then seeing him come into the league, I've noticed already the changes in his physique, the changes in his mental approach to the game. Again, I'm sure the losses haven't been easy on him, but my sense is he's just determined to get better every single day.

Now jump ahead to somebody like LeBron James. Think about that. That's 20 years later and still playing at a high level. I think, as sports science continues to improve, these players can come into this league and have such long careers. They've just got to stay present and continue

to work hard, their body, their mind, and look what fantastic opportunities are available globally for them.

So thanks for that question. Thank you all very much, everyone. Enjoy the game.

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