

Emirates NBA Cup

Tuesday, December 16, 2025

Commissioner Adam Silver

Commissioner's Press Conference



ADAM SILVER: Welcome to Las Vegas, everyone. I appreciate the members of the media for making the trip out here for this Cup tournament. I thought we had two great games on Saturday, and I'm looking forward to an exciting final tonight.

I'll just say quickly so far this season, the competition has been fantastic. We've seen record ratings. In fact, the highest viewership in the last 15 years so far this season.

In terms of the Cup interest in the month of November, and that was something very important to us, we've now had our three highest-attended months of November in the history of the league, and I think a lot of that is due to the increased interest in these Cup games. I'm very pleased with where we are.

Q. Can you shed any light on the status of the investigation into the arrests of Chauncey and Terry Rozier, where that stands, if the league has an expected timetable? And as a part within that, Rozier remains on the books in Miami; he's 17 percent of the cap. There's a draft pick that's going to convey in '27 or '28. Has the league considered any relief to the Heat about what they can do with that situation?

ADAM SILVER: So first of all, on the timeline, it's essentially out of our hands. As you know, these are federal indictments. In the case of Terry Rozier, in Brooklyn, New York, the Eastern District of New York.

We had investigated him at some point earlier. We had not found sufficient evidence to discipline under the rules of the league, and then at some point that investigation was taken over by federal authorities. As I said, it's in their hands, and also now he's been indicted and trial schedule, et cetera.

There are tangential issues that we're looking into in that indictment, which is public record. There were also references to other players, other incidents, as has been reported. Much of that information was new to us.

So in essence, on a parallel path with the federal authorities, we are using whatever investigative powers we have to look into those incidents, as well, but we don't have

ultimately the leverage, the authority that federal investigators have. We take a backseat to their work, so timeline uncertain.

In terms of Miami, this is an unprecedented situation. I think I'm incredibly sympathetic to the Heat and to their fans. But I think we're going to try to work something through, work this out with them. But there's no obvious solution here. I would just say that there's no doubt at the moment they have a player that can't perform services for them. And as to the draft pick they conveyed -- obviously he hasn't been convicted of anything yet, either, but this is an unfortunate circumstance. But sometimes there's unique events and maybe sometimes they require unique solutions.

We'll be looking at this with the Heat and the other teams in the league and see if there's any satisfactory relief, but at the moment there is none.

Q. I know the numbers may say something a little bit different. I know you guys may quibble with it. But the increase in the notable soft tissue injuries that seem to occur at a more frequent rate, at what point is that a concern of yours as far as the pace of play? Does it go as far back as the age of specialization with the grassroots level of basketball? How deep do you look into this, or do you think this is something that's an anomaly and that the media is making a little too much of?

ADAM SILVER: You began your question by saying the numbers tell one story but maybe there's some other --

Q. It feels heavy. It feels more notable.

ADAM SILVER: I understand, but all I can deal with is the data itself, and the data we have so far this season is we have the lowest number of injuries in the last three years.

I'll stop there and say, regardless where the level of injuries stands versus prior years, of course the soft tissue injuries concern us. All injuries concern us, for that matter. The most frustrating issue right now, and the one that we have seemingly the least control over, is keeping star players on the floor.

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I think we have made progress. We've made adjustments in scheduling. We've made adjustments in the sharing of information among teams. We've made adjustments in the care of players. But there are no silver bullets here.

I think we have to be true to the data. So when people say because of the Cup the season was denser leading up to now -- it wasn't, full stop. The level of density up until this point in the season is roughly what it's been for the last decade. It's just factually not true that, as a result of Cup scheduling, the first part of the season created a denser schedule.

We are seeing an increase in pace of play. You could measure that in different ways. But measured by speed in which players are bringing the ball to half court -- yes, that's up. That may be causing some additional injuries. But what do you do about that? That's something we're looking at.

Also part of your question, we're very focused with our team doctors on the data we're seeing and the evidence in terms of the wear and tear on players' bodies when they get to the league. I think, as you said, we're seeing young players now specialize at 10 years old and up as opposed to a generation before them that -- I'm looking at James Jones -- the top athletes played a different sport in every season and they developed their musculature in a different way.

We think that's preventative when you have a balanced system. Now it's not even just that athletes aren't switching from -- young athletes aren't switching from season to season, they're literally playing year-round.

Even modern NBA players, they finish the season, they take a day off and they're right back in the gym. It may be that over time that with better data, this may be another area where AI can ingest enormous amounts of data and video and look at patterns, might be able to solve some of these problems.

So the answer is it's frustrating. It's frustrating for our teams. It's frustrating for our fans. But I do think we have to be true to what the evidence is as opposed to saying there's a narrative out there that injuries are up or injuries are up because of scheduling. They're not.

But we continue to slice and dice the data in every way we can, plus we look at qualitative information. People who have been around this game for a long time, what are they seeing? Are players training differently? Are there better techniques out there to keep players healthier? By the way, this is not a problem unique to the NBA. It's

tremendously frustrating in all sports to see star players in particular go down, but of course any player.

We're very focused on it. There's no amount of money we're not willing to invest in it to make those investments to see if there's better resources out there. I would say also, Andre Iguodala and the Players Association have been tremendously cooperative, as well. We all have a common interest in keeping players on the floor.

Q. Where were you, and how did you hear about Chris Paul leaving the Clippers? What was your reaction, and have you spoken to Chris and have you spoken to Steve Ballmer?

ADAM SILVER: I've talked to Chris. I've talked to Steve Ballmer, but frankly not about this.

Where was I? I probably was in bed and saw an alert on my phone. I have a bad habit of checking my phone in the middle of the night, so I think that's when I learned of it.

I will say I was dismayed just for everyone involved. As you know, I'm particularly close to Chris because he was president of the Players Association many years. We probably would not have managed to play through the pandemic and the so-called bubble in Orlando but for Chris working hand-in-hand with Michele Roberts and people at the league in a constructive way. So I've admired his leadership over the years. He has a dozen All-Star appearances. I think it's his 21st year in the league.

I would love to see him finish off the season on another team. He's already announced this is his last season, so I'd love to see him finish strong.

Q. With a guy who has as many credentials as he has and who has had such an impact on the league beyond the court, would you like to have seen the situation handled differently? This is a future Hall of Famer.

ADAM SILVER: That's not for me to say because, as I said, I did not talk to Steve Ballmer about it. The first I saw it, it was done. It doesn't seem my role to cross-examine the participants here. It's an unfortunate situation that it ended the way it did, as I said. So I'm focused, and I hope Chris is now, on the future.

We have many games left to be played this season. There's an opportunity now for him to join another team, and I hope there's mutual interest.

Q. I asked you in September about the timelines for expansion in Europe. You said they were on parallel tracks at the time. We're obviously in a city where it's

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been talked about as a potential expansion home in the future. I was curious, do you think that the current 28 markets within the league, are they all strong enough from a financial standpoint to justify expansion?

ADAM SILVER: I want to make sure I understand your question. You're asking about the current markets?

Q. Yeah.

ADAM SILVER: What's the relation to expansion?

Q. In terms of do you think they're all strong enough in terms of supporting their own team to justify expansion as opposed to potential relocation of teams?

ADAM SILVER: It's two separate issues because the league doesn't have the right to relocate a team. Are some markets stronger than others? Of course. Do we have a revenue sharing system in our league? Yes. Do some teams receive significant revenue from other teams that generate more money? Those things are all true. But relocating a team requires that team's desire to be relocated, specifically the governor; it's a process where you apply to relocate.

I'd also say just because some markets don't generate the same revenue as others, it doesn't mean they are markets that are not worthy of NBA franchises. If you look in our constitution, the factors that the owners are required to look at in making the determination whether to relocate a team go to support that team has historically had in that community, the operation of that team, the competitive opportunity in that market.

We live in a big country, so I think if we were to relocate teams, I don't think the right way to do it would be to rank the teams 1 to 30 in terms of market size or economic opportunity in those markets and then just take the two teams at the bottom and say let's take them to markets where they could be more prosperous.

At least, again, I look at the potential to relocate teams as sort of independent as to whether it makes sense to expand to markets we're not currently in.

Q. Is there any update on either Europe or expansion from September?

ADAM SILVER: On Europe, yes, there's an update. Mark Tatum is sitting in the front row here, the deputy commissioner and chief operating officer. He's been taking the lead on this European project.

We've announced it, but we've engaged JP Morgan along with investment firm Raine. They have been meeting with interested parties in Europe. A combination of existing clubs, organizations that own clubs in other leagues, city officials, many of whom I've met with, as well, governmental leaders of states in terms of their interest. I'd say we've heard a lot of very positive interest in our moving forward.

I think we at the league office are still working on the economic model, want to make sure it makes sense. As I've said before, many of the cities we'd like to be in don't have a sufficient arena infrastructure, so that's something that we would need to work on in terms of private investment, maybe work with those municipalities, as well. We have been moving along on a very constructive path.

I'd say in terms of domestic expansion, that is something we're continuing to look at. Not a secret we're looking at this market in Las Vegas. We are looking at Seattle. We've looked at other markets, as well. I'd say I want to be sensitive there about this notion that we're somehow teasing these markets, because I know we've been talking about it for a while.

As I've said before, domestic expansion, as opposed to doing a new league in Europe, is selling equity in this current league. If you own 1/30 of this league, now you own 1/32 if you add two teams. So it's a much more difficult economic analysis. In many ways, it requires predicting the future.

At the same time, I think Seattle and Las Vegas are two incredible cities. Obviously we had a team in Seattle that had great success. We have a WNBA team here in Las Vegas in the Aces. We've been playing the Summer League here for 20 years. We're playing our Cup games here, so we're very familiar with this market.

I don't have any doubt that Las Vegas, despite all of the other major league teams that are here now, the other entertainment properties, that this city could support an NBA team. I think now we're in the process of working with our teams and gauging the level of interest and having a better understanding of what the economics would be on the ground for those particular teams and what a pro forma would look like for them, and then sometime in 2026 we'll make a determination.

Q. Kevin Durant is a minority owner in PSG, and PSG is one of the teams I think is expected to have a Europe team. Does that mean he and potentially other players could have ownership in European NBA Europe teams? And in addition, what is the latest with



teams being named in the NBA Africa league, and could players have ownership in that, as well?

ADAM SILVER: So I'll start with Europe. Obviously there's a lot built into your question, the assumption that PSG would have a team, and then if PSG were to have a team that then Kevin Durant, who's an investor in PSG, could remain. Those are all issues we have to work through.

I would say, as you know, if you just begin with the framework in the U.S., because we have a salary cap system, we don't allow players -- by agreement with the Players Association -- to also be investors in NBA clubs. We view that as a conflict. But incidentally, they can invest in WNBA teams if they're not NBA owners, and we have some players who have done that.

So I think that once we make a decision on Europe and then we're looking at who the right owners are, if there was a situation where a player had an investment in that ownership group, we would have to figure out a framework for those issues and work with the Players Association on that, as well.

In terms of Africa, maybe an opportunity over time for players to invest there. In Africa, I didn't really talk about this as much before, there we've been operating a club tournament league of existing teams, sort of what FIBA would refer to as an open league. Now we're looking at more of a hybrid, a closed model, maybe some open slots, as well, where whether it's an existing club that comes into NBA Africa or a newly formed club where, more along the U.S. model, investors would buy franchises and then essentially have a permanent right to operate them.

I'm very encouraged by what we've seen so far. We're five years into the BAL, Basketball Africa League. It's amazing what we're seeing in terms of participation in the sport. I've said this before, roughly 10 percent of our league now is comprised of players who were born in Africa or one of their parents was born in Africa. Obviously Victor Wembanyama is a great example of that second category.

Enormous talent coming into the league, I think, because of the spread of digital technology. People throughout the continent of Africa, again, talking about 55 countries, but are increasingly aware of our NBA players, our WNBA players, as well.

So we see a real opportunity there, which is why we're taking this next step on selling franchises. It's not nearly as well developed as the opportunity in Europe. I think we're further down the totem pole on Africa. For example, soccer is clearly ahead of us, rugby is clearly ahead of us. There may be some other sports, as well. In Europe, we're

firmly the No. 2 sport; something like 300 million people are playing the sport in Europe. So we're in a different place from an infrastructure standpoint, as well.

There are different opportunities, but we're working equally as hard on Africa as we are on Europe.

Q. On NBA Europe, besides the established basketball clubs that will join, when it comes to the new clubs in Paris, London, Manchester, Munich, Milan and Rome, it seems pretty established that you want to work and you want to partner with soccer clubs. Can you confirm that? Second, Mark Tatum a couple of weeks ago mentioned when it comes to the possible franchises in Milan and Rome, mentioned that you would be willing to work with the AC Milan, with RedBird and I assume with the Fenway Group. Is this still the case? Are they still the favorites for those two potential franchises?

ADAM SILVER: I wouldn't say there's any favorites. As I mentioned before, what we're doing now with JP Morgan and Raine is talking to everyone, and that includes soccer clubs, some who have basketball teams, some who don't have basketball teams, existing basketball organizations who potentially would be interested in joining our league. We're talking to other organizations or individuals who don't own any team who would be interested if we expanded to Europe, looking at opportunities.

I would say we're casting a very, very wide net right now and essentially saying to anyone who's interested, come see our bankers, explain to us why you're interested, how you view the opportunity, what resources you would put behind opening a team, and then we're taking all that information back, and then I think sometime in late January or in January we'll be in a position to have more serious conversations with those interested parties.

Q. When the indictments were announced, there was so much conversation with the integrity of the game and what it could do if this became a more pervasive problem, but it didn't seem like fans cared that much. In fact, you guys had a great week viewership-wise that week and NBA fans love the drama. They love joking about the league being rigged, by you specifically. Does it bother you when people make those jokes, oh, it's Game 6, Adam is going to want a Game 7, he's going to pull the lever, those kinds of things? Two, if the fans don't seem to care about questions about the integrity of the game, does the league -- why would the league?

ADAM SILVER: I'd say, number one, I think the fans care a lot. It's hard to make judgments, either anecdotally over



what some fans are saying or what's even on social media.

Fans definitely care, and I mean it when I say if this game isn't viewed as being honest and the competition being on the level and at the highest integrity, over time we will lose our fan base. I have no doubt about that.

I take it incredibly seriously. I try not to take the comments personally. But to the extent someone thinks that the league has a finger on the scale, the league cares which team wins, the league wants more games in a series rather than less games or a particular outcome, I think that's incredibly corrosive to the game.

In response to those indictments, we've been redoubling our efforts at the league office, working with our teams, looking at every aspect of our rules around sports betting: Are there better ways to educate the participants; are there changes we should make in how injuries are reported, dealing with the so-called inside information issue to ensure there's a level playing field, to the extent people are betting on the sport, which we know is now legal and people are going to continue to do so. Are there improvements in terms of monitoring?

For example, in the case of Terry Rozier, it's now known publicly, we knew and our betting partners knew there was aberrational activity on that game before it took place, and in fact they took bets off the books because something odd was happening, so the system worked from that standpoint.

But in a world of AI, can you scrape the internet for sort of any chatter whatsoever around a game? Can you incorporate not just the legal betting lines, which now need to be monitored state by state because you have essentially 40 different jurisdictions in the U.S. which have legalized sports betting, but you have the prediction markets now, which are a form of legalized sports betting now. You have the illegal markets in the United States, which are likely still significantly more than 50 percent of sports betting right now. Then you have, and especially for a sport like the NBA, you have legal markets all over the world that are betting on the NBA, and you have illegal markets all over the world.

Then the question is can you incorporate all of that data and have us do even a better job with sophisticated computers spotting anything that seems aberrant. Those are some of the things we're working on right now.

Believe me, whatever fans joking or joking online or whatever else, I have to believe at the end of the day that if they didn't think what they were watching was on the level, they would lose interest. So I lose a lot of sleep over that

issue.

We're in the process, as I said right now, in working with our teams, thinking about anything else we can be doing, if there's any aspect of our system that needs to be shored up, and that includes working with the regulators on some, certain kinds of problematic betting.

For example, we know unders and prop bets are where we are most vulnerable, as I think you know, we don't control the bets that are placed on our own sport right now. We're left to lobby regulators or try to convince the legal sports betting companies that that's bad for them, as well, because I also think in terms of their business, if their consumers don't think that there's integrity in the product, why would they be willing to place bets.

Put all that together. We're working on it. Even since the beginning of the season, sports betting is increasing, not decreasing, and as I said, add the prediction markets now into the mix because with those platforms now operating legally in the United States, even in states like Texas and California that haven't chosen to legalize sports betting, they now have legalized sports betting in their states through those markets.

The volume is continuing to increase, so it just means that we're going to have to do whatever is necessary to protect our integrity.

Q. Just wanted to check in on the WNBA side of things. Earlier this month the CBA window was extended yet again, and frankly, I've been asked the question do you want to see Adam and Mark get involved. How are you tracking that? Is there a scenario where you guys would come to the table on that one?

ADAM SILVER: I'll speak for Mark, as well. We're available to do whatever is necessary to help get a deal done. I'm encouraged by the fact they extended the deadline once again into January. Presumably the sides wouldn't have been willing to do that unless they thought there was a constructive path to getting a deal done.

I'm tracking things very closely. We're integrated at the league office. I talk to the people who are at the negotiating table on a daily basis.

As I've said before, we, the NBA, WNBA collective, acknowledged that our players deserve to be paid significantly more than they have so far based on the increased success of the league, and it's just a question now of finding a meeting of the minds in terms of what is a fair deal. It's going to require compromise on both sides.

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I remain optimistic we'll get something done, but whether that means I'm physically sitting at the table for the negotiation, and I speak for Mark, as well, we've been involved with this league for three decades in essence. I care enormously about it and have great relationships with many of the players and want it to be successful, and I want the players to feel fairly treated, as well.

I realize there's been a disconnect, especially over the last few months, in these negotiations, but sometimes that's the nature of collective bargaining. We recognize we've got to work through those issues.

It remains a very high priority for me even if I'm not at the table to get an agreement done and get one done as quickly as possible.

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