

91st MLB All-Star Game

Monday, July 12, 2021

Denver, Colorado, USA

Coors Field

Rob Manfred

Commissioner Press Conference



HAROLD REYNOLDS: It's a special day today. Really excited about this announcement, Major League Baseball and The Players Alliance announcing a partnership. Excited to be here today. Let me tell you some of the current players in the All-Star Game tonight that are present here. Go through the list real quick. Bo Bichette, Tim Anderson, Reggie Smith, Taijuan Walker. Dave Robinson is here, Zack Wheeler, Josh Hader, Al Rays, Corbin Burnes, Marcus Semien and Mark Melancon.

The reason I name all the players that are here, Jackie Robinson Day this year, we had over 500 players donate portions or all of their salary that day to The Players Alliance. Ironic thing is there were maybe only less than 50 black players in the big leagues. It's not just about a collection of black athletes getting together; it's a collection of them and their allies, and that's all the players we're talking about. Thank you all for showing up. Let me introduce Commissioner Rob Manfred for the announcement. I'll turn it over to him.

COMMISSIONER ROB MANFRED: Thanks, Harold. One of the great things that happened in the last year is the emergence of The Players Alliance on the baseball landscape. Thanks to the leadership of some of our former players, C.C., Curtis, Edwin, the Alliance attracted not only former players, but as you see here tonight, many, many of our current players. And from the very beginning with the Alliance, they made a great partnership with the Commissioner's Office.

We found the group to be easy to work with, and they did a really important thing. They went beyond the Commissioner's Office and reached out to some of our owners and got them directly involved: Dick Monfort from the Rockies; Mark Walter from the Dodgers who is here tonight; Peter Angelos from the Orioles, Stuart Sternberg from the Rays; and Mark Attanasio from the Brewers have been really involved in the Alliance for a period of time.

And the relationship grew because we were united behind two really fundamental goals. First of all, we want to see more young people of color playing our game. We want

young people, period, playing the game, but particularly young people of color. Secondly, we all know that we need more diversity in our game, not just on the field but everywhere, front offices, Commissioner's Office, everywhere. And those two goals continue to bring this group together.

The Alliance has gotten off to a great start in terms of their programming. I went this morning to an Alliance event, 'camp' they referred to it as. About 150 kids with I think about 20 former major league players learning the game. And if you have my job, that is the best thing you could possibly see. It's just a picture that's all good when you think about the future of our game.

Because we believe in this partnership, tonight we are announcing baseball is making its largest-ever charitable commitment. We are going to commit over the next ten years \$100 million of funding at a minimum to The Players Alliance. That number could be as high as \$150 million, and all I can say about that commitment, or the most important thing for me to say about that commitment, is I really look forward to working with the Alliance to further our common goals. They have got a great staff in place, Christina and her whole group, and I know the Alliance can help us achieve those common goals, and I just look forward to working with y'all.

HAROLD REYNOLDS: That's outstanding. It's a tremendous donation.

Well, we are at the All-Star Game, so you will see players trickling in during batting practice. Eduardo Escobar is here as well, and Nelson Cruz showed up, so want to make sure I acknowledge those guys.

Our next speaker, the Commissioner talked about the importance of the owners that are behind these guys and Dick Monfort, and we're glad to see Mark Walter here. Dick is going to speak on behalf of the owners and see how we came to be where we're at with The Players Alliance.

DICK MONFORT: Because of Zoom, everybody was shut down and there was no traveling, we were able to get on



phone calls, and somehow, Mark and I and the other owners that Rob mentioned became part of an advisory board. We had -- I don't know. Curtis, you probably kept track -- half a dozen meetings, and talking about all the things that they wanted to do, and they all sounded great, right? But we have all been down that road, okay. Are they really going to do it?

Well, they decided to go across the country. They skipped Denver, but they are not going to do that anymore (laughter) and give out gloves and hats and baseballs and water and food, and they did this during COVID. That sort of opened up my eyes that these guys were really serious. The thing that I got from it as these guys were going along is that there's not an agenda here. Sometimes in life, everybody's got an agenda, but this is about getting kids that maybe wouldn't be able to play baseball, the opportunity to play baseball. And that's really what we're all about.

You know, whether it's scholarships; I went to the same clinic today and I was blown away. You watch these guys get out there and talk to those kids. You know, we put on clinics all the time. All 30 teams put on clinics all the time, but it's our staff, right. It's one thing when the staff is out there doing it; it's another thing when Granderson is out there doing it and throwing balls and all that stuff. I was blown away by the organization. I kidded with Christina, we got to this field, and the Alliance is painted on this field. I mean, it was impressive.

They really sold me on the fact, sold us all to be quite honest, and I will tell that you this was a big ask. This was a big ask for owners to give up this money, even though it comes from central baseball. Central baseball is owned by the 30 clubs, but it was 100 percent unanimous. And it was, let's support this. This is a great cause, and I am so thrilled to be involved with this.

C.C. sort of showed me up today, so I wore a jacket to an earlier deal, so I thought I was safe not wearing a jacket (laughter) and then C.C. shows me up. But anyway, these guys, we are all in.

As 30 owners, we know this is a game-changer for all of us, and we wanted to be part of it. And she drives a helluva bargain, I tell you what. You guys think she's not representing you; she's got your best interest at hand. And so we're thrilled. I'm thrilled to be on the advisory board. They will probably throw me off soon. But anyway, I am so thrilled to be able to meet these guys and see their heartfelt desire to improve the game is tremendous to me.

HAROLD REYNOLDS: Well, she being Christina. I was wondering, I saw C.C. with a suit on, but what happened to

you? And this morning, I saw Dick in purple shoes, I'm like, y'all traded places, what's going on around here?

Our next speaker is the president of The Players Alliance, and Curtis Granderson is going to tell you about where they came from, where they headed and what's happening.

CURTIS GRANDERSON: Thank you, Harold, and thank you to everybody in attendance, our players, our all-stars. Big congratulations for making the team and showing your support throughout this last year.

All of this is possible because of the players in this game that want to see the game continue to get better and strive in directions that we all know that it can be.

We come from different areas and we play in different ballparks across this country and across this world, and we want to see everything continue to get better. And over the last year, The Players Alliance was able to come together over Zoom, we didn't have any in-person meetings, and put together that 33 city tour over the course of 40 days where we went across the country handing out COVID supplies, handing out food to those in need, giving kids their first glove and first bat and many other different things.

We're here at the All-Star Game, excited to be in Denver, and we thank Rob and Dan for everything you've done to connect us with this amazing ownership group, and Dick and the rest of the ownership committee to allow us to have an opportunity to keep expressing, to continue to keep showcasing, and to continue to keep building what we ultimately want to see, and that's to get a lot more kids of color access to this game, introduced to this game, playing this game, working in this game, watching this game, cheering for these guys out here that are getting ready to take the ball off the field a little bit later on today and it's all been thanks in part to everyone here.

We also realize and understand that even though The Players Alliance was created and founded with 150 current and former black professional ballplayers, we don't get this done without what you see in this room, and that's the diversity here. So having players all across the country, having owners that represent all 30 clubs, having you in attendance here and everyone watching that's donated and watched and helped and showed up at all these different clinics and showcases and tours, it's all going to take all of us here to ultimately get to where we want to be.

This is a big step moving forward. This is going to allow us to continue to keep doing all the things that we said we're going to do, that we've already been doing. And we are hopefully going to continue to do more things as we build from this moment on. We are extremely excited and we



want to thank Major League Baseball, the Players Association, all the players for giving us this opportunity to be here and we're excited about the future.

HAROLD REYNOLDS: I'm telling you, that's awesome.

You know the relationship has gone to a different level when he's Rob and not the Commissioner (laughter). Big stuff right there.

All right, so for now, we're getting ready to get these guys back on the field.

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