

NCAA Media Conference

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Dr. Linda Livingstone

Grant Hill

Hon. Charlie Baker

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Thank you so much for joining today's press call. I'm Michelle Hosick with the NCAA. We have ASAP transcriptions on this call to transcribe today.

We will start with opening remarks from Dr. Linda Livingstone, chair of the NCAA Board of Governors and president of Baylor University.

LINDA LIVINGSTONE: Thank you, Michelle. It's wonderful to have all of you with us today. This is truly an exciting and momentous day for the NCAA and for college sports. I'm Linda Livingstone, president of Baylor University, and I chair the NCAA Board of Governors. I'm joined by Grant Hill, who's an independent member of the Board of Governors and also served with me on the presidential search committee.

What we're here to do today and what it is my pleasure to do is to introduce the next president of the NCAA, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker, who has accepted our offer to lead the NCAA in this next stage of its growth and development.

Governor Baker is truly an exceptionally accomplished individual who throughout his entire career has demonstrated an appetite to take on really big and complex problems as well as the ability to tackle them in remarkably effective and creative ways.

This effectiveness of his style is in large part due to the way he has approached those problems, by identifying high-impact issues and building consensus among really diverse constituencies and taking a bipartisan approach that transcends conventional political divides. Governor Baker has consistently earned among the highest approval ratings of any American politician.

As we conducted an exhaustive national search to fill the role of the NCAA president, not only did these traits stand out, but so did Governor Baker and the Baker family's deep

ties to college athletics. As a young man, Governor Baker was a member of Harvard's varsity basketball team. His wife Lauren competed in gymnastics at Northwestern, and two of his children played college football.

Taken together, we believe Governor Baker's skill set and passion for college athletics make him the right choice at this time for the NCAA. So we are really grateful that he said yes, as college sports is really at a crossroads as we all are aware.

On the one hand, we know that the popularity and interest in college sports continues to grow across the country and around the world. They create a pathway to opportunity for hundreds of thousands of student-athletes annually, and they're vital and essential to the life on our campuses. They're a source of thrilling entertainment and really important moments for millions of fans across the country and really are embedded in the culture of our country.

On the other hand, we all know that the challenges that we face are big, they're complex, and they're urgent, as we think about the future of college athletics, in legal, political and cultural environments that have changed drastically over the decades, and we need to build the sustainable model for college athletics while offering even more support for our student-athletes to ensure their success in a well-rounded way.

That's going to take the ability to engage and motivate Congress, to enact legislation that helps us modernize our framework for regulation of college athletics and the support we provide our student-athletes. It also requires the ability to lead transformation within the NCAA itself, a process that is certainly underway but one that we know has to be an ongoing effort in the months and years ahead.

When you consider the priorities that we have right now in the NCAA, it's hard to imagine a better fit than Governor Baker. As a public servant, he's shown a talent for working across party lines, convening Bay Staters of all types to do big things together. As a business executive, he led a remarkable turnaround at Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare, building one of America's top health insurance plans, and served as an advisor to several successful startups. As a



leader, he has consistently shown the ability to maximize an organization's talents, passions and capabilities.

Our mission at the NCAA is to provide student-athletes with a fair, inclusive and fulfilling environment in which to study, practice and compete so they can not only have a successful career in college but can go on to have a major impact in their lives after college.

Under Governor Baker's leadership, I have no doubt that we will make tremendous strides in that mission, and it will have an enormous impact on our student-athletes.

Before I introduce Governor Baker to you, I do want to ask Grant Hill to share a few of his thoughts on Governor Baker and the process of getting to this point to select him as our next president. Grant?

GRANT HILL: Thank you, Dr. Livingstone, for your service and for your incredible work as chair of the presidential search committee.

Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the hard work and collaborative spirit that was truly on display during the entire search process. As Dr. Livingstone said, the process was both comprehensive and wide ranging with plenty of strong candidates, but we found the right person for the job, and for that we are grateful and extremely excited.

At a moment in time where there is real transformation occurring in intercollegiate athletics, we are truly thrilled with this selection, and we are confident that all the stakeholders, both internally and externally, will feel the same and have that same sense of excitement for the next iteration of NCAA leadership.

Thank you.

LINDA LIVINGSTONE: Thank you so much, Grant. Well, it is my honor and pleasure to introduce to you Governor Charlie Baker, the next president of the NCAA. Governor Baker?

CHARLIE BAKER: Well, thank you very much, Dr. Livingstone, and Grant Hill, it's great to see you, as well, and I just want to start by saying how much I appreciate the faith that you have shown in me in giving me this amazing opportunity at such an important period for NCAA athletics and college sports generally.

I must say that when I was first approached about this, my initial reaction was that I was not exactly what you would call a traditional candidate, but the more I thought about it and the more I learned about it, several things became

clear to me.

The first was I have, for most of my professional career, worked in what I would describe as distributed decision-making models. Much of what goes on in organizations like the NCAA which have literally thousands of folks who participate in their activities, they are run and operated in many cases using that sort of distributed decision-making model.

The second piece that became pretty clear, and this was something that I knew from afar, is the enormous amount of transition associated with policy and government and rules and regulations and all the rest that will be, in fact, a big part of the next act when it comes to the NCAA and how we manage to figure out a way to create the framework that's going to make it possible for kids, for coaches, for staff and for schools to continue to produce and deliver what I think we would all agree is one of the truly great American experiences, which is to either be a collegiate athlete or to have a chance to watch and support and be part of college athletics.

As Dr. Livingstone noted, my history with this began obviously when I was a kid. I played all kinds of sports growing up. I played a lot of sports in high school. I played basketball in college. My brother was a pitcher in college. Two of my kids played college football, as well, and my wife was probably the best athlete in the family, which probably says something about why our boys were pretty solid athletes, as well.

I've always just believed that sports have this tremendous power to bring people together. You just see it over and over again, the way in which athletics can transcend so many other divisions.

I really do believe that we are at a bit of a pivotal period for the NCAA, and I really do think that the enthusiasm, the life and professional experiences I've had, the people I've gotten to know, the relationships I have can be a big part of helping all the folks involved in the NCAA wherever they fit in that very significant organization benefit from what we can put together going forward if we work together.

I really do think the challenge is significant, but the possibilities and the opportunities if we are successful are enormous, and I'm very honored and grateful for this chance to serve.

LINDA LIVINGSTONE: Thank you, Governor Baker. We're thrilled to have you joining us. I'm going to turn it back over to Michelle who's going to help facilitate the Q & A.



THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Dr. Livingstone. We'll now turn to the question-and-answer portion.

Q. Governor Baker, is there anything comparable in your career to having to go to Congress and Capitol Hill and try to find relief or resolution on the NIL matter, and considering a working relationship with players that could result in collective bargaining or something more?

CHARLIE BAKER: I certainly think the challenges here are significant. I think there are a number of times I've worked together with coalitions on a variety of issues that involved organizations here in the Commonwealth, but also organizations across the country.

I think the most recent one I can think of was the very significant debate and discussion we had about what an appropriate level of funding for the NIH would be, which began I'm going to say maybe six or seven years ago. There were a lot of moves afoot to dramatically cut NIH funding, and we and our colleagues across the country created an enormous coalition basically arguing that NIH funding was one of the most important engines of economic activity and scientific and discovery progress in the United States and that rather than cutting funding for it we should actually increase funding for it.

By the end of that process, we had turned a very significant cut in NIH funding actually into a pretty significant increase which has been sustained over time. That would probably be the most recent thing I was involved in that would involve something that's sort of very broad and cuts across a lot of states and a lot of interests.

Q. Do you understand why a lot of people -- the first thought that would come to their mind on this is why would anyone take this job at the moment. I'm being facetious but just a little bit.

CHARLIE BAKER: I think from my point of view, it's important that a lot of these issues get dealt with and get dealt with in a way that works. When I say "works," I mean works for everybody. It can't just work for a few.

I think the big worry I have, which I'm sure is the worry a lot of people have when it comes to college sports is if we can't figure out a way to organize and frame the future of college sports on a platform where we can deal with the fact that there are a lot of different organizations with a wide variety of capabilities and capacities to participate, we're going to lose a tremendous opportunity to provide real opportunity to literally hundreds of thousands of kids going forward.

As somebody, as I said, who really believes in the power of collegiate sports on all levels, to do all sorts of amazing things, for communities, for schools, for alumni and for student-athletes, I think it's worth doing.

Yeah, it's big and complicated. So have been a lot of things I've done in my life. But most of the time they were absolutely worth doing.

Q. To follow up on the question about why anybody would really want this job, could you describe what the job is, because I know there's been a lot of talk about how a leadership change also meant a change in maybe the way the job is done. As best you can, what do you think the job description is?

CHARLIE BAKER: I guess I would say a couple things. I think one of the things the job is it's an exercise in listening. My father always used to say to me that you will learn a lot more listening than you will talking. I think in my career, both in the public and private sector, one of the things I've done very well is listen.

The main reason behind that is it's very hard to figure out where your opportunity to move forward as a community is unless you actually hear from all the voices that are represented there and figure out what the best path forward is that is most likely to be one that can work for most people.

This role in particular, the way I see it at this point, is it's about being the convener and the collaborator of a very large organization that has a lot of points of view and seeking to find those places where people can come together, can agree and can make a case generally to the public, to their student-athletes, to their alumni and their fans about what the best way to ensure that we don't lose this jewel going forward.

Q. What are maybe a couple of the biggest issues that you need to tackle first, is one question. Then another, how much time do you expect to spend in Washington, D.C.?

CHARLIE BAKER: I don't really like to speculate on future things that I don't really have the ability to successfully answer, and I still have a day job that I'm doing here now, and I'm not going to start my new job until March 1. As we get a little closer to that, some of the more detailed questions I'd be perfectly happy to answer.

I think I'd anticipate that my job is going to require me to spend a lot of time with a lot of different interests, and I'm anticipating, as I said, that I'm going to be mostly asking questions and hearing what people have to say.



A lot of that these days post-pandemic can be done virtually, and a lot of it you still need to show a physical presence for and to be what I would describe as physically in place.

I expect that going forward it's going to be a combination of both.

Q. I know that the timeline of your job is such that you will not be starting until after the NCAA convention, but given that there are a lot of, I guess, important topics that are going to be broached from the transformation committees, about the constitution and just the structure of the organization going forward, do you have plans to attend that at all? I think it's after you are out of office, but I guess how do you envision that first two-month period before March going?

CHARLIE BAKER: Well, I am going to plan to attend it for a number of reasons, but the biggest one is I can't think of a better opportunity to do some of that physical presence work when so many of the folks from around the country are all going to be in one place. I also think it'll be a great opportunity for me to do some of the learning that I would like to do from a lot of the folks who are currently part of the leadership structure of the NCAA generally.

That for me is probably the best opportunity I would have before I were to begin doing the job in March to have a chance to spend some face-to-face time with a very significant number of the players from around the country.

Q. Governor, as a fan of college sports, which I assume you are, how would you characterize the impact of the transfer portal? Is it a good thing, a bad thing? What's to be done about it?

CHARLIE BAKER: I am a fan of college sports, and I think the transfer portal is one element of a whole series of elements that need to be part of the conversation going forward. I'm not going to at this point in time, not having had a lot of the conversations that I would like to have with the organization and its membership generally, going to comment on the pluses or minuses. I think what I would say is it's one element of a large collection of elements that all need to be incorporated into a strategy or a program going forward that's going to make it possible for college athletes to be successful and for, as well, colleges to be successful, given the very different places and spaces a lot of schools find themselves in these days.

Q. You mentioned the jewel of college sports and your priority of preserving it. What is sort of essential to college sports remaining what it is in your mind, and

where does compensating athletes or placing some elements on compensating athletes fit into maintaining what college sports is as you think of it?

CHARLIE BAKER: Well, again, I'm going to wait until I actually have the job and I've had some conversations before I get into the details of several of these questions, but to me, the jewel of college sports is the opportunity and the access that it provides to so many people and the experiences and the learning that comes with that.

The number of people -- in some respects, college athletics is one of the truly greatest human potential development organizations ever devised. It is through sports that so many people find themselves and develop a lot of the skills and capabilities that translate to the rest of their lives.

For me, when people talk about the transitional period and the number of different things that are going on at this point in time, the question becomes how do you figure out a way to build a platform and get the support for that platform given where everybody sits and stands that can work going forward to serve the very different elements of the very large NCAA constituency, so that jewel, that opportunity that young people have to be part of a team, to learn about themselves and to build a foundation which in many cases will frame the rest of their lives can happen. That to me is the jewel.

Q. What gives you confidence, given the state of this current Federal Government, that you'd be able to find perhaps bipartisan agreement on making changes that college sports needs?

CHARLIE BAKER: There's a lot of sports fans in America. A lot. And I think many of them deeply value their college experience.

I went to -- I bet I went to thousands of college events with my parents and their friends when I was growing up. This wasn't even big-time sports, okay. If you think about the number of athletes and if you think about the number of people who care about those teams and what they mean to them, it's an enormous community, and it's one that I believe is going to want to see that opportunity continue to be part of the student-athletes' lives and the school communities' lives and the broader community of alumni and fans going forward.

That in some ways, I think, is an enormous asset, when you're trying to have a discussion about what the best way to ensure that what we have is not lost going forward.

Q. Did you have this position in mind when you decided -- did you think about this at all when you



decided not to run for reelection in December, and if not, when did you think about this role and what began that process?

CHARLIE BAKER: I can state unequivocally that this was nowhere near my mind when I made the decision a year ago not to seek reelection. At that point in time, I was worried about making sure that we got through the rest of 2022 without sort of a political overhang in terms of our dealing with the COVID pandemic and a whole variety of other issues. People for the most part don't think I made a lot of political decisions during COVID. Most people think that I made what I thought was the best decision for the people of the Commonwealth at the time. I didn't want that to become torqued into a political campaign.

This job was really not on my -- I wasn't really spending a lot of time thinking about what I was going to do after I left office. I was focused on, as I've said many times, running through the tape. I was approached about this a couple of months ago by the search committee, and as I said earlier, the more I got into the conversation with them, the more I thought it was something where I thought I could be helpful.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much for your time today and for joining us for this press call. A transcription of the call will be available at NCAA.org later today, and this concludes today's call. Thank you.

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