#### NCAA 2025 Men's Basketball Championship

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# Sean Ford Micky Arison Billy Donovan Dwight Howard Danny Crawford Carmelo Anthony

Naismith Hall of Fame Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: This is our news conference introducing members of the Class of 2025 in the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame.

The 2008 U.S. Olympic men's basketball team. Known as the Redeem Team, they restored American basketball dominance on the international stage, led by managing director Jerry Colangelo and Hall of Fame coach Mike Krzyzewski. The team featured an All-Star roster including Kobe Bryant, LeBron James, Dwyane Wade and Carmelo Anthony.

They went a flawless 8-0 in Beijing, securing the gold medal with a thrilling 118-107 victory over Spain in the final.

Joining us to represent the 2008 U.S. Olympic Men's Basketball Team is USA Basketball Men's National Team Director Sean Ford.

SEAN FORD: Thank you. Congratulations to everyone here and those that aren't with us today. It's a great class. From the USA Basketball perspective, it's not just this team. There are a lot of people that have been getting into the Hall of Fame that have U.S. basketball experience that we're happy to be part of their journey. So congratulations.

On behalf of USA Basketball, it's an honor for me personally to be here today on behalf of Jerry Colangelo and Coach K and the organization and most importantly the players on the team. The accomplishment and what they were able to do for USA Basketball in that moment in



time was something special.

In 2000, we won the Olympic Games. And it was very hard. It was a tough competition. Then we struggled for a couple of competitions -- the '02 World Cup, the '04 Olympics and '06 World Cup. We were finding our way back.

This team in particular helped us and Jerry Colangelo's vision of creating a national team program. That was what resulted in what took place on the court in '08. Coach K's management of the players and the players' commitment to each other and what they were able to accomplish was extraordinary.

Obviously since then we've won five Olympic Games. We kind of say a little bit of the '08 team is a little bit of a North Star for us. It got us guided back on the right ship in the right direction, and we're still on that direction and a lot of it goes back to that.

One of the things that's very interesting about every gold medal that we've won since the '08 team, there's been a member of that team on the other teams. So in '12 and '16 and '21 and this past summer, '24, there was a member of the '08 team on every team since then.

Congratulations to the players. And USA Basketball is very excited that this team is honored in this way.

THE MODERATOR: Our next member of the 2025 class is Carmelo Anthony. A prolific scorer and a 10-time NBA All-Star, Carmelo Anthony left an indelible mark on the game with his ability to take over offensively. From leading Syracuse to an NCAA title as a freshman to being one of the NBA's all-time leading scorers, Carmelo's impact was felt at every level. His three Olympic gold medals further solidifying his place among basketball's elite.

CARMELO ANTHONY: Thank you, first of all. Again, I keep trying to come up with things to say for these moments and there's nothing that I can say that's actually going to express the way that I feel or the way that I'm just trying to take this moment in.

To be sitting here as an inductee of the '25 Hall of Fame, not just as an individual but also as a team, 2008 USA Team member. It's a lot to put into perspective. You get the call about coming to be entered into the Hall of Fame for what you've done for your career and as an individual and what you've brought to this game of basketball.

Then on the flipside, I was actually waiting on my other call for the 2008 Olympic team. I didn't get that call. I had to come here and hear the announcement.

But I say that all to say it's the energy and the connectivity of what's actually happening right now, being a part with Sean Ford since 2002, with Team USA, like he said, going to Venezuela, losing; going to Greece and Athens in '04, losing; going to Japan in '06, losing. And then realizing that we are falling behind as basketball in the U.S.

It took somebody with a vision like Jerry Colangelo to come and say we have to create a new standard, we have to create a new form, we have to create a new culture in the U.S. And that was a part of my journey.

So to say that a part of my journey will also enter with me separately as an individual player. I just like to say, I'm honored. I really don't have any words. I'm trying to figure out what I'm going to say for the Hall of Fame speech. I'm sitting here getting all this information from other Hall of Famers and just trying to take it all in.

I'm gracious. I'm trying to give myself some grace at this moment to just enjoy these times because this is a hell of a table right here.

I was able to play for Coach Billy Donovan. We talk about connectivity, being a part of his team at OKC. This young man right here has reffed me plenty of times. We've had a lot of going back and forth as player reps, but we had a mutual respect for one another.

And, Micky, we've had battles in Miami and New York and things like that. But all in all, I'd like to say thank you guys because you were the ones as the media and asking those questions, you guys kept me sharp, too, to understand how to stay ahead of you guys and what you guys were going to ask me. Thank you, guys. You played a major part in my career as well. So, thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Our next member of the Class of 2025 is one of the NBA's most respected referees. He was a fixture on the league's biggest stages, officiating more than 2,000 regular season games and 30 NBA Finals. His remarkable consistency earned him the honor of working the Finals for 23 consecutive seasons. Now a member of

the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame of the Class of 2025, Danny Crawford.

DANNY CRAWFORD: Being up at this table with these members here is a humbling experience. First of all, if I'm in a room like this looking at all these reporters that means I'm in trouble because referees are only to be seen and not heard from. So I'm very uncomfortable sitting in this room because I think I'm in trouble, that you're going to ask me some tough questions.

But this is a humbling experience being inducted into the Hall of Fame. It's a very unusual thing. Referees aren't accustomed to this. We are accustomed to you guys chasing us out of the building, talking about us, disagreeing with everything we do. For me to sit here and for you all to look sane and you don't have that look like I'm in trouble, I feel pretty comfortable. So thank you very much and look forward to your questions.

THE MODERATOR: Our next inductee, a two-time NCAA champion coach, built a powerhouse at the University of Florida before transitioning to the NBA where he continues to lead with more than 400 victories. His ability to develop talent and implement winning systems has made him one of the game's most respected leaders. Known as Billy the Kid, the former Providence College point guard under Hall of Famer Rick Pitino is a member of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame's Class of 2025. Billy Donovan.

BILLY DONOVAN: I want to congratulate everybody else who is up here who has been inducted. I think everybody up here so far has expressed exactly how I feel. It's very overwhelming. It's very, very humbling.

I think it really makes you and takes you to a place of real reflection of people that have impacted your life, from my family, my parents, my wife and my kids.

But then you think about being in this game. You're only as good as the people that are around you. Certainly that's the case in coaching.

I've been fortunate to coach a lot of great players, guys that were committed to the game, to winning, and I was really, really blessed to have so many great coaches and people around me for such a long period of time.

I'm thankful. I'm really humbled sitting up here. I think when you get into the game of basketball, at least for me, I never thought about sitting up here one day and being inducted into the Hall of Fame. You did it because you loved it.

I'm just incredibly honored, thankful and grateful for all the

people that played such an impactful part of my life. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Our next member of the Class of 2025, a dominant force in the paint and eight-time All-Star and three time Defensive Player of the Year. Known for his rebounding, shot blocking and rim protection, Dwight Howard helped lead the Orlando Magic to the 2009 NBA Finals. And he won a championship with the Lakers in 2020. From high school to the NBA and now to Springfield, please welcome our next member of the Class of 2025, Dwight Howard.

DWIGHT HOWARD: Thank you all for coming out today and celebrating such a prestigious and amazing award of being inducted into the Hall of Fame. I'm just glad to be here enjoying with some amazing people -- Sean, Melo, Danny.

(Applause).

More for you guys, Billy, but Billy and also Micky. This is such an amazing honor. I've been playing the game of basketball my whole entire life. To make it to heaven, this is the only way I can describe it, it's such a beautiful thing. This is what you dream for. It's what you sit at home and shoot basketball all day and all night for, just to make it to basketball heaven.

I'm just overwhelmed with joy, gratitude, all the emotions, every one. The words cannot describe how this moment feels just to be up on this stage to represent my family, to represent my friends, all the people who have went along with this journey with me -- the good, the bad and the ugly. It has all led to being up in the Hall of Fame.

So I'm so thankful, the media, every one of you guys have made my life amazing. So thank you guys for that.

THE MODERATOR: Since acquiring the Miami Heat in 1995, our next Hall of Fame inductee transformed a franchise into one of the NBA's most successful organizations, winning three NBA championships. His leadership, alongside Pat Riley and Erik Spoelstra has defined a culture of excellence both on and off the court. This long-time owner will now for be enshrined in the Hall of Fame as a member of the Class of 2025. Please welcome Micky Arison.

MICKY ARISON: Thank you and congratulations to everybody up here. It's been a fascinating 24 hours spent with you guys. It's been great.

It was never my goal to be up here. My goal was to try to put together an organization that the community in Miami would be proud of, that we would compete at the highest levels. So I went out and got some of the best people I could, starting with Pat Riley, and they took it from there.

To me, this is an award and a recognition of the efforts of the organization, the Miami Heat organization, all its employees, and especially its great players that we've had over the last 30 years.

So on their behalf, I'm accepting this award and thank everybody for recognizing their efforts. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: These six individuals join Sue Bird, Maya Moore and Sylvia Fowles as members of the Class of 2025.

Questions for the inductees.

Q. Carmelo and Billy, two people in the Hall of Fame now that it started at you guys in the Final Four, where you're at right now. Do you ever go back and look at those memories? And just what does it mean for you guys to be here at the Hall of Fame, getting this honor when it started there for you both?

CARMELO ANTHONY: For me, the Final Four holds a special place for me because it was a moment where you had to really come together. You had to come together throughout the tournament, but the Final Four is a different type of moment that you have to come together.

You have to block everything out. It's media that you have to deal with. It's a whole run of show that you have to deal with in the Final Four, alongside kind of having to focus on the game of basketball.

I just think the way that teams are able to come together throughout the Final Four, in the course of the Final Four, that's the moment that really determines who you are, what happens, what type of team you're going to be, what type of people you're going to be. And these relationships and friendships carry over for a lifetime.

So those were some of the experiences I actually was very well aware of as I was going throughout the Final Four. I also had Coach Boeheim alongside me who had been there and understood what it takes to be in the situation, in a moment like that.

It was a lot of kind of jitters going on out there. But also when you are 17 or 18, you're not getting nervous. You're going out there, you're playing basketball. Luckily I had the opportunity to play in front of 30,000 on some nights in the Carrier Dome, so I was used to playing in front of big arenas and big crowds.

Coming to New Orleans in 2003 was a very special moment. And knowing the game of basketball, and being a student of the game, I also knew that Coach Boeheim lost in that same arena to Indiana years, years ago to Keith Smart in that same corner, same shot. So that play kept playing alongside in my brain.

I say that also to say there's nothing like a Final Four moment. I hope everybody who is experiencing this Final Four moment, enjoy it. Understand what it is. Because as a player, it's a special moment.

BILLY DONOVAN: It's interesting listening to Carmelo talk because he doesn't realize this. I was in the Final Four when Smart made that shot. Syracuse beat us to get to the national championship game.

But the thing that's amazing is I don't know if people really know this, Carmelo, you were a freshman, right? He won a national championship as a freshman in college, which was really incredible.

We were both obviously in the Superdome in New Orleans, both of our Final Fours. So the connection through the game, and obviously having a chance to work with Carmelo in Oklahoma City.

For me, I don't think Providence had been to the NCAA Tournament for 10 straight years. This was kind of like all new. Syracuse was really already established as a program for a long period of time.

They were close to getting to a national championship. And obviously Carmelo and the rest of that group took them over the top.

But for me to experience that, you know, after never even getting to the NCAA Tournament for three straight years, it changes your life and your perspective.

You learn a lot. We were in the Big East. So we played in the Carrier Dome. Carmelo is right, it's 30,000 people. You go to the Superdome there, it's 65, 70,000. It's a totally different atmosphere, experience all together.

To have the experience in my senior year, to get to the Final Four is just an incredible experience that I don't even know if you know how to prepare for something like that.

Q. Carmelo and Billy, Cooper Flagg was right up there where you guys are yesterday accepting National Player of the Year honors. How special is what he's doing right now as a freshman? Carmelo, a lot of people comparing Cooper to you, obviously trying to

win it as a freshman. How good is this kid? And how do you see him projecting immediately into the NBA? Can he make an impact right away?

CARMELO ANTHONY: I think what we're seeing with Cooper is -- he has some similarities to the run that I had. I also like to point out, you have to take your hat off to Coach Scheyer because the way he was able to orchestrate that team and put the pieces around Cooper so he can be able to go out there and flourish and do what he do and become the National Player of the Year.

I also think in my point in time, in '03, Syracuse, yeah, we was a big program, but we was on the downside of things, too. So nobody expected us to go out there with four freshmen being a part of a team to go win a national championship.

Again, we were playing just for fun and we were happy to be there and we were happy-go-lucky kids. Now it's a real business. You know you're coming to school to go to the national championship. You know you're going to the best situation, which is totally different.

On the flipside, from a basketball standpoint, I think what we've seen from Cooper, from a skill-set standpoint, I don't think we've seen it in a long time -- somebody who can control the game and demand the game in the way he can from all aspects from rebounding, from weak-side blocked shots to defense closing out. And he can get a bucket, too, so that adds a little bit more to your game.

I just love watching him as a player. I said this the other day to somebody: If he can go get this championship, then he sits at that small table at Duke University. There's one more seat left, and he has the opportunity to go pull that seat up.

#### Q. About the NBA?

CARMELO ANTHONY: I believe so. He's already making the impact. In college, guys are 26, 27. It's not like you're playing against 17-year old. You're playing against grown men in college. He had an opportunity to play against the USA Team in practice. You get that experience at 17, 18 years old -- I just hope we, you, give him some grace. Give him time to develop a couple years.

BILLY DONOVAN: I think the game's changed so much because of what Carmelo said. A lot of these guys are older now. Guys are staying in college longer because of the NIL and the opportunity to earn money. I can't sit there and say I've watched a lot of his games. I've watched him, but the one thing that stands out to me besides the skill level is the tenacity, the toughness, the competitiveness.

Dwight and Carmelo know this better than anybody, and I was in college for a long time, these guys have a different mindset competitively.

If you don't have that mindset, it's really, really hard to survive up there as a player. He appears to have that kind of mindset. That's going to serve him well.

To Carmelo's point he'll get better in skill development, but I think probably Dwight and Carmelo could probably speak more eloquently than I could of what it was like to come into the NBA as a rookie and know, okay, really, he's showing up, this young guy? Okay, I'm going to try to do something. This is the way these guys are.

But I think because of Cooper's competitiveness and leaning into stuff and the physicality that's going to serve him well as his skill level continues to grow and develop.

DWIGHT HOWARD: I've had a few chances to watch him and I think he's an awesome young player coming into the NBA at a very young age could be very difficult.

I think his time at Duke, the way that the staff has helped him grow as a player and a person, he's going to be great in the NBA. I'm looking forward to seeing him thrive.

## Q. Danny, I know you officiated a lot of games, especially ones with Carmelo and Dwight. Could you tell us all which one of these guys really gave you the business?

DANNY CRAWFORD: Both. Both. The relationships referees have with players, for the most part, it's a working relationship. They're going to do their job and I'm going to do my job. And at the end of the night we'll figure out, you know, who did their job best.

So we always have a working relationship. Carmelo's going to go at it hard. Dwight's going to go at it hard. And I'm going to go at it hard in a different way. Mine's more mental. Theirs is more physical. And we're going to have a working relationship on the court. I'm going to stay out of their way. As long as they're doing their job then I stay out of the way because I have no job.

So that's pretty much how a referee and a player and referees and teams, that's pretty much how we manage to stay in existence.

Q. Micky, how did you build the championship with LeBron, Wade and Bosh? And what's been key to maintaining that culture of excellence, that standard, since?

MICKY ARISON: We talk a lot about culture and a lot of people now talk about culture a lot. But really it's pretty simple. As Danny said, everybody is doing their job. Come to work on time, work hard, be proud in what you're accomplishing, support your teammates.

We talk about enjoying each other's successes. And that's what it's all about. It's just working hard together and hopefully the outcome at the end is great. You obviously need great players like the two guys up here. And we've been fortunate, especially in those four years where we went to the Finals four years in a row. As you guys know, we had some pretty good players.

### Q. Carmelo and Dwight, did you ever have any doubts that you would be on that stage? If so, how did you handle that and just the wait?

DWIGHT HOWARD: I don't think there was any doubts, but I just didn't think about anything but I had an amazing career. I gave 110 percent every time I stepped on the court. And what's going to happen is going to happen. When I got the call, it was the best feeling in the world.

CARMELO ANTHONY: For me, I've never thought about it, to be honest with you. You're just playing basketball and you look up, okay, you accomplished this. And it's on to the next. You don't really have time to sit back and reflect on any of the accomplishments as you're going through the journey.

So I've never thought about the Hall of Fame. You start thinking about it as you -- your work will tell you when to start thinking about it. The work you put in would tell you.

Things that I was doing were starting to tell me, okay, Melo, you put in the work. You're in the game for 19 years. You have all of these accolades, but it's not just about winning and losing why we're up here. It's actually the impact you actually have for the game of basketball.

For me, globally, having an impact for the game of basketball, having an impact from a grassroots program, to college, to professional, to international basketball, to me that's when I started looking at the Hall of Fame for basketball. It wasn't just about what I was doing on the court.

It was, like, how am I impacting this game from a global standpoint? If my peers and people I played against and owners and things like that look at me and say, hey, Melo is a great representation of this game of basketball around the world, then, yeah, I'll start looking at the Hall of Fame after that.

Q. Micky, what's it been like developing a successful program team in Miami and seeing kind of a building that team in a way that kind of represents the city and the fans itself?

MICKY ARISON: My management style is get the best people and let them go to work and don't get in their way.

Danny talked about the best thing about the best way an official can be recognized if he isn't recognized, if he's invisible. I feel the same way about owners. I'm really uncomfortable being up here because I think the best owners are the most invisible owners. And I'd rather be invisible than be up here. (Laughter).

Q. Billy, how special is the timing of this? On the same day that it was announced you're being elected into the Hall of Fame the Gators are playing in the Final Four.

BILLY DONOVAN: It was kind of calming to have a chance to be here, sharing this moment to have Florida be in the Final Four and get a chance to watch some of the game. It was great. Had a chance to see a lot of people I haven't seen in quite some time. That part is nice. It's kind of ironic how it all worked out.

Q. Carmelo, can you rate what this accomplishment, where it stands for you from some of the great accomplishments? Obviously the national championship, the stuff you did in the NBA, where does this go?

CARMELO ANTHONY: This is it. It don't get no better than this. It don't get greater than this. All of those things, those accomplishments that you have mentioned, this just puts a cap on that and it makes it all worth the while -- I keep going back to the journey. You all hear me talk about the journey. It's a journey when you are doing this for two decades. You have to take the good, the bad, the ugly with that.

If you go through that process with the good, the bad the ugly and you come on the other side of it, and this is the blessing I get for going through that, this is the greatest accomplishment that I ever will accomplish, let me tell you that.

Q. To hear "Carmelo Anthony, Hall of Famer," what are your first thoughts to hear that?

CARMELO ANTHONY: I'm satisfied. It was worth it. I'm satisfied. I'm here. Again, it just comes back to being satisfied. When you are an athlete and you're playing,

you're competing and your coaches tell you, never be satisfied. So you have that mentality until you can sit back and take yourself out of that situation in that moment and realize, I'm good on basketball. I'm satisfied. This is the gates, this is the doors. And it's nothing that anyone can take away from now.

Q. Carmelo, with the type of collegiate career you had and you're back in the Final Four, your son will be playing at your alma mater in six months, what advice have you given him before he steps into the world of college basketball?

CARMELO ANTHONY: He should have had his ass right here to get the experience. He should have been right here looking at these fans. (Laughter).

Seniors in high school, they want that moment where they can have a couple of weeks off.

But, for me, it's just a proud moment just to be able to -- I'm here at the Final Four and he had an opportunity to come into college next year and create his own lane and have an opportunity to play in the Final Four.

Again, I've never been in these moments to explain to you how I feel about the experience. I just know he has an opportunity to go to college, go to Syracuse, understand what's happening, understand what came before you but also allowing yourself to carve out something different right now.

I'm excited. Hopefully I'm here this time next year inducting some other Hall of Famers but also watching my son play in this moment.

Q. Dwight, Coach Donovan talked a little bit about how the game has changed and different mentalities and so forth. Obviously some things have changed during the middle and prime of your career with small ball and things of that nature. How did that kind of impact your career where obviously the bigs in the game and so forth kind of start making its way out maybe just a little bit or just the dump-it-down-low bigs and so forth? How did that impact you and the things that you had to do in order to kind of keep things flowing for you in the game?

DWIGHT HOWARD: For me, I just had to adapt. I think playing basketball for as long as I've played, I've had to play all positions, from the point guard to center. Each one took a time for me to adapt.

The last part of my career, I was not the main guy on the team. I was the role player, the guy that had to come in,

bring a lot of energy, and I had a lot of fun doing that. So my whole career, I just had to adapt to all my surroundings, adapt to everything that was going on. And that takes a lot of dedication, perseverance and a lot of faith in yourself knowing that you can do anything that you put your mind to.

So that's how I took that, and it led me here. So no matter what the situation was, it led me right to this moment, which is being in the Hall of Fame. So I'm grateful that I could say I went through all these different stages of my career -- the good, the bad, all the ups and downs, being the star, being the role player, being the bench guy, being the guy that's just there for energy, all that stuff. It really made me into the Hall of Famer I am today. So I'm very grateful about that.

Q. Danny, with the treatment of referees nowadays kind of souring with fans, what is your message to future referees and current referees nowadays on how to block out that noise? And also what is your message to the fans to maybe dial it back a little bit on some of the referees that are just trying to do their job?

DANNY CRAWFORD: That's a great question. You know, fans are not very educated about referees. Your first reaction is to, especially if it goes against your team, is the referees were wrong. I would advise everybody in this room -- I know it's the most boring thing in the world to do -- watch a game, boo the refs, and then do me a favor now, turn the sound down when you're going to replay it. Take the volume, put it at zero, watch the game and watch the plays.

What you'll realize is they're better than you think. It's just the culture.

The question about the referees, shame on them if they didn't know a part of their job description was to block 'em out.

I would referee a game and not hear a fan and the arena could be 30,000 fans booking at me.

If I hear the fans, my concentration isn't where it should be. So for those referees, if they need advice on how to block it out, they missed it when they started getting into refereeing.

Q. What do you think the defining moment was from the 2008 run? And how did the strategy and the years leading up to it help achieve that moment?

SEAN FORD: I think the defining moment for the team

was the gold medal game. We were fighting our way back when we didn't -- we were unsuccessful in winning at the World Cup in 2006 in Japan. We had a tough loss to Greece. Dwight and Carmelo were there. It was a really tough loss.

But a lot of good came out of it. You learn a lot from it. You learn more from a loss than a win, unfortunately. We fought our way back and we had to qualify for the Olympic Games. We had to train and play in a tournament in '07, and they were both on the team. We were fighting our way back.

And I remember there was a time, we were heading into the quarterfinals. It was in China, and the team was doing great. China loved basketball and they loved basketball, so they loved our team. But even then, we would get to the quarterfinals, we really haven't accomplished anything yet.

We had three games, and we were playing well. And we get to the game against Spain, and it was a war. It was really a challenge all the way through.

I remember there was talk last night a little bit, there was a timeout with eight minutes to go. It was a two-point game. And it was as if there was no strategy discussed. It was just we just needed a break. We just wanted a stop. It was like going back in a boxing match just in between rounds. We took a break, went back out.

And Kobe, God bless him, he assisted or scored the last seven possessions of the game. It was a really defining moment.

But it was also the excitement after the game that the players had because oftentimes when the U.S. wins, it can be more relief than excitement sometimes because of the high expectation.

The defining moment was being challenged and fighting through the adversity. And the way they fought through the adversity was because they believed in each other and they were really a team. They were really a team and they knew what they were representing and they knew what they were trying to do. And they did it in a very hard-fought way, and the excitement they had, there was no relief, it was all exhilaration.

So that was a special moment. I think once they feel it, we're bonded for life.

I would say to you, it's interesting, not all the players knew they got in. I ran into Chris Paul this morning. He came, we have 65 high school players here at a camp. And Chris

came by to see the players. He didn't know. I said, hey, we're getting in. He goes really?

I was thinking, no one knows. We knew, we were together last night. I called Jason Kidd. He didn't know. We talked this morning. Dwyane Wade, we texted -- DaShawn Prince, Carlos Boozer, Mike D'Antoni, Nate McMillan, they're so excited. People didn't know. We got in.

Everyone was hoping to get the whole team together in September in Springfield. It would be great.

You're bonded for life when you accomplish something like that, and the moment lives on.

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