

Golden State Warriors Media Conference

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Joe Lacob

Ohemaa Nyanin

Media Conference



JOE LACOB: Well, good morning, and welcome to a very momentous day in Golden State Warriors history and Warriors history, our organization -- I almost said the team name to you guys just now. Can you imagine if I had blown that what Brandon and everyone would have done to me? But welcome, and it's a momentous day because today we're announcing -- well, our general manager, our new general manager for our team, for our team that we've been interested in forming for so very, very long. For me personally, as you know, 27 years in women's basketball, I was involved until the '90s, so this is a momentous day as we announced it in the past, and now to get a general manager and actual architect of our team will be very exciting. We have big goals for the franchise.

I want to describe a little bit about the situation, the process we went through to higher Ohemaa here today. And welcome, officially, by the way, to our media. It was an extensive process. We had many candidates from all walks, WNBA, college ranks, you know, everything associated with women's basketball. We really looked far and wide. We wanted someone that we felt could be a great leader for our franchise, that had the intellect to go forward, and we'll talk about this in a couple minutes in her qualifications, but we went through a process internally which I think was quite unique in that we had, I believe, it was 10 Brandon, is that correct? 10 different members of our organization interview Ohemaa, which is highly unusual, I guess, for a lot of organizations, but it's the way we do things. We're pretty careful. We want to hire the best, only the best, and we want to make sure that whoever we hire can fit within our organization as a whole. We very much are a collaborative group and that's the way we like to operate. So I can assure you that she did a fantastic job of doing that. But we went through that process and interviewed with a lot of people. We came down to three candidates who then I actually met and spent time with. Then even whittled it to two, and just, those two had to come to my house and actually spend some time just sitting around a table, not really talking about an actual interview, but more just interacting. And

that was with not just me, but with our members of the group. So, not individually, but as a group setting.

Why is it important to talk about all that? Because that's actually what we do. We collaborate, we work together, we try to build an organization, we're all for one and one for all.

That's a very important part of the process and she passed with flying colors. So that was the process. I just want to talk a little bit about the individual that we're hiring today or announcing today.

Of course you look for IQ and intelligence, very important in this job and in this organization, but we also look for someone with basketball knowledge and experience and sort of a gut level understanding of the game. I think all of that and along with sort of a cultural fit, someone that would really be able to fit within our culture were all important aspects of this hiring process and she passed with flying colors. And I want to say, I've net met a lot of candidates in the years I've been doing this, interviewed a lot of people, I think usually you know right in the beginning, to be honest, even though you hire, or interview a lot of people, I kind of knew when I first met her in our office here, I said, This woman is the right person. I mean, I just knew it, I felt it. But we went through that whole process and she continued to perform so well. And I can't -- her background with not only Brooklyn the Liberty, very successful team in the WNBA, which I think is very helpful, because she's seen it firsthand and been involved in it first hand, but in addition to that her U.S. Olympic Group, Women's Basketball, USA Basketball, it's a great experience. She convinced me certainly that she had a great understanding and knowledge of all the younger players that were coming up through the years. I mean, from the time they were, what.

OHEMAA NYANIN: 13.

JOE LACOB: 13 years old. Which is pretty amazing. So I think she just has it all, she really does. This is a tremendous hire. Couldn't be more excited. Going forward, as you know, the goal of this franchise -- here I go, I'm going to do it again -- our goal is to win championships and, frankly, within the first five years. We've done it with our G League team, we did it with the



Warriors, and, shoot, what the hell, let's just announce that as a goal right here once again, put a little pressure on from day one, win a championship, if not more, within the first five years. So welcome and it's really great to have you here.

OHEMAA NYANIN: Thank you. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Joe got to the most important news of the day, the Warriors hiring their new GM Ohemaa Nyanin. Ohemaa, just a little bit about you, played center at American University, worked for Team USA basketball, most recently was the assistant GM for the New York Liberty and now takes over general management duties for the Golden State franchise of the WNBA tipping off in 2025. You probably saw the amazing news that 7,000 people already put down their deposits to be season ticket holders for this team. The excitement is building, the hire had to be right. Joe laid out all the reasons why it was going to be Ohemaa. Congratulations and welcome today.

OHEMAA NYANIN: Thank you. Good morning. Please just give me just one second to take this all in. Wow. Thank you, Mr. Joe Lacob, Kirk Lacob, the executive search committee, for giving me this exhilarating and incredible opportunity to join this organization, and more importantly this family.

The investment that has already been committed to building an incredible WNBA franchise is nothing short of amazing. I'm just really excited to collaborate with the current and future incredible minds to build a winning culture of which Joe just laid out.

I would not be sitting here if it were not for my tenure with the New York Liberty. I would love to just honor the leadership of the organization, Clara Wu and Joe Tsai, thank you for everything. Ollie Weisberg. To my mentor and business maven, Keia Clarke, CEO of the New York Liberty. Woo. And, for a man who is in the building today, I unequivocally would not be sitting here if it was not for Jonathan Kolb seeing me and elevating me within the organization and, frankly, just giving me a seat at the table for me to even be able to dream or think about this opportunity.

I would like to thank my village. First and foremost, my grandparents who are looking down on me, to my parents, (speaking Twi) which in Twi means I'm grateful, I'm thankful to God for putting me in their hands. I'm grateful for their sacrifice and their wisdom that they have shared with me. I won the sibling lottery. I have two amazing siblings, in Nana and Papa, thank you for being your best selves, which pushed me to even think that this was at all possible. I would like to thank Sampson Kaiodai, Corey

and Andrew Munchbach and Tala Hadavi. Hello Bay Area. I'm so excited to be here. Thank you in advance for welcoming me to this community. I know that this area has such a rich women's basketball history and you all are very hungry for a WNBA franchise. The foundation of which is very successful collegiate programs. The San Francisco Pioneers, from the WBL, the San Jose Lasers from the ABL, and now the Golden State W team. So I, throughout my research of being here and interviewing, I came across this fact that the Santa Rosa Education Task Force, which is in the Bay Area, created Women's History Week in 1978. And then in 1987, the year that I was born, it got adopted by Congress to become Women's History Month. So this area is ready for a WNBA team. The Bay Area also has an existing living legacy of the Golden State Warriors team. Given the sustained winning culture, I'm humbled to be a part of this incredible moment for this community and for the WNBA.

If you haven't already heard me say it you will, I believe that everybody's a product of their own experiences and my experiences have led me here today. I'm really grateful for Joe and Kerith speaking about it, and what brings me so much joy about taking this opportunity is that it's a blank canvas and there are many elements that can go into building a masterpiece. First and foremost, just building a foundation of a winning team, both on and off the court. We've talked a lot about the community, 7,000 plus season ticket deposits already is nothing short of amazing, and I'm really excited to learn the stories of the people who have pioneered in this area and want to continue to help this organization grow. We are going to build a locker room and family that players would like to be a part of and champion for all youth in the Bay Area and globally. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. Ohemaa. Ohemaa, we talked a little bit behind the scenes about how a big job, landing a big job like this a two-way street. Yes, they have to make sure you're the right fit, but you have to make sure this job reaches your expectations as well. What attracted you to Golden State?

OHEMAA NYANIN: You know, it's a great question. First, it was really hard decision in the fact that I'm leaving good people and people mean a lot to me. So, throughout the interview process I got to meet the leadership of this organization and they're really good people. I think where I'm at in my career is, yes, I want to continue to grow professionally, but I also want to enjoy what I do. I also want to have a smile on my face when I come into work. They took a leap of faith in me and I in turn am taking a leap of faith in them to learn from each other, but also to grow a winning team.

THE MODERATOR: And this is a unique opportunity because this team is being built from scratch. What are your priorities for the next few months?

OHEMAA NYANIN: Yeah, outside of finding a place to live and buying a car again, which I'm not excited about, I think it's just really understanding and learning again like the current legacy and then also just going out and being able to be visible in the community, get to know people, like I think this team is going to be a compilation of pretty much everybody in this room and everybody out there. And then I have to hire some people. So really just working with the team to recruit the best minds, the best basketball minds, the best artistic minds, the best eclectic minds, to build the strongest team in the W.

THE MODERATOR: What do you think about this moment in time for women's basketball as well, whether it's the NCAA tournament or whether it's the excitement for the WNBA draft, whether it's the rivalries that are happening in the draft in the W right now, what do you think about capitalizing on the attention and adoration and investment for these basketball players?

OHEMAA NYANIN: Yeah, it's exciting. Exciting is probably not the best word, but it is. Like it's something that I, when I was growing up, didn't think was possible, and it's here and it's growing exponentially. I think something that my parents have taught me is you always honor the past. So the league has existed for going on 28 plus years now and there are people that have invested to get it to where it is now and so there are -- and now there are new people who are continuing to help it grow. So I think, for me, it's a combination of all the collaboration that has happened.

THE MODERATOR: You also mentioned you were born in 1987 which means you've landed a GM job before the age of 40. What do you think about arriving at this moment?

OHEMAA NYANIN: Woo, yeah, I have not thought about that part, the 40 part (laughing). I thought about a lot of other things, but not the 40 part. I just think it's a testament to my work ethic, it's a testament to my village, the people that I've worked with in the past that have accelerated my process. It's a testament to everybody that I will collaborate with to know that I am young and ready to just get to work.

THE MODERATOR: Finally, before we take some questions, a GM has a lot of responsibilities, some tough decisions, relationships are very important, how do you like to deal with people? What are the most important things you've learned about people?

OHEMAA NYANIN: Yeah, first and foremost, empathy. I think like I said at the top, everybody's a product of their experiences, so to understand who a person is first before we look at their skills is very, very important to me. Their purpose. Why. Why do you want to be here. Why do you want to work together. Why do you want to collaborate. Are you collaborative. I think at the end of the day it is just really important for people to have the balance. Not have this job or whatever job that they have, to consume them so much that it becomes their identity.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Ohemaa, and thank you everybody for being here today for a historical moment for Golden State and WNBA. We should open the floor for a few questions.

Q. I'm not sure if this question is for you or for Joe, but the hiring of a coach, what will be Ohemaa's role in hiring and selecting the first head coach for this team?

OHEMAA NYANIN: It's my job (laughing). So, yeah, I got to get started.

Q. Timeline for getting somebody in place?

OHEMAA NYANIN: The timeline's fluid, I think. I think we want the best coach possible, and so with some flexibility from our team I think we'll wait or hire, but we want the best person.

Q. Specifically, what are you looking for in a coach and what is your idea for an identity for the team?

OHEMAA NYANIN: Yeah, so I will start with the identity part first. I would like to build that collaboratively with the people that I hire. So, I'm not answering the question because I haven't already thought about it, but I also would like to give space to people to come in with their own ideas and their own experiences for us to build it together. And for the coach, I'm just looking for a person who is you know afraid to embrace the unknown, that has a history of understanding the game and just empathy and openness to grow in this space.

Q. How did your experience in New York just inform in building the Liberty, how has that informed your perspective on team building, especially building a team to sustain at the highest level?

OHEMAA NYANIN: Yeah, thank you. Jonathan Kolb and I were in the trenches since 2019, we've had many iterations to test out our different theories with different coaches and I think at the end of the day where we landed is we want to work with good people and the talent will come. Some are already talented on the court, and I think another thing in

addition to their talent is who they are. So building the culture is people first and that is what I'm for sure taking from there and bringing here to build the team here.

Q. It's been a long time since the W expanded and there was a lot of eyeballs on this franchise because of that guy and the standard he's set in that other league. I'm just wondering how do you feel the pressure is going to be for you and how you're going to respond to that and what your working relationship with a notoriously demanding owner so far?

JOE LACOB: What? (Laughing). I was about to say that -- she's a problem, be careful (laughing). Now I wish I had said it.

OHEMAA NYANIN: Well, he's sitting right here, so I can't talk about him (laughing). But I'm really excited. Like, I understand that there are pressures, but those are pressures don't have to be impacting me, right. Like the idea that Mr. Lacob, Joe, I'm going to get -- my parents have always told me to call our elders by Mr. and Mrs., so I call him Mr. Lacob.

JOE LACOB: We're going to go with Joe. We're going to go with Joe.

OHEMAA NYANIN: Okay. So, Joe -- parents, you see, it's Joe, okay. So, Joe has been just an incredible wealth of knowledge. I think that him and I, along with the staff that is going to be hired, is, are people who have that same spirit. Winning is the foundation of this organization. So, why not us, and it will be us. So I'm just excited to get started.

Q. Joe kind of hit on it earlier, he talked about the hiring process a little bit. But from your point of view, what was the hiring process like for you, what kind of a journey was it, week, months, how long did it take and just the beginning to the end?

OHEMAA NYANIN: Yeah, it took awhile, I'm not going to lie. It took a long time, but it needed to take a long time because we both needed to feel each other out. I don't take any of kind of the sleepless nights for granted because I'm currently based in Brooklyn, so to get out here is a trek, and they made it worth it. Every moment that I spent with everybody within the hiring process came up as their true authentic selves and showed me why I would want to be a part of this franchise, and in turn I had to show them why they would accept me to be a part of this.

Q. You mentioned the idea of having to build a team kind of from scratch, having this blank canvas. Have you had any preliminary conversations with anybody

around the league around what that might entail for you over these next couple months and year?

OHEMAA NYANIN: No, but I hope they pick up the phone now. This is, for a lot of people, because a lot of people did not know that I would be announced today, get ready, I'm going to call you and ask questions. But I think the Warriors organization has been really open, like I just want to shout out Mike Dunleavy, he is an ally and very, very quickly made me feel comfortable to just come and ask him questions about anything, including working with Mr. Joe Lacob.

JOE LACOB: Mr. Joe?

OHEMAA NYANIN: Mr. Joe. It will -- I'm working on it. But, yeah, I think time will tell, and I'm just super excited.

Q. You have a lot of institutional knowledge and you mentioned Dunleavy, but along with Joe you got Steve Kerr, you got other people in the organization. Will you lean on those people or talk to them or kind of pick their brains and that kind of thing?

OHEMAA NYANIN: A hundred percent. They're the most collaborative people. Everything that they have said up to this point they have honored. And I'm just really excited to sit in on their meetings, to glean kind of everything that they have been doing, and then to add my spin to it as I continue to hire more people. I think they, you know, open arms. Kirk has been really, really, really, really helpful in just being like, Yup, you can sit here. Yes, you can go here. Yes, you can do this. So the collaboration with them in advance I'm very grateful for.

JOE LACOB: Let me just add one thing on that. She's doing a great job answering these questions, I don't have to do anything, it's perfect. But, you know, this is going to be an independent organization. I just want to make it very clear. She's going to have her own staff, own everything, and to make you know decisions and we'll talk and we'll get it done. But on the other hand, there is this tremendous resource, right, to your point. All these people that collaborate and have done a great job and won championships and built a great organization. So, I think that's why it's great advantage for Ohemaa and something that we can -- it will help make this organization even greater I think just by having that ability to collaborate. And don't take it for granted, because it's not like that in every organization in sports. Often there's a big separation, you know, between church and state or whatever you want to call it. They just don't talk to other people in the other part of the organization. That's not how we operate and never will be. And we think we're better if we do collaborate.

Q. I wanted to talk to you about the construction of a roster. You know well that this is the week where we see a lot of painful cuts in the W with lot of veteran players, really talented people who aren't going to land on a roster, and also expansion draft possibilities for you all, and then how you you're mindset is entering free agency for the first time as well when that comes up, because you're going to have to start constructing a roster pretty quickly. Do you feel like you've got, there are quality players who are, who will either not land on a roster or that are going to be available through the expansion draft that will really give you a good foundation?

OHEMAA NYANIN: Yes, absolutely. This is the best league in the world, and so there currently are only 144 spots and 144 plus 12, 156? Now there will be 156 starting in 2025. So, yeah, I'm just super excited to first and foremost hire a coach. I need to know what their philosophies are and be able to collaborate with them to find the best players that will kind of elevate their vision.

Q. You've over the last five years seen the growth and popularity of the league from kind of a media perspective, TV ratings on the rise over the last five years, now what's it mean to you to be a part of the ground floor of the expansion efforts bringing in a 13th team to the WNBA?

OHEMAA NYANIN: Yeah, it's a dream come true. It's a dream that I never thought I would realize, to be quite honest, and it's a dream that's like currently happening, if that makes sense. So, I'm still trying to wrap my mind around it. I think that the growth of the League as I've been a part of it for the past five years is just a nod to the leadership of the league, the leadership of the other GMs and AGMs and basketball ops staff and the coaches and players, right, like it's been a collective effort, and I think that it's just really exciting to be now a part of the leadership to continue to see it grow.

Q. You're in your 28th year as a league. When the NBA was in its 28th year there were 17 teams, you have 12 going to 13. How soon do you think you'll get to 30 or beyond given the explosive nature of what's happened in the last year with women's basketball?

OHEMAA NYANIN: That's a great question. I think I'm going to kick it to Joe.

JOE LACOB: Sure. You know, the beginnings of this league have been a little rocky. Obviously, we all know that it was 16 teams, I think it was originally, right, and it didn't quite achieve all its objectives and went the other way a little bit. I can't say why entirely. I don't know. But I

do know this: Women's basketball, women's sports, this is on the rise, clearly. And the quality of play, the players that are coming up I think has something to do with that, too. Used to be that you would going to college, women's college basketball games and there were only a few teams that you knew could only win the championship. And now you can see there's a lot more teams that are good. A lot more players that are really good. It's just, it's changing. It's changing rapidly. It's exciting. I foresee a tremendous future going forward. I don't know about the numbers, that 12 to 17 thing you excited was pretty interesting, but I don't think that matters, it's what happens going forward. Going forward, I think the league is going to expand in the next few years beyond us, that's pretty clear, there's a lot of interest, a lot of interest. I think the future is very, very bright.

Q. Can you just touch a little bit more on how this announcement comes at the time of the WNBA expanding and women's basketball, women's sports in general on the rise?

OHEMAA NYANIN: Yeah, I think it is part of the journey. I think the journey has, as Mr., as Joe just mentioned -- I'm working on it -- as Joe just mentioned, has had a lot of twists and turns, so we've arrived and we want to continue to grow, we want to continue to innovate, and I think that this announcement is just one of many in years to come and I'm just really humbled and proud to be part of that.

Q. This last question is for Mr. Lacob.

JOE LACOB: You, you have to call me Mr. Lacob (laughing).

Q. Considering this is a massive undertaking and you're going to be involved, does this mean you're either going to be stretched too thin or you're going to pull away from the NBA franchise?

JOE LACOB: Are you serious? (Laughing). My life is basketball. You know that, Marcus. 24/7/365. I love it. I love what we do. This is just now more of it. This is a lot of fun. This is a lot of fun. We have, you know, 14 years ago when this ownership group brought the team it was a big transition, a big turn around. You were there, you saw. There was a lot to do and we had a lot of people to hire. But we're a whole different organization now. It's not just me, there's a whole lot of people here that really know what they're doing, that are really good at their jobs, and my job, to get to your point of distraction, per se, my job is really two-fold, it's to try to set a little bit of a bar, a vision, if you will, and try to use some experience that I've had over a long period of time hiring really good people, and I think we really did it here. That's kind of my two responsibilities.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

We got a lot of other people to help and figure out what we're going to do, how we're going to do it and get it done. So, no, it's not going to be distracting, we're going to win championships in both going forward, how's that?

THE MODERATOR: Well done, Mr. Joe, thank you very much. One of the things that Golden State likes to do is do the job with joy. We'll give you the final remarks here. How would you like to approach this job and a new opportunity for you and the League, with joy?

OHEMAA NYANIN: Yeah, I would like for everyone to just continue to tune in. The 2024 WNBA season is about to start May 14th, and I think that I would love for everybody to, as they continue to have eyeballs on our team, wow, I said our team, wow.

JOE LACOB: Yes.

OHEMAA NYANIN: It is our team. To have all the high expectations. Have all the pressure. Give it to us in the most authentic way, and we will be sure to meet you at the top.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks Ohemaa, thank you everybody.

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