

# Los Angeles Clippers Media Conference

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Los Angeles, California, USA

## Doc Rivers

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. We will get started momentarily. If you have a question, please raise your hand. We'll get to as many questions as we can.

**Q. First of all, I hope you've been well the last few months, last few weeks. Wanted to first kind of ask a two-parter, just your feelings about getting going again knowing that there is still uncertainty about how this will all play out, and the second part is has Lou informed you guys whether he's going to play or not?**

DOC RIVERS: Yeah, well, both questions. I'm excited about getting going. I think anybody would be excited about going back to work. We've been out of work not just athletes but most of this country for three plus months, so I think anybody would want to go back to work.

I think obviously in our profession, we're working for something hopefully that results in something big for us, so that's the selfish part of the answer.

As far as Lou, all indications is that yes, he is. I mean, obviously up until we get on the plane, anything can happen. But I do expect Lou to be with us. I would be very surprised if he's not.

**Q. It's July 1st, so along those same lines, is there anyone opting out on the roster?**

DOC RIVERS: I don't think so. But listen, it is their choice, and we support that. There's so many reasons for everyone to play, but there's also very valid reasons for guys to opt out. I don't think many will. I think they're all invested in what we're trying to do. But again, you don't hold it against anyone on any team. This is extraordinary times, and we just have to support each other.

**Q. And just to follow up, has anyone in the organization tested positive?**

DOC RIVERS: Not that I know of. Again, I wouldn't even

know that information, which is good. I think so far, at least in our homestead, so far, so good. Guys have done a great job trying to protect themselves, but this virus, he's a mean customer. So we're just doing our best here.

**Q. I wanted to ask you, obviously this is a unique kind of situation where somebody tried to compare it to like an off-season, but it's not really an off-season because the guys haven't been able to be in the gym practicing as they normally would. Now that you're kind of returning and able to watch them and evaluate them, what are you looking for and how do you even have like a baseline expectation with just something like this that's just never happened before?**

DOC RIVERS: Yeah, this is tough. This has not been an off-season. As a coaching staff, we've worked weekly through this entire break through Zoom. Our players have done the same thing. Off-seasons guys take vacations and take breaks. This, our guys have continued to work. We've done it through Zoom, on exercise bikes, on treadmills, through our vehicles with our strength and conditioning staff.

But now they're in the gym and they're shooting. Most of our guys look really good. But that's still individual, though, so until we're together, I think the challenge will be for every team -- until you're together, you will find out what your rhythm is, how quickly you can get it back, how quickly you can get engaged and conditioned. I don't care how much working out you're doing, you're not playing basketball, so that sets every team back.

When we get to Orlando, that's what it's going to be about is about continuity and rhythm and conditioning.

**Q. I have kind of a question sort of about America right now and the sort of with all the perspective on police, obviously your dad having been a police officer, have you any thoughts on sort of the calls for police reform and defunding the police and kind of what you've seen, sort of the shift of American thought on that?**

DOC RIVERS: Yeah, we need police reform. I don't think that there's anything new to this. I think it's new to more people, but we've been calling for police reform -- listen, you can go back and look at sitcoms with Fred Sanford in it



and he's talking about police reform. When you look back that far, you know that there's an issue, and we have to solve it. You should not be nervous driving in your car while you're black. You just shouldn't be, and we all are. I don't think people understand that and get that. But that's a fact.

And just because I'm the coach of the Clippers or Kawhi Leonard is a player with the Clippers, we still have every chance of getting pulled over, and from there we don't know what happens. And so clearly we want reform. That's what everyone should want. We should want good.

I think it's important for us to get this right. It's more than just that, though, obviously, that we have to come to grips with. But that's one of them for sure.

**Q. Last we talked to you, you said Kawhi was going to be in incredible shape coming out of this because it was almost like all this extra time to really get his body right. What have you seen from Kawhi out of this hiatus? And you've talked to a lot of individual players during this time; what did you learn about Kawhi since you were still getting to know him when the season was interrupted?**

DOC RIVERS: I think you learn about all of them, not just Kawhi. You talk to all your players during this break. You know, it's funny, the one advantage, I think -- or I don't know if it's an advantage. The one interesting thing that has come out of this, and I would probably say this is with every team, you tend to talk to your players now more than about basketball. When you're in the season, you kind of focus on getting them ready, the plays, getting them in shape and all that. Even before the George Floyd thing happened, we were just having conversations with players, you know, just talking to them about their families. Through the George Floyd thing, we got to get a lot deeper, and I think that's been important for not just me but for all coaches in our league.

And just on another note, I'm really proud of all NBA coaches really because they've really dived into that matter. They want to do something to change. And I'm really proud of our players because to a man, they all want to do something. There's so many ways as far as voter suppression, police reform, education. I've learned that a lot of my players, including Kawhi -- first of all, they've always been invested in it, but now they really are invested in it, and they want to do more, and I'm just very proud of all of them.

**Q. Speaking of the George Floyd murder, why do you think this murder has had such a profound impact on the world compared to the other incidents with**

**Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Mike Brown, Breonna Taylor, et cetera?**

DOC RIVERS: Well, I think the brutality of it. To me it's similar to when America saw fire hoses being used on human beings and dogs being used on human beings. I think it's just the brutality of it.

When you think that America and the world can witness a murder that was over eight minutes -- you know, in basketball terms, that's almost an entire quarter of basketball that you got to sit and just watch. I would challenge every American to watch it in full. Just watch it in full, and if that doesn't change you or affect you, then you have no feelings.

So I think that's what happened. You know, it's funny how things change. It was beautiful to see people all over the world protesting. It's very similar to how we all were protesting for equal rights in South Africa, yet we have our own problem here, and now people are protesting against us. I think it's interesting how the tide has turned.

**Q. Doc, two questions for you. How important do you think the previous 60 plus games are going to be to what happens in Orlando? Do you think there will be carryover? I know you've always been a believer in kind of every season -- I know it's the same season technically, but every season is its own thing. And then secondly, socially, I'm curious kind of looking back at the history of the league, when you look at sort of the periods of protests and athletes speaking out, the late '80s early '90s was kind of a quieter time in that and you were playing during that time. Why do you think that was, and why have athletes been more empowered to speak out now and to do it the way that they're doing it?**

DOC RIVERS: Well, on the basketball part, I would just say yes, the 60 plus games will definitely -- there will be a carryover. I don't think we've ever had a chance after 60 games to take a three-month break, evaluate what we were doing well, what we were doing poorly, what we should have done more or less and then put it back together. So I think that's to every team's advantage. So yeah, I do think those games matter, though, because it does give you a window of who you were.

For us with all the trades, I would say those last 10 games were an exceptional window for us to look at and how we were playing.

I would say the biggest difference now than 20 years ago as a player is social media. You know, I do believe there were players speaking out, but it was up to the media at

that point to print it and make it a big deal or not. Players can make it a big deal on their own now. They have their own avenues through Instagram and Twitter and other -- TikTok and everything else. No player in my era had that, and I just love that our players are using it and for the most part using it in the right way. Very proud of that.

**Q. I was wondering what are your initial thoughts of what it will be like coaching in this environment given there's no fans in the stands, there might be restrictions on the bench as far as social distancing and interactions with players and officials might be picked up a lot easier on the feed? How do you process all that and what you expect with it?**

DOC RIVERS: You know, I don't try to process much of it. It's going to be different. I have lived in Disney at the Milk Barn, and I don't think they call it the Milk Barn anymore, the Fieldhouse now, with all my kids, from my daughter in volleyball and all three boys in AAU basketball. I literally have lived there during summers. So for me that's not going to be that big of a difference. It will be different, the no fans, and the fact that you can hear everything. I don't think we need scouts right now because every time a coach makes a call, we're going to hear it. We make one, they're going to hear it. Even when a coach makes a signal the players will yell it out. I don't think there will be a lot of secrets, that's for sure.

I think players will hear things they've never heard before. Officials unfortunately will hear things they've never heard before.

But I think from the fan point of view, I think obviously we'd rather have fans there. I think it's a competition, and you put two men in a boxing ring or five or ten guys on the court, the game is going to turn into a competition. It always does, and it always will. I think for the fans who are watching, I think they will hear and learn things that they probably have never -- I think there will be some neatness, some really interesting things that will come out of that from a fan perspective that will be enjoyable. It will not be obviously normal without the fan noise.

**Q. You have five active centers who can also play forward; has that changed your game planning very much or improved it?**

DOC RIVERS: I don't think it's improved it for sure, but I don't think it's changed it. He's a great addition to our team, not just on the floor but off the floor with his energy, his basketball IQ. I think he'll be an amazing help for Zub in general, just his mental approach to the game. Zub is turning into a terrific player. Bringing Noah in to help I think will be absolutely fantastic for him.

**Q. Going back to the reason that generated this interruption, are you concerned at all with your personal health in the bubble, and do you agree with Commissioner Silver that the pandemic still has a chance of reinterrupting the process?**

DOC RIVERS: Yeah, I do. Yes, I am. I think everyone should be, not just the guys in the NBA but everyone. We have to do the right things. We have to wear our masks. We have to wash our hands. We have to social distance. We have to avoid the urge of joining into crowds. There's a lot of things that we can do that can slow this pandemic -- I don't think any of us know what to do to stop it, and so that's what we're all trying to do.

I'm hoping, quite honestly, and it's just a hope, that when we get to the bubble, it becomes the safest place in America. But we don't know any of this, and yeah, this pandemic, it seems like obviously -- I guess this is the only political statement I'll make on it. It would be great if we had national leadership, which we have zero on this, and so unfortunately, everyone is left to do their own thing from state to state and in some places from city to city. It's absurd.

But what we're going to try to do once we get to Disney is to protect each other, protect the area. But we have to get there. You know, you're almost nervous about that.

**Q. From a basketball standpoint, I can't help but wonder if the team that wins the NBA Finals will be one of the mentally toughest teams because they will be without their family potentially for three months, 90 to 100 days. Have you guys discussed some of the changes that might need to happen within the team and the organization to keep these guys mentally strong for the duration?**

DOC RIVERS: That's a great question because that's what this is going to come down to. You know, I was talking to the Commissioner last week, and he made a comment, which I agree, he said, the team that wins this will deserve a gold star, not an asterisk. If you think about the mental toughness it's going to take to -- whoever comes out of this, it's going to come down to that. It's going to come down to talent. It's going to come down to teams trying to get back together and play together. But there's going to be so many things that are thrown at us that we don't even know yet that it's really going to be a mental toughness challenge.

Yeah, we do talk about it. I love using a lot of military things to try to correlate what we're doing. Obviously far less important than the military, we know that, but use the

Navy Seals as an example, like they get deployed, right, and they don't know the situation, they don't know when exactly they're going, but they keep preparing, but when they're called upon -- and when they're called upon they still don't know, and it's very similar to that is the way I'm looking at it with our players. It's to feel like that, feel like we're going to be deployed for a mission in Orlando, and we have to have great mental toughness to finish it.

**Q. Coach, quick question for you: As far as taking actionable measures against the social injustice, have you and the Clippers had any conversations -- I know a lot of players have talked about going beyond just names on shirts, and you look at the Hawks turning their arena into a voting precinct, have the Clippers done specific anything or planned anything specific along those lines?**

DOC RIVERS: I won't get into specifics but we have definitely had some great plans. We have had great team talk. Steve has been very, very involved. Steve was involved -- you know, it's funny, somebody who has been involved in this for a long time says Steve Ballmer has been about the cause long before the cause, and now you can kind of see it manifesting itself through our players.

I love what Lloyd Pierce is doing in Atlanta. Voting and voting suppression is a big issue with me and obviously with our team. But I think you will see a lot of things that we're going to do, and that's what I was talking about earlier. It's just how prideful I am in our guys to want to get involved and do things.

**Q. Your personal past, especially with Sterling and this team, did that shape how you either developed your voice or how you wanted to approach the recent wave of injustice that pretty much erupted? Did that give you any, I guess, experience or preparedness for how you wanted to talk about this with your guys?**

DOC RIVERS: I think my life did, honestly. Sterling is just one of the small chapters in it. I've had my house burned down. I grew up in Chicago, and in the time I grew up in Chicago it was probably the most segregated city in the country. So I'm seeing this through my life. I've seen it through my father, who was a police officer, and through my grandparents who told stories about Macon, Georgia, where they grew up. This is just another chapter.

But this seems to me to have legs, this one. I've seen too many protests that they become protests and then everybody wears a badge or wears signs and then it goes away. This is not going away this time. I really believe this. I think social media is part of that, and I just think our young people are engaged. And the past it's always been

the older people who have been doing the protests and then the kids were at home. The younger people to me are bringing back out the older people who have already protested, and this thing has life, and so we have to keep it going.

**Q. Your reaction to seeing players around the NBA out there protesting, Black Lives Matter protests, we saw Jaylen Brown, Malcolm Brogdon, Steph Curry, Dame Lillard were out there, and then on the basketball side, have there been internal discussions about how many cases of coronavirus? God forbid -- Adam Silver said the NBA is going to have to live with coronavirus cases probably popping up in the bubble. Have there been conversations about how many would be okay, I guess you could say?**

DOC RIVERS: No, there's no conversation. I mean, one case is serious, I'll tell you that, especially once we get into the bubble. But I don't think there's -- let me put it like this: I'm not smart enough to know if there's a number that would affect the league. Obviously there has to be. I just don't know what it would be.

**Q. And then your reaction to some of the NBA players around the league, Malcolm Brogdon, Jaylen Brown, those guys?**

DOC RIVERS: Oh, very happy. And again, Malcolm Brogdon has been doing this long before the protests. I think it was the first time that everyone saw it maybe. But I love that our players have been doing things and just really prideful to watch our league I think stand out over all the leagues in sports. I don't think any league has stood up more than the NBA. And not only just the players but everyone. I think it's a good testimony about who we are.

**Q. We've heard players talk about just how nice it is to hear that the Clippers have had all this equipment sent to them, and it seems like they're way ahead of the curve. Is there some kind of appreciation you've seen from your players and how much they've enjoyed being able to have their home gyms?**

DOC RIVERS: You know, it's a good question. I don't know if we always are ever looking for appreciation. We're just looking for doing our jobs. We thought it was the right thing to do. Lawrence Frank and our entire staff really got out ahead of this early, and we didn't know how long -- like no one knew how long we would be in this pandemic when it started. We just knew that conditioning would be a major part played into this. So fortunately for us we got that one right, and it's been great. Our guys have been very involved in it.

The one thing I would say from our players, early on we started doing these Zoom workouts, and they were all in. And so I think if there's appreciation, that would be it. The appreciation more is from me to them instead of the other way around because you can send the equipment -- listen, I've got a ton of equipment at my house, but it also has towels and underwear and other things laying on it. I haven't used it in years. So it's not just about the equipment, it's about the will.

**Q. Doc, once you get to Orlando and you've gone through whatever the 36-hour quarantine is and you get the players, what are your first couple of priorities as you lead up to those first games on July 30th?**

DOC RIVERS: You mean other than finding out which golf courses that are the best three golf courses? I mean, that's a priority. Finding out where I can eat.

Honestly, I would say for us, the biggest priority, for me at least, with our team is conditioning and continuity. I think those are two things.

And then listen, this is going to be a mental toll on everybody, and so I think once we get there, we'll have a better chance of seeing the things that we're going to have to combat to get our guys to create our keep their focus. So I would say those would be the most important things.

**Q. My question is this: Once you guys start up, I was thinking about one of the concerns would be that you need to figure out like how much you'd be able to play these guys because they have been sitting so long. It's like a car; you run it and then all of a sudden you stop it and you want to start it back full throttle. So I was thinking about from an injury perspective how you manage that as a coach and as a staff for your team?**

DOC RIVERS: Yeah, that's probably where I'm going to really lean on our medical staff. It is different a little bit in the fact that usually training camp is four or five days. This time training camp is almost two and a half weeks. So we do get a chance to kind of condition them and get them ready, and thank God for the eight games. Early on I honestly didn't want to play the eight games; I wanted to go straight to the Playoffs and get it on. But in retrospect the league got this one right. I think we do need these games to kind of get right so when we get to the Playoffs, everybody is in full stride.

I think we have enough time, and I think game by game we'll start judging who can play what. I'm hoping every team, not just ours -- really, I want every team to be at full throttle when the Playoffs start. I don't want anybody to use that as an excuse, including us, so I'm hoping by the

time we get to the Playoffs, our key guys can play the minutes that they were playing right before we went out.

THE MODERATOR: That is all for today, Doc. Thank you for joining us, and everyone on the media side, thank you for joining.

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