

Los Angeles Clippers

Media Conference

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Doc Rivers

Press Conference



Q. I want to start by asking you, you're as old as I am, if not older (laughter) --

DOC RIVERS: That's a good way to start this interview.

Q. It's been 400 years of trying to get change. Now that you guys are doing that, how do you reconcile trying to tell your players, your team, other players, the public that just because it hasn't been enough change that you still can't stop, you still have to keep fighting? How do you deal with that, knowing that we're still dealing with these situations?

DOC RIVERS: Well, you know, change doesn't happen a lot of times quickly, either. And I think our players actually kind of learned that over the last couple days, that -- I'm going to start with this, that the players were phenomenal. I was fortunate enough they invited me to sit in on the meetings, and all of them -- there's been so many different reports, but just from a fly on the wall, I was just so impressed with them.

The meeting last night, I was really impressed because you learn a lot of things, number one, that the players and the owners are partners, and it didn't have to be a contentious meeting and it wasn't. It was a discussion about what they needed, what they wanted, and Adam and the owners were on board with most of it or all of it, and even the things that they didn't come to an agreement on, they discussed.

Just to start there was great. But you're right, just because something hasn't happened doesn't mean it can't happen. Like I've always -- don't give in to something that hasn't happened. Keep pushing, keep working.

The key to this thing is that I think we all needed to take a breath. We needed a moment to breathe. It's not lost on me that George Floyd didn't get that moment. But we did. And we took it. And the players took it, and they got to refocus on the things that they wanted to focus on outside of their jobs.

And then they voiced it, they organized it, they got it together, they understood they can't do everything on their own, that we all need help to get things done, and they went out and they got that help, as well.

So again, just the pride to be in the NBA was very high for me. I slept very well last night thinking that our young people spoke, and that was fantastic.

Q. Yesterday you spoke about how emotional it was for your team, like Wednesday night they went from thinking that it was over to Thursday we're playing again, playing for a championship. I mean, it sounds like the world has really kind of changed inside the bubble in the last 48 hours for you guys. What's the challenge of getting back on the court mentally and just refocusing on playing basketball again? Won't it feel different playing on Sunday as opposed to what you guys played the last time you were on the court?

DOC RIVERS: I don't know if it'll feel different or not. What's never lost to me is my job. At the end of the day it's not the NBA's job to solve the world, it's the NBA's job to be part of the world, and so I think we've accomplished that part, but you still have to do your jobs.

You know, I think that today may be a tough day and even whenever we play tomorrow, but will be a tough day practice-wise just to get refocused, but I do think that the couple days off will help in that fact, as well.

Q. Chris Paul today said being in that room specifically on Wednesday night was unlike anything he had ever seen in his 15 years. How would you describe what that feeling was to have all those players and coaches in that room? What was that feeling like for you?

DOC RIVERS: It was awesome, again, and I don't even know that that meeting went well. That meeting had a lot of anger, a lot of voices, a lot of emotion. I think I've learned long ago that emotion is great, being emotional sometimes is not; know what I mean?

But it was out there. We got to hear what people felt and thought. So to me, that was very powerful. That's what I told our guys, the players, that this is a powerful moment.



You guys are learning how powerful you can be, and that I was proud of them.

But then to come back that next morning, it was amazing the difference. They got it out, then they could talk. And then the third meeting, now we could work. I just thought the progression of that was absolutely perfect.

Q. Kind of a couple that are sort of related. You said progress is slow in this stuff, but one of the things players were able to accomplish was a commitment for NBA arenas to be used as polling places. That's already been moving a little bit in that direction, but to get -- we saw Houston yesterday, Utah today. I assume more will come after that. How important was it to see something tangible? And then secondly, you mentioned being a part of the world. Players were on CNN, people are talking now, but in a week or two weeks it's going to be the Conference Finals and the stakes on the court are going to be higher and then it'll be the NBA Finals and the stakes will be higher still. How can that not overshadow the real work, and is that even possible?

DOC RIVERS: I don't know if it's possible or not. I think that's up to the players and it's up to you guys to keep the talk going.

Listen, the stakes are high now for players and coaches. We've had a couple coaches fired after they lost. I don't think anybody that plays the game thinks the stakes aren't high now. But after the game, or whenever you feel like it, you can still speak out, and you don't have to speak out. It's not your job. Some guys choose to. I've always chosen to do it.

But there's no demand like that you have to. I think everybody should do whatever is comfortable in their space, and we can keep doing it. I just think there's so many guys that will that there's no way that their voice will be drowned out during the Finals or the Conference Finals because when you think about it, we have even more media that is there to get our voice out. I think that'll be good.

Q. And the polling places?

DOC RIVERS: It's awesome. I was already on a board for the Election Super Centers project, and that's what we were doing. LeBron has his group. That was the other thing, by the way, that was really cool that people understood. You can all have your different groups, but you can still do it together. That came to fruition last night when we were talking about it. You can use anybody's groups. Miami is working really hard right now. Some of

these things were set already and some have just started, but the tangible things were important. I thought taking the breath was important, just needed a breather. I thought that was important. That was actually tangible for the players. Forming the coalition I thought was fantastic because that's the future, it's not just now. But forming a coalition with coaches and players and ownership and the league and then hiring other people to come in to help work that, I thought it was huge to get that done.

Voting is right now, so we're doing that right now. We've got to get people to vote. Black men -- Black and Brown men have to vote, have to vote, and so the registration -- the suppression right now has never been higher. Our players understood that, and so that's important. And so we've just got to keep moving forward.

And then the George Floyd bill, we've got to get that on the floor. We have to. And so we're going to work to get that done, as well.

Q. In terms of your own team's discussions, I'm sure you weren't part of every single one among the players, but how did those play out from Wednesday night to Thursday morning, and there's been some talk about Kawhi as someone who really spoke out at one point. Who drove those discussions?

DOC RIVERS: I think they all did. We had a long discussion that night in the hallway, but I thought everyone. I thought Lou was fantastic, Kawhi was fantastic. Marcus was absolutely wonderful. There was a lot of guys who talked that night. I was just sitting there trying to get them to talk, and they did. A lot of emotion.

I think the thing I learned as a coach, where I would honestly admit that I didn't see how much effect the bubble has. The bubble has an effect, guys, and I'm the first to say I missed that, so I've got to be better in seeing that, how we can make this experience better for our guys. That's nothing to do with politics or anything else. That's to do with real life.

And so we have to really monitor that better, and I'm the first to say I knew it was hard, but I didn't see the impact. We have to do better there.

Q. Did you leave the meeting Wednesday night thinking the Clippers were going home?

DOC RIVERS: No, no. I did not. No, I think everyone else did, but I just -- I knew how high the emotions were, and I just had a lot of faith that it would all calm down. I guess the report was the Lakers and the Clippers. I think it was close, though. I don't think it was a lay-up either way. But I

did not.

Q. The fact that all the guys got together in a room and how powerful that was, are there plans to do that more often, to have sort of big --

DOC RIVERS: That's a great question. I don't know that. You know what was funny, we talked about that. I remember CP and I talked the first day we got here, and I thought it would be a good idea to do it. This is when nothing was going on, and he told me it was hard to get everybody because all the practice schedules and stuff.

I think it wouldn't be a bad idea to just get the room's feelings. They don't need any coaches there, just them talking I think is very important.

Q. We talk a lot about perspective, but in years to come when history tells the story about these past couple days, what story do you want it to tell?

DOC RIVERS: Oh, man, that's too deep. (Laughter).

You know, I want them to tell the story about what they're speaking about now, that the league is doing something -- whenever that story is told, they're talking about what's happening at that moment, and it started then. The reason I say that, that means they're still doing it.

I'm just hoping it's not a one-hit wonder. This has to continue. And I think that's why the coalition is so important, because this is not about just today. Something is going to happen next week, next month, and we have to have a group in place to understand how to handle that and understand how to help the players process through it.

We have to have a group that is working on legislation all the time, not just U.S. but state to state legislation. I think that's the story that I want told.

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