

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Sam Presti Press Conference



SAM PRESTI: Morning, everybody. Just kind of the idea of today is just to be available given the unique circumstances that we find ourselves in and make sure that we kind of report back a little bit relative to things that are taking place down here, answer any questions you guys might have. I know you've had plenty of time to spend with players and Billy, but I just want to make sure we're doing the same thing with myself given the bubble experience.

So just a couple things to go over to start with. First, I really want to extend our thanks to everybody in Oklahoma. The amount of well wishes that we've received from all over the state, the messages and the encouragement and the camaraderie of the state and the support that we've received, we just really, really appreciate that. I would say keep it coming. I think it's awesome that we've gotten that type of support from our home city and state.

I think it's not lost on anybody that that's what the organization down here -- that we're representing a lot of people, a lot of people that have supported us for a long time, and we're absolutely keeping that in our minds and taking it real seriously.

We just want to make sure that we extend that back to everybody and let them know that we appreciate the amount of well wishes that we're receiving and the support. That's really important to us.

Relative to the bubble itself, I think everybody has heard this. It's been a very good thing. I think obviously the NBA and the event staff that they have -- I also really think that people need a tip of the cap are all the medical techs that have been hired from in and around Florida and the amount of just person power that's descended on the campuses to help keep everybody safe that aren't affiliated with the NBA need a lot of recognition.

I also feel like one of the things about this bubble that when we look back on it I think is going to be really important is that nobody can solve this type of a problem on their own,

and the thing that I think is making this successful is that it's a combination of the teams, the players, as I said, the local medical community and the NBA all kind of working together with a tremendous amount of checks and balances to make it all work together. If it was just one group designing this or solving for this, there's no way that it would work, but in kind of combination and the kind of checks and balances that exist and the fact that everyone is bringing something different to the table, I think is making this somewhat successful for that reason.

And then this tremendous camaraderie that I think is existing within the campus and the bubble, and I'd like to think that the people that are experiencing this will certainly look at everyone that they're going through this with and look at it in like a different light. Will look at them in a different light, in a positive way.

So I just think there's a lot of teamwork that it takes. If you think about the amount of problems that needed to be solved to even get down here at the start, just within our team alone, you know, the amount of equipment that needs to be moved, the safety, the schedules that people have to be on for the regular testing. I just want to tip my cap to our operations and the people that make the trains run on time every single day.

We started with zero. We didn't have anything. And the next thing you know we're getting ready to play a scrimmage on Friday, and as I said before, it's not because like one person is making decisions and people are carrying it out. It's all these people with different expertises that are coming together.

I hope we look back on this as like not just a historic event for the league but a historic event in terms of just teamwork and what that really -- what people can do.

Relative to the break, the last time that I was visiting with you guys, I couldn't predict what it would look like when we got down here, obviously the effect that the break would have on our team. But after the amount of time that I've been able to observe and watch, number one, I think the break has actually really helped us. Our players deserve a tremendous amount of credit. Number one, they're really well-conditioned. They've been excellent in terms of just keeping themselves in shape and maintaining their health, and above all, following the protocols that were set forth



relative to staying safe during the pandemic and just that amount of discipline and the face coverings and the hygiene requirements. They've just been great, and that's put them in a really strong position to come down here and have continuity as a group of guys that want to get back on the court. So a lot of credit goes to them.

The other thing is we have guys that have certainly gotten better, and I'm excited to see a lot of our guys because essentially they've had what amounts to a little bit of an off-season, and for younger players in our organizational history, we've seen the rapid development that can take place at different times. I think Shai has improved, I think Hami has improved, Baz has improved, Ferg, down the line. Our younger players have put their time in. They haven't been able to play five-on-five and now they've got to take those skills and put them into practice, but I'm excited to watch the group. I think the group has gotten stronger through the hiatus.

Another thing that I think is important is that just the focus level that our group has brought down here has been, I think, also a positive. Now, we have to be able to put that together day in and day out, but the group kept itself engaged throughout the hiatus. I think everyone was expecting to play and wanting to play, and that is a credit to the type of guys that we have, and I think the coaches have done an excellent job in this way.

I think one of the things, if I could point a few things out about the job that Billy has done, I think he's done an excellent job in -- I'm not one for -- I'm not usually one for individual awards, but I really think that he needs to be heavily considered to be Coach of the Year. I think he's done an excellent job, and I think the way that he's gone through the hiatus especially, because he's just tried to control the things that he can control.

I think in a lot of situations when you're given a lot of time, you can like overdo it with planning for things that make you feel good but probably aren't really relatively applicable because you don't know what the conditions are. So taking the opportunity to kind of prepare for keeping the group fresh yet engaged, almost in neutral, so when we get here we can start to put some things in place, I think they've done an excellent job in that way, and that takes patience.

Yeah, I just think that they've done an excellent job in that respect. When we got to -- when we were talking at the beginning of the season, we talked a lot about wanting to play meaningful games, and that was kind of what our focus was, and that's what our goal was. We're in position to do that. We're in position to do that, and I think the players deserve a ton of credit because Dave really embraced kind of a process-based mentality, and I think it's

really reflected the mindset of the group and the organization, and I think they've put themselves in position, especially with the format of this situation, to not have any limit on the expectations for what the team can accomplish in this type of a setting.

You know, it's a very unique setup. It's probably a once-in-a-lifetime environment to play in because of the way everything is designed down here. I think it's really a flat competition, in a positive way, and I'm looking forward to watching the team compete because they've really -- they've built themselves into a really well-rounded team. I think we should be really excited. I know everybody within our organization, the people down here are optimistic about what we feel like we can accomplish if we maintain the same kind of day-to-day approach and commitment to what makes teams function on a high level, not just in this environment but just in basketball in general.

The other thing that obviously really helps us, I feel, in this environment is having somebody like Chris, I think having like a real strong player leadership component in this environment is going to be a big advantage. Whether that's -- we know the guys that are capable of raising the performance of their teammates that have intense craftsmanship to what they do. We've had players like that. I actually just saw Russell this morning when I was coming back from a workout, and I think players like a Westbrook, players like a Chris Paul, players like LeBron, I think those guys -- I'm excited to watch the greatness of these types of individuals in this setting because this is -- one thing that I think everybody that's a competitor really wants to see any time is they want a fair playing field, and I think that's exactly what this is.

I think it's flat. I think the general advantages that certain teams might have, those things are limited here. Everyone has got the same amount of people here. Everybody has got the same conditions. Everyone is eating the same food, sleeping in the same type of hotels. I think it's great. And I think that's where you're going to see these tremendous leaders really shine, and I think Chris is going to do a great job for us in that way, and I think he's already done a great job for us. I'm excited to watch him and the other guys compete in this type of environment.

And then the other thing, I think organizationally, we've always taken the approach of don't expect to be given much, and we don't really ask for a whole lot other than kind of a fair playing field, and I think we'll adapt well to this type of environment, knowing that it's going to be -- we're going to have to have the same kind of process-based approach and take a longer view to make sure we're playing our best basketball as we get into the postseason, but I just think the players have done a great job and

they've got a great camaraderie amongst each other and they've been able to recapture that in a short amount of time, and I just want to acknowledge the work that they've done. They've done a great job. I'm happy for them, and the coaching staff has done a great job, as well, and lastly in this type of environment, our medical staff getting through the hiatus and the pandemic and keeping not just our players safe but also our staff, as well, with all the education that they've levied on us.

We're excited, and we don't want to lose sight of the other things that are critical, obviously, at this time relative to all of the social justice endeavors, the league's undertaking, everybody in general, and then obviously the absolute imperative for people to wear masks back home and take care of one another during this type of environment that's taking place all over the country.

But we're also going to kind of do our best down here to represent the city and the state that we come from, and we're really excited about what's in front of us knowing that it's probably a once-in-a-lifetime situation that we're going to be representing Oklahoma.

With that, I'll take any questions that you guys might have about anything.

Q. Given the team travel party limits, I was wondering, how did you decide to make the trip to Orlando, and why was it important for you to be there?

SAM PRESTI: Well, I mean, I think at the end of the day we have to have -- there was one required position for an executive. So initially I wasn't sure -- we really put the medical group first. Obviously if you can get through your coaching staff -- number one, they use this term essential staff. I wouldn't say that they're like -- I think everyone that works for the organization is essential in their own way, so I wouldn't say that just people that are here are essential. We have a lot of really quality work being done in Oklahoma right now that is leading downstream to things here.

But to me, I just felt like it was important to be with the group. Listen, we're in an era currently where there's unemployment at a significant high, an economic crisis that is shaping up and a health crisis, and we also have social issues that are challenging our country in ways that we haven't seen.

So I don't think that we're making like a tremendous -- I don't want to make it seem like we're making some type of tremendous sacrifice by being down here, but being away from people's families for an elongated period of time is a sacrifice, and I just felt -- and I think that a lot of people feel

like there's going to be a lot of people making that sacrifice, and I'm happy to do that with the people that are here because I think that's part of the deal.

I also feel one of the things we've talked about as a traveling party of people, players included, is when you go through something like this together where there is separation involved from people you love and you're in an environment where you really don't have a lot of control, that's when I think the best in people emerges. We're going to learn things about each other, and we're going to see sides of each other that I think are extraordinarily human. I think it's going to be a tremendous thing for this group of people to look back on and say, we went through this kind of as a unit, and we're going to look at each other differently as a result of that, and I think you see the best in people when they're in a situation like this because they have to work together, they become more tolerant, they become more generous because you really need each other.

You know, I love the people I work with. I don't love them more than the people in my house right now who I FaceTime five times a day, but we're doing it together, and it's part of what we have to do right now, and we're going to -- to use an "Annie" reference, the sun is going to come out tomorrow, because I heard you guys bantering about "Annie." We're going to make each one of these days an opportunity to learn each other better, to know each other better, to take care of one another and look back on this and say that this was a good experience for the team.

Q. I wanted you to expand a little bit if you could about Billy Donovan being a Coach of the Year contender. You mentioned him in passing, but just -- I don't know the expectations for the Thunder weren't that high from the outside coming into this season. Looking at the position you're in now, what specifically has he done to put you here?

SAM PRESTI: Well, I hope it wasn't in passing. I tried to be as direct as I could. I think he needs to be heavily considered for Coach of the Year. I'll say it again. You know, relative to the expectations coming into the season -- the thing I would always say is for us, the scorecard that matters the most is the one that we're keeping inside. I do think that a lot of the expectations were probably based off the fact that a lot of people expected us to pivot off the team and not to finish maybe with the roster that we had initially.

And that's why I said at the beginning of the year, like we want to be in a position to play meaningful games, and if we're in that position, then we're going to -- we're going to see what this team can do.

All that being said, like not at the expense of the long-term interest of our team going forward, but we felt like we were able to do that. If we wanted to pivot off the team in November, there was plenty of guys on our team that other people in the league would love to have. So I think that's part of it.

I think the other thing is all the change that came about. I think Billy has done a great job relative to really letting the guys play, giving them space and freedom. I think he's done a good job being creative with the ball handlers that we have and how to put those guys together. I think he's been consistent every single day, as he has been in the past. And just I think tactically, I think he's a good problem solver, and presented with some unique players and things of that nature, he got to know them pretty quickly. So I think really learning Chris's game, figuring out how to put him in positions to be successful.

One other thing that's really tricky is when you have a player like Steven Adams who you've seen for so long, it's hard to reimagine that player. But Steven Adams is demonstrating he's a fantastic passer. You can put the ball in his hands and he can make pretty good decisions. I think that's a hard thing to do is to see players you've had and see them in a different light as a result of other players, but I think that's one of Billy's strengths.

I also think that the things I was saying about playing meaningful games, it's the same type of stuff I've probably been saying for nine or ten years that everyone tunes me out when I say it, because that's just how we do things. And so we're going to take a process-based approach. We're going to be pretty reasoned. We're not going to get too excited when things are going well. We're not going to panic when things are not going well. We're going to value things that probably don't show up in the box score all the time. And we're not going to lose our minds and be impulsive at any point in time.

There's probably over a decade of history of that. Honestly, I don't think we've done anything different. I do think this team particularly has really, really taken a day-by-day approach. I do think they've come together in a way because there's a lot of unique circumstances that have all aligned at one time, and it's a special team. It really is. I really want this team to perform well down here because I think that they've tried to do the right things.

But I would say the approach that we've taken is the same, but it just goes to show you how random NBA years are. Chris obviously is -- I mean, has there been a more impactful player for his team this year? I don't know. He's performed at a high level, but he's also enhanced the

player of those around him. He's kept a steady hand on the ship throughout.

Just a lot of different contributors, and Billy is absolutely in the very front of that group.

Q. Dre is on the verge of making his way back, and you've obviously been part of this journey yourself and watching him and his rehab process. What are your emotions kind of watching him nearing this point, and what are your expectations for him as he hopefully gets back on the court?

SAM PRESTI: You know, I mean, my emotions -- when you're around Andre like we've been around him, you get to see somebody that arrives in their early 20s, and they just mature before your eyes. They develop into -- that's one of the things I love most about my job. I said that to Steven the other day when I wished him happy birthday. Steve showed up when he was 19 years old, and I'm looking at him, and not only is he a bigger person, but he's just a developing adult in a way that he wasn't when I first met him. Dre is the same way.

Dre, to me with Dre, he's what's right about everything in sports and in teams, and the way you know that is when things are not going right for you, you can still be totally invested in the team. I think that's a real form of mental toughness is that you can still be committed to the team and what's best for the team, even when your situation is either being affected or it's not going the way you want it to go.

I'm happy for him. We still have some ways to go to get to that point. We've been down this path a little bit before, and unfortunately have had some setbacks. But his quest is a testament to me as to why he's a great defender.

I hadn't really thought about this until just now, but the thing that makes Dre a great defender is when someone scores on him, it doesn't deter him from the next possession. He doesn't get disrupted when things don't go his way. You can play great defense on one of these great players in the NBA, they're going to score on you. It's the same thing with this. When you suffer an injury like this, there's going to be setbacks, and probably in his case there's more than you would have hoped. But that hasn't deterred him. He's had low moments. He's had moments where he thought he was right there. But nothing makes you more happy than when you can see him on the floor doing the things that he does.

I know, listen, you've got to really watch what he does. If you're just casually watching Andre, you don't get it. But if you're truly watching and you know what to watch for, this

guy, he impacts winning. He just doesn't do it in a way that most people like expect, want or feel is easy to see. But he impacts winning. He does it in ways that his teammates recognize and his coaches realize, and he understands what it means to be part of a team. And he's an essential part of that in my opinion because of his -- just his innate understanding about how teams function and how they work. I don't think you can necessarily teach that. I just think he's got great instincts, and I'm really happy for him, and I want to see him perform well.

Q. Sam, you talked glowingly about Billy. Sounds like you want him to return as coach. I was curious how that's going and whether the condensed off-season, the true off-season we're about to have, does that mean you have to do some of the talks with Billy during the season or while you're in Orlando?

SAM PRESTI: Not necessarily. Like we've said before, our hope is that we'll have those conversations when the season is over. Nothing has changed with that.

And again, I think we've always been one to kind of take care of the things that are in front of us, and then when we get to the end of the year, we'll sit down and we'll figure out what's best for him, what's best for us. But I think a big part of it right now is just kind of embracing the situation that we have in front of us.

I don't know, honestly. I can't predict the future. I know kind of the way we've approached it and how I'm looking at it, but at the end of the day, we have to take care of what's in front of us right now and then we'll get to that at the appropriate time and handle it like we handle everything else.

Q. You heard my "Annie" story earlier, did you?

SAM PRESTI: Yeah, I heard the "Annie" banter. Anyone that heard me quote "Annie" probably if taken out of context will think I'm the "Annie" fan and not somebody on the call, but that's all right, those are the risks you take in today's world.

Q. Piggy-backing off the expectations coming into the season, you said y'all pivoted in November or early in the season and could have traded some guys. Why didn't you all pivot? Why does this team remain intact?

SAM PRESTI: I just think that when you're in the NBA, if you've done it long enough, you realize that there's a significant amount of randomness that takes place in the NBA every single year, and you've got to give -- I don't think -- I think you've got to give the opportunity for the

team to figure itself out.

You know, I'll be totally transparent with you guys; obviously it didn't mean that there wasn't at some point in time something that would have made us do that. Of course. But I just think our value proposition on trying to see what could take place with this team, because you do have Chris Paul, who's one of the premier point guards in history, you know, letting that take its shape.

Now, there's -- like I said before, there's a lot of things that have to go right in order for things to come together, but I think we decided that this team needed the opportunity to see if that could take place, and to their credit, they've developed themselves from the start to now into a pretty fully formed team that has to play as a team, but when they do, they're really difficult to beat.

But yeah, at any point in time, every single team in the league is always looking to improve or get better. I think we just valued the opportunity to see if this team could play in meaningful games higher than the things that maybe other people were willing to present to us during different points in time in the season. That's just kind of the way we looked at it, and the team is -- I think the team has rewarded themselves and the fans, giving them something to root for, and playing in a way that people can get behind. I don't think it's more complicated than that.

Q. Obviously you probably knew about this before Dennis told us, but just your reaction when you found out that Dennis Schroder was going to leave the bubble for the birth of his second child, and whatever the team has been talking about in terms of an exit strategy for Dennis and then a return strategy, whenever that may be, and you also kind of talked about your thoughts on Billy being up there for Coach of the Year. What do you think of Dennis's chances for Sixth Man of the Year?

SAM PRESTI: Yeah, glad you asked that question. We usually generally don't do a whole deal on the award front or politic for the award thing, but I do think Dennis has done an excellent job.

The thing about Dennis that I think -- I'm not talking about the bubble a second. The thing with Dennis is doesn't get enough recognition is that his willingness to accept the role itself is in and of itself a tremendous quality because he has the ability to be a starter and has been a starter, but he's a big reason why the team is functioning at such a high level, because he's willing to be that guy that comes off the bench and becomes the third ball handler. That could be any of those guys, obviously, but he's been excelling at that, and I think he's playing his best basketball

of his career because he's settled into that. He's all about trying to do what's right for the team right now, and he's just an elite competitor. He's an elite competitor. I'm happy that he's playing so well, and I hope he does get recognized for it.

Now, I know I'm biased in all my points of view, but obviously I can't pretend I'm not. I see what these guys do every day, but I know there's a lot of other people out there that feel that way about the people they work with. So don't hold that against me.

With respect to what I felt or what I thought when he told me that, I was -- I would say if he told me he wasn't, I told him I would have told him to leave. Of course he should do that. Of course he should be there for that. That's much more important than any basketball game at any point in time. We totally support him, and we'll work through the logistics of that with the league and make sure that we have a good plan for it. But we're totally supportive of whatever Dennis decides to do in that respect, and that's not rhetoric.

If he told us he didn't feel comfortable coming to the bubble, we wouldn't have batted an eye. In these times -- I think any time but especially in these times, family is the most important thing, and I totally understand where his heart is, and it's where it should be. It doesn't surprise me at all because I know how much Dennis's family means to him, and we'll find a way to do this for him.

Look, the team has been adaptable throughout the year. This is going to be an opportunity for a few games for somebody else to step in and play a little bit differently. I actually think that's been a strength of the team is just being thrown some situations and having to adapt and adjust. That's how you get a fully formed team like we've got.

We'll make the most of it, but most importantly Dennis needs to be there, and we're going to make sure he gets there in plenty of time and has the time he needs with his family.

Q. What book are you currently reading? And second, can you talk about what your daily regimen is during the bubble life? Obviously I'm assuming it's a little bit different than what you normally would do if you're back here in Oklahoma City. How has it changed? What do you normally do? And of course what book are you currently reading?

SAM PRESTI: Well, I generally read like a lot of things at one time. I don't -- I kind of dabble a little bit. But there's a book called "Lyndon Johnson and the Senate," it's written

by Robert Caro. It's a hefty read. It's one of those books where my wrist gets tired before my eyes. I'm working my way through that. But it's really good. It's a three-part series on Lyndon Johnson that he wrote, and he also wrote "The Power Broker" about Robert Moses and New York. I was kind of interested in learning about Lyndon Johnson, so that's kind of the most -- I was reading that this morning.

In terms of the regimen, what's interesting, because the way the NBA has done it, it changes kind of every day what time you practice. You don't get control over that. So it's really hard to get into kind of a regular routine. You kind of adjust. It's relatively the same. I wake up early and I work out, I do some reading, try to make a dent into that Robert Caro book, and just do some journaling. Those things will always be consistent with me.

The other thing that's really fascinating is we have a whole aspect of our operation that is operating full tilt back in Oklahoma. We have more people back in Oklahoma than we do in Orlando, so really staying connected to Rob Hennigan and Will Dawkins and Amanda Green, who are really doing an excellent job kind of leading that effort back home, making sure each one of those pillars continues to stay organized and help us down here.

Your day is kind of adjusted with all these different -- testing, practice, different procedures you've got to go through.

One thing I've really enjoyed and really think this is a great thing is getting to see all the different people from the NBA, meaning the other teams. We haven't been able to move around the campus yet, but we have Indiana and Orlando and Brooklyn and Houston -- I just saw Russell this morning. I see Mike D'Antoni about 70 times a day because there's like this little patch of asphalt that you can run on -- because you can't go anywhere. It's very -- so he walks. He's walking every morning, and I'm jogging, and we just kind of -- if anyone has seen European vacation where they drive around the rotary and he goes, Big Ben, Parliament, that's how I feel with Mike; it's like, at what point do you stop waving and saying hi? It's like the 10th time I've seen him in the last four minutes.

But I've gotten to spend time with Sean Marks, which I haven't gotten to do since he was a player with the Spurs. I had a great visit, like I said, with Russell. I get to see Elton Brand later today. Getting to know everybody in a different way has been really cool. I saw Lance Thomas this morning, Jeff Green the other day. I showed Jeff Green -- I found a picture during the hiatus of myself, Clay Bennett, Kevin Durant and Jeff Green, the draft press conference holding up the jerseys. Every single one of us looks 40 years younger. I sent it to Jeff, and he got a kick

out of it. We were just reminiscing about some of those early days.

You know, like I said before, you put everybody in an environment like this, the human side of everyone comes out, because you've lost control over a lot of other things.

So you get to learn a lot about people, which I think is really positive. That's the optimistic point of view that I'm giving you, which is the way I believe you've got to take these things, especially in a leadership position.

Q. There's been a lot of talk about Shai's development. Can you go back about a year ago and talk us through what you thought his ceiling was, what type of player he was at the time that you acquired him, and how that's changed now and where you think his ceiling is and what kind of player he could be for this team going forward?

SAM PRESTI: Sure. So one thing I'd say is we're really careful about making like really concrete, like, estimations or evaluations on players until we get them. I just think you've got to give everybody a clean canvas. That would be for people and/or players because I like to think that we're going to evaluate people on their own merits.

There's no way you can really know about a player or a person for that matter until you're with them every day in your environment. So we knew he was extraordinarily talented and we had watched him, but that's worth a cup of coffee until you actually have somebody and observe their work habits and the way they interact within the organization and the team, their true skill level.

I will say that we had some open gym sessions over the summer. I remember Chris was there because he had come in and that's when everyone started coming like around to play, and we were in the blue building because our -- the Ion building was being -- the floor was getting finished.

And I watched -- it's the first time I really got to settle in and watch him closely since he was at Kentucky, you know. He made a couple finishes around the basket that really got my -- really kind of sat me up a little bit. I think it was standing up, but it kind of jolted me a little bit, and I realized he's on the way up. Like there's some crafty, some finesse parts of his game that you're starting to see or maybe uncover a little bit that you didn't realize before.

What he's done during the hiatus, though, has been another one of those because physically he's put a lot of time into his body. He looks a little different physically, which helps, obviously for him. His play making is

improving. But I wouldn't put a ceiling on the player because I think that -- or even an estimation because so many things play into that. It's who they're playing with, it's opportunity, it's work ethic, it's their ability to stay focused and avoid distractions. He's hitting all the marks right now, and these next two or three summers are going to be huge vaults for him.

But he's just been excellent in every way since we've had him. But again, I don't want to pretend like we know anything or we knew anything. People ask me when we had Sabonis how much I thought he'd play, and I didn't know how much he'd play, but he started at the 4 because we had Steven, and that was the best way to get him on the floor as a winning player.

So again, Bazley, we didn't know how much he'd play, so kind of let everybody develop on their own merits only to say that opportunity matters. Got to have opportunity. You have to earn it, but if you get opportunity, guys generally start to improve and settle in and grow a little bit, and Shai is doing that. I think he's going to do that for quite a while.

Q. Sam, you spoke about your staff back in OKC and I know you're used to having a distributed workforce throughout the year where you've got scouts and people all over the world and then the team on the road. But just curious if you guys have had to adjust your processes and the things that the organization is doing during all of this and maybe what's stood out to you about the way that your staff has adapted to all these challenges.

SAM PRESTI: Well, when we started out, I think I said this the last time I did the press, the number one focus for us coming into the hiatus was taking care of one another as people, checking on each other, making sure everyone had the necessary support, and I want to add one thing. I'll get back to you -- it kind of fits into it. One of the great things that's taking place right now for our organization is for those of us that are down in Orlando, the people that are providing a tremendous amount of support to a lot of our families that are back home are our coworkers' families, which to me you always want -- at least for me, I can only speak for our organization, we want our teams to reflect the mentality and the philosophy and the culture of the organization at large, and the amount of teamwork that's taking place and empathy and compassion that's taking place back in Oklahoma City by people doing errands for one another, dropping masks off for people, getting -- if someone needs children's masks, someone from the organization, being able to go over and drop that off because it's child care is challenging during this period of time given that we're in COVID times. So people relying on each other to me is just another example of the teamwork

that's necessary to have a really good basketball team and to have a really good organization. You have to demonstrate that off the floor, as well, and we're doing that at a really high level.

So I think just continuing to let that shine through, and I think what we're doing is important. I do think the other thing, to answer your question, is obviously we've had much more virtual on everything. I think we've put a huge focus on efficiency, and also the quality of value work and the ability to work and solve problems longer term that can kind of create downstream value for the organization.

You know, when you go through something like this, it's easy to take stock and go, okay, what are the projects that we never got to. The question is what are the things that we're currently doing that we need to stop doing. Like it's not about we didn't get -- the way we're looking at it is it's not about what we didn't get to, it's what are we currently doing and what could we do with that time that could produce for value for our team and our organization. There's things that we've looked at in every aspect of the program where I think there's some things that have become antiquated, ways in which we can make automate things or eliminate things altogether, ways in which we can become more efficient economically or even with the environment with some of the paper use that we're looking at.

We are learning so much from this pandemic. We have to be willing to take that with us because I don't know that we're going to go back, any of us, to the way things were done previously, and that's okay. But we have to have really open minds about the things we're learning right now. They're not temporary.

And then the other thing is just the reality that nothing can be done by yourself. Everything is -- like I said earlier, the bubble doesn't come about because somebody came up with it in the NBA events team. It comes about because there's checks and balances that are taking place, and everyone -- nobody's extreme opinions are -- like they're being modified by kind of the wisdom of a lot of different people's experiences, and the NBA is not only asking for opinions from the teams but they're listening. There's things that the NBA doesn't know about how to put together the team aspects of this, and I can tell you, the teams don't understand the business interests of the NBA well enough because that's not what our focus is. Our focus isn't on the business interests. Our focus is on building teams and environments and developing people.

It's been an interesting thing. I think the Thunder ourselves have had to look at that closely, and that's a positive thing. I think we'll become a stronger organization as a result of

this. I don't know that our values are changing. I think we'll double down on those. But I think the way in which we get to that will be important.

The last thing I'd add is that we always talk about building a legacy as an organization, and I think that we want to reflect back and say that we didn't just kind of float through this but we were very intentional about how we wanted to go through this as a group of people, first and foremost, and it's going to be a point on our timeline. It's going to be a big one, I think, because I think the pandemic is framing up everything that takes place right now. I mean, we're going to see it through the eyes of this health crisis that we're encountering. But there will be positive things that come from this. I think the time to think is super helpful.

Q. Sam, you said that this is a once-in-a-lifetime situation being down in the bubble. However, if we don't see a major change with the health of this country say around November, December, how much of a chance is there that you guys could be right back there at the start of next season?

SAM PRESTI: I don't -- that's a great question, and I'm happy you kind of pointed that out because as I was saying it to myself I felt like that could come across -- you could kind of pick that apart and not in a negative way, but it's a natural question I'd ask. Well, there's 30 teams in the league, so there's definitely not going to be a 22-team bubble. I would lean on the league for what their plans are in the event that we are in a situation where we need to do a more isolated type of competition. We don't know when the season would start, et cetera, et cetera.

What we're going to do, though, I believe is take a lot of the learnings from this experience in Orlando in all facets and probably throw them into the future to figure out the most effective way to manage in the event that we're playing without fans.

If anything, I think we should have a lot of confidence that as a collection of teams and the league itself we've demonstrated the ability to problem solve at a relatively high level, and a lot of this will help us. I don't know exactly what the answer to your question will be. I don't believe it's all going to be in one place, if that were the case, because we ruled out the idea of having 30 teams here. So I don't believe that, to answer your question, I don't think you could do this again because you'd have to have 30 teams, and we said you couldn't do that with 30 teams here.

But this falls under the auspices of you just can't plan yourself into a pretzel. We have to wait for things to evolve and see where things are at season's end and make our future decisions from there. We don't know where -- we

don't understand or have a better handle on where the virus will be. We don't know how the bubble experiment will go. We just know it's going well to this point, but every day is a new day and new situations occur.

So I think we've got to be really careful about making any -- in anything we're doing right now, like I couldn't tell you the future of pretty much anything because so much is reliant on what's happening with the pandemic and the effect it's having on people and the economy and all the different things that the country is going through.

I don't know what the answer would be to that. I think we probably need to let things unfold and then make the best decisions once we have that information.

Q. Sam, just to follow up on the Dennis Schroder topic, has he indicated that he wants to come back later on after he leaves, or is that still to be determined?

SAM PRESTI: You know what I'd say is absolutely conversations with him have been super positive and collaborative and productive. This is a topic, obviously, we knew when we were talking about in advance of even coming down here. But again, it's such a moving situation with the league has to develop these protocols, and they couldn't give us any answers until we got down here. That's fine with us. We all have to be team players in this.

One thing -- let me finish the answer on Dennis. We'll see what happens. We're not going to hold him to anything that he says. If he changes his mind in some way, shape or form, that's okay. But I think he'd like to make sure he's there, and he needs to spend the time he needs with his family, and when he's ready to play basketball again, come back and quarantine for the amount of time they tell us he has to quarantine. It's not our decision. And get back on the court.

I think that's his intention, but listen, we're in the middle of a health crisis, and we're not holding anyone to anything. We have to be flexible and adaptable and amenable to things as they come across.

One thing that I learned when I was -- I learned a lot of things when I was in San Antonio with Gregg Popovich and R.C. Buford, but one of the things Pop instilled really early in my career was expect nothing, ask for nothing. That's a good thing to say to a 22-year-old intern. And I think that's kind of like been our approach down here. We came down here with no expectations and no entitlements, and you're not going to hear the Thunder asking for a lot of things or requiring a lot of amenities. We have more than we need. We can get the job done with anything that they provide us

because it's the same thing everybody else is getting.

When we came down here, we came down here to see if we could do this and to hold the mentality of the organization in place so that we could come down here and play good basketball. But when it comes to Dennis's situation, we're not going to ask him to do anything. We don't expect him to do anything, other than what's best for him, and irrespective what the result is, we're going to make it work as we have all year, and we're not going to let anything kind of get in the way of that.

People first, obviously, in this situation, but environmentally here, we have the conditions to be successful. I'm not going to invoke the New Zealand philosopher Steven Adams to make my point, but we're fine, and whatever gets thrown at us I think we've always found a way to use that as a strength, and that's what we'll do.

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