

WNBA Media Conference

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WNBA Commissioner

Cathy Engelbert

Press Conference

CATHY ENGELBERT: Thank you, Ron. Thank you to everyone for joining this call. It seems like it was just yesterday, yet in some ways like years ago that we were tipping off the season; and thank you for everyone to helping make the season at IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida, possible.

I hope you all are staying healthy and safe. That's number one. As you know, that was our number one objective here as well. As the Seattle Storm and Las Vegas Aces get ready to face off against each other in The Finals, I've been reflecting a lot on what we were faced with when we first held our virtual draft in April, the tireless effort that went in to getting us to this point, so many unsung heroes, too many to name here.

But here we are on the eve of the Finals, where Seattle becomes the seventh team in WNBA history to earn four Finals berths. The Aces, led by 2020 MVP A'ja Wilson are heading to their first WNBA Finals as an Aces organization.

This is our No. 1 and No. 2 seed playing for a championship. I couldn't be more pleased with the state of the game in the face of enormous challenges this year.

I want to express my gratitude, especially to our owners and teams, for their unwavering support and leadership in the face of adversity to their businesses. We can't forget about them. A big thank you to Nneka Ogumike, the president, the EC of the Players Association, Terri Jackson, players, coaches, staff for their enormous sacrifice and dedication to making this season a success both in the game and outside the game because that was important.

Then our medical professionals, the true unsung heroes, and I think the players have all gotten to know them, including our player health and safety colleagues, and all those on site who are keeping everyone healthy and safe -- our medical director, the testers, the infectious disease specialists we've been conferencing with, the nurses on site in our medical clinic. They've put in so many hours, and their work is not done until the day we leave here. So,

a special shout out to them.

IMG Academy -- I mean, to pull something like this off, you have to have a great partnership with the host, and that was IMG Academy, and their hospitality for serving as the home for the 2020 season has been amazing.

ESPN for their enormous agility and support, CBS too, NBA-TV, Twitter, Facebook, Oculus, which we signed during this unprecedented season, and just really unprecedented coverage. Enhanced coverage, as many of you who follow us know, has been a really important part of driving visibility for women's sports and women's basketball and for our players.

A special shout out to our WNBA Changemakers, AT&T, Deloitte, and Nike. This season wouldn't have been possible without them either. When we talk about companies supporting women, these should be at the top of everyone's list. We also had support this unique season while we were here in 'the Wubble' from partners like Mountain Dew and Kinsa Thermometer and Oura Ring. In addition, AT&T has been amazing, hosting a weekly She's Connected series and gifting the players 5G phones and Macs, which comes in handy when you're in a bubble.

Quite frankly, to all of you, for your continuing coverage of the league. I know there were many competing sports, many topics going on. So, we greatly appreciate your dedication to the WNBA and especially highlighting our social justice efforts which were so important.

I do want to take this opportunity to share insights around COVID-19 and our season outcomes, including our social justice initiatives, because this is supposed to be a State of the League address. First and foremost, I'm incredibly proud that we've reached this point and accomplished what we did related to COVID-19 health and safety. That, again, was our principal number one. Although we're not done yet, we're in pretty good shape so far.

I wanted to share a few numbers to bring to what we saw this season to light. First, 97. By the end of The Finals, we'll have been at the IMG Academy for about 97 days. That's a huge sacrifice for so many. 132, that was the number of regular season games. Zero positive COVID-19 cases for players and team staff during the regular season and playoffs, but as I warned before, every day resets to



zero. There's no resting on the protocols or past success here. I know you'll have some questions on that.

The health and safety measures got us here, and it led to 87 nationally televised games. Here's one of the stats I love – 83.1 record-setting points per game, so the quality of the play on the court was amazing.

Then kind of off the court to try to draw in new fans, which you know is part of our pillars of the strategy, 30 percent increase in cross-platform average action for social posts, 68 percent increase in regular season average viewership across all networks, and thanks in great part to a big increase in games on the ESPN Network and the first ever WNBA game on the CBS Television Network.

We also look at innovation. I think I told some of you, when we kicked off this season, a crisis tends to accelerate or deepen issues that existed before the crisis, but it also has a chance to innovate. So, we look for some innovation during a challenging season.

Without fans in the arena, we piloted a Tap to Cheer feature in our app, as we thought about how to provide some transformative value of a second screen experience, with everybody working from home. So, Tap to Cheer started off well right away. I hope some of you went into our app. It led to an 85 percent increase year over year in average weekly mobile app downloads. We had 109 million total taps, 109 million -- just reflect on that for the WNBA -- showing opportunity again for second screen engagement.

So key matchups and loyal fan bases further fueled that engagement. The Las Vegas Aces alone had 22 million taps over the season from their fans, and our highest single game had over 5.6 million taps, which coincidentally was the September 13 matchup between the Aces and the Storm.

Then we further evolved Tap to Cheer, which we still have a lot of innovation to do at the start of the playoffs, with the launch of a new voting feature which allows fans to vote on their MVP or player of the game, and as a result, engagement -- we have kind of some key performance indicators. Those increased. 22 percent increase in unique visitors during the playoffs; 118 percent increase in total taps; and 35 percent increase in average time spent on the app per game.

This was all made possible, again, by our 12 teams, their dedicated coaching staff, our medical team, all 144 of the fearless women, moms, and athletes that represent what we put on the court every night.

So those numbers are just a glimpse of what the season has meant, I think, for the future of the league. It was not easy, and there's no doubt in my mind, and hopefully the players' minds, that it was 100 percent worth it.

With that, this season brought the WNBA together in one place, the entire league for the first time, never been done before, an entire league. I think we are stronger, a stronger community, and the players have a louder and stronger voice. This may prove the ability to lead during difficult times.

So, I think the WNBA players have continued to speak out against the lack of accountability and injustice in our country. I know they wore Breonna Taylor on the back of their jersey. They continued the Say Her Name throughout the season. Each week we dedicated that to a different female victim and really a voice for the voiceless. We're encouraged by the Say Her Name movement that was launched in connection with the African American Policy Forum.

Again, these recent events reminded us that there's so much work to be done, but that the WNBA players have led for many years on this. With the Social Justice Council now launched and the WNBA's social justice movement now established, this is not a one and done for this league. This is a strategy that will continue in the off-season to amplify players' voices. So, really proud of that.

We're poised to continue building on the momentum. We're already scenario planning for next year. I'm sure some of you will have questions on that, but we're just stepping back, grateful for our terrific partners, looking forward to seeing more values-driven companies join us to continue the momentum for the WNBA because we need it.

So, now as we get ready to tip off the conclusion of the season and crown the champion, we'll look at how we can commemorate the upcoming 25th -- what I call the Silver Anniversary season for the WNBA and really looking forward to moving on to that once we crown our champion.

With that, thank you again for all your support and coverage. It's really important at this moment in time for these players and for the league. I will open it up.

Q. Hey, Cathy. Thanks so much for your time today. As you had said earlier, this season has been really intense and also very long and very short. I'm curious how often you step back to appreciate what the players shouldered this season, not just in term of the 22 regular season games over 50 days, but organizing the way they have -- the voting initiative, the social



justice advocacy work, kind of the mental, emotional, and physical toll involved and taken on by all of the players this year.

CATHY ENGELBERT: Thanks for the question. I've been reflecting all season on the heavy, almost burden, I think, that has been placed on the shoulders of these players, not only playing during a global pandemic but during a time of civil unrest, in a time when racial injustice is front and center, something, again, I believe our players were advocating for well before this summer and coming in. So, yes, heavy burden.

I think being all together in one place, particularly during that time where the players took those two days off as days of reflection about what action and how their voice could be shaped and really reflecting on what strategy they should employ going forward to make sure they could be part of change and a strong voice in that. So, I definitely think they did feel heavily burdened, even coming into the season.

I think hopefully we helped provide a healthy and safe environment to play the game they love and that they're great at, the best professional basketball players in the world, but they'll continue to take the burden of the social justice platform with them. And what I think we've done is created kind of this combination of competition and community that they can take into their off-season, that we can continue to help lead the league, facilitate their actions, like you said, around voting, but, again, many of them, as you know, are also advocating for criminal justice reform and gun reform and LGBTQ+ and a variety of other things that they're passionate about.

So, we'll continue to support that, and again, use the Social Justice Council and its outside advisers to drive the next steps on that. We're working on that. And Bethany Donaphin, who is our Head of Basketball and League Operations here at the League has been instrumental in helping the players think through what they're doing and partnering with the Players Association as well.

Q. Cathy, thanks so much for taking the time today. Just with everything that's going on, I know a lot of the players have been speaking to various therapists or speaking to other people just to work on their mental health and make sure their mental health is still in check. I know that's something that you also championed at the beginning of the season. I'm not sure if it's the conversation that you and I had personally or from another conference that we had, but just throughout the season, have there been any players who reached out to you just to discuss, aside from Nneka or Layshia, have there been any players

who reached out to you personally during the season to discuss what's going on and what the league is doing to sort of support?

CATHY ENGELBERT: As you know, one of the things coming off the Collective Bargaining Agreement negotiation was to work with the Players Association around a stronger mental health platform. Not ever thinking back to when we signed that back in mid-January we'd be dealing with what we were dealing with this summer on so many different dimensions.

So definitely, as we tipped off here into a quarantine period and a training camp, we had available onsite mental health resources. We had online what we call our mind health consultant to the WNBA, licensed psychologists, who I think the players really got to know during the season, and she was available, primarily by Zoom, but was onsite for some period of time.

Certainly, I talked to players throughout. I wouldn't say those were kind of mental health sessions or anything, but I would say constantly talking with players as we would see them in the hallways, in the lobby, over at the broadcast courts, and making sure -- and we also added in every day we have to fill out a kind of a health questionnaire, and we added a last question and say, do you need to talk to somebody? Then we had someone, to protect HIPAA, monitoring if anyone said yes and reaching out to them.

So that was really part of our process. We need to work on a more holistic mental health platform as we get into the off-season and before next season because this pandemic isn't going away. The answers we're looking for on racial justice are not going to be solved overnight. So, we're going to have to stay on top of this and stay close to our players.

We also had individuals from the league who are part of our player relations here as well, and they're probably more -- you know, former players, where I think the players really trust them, and we reach out to them and talk to them in this area.

Q. First, let me just say huge thanks to you and your staff for making the media's life as easy as possible with all the Zooms. I know the people behind the scenes didn't get the credit for the hard work they put in to do that. Thanks, from a media standpoint, for all you did. I have a two-part question. One, just the finances of this whole thing. I'm sure being in 'the Wubble' was not cheap or inexpensive. So maybe how will you come out of this financially? And the second one is you mentioned next year. I know a lot can happen with the virus between now and when you



potentially could play next year, but do you have some idea when the draft lottery might be or when things might be somewhat thought of what next year might look like? Will it be January, February, or do you have some idea of what next year might look like for you guys?

CATHY ENGELBERT: First, the finances. Obviously, it was a very trying financial year on our teams and our owners. If you think about they usually had over 1.3 million fans sit in their seats and pay for tickets and merch and food and beverage and everything that surrounds that kind of fandom. Obviously, I think our teams were impacted the most financially.

At the league, if you think about it, then all the expenses of putting on the season shifted to the league, but, again, I think, because of our strong momentum with our broadcast partners and our sponsors and partners, we did -- we hung in there, let's call it that. So, it was a tough year, but this is one year in a multi-year transformation, as you've heard me talk about before.

So, we're going to keep the course. Again, the option of not having a season and being out of the sports landscape for 20 months was going to be more devastating financially. That's why I said, again, I think this was 100 percent worth it in the end.

As far as Draft Lottery, we're hoping to have Draft Lottery -- unfortunately, it will be virtual -- but by year end, I would say, calendar year end. Obviously, we're evaluating closely what the NCAA is doing as far as starting their seasons, a little delayed, it sounds like, but we'll see how that works out. But we think we'll be in a position to do Draft Lottery by year end.

Next year we're already starting an enormous scenario planning exercise to determine -- and we'll have a little more time than some of the other major sports who are supposed to start up late fall and for the winter. Obviously, we'll monitor that very quickly, but we've already started our scenario planning. We do have some players that are already overseas that have advanced here in Bradenton and so they're playing overseas. We'll monitor the length of those seasons and hope they're all staying healthy and safe there.

We'll just continue to scenario plan around whether we'll be back in our arenas with fans, without fans, with socially distanced fans, testing, rapid testing coming down a little bit in price. So we're monitoring all of that to determine is there a model that we could get fans in the seats but they get tested before they come and then they feel more comfortable?

We're doing some surveying of fan bases too to determine, if we reopen our arenas to fans, are they willing to come? Because the trajectory of the virus, people could see second waves. You see states in the United States and around the world and in the UK, where they're saying there is a second wave.

So just really continue to monitor all that. One thing we do know, we said it in April, we said it in July, and I'll say it here again on October 1st, the virus isn't going anywhere. We have to learn to live with it and determine what live sports is going to look like going forward. So those are all the things that we're thinking through right now.

Q. Thanks for doing this, Cathy. Really appreciate your time. If I could just follow up on what Doug asked in just a couple of different ways. One is given the season you guys have had and talk about it being 100 percent worth it, but also obviously a tremendous challenge, whether as part of the scenario planning the bubble visit to Bradenton is on the table in what you're considering. Also, just given what the NWSL has done and the Challenge Cup followed by a half season -- you know, a little bit different -- I'm wondering if, as part of your scenario planning, there's a potential for a tournament, a mini season, something along the lines of that. Obviously, knowing with so many players overseas, that makes it more of a challenge.

CATHY ENGELBERT: A lot of people are asking that question: would you do it again? We may be in a position where we have to do it again, but we need to be prepared for a variety of outcomes here. I think our teams would like to get their fans back in their arenas, but certainly, would we do it again? We'd revisit it because, again, I think it's so important to stay in the sports landscape.

Next year if the Olympics come off, we'll have that to evaluate. We'll also hopefully have an All-Star Game next year. We had planned to do the Commissioners Cup, which is a special competition, in part, the players' idea, coming off the Collective Bargaining Agreement. So, we have a variety of things we're trying to plan around.

But with fan engagement always being kind of part of it, but then health and safety of our players and staff and fans being significant too.

So I don't think we're planning a tournament in the off-season because so many of our players are already overseas and will continue to play overseas, but we'll certainly be looking at some interesting formats this year, special competitions for our 25th Anniversary season, supporting our Olympic athletes if the Olympics go forward,

as you know, because the U.S. Women's Team is going for their seventh consecutive gold medal, so we'll support that.

And we'll continue to talk to the players and get their buy-in.

But I do know some of these leagues are starting up overseas, so to do something in the off-season is probably not practical. Certainly, as we head into April, May, and hopefully things return to a little more normal, we're thinking of some interesting special competition formats and then an All-Star Game next year.

Q. Quickly, just curious, what's it mean to have this particular pairing for the League Finals, especially having A'ja, the current MVP, and Breanna, the MVP from a couple years ago. What significance does that have for the league, and how does that help you showcase to some folks who maybe might just be tuning in now?

CATHY ENGELBERT: Yes, obviously, it was a very competitive playoff round into the Semifinals, now to The Finals. I think having A'ja there is great. I'll tell you, the rest of the Aces came back from being down and came back from being down two games to win the best of five series the other night.

Obviously, I think Seattle has been great. They've all stayed healthy for the most part of the season. Remember, they were actually not the No. 1 seed. They were the No. 2 seed, and the Aces were the No. 1 seed. So I think anybody in sports loves to have your 1 and 2 seeds ultimately competing for a championship, but had it been two other teams, we would have been excited because we have so many great storylines on so many teams.

The rookies this year that kind of emerged, that was a result of having kind of a different kind of season and some injuries that happened, and having Chennedy Carter and Crystal Dangerfield, who was a 16th pick, so not in our first round, be the first one to win Rookie of the Year that wasn't picked in the first round was exciting.

Again, I think lots of star power with Sue and Stewie and Jewell and others on Seattle, and A'ja leads such a talented group over at the Aces. It's great, and I think for the last few years, the MVPs have been in The Finals. The last year it was Elena Delle Donne, and Connecticut had such a great run last year as they did this year too. Huge fan bases for both of these teams.

As I threw out some of the data on the Tap to Cheer app, which is really the loyal fan going in and wanting to be engaged with the team even though they can't attend the

game. So we're excited for this matchup for sure.

Q. Commissioner, thanks for your time today. I think there was a mentality for a lot of years that athletes maybe kept their political or social views to themselves, but that's changed a lot. It seems like with the WNBA, it's changed for the better, and we've given a bigger platform to the league and to the players. Do you think that's been the case and maybe especially been the case in this past summer?

CATHY ENGELBERT: Yeah, I think, if you look at the history of the WNBA -- and you all know I'm only a year into this role, a little over a year now, and you look at the history, and that's why I've been reflecting a lot on what the players accomplished this year, but it should be no surprise to anyone what they accomplished in this area because of their previous advocacy and dipping into a little bit, as you said, Michelle, the political area that athletes normally hadn't done, but our players had done it in the past. I think that's an important distinction.

I think people kind of, as a result of the events this summer around the racial injustice, has said, yeah, this isn't new for the WNBA because you can go back and look in history and pull things out of the events of 2016 with Minnesota, Maya Moore taking two years off as a former MVP to advocate for criminal justice reform, and Natasha Cloud opting out of this year, along with a few other players, to work on their social justice platform at a time when we didn't know what it was going to look like throughout the season.

So really proud of these players. I'm actually kind of in awe of them, quite frankly, and not having known any of them coming in a year ago, I think I said probably a month into the job that was the number one thing that surprised me is how impressed I was with their courage to speak out with voices on unpopular issues that maybe weren't mainstream that I think, just in the year and a half I've been in the role, have become more mainstream issues that everybody's talking about.

So I'll leave that there because I think I've talked a lot about how impressed I've been, but it was quick. It was a month into the job I figured that out, and they've just continued to have courage. Now, you might say they continue to have these strong voices, and maybe it's less courageous to do so because everybody's doing that, but they had courage well before everybody else.

Q. I have two questions. One is some of us who have covered the league forever, we've always had an issue about, once the season is done, that the league seems to be out of sight, out of mind, in terms of information,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

until the draft time comes. I wonder if you're going to plan to have more contact with league officials just talking about things during the off-season. Are you planning on doing more calls like this during the off-season to let us be able to report and do more story lines throughout the league? Secondly, you only had two black head coaches this year and no black females. Adam Silver was asked about it. Would you look at something like that in the WNBA with the number of black head coaches in the league that have dominated or have a majority of the players being black.

CATHY ENGELBERT: Charles, thanks for both those questions. Let me address the first question first. Certainly, one of our 'probably' things that COVID changed a little bit is we were planning on coming off the Collective Bargaining Agreement knowing that our assessment from a marketing perspective is we need to market more in the off-season. We were going to be doing the marketing agreements with players who didn't go overseas so we wouldn't have an out of sight, out of mind. We are still planning on that. Probably not as big and bold as we thought we were going to do when we came off the CBA for this year. Certainly for next year we do.

We are planning a variety of things, promotional things, over the course of the off-season. Absolutely, I think it's a great idea to continue having these connections with the media because you help draw exposure to what the players are doing, the storylines, how we're getting ready for the 25th season, how the Olympic athletes are getting ready for those national team experiences. So, yes, absolutely, this is certainly part of our strategy, so more to come on that, Charles.

Then I don't disagree with the numbers you threw out there. I think this also was a focus well before the George Floyd situation for us as a league and for many sports leagues to get more executives, diverse executives into leadership positions at our teams, and I think it's not a great watermark, but we're probably better than some leagues or many leagues, if you look at some of the things.

So we are increasing the number of black league office employees as well. We're very, very diverse at the WNBA, and our goal is to reflect the diversity of both our players and our fans in who we hire, how we hire. I know, coupled with our brethren at the NBA, we have kind of a whole initiative around this that will establish a pipeline of ready now candidates to move into leadership positions, but if you look at my team behind me, it's extremely diverse.

We need to work with the teams more on when there are openings like a general manager or head coaches, that

we're making sure they're looking at all diverse candidates, all candidates, including diverse candidates, in a very constructive way and making sure that there's -- because we know the pipeline is there in the coaching and GM ranks because it's a lot of our former players and college players and college coaches and college administrators.

With any management measure -- and I know that from my many years in business -- we've got to make sure this is top of mind even before positions come open because it's not when the position becomes open, it's in the lead up and experiences and development of individuals that, when an opening comes up, that's how you then place somebody in that position. So the lead up, the development and development culture at our teams and at the league are what I'm really focused on right now.

Q. Cathy, thanks so much for taking the time. You talked about innovation. We saw that Robin Roberts is one of the virtual fans for the NBA, and she was wearing her WNBA sweatshirt. So I was wondering if having virtual fans is something you're considering doing during the regular season. Is it possible to get folks like Robin in a position to do the same for the WNBA moving forward?

CATHY ENGELBERT: Yes, so obviously, we absolutely looked at the possibility of virtual fans. Again, not comparing ourselves to the men's league, but the way our broadcast courts and arena were set up, they were not in an actual arena per se, so we didn't have risers, and you really couldn't -- just technically, the technology would not have worked at our broadcast courts around virtual fans. But is that certainly something we're going to consider if we get back in an arena where he can't have the number of fans we let in, absolutely. We absolutely considered it.

Robin is such a great advocate for this league. She did a spot on "Good Morning America" for both the WNBA and the NBA where she was a virtual fan and very proud. I got many e-mails and text messages about Robin wearing a WNBA shirt, and she always reps our brand so well and always advances us. In fact, if you recall, back when we announced the Collective Bargaining Agreement, the successful and progressive CBA, Robin is the one who broke it on "Good Morning America" because we knew what an advocate she is for the league. So absolutely.

And not just in the virtual fan environment, these advocates like Robin, but we're looking to broaden because I am a big believer in advocates and influencers driving more interest and exposure for the WNBA players, and that then attracts more sponsors and partners and attracts more value for our franchises and for value to our players.



It's not just the virtual fan. It's a much more holistic strategy we have to draw in more interest and exposure for the game, using advocates and influencers, and Robin has been such a champion for our league for so long. We're very blessed to have her do that. We also, as you know, in the tip of the season, ESPN did the campaign, and that is something that we need to do more of, again, to advance the brand. Have this rebrand, this consistent brand, and taking that to the next level of exposure. So that's definitely part of the strategy.

Q. Thanks for your time today. Two relatively quick questions for you. One is I'm hoping you're going to take a little bit of vacation once The Finals are complete. But I was wondering after that if you can talk a little bit about that really what your number one priority is for the rest of calendar year 2020. I was wondering if there's something you're looking at after you catch your breath and head into the next season. My second question is around the time of The Finals and also Game 5. I'm curious to hear your thoughts on how you prioritized and made your decisions around the dates and the times, trading off starting on Tuesday at 7:30 versus 7:00 for Game 5, rather than 7:00 time slot that's been used for The Finals. Wonder how you thought about the pros and cons of scheduling games on the same day as the NBA Finals, so there's a doubleheader, versus on Friday when there's a potential advantage for the NBA off days with The Finals happening every day.

CATHY ENGELBERT: Thank you. Catching breath, yes. I'm really looking forward to getting home in a few days or so and seeing my two kids. That's my number one priority over the remainder of October.

Certainly, we do have to focus on everybody's mental health and physical health, and when we leave the Wubble, it's kind of like a repatriation back from being somewhere for four months for a lot of our employees and certainly the players and coaching staff. That's something to monitor and watch out for.

As far as the constraints, obviously, everything got packed into a very busy time of year with not only the NBA, who's usually not playing during our playoff time. The NHL usually not playing in the Stanley Cup during our time. Major League Baseball with their shortened season, they usually are playing, but not usually their playoffs during our time. So the shift of a half hour here and there didn't bother us Tuesday night. We did a West Coast team playing, so we don't mind sometimes pushing us back. Now we have two West Coast teams in The Finals where a lot of their fans are on Pacific time.

So we worked very closely with our partners and obviously the playoffs with ESPN, but they've got their own Rubik's cube to solve with the playoffs and the format they're in right now. I think 7:30 p.m. was a good slot. Whether it was 7:00, 7:30 didn't bother me. Obviously, there's a lot of other things going on too in the world, like the election and many other things that people are staying close to as well.

This year was about momentum, exposure, and not about any single game rating. We also have time slots, windows, broadcast windows, all of our broadcast partners were extremely flexible. Think about we didn't start until July 25. We were supposed to start in May. Again, we were fortunate to get the season we got in and very competitive because of not having the Olympics and not having the Olympic breaks because we had already scheduled that month off.

Again, we're blessed to have the windows we have. Do we always want better windows and not want to go against NHL and MLB and NBA? Sure. For instance, tomorrow it will be a nice lead-in to the NBA. We're on at 7:00. They're on at 9:00. That will be a nice lead-in.

I don't know if you saw last night during the NBA game, a cross-promotion for the WNBA game tomorrow night, leading into Game 2 of the NBA Finals. And I said in the beginnings, some said, what happens if you're at the same time as the NBA Finals? That actually happened. I think at the time the question was asked we didn't think it was going to happen. I think we'll do our best and take advantage of cross-promotion.

We're not on at the same time. Had we been, we'd have a live look in from one broadcast to another. I think we'll probably be done right about when -- because we're the best two hours in sports, I always say, because of playing 10-minute quarters, not 12 minutes. So we usually get done within two hours and great cross-promotion from the WNBA to the NBA.

So it's never easy, I would say, and particularly was challenging this year because of all the other sports on at the same time. Absent that, we still had record level play on the court and tons of viewership. That's something I think next season we'll have to be very cognizant and plan well ahead and make sure we were agile like we were this year in TV windows. We don't always get to govern those, but we work closely with our broadcast partners.

Q. Cathy, just wondering, if you get back in the local markets, and particularly fans are allowed in, do you feel like there could be quite a turnout, if you want to predict that way, for not having been there that long and also with all the players that will be coming back



who didn't play this year and the Olympic year, silver anniversary year. Could you see that really playing out into a big attendance bounce next year potentially?

CATHY ENGELBERT: Great question. When you ask what my number one priority is through the end of the calendar year, and I didn't answer it, and that is selling and marketing the league, continuing to sell and market the league. But it plays into a little bit of this question, which is making sure we engage our fans in the off-season to be ready.

Hopefully, the fire is under control. We get anti-virals, we get a vaccine, we get rapid testing that's affordable that fans will feel comfortable getting tested, coming into the arena. Whether we end up having to physically distance the seating or not, it's still unknown. But absolutely, I think it could really play into big attendance.

The key will be to continue to market the players, the personalities, market the rivalries that were formed this year and last since I've been here and I've been observing. Again, these story lines around these players, amazing veterans like Diana and Sue, and then this amazing rookie class that just finished their first year. Obviously, a lot of veterans in between. So really capitalizing on those story lines.

I think one of the prior questions about the off-season not being out of sight and out of mind and even if players are overseas or even if they're here in the U.S. training or doing other things and hopefully spending some time with their families, et cetera, that they didn't get while they were in the wubble, really important, I think, that I think we can drive a big push in attendance, but the fans are going to have to feel comfortable coming back to arenas.

Today because of the trajectory of the virus, I don't think we're there yet, but hopefully by May, when we tip off, they will be. This off-season has got to be a very critical time in marketing our players from young to veteran because there's such great stories, and we have this -- we're kind of on the tip of this exposure around these players. They're great at their craft, and they're also great off the court. So we'll be working on that, and you'll be seeing hopefully a different way to market them in this off-season.

RON HOWARD: Thank you very much. Once again to our media, thank you so much for joining. If you would, be kind enough to include tune-in notes for tomorrow's game on ESPN2. Thanks everybody.

CATHY ENGELBERT: Thank you everyone. Stay healthy.

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