

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

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Sam Flood Bob Costas

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us on today's conference call as Bob Costas returns to NBC Sports as the host of Sunday Night Baseball's pregame show.

Joining us today are Bob Costas and our executive producer and president of programming, Sam Flood.

SAM FLOOD: It's exciting to be back with Bob. He and I started working together back in 1986 when I was an Olympic researcher, overlapped on a number of great shows for the years from NBA Showtime -- we were just reminiscing about the very first game we did when the bet was how long it would take Marv Albert to say "Yes!" in the first game. It was if you bet the under, you won.

Worked with Bob on baseball. Worked with him on Football Night in America. He's iconic. His work on the Olympics speaks for itself. He belongs in the NBC family and it's great to have him back hanging out with us, calling baseball as the host of the pregame show.

There's no one more associated with baseball who hasn't played the game than Bob. Others who have played the game might be more associated. But for a non-player, Bob has impacted baseball for generations and will continue to do so now that he's partnered back with us.

And we can't wait to work with him. We'll have our laughs. We'll have our fun. And Bob, as always, will put on a fun show and tell the right stories at the right time.

BOB COSTAS: Sam, thanks. I think you all should know, while I've been gone from NBC since 2019, we have been in nearly constant contact since shortly after that, and just waiting for the right time and the lineup of the right circumstances to come together for me to return. And now those circumstances have perfectly come together.

I did a lot of things, some of them outside of sports, a lot of things at NBC over nearly 40 years. But the things with



sports with which I was most associated are the NBA, the MLB and the Olympics. And those things are lined up.

So we're talking about MLB now. There will be other things. But as I emphasized in the release, and most of you are aware, this is an emeritus role.

We designed an emeritus role back in 2012 when I signed my last full-blown contract with NBC to go into effect after 2016, and that's the way it was.

That's the way I see myself. And nothing that I do will overlap what others are doing. You'll see, as it plays out, that we will design a role for me -- we're in the process of doing that -- a role for me that makes sense and doesn't duplicate or get in the way of what others rightly do.

Others are in the primes of their careers, and I'm an icing-on-the-cake guy now, a contributor, a role player, and I look forward to it especially just because it's under the NBC umbrella.

Q. Welcome back. This is great news. You talked about the perfect timing. Talk about the timing here with baseball. Baseball seems to be coming off one of its strongest seasons in years, everything from viewership, to attendance, to stars. Talk about the timing for baseball here for you to come back?

BOB COSTAS: Yeah, it's great timing, and it's great timing for NBC. As people of a certain age know, baseball and NBC work synonymous, from the first World Series that were on television in the 1940s, all the way through 2000, when we last broadcast baseball.

Now, I think it's important to baseball to have a consistent place on over-the-air television. The media landscape has changed, it's true. But the next two deals here allows Sunday night to become sports night year-round on NBC -- Sunday Night Football, Sunday Night NBA, Sunday Night Baseball.

And to your point, baseball is coming off a high. The World Series, many people -- and I've been around a long time -- I think it's the best World Series, top to bottom, I've ever seen. There's competition, but I can't remember a series as good throughout and then with as dramatic and memorable a seventh game.



So there's a lot of momentum here. So we seem to have landed at the right time here.

Q. Did you ever think there would be a time when baseball would have a prominent role back on NBC, or especially, like you said, in the '80s and '90s, there was a game of the week on network television and now there's one back now?

BOB COSTAS: Well, you know, I wasn't as attuned to all the boardroom stuff and the business dealings. I was always hopeful, even as a fan, that there would be such a place.

In fairness, Fox's over-the-air television and they had a game of the week on Saturdays. But the landscape had shifted to the point where it wasn't the same, through no fault of theirs. It wasn't the same as when in the '80s, '90s, even before that, Saturday afternoon games sometimes got higher ratings with Vin and Joe and Curt Gowdy and Tony Kubek and whomever, higher ratings than some prime-time hits do.

Now, again, the landscape has shifted, but look at the ratings when baseball really rises to an occasion. Look at the ratings in the World Series last year. Look at what happened in 2016 in the seventh game between the Cubs and Cleveland.

So there can be a renaissance. It has to be in the present context. Never going to be exactly the same, but I think a step forward is that baseball is back at one of its natural homes, which is NBC. There's a lot of baseball history here.

Q. What do you think the atmosphere will be like in Los Angeles for the banner raising and with the Dodgers kind of having the offseason they've had?

BOB COSTAS: Over-the-top appreciative. There will be some resentment outside of Los Angeles, as there already is. There's always resentment of teams that are successful and teams that are perceived to have advantages, and that's part of the ongoing baseball conversation.

But we have an exclusive window. There's no other baseball on that Thursday night, March 26. Arizona at the Dodgers, I think it's just going to be a fantastic atmosphere.

SAM FLOOD: I'll just briefly add that we now launched the NFL season on a Thursday night, raising the banner of the champion. We raised the banner for the champions in the NBA with record ratings with Oklahoma City this year. And we look forward to raising another banner in Los Angeles

on March 26th.

Q. In regards to baseball broadcasts on television in general, what would you like to see that's either unique or just different from other telecasts on NBC? You've seen baseball broadcasts evolve with analytics and in-game interviews. What would you like to see from NBC's product?

BOB COSTAS: I think NBC's signature has always been, for a long time, no matter what the sport is, storytelling. That doesn't mean you divert for half an inning to tell a story about somebody's grandmother who remembers the last time the Cubs won the World Series in 1908, if such a person exists. But there's always been a storytelling ethos.

Each game -- and you can't create drama or storylines that don't exist, but you can identify them and frame them and amplify them -- so each game is more than just a collection of pitches and collection of plays.

Each game is part of the story of a season, part of a story of a career, part of a story as it fits in the history of baseball. You don't push it too hard, but it's there.

And I think that while others have done a good job with that, nobody, over time, ever matched the way NBC did that.

Same thing with the NBA on NBC. Same thing with the Olympic approach, which Dick Ebersol inherited from Roone Arledge and now Sam and others carry forward.

There's a storytelling ethos at NBC. And it has to be shaped for each sport; it's not exactly the same. But there's a way to do it in baseball. We did it for decades.

Think about Vin Scully and Joe Garagiola. Think of Kirk Gibson's at-bat as a pinch-hitter in Game 1 in 1988. Analytics basically didn't exist then, unless you were reading Bill James like I was. And you didn't have to perform an autopsy on every pitch. And you didn't have to overproduce what was going on.

The drama was more than sufficient. And the way Harry Coyle captured it, directing it, and the way Vin and Joe captured it in the booth, that goes beyond craft to art. And that's what NBC was about.

Q. Sam, will you harken back to those '80s broadcasts of maybe the opening songs, like you do in the NBA sometimes?

SAM FLOOD: There will certainly be an acknowledgment of nostalgia and what we represent as a



company in baseball. We'll be part of the narrative. But we're also going to move the sport forward like we have with the NBA.

We're going to try some new things that we've done in the NBA. So our NBA coverage has a mix of nostalgia. We created the On the Bench broadcast, which has been well received by both the teams and the audience.

So in the baseball world, we have some ideas that we'll share with people later. But we've got some neat ideas that will take people deeper into the game, we hope, and build out the sport that we love because we have a bunch of baseball hard-core fans in our building that couldn't have celebrated any louder when this deal came to fruition.

Q. One, what is the timeline that's being considered? Is this kind of viewed as a multiyear deal? Is it viewed as maybe just a year? Is there no kind of timeline on it?

BOB COSTAS: Well, in terms of the baseball, certainly the first year -- and it's an obvious circumstance there, it's kind of a passing of the baton. I was the last person, as it happened, to call baseball on NBC in 2000 -- the Yankees and the Mariners and the ALCS, and the year before that, the last World Series that was on NBC, I did that with Joe Morgan.

So there's a natural connection with me, luckily for me, to the history of NBC Sports, which is why, in a role that is specifically crafted for me that you'll see makes sense as it plays out, at least in the first year, I'll be prominently involved.

Beyond that, we'll see what happens. But I think I'll be a contributor. As long as I'm upright and haven't lost my fastball completely, I'll be a contributor as long as I have something to contribute.

SAM FLOOD: Bob is not a new-generation, one-and-done player. He's in for some fun for a little bit of time. We plan to take advantage of that and share some great stories going forward. So one-and-done, he is not.

BOB COSTAS: Correct, I wish I had thought to say that.

Q. Bob, you had spoken openly about kind of the sense of wanting to have that grace note at NBC, about being able to finish your career in the appropriate way, given everything that you've contributed to NBC over the years. And I was just curious, does this satisfy that need?

BOB COSTAS: I think so. And what's gratifying is I wasn't

the only one who had that idea. Lots of people -- Sam, Rick Cordella -- lots of people in this building as we sit now at NBC, lots of people had that idea. And the way it's set up now, I think it's the proper path to that.

As I've always said, I don't need a brass band and a parade, but if we can do some good work, have some fun and it feels like the right, concluding chapter, I think everybody will be gratified by that.

SAM FLOOD: Thanks, everyone, for joining us.

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