

# All-Star Game

Saturday, February 14, 2026

Los Angeles, California, USA

## Commissioner Adam Silver

Press Conference



ADAM SILVER: Thank you all for being here today, and welcome to the 75th NBA All-Star Game. I called Bob Cousy earlier this week, who I check in with now and then. He's 97 years old. When I was looking at the records from the earlier All-Star Games, Bob actually played in the first All-Star Game ever, which was in the '50-'51 season. I asked Bob if he had any recollections from that All-Star Game. Frankly, he said he didn't, but I said, what do you remember? And he said, I remember that it was the season in which the Celtics drafted Chuck Cooper, who was the first African American player drafted into the NBA.

Of course, many people remember Nat "Sweetwater" Clifton was the first player then who signed a contract, an NBA contract that season, and Earl Lloyd was the first African American player to play in the NBA.

It was interesting, Bob was just reminiscing on the state of basketball today from where it was in 1950. Of course, Jackie Robinson was the first Black player to play Major League Baseball only three years earlier, and he said, he was so proud that he was a Boston Celtic, the very team that had drafted Chuck Cooper, and was saying that it was not a huge story, at least to him, in those days, but it was very meaningful to his team.

In fact, it was the 75th anniversary not just of our All-Star Game but of the signing and playing and drafting of the first Black players in the league. That's something we've been celebrating throughout the season and also celebrating here in Los Angeles this weekend.

Just want to say hello to Bob, if he's watching. The NBA owes him a huge debt of gratitude for the impact that he's had on the NBA all these years later.

Bob and I started talking a bit about how global the game has become. Obviously over all those years. I'm not sure he was aware, but at that time, there were two international, or two players born outside of the United States who played in the league in that season. That number is 135 today, roughly 30 percent of the league.

But Bob and I were joking, so 75 years into the league, it

may be time to try a new format, and hence tomorrow, you're going to be seeing the USA versus World, again, something many people have been asking for for a long time.

We're thrilled to be back on NBC 24 years later. We're sandwiched in the middle of the Olympics now, so it seemed like the appropriate time to try this new format. I'm very much looking forward to seeing really the games tomorrow at this point.

One other brief point and then happy to answer any questions. Many of you had an opportunity to attend our Technology Summit on Friday, where we had several different panels talking about how technology is impacting sports, predictions on how it will change the coverage of sports, and the playing and the analytics around sports in the future. It's the 26th time we've done that.

Not surprisingly, so much of the discussion was around artificial intelligence. As I look at the world and the predictions, and we're seeing much of it already on how AI is changing everything about our personal lives, our business lives, for me, there's no doubt that AI will have the same impact on sports.

One area in particular that I think is worth addressing is impact on the fan experience. One of the things that we're beginning to see already is how we're going to be able to -- more than personalize, almost hyper-personalize our telecasts, and allowing people to experience the game in any way they want.

Many of you have probably experimented with this already, but in essence you'll be able to hear the game in any dialect, any language. You'll be able to hear a hardcore X's and O's commentary, maybe one that's more comedic, if that's what you're interested in, or somebody from a novice explaining each foul and the rules as it goes along.

So to me, we're about to witness probably the most significant change, certainly in my lifetime, in how sports are presented. Beyond that, in the hyper-personalization if people want to shop during a game, if they want to be on social media and having an ongoing discussion about some aspect of the game -- I think it's a really exciting

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moment and transformation.

We've enjoyed working with our longtime partner Disney, which is ABC and ESPN, on this. Of course, NBC and Peacock are now back in the fold, and Amazon Prime. They're all experimenting doing incredible things, and I think it's going to make the game that much more accessible for fans on a global basis.

With that, one other brief point, I want to thank Steve Ballmer, the Clippers organization, Gillian Zucker. They've been fantastic hosts for all of us, really what's been All-Star week, culminating in this weekend.

Thank you to the communities of Los Angeles and Inglewood. You've been fantastic hosts, as well. I'm told that they're projecting, all the combined activities will have roughly a half a billion dollar impact on the economy here, so that's quite remarkable.

Happy to take any questions.

**Q. As you know, what media and fans call tanking has been a part of this league's culture for some time. This week the Jazz were fined half a million dollars. Indiana was fined \$100,000. Why now the fines for those teams specifically? And do you feel like tanking is worse this season than it has been in the past? And what are some of the solutions the league is discussing to ensure that when fans go to a game or they watch a game on TV that both teams are competing to win that night?**

ADAM SILVER: So I'll maybe answer it out of order a little bit. You're right. I'll just use the colloquial "tanking" term. Yes, it's been part of this league for a long time. Back in the 1960s, there was a coin flip. At some point, I think it was in the 1980s, we moved to a lottery. That lottery has been changed I think roughly five times over the years to stay ahead of some of the behavior of our teams.

The incentives are not necessarily matched here. I think the tradition in sports where the worst-performing team receives the first pick from their partners, when any economist comes and looks at our system, they always point out you have the incentives backwards there. That doesn't necessarily make sense.

I think there was a more classical view of that in the old days, where it was just sort of an understanding among partners in terms of behavior. I think what we're seeing is modern analytics where it's so clear that the incentives are misaligned. I think to further answer your question, are we seeing behavior that is worse this year than we've seen in recent memory? Yes, is my view. Which was what led to

those fines, and not just those fines but to my statement that we're going to be looking more closely at the totality of all the circumstances this season in terms of teams' behavior, and very intentionally wanted teams to be on notice.

There is a bit of a note when you see a quality to this. We spend a lot of time at the league office going back and forth with teams on injury reports, on coaches' decisions. It's not a position necessarily we want to be in. But I'd say also, to address your question, it's not what the fans want at the end of the day. Although my caveat is, this is where teams are in a difficult place. Many of you in this room have written understandably about our teams that the worst place to be, for example, is to be a middle-of-the-road team. Either be great or be bad, because then that will help you with the draft.

In many cases, you have fans of those teams -- remember, it's not what they want to pay for to see poor performance on the floor, but they're actually rooting for their teams in some cases to be bad to improve their draft chances.

I think we're coming at it in two ways. One is, again, focusing on the here and now, the behavior we're seeing from our teams and doing whatever we can to remind them of what their obligation is to the fans and to their partner teams. But number two, as I also said in that statement, the Competition Committee started earlier this year reexamining the whole approach to how the draft lottery works.

Ultimately those teams, and just as a reminder that we're all in this together, that we want to have fair competition, we want to have fair systems and to keep an eye on the fans, most importantly, and their expectation that we're going to be putting the best product forward.

**Q. Expansion has been a topic over the past five, six years. It's come a little bit closer, now the report about Vegas and Seattle. Is there a credence to that coming a little bit closer? And secondarily, does expansion have to be two teams? Could it be one team expand and maybe another team relocate, conference realignment? How do you see all those things play out?**

ADAM SILVER: In terms of the timeline, and I think I said at the end of last year when we were in Las Vegas, that we will make decisions in 2026. I think in fairness to the cities, Seattle and Las Vegas in particular, I've been very clear I don't want to tease teams, I don't want to tease cities or mislead anyone. I think we wanted to get through collective bargaining, national television deals. We've done that, and now we've turned to it as a league.

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My sense is at the March Board of Governors meetings we'll be having further discussions around an expansion process. We won't be voting at the March meeting, but we will likely come out of those meetings ready, prepared to take a next step in terms of potentially talking to interested parties.

No, it doesn't have to be a two-team expansion. Frankly, it doesn't have to be any number of teams. I think the logical next move would be to say, all right, we've had those discussions internally, we've made decisions about cities to focus on and what the opportunity is, and now we've got to go out into the marketplace. I think that's probably the most important step, to find out who is potentially interested in owning a franchise in particular cities, what's the value of that franchise. There's some work to do in terms of potential conference realignment. That's the next step there.

**Q. Relocation --**

ADAM SILVER: Relocation is not on the table right now.

**Q. Stepping away from the NBA for a second to the WNBA, what are your thoughts on where the negotiations stand? And as we inch further toward the May 8th start of the season, is there a drop-dead date that you have as to when the CBA needs to get done in order for the season to start on time, considering we still have an expansion draft, collegiate draft, free agency?**

ADAM SILVER: Let me begin by saying I think it's unfortunate where we find ourselves right now, both from the team standpoint and from the players. We're coming off tremendous momentum in the WNBA. It's not lost on anyone. I feel like in the last few years in particular, the league has turned a corner in terms of fan interest, commercial success, popularity of players. All arrows are pointing up in terms of the WNBA, and as one who was involved from the earliest days, now going into our 30th season, I couldn't be prouder to be part of that movement.

I'm not ready to set a drop-dead date. But I will say, as I look at the calendar and the amount that we need to get done really over the next two months, because training camps are scheduled to open roughly two months from now. To your point, we have to get not one but two drafts done. We have an expansion draft and a collegiate draft, and then we need to fit in free agency. Plus whenever we shake hands on a collective bargaining agreement, the lawyers have to go to work and memorialize it.

What I'd love to accomplish is sort of putting pressure on

everybody and saying, okay, I've been through so many cycles of collective bargaining and often things tend to get done at the 11th hour. We are awfully close to the 11th now when it comes to bargaining.

I'm encouraged there has been more back and forth over the past few weeks. I think there's been more direct engagement from players and team owners. I have not been at the table, but I'm very involved behind the scenes.

I want to play whatever role would be most productive in getting a deal done. But again, I think we need to now move toward the next level sense of urgency and not lose momentum in terms of the amazing amount of progress we've seen in women's basketball.

**Q. I wanted to ask you generally about the state of the investigation into the Clippers and specifically are the Clippers fully cooperating with the investigation? And ultimately you have to make a decision on whether or not a rule was broken. Have you come to a decision in your mind of what the threshold needs to be for you to decide that?**

ADAM SILVER: I haven't come to any decisions whatsoever yet on the Clippers' matter. As you know, the league office is not directly running the investigation. That's being overseen by a law firm, Wachtell, in New York. From everything I've been told, the Clippers have been fully cooperative. But as I said, I'm not involved day to day in the investigation.

I think, as I've said before, it's enormously complex. You have a company in bankruptcy. You have thousands of documents, multiple witnesses that have been needed to be interviewed.

I will say, just in case anyone is wondering, the fact that All-Star is here this weekend has had no impact on the timeline of the investigation. Our charge to the Wachtell law firm is do the work and then come back and make recommendations to the league office, and that's where things now stand.

**Q. Giannis has an endorsement deal with a prediction market. How does the NBA view prediction markets compared to traditional sports books? Are there rules in place for participation there? Does an endorsement deal like that concern you?**

ADAM SILVER: We currently are looking at prediction markets essentially in the same way that we're looking at sports betting markets or sports betting companies. We have a rule that was collectively bargained with the Players Association that players can make, I will call them, de

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minimis investments in sports betting companies, and we're applying the same rule to prediction markets.

That means their investment cannot amount to over 1 percent. In the case of Giannis, from what I understand, it's a minuscule investment, much smaller than 1 percent. So that does not violate the rules that have been collectively bargained with the Players Association.

Obviously, it's an issue that I'm paying enormous amount of attention to. It's rapidly evolving. Prediction markets have now come on the scene fairly recently as, I don't know how else to say it, major sports betting marketplaces. Whether prediction markets are allowed to go forward in the form they're in now will, I think, be ultimately an issue for the courts and for Congress.

But even if they go away, the league is now dealing with essentially 40 different jurisdictions that have legalized sports betting in the United States. Still a huge illegal market. I'd say one other category that I hardly ever hear people talk about is that the last I looked, there are probably 80 countries in the world outside of the United States that also have legalized betting on the NBA.

It concerns me in the totality of all this betting that we need a better handle, no pun intended, on all the different activity that's happening out there. There's been some -- Sportradar is a company we deal with now. There's others, massive database companies that are looking at getting into this business for all leagues. So there are ways that you can, in essence, scrape the internet -- I don't know a better way to say it -- for whatever chatter is happening out there and try to pick up all the markets, legal and illegal, to see whatever aberrant behavior is out there. So I'm paying a lot of attention to that.

**Q. Parity is something that you have been very much a proponent of, greater parity, I should say, in the NBA. The best way for bad teams to get better is to get good young players, and the lottery in the last few years has not done that as efficiently as it should, or as it's designed to do. If the lottery, and by extension, the draft are not creating the conditions for greater parity, how do you fix that so that teams can get into the lottery, get a player and get out of the lottery and not be in the lottery again for several years?**

ADAM SILVER: That is the question, and it's something that we've been spending a lot of time on with our Competition Committee, outside consultants, advanced analytics.

Part of the problem is if you step back, the fundamental theory behind a draft is to help your worst-performing

teams, restock and be able to compete, and by the way, yes, we want parity, but parity of opportunity. There's still going to be better managed teams, et cetera.

The issue is if teams are manipulating their performance in order to get higher draft picks even in a lottery, then the question becomes, even if teams were rewarded for draft picks purely according to predicted odds of the lottery, are they really the worst-performing teams?

My sense is, talking to GMs and coaches around the league, that there's probably even more parity than is reflected in our records. That goes to the incentive issue. It's not clear to me, for example, that the 30th performing team is that much measurably worse than the 22nd performing team, particularly if you have incentive to perform poorly to get a better draft pick.

It's a bit of a conundrum. As I've said, the All-Star is 75 years old. The league is 80 years old. It's time to take a fresh look at this to see to whether that's an antiquated way of going about doing it.

Ultimately, we need a system to fairly, I think, distribute players. I think it's in the players' interest as well as the teams that you have a level of parity around the league. There's only so many jobs and so many cities.

But we've got to look at some fresh thinking here. What we're doing, what we're seeing right now is not working; there's no question about it. Yes, is there more I can do? Have I attempted not only to respond to behavior we've seen but send a clear message that we're going to be scrutinizing everything we see going forward? Absolutely.

But I don't think that's the way to manage this system long-term of, I know it when I see it or people in the league office. It will lead to very unhealthy relationships between us and our teams.

**Q. If I could follow up, is there any talk of taking draft picks away from teams that do this as opposed to fining them?**

ADAM SILVER: There is talk about every possible remedy now to stop this behavior.

**Q. On the NBA Europe front, with a tentative date set in place for October '27 for the start, do you have a realistic timeline where you think you can announce structure, rules, investors? Also considering that I assume by the summer you would have to announce the qualification process for the four teams that would qualify?**

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ADAM SILVER: Well, I'm encouraged by some constructive discussions we're having with the EuroLeague now. There was recently a new CEO, Chus Bueno, who replaced the prior CEO at the EuroLeague, someone who is a longtime colleague at the NBA. So I'm hopeful that will help us advance in more of an integrated system in Europe of approaching this.

In terms of the timeline, as you well know, you have amazing basketball right now in Europe, historic clubs competing at a high level. Do I think it's doable for '27-28? Yes. How we launch the league might not look how it will several years later. One of the things we're focused on is building a new arena infrastructure in Europe, as well, which is badly needed.

But we've moved into a new phase now working with our two bankers, JP Morgan and Raine. We have dozens of organizations that have in essence signed these non-disclosure agreements, looking at our projections, looking at our model, have indicated strong interest in potentially being franchise owners.

In fairness to European basketball, one of the reasons we're on this advanced timeline is we know it's not realistic to ask people just to freeze the competition and wait for us to come. We want to be respectful of the existing teams. We want to be respectful of a passionate fan base and move as quickly as possible. So that's where we are now.

**Q. Would the current NBA players be allowed to invest in NBA Europe teams?**

ADAM SILVER: That's something we're looking at right now with the Players Association.

**Q. Besides the investors, of course, the role that the arenas are going to play, one of the biggest assets of the NBA is the huge community of followers that you have. But the question is do you pretend to engage like all this community with the new European competition, because it happens that a lot of these followers, they have never, let's say, cared about European basketball. Isn't it going to be a challenge to engage this community to find this niche?**

ADAM SILVER: So I think creating any new organization or enterprise is a challenge. This is, as I've said before, even in terms of potential investors, people who are looking for a short return should probably look elsewhere. This is something that we plan to build over decades.

But we're building off a very strong base. As I said in response to the last question, European basketball is tremendously popular. Roughly 15 percent of the players

in the NBA are European. Some of our very best players, some of the All-Stars that we're going to see today and tomorrow.

In terms of the existing fan bases, in some cases you have some of the historic European soccer clubs, which have hundreds of millions of followers and where somebody is interested in -- I'll use Real Madrid as an example, you may have a Real Madrid football fan and they also have a great basketball organization, and a relaunch league may bring a lot of those historic fans with them.

As you said, also, the NBA has a social media community of roughly two billion people globally. One of the things that we've talked about in terms of this new league, just as the NBA is a league based in North America, we have a global following. Our expectation is we're going to have a European league, yes, located throughout Europe, but also with a global following. There's that much interest in basketball around the world these days.

**Q. You mentioned Real Madrid. You had a meeting with FC Barcelona in London in January and with Pau Gasol also involved. How was the meeting from your standpoint?**

ADAM SILVER: I thought it was a very constructive meeting.

**Q. Obviously with the All-Star being in Phoenix next year, what are some talking points or some big talking points to having meetings here and making that transfer over? When you have an owner like [Mat] Ishbia, obviously energetic and things of that sort, what things do you want to have it where it's unique to Phoenix but falls in line with what the theme of what the All-Star has been?**

ADAM SILVER: The team owner, Mat Ishbia, is so enthusiastic, he played in the Celebrity Game yesterday, and I saw him last night. He's a little banged up but he's not injured, so was pleased to see that.

You may know, the mayor of Phoenix [Kate Gallego] is in town for the Conference of Mayors, as well, and she and I had a chance to say hello and I think she's taking notes and seeing, all right -- I think what's so great about these All-Star experiences is one, each progressive All-Star we learn and we try new things, but also the goal is for an All-Star Game in LA should feel different than an All-Star Game in Phoenix, different community, different interest, different climate, and I think when people come to the market, yes, we want them to experience all these great events on the floor but also to take advantage of the restaurants, the night life, the beaches here, and Phoenix

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is a fantastic city. So our goal would be to come there and working with Mat and his folks, and again, your great mayor to have very much a Phoenix, Arizona experience.

**Q. To what extent are you beholden to the CBA and the constitution with regard to any punishment handed out for cap circumvention?**

ADAM SILVER: I am completely beholden to the constitution and the CBA. I believe in the rule of law. I have broad powers in certain areas, but those are broad powers that are granted to me by those very documents.

I think in a way, I think it's what makes sports so special, that you establish these rules and people and teams are required to follow them. I've been imbued in these powers by the very team owners and told, you are responsible for enforcing these rules, and then there's procedures with the Players Association, a strong Players Association, where they can challenge certain rulings but there's a whole mechanism in place for the way competition works, and I think it's the way it should be when there's a process when we want to change rules. That's what I was saying in terms of the draft or the lottery, where we have a committee system and Competition Committee, which by the way, includes not just general managers but team owners, representatives of the Players Association, players themselves. It's the whole community coming together and deciding what's in the best interest.

Again, it's part of my job to remind everybody who's in this community that I understand in some cases what your short-term interests may be, but we'd better not lose sight of our fans here, we'd better not lose sight of the people who support this league day in and day out.

I have to remind myself of that sometimes because you can get caught up in a particular issue, and even the media may be clamoring for something or one of my team owners and I remind myself I've got to step back, think long-term, think how do we keep building this incredible sport where billions of people around the world love it, and taking that long-term perspective and making sure, again, we are living up to the very constitution that created this league.

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