

# NBA Finals: Bucks vs. Suns

Tuesday, July 6, 2021

## Adam Silver

Media Conference



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ADAM SILVER: Thank you all for being here, and for those on Zoom, appreciate your time today. It's been an incredibly unique season and a half dealing with COVID and the protocols. Let me thank the members of the media. You've often dealt with all of our same protocols, our testing, our mask wearing and all the various restrictions around your coverage. I appreciate your all fighting through it.

Of course to our players and teams, it's just been an enormous physical and emotional burden on everyone. I think we see that every day. There's been a lot of discussion around the injuries. Putting aside the specific data for a second, I have no doubt that the additional stress, again physical and emotional, on them contributes to injuries. None of it is an exact science. It's something that even pre-COVID, as you all know, we were very focused on at the league. We put people in place to focus exclusively on injury prevention. Precisely why we have the injuries we do is still unclear to us. It's something that we'll continue to study in the offseason. The trend line, unfortunately, has been going up for the last several years, and that's despite the tremendous additional resources our teams have put into injury prevention, the brand new practice facilities located throughout the league, the state-of-the-art equipment. It's horrific and it's something that, of course, takes away from the competition. These are players with relatively short careers, and keeping them on the floor is of paramount importance to us, to the fans.

So, again, it's something that we'll continue to focus on. But it's not as easy to even discern what's happening this season. It seems it doesn't correlate precisely to numbers of games, to the amount of time off particular teams had coming into this season, to the density or not of the schedule. Of course we played 72 games instead of 82 games this season, and 22 of our teams had four months off coming into the season. So, yes, was there more of a burden on those teams that went far into the playoffs and into the Finals last year? Absolutely. And it was a question of working with the Players Association to find the right balance between appropriate rest, the concerns we had about players when they were outside of our COVID protocols.

As you all recall, we had a tremendous number of positives

when the players first came back between the break of last season and coming back this season. We knew, collectively we and the Players Association, that it was healthier when the players were under the various protocols put in place by the league, together with the Players Association. We also on the back end were looking for a way to get back on schedule. We were trying to contain the issues around COVID to the extent possible -- and that's something we still don't know -- to two seasons. So it also meant trying to do everything we could to get back into our natural season next year, meaning starting in October and ending before July. Of course we're in July this year, something not optimal for the league, both in terms of television viewership and for the players as well. Just as a reminder, in discussions with the players, they have sort of a natural clock themselves, and maybe that's related to injuries or not on their bodies. They played, especially the veterans, their bodies sort of peak at specific times in the year. That's something that they have been conditioned to doing, and physically, mentally, emotionally as well.

And there's also an issue of family time for our players. I mean, when we were in these discussions toward the end of last season with the Players Association and directly with players as to when the optimal time to start this year, many players expressed a strong desire to have time, particularly in August, with their families, with their young children. Many players don't live in the same city that their families live in, and even when they do they're on the road most of the time or their children are back in school. And then on top of that the desire for many players, both U.S. players and international players, to play in the Olympics.

So lots of different factors went into making these decisions. Again, it's fair game to second-guess them, and I think frankly we may not know for quite awhile, until we're really able to look back when we know this pandemic is over, whether we made the right decisions or not.

A few other things before I get to your questions. We of course are thrilled to have fans back in the arenas. We have now had, since the playoffs started, over a million fans back in our arenas, which is quite remarkable and not a place that I thought we would be in only a few months ago. I know I heard from many people outside of basketball and even outside of sports that when the

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playoffs started and they saw those full arenas again, it was a signal that maybe the worst of the pandemic is behind us, and of course we're very much hoping that's the case.

Again, to see all of you, the media back in our buildings, covering our games. I know the players have all said it makes a huge difference to them to be playing in front of tens of thousands of fans screaming, yelling, cheering, et cetera, that that's been really meaningful for the league. So we're thrilled at that.

For me, I see this as hopefully the end of a transition for the league. Not just post-COVID, but just by virtue of the teams that we saw in the Conference Finals, a real transition in terms of the league of the up-and-coming new stars, up-and-coming franchises, more parity throughout the league. Again, it wouldn't be true to the data to make too large a point around one season, particularly one that may have been, that was so aberrational, but I at least say that it looks like a very positive sign in terms of the competition we're seeing around the league.

Let me also congratulate for the Phoenix Suns, of course Robert Sarver, the principal governor of the team, James Jones, the general manager, Monty Williams, the coach. Just a fantastic job. I can't say it enough for the teams that are here. You in the media know what it's been like to go through these protocols on a daily basis, pre-vaccines in many cases. Teams on game days were being tested three times a day. As you saw, especially we adjusted when we had some game suspensions early in the season that we realized we needed to do even more testing. And of course again whether it correlates to injuries or not, what that meant on the players' bodies, the interference with sleep and their normal routines. I'm sure that all had an effect on them.

For the Bucks, the principal governor, Marc Lasry, of course Wes Edens, his partner. They have two other principal partners, Mike Fascitelli and Jamie Dinan, who have been very involved in the franchise. Jon Horst and Mike Budenholzer did, again, yeoman's work. From the league office we have been in touch with these folks virtually every day for the last year and a half. It's been quite a journey to get here and it's just amazing on behalf of both franchises.

I would also like to just shout out the two former principal owners of both clubs, people that I grew up with in the league, starting when I joined in 1992. Of course Jerry Colangelo here in Phoenix. Although he stepped out of ownership many years ago, he remained very involved in basketball largely through USA Basketball. And, in fact, as I understand it he's in Las Vegas right now preparing our

USA men's team for Tokyo. So again I'm sure Jerry is just thrilled to his core to see what's happening with this franchise.

And Senator Herb Kohl, our former U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, the longtime owner of this team. When he sold the team not so long ago, what was most important to him was keeping this team in Milwaukee and seeing that a new arena and development around it came with that. I know I've talked to Senator Kohl and he remains one of the team's greatest supporters, is just so thrilled for new ownership, for the fact that they got that new arena built and that whole development around it. So, again, to Herb and Jerry congratulations to both you as well.

It is sort of a fun fact that these franchises came into the league in the same year, back in 1968. And of course some of you have written about that famous toss of the coin from then Commissioner Walter Kennedy, that of course Milwaukee ended up winning, getting Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and they went on to win a championship. So they have that one championship under their belt. Phoenix of course has never won one. Here they are again all these years later.

So I'll just conclude that I'm looking forward to a fantastic series, just great competition. I think the level of basketball we're seeing is unprecedented. The skill level of these players on the floor, the things they can do with the basketball, the distances they can shoot from, it's just truly a joy to watch. Thank our fans around the world, 215 countries and territories, that will be able to tune into these games. So with that, happy to answer any questions.

**Q. You're right, it has been great to see the fans, the buildings filled during the post-season. Obviously that wasn't the case for much of the regular season. Can you kind of address how you expect the league will come out of this season financially, how the teams will have come out of it financially? And as a semi-unrelated part of that, would you expect that the Raptors will be able to start next season at home?**

ADAM SILVER: Let me begin with the Raptors question. It's unclear yet. I know on behalf of Larry Tanenbaum, who is the governor of the team and happens to be the chairman of the board of the NBA, he's very hopeful that Ontario will open up and that they will be able to have the team back in Toronto. I know it's incredibly meaningful to the team. I think there was that yet additional burden placed on the Raptors more than any other team by having to relocate for the season. But we are hopeful the team will be back if things continue as we're seeing in Canada right now.

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Financially, for the season, without getting into it too specifically, we did somewhat better than we initially projected. As you recall, I think I had said at the beginning of the season that roughly 40 percent of our typical revenue is attributed to not just ticket sales but those revenue streams that come from the related activities in arenas. Because of our ability to get fans back in the arenas for the playoffs, as great as that's been, it's a relatively small portion of the season in terms of number of games. So I think now we don't have the exact numbers yet, but maybe we'll be down roughly a third in revenue, something around there, instead of 40 percent.

And so no question, the league will incur significant losses for the past two years. I will say, though, I'm not here to complain about that. I think speaking for our team owners, they view it as a long-term investment in the league and something very necessary to keep these organizations going. And by the way, it was shared sacrifice by our players as well, just based on the way our system works. We worked something out with the Players Association where they all took, frankly all the players took, significant reductions this season. We were able to in essence advance some of the money they otherwise will be getting in future seasons by spreading out the deductions, so that they were able to make a little bit over the percentage, but it was definitely a shared sacrifice.

But I feel again if things continue on track and we could move toward a new season next year that looks a lot more like normal, I think we'll have weathered it very well. I think we have, to me, an incredibly strong partnership with our players and coaches and referees and all the affiliated constituent groups, having all worked closely together to come through this.

**Q. Two questions: First, where do you see the relationship between China and the NBA going in next year or two? And second question, do you consider having an Asia league like the Africa league in the future?**

ADAM SILVER: I'll take the second part of your question first. Some number of years ago we had discussions with the Chinese Basketball Association, which of course is now led by Yao Ming, about potentially partnering on a league. That's nothing that we have talked about all that much in the last few years. I think the Chinese Basketball Association continues to thrive under Yao's direction. That would be my expectation, that they will remain independent of the NBA.

In terms of the future of our relationship with China, meaning the NBA's, I mean, of course, it's hard to divorce what's happening with the NBA from larger geopolitical

issues between the U.S. and China. I do think it remains important, that particularly when tensions are high between governments, that we foster these sports, educational, cultural relationships. I've said that from the very beginning. It certainly doesn't mean that we are blessing everything that happens in China by any means. We are at root an American company, and so we follow U.S. government policy. But it's my expectation that we will continue to distribute our games in China through your service, Tencent, and others, and that we can play a productive role in helping the people of the United States and the people of China have a better understanding of each other, and see that we're all human beings and that there is commonality between us. And I think that form of engagement is critically important if we're going to work together to try to resolve some of our issues.

Those issues include dealing with future pandemics and dealing with global climate issues and economic issues and human rights issues. They have to begin from a point of discussions directly with each other. I think to the extent that through sports that, again, as I said, that's something that we can at least find common ground on, I continue to believe we can play a positive role.

**Q. Two specific areas I'm just wondering the future of the Play-In Tournament, seemingly was a hit. LeBron was not a fan, and this year in particular he kind of pushed back on a few areas. That one, where does that leave you going forward? Do you see it existing as it did? But also expansion, it seems my understanding was that on the owner level as the revenues dipped, that expansion was looked at pretty seriously in terms of a possible uplift revenue-wise. But now that you've leveled out and things are a little bit better, how do you see that front?**

ADAM SILVER: Sure. So first on the Play-In Tournament, it's my expectation that we'll continue it for next season. We, of course, need agreement from our teams and the Players Association. Know Michele Roberts doesn't have an easy job -- she has 450 players, some maybe have louder voices than others at the table. But again, I think ultimately although there were critics, not just LeBron but others who weren't in favor of it and maybe some teams who weren't thrilled with it, I think overall it was very positive for the league and the players. Certainly there'd been some suggestions about some tweaks we should consider, but again, I think once we bring it back to our owners for a vote and the Players Association meets and has an opportunity to consider it, it's my expectation that it will continue for next season.

In terms of expansion, you know, I know that was reported that when revenues were down we were looking more



seriously at expansion. I mean, it didn't work exactly like that, largely because expansion is a multi-year process. So it wasn't as if the pandemic came, we're 40 percent down, we can quickly collect some expansion revenue. So you know, yes, it's true that we actually had some time while we were initially shut down and we were meeting more often with our teams to think a little bit more about it. But it seemed the consensus was certainly during a pandemic that wasn't the right time to expand, but that we should continue to consider it.

I'll say what I think is lost sometimes is that from an economic standpoint, the league looks at it is that we're in essence selling equity in the league. You have 30 partners and just say hypothetically we expanded by two more teams, then you would have 32 partners. So the extent you have a national television deal or global television rights, instead of it being divided 30 ways, it's divided 32 ways. So it's sort of cash up front, depending upon what you sell the expansion team for, but it's not necessarily the windfall that I think people think it is.

The most important considerations for us when we look at expansion is, will it ultimately grow the pie? Meaning it's potentially 30 more jobs if you expand with two teams. You expand the league's footprint. How does that help us in varying ways, sort of increased support nationally. So we'll continue to look at it. I mean, I've said this many times before, we're certainly not suggesting we're locked at 30 teams. I think at some point it will make sense to expand, but it's just not at the top of the agenda right now.

**Q. Following up on your opening remarks, can you tell us where you are in your conversations with the teams at this point regarding player rest and load management for next season?**

ADAM SILVER: We haven't addressed it so specifically for next season, only because I think as we watch what's happening with COVID, we're mindful that as much as I want to sort of close the book and say we have lived through it, of course I'm reading the same stories you all are about Delta variants and other things. I mean, again, I'm very hopeful we're going to put it behind us, but that could have an impact on how we schedule rest.

I will say, again, this is not something that's been talked a lot about in the context of injuries, but resting is up over 100 percent this season from last season. And the issue which we're trying to get to the root of is does resting work, frankly? Does load management work? And there's different theories out there on it. What's most surprising, as I said it's not just about injuries up this season; we have seen this upward trend for several years. And you would like to believe that with the investment, the level of

sophistication, the number of doctors, the amount of analytics we look at, the data that we collect that we couldn't in the old days, that putting the pandemic aside, we would have seen improvements and we haven't seen that yet.

So I mean part of it, of course, load management or resting, there's an economic impact on that, there's no doubt. I understand it from a fan standpoint. I mean, they want to see their teams advance and they're even sympathetic to a certain amount of rest, but they don't necessarily want to necessarily pay the same price for the ticket if the stars aren't playing or whatever television programming looks like in the future in terms of how people are charged for it. So they might be both rooting for rest but saying the game doesn't have the same value. I think we have to find the right sort of midpoint there between -- clearly if players hardly played at all, there would be a dramatic reduction presumably in the amount of injuries, although we see a lot of offseason injuries now. We see a lot of injuries during training. And load management isn't just a function of how many minutes in a game a player plays, but what other burdens they're putting on their bodies when they're not playing and how hard they're training and what they're doing in the offseason.

So nothing could be more important for our league than keeping -- especially a league where stars drive so much of the interest -- of keeping them on the floor longer. So my only thing on load management, sometimes I think people just accept, to me, in a sort of non-scientific way that load management works. It's just not all that clear. I think it's another area where historically some of the teams have thought about their medical protocols as kind of their secret sauce. And I think at least there's a recognition now, especially players have shorter contracts, there's more movement of players, that we all have a common interest in players staying healthy and that we should, in the same way we have in many business areas in the league, be looking at best practices when it comes to rehabilitation and training of our players.

So it will remain a focus on the league, and again what the optimal number of games are in the season. As I said, we have had this 82-game season for 50-plus years. I mean, is 82 optimal? You know, it's interesting. We got this experiment during the pandemic to move to 72. Everybody thought that was the cure-all, if we just lopped 10 games off the season. I mean, obviously injuries are up, so that wasn't it. Now it's just one data point, but this is one that requires a lot more study.

**Q. Once all the head coaching positions are filled, what's your expectation on how much more representation there will be among Black and women**

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## coaches?

ADAM SILVER: Well, in terms of Black coaches, obviously we have seen positive developments there in terms of the number of vacancies that are being filled. I will say that not unlike a lot of organizations that are dealing with diversity issues, this is something that requires daily attention. So again, positive movement in that direction, but we're not going to rest on our laurels there. It's something that, back to the point about data, it's something that's a regular part of our team meetings, of our Board of Governors meetings now. Not just in the coaching ranks but across the league and making sure teams are focused on it, and that we're also working collectively to develop pools of future general managers, like James Jones, and future great coaches, like Monty. So that's part of the work that we have to do.

In terms of women, it's a little bit frustrating. It's an area where even just looking around the room here, you would like to see more women represented in the room here today, in all aspects of our business. We have historically made more progress on race rather than on gender. But I think that's beginning to change. It's slow. It's frustrating. But it's the work that we have to do every day to change awareness and then develop pools of candidates as well.

**Q. When you can look back at the bubble and those three days when the Bucks sparked a layoff for three days after Kenosha, how do you reflect back on that and what do you think about what the NBA has done since then to live up to what the players wanted you to do from a social justice standpoint?**

ADAM SILVER: It's a great question. One, I would say I'm proud of our players. I think that they used that platform that they had in Orlando to bring global attention to those issues and that they also came together. It was, as you know, a bit divisive initially, but they came together as a group and I thought in a very constructive way to think about how we could use this league to further a social justice agenda, at the same time play basketball, which is what we managed to do down in Orlando.

To me, I didn't see it so much as player demands on the league. I saw it as an opportunity to jointly address the impact that the combination of our players and team owners could have together. What came out of, not just the incident in Kenosha, but Georges Floyd's killing was in addition to enormously heightened awareness of those issues, I'll just speak for the league, and conversations, many of which had never been had and should have been had many years earlier, but the NBA Foundation and the 300-million-dollar commitment from our governors to create and I hope initial funding for it and something that can grow much larger, the National Basketball Social Justice

Coalition. That came directly out of that moment in the bubble, which was a recognition that it's not just about money but we need to have more of a legislative agenda as well. That, again, working, I think uniquely together that certainly -- the players always could have just gone off and created a lobbying organization or done whatever on their own and the owners could have done their own thing. But I think there was a realization that if we work together, we can be incredibly powerful.

Since then we hired an executive director, James Cadogan, who is recently in the job and doing a fantastic job. Greg Taylor, who came in to the NBA Foundation, longtime NBA employee. So we're making progress. I think that it was important to create those institutions. I think that we could sort of focus on these issues full time and that we saw a real opportunity there to make a difference. And again, it's early days.

In part because we have all been living under these pandemic protocols, I do think just like having all of us together today, in-person gatherings are important. I mean, to try to persuade people, to talk to people who may disagree with you, and we haven't been able to do for the most part. It's largely been through virtual meetings. So I know that both Greg and James, and leading their boards and coalitions, I think we need to get people in the same room and really talk about, like make priorities where we can have the most impact from a societal standpoint.

**Q. You said the league is trying to get back to normalcy with the next season and the 82 games. When do you expect Global Games to be part of that return to normalcy?**

ADAM SILVER: Thanks for tuning in. Thanks for your question. I think most realistically not -- well, it's clear it's not going to happen this fall, but it's my hope it will be the following year. Again, of course this is a global issue, COVID, and so it's not just conditions here in the United States but the places at least where we have traditionally played and in Europe and Asia and in Latin America, we would need COVID rates to come way down there as well -- I think to understand what the new normal is going to be.

But it is my hope that as we can move in the U.S. back to something that looks very close to normal next year and then the following seasons we'll return to our international activities.

**Q. I was wondering what your reaction is to the news about ESPN's turmoil over the past year given the relationship the NBA has with the network and the widespread reaction with current and former players to the comments from Rachel Nichols and Adam**



## Mendelsohn?

ADAM SILVER: It's disheartening. I'm really not in a position to speak too specifically about what goes on at ESPN because so much of my information came from your newspaper's reporting and others, so I am not privy to much more beyond that. I will say, apropos of my earlier comments, I think it's particularly unfortunate that two women in the industry are pitted against each other. You know, I know that both Rachel and Maria [Taylor] are terrific at what they do, they work extraordinarily hard. As I said, I think just from the league's standpoint, while we recognize well, ESPN's operations are independent of us, I feel we're all part of a family here in terms of what we do around our sport.

I think part of the problem is, that as I said earlier, when people can't get in a room and talk through these issues, this seemingly has fostered now for a full year. I mean, this is an incident that happened I guess when Rachel was in the bubble a year ago, and I would have thought that in the past year, maybe through some incredibly difficult conversations, that ESPN would have found a way to be able to work through it. Obviously not.

I should also say, too, that these issues are not unique to ESPN. As I said, the league is working on its own issues in terms of doing a better job with diversity. It's not just in sports, but in companies around America, there's a reckoning going on. I think part of it and what we're seeing in ESPN, it's one thing to talk about the principles around diversity and inclusion, it's something else when it comes to somebody's specific job and how that's handled. What I've learned from dealing with these issues in the NBA is that they are incredibly complex, there's no magic bullets here, and they require a very labor-intensive effort of getting people in the room and working through these issues by talking a lot about them, and then talking even more about them, and creating a climate where people are comfortable saying what's on their mind, where people are given the benefit of the doubt, especially long-term employees that are in good standing, that when they do make comments, that people recognize that people make mistakes, that careers shouldn't be erased by a single comment, that we should be judging people by the larger context of their body of work and who they are and what we know about them.

So, I have confidence in the leadership of ESPN and of course in my Disney colleagues, and so they will work through this, but I'm sure this is a very difficult time for them and it's really unfortunate what we're seeing in sports. I would say one of the differences from sports from most other businesses, including usually the media, is that it doesn't play out so publicly. We all are familiar with issues

that have happened in workplaces, but they're handled by a human resources department and people are quietly brought into rooms and they work through them and people can talk these things through. It's when things are playing out and the media and then on social media, it's incredibly difficult for everyone involved.

Again, I hope that the folks at ESPN are able to continue to work through these. We appreciate our partnership with them and the coverage, again from both Rachel and Maria. I mean, they're incredibly devoted to the NBA. They're both fantastic at what they do, and this is just a really unfortunate situation, especially coming at this moment in time when we would like all the focus to be on the players on the floor.

**Q. Wondering, we have all arrived at this place and we keep talking about this idea of getting back to normal. But I'm wondering like all of us who are sort of confronting that thought, what parts of normal do you want to get back to and what parts do you want to leave behind? Just from this whole year, starting from maybe even March 11th of last year.**

ADAM SILVER: Sure. So certainly, one part of normal we want to get back to is full arenas with fans. I think it's part of the NBA experience. We have talked about this before, that there aren't that many places even pre-pandemic in society where people gather in the way they do in arenas, in relatively intimate settings. It's to come together for a common purpose. I miss that a lot. I think also whether it's the arts or in sports, people literally breathe each other's air. When you think about what NBA players were doing in a pandemic, which is why it required so much testing, think about how many other workplaces where people go in masks off and they go this close to their colleague, and literally like breathing in through each other's mouths in many cases. So, I think that's part of the human connection. So, I really do miss that.

I think there are things we have learned, though, about flexibility in work places that I certainly am someone that pre-pandemic in my almost 30 years at the league, probably hardly been a week of my tenure where I didn't travel somewhere. I think we'll see probably less travel in the future for certain kinds of meetings that we can do. It doesn't mean that in-person meetings aren't incredibly important, but maybe people will value those meetings even more and treasure that time together. I think that will be really important. I hope we're able to maintain a sense of partnership that we have had in this community. Particularly with the Players Association. And it seems like almost poetic justice that Chris Paul, as president of the Players Association, someone I was on the phone with at least once a week since March 11th of 2020, is here in the

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Finals. He devoted an enormous amount of his personal time to leading the players, not an easy job, not without criticism.

And so, that sense of unity, I hope we can keep up and I see no reason why we won't. I think there's a, I think the players have a better understanding of sort of what we're up against in trying to run this business and I think we have a better understanding of the players and what it's like to travel the amount they do and to the stresses they're under, the emotional and physical burdens they're under by competing at this level, and hopefully we can continue to build on that.

**Q. A couple points. One, what do you think of the Suns' run that they have had to get here? And then, two, just looking at the season overall, what do you feel like is the one thing you guys got right and the one thing that you're like we could have done that better?**

ADAM SILVER: Sure. The first question's a little easier. So, the Suns' run, of course, began in the bubble with that 8-0 streak that they were on. It was a close call; they were right on the margin in terms of whether they were going to come to Orlando. And I think that, I'm sure when they look back on the team, regardless of what happens in the Finals, when they look back on their season, I think there's no doubt that had a real impact, them sort of seeing they could compete at a high level and come together like that as a team, even before the addition of Chris Paul.

Boy, you know, in terms of what we did right and wrong, you know, as I said earlier, I think it's too early to make these judgments, because I think it may turn out that things I thought we did right, turn out to be completely wrong. I just think there's still so much that's potentially not known about this virus, about whether these, whether, what aspects of the lockdown were necessary. Maybe there should have been, we should have shut down other parts of our business that we weren't aware of.

So, I would say, the one thing I feel -- same answer I gave before -- that I really think we did right, is building on a partnership with our players with Michele Roberts and the Players Association, with her Executive Committee and really talking through some very difficult issues. You know, I think similar to my response to an earlier question, that, you know, we went into a lot of these negotiations with the players not even honestly knowing what our position was. It was sort of, well, here's the obstacle, let's talk through the right way to get to the other side. How is this going to affect players, how are they going to feel about it, how will they feel about being in a bubble.

I mean, certainly at this point, looking back on the last year

and a half, the bubble seems to have been very effective.

In terms of this season, whether we started it at the right time and whether we were right to conclude by July 22nd, I still maintain that, balancing all these various issues, that was still the best outcome out of a variety of unpopular decisions, that it was the best way to balance those factors. But it's unclear and I accept the criticism. It's part of the job, whether it comes from players or the media or others, and we'll see. Maybe it will take a few years to really look back on this season to really understand what we did right and what we did wrong.

**Q. It was just less than a decade ago there was real concern about the franchise viability in Milwaukee and whether it could stay there. So, could you speak to a little bit about this ownership group, what they have done and meant to the franchise's viability, and then also just in general what it means to the NBA to have Phoenix and Milwaukee represented in the Finals.**

ADAM SILVER: To your point about roughly a decade ago, and this is another area where Senator Kohl deserves a lot of credit. He led an effort to create a more robust revenue sharing system in the league. It was part and parcel of a new CBA that we entered [in] 2011. But I thought those two sides of the coin together are what enabled smaller market teams to better compete in the league. So, again, Senator Kohl deserves much of that credit.

I think though that he set out to find a group to pass the team to that would have the same love of Milwaukee that he did and commitment to keeping the team there, but also had the wherewithal -- and it's not just financial resources, but the technical wherewithal -- and that's something I mentioned to Mike Fascitelli earlier, that's one of their owners with a strong construction background, to make possible the development of the arena that they did.

So, it's a model what they have created, both now -- certainly I was able to say that before the season, a model in terms of the business, but now a model from a basketball standpoint as well.

And to have Phoenix and Milwaukee, of course, you know, one team that hadn't won a championship in 50 years, one team that hadn't won a championship. And for people to see the viability of the competition in this league, you know, not just from independent of market size, but also in some cases independent of top picks in the draft. And not to say -- of course there's a correlation between quality on the floor and top picks. But whether it's Giannis or Devin, picks out of the top-five come in and become All-Stars, become accomplished players and the way they are also just, you

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

know, multi-dimensional people with just great personalities and interests far beyond basketball, it's a dream for the league.

And it's something -- again, I realize that it's one data point and one season, so I'm not here to say our problems are all solved. But I think it's very positive, and of course just a wonderful vibe both here in Phoenix and I know in Milwaukee as well, I was there recently for a playoff game, it's just great to see.

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