

THE SPORTIER

The NBA Bubble Restart

This past Thursday, with 11:42 remaining in the first quarter of the first game of the NBA's restart, Jazz center Rudy Gobert dumped in an and-one layup while being guarded by Pelicans forward Derrick Favors. This basket, while not only signaling the return of basketball, was quite fitting for the NBA: Gobert, the first person in the NBA to contract the virus due to his own stubborn attitude, who, after touching reporters' microphones as a "joke," spread the virus to his star teammate Donovan Mitchell and kicked off the NBA's reformatted season. There was a whole lot more to the reboot of the NBA season, though. The most prevalent aspect about the new plan is the push towards awareness and prevention of social injustices, specifically standing up for the African-American community. On each court, a main feature is the block text that boldly states "Black Lives Matter." This message is also imprinted across the warmup jerseys of players. Speaking of jerseys, the players also have the option of switching the name on the back of their jersey to one of 29 approved messages, with the two most popular being "Equality" and "Black Lives Matter." Finally, most players throughout the NBA have decided to kneel for the National Anthem, as it is now becoming an encouraged practice across the league. Both Miami Heat's Meyers Leonard and Orlando Magic's Jonathan Isaac did not kneel, though they both said that they understood the Black Lives Matter movement. With virtual seats for fans to place themselves in the stands, overgrown beards, and video game crowd noises, this NBA season is expected to be different than any before. In addition to making a difference on a large scale in the African-American community, every team is fighting for its chance to be crowned an NBA champion.



Trail Blazers point guard Damian Lillard sports a social justice message on his jersey



Magic forward Jonathan Issac stands for the National Anthem, while teammates kneel

Baseball: A Disappearing Act?

Just as soon as it came, it may be gone. The MLB had so carefully planned out a return, with many safety regulations in place to protect players. Unfortunately, the plan has not been airtight enough, and COVID-19 has begun its slow plague of baseball. Before the season began, presumably during summer camp, the Miami Marlins were in Atlanta to play the Braves. It has been reported that at least one, but very possibly more than one player from the Marlins, ventured outside of the team hotel and went out in the city. Now there have been approximately 21 Marlins players and staff that have tested positive for COVID-19. How did this happen? The MLB as well as the players' association (MLBPA), while they had a lot of time to plan out a season as they were starting the 2020 season fresh, may have disregarded a bubble plan because of inconvenience to players, and because at the time, many players complained that it would be too difficult for them to be separated from family for an extended period of time. As we have seen with the NBA, who, in their bubble, have reported a total of zero positive tests, the bubble idea may have been best to stop the spread of the virus. Worse, the Marlins tests did not only affect their own team. The Phillies, who had hosted the Marlins for their 3-game opening series, had their subsequent games against the Yankees canceled as a precautionary measure. Sure enough, a Phillies' staff member who had entered the visitors' clubhouse at the Phillies' Citizens Bank Park contracted the virus, most likely due to the Marlins having occupied the space. More Phillies staff eventually tested positive, which left both the Phillies and Marlins temporarily without games to play. Wait, there's more. Separate from the Marlins-Phillies saga, a total of 6 Cardinals players and staff tested positive, which led to the cancellation of their series against the Brewers. Through all of the madness, many players began to opt out of the season: Marlins infielder Isan Diaz, who had not tested positive for the virus, and Brewers outfielder Lorenzo Cain, both opted out. The cancelled games as a result of the MLB's outbreak of COVID-19 leaves the league on thin ice. It appeared as though they would make a fluid return, with all of the planning that had supposedly gone into the 101-page safety manual. Robert Manfred, the Commissioner in charge of the MLB, has been quoted as recently saying "there is no reason to quit now." With the coronavirus cases rising throughout the league, not to mention the fact that the Toronto Blue Jays have yet to formally secure a new temporary home after being pushed out of Canada, it may be time for Manfred to think a bit clearer before the situation gets even worse.

Sources:

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