

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

**Remarks Honoring the 2010 Women's National Basketball Association
Champion Seattle Storm**

June 29, 2011

The President. Hello, everybody! Everybody, please have a seat. We arranged for a gorgeous day here. Give it up for the 2010 WNBA champions, the Seattle Storm. Congratulations, Coach, on winning a second title.

We've got some big fans in the house today. The former Governor of Washington State, current Commerce Secretary, soon-to-be Ambassador to China—that's all one person—Gary Locke is here with his beautiful wife. Secretary of Health and Human Services and former college basketball star Kathleen Sebelius is in the house. The wonderful Senator from Washington State, Patty Murray is here. There she is. And the former county executive out in Seattle, who's now Deputy Secretary at HUD, Ron Sims is in the house.

A few weeks ago, WNBA tipped off its 15th season. And in that time, it has become the most successful women's professional sports league in the world. Attendance is up. Ratings are up. Basketball is now the most popular sport for girls in the Nation. That's worth applauding. To WNBA President Laurel Richie and everyone who else make—everybody else who makes this possible, congratulations. We are very, very proud.

Today, though, is about the Storm. Three years ago, when this team's future in Seattle was uncertain, four season ticket holders joined forces to become co-owners. Now they're also the first all-female ownership group in American history to win a championship. Owners, wave your hands.

Congratulations to Coach Brian: three winning seasons in a row, 2010 Coach of the Year, championship ring. Not bad. And he had a special team to coach. They tied the record for the most regular-season wins, went undefeated at home, became the first team in WNBA history to go a perfect 7–0 in the playoffs on the way to the title.

And this was no fluke. It was the result of true teamwork and unselfish play. When you meet these women, you can't help but be struck by their humility. You ask them how they'd describe a champion, and they say things like, "Somebody that makes the people around them better."

There's guard Tanisha Wright, who, when asked that same question, said, "Tanisha Wright." [*Laughter*] But the rest are humble.

Lauren Jackson, who couldn't be here today, but was there every time she was needed last year, picked up her third WNBA MVP award and her first Finals MVP award. Forward Camille Little iced the championship game by draining two clutch free throws with 6 seconds left. Swin Cash and Sue Bird—they're no strangers to the White House—both know something about perfection from their time playing college ball at UConn.

In fact, we can't get rid of Swin. [*Laughter*] I think she's got a cot here somewhere. She was here as part of the Detroit Shock championship team. She volunteered to read to children at an Easter egg roll. She helped out with our Father's Day mentoring barbecue. So Swin, thank you for going above and beyond the call of duty.

You see, the Storm family understands that being a champion doesn't stop when you step off the court. That's why they're playing their part in the life of Seattle communities by running healthy lifestyle programs for girls and reading and mentoring in the schools.

And today they're bringing that commitment here to the White House. After we're done, they're going to hold a clinic for young people on the basketball court—young people, go ahead and wave—as part of the First Lady's "Let's Move!" initiative and the WNBA Fit program.

And I was telling Coach, as somebody who had an extraordinary time this year coaching a couple of games of Sasha's, I can tell you nothing gets me more stressed—[laughter]—but also nothing gave me more satisfaction than seeing young girls get confidence and improve and learn how to be competitive and still good sports. It is just wonderful.

And since I'm usually surrounded by strong women in this house, seeing these young ladies behind us is a special pleasure. Because Michelle and I are always trying to teach our girls to set their sights high for themselves, expectations high for themselves, and we tell them if they work hard and do right, there's nothing they can't achieve.

So as a father, I thank this team for reaffirming that sentiment and for setting a good example for every young girl with big dreams. And as a basketball fan, congratulations on a thrilling year, and good luck next year.

All right? All right, we're going to take a picture.

We going to move this out? Thank you, guys.

[At this point, White House staff began to remove the podium, but were interrupted by the President, who continued his remarks as follows.]

The President. Coach, you want to say anything? Let him—[inaudible]. He won all these—

Head Coach Brian Agler. Well, first of all, President Obama, thank you for having us. It's a special moment for us and our organization, and we've got a special group here. And Lauren Jackson is not here today, but we miss her. She's having surgery tomorrow, as a matter of fact. So our wishes with—are with her, but we'll continue on and be a strong team, and we'll be competitive this year.

So thank you so much.

The President. Thank you. Fantastic. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mona Lee Locke, wife of U.S. Ambassador-designate to China Locke; and Dawn Trudeau, Lisa Brummel, and Ginny Gilder, co-owners, Anne Levinson, former co-owner, Lauren Jackson, forward/center, Swin Cash, forward, and Sue Bird, guard, Seattle Storm.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Women's National Basketball Association champion Seattle Storm.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Agler, Brian; Bird, Sue; Brummel, Lisa; Cash, Swin; Gilder, Ginny; Jackson, Lauren; Levinson, Anne; Little, Camille; Locke, Gary F.; Locke, Mona Lee; Murray, Patricia L.;

Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Richie, Laurel J.; Sebelius, Kathleen; Sims, Ronald C.; Trudeau, Dawn; Wright, Tanisha.

Subjects: China : U.S. Ambassador-designate; Commerce, Department of : Secretary; Health and Human Services, Department of : Secretary; Housing and Urban Development, Department of : Deputy Secretary; Sports : Basketball; Voluntarism.

DCPD Number: DCPD201100480.