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Remarks Honoring the 2012 National Basketball Association Champion Miami Heat

January 28, 2013

The President. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, today I am honored to welcome a little up-and-coming basketball team—[*laughter*]—to the White House called the world champion Miami Heat.

Now, for many of teams that come here, this is a lot of cameras in one place. It's a little overwhelming. [*Laughter*] But for the Heat, this is what practice looks like. [*Laughter*] This is normal. I know this is the first trip for some of these players, but a few of them were here a couple of years ago for a pickup game on my birthday.

Now, I'm not trying to take all the credit, Coach, but I think that it's clear that going up against me prepared them to take on Kevin Durant and Russell Westbrook. [*Laughter*] It sharpened their skills. It gave them the competitive edge that they needed. And I think part of the reason they came back today is they want another shot at the old guy. [*Laughter*]

But first, I have to congratulate the Heat on their well-earned title. This team traveled a long road to get to where they are. In 2011, the Heat got all the way to the finals only to come up short. But when you fall, the real test is whether you can ignore the naysayers, pick yourself up, and come back stronger. And that's true in basketball, but it's also true in life. That's exactly what these guys did.

Instead of getting down, they got better. Dwyane Wade worked on his core. LeBron learned some post moves from Hakeem. Shane Battier came on board. They became a more complete team. They got to know each other better and trust each other more. And they became more fun to watch.

In game four against the Thunder last year, we saw LeBron carried off the floor with cramps, only to come back a few minutes later and hit a dagger of a 3-pointer to put the Heat ahead. During game six, we saw him pull off one of the greatest performances in basketball playoff history, dropping 45 points, and he had a scary look in his eye. [*Laughter*]

We saw Dwyane Wade, the heart and soul of this team, continue to do whatever it takes to win, including leading the team in blocks. And at the postgame press conferences, he dressed well enough to land himself in GQ magazine. [*Laughter*] Show them your kicks here, Dwyane. [*Laughter*] If any of you can pull this off—[*laughter*]—other than Dwyane Wade, let me know. We saw Chris Bosh get injured, but get healthy right at the perfect time and do outstanding work throughout the rest of the playoffs.

And it wasn't just the Big Three. Mike Miller could barely walk. Mike, you look better now. [*Laughter*] You looked broke down last year—[*laughter*]—but still hit seven 3-pointers in the final game. I don't know how he did it because he could not walk. He looked like an old man. [*Laughter*] Mario Chalmers earned himself a nickname from Dwyane Wade that I'm not allowed to repeat. [*Laughter*] But he did a great job.

Shane Battier, as always, played impeccable defense, hit big threes. Juwan Howard—Grandpa—became the first member of the Fab Five to win a ring. And Coach continually set the tone and kept these guys motivated the entire way.

So that team mentality—with everybody doing their part—is what finally put the Heat over the top. And it's especially impressive when you think about everything they've had to deal with over the last few years. This team inspired a lot of passions on both sides. And I'm just talking about their dance moves now. [*Laughter*] We saw that video, LeBron. [*Laughter*]

But even though I'm a little disappointed that the Bulls didn't make it, I do want to congratulate the Heat for a well-earned championship. LeBron said, "It's about damn time." And I want to thank them for taking the time this afternoon to spend with wounded warriors at Walter Reed, because you guys are heroes to them, but they are heroes to all of us.

And let me just say one last thing about these guys, and I mentioned this as we were coming in. Now, there's a lot of focus on what happens on the court, but what's also important is what happens off the court. And I don't know all these guys, but I do know LeBron and Dwyane and Chris. And one of the things I'm proudest of is that they take their roles as fathers seriously. And for all the young men out there who are looking up to them all the time, for them to see somebody who cares about their kids and is there for them day in, day out, that's a good message to send. It's a positive message to send, and we're very proud of them for that. So the—[*applause*].

So congratulations again to the Miami Heat. And now we are going to take a picture that makes me look very short. [*Laughter*] I'm accustomed to it, but first I'm going to ask Coach to say a few words. Thank you, Coach.

Head Coach Erik Spoelstra. Well, on behalf of Micky Arison, Pat Riley, the entire Miami Heat organization, and our families, we want to thank you for your hospitality today to be in the White House and also to be inspired by the great men and women of the Walter Reed Hospital. We are honored and truly, truly humbled to be here.

Because we actually hope that this team serves as an inspiration to the Nation of what a group can do when you come together and sacrifice your egos for a greater goal, to come together with a real hardhat work ethic, and to be able to persevere through adversity and a whole heck of a lot of criticism—[*laughter*]—and still be able to accomplish the ultimate dream.

The President. Fantastic. Thank you so much.

Forward LeBron James. Am I supposed to say something?

The President. Hey, you can if you want. It's your world, man. [*Laughter*]

Mr. James. I mean, on behalf of myself and my teammates, we just want to thank you—to piggyback what Spo' said—for the hospitality, for allowing us to be, I mean, in the White House. I mean, we're in the White House. [*Laughter*] I mean—and Coach said—and the Prez said this real casual. So I mean, we're kids from Chicago and Dallas, Texas and Michigan and Ohio and South Dakota—[*laughter*]—Miami. I mean—and we're in the White House right now. This is like, "Hey, mama, I made it." [*Laughter*]

Guard Dwyane Wade. All I've got to say is, we've got a 10-day contract left?

The President. Yes.

Mr. Wade. Pick my man up. [*Laughter*]

The President. You guys could use a shooter. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Wade. My point guard. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you. Thank you. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:44 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Kevin Durant, forward, and Russell Westbrook, point guard, National Basketball Association's Oklahoma City Thunder; Shane Battier, Chris Bosh, Mike Miller, and Juwan Howard, forwards, Mario Chalmers, point guard, Miami Heat; and Hakeem Abdul Olajuwon, former center, Houston Rockets. Mr. Spoelstra referred to Micky Arison, general manager, and Pat Riley, president, the HEAT Group.

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