

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

Remarks Honoring the 2015 National Basketball Association Champion Golden State Warriors

February 4, 2016

The President. Welcome to the White House, everybody. Give it up for the NBA Champion Golden State Warriors! Everybody, please have a seat. Now, let me begin by saying I was hoping that Riley Curry would be here today—[*laughter*—to share the podium with me, but I guess I'm going to have to get media training some other day. [*Laughter*]

The East Room is not as loud as the "Roaracle," but Dub Nation is well represented. We've got some members of my Cabinet and Congress in the house who are big fans, and I don't just mean Harrison Barnes, who apparently they call the Senator. [*Laughter*] He's from Iowa, so maybe he's got some politics in his blood. But we've got one of the biggest Golden State Warrior fans around, our leader in the House of Representatives, Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi. We've got Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy is here, so this is bipartisan. We have Mayor Schaaf is here. So we're glad you're here to celebrate the best in the Bay. [*Laughter*] What's going on back here? [*Laughter*]

I also want to recognize Warriors Executive Board member and NBA legend, one of the greatest of all time, the logo, Jerry West. [*Applause*] He's worth a standing ovation. As well as owner Joe Lacob and General Manager Bob Myers. Give them a big round of applause.

Now, it is rare to be in the presence of guys from the greatest team in NBA history. So we're pretty lucky today, because we've got one of those players in the house: Steve Kerr from the 1995–96 Chicago Bulls! [*Laughter*] It's good to see you back. [*Laughter*]

Head Coach Steve Kerr. Thank you.

The President. Now, for those of you who don't know, the Warriors started this season without Coach Kerr, who was recovering from back surgery. So Luke Walton stepped up and led the team to a ridiculous 39-and-4 record. Unfortunately, the NBA won't let Luke count those wins as his own. [*Laughter*] Which, man, that doesn't seem fair. [*Laughter*] You defied the cynics, you accomplished big things, you racked up a great record, and you don't get enough credit. [*Laughter*] Well, I can't imagine how that feels. [*Laughter*]

Now, let's face it, the Warriors are in the midst of a pretty special 2-year run. Folks are saying that they are "revolutionizing" basketball. They are so good that they seem to be just breaking the game itself. And I don't play anymore, but I still know a little bit about basketball, and this really is one of the best that we've ever seen. Great shooting, great passing, a small-ball "nuclear lineup"—it's almost not fair. And they play not just well, but they play well together. They play as a team the way basketball is supposed to be played. And it's beautiful to watch when they're working on all cylinders.

Now, let's face it, "beautiful" was not how folks described the Warriors for many years. [*Laughter*] I may be one of the few who are old enough to remember the last time they were good, back in the middle seventies, I was—the last time they won a championship—I was 10 years old. [*Laughter*] So the franchise, it had some good teams and some great players, but it had been struggling. One college player forgot that there was even a team in Oakland. That was Klay Thompson, by the way. [*Laughter*]

But a few years ago, Joe Lacob took over, pointed out—pointed to that 1975 Championship banner and said, "That's a very lonely flag. We need another one." And last year they got it: 67

wins, 16 straight at one point. That used to seem like a lot until this year—[laughter]—where they started off 24 and 0. Ended last season with their first title in 40 years.

And obviously, a big part of that was league MVP, Steph Curry. Steph is a pretty good shooter. [Laughter] For those of you who watched the game against the Wizards last night, he was—to use slang—he was "clowning." [Laughter] He was all jumping up and down. [Laughter] Just settle down, all right? He was all jumping up and down. [Laughter] Just settle down. By the way, for the record, I heard during this summer, after our golf game, that Steph was using the excuse of Secret Service being intimidating for why he lost the match. That is not the case. [Laughter] But he will have another opportunity. Obviously, watching Steph play is incredible. And for anybody who enjoys basketball, it is just a lot of fun.

But it's not just Steph. There's the other "Splash Brother," Klay, who dropped 37 points in a quarter, and whose jump shot is actually a little prettier. [Laughter] I mean, I'm just saying. There were Barnes dunks, Bogut blocks, Draymond Green showing us "heart over height" every single night. Draymond is also known to add a few more words that I cannot repeat. [Laughter] Then, you've got a couple of unselfish All-Stars in their own right that were coming off the bench: Andre Iguodala and David Lee. And a bench that was so good that an opposing coach complained, "they've got two starting lineups."

In the Finals, Golden State faced Cleveland and a guy named LeBron. Down two games to one, Coach Kerr had the guts to shake up the lineup, and it worked. Andre came off the bench, played great D, took home the Finals MVP. And it was a perfect example of the kind of team this is: everybody doing their part, everybody ready to step up at any moment. Unselfish play. Folks looking out for each other.

And it's the same kind of selflessness that the Warriors show in their community as well. They've led the way for the NBA's commitment to our "My Brother's Keeper" initiative, promoting mentoring in the Bay Area and nationwide. I know they met with some students in the White House mentor program earlier today. This team is also supporting the city's Oakland Promise effort to help more kids make it through college. You've had players take a stand against gun violence, work with—[applause]. They've worked with Michelle's "Let's Move" initiative. They've dressed up as Santa to deliver Christmas presents to those in need. And the first time I met Steph was because he had partnered with the U.N. Foundation to donate three antimalarial mosquito nets for every 3-pointer he makes. So last night, that's 33 nets. [Laughter] So keep shooting, Steph. Not that he needs any encouragement obviously. [Laughter]

I—the point is, this is a great basketball team, but it's a great organization, it's a great culture. And these are outstanding young men. And some of them I've met before. Steph I've gotten to know a little better. They're just—they're the kind of people you want representing a city, representing the NBA, and the kinds of people that you want our kids to be rooting for.

So they have a lot to be proud of. Good luck for the rest of this season. Maybe you'll break that Bulls record. But as Coach Kerr pointed out, he wins either way. Either way, he's got the record. [Laughter]

So thanks, everybody. Congratulations.

You want to say something?

Coach Kerr. Thank you. I'm actually—I'm a little thirsty. Is that my water or yours? [Laughter]

The President. It is. Go for it.

Coach Kerr. I thought maybe it was yours. [Laughter] I'm guessing it's yours.

I want to say thank you. I also want to say congratulations for becoming the first President in our Nation's great history to use the term "clowning." So—[laughter].

The President. I'm proud of that.

Coach Kerr. Although maybe Teddy Roosevelt used it somewhere in there, I don't know. [Laughter] But we want to thank you. Our organization is so honored to be here, to meet you, to tour the White House, and to celebrate our championship with you here.

Our general manager, Bob Myers, who you met earlier, also mentioned to me that you're going to be a free agent at the end of this year. [Laughter] So we don't know if you have anything lined up yet, but——

The President. I'm ready to go.

Coach Kerr. You can consider this a symbol of an offer that's coming. We want you—as soon as your duties are done here in the White House, we'd like you to be the leader of Dub Nation.

The President. Forty-four!

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:02 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Harrison B.J. Barnes, forward, Luke T. Walton, assistant coach, Andrew M. Bogut and Draymond J. Green, centers, Klay A. Thompson, W. Stephen Curry II, and Andre T. Iguodala, guards, and David Lee, former forward, Golden State Warriors; Riley Curry, daughter of Mr. Curry; Mayor Elizabeth B. "Libby" Schaaf of Oakland, CA; Monty Williams, assistant coach, Oklahoma City Thunder, in his former capacity as head coach of the New Orleans Pelicans; and LeBron R. James, forward, Cleveland Cavaliers.

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