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Remarks Honoring the 2015 Women's National Basketball Association Champion Minnesota Lynx

June 27, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody, hello! Hello! Everybody—everybody, have a seat. Everybody, have a seat. Oliver is upset—[*laughter*]—that Mom is up here and he's not. Now, if you want to bring Oliver up here, you—that's fine. Coach, what do you think? Come on.

Audience members. Aww!

The President. Yes, come on. There you go. Look, he's got his little suit on and everything. [*Laughter*] Look at him—got the bowtie.

Head Coach Cheryl Reeve. Can you say say hi to Mr. President?

The President. Hey, man. High five?

Coach Reeve. Say high hive. High five?

The President. There you go. All right, now that we've got that settled. [*Laughter*]

Good afternoon, everybody. Give it up for the 2015 WNBA champion the Minnesota Lynx! Yes. So this is this team's third visit to the White House in the past 5 years. So I guess I should ask: "Whose house?" [*Laughter*]

Player. Our house!

Coach Reeve. Our house!

The President. Our house!

We have some Lynx fans in the house, including your outstanding Senator, Amy Klobuchar. WNBA President Lisa Borders is here. Welcome back to Coach Cheryl Reeve—third title with the Lynx. You get a sense she's feeling greedy though. [*Laughter*] She wants more. [*Laughter*] When the Lynx won it all, with champion—you know, banners going up, champagne popping, she looked around and said, "This never gets old." [*Laughter*] This never gets old. And you can see how the way—by the way they're playing this year that it has not gotten old for any of the players either.

Now, I want to take a moment to recognize somebody who I know would have loved to have been in this moment: Flip Saunders, who was a huge part of Minnesota basketball at all levels and a supporter of this team. Obviously, he experienced a tragic illness. And so on behalf of all basketball fans, this day, too, is "For Flip." And we want to give him a big round of applause.

So I think it's fair to say this team is a powerhouse. [*Laughter*] You've got Maya Moore, Lindsay Whalen, Seimone Augustus, recently named among the top 20 players in WNBA history. So you've got—seems like you all should have more than three—[*laughter*]—when you've got that much talent. Uh-oh, I've got you. [*Laughter*] All right, well, you just wanted this moment in the sun. [*Laughter*]

Now, this isn't to say it's always easy. Last year, these women faced down midseason roster shakeups and multiple injuries——

[*At this point, a baby cried.*]

The President. I know, it was frustrating—[*laughter*]—and a championship game that started a little bleak. Lindsay sprained her ankle. Maya was trying to find her rhythm. But in the second half, the Lynx started to gain some steam. Seimone finished with 16 points. Sylvia Fowles had 20. They pulled away and won the championship by 17 points. It was their first championship at home, in front of their loyal Minnesota fans. And as Maya put it, "It wasn't a perfect year, a perfect series, or a perfect game . . . but we are the champions." And that's what matters.

They did manage to have a pretty-close-to-perfect victory party though. After the game, the Lynx drove out to Paisley Park for a private concert by one of their biggest fans, Prince, which was pretty cool and reminds us of how much we miss him. In fact, the last time I saw him, he was on this stage at a really good party. [*Laughter*]

Now, these women are not just all-star basketball players, they're also leaders in the Minnesota community. They host an annual Breast Health Awareness game in partnership with the Mayo Clinic. They made holiday cards for children of military members, teamed up with the Twin Cities Boys and Girls Club to help prepare meals for kids who would otherwise go hungry. And the team signed honorary contracts with young boys and girls who are facing big challenges, but dream of playing basketball. For a day, those young people were Lynx teammates, and that, as much as any trophy, is what makes these women champions.

So on the 20th anniversary of the WNBA, this is a good moment to celebrate all that these players and the many others who came before have accomplished. Twenty years ago, Maya, Seimone, and Lindsay were playing H–O–R–S–E in their driveway. And suddenly, they saw players like Lisa Leslie and Sheryl Swoopes and Sue Bird to look up to as role models. And there's no discounting how important that is. Today, these women—and women across the WNBA—are setting their own outstanding example for girls who are growing up today.

And they're aware of the responsibilities that come with that. As Maya says, "We're not super rich like the guys . . . but money's not everything when you're talking about dynasties and legacies and inspiring young women and men and opening people's minds." Although, money is useful too. [*Laughter*] And I am for equal pay for equal work.

But, with that, I know Lindsay would like to say a few more words. Let's give a big White House congratulations once again to the Minnesota Lynx, 2015 WNBA Champions.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:42 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Maya Moore, forward, Lindsay Whalen and Seimone Augustus, guards, and Sylvia Fowles, center, Women's National Basketball Association's Minnesota Lynx; Lisa Leslie, former center, WNBA's Los Angeles Sparks; Sheryl Swoopes, former head coach, Loyola University women's basketball team; and Sue Bird, guard, WNBA's Seattle Storm.

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