

Interview With Mark Jones of ESPN2 During a United States-Brazil Men's Basketball Game

July 16, 2012

Mr. Jones. President Obama, I want to ask you, first of all, your thoughts on the first half of play. It was a little bit more competitive maybe than some people thought.

The President. Well, you forget how many Brazilians are in the NBA now. Between Nene and Varejao and Barbosa, they've got a good team. So it took a while for our guys to kind of get into rhythm, but we're so much deeper that over time you get a sense they're going to wear them down.

Mr. Jones. Predictions for the second half?

The President. I don't think it will be close in the second half.

Mr. Jones. No. U.S.A. Basketball, Mr. President, has undergone a culture change. They bottomed out a little bit in 2004 with the Bronze, and then Coach Krzyzewski came aboard and really turned it around. Your thoughts on that process.

The President. Well, obviously, Coach K is one of the greatest coaches of all time. He knows how to bring together folks to think like a team. And obviously, the talent that we've got at this point is unbelievable. So there's no reason we shouldn't bring home the Gold. We just have to stay focused.

One thing I'm happy about is to see how hard everybody is playing. You really get a sense of how proud they are to represent the United States, and I think they're going to conduct themselves really well in London.

Mr. Jones. One of the subjects of great debate of late, started by one Kobe Bryant, was the fact that he feels that the present constitution of the team would beat the 1992 original version. Your thoughts on that. Can you weigh in on that argument for us?

The President. You know, this is a generational thing. I was around in '92. I was a Bulls fan, so I've got to go with the original Dream Team. And I suspect that Michael and Sir Charles and others would point out they were probably never down at any point in any of their games. But this is a great team, unbeliev-

able talent, and Kobe is a competitor, so you expect him to do a little trash talking whenever the opportunity arises.

Mr. Jones. You're a big basketball fan. Everybody knows that. And you're involved in coaching your daughters. We saw the U.S.A. Women's National Team win by a big margin earlier tonight. How would you characterize your experience in coaching your two daughters?

The President. Well, first of all, I want to congratulate the women's team. They're going to be as dominant, if not more dominant, I think in the Olympics. And wonderful young women; they're great role models for my daughter. And I had a chance to say hello to them before this game started.

As you know, coaching kids, your heart is out there on the floor with them. I get more excited than I ever got when I was actually playing, watching Sasha or Malia play. They're really enjoying it, and to see them improve and start playing as a team always is great satisfaction.

What you want to see in your kids, even if they're not going to be professionals, is just taking something seriously, learning how to put a lot into it and seeing them get something out of it.

Mr. Jones. For your 49th birthday you had an all-star cast of players come to the White House for a much-celebrated pickup game. Who's coming to the next birthday party pickup game?

The President. Well, this summer these guys are busy. [Laughter] So they need to focus on the Olympics. But it was one of the most fun events that we've had.

Mr. Jones. Did your team win?

The President. We actually had four teams, and my team did not win. I did not stack it. But LeBron and Dwyane Wade and Chris Paul and a whole bunch of folks—Derrick Rose—came. We had three pros and two amateurs on each

team, and it was a lot of fun. Then we had a barbecue at the White House afterwards.

And we did it in front of wounded warriors, so it gave them a chance to see up close and personal some of the greatest basketball talent. And the guys could not have been more generous—signing shoes and jerseys and everything. So really enjoyed it and these are all some great guys.

Mr. Jones. Thanks a lot for joining us, Mr. President.

The President. Really enjoyed it. Thank you, Mark.

Mr. Jones. Back to you guys.

NOTE: The interview began at 9:03 p.m. at the Verizon Center. In his remarks, the President referred to Nene Hilario, forward and center,

National Basketball Association's Washington Wizards; Anderson Varejao, center, NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers, and Leandro Barbosa, guard, Indiana Pacers, in their capacity as members of the 2012 Brazilian Olympic men's basketball team; Michael W. Krzyzewski, head coach, Kobe Bryant, guard, LeBron James, forward, and Chris Paul, guard, 2012 U.S. Olympic men's basketball team; Michael Jordan and Charles Barkley, members of the 1992 U.S. Olympic men's basketball team; Dwyane Wade, shooting guard, NBA's Miami Heat; and Derrick M. Rose, guard, NBA's Chicago Bulls. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 17. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks at a Campaign Rally in San Antonio, Texas July 17, 2012

The President. Hello, San Antone! Hello, Texas! Well, thank you so much. Everybody have a seat. Have a seat. It is good to be with all of you, good to be back in San Antonio.

Couple of people I want to acknowledge who helped to make this day possible. First of all, your outstanding mayor, Julian Castro. Somebody whose name I know you're familiar with because we are in the Henry Gonzalez Convention Center, a great friend, outstanding leader, great Congressman, Charlie Gonzalez is in the house. Another fighter for working people, Lloyd Doggett is here. One of my national cochairs and just a great friend and a great advocate—and a really good actress too—Eva Longoria. And finally, our Futuro Fund cochair and a wonderful friend and supporter, Henry Muñoz.

Now, this is my last campaign. It's true, I'm term limited out. [*Laughter*] And that got me thinking about some of my first campaigns. I know that Charlie and Julian and others, they think back to your first campaigns. And back then, I didn't have Air Force One. [*Laughter*] Didn't have a motorcade, no helicopter. I did the driving myself, and we didn't even have MapQuest—[*laughter*]—I'd have to unfold the

maps. And Illinois, like Texas, is a big State, so I'd have to travel all across the State, and you'd go from urban neighborhoods to rural communities, suburbs. You'd meet folks from every walk of life: Black, White, Latino, Asian, Native American.

And wherever I traveled, what I discovered was that there was a common theme to everyone's story. If I met an elderly couple, I'd think back to my grandparents and how my grandfather fought in Patton's army in World War II and my grandmother worked on a bomber assembly line. And when my grandfather came back home, he was able to attend college on the GI bill, and they were able to buy their first home with an FHA loan. And I'd think about the distance they'd traveled from the small towns in Kansas where they had been born.

And if I met a single mom, I'd think about my mother, who had to raise me and my sister basically by herself, with some help from my grandparents, because my father had left, so that I didn't even know him, and how she had to work and go to school and look after her kids. But with the help of grants and scholarships, she was able to get an outstanding education and, more importantly from her