

THE WEEK AHEAD

COMMENTARY »

Sporting events this week, May 12-18

Sunday, May 12

Mothers Day diamond

Salt Lake Bees vs. Sacramento River Cats

1:05 p.m. at Smith's Ballpark

Listen: The Zone

Mother's Day brunch at the ballpark

Tuesday, May 14

Utes get rematch

Utah baseball vs. Utah Tech

4 p.m. at Smith's Ballpark

Watch: Pac-12 Networks

The Trailblazers powered past the Utes last week in St. George, 11-8.

Wednesday, May 15

RSL on MLS quest

Real Salt Lake vs. Seattle Sounders

7:30 p.m. at America First Field

Watch: Apple TV

RSL has its focus on the league after getting bounced from Open Cup.

Friday, May 17

Hard road to travel

Utah Royals at North Carolina Courage

6 p.m.

Watch: KMYU

The Royals have struggled on the road in their first campaign.

Saturday, May 18

Rivals on the pitch

Real Salt Lake vs. Colorado Rapids

7:30 p.m. at America First Field

Watch: Apple TV

A Rocky Mountain rivalry comes to Sandy.

THE GAME PLAN

Wednesday Utah Royals 7:30 p.m. TV: Apple	Saturday Colorado Rapids 7:30 p.m. TV: Apple	May 25 at Seattle 8 p.m. TV: Apple	May 29 at Seattle 8 p.m. TV: Apple	June 1 Austin 7:30 p.m.
Sunday at Chicago 8 p.m.	Friday at North Carolina 6 p.m.	May 25 Kansas City 8 p.m.	June 8 Washington 5:30 p.m.	June 16 at Bay FC 6 p.m.
Sunday Sacramento 10:30 p.m.	Tuesday at Carolina 7:30 p.m.	Wednesday at Seattle 10:30 p.m.	Thursday at Tacoma 8:05 p.m.	Friday at Tacoma 7:05 p.m.

NBA suspends Bucks' Beverley for throwing ball at fan in Indiana

THE ATHLETIC

The NBA suspended Bucks guard Patrick Beverley four games without pay for throwing a basketball at multiple fans in the final minutes of Milwaukee's Game 6 elimination loss to Indiana and a subsequent "inappropriate interaction" with a reporter during media availability, the league announced Thursday.

The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department is investigating the ball-throwing incident, which occurred with roughly two and a half minutes to play. Down 20, Beverley threw a basketball from the team's bench at a fan sitting behind him. He appeared to miss his target, a male Pacers fan, instead hitting a female Pacers fan in the side of the head before asking for the ball back.

The man collected the ball and tossed it back to Beverley, who immediately over-the-head, double-hand checked it back at the fan. The fan deflected the ball as Bucks staff and security stepped in, but the fan and Beverley continued to exchange words.

A case report was filed that night after an officer observed the interaction, and detectives are looking into the incident, a police spokesperson previously said. They are working with Gainbridge Fieldhouse to review video footage and plan to speak with those involved. The result of the investigation will be presented to the Marion County Prosecutor's Office, which will decide whether to bring charges.

According to one source who witnessed the incident and two others who were

briefed on it, the exchange between Beverley and one of the fans behind the bench escalated when the Bucks were breaking a huddle and the fan yelled, "Can you... Can you on 3."

Those sources indicated that obscenities were said toward Beverley in the lead-up to the escalation.

Beverley also addressed the exchange in a post on his X account, commenting on a video of the incident with the caption: "Exchanged between Pat Bev and Pacers fans behind the bench."

"Not fair at all," Beverley wrote. "Exchanged between a fan and our ball club all night. We warned and asked for help all night. Not fair."

In a separate post, Beverley wrote on X, "But I have to be better. And I will."

The incident with fans preceded an exchange later on May 2 involving Beverley and a postgame media scum that she couldn't ask him a question because she didn't subscribe to his podcast. Adams said on social media on May 3 that Beverley called her and apologized for the exchange.

Bucks coach Doc Rivers said he had a conversation with Beverley about his actions.

"I did (speak with Beverley) right away because that's not the Milwaukee way or the Bucks way," Rivers said. "We're better than that. Pat feels awful about that. He feels awful about that. He feels that he let the emotions get the better of him."



From left: Shaquille O'Neal, Ernie Johnson, Kenny Smith and Charles Barkley speak during the NBA Awards Show on TNT on June 25, 2018, at the Barker Hangar in Santa Monica, Calif.

TNT Sports' boss said they didn't need NBA — we're about to find out

By ANDREW MARCHAND

The Athletic

One of the core aspects of basketball is trash talk. It has seemingly been part of the game since Dr. Naismith taped up his first peach basket in 1891 at Springfield College. If you talk the talk, you have to back it up.

That is why Warner Bros. Discovery CEO David Zaslav's diss track from 2022 is underpinning the sudden jump ball between Zaslav's TNT Sports and NBC for the last NBA TV rights deal that is still up for grabs. Two years ago, Zaslav dunked on NFL Commissioner Adam Silver's league.

"We don't have to have the NBA," said Zaslav, who is reportedly paid like an NBA star at nearly \$50 million a year, during an RBC interview conference.

Zaslav's words zinged the ears of Silver and NBA executives. It has left Zaslav and TNT Sports fighting for their NBA lives with a Faustian choice.

Zaslav can either show fiscal restraint and lose the NBA to NBC, punting TNT Sports in the process, or he can play the reported \$2.5 billion per season asking price for a lesser package than he currently owns, proving that he does need the NBA.

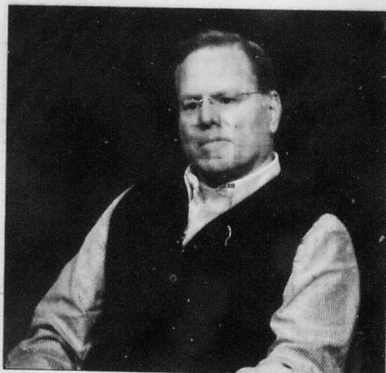
Any deal for TNT or NBC is expected to include a conference final every other year, as opposed to TNT's current setup of every season. Either network is anticipated to hold onto the yearly All-Star Game broadcast.

At this point, it seems apparent that ESPN's chairman Jimmy Pitaro, and Amazon Prime Video's top sports executive Jay Marine, and their bosses — who are already at the negotiation's medal stand waiting for the third winner — have done a better job than Zaslav and his top lieutenants.

As reported by the Wall Street Journal and confirmed by The Athletic, ESPN will pay \$2.6 billion each season for the NBA Finals and conference finals, while Amazon Prime Video will receive a conference final every other year and is expected to be in the \$1.8 billion-per-year range.

Meanwhile, NBC is sitting there, aggressively going after Zaslav's deal. It is a multi-faceted corporate move by Comcast-owned NBC that would reunite the league with its Michael Jordan-era partner and its "Roundball Rock" theme song and comes with an already set one-two play-by-play punch of Mike Tirico and Noah Eagle.

While cable may be dwindling, Comcast is still in the business. If Zaslav and TNT Sports no longer air NBA games, Comcast could conceivably attempt to drop the price of its roughly \$3 per month fee on



Warner Bros. Discovery CEO David Zaslav is interviewed by host Maria Bartiromo on the "Mornings with Maria" program on the Fox Business Network in New York on March 13, 2018. Zaslav's TNT Sports and NBC are fighting for the last NBA TV rights deal that remains up for grabs.

subscribers. It could add up to millions in savings for Comcast.

Meanwhile, NBC is offering to put games on its broadcast network, where they could fit snugly after "Sunday Night Football" ends in early January. NBC also wants the NBA to prop up its subscription streamer, Peacock. And, although not the incumbent, the NBA may prefer NBC as its teammate for all time.

While TNT Sports has broadcast the NBA for nearly four decades, it includes countless employees with long-term NBA ties and boasts Charles Barkley and the iconic "Inside the NBA" studio show, NBCUniversal chairman Mark Lazarus is the media executive with the long-term relationship with the league.

From 1999 to 2003, Lazarus headed TNT Sports. During that time, the network hired Barkley, arguably the greatest sports studio analyst of all time.

Lazarus also developed strong relationships with Silver and NBA chief rights negotiator Bill Koenig.

At Turner, Lazarus ascended to the head of Turner Entertainment, overseeing all of their programming from TNT to TBS. By 2008, though, he was fired.

He went on to resurrect his career with NBC, where he now sits atop NBCUniversal Media Group.

Both NBC and me, personally, have long histories with the NBA from my Turner years," Lazarus said at the IMG Summit last September. "It's a wonderful product in the States and globally. It's a really valuable product, it's culturally relevant in ways maybe some other

sports aren't — it speaks to multiple generations.

"So we're intrigued by that, but we're not an incumbent, and the process will come and go as it does."

The process is ongoing, and it is hard to see how Zaslav wins. If he pays top dollar to keep a lesser package, he will dishonor his words about not needing the NBA, even if he has since tried to walk them back somewhat, professing his love for the league. If he loses the NBA, what becomes of TNT Sports, even if it still has MLB, the NCAA Tournament, NHL, and NASCAR?

NBA history is stellar, and many of the people who built it remain with the network, waiting by their phones to find out what the future holds. They are at the ground level grinding, while Zaslav is at the games.

During New York Knicks first-round playoff games, TNT showed Zaslav sitting courtside when it did its celebrity roll call. Those things don't happen by accident; especially, and notably, on the late-April night the network's exclusive negotiations rights window was closing.

TNT's coverage is iconic because of all the memorable moments with Ernie Johnson, Kenny Smith, Shaquille O'Neal and Barkley. But the words that may define it, if this is the end of an era, could belong to Zaslav, who, at last resort, may also prove those words were hollow if he tries to prevent NBC from completing the steal.

Zaslav talked trash, but Silver has the ball, and the commissioner may decide who he wants to take the final shot.

POOR