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USA Basketball 2012 U.S. Olympic Men's Basketball Team Finalists Teleconference:

JERRY COLANGELO MIKE KRZYZEWSKI

THE MODERATOR: Good morning, thanks for joining us on today's call. We want to start things and end things promptly today because we know we have a full NBA schedule that some of you media are trying to get to, and as I said we appreciate everybody joining us for today's announcement of finalists for the U.S. Olympic men's basketball team.

I'm going to turn things over to USA Basketball Chairman, Jerry Colangelo, who since 2005 when he took over the men's national team program as managing director, and I should say he instigated and started the program in 2005, the USA teams have gone 48-1 which is a remarkable record in this era of international competition.

The USA teams have won obviously the 2010 FIBA World Championship, the 2008 Olympics and 2007 FIBA Americas Championship, and they won the bronze at the 2006 World Championship. So success has been remarkable for the USA team in the years since Jerry has taken over the national team program.

At this point I'll turn it over to Jerry to announce the 20 finalists and make some general comments, and then we'll get into question and answers from the media.

JERRY COLANGELO: Thank you. There's been a great deal of speculation about the list, so let's get right to that.

In alphabetical order:

LaMarcus Aldridge, Portland Trailblazers. Carmelo Anthony, New York Knicks. Chauncey Billups, Los Angeles Clippers. Chris Bosh, Miami Heat. Kobe Bryant, Los Angeles Lakers. Tyson

Chandler, New York Knicks. Kevin Durant, Oklahoma City Thunder. Rudy Gay, Memphis Grizzlies. Eric Gordon, New Orleans Hornets. Blake Griffin, Los Angeles Clippers. Dwight Howard, Orlando Magic. Andre Iguodala, Philadelphia 76ers. LeBron James, Miami Heat. Kevin Love, Minnesota Timberwolves. Lamar Odom, Dallas Mavericks. Chris Paul, Los Angeles Clippers. Derrick Rose, Chicago Bulls. Dwyane Wade, Miami Heat. Russell Westbrook, Oklahoma City Thunder. And Deron Williams, New Jersey Nets.

That is the list of 20 candidates, and of course, Coach K and the rest of the staff, Jimmy Boeheim, Mike D'Antoni and Nate McMillan are in place to move forward.

And I want to make some general comments.

To say that it's difficult to come up with a list, whatever the list might be, be it 15, 20 or 30, players are left off that one might say, should have been considered. Trust me, they have all been considered.

We put a great deal of emphasis on a word I've used a lot, and that's equity. Those who have put in time with USA Basketball, earned that equity, and also, in building a program, which is a lot different than putting the team on the floor to represent the United States, we have developed a whole bunch of champions, and champions with -- of the 20 names, eight of those 20 are champions relative to the Olympics in 2008. And 10 are world champions. So 18 of the 20 represent that kind of success.

The program was initiated in 2005 after we, the USA, failed to medal in the 2002 FIBA World Championship and taking a bronze medal in the 2004 Athens Olympics. We feel we have put in the infrastructure, and things are moving smoothly.

The proof of that pudding is we are loaded in terms of our pipeline. We have an awful lot of players who want to play, much more than a roster

would allow us to do so.

The finalists represent 14 different teams, and when we talk about the international experience, it's really key to being successful in international play. 18 finalists have a lot of experience led by Carmelo Anthony with 59 games; LeBron James, 55; Deron Williams 47; Wade, 40; Howard 38; Paul, 37; Bosh, 32; Billups, 30; Odom, 28; Chandler, 25; Bryant, 24; Gay, 23 and Durant 17 to begin with.

Griffin, let's talk about him for a moment. He's the youngest finalist at 22, has not played an international game, but very much was in the mix to play in the world championship, but he had that serious injury that kept him out.

LaMarcus Aldridge was on the select team in 2008, and then circumstances did not allow him to participate in the 2010 world championship.

We are excited about this group and the opportunities that are in front of us. The timing for announcing the 12-man roster is not until June, I believe it's June 18, at which time we have to select 12.

Our training camp is scheduled to begin right after the 4th of July, right on the 5th, maybe the first practice on the 6th, so that will start everything going for us.

For your information, the following teams have already qualified for the Olympics: The host country, Great Britain, the world champion, United States; Tunisia, Argentina, Brazil, China, Spain, France and Australia.

The final three teams will be selected in the qualifying tournament that's going to be held July 2 in Caracas, Venezuela.

We are looking forward to a very competitive time. We are very excited about keeping our program on the right track. We take nothing for granted, and we are looking forward to it. And with that, I'll just open it up for any questions.

Q. Can you maybe just explain the reason to go from 18 to 20 names on this list of finalists?

JERRY COLANGELO: I think in our final review of our list, we thought it would be probable in our best interest to expand it to 20; not that it's going to have a significant play.

But when you think about free agency, we do have some players who fall into the unrestricted category: Deron Williams, Chris Paul, Dwight Howard, Chauncey Billups. We have a couple -- we actually have three restricted free agents:

Westbrook, Love and Gordon and one player with a team option, Lamar Odom. That moratorium is scheduled to end July 7, and we will probably start practice on the 6th. Players can sign July 8th.

So I think we are just protecting our back side, if you will, by having more flexibility. You know, with some of the injuries that are occurring; I saw Wade's very serious ankle injury. Thank goodness it wasn't broken. But you just never know. That's why we are watching all of our players very carefully during the season.

Q. I'm wondering, there's already been talk about how good this team can be and does it compare to the '92 team and things like that. Does that worry you? Do you need to kind of step back and keep people focused on that the world is better now and it's not going to be quite the easy road that some people might think?

JERRY COLANGELO: Well, one thing is certain, we know that, and we have kind of drilled that into our own format regarding USA Basketball. In 1992 when the Dream Team dominated the way they did, the world level of basketball just wasn't quite there yet. But that kind of catapulted the world basketball community after the '92 Olympics. It's much more competitive today.

And yes, we are a target. We understand that. But it's better to be a target than chasing in my opinion. I think we are going to keep it the way we should.

With respect, we said originally, we need to show the world basketball community respect. All you have to do is look at games and see the input and contributions that a lot of the international players make in these NBA games, and it says an awful lot. Basketball is a team game. Some of these players are actually looking better, like Rubio, in the NBA, even from how he looked in Spain a year ago. The game just allows him a little bit more freedom here.

THE MODERATOR: Joining us on our conference call now is USA head coach and Duke Hall of Fame Coach, Mike Krzyzewski. Coach is in Springfield visiting some high school games and is taking some time out to join us, so we can open questions for him.

But let's start with Coach, if you would make some general comments on your thoughts about the 20 finalists, and then we'll go to questions for both Jerry and Coach K.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: It's been an exciting day for USA Basketball. To have these 20 men commit to the selfless service that a number of them, 18 of them, have served already, which is an example that our military has set for our program. We have used the military as a good example for selfless service and I've had many members of the military speak to our teams.

I like the fact that we have a roster full of guys who have been champions, either in the Olympics or the World Championships, and people who are excited to play.

It's an honor for us to coach them and to work with Jerry. They are not playing for us; they are us, and that's where the program has developed thanks to Jerry's leadership.

Q. These two new players, are they need based? Did you feel you were light in the front court, or two guys who you felt you deserved based on their careers to get named?

JERRY COLANGELO: Well, be specific. Which two would you refer to?

Q. Blake and Aldridge.

JERRY COLANGELO: Well, Aldridge is having a terrific season. He also has some physical attributes that we are quite interested in. His length is important. He can shoot the ball. He can pass it. He can get up and down the court.

But we certainly always look for the very best that we can find in the way of big men who have mobility and can defend. And so you know, that's a good reason, or many reasons, for him.

As far as Griffin is concerned, he's showing what kind of future he has, and I have no doubt that going forward that Blake will have a significant impact on USA Basketball; if not now, certainly in the future.

Q. Derrick Rose has talked about how much he learned from running the team from Chauncey in the 2010 World Championship. Could you speak about his growth, not just as a scorer but as a play maker and ability to run a team from the point guard position?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Well, he's just a marvelous player to coach, because he's a sponge, and such a team player. That whole summer, he wanted to learn and he did a great job for us, and I think it helped him going into the next year. But he helped himself by making that commitment.

Remember, he also was part of our select teams, and like Durant and guys who will be on our select team this year, who will then become part of the team that goes forward.

And so Derrick paid his dues. You know, he's an incredible athlete, but an incredible guy. What a team player and a pleasure to coach.

Q. With Kobe Bryant, he obviously went through the knee procedure in Germany in the off-season and is dealing with his wrist. When you reached out to him to gauge his interest, was there any concern with his health level with the commitment?

JERRY COLANGELO: Well, we always are very, very sensitive regarding the health of each and every player because they are very valuable assets in their own right. And you know, one of the things I should have pointed out, and I think I will.

When you look at the Olympic team after 2008 and the seasons that those players had, and injury-free, they had outstanding seasons. The same thing applied to the World Championship roster of younger players. We had the MVP in Derrick Rose. We had the leading scorer in the league in Durant. We had the leading -- one of the two leading rebounders in Kevin Love; four or five All-Stars, and injury-free.

So we monitor existing injuries and we certainly, Coach K and his staff, are very, very sensitive to how much time and how much use and how much practice, because we just are not going to overdo it.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: The guys who have played now for us know what to expect so they understand that they are not going to be overworked.

And what we did after the first year was adapt to each other; in other words, we would have one practice a day, but schedule their workouts -- most of those guys, all of those guys, have some type of individual workouts in conditioning, stretching, you name it.

What we did is we carved out time so that they could get all that done, and it didn't mess up their normal routine. In other words, we tried to incorporate normal routines for these outstanding players, along with doing the team stuff. And they know that. They know that. They know what to expect, and it will be the same this summer.

Q. I think that this year there's a particular shortage of time for practice that leads into the Olympics. Because of that, are you intending to favor players that are already clumped together on an NBA team and already practicing with one another? And for example, Billups and Blake, who are good players in their own right, are their chances increased of being on the team because they are practicing all year with Chris Paul?

JERRY COLANGELO: Go ahead, Coach.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: No, that won't be the case. We are happy that they are playing, you know. We were more worried about a lockout than not playing.

The main thing for them is to be in shape, and they will adjust accordingly as to whoever is on the team. You know, again, we want to see as many of those guys as possible compete for The NBA Championships, but that won't be part of the criteria.

Q. I didn't mean it in relation to the NBA Championship, but you guys have always had prolonged practices in the summer that allowed chemistry to be developed, and I'm talking about just the knowledge.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Yeah, they adjust very quickly.

One thing I will tell you is that each one of the last two teams to a man, every one of them has stated, I'll do whatever you want me to do to make this a great team. And we expect that same cooperation going forward.

One thing about all of these players, these 20 players, they are not only very talented, they are very, very smart. They are very intelligent and they want to be -- they are very good team players and they understand that they represented the United States, and they will adapt accordingly.

Q. In 2008, all of the players did have roles after they won the gold medal, with the growth of these players, especially Derrick Rose and the change of teams with LeBron James and Dwyane Wade, do you see these roles changing for the next Olympics in terms of who is the main scorer, who is the main closer, who is the main facilitator? Because a lot of these players have really grown, and with the addition of Durant, there's going to be a lot of people wanting to fill those roles.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Well, I think all of them have gotten better. You know, like in

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LeBron, Dwyane, those guys, they have gotten older, so they know more about the game.

We didn't have one facilitator; we had a few facilitators. And we didn't have one closer; we had a few closers. So this will be the most talented of the teams that I've had the opportunity to coach. And one is that we'll have a combination of the two championship teams, but also they are all older. They are better; a number of them are at the primetime in their careers.

I like the balance we have, that we eventually could have with youth than right at your prime. And then guys who like in Kobe's case, I guess he's always at his prime; to have somebody with 16 years of experience like that to be the top dog, to be the oldest guy, that's not a bad thing to have as your oldest guy (chuckling).

JERRY COLANGELO: Coach, I want to add something to that.

One of the things we have really harped on is that we have a program; it's not a team.

So it's important to have that blending of youth, and those who are coming up and those veterans who have been there and done it, and that just keeps it going in the right direction. Because when all of us are gone, we want this program to have the momentum, to have the pipeline really greased so that it just perpetuates itself.

Q. LeBron James, can you talk about what a leader he was for you in 2008, and also I guess 2006, and just what you expect from LeBron moving forward as possibly one of the leaders, certainly, for the 2012 Olympic team.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Well, you know, LeBron has made as big a commitment as anybody in the program from day one, and his versatility, being able to play numerous positions on the court helps us tremendously.

I think his biggest growth for us has been on defense. His voice on defense was the dominant voice in Beijing. I thought he became a great, not just individual defensive player, but a great team defensive player, because he's smart, he's a leader, he has a command voice and he has the athletic ability to make the plays.

I look at that as really being one of the main roles that LeBron would have on our team. He fits easy with a lot of groups.

Q. Dwyane Wade has definitely said

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this will be his last Olympics and he said he thought 2008 was going to be his last, but then a lot of the players were begging him to play another one. Did you play a role in working over Dwyane, or did you let the other players work him over?

JERRY COLANGELO: No, I did not work him over. The players I think as a whole just made a commitment they wanted to go forward. I realized Dwyane was where he was, and we are very thankful that he's made that decision to go for it one more time in London in 2012.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: I also think the power of prayer worked. I didn't say anything to him but I certainly said a few prayers hoping the other guys would have an influence on him.

JERRY COLANGELO: Yes.

Q. This roster is obviously notably deep at the point guard position. Could you see some of these guys playing off the ball a little bit more than they do traditionally in the NBA? And that being said, would versatility like that come into play when it comes to the final roster?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Well, we had that versatility with the Olympic team and with the World Championship team. We had Chris Paul and Deron Williams played a lot together. They will do that, depending on who is picked. Guys will do whatever we ask them to do. Obviously we have a lot of really good guards.

JERRY COLANGELO: I would just add that I do feel we are extremely, extremely strong at the point position, as evidenced by some people who are not even in the roster of 20. Because right now, there seems to be a load of outstanding point guards in the NBA today, including some very young ones.

So the growth that some of the players have had, for example, Chris Paul, is healthy up until his hamstring the other night. Deron Williams has come a long way overall in terms of his talent, but I'm not sure anyone has come as far and as fast as Derrick Rose. I mean, he literally dominates games. As I watch him play, he seems to be able to get to any point on the floor at any time he wishes to.

So, I'll tell you this: Our practices are going to be pretty interesting in terms of competition.

Q. I know you mentioned Kobe's injury already. Any concern specifically that his wrist

might cause him to miss the Olympics, even though he's obviously scoring plenty of points these days and showing a pretty high tolerance for the pain in the wrist.

JERRY COLANGELO: Well, I'll start it and then Coach can finish up. Obviously he has -- he's such a competitor, he'll do anything to play, and he would take any role he was asked to take.

So in this particular case, Kobe is going to keep us posted, and we'll watch him as closely as we can. We don't want to put him in any jeopardy whatsoever, and we won't.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Yeah, I think Kobe really wants to be in London, and again, depending on injury, that will be his choice.

But it would have to be something very, very serious, because I know he has a number of years still left, but I know he would want another Olympic championship. He's about championships. I mean, we need him. We need him because of that mentality and to be one of the leaders for our team.

Q. I'd like comments on the contribution Jason Kidd made on the last Olympic team, obviously he's served his time and not on this roster, but what he's meant to the program.

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Well, Jason is amazing. He's an undefeated international player, and gave us -- I mean, one of the reasons we have a program right now is because of his leadership and maturity. And he's the best.

I mean, we -- I love Jason and appreciate his amazing commitment to USA Basketball over the years, but especially as we were starting to form the program that we have right now. He was an essential ingredient for the success that we've had thus far.

JERRY COLANGELO: You know what's interesting about that, when we formed our club for 2008 for the Olympics, Jason was the only gold medalist in the room. And since that time, we now have 18 gold medalists, eight from the Olympic team in 2008, and ten from the World Championship team, but it all started with Jason.

Q. Seems like in the past the last Olympic team and the World Championship team, the roster was a little bit small at times, you had one center on there and Coach K would play Durant at the four and have Odom

and Bosh playing at the 5. Do you think this year you might put a little more emphasis on size on the roster, especially considering that you have those twin seven-footers in Spain that you might come up against in a tournament?

MIKE KRZYZEWSKI: Well, we will take a good look at the competition we expect to face, and Spain will be a formidable opponent.

The international game is a little bit different, and one thing is there are more continuity offenses, much more so than the NBA where isolations -- there's more continuities. So versatility on defense is essential. Like in the 2008 Olympics, Bosh did an amazing job at the center position.

However, things change. The lane has changed. I think that's the most important thing to consider. There's no longer the trapezoid; it's the NBA lane. So there may be more low-post play than there has been in the past for international competition.

JERRY COLANGELO: I think the ability to have more versatility big men on the roster, the 20-man roster, gives us the opportunity to be more selective, if you will, when we get down to the final 12.

And again, we will be watching a lot of things during the course of this year and strategizing about what we need in the way of match-ups and not only us matching up against our major opposition, but vice versa.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much for taking time-out of your schedule.

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