



NBA BOARD OF GOVERNORS APPROVES COMPETITIVE FORMAT TO RESTART 2019-20 SEASON WITH 22 TEAMS RETURNING TO PLAY

NEW YORK, June 4, 2020 – The NBA Board of Governors today approved a competitive format to restart the 2019-20 season with 22 teams returning to play and a tentative start date of Friday, July 31. The Board’s approval is the first formal step among many required to resume the season.

The NBA is working to finalize a comprehensive season restart plan with the National Basketball Players Association. The NBA and the NBPA are working with infectious disease specialists, public health experts and government officials to establish a rigorous program to prevent and mitigate the risk related to COVID-19, including a regular testing protocol and stringent safety practices. The season restart is also contingent on an agreement with The Walt Disney Company to use Walt Disney World Resort near Orlando, Florida, as a single site for a campus for all games, practices and housing for the remainder of the season.

Based on the competitive format that the NBA Board of Governors approved today, the 22 returning teams would be the 16 teams (eight per conference) in current playoff positions and the six teams that are currently six games or fewer behind the eighth seed in their respective conferences. Those two groups comprise teams with the NBA’s 22 best records.

“The Board’s approval of the restart format is a necessary step toward resuming the NBA season,” said NBA Commissioner Adam Silver. “While the COVID-19 pandemic presents formidable challenges, we are hopeful of finishing the season in a safe and responsible manner based on strict protocols now being finalized with public health officials and medical experts. We also recognize that as we prepare to resume play, our society is reeling from recent tragedies of racial violence and injustice, and we will continue to work closely with our teams and players to use our collective resources and influence to address these issues in very real and concrete ways.”

The season restart would begin with eight “seeding games” for each returning team and include the possibility of a play-in tournament for the eighth and final playoff seed in each conference depending on combined records across regular-season games and seeding games. Once the 16-team playoff field is set, the NBA Playoffs would proceed in a traditional conference-based format with four rounds and best-of-seven series in each round. The NBA Finals would end no later than Oct. 12. (See below for the list of returning teams and additional details.)

If, as tentatively scheduled, the season resumes on July 31, then the 2020 NBA Draft Lottery would be rescheduled for Aug. 25, the 2020 NBA Draft would be held on Oct. 15 and the 2020-21 NBA regular season would likely begin on Dec. 1, 2020.

The 14 NBA Lottery teams would be the eight teams that do not participate in the restart and the six teams that participate in the restart but do not qualify for the playoffs. These teams would be seeded in the lottery and assigned odds based on their records through games of March 11. The 16 playoff teams would draft in inverse order of their combined records across regular-season games and seeding games.

NBA Season Restart: Competitive Format Plan

The 22 returning teams for the season restart would be the Milwaukee Bucks, Toronto Raptors, Boston Celtics, Miami Heat, Indiana Pacers, Philadelphia 76ers, Brooklyn Nets, Orlando Magic and Washington Wizards from the Eastern Conference and the Los Angeles Lakers, LA Clippers, Denver Nuggets, Utah Jazz, Oklahoma City Thunder, Houston Rockets, Dallas Mavericks, Memphis Grizzlies, Portland Trail Blazers, New Orleans Pelicans, Sacramento Kings, San Antonio Spurs and Phoenix Suns from the Western Conference.

Each returning team would play eight seeding games, as selected from its remaining regular-season matchups. At the conclusion of the seeding games, the seven teams in each conference with the best combined records across regular-season games and seeding games would qualify for the playoffs.

If the team with the eighth-best combined record in its conference is more than four games ahead of the team with the ninth-best combined record in the same conference, then the team with the eighth-best record would earn the eighth playoff seed.

If the team with the eighth-best combined record in its conference (Team A) is four games or fewer ahead of the team with the ninth-best combined record in the same conference (Team B), then Teams A and B would compete in a play-in tournament to determine the eighth playoff seed. To earn the eighth playoff seed, Team A would need to defeat Team B once and Team B would need to defeat Team A two games in a row.

The 2019-20 season would conclude with a traditional playoff format with best-of-seven series in the first round, conference semifinals, conference finals and the NBA Finals.

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