

Im sure most people think I would be against a dress code of any kind in the NBA. Im not. I think every team should have the option of having one , or not. Every team has an image that it wants to present to its community and its customers, and that image should be cultivated on a proactive, rather than a reactive basis.

I also understand completely why Commish Stern felt the need to establish a dress code. Contrary to popular belief, the dress code wasnt in response to a problem with any players, it was in response to problems with owners.

Unfortunately we have gotten to the point where some, but not all, owners, or which ever executive is in charge of the team, have lost the ability to communicate with their players. In a nutshell, they dont talk to their players. Communication is a slap on the back if they see them after the game or at a team function. Communication might be a message via the General Manager asking him to sign something for a son or daughter of a friend. Its sad, but true.

Its awful hard to get to know a player if you have never spent any time with them. Thats not to say that every owner has to be best friends with the players, or the President of the team has to go out to dinner with them every week. But what does have to happen is that someone who represents the business side of the team has to be able to sit and talk to players and do their best to get to know the player at least a little bit. Only then can they come to an understanding of whats expected or needed from the player and by the player from the team.

Its amazing to me that this is really only a problem in professional sports. In "regular" business, even on the business side of the Mavs, I am very confident that I can trust my managers to maintain relationships with all of our employees. When there is a corporate initiative, we know how to work through any trouble spots and to learn as an organization how to overcome problems, whether internal or external.

Those skills dont exist everywhere in the NBA. For many teams, I dont even want to say most teams, if the team wants to try something different , they are truly afraid of how their players, particularly their stars might respond. Its the teams that are afraid of their players that forced David Stern into creating a Dress Code for players.

Its funny how the media likes to talk about the fundamentals of the players on the court being lacking, the real lack of fundamentals is in the teams' executive suites. When a team is unable or afraid to communicate their message or initiative to their front office or players, or when they know they have a problem they are afraid or unable to deal with, they ask the Commissioner to create a league wide edict. This is a convenient out for the teams. Its not their fault that the players have to do this, its the league's fault. To the Commissioners credit, he knows he can easily take the hit for something so simple in concept.

Unfortunately there isnt much the league can do to legislate against lousy team management. Its there and its not going anywhere. But as in any business, the business is only as strong as its weakest link.

Which takes us back to the dress code.

The league requires each team to do a business of basketball presentation. They give us a nice little powerpoint to work from. Its pretty good, but I prefer to have as open a discussion about the business of the Mavs and the league as I can.

For our meeting last week, I went over the basic economics of the team. All the way down to money we make from the arena, money I get from other sources and the tax benefit i get from the operating loss the Mavs show. I offered to sit down and go through the books in detail with any of them. As I have in the past with some of them.

I went through the economics of the amnesty from the luxury tax and why we did what we did with Fin.

Then we had the important discussion. We talked about how critical the relationship each of them has with our fans and our advertisers. That their financial success was directly related to our ability to connect to the people who pay our bills, the fans and our corporate customers.

We then discussed how that led to the upcoming dress code. I explained that a couple corporate customers of the league (this isnt a problem with our Mavs corporate customers) were uncomfortable with the appearance of some players. That unfortunately, in those cities, they didnt feel comfortable having a discussion like this and that their ownership didnt feel comfortable asking those players to work with the teams for the best of the league. Since the teams couldnt deal with it, they had asked the league to step in and deal with it.

At that point several players asked questions about what I thought the dress code would be. I told them that I was pretty sure that the league would prevent any jewelry being worn on the outside of clothing, but that beyond that it would be business casual attire. But not suits or sportcoats. I asked everyone if they were ok with that. To a man, every single one shook their head ok.

Then Josh Howard spoke up with a great idea. Why not go to a fashion designer that specializes in nicer clothes and ask them to work with us. Kind of give us a designer look that the team could adopt. We do it with sneakers, uniforms and workout gear, why not for this. Everyone would be watching, so it would be a great marketing opportunity for everyone. He threw out some names and all the guys were voicing their approval. So they put me on a mission.

Hopefully I can come through. (Feel free to email me if you are a designer in case the current deal falls through ■

Then I asked the guys if they would be willing to spend an extra few minutes before every game, home and on the road signing some autographs. Jason Terry was all over the idea. He wanted specially made JET wristbands to hand out. Some guys wanted to be able to sign pictures in advance and hand them out right when they went out to shootaround so they could stay as close to their normal routine as possible. I was cool with that. Again, to a man, with Dirk and Stack and JET being the impetus they all got behind it

We discussed that the more we did as a team to establish a Dallas Mavericks identity, not only would it be better business for them and the team, but it also meant that we could control our own destiny. That as the team that set the example, we could do things that we liked, rather than waiting for the league to tell us what to do.

The funny thing about the signing is that for our first 3 preseason games on the road, our guys signed pictures at the hotel, took pictures and sharpies in hand and went out on the court to hand them out. (yes, we want to do this on the road and at home). Unfortunately there was hardly anyone at those games 75 to 90 minutes before tipoff, so there were some lucky fans who got lots of signed pictures. We still have some fine tuning of the program to do, and there will never be enough time to make every fan happy, but I think its going to work out great.

But now I am here in Dallas and the guys are in Detroit. I'm sure I'm going to hear about the sports coat thing. Hopefully the designers we are talking to have a line of sports coats. Or better yet, I will be able to show the league the Mavs dress code, and they will be fine with it. That's going to be my job.

The reality is that sports coats on the bench sound good, but it's not a good idea. The league knows I feel this way. A minimum salary rookie makes more money than most of America, and we all have to buy our own clothes for work, but not many of us have to have specially tailored clothes because we are 6'8. Those aren't cheap.

Not many of us have to work in an environment where what we wear to work every day is going to be shown on TV, and now because of this dress code, commented on and discussed. It's going to be awful expensive for minimum contract players. And what are they going to do about the NBDL? Sports coats there as well?

While the lack of management skills may be the underlying problem that led to the dress code, it's the inevitable discussion of the dress code by the media that makes it a wrong place, wrong time mistake.

Will the media in their "Let's talk about the easiest thing to talk about" approach, talk about anything other than the dress code for the foreseeable future?

I have already gotten more interview requests about this than I have about players, teams, games, entertainment or anything related to the product we put on the floor. This is ALL we are going to hear about for months.

How many cameras are going to be pointed to the bench area and not the floor when regular season games start? How many plays are going to be missed in game as commentary goes on about what a player is wearing. And then as players get hurt during the year, every time it's the first time out of uniform for a player, there is going to be a fashion watch.

Think it will be over by April? Not a chance. Some reporter will be there with this question "A.I., I know it's April and the playoffs start in 2 weeks, but this is your first trip to our fair city. What do you think about the dress code?". Let's all hope that A.I. gives us a "Dress Code.... Dress Code.. it's the playoffs around the corner and all you can talk about is a Dress Code .." Hurt 'em Answer.

But wait, there is more.

To compound the problem, when they probably thought they were going to mitigate it, the crack marketing team at the NBA puts out the release for what is unquestionably the best program the NBA has EVER introduced on the same day as the dress code is released.

The [NBA CARES](#) global outreach initiative.

\$100 Million Dollars to charity. 1 MILLION HOURS of hands on service by players for charitable causes.

It's absolutely, positively brilliant. The first thing the NBA has done where I sat there and asked myself why I hadn't thought of it first and suggested it. It's an amazing program that had it been released without all this dress code nonsense, would have gotten loads of great coverage. Coverage that would have gone a long way towards helping those few sponsors who don't understand, that the NBA has great guys who really do care.

So why in the world release it today? What is going to be written about tomorrow, the dress code or NBA Cares?

In the questions I have gotten today, it was asked as a single ... and oh yeah, what do you think about NBA CARES.. by ONE reporter. That's it. And what is talk radio talking about.. The Dress Code with all the speculation

about whether racism or some other nefarious logic is behind it. Just what we dont need.

We have the worlds greatest game. The worlds best athletes. The most entertaining product in person and on TV. We are 2 weeks before the start of the season. What is everyone talking about ?

And finally, Im sure people will ask what Im going to wear to our games. Well I would consider wearing a sports coat, but i dont own one. So i guess the only way I would buy one would be ifl could cover itwith logo ads from sponsors. A lot of logo ads from sponsors. Think the [1 million dollar homepage](#) covered. Feel free to post any and all bids in the comments section

Or maybe Ill just wear a speedo.. With a Mavs logo and an [MFFL shirt](#) of course