

Robert Shumake Discusses the Historic Debut of Basketball League Africa

The NBA playoffs are in full swing here in the U.S. Yet, fans were focused overseas.

DETROIT, MICHIGAN, UNITED STATES, June 23, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The inaugural season of the Basketball Africa League (BAL) tipped off May 16th. Postponed last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, [the historic league is an opportunity to keep growing basketball](#) on the continent. BAL results from a partnership between the NBA and FIBA. Although both organizations have had involvement in Africa before, this endeavor represents the NBA's first collaboration to operate an entire league outside of North America.

This attempt hasn't gone unnoticed. Robert Shumake sees similarities with his own work. The executive has devoted most of his professional life to building and raising Africa's infrastructure through charitable missions. His global humanitarian efforts have included donating clothes in Tanzania, drilling wells in Kenya, and serving Ethiopian children orphaned by HIV. For his work, he was awarded the title of Honorary Consul in two different African countries and even appointed as Special Diplomatic Advisor for the International Human Rights Commission in 2015. [Robert Shumake sees BAL as another great step in repairing the lingering](#) damage caused during the continent's colonization.

However, the entrepreneur isn't the only one invested in the league's success. BAL has partnered with the world's leading brands and broadcast companies to extend its global reach. Nike and Jordan Brand are the leading sponsors, providing uniforms for all twelve teams. Yet, BAL's deal with New Fortress Energy Inc. is perhaps most exciting. As part of their "Threes for Trees" initiative, the pair will donate three trees for every three-point field goal made throughout the season.

Basketball is not new to Africa. In fact, the pipeline for basketball players to make it big in the NBA is well established. Hakeem Olajuwon and his dominance at the University of Houston in the early 1980s put the region on the map. Since his arrival from Nigeria, universities and professional scouts have mined Africa, exporting this talent to the U.S. Stars like Joel Embiid, Dikembe Mutombo, and Serge Ibaka are products of this practice.

What is novel about BAL is their commitment to local talent. The league restricts these clubs to only four foreign players. The other eight players per team must come from that home country. This provides greater opportunities for non-superstar talent. But, this doesn't mean there aren't

familiar names. Nine former NBA G league members are on rosters. Former McDonald's All American Myck Kabongo leads a group of 21 who played Division I. Former NBA guard Ben Uzoh is the first former NBA player to join, having played three professional seasons with three different teams. Rapper J. Cole has dominated headlines since signing and debuting with Rwanda's team.

Games were televised on ESPN+ and NBA TV in the U.S. The playoffs concluded with the league's first-ever champion crowned on May 30, 2021.

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