



2026 GLOBAL CONFERENCE

LEADING IN A NEW ERA



PART 1: HOW SPORTS PHILANTHROPY STRENGTHENS COMMUNITIES

Kelvin Washington 00:00

All right. One, two, three. Is this thing on? Can everybody hear us? Hello. I know it's been a long day, but we appreciate you all being here with us. All right, one more time, can everybody hear us? All right. Listen, we need a little energy. We were talking about this. We got folks coming from the Midwest, so this is really 7:00 PM for them. Some of them have been here since 8:00 AM, so it's been a long day. So we're definitely going to need your energy throughout this whole thing. Looking forward to this conversation, because obviously this is something that's so important: giving back. And I believe to whom much is given, much is required. And there's so many folks that are doing wonderful things up here in this panel, the foundations and organizations that they represent as well. So we'll have a great talk here. My name is Kelvin Washington. I am an anchor with Spectrum News 1 here in Los Angeles. Also, I do a national sports radio show on Fox Sports Radio later in the day, so if you see the bags under my eyes, it's okay. Please forgive me for that. But looking forward to this chat with some amazing panelists. Let's go through who we have up here. I'll start here, work my way down. We have Jason Arthur. He is a CEO with Mission 44. It's a global charity foundation started by Sir Lewis Hamilton to drive inclusion in STEM education and motorsport careers, focused on young folks who are from underserved communities in the United States, UK, and Brazil. So maybe we'll do an applause at the end. We'll work our way down to Michele Campbell here. She is the executive director of the LeBron James Family Foundation, Akron-based foundation behind the I PROMISE ecosystem, which is, of course, a school. There's a job training facility. They help with the health center as well, and also housing support and so many more other things that we'll get to here as well. To her left, Nichol McKenzie-Whiteman, CEO of the Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation, which is an award-winning foundation that grew from a \$600,000 budget in 2013 to over \$200 million raised, serving 11 million youth across the LA area. And they have the Dodgers Dream Team service, which services 17,000 youth annually, and they do a lot more as well. We'll get to them in just a bit. And lastly, down here but not least, Jason Wright, former NFL running back, managing partner and head of investments, Project Level, which is a \$250 million women's sports investment fund launched by Ariel Investments in January of 2025, targeting professional women's teams, leagues, and youth sports. And again, there's a lot more we'll get to here in just a moment, again. So please welcome the panel, if you would do so.

[Applause]

All right. So, they're not playing around. The clock is ticking, so let's get into this here, folks. I can hear some stomachs growling. They're ready to eat dinner. Let's start here. I want to start with the folks who are individuals. So I'll start with, for instance, Sir Lewis Hamilton as well as LeBron James, folks who decided to put their names attached to things. Michele, I'll start with you with LeBron. Here in Los Angeles, by the way, he's got a game coming up here in a matter of hours. Let's start with this. Someone I believe—I've thought about—I don't know if there's been anyone in the last maybe 30, 40 years who's had more pressure to succeed and to be successful, with—coming with expectations. And I mean not just an individual, I mean maybe a technological advancement as well, right? I mean, the iPhone 28 or something. LeBron came with so much expectations at a very young age, and I've always thought it was remarkable that at an early age, in the prime of his career, he decided to start the I PROMISE Foundation. Tell me a little bit more about why that mattered to him, why he didn't wait. He could've waited until he retired. Hey, I'll have 40 more years to do something like that. Tell me about the urgency and importance for someone like that, of this stature, to do something like this.

Michele Campbell 03:42

So, LeBron has always surrounded himself with wonderful people. He has a great sense of who he can trust. And he started the foundation right when he graduated high school and went into the NBA, because he went from high school right into the NBA, and at that point in time, he started the foundation. And then there was a pivotal moment in LeBron's career where I would say the foundation became deeply rooted in who he is, in his legacy, and who he wants to be. And that was that moment that he chose to work somewhere else than northeastern Ohio, and he went to Miami. And he did this show called *The Decision* that I'm sure many of you have heard of or watched. And that year was really, really, really tough for him. It was the first time that he left his now wife—his fiancée at the time—his mother, his children, and he went away to work in Miami, leaving Ohio being the chosen one, loved, cheered wherever he went, whatever arena he went into, and went into a unfamiliar space, which everywhere that he went, he was booed. There was terrible media across how he did this, why he made this change. And it was after that year—we lost to the Dallas Mavericks that year in five games—and he stood up like this and talked to the media and said some things that we all try to forget that he said. But then he went away for two weeks, and he came back home to Ohio, and it was at that moment that we had these deep conversations about what he was doing with his foundation, who he was, how he got to where he was as a basketball player, as a philanthropist, and everything in between. And it was decided that we needed to dig deeper, and we needed to understand who students were, who kids were in our community that were just like him, because that year taught him that he became who he was not just because of him, but because of his mom, because of coaches, because of people in Akron that helped him, helped he and his mom when they were in their most difficult times. And he identified through that whole year in Miami that he wanted to do something deeper, more strategic, that could help change lives like people did—changed his life. So because of that, this whole I PROMISE movement was born. And I always say I didn't understand it when we were in it. We had to be escorted to our cars when we left work with police, because they were throwing things at our cars when we were—our office in that time was in Cleveland. It was awful, and I never understood it when we were in it, but it was the best thing that ever happened to the LeBron James Family Foundation, because now what we're doing is very strategic, is very real, and something that will last long beyond LeBron's years, my years. And it is because of that that it is so important to him.

Kelvin Washington 07:08

Yeah. You mentioned some things that I want to come right back to you on from a holistic standpoint. I know, really—not just simply with education, so many other facets as well. So we'll get there in just a moment. I want to have a similar conversation with you, Jason, about the idea of Sir Lewis Hamilton. Make sure you put some respect on his name: Sir Lewis Hamilton. Again, same thing, personal experience being the only person of color in Formula 1, and saying, I want to start something like this and advance persons of color involvement. Talk about STEM as well. But just give me that personal experience for him that decided, again, I want to jump into this and be a part of it and create it.

Jason Arthur 07:44

Yeah, so most people are aware of the incredible things that he's achieved, right? So, greatest F1 driver of all time, the most championships, the most podiums, the most races, increasingly for fashion and for—

Kelvin Washington 07:57

I'm running out of fingers.

Jason Arthur 07:58

Yeah, who he's dating. But what they don't necessarily know are the barriers, the hurdles that he has had to overcome to get there, right? So this is a guy who really struggled at school, dyslexic, experienced quite a lot of racism in Stevenage, which is just outside of London in the UK. He didn't enjoy many aspects of his childhood, and he was also permanently excluded from school when he was 16. So his experience of education and that feeling of not being included is one that's very raw for him. And then he enters into the world of Formula 1, having started go-karting and playing with remote-controlled cars from a very young age. And that feeling of not being included, despite the fact that he is elite as a racer, was still there. And he's looking at what's going on in the paddocks and the factories of these incredible organizations. The same level of science that is sending rockets into space is what's propelling these cars around tracks at crazy speeds. And he's not seeing enough ethnic minority people. He's not seeing enough women. So I think it felt very personal to him that you could achieve all of these things, all these race wins, but if he's not using that platform to create change for others, then he's missing an opportunity. So in 2020, he was really clear that if he was going to do more, he wanted that to be grounded in evidence. So not just feelings, but what is the data behind the lack of diversity within motorsport? What are the things that are stopping the progression, very specifically, of the Black community into the sport? And he brought together the great and the good. There were MPs on that commission. He had academics, people within motorsport, all really exploring the issues. And as you would expect, a lot of it is about what these teams are doing and what the sport is doing, but a lot of it is actually about what's going on at school, what's

going on in higher education. And so, with that grounding, with that evidence base, that was what gave him the tools then to create Mission 44.

Kelvin Washington 10:07

I think there's a common thread all the way down the line, again, as we continue this conversation about finding ways to be more inclusive. You mention—whether it be African Americans—I know with the Dodgers, the way their approach here in Los Angeles, even, of course, when we're trying to get more investments in women's sports. So I think there's a common thread that goes through this. I want you two one more time here to kind of put a button on this holistic approach I mentioned, Michele, with LeBron. It's one thing you can just say, "Well, we're going to offer a nice education for these young people. There you go. Here's some books and maybe a good teacher." But you all take a different approach. You have a health end of this, you have obviously from an educational standpoint, job training, educating parents as well. Tell me a little bit about why that's important—to what Jason was just mentioning, not just kind of saying, "Hey, we did something," but actually having—where you can have those results.

Michele Campbell 10:55

So it's very important, because we were—LeBron wanted to work with children that were just like him from Akron. He had a struggle growing up—he and his mom, very well documented in the media. So when we identified how we would find those students and be true and authentic to what he wanted to do, we immediately partnered with our Akron public school system. And LeBron was an Akron public school kid until he went into high school and went to St. Vincent-St. Mary. So we learned quickly when we were working with our Akron public school system that 25 percent of our children were dropping out of high school. And then if you went into the data deeper and you could find what happened to those kids, you can probably guess: many of them were incarcerated, drug issues, having trouble with employment, et cetera. So what we started to do was identify those children with our school system by testing that they had that could identify students at the end of second grade, going into third grade, showing those signs that they would be on this path. And that is who we chose to work with immediately, so we could always be authentic to who LeBron wanted to work with in our community. And I will tell you, it was really quickly that first year, he's like, yeah, we're going to change graduation rates, and all these kids are going to graduate. We're going to get them laptops, and we're going to do all these after-school programs, and we're going to do tutoring and we're going to solve the problem. And it was really quick that we learned that there was no way that was going to solve the problem when you have children coming to school to take a test that didn't have a meal the night before, many of them that didn't have a safe place to sleep. So the last thing they're worried about is taking a test, and what they're worried about is survival. So we learned immediately that this work had to be deeper if we were ever going to make a difference.

Kelvin Washington 13:03

And lastly for you, Jason, we'll obviously come back, but you were just talking about results and data. I know that you all, one of the purposes is also to get folks directly involved in Formula 1. Again, not just

introducing them, but actually having people get jobs and become a part of it. Tell me how that's been going.

Jason Arthur 13:19

Yeah, it's been going well. I think the key difference between Mission 44 and the Hamilton Commission is firstly, we aren't just focused on Black young people. Lewis himself is biracial, a kind of recognition that many of the challenges that Black young people in the UK face, other groups facing disadvantage are struggling with. And so we've got a broader scope there. And then the second thing is that we're not just focused on jobs in motorsport. It's a key area of focus for us, but actually, the broader opportunities within STEM and actually the experiences of young people within education, their sense of belonging, those are critical areas of focus for us, too. Now, I think for Lewis and for me in helping him to lead Mission 44, there are some key principles that we wanted to nail right from the outset. So one, there are brilliant organizations already out there who are doing the work to support young people who are underserved and underrepresented. So rather than us setting up a number of different programs which kind of take up space, actually, how do we funnel investment and support to organizations and leaders to help those young people and help them to grow? And then secondly, look, there's a lot of philanthropy that already exists there. There's a huge amount of investment. There's government funding. So yes, we can invest in those organizations and help them to scale up, but then how do we use the learning from that to tell stories, to influence policymakers, to influence employers to do something differently and to behave differently? And so for us, that is vital, too. So yes, we'll be working with Formula 1 teams, and we're really proud of—we've got a scholarship. We've done an initial 13 scholarships. Eight out of those 13 scholars who did master's in engineering and things like that now have jobs within motorsport. We want to keep growing that. But that's a kind of micro bit of impact. What we want to do is then see how the stories of those scholars and the leadership of those scholars actually then helps to shape how young people who see their story, whether it's in the newspaper or online, on social media, how they then think about themselves and whether they think motorsport is a place for them. And we're just doing it in a number of areas in the education space, trying to really influence policy within the UK. So you do the investment, you do the grant making, but you've got to find a way of translating that into systemic change so that you're trying to tackle the root causes that are creating barriers for the young people we're here to serve.

Kelvin Washington 15:51

Absolutely. Getting down to the bottom of it. And I think that's why, starting with you two, again, just seeing the amazing impacts, folks who have these platforms, they don't take it for granted in how they give back. I want to swing down to you two, Nichol and Jason. From an organizational standpoint, of course, with the Dodgers, and pivotal level—Project Level, I should say. Let's start with you, Nichol, with the Dodgers. I'm very familiar. You and I have done these before. I have the privilege to do some pre and post-game with the Dodgers, and then, of course, Spectrum Networks has a Dodgers network, so familiar with you. And I can say you all do amazing things, and I really mean that. So I want you to touch on just from the beginning, you're looking at something where you had a \$600,000 budget, which sounds great, right? Help out. Now we're at \$200 million. Yeah. Big jump there. So how did this start, where the Dodgers got involved with the community, which, as a professional sports team, it's almost you're supposed to. But

then I can say just from being around here now 15 years in Los Angeles, you all really have an imprint in the community. It's kind of unlike any I've ever really seen. Tell me how that started for you personally and the goal of the foundation.

Nichol McKenzie-Whiteman 16:56

Yeah. I came on 13 years ago. New ownership group, Magic Johnson, Mark Walter, Todd Boehly, Billie Jean King, and so many others who started this with intention. It was really about can we be intentional about using that same championship perspective that we want on the field, off the field in community here in Los Angeles. So it was how can we build something that is really going to help those who need it most, but truly have this intentional meaning behind it. And so really at the beginning of the day, it was we don't want to just be any sports philanthropy. We want to be the premier sports philanthropy in Los Angeles, and we want to show up in that way as a leader. And so ultimately, from the very beginning, it was about taking that \$600,000 budget that's wavered anywhere from \$19, \$20 million annually now and raising this \$200 million, which we've gratefully been able to put \$76.5 million back into community in the form of programs, but also in the form of grants to 300-plus nonprofits. We've had a lot happen over the last couple of years, and so I think that that has heightened the visibility of our brand and shown people how important a sports team and a franchise can be to an overall city when tragedy hits like COVID and ICE raids and everything else, as you can imagine. Our work has really been about making sure that we're tackling some of LA's most pressing problems. So we are very place-based in terms of who are the ZIP codes in Los Angeles that are not thriving, and how are we able to be able to impart the Dodgers brand and all the skills and the strengths that it brings to be able to uplift those communities. I make no bones about it, right? I have an amazing brand to work with. And so, when you think about the Dodgers being such a global brand, three World Series championships in the last five years, two back-to-backs. Being able to take that same flavor and that same recipe, if you will, and all those ingredients, which is the ownership group and our board of directors and our resources and frankly, partnerships. The fact that people across the city, whether they are our sponsors or our donors or fans or nonprofit organizations in the school districts, et cetera, they've come to us, and they've allowed us to be this hub and this convener. So our approach is if we can use all of these things and sort of be the melting pot for all of these pieces, we can have even greater impact. And therefore, our goal has been to set out to increase the confidence of the community, to strengthen the community, to provide future possibilities, and all of this exposure and awareness that this brand and the excitement that it brings can really impart on a young child, but also a family and then hence a community.

Kelvin Washington 19:30

One thing I got to say is, so far we've heard from three of you. You all are—I tell you what, they got the right people fronting these leagues. Don't they? I mean, my goodness, you all, I tell you, are very well-informed and obviously very passionate about this. Jason, I want to come to you. We were talking as we were kind of hanging out in the green room a little bit. This is something I'm passionate about, when you're talking about women's sports and just the investment in that. I have three little girls, nine, seven, and four. They'll be waiting on me at any given moment. They won't care about the rest of my day. They won't care about anything that happened. They want to say, "What are we doing? Can we play basketball? Are we

going to do my homework?" And all that good stuff. But one of the things we're starting to see more of, and maybe not enough, is investment into women in sports, and you all were able to, of course, \$250 million sports investment fund that was launched by Ariel Investments back in January of 2025, and again, targeting professional women's teams, leagues, youth sports, and so on. Tell me—and I talked about, seems like marginalized communities. As we know, women are prominent, but still not quite where they need to be. Tell me why this is important to the project and what you all are able to do thus far.

Jason Wright 20:31

If I take a step back, something that's really evident on stage here is the evolution of how sports philanthropy has grown over the last, call it 20 years. You have individuals who now understand their platform and are mobilizing it in a much more structured and thoughtful way, with a bottom line on impact. And Sir Lewis is on our board, so, he sits on our board, too. And even for us, as a fund, we're not an impact fund. We are a financial returns fund because it is a moment for women's sports, but his lens is, what are the outcomes that are coming for women and girls as a part of this? So athletes have evolved and become more thoughtful and structured and rigorous, and then organizations have learned how to meld it into their business model. And Nichol said this really quickly, but I want you to catch this because I did this at the Commanders, too. When you can meld at-scale community efforts with sponsorship dollars and community programming, then it becomes sustainable over the long haul because it becomes revenue to the organization, it's helping profitability, it's growing the business, which means year over year, she's not worried about that program being funded again and again. And I know at the Commanders, we had a turnaround on our hands when I took over that organization in 2020, and one of the things that I needed to do to get sponsors to come back in and grow the business was put community programs in front of them where they could detach from what was a bad brand at the time and attach to something positive. But then it boosted revenue, and then it was sustainable year over year. And then when we decided to do programs, where did you place them? I put them in the wards where we might want to do a stadium deal in the future. And by the time I went to the DC City Council, we had a positive vote on our side. So you can meld these to the business model in a way that's productive.

Now, what you've seen in women's sports is a different evolution. I think when Nadia Rawlinson, who's one of the owners of the Chicago Sky and the operating partner there with the Sky, when they invested and others invested in early stages in the WNBA, it was kind of philanthropy, in their minds, in many people's minds. It is no longer that. These are profitable businesses that are outgrowing men's sports, have real financial returns commensurate with the growth in salary that the female athletes should have over time in this. And so you now have a business model that can sustainably do all that good. And so things that used to be in the realm of philanthropy, women's sports, youth sports, women's health technology, those are now in our realm where they are profitable businesses and we can grow them to scale, and they still have the positive impact on society, but also financial returns that make them last for 20 years, 30 years, 40 years, instead of going back to the well for funding. So I think what you're witnessing is a real sea change in philanthropy and the good that can come through sports. And now we all have to partner together on the margins because while we're doing great work in the women's sports space, our Denver Summit FC is our first investment in the NWSL. We set a record for our first home game, 63,100 attendees. It's the largest women's professional sports match in North American history. Then we followed it up with 17,000 the next game, sold out the MLS stadium. It's going really well, but we still need philanthropic partners to do our part around, say, our permanent stadium that we're building there. The

only second of its kind in the US, built for women, for the female athletes, primarily for the women's team. We believe we did what was the first community benefits agreement for a women's team. But we need philanthropic partners to execute on that, to make good on the commitments to the community. So then, when tax increment financing comes back around, there's no argument about the team having done its job. So the synergy between traditional philanthropy, the teams in corporate, and us on the investing side is more critical than ever, and we are helping each other evolve to better outcomes.

Kelvin Washington 24:28

I want to piggyback on something. The Golden State Valkyries, I think they were valued at \$850 million recently.

Jason Wright 24:34

Yeah, Sportico had them at \$850, and CNBC said today they're a billion.

Kelvin Washington 24:38

Look at what a week can do. My goodness. So how much are you able to piggyback off of things like that so that you can almost say, "See, we told you," and how that can continue to evolve?

Jason Wright 24:49

Yeah, even our own investment, we bought in at Denver Summit FC at \$110 million expansion fee a year ago, little over a year ago. The Columbus team just sold for \$205 million, so our investment has basically doubled already—

Kelvin Washington 25:02

Right.

Jason Wright 25:03

—at minimum. So there's real money in this. Our LPs are happy about that, but it's great for women's sports, too. It's great for Nadia. It's great for anyone else who's investing in these teams. So the proof points are there. But it's not just that valuation. That's not the only thing that needs to happen. For us, we see this as not just a flash in the pan, but this is something that's been building for 30 years. And it started

with folks like this, who are working in community programs. Youth sports participation for the last 20 years has gotten as close to parity as it's ever been in the United States. And actually, girls are continuing to participate in sports at a higher level while boys are trailing off and going to video games and virtual things. A topic for a different time. And you and I—if you have girls ages five to 18, you are spending thousands of dollars a year. I am. Thousands of dollars a year on these girls' programs. That has set the stage for people not batting an eye when they want to go buy Chicago Sky season tickets. Because it used to be, "Ah, we don't pay for that. They don't dunk." Now it is, "We appreciate women's sports. It is normal in our household. There's no difference between the two." In fact, we had somebody say the other day, "Why isn't it called the MNBA? Because I prefer the women's game." It's no longer anathema to pay real money and respect the game and see value in it. And so it's boosted that. And so now we have taken this in the investing realm to make sure youth sports gets to scale, and we continue to see folks through. So our—we invested in League One Volleyball. It's a professional women's volleyball league. It's doing really well. It'll be the next major league at the level of the W and NWSL in a few years. Amazing commissioner we just hired from Nike, Sandra Idehen. Awesome organization. But we invested because it's \$120 million a year youth girls' volleyball business. 26,000 girls, 89 clubs across the country. Structured like a private equity roll-up, so safety improves, instruction improves. You have enough scale so that you can do inclusive pricing. Something that was happening with youth sports when it became a business and out of philanthropy, is lower-income kids were being priced out. Well, when we get to scale, all of a sudden, we can underwrite some of those lower-income youth because we have a profitable business on which it stands because we've structured it in a roll-up model. So there's a lot that is happening now that used to be in the philanthropic space that now properly belongs in this space because of the need for it to grow and be sustainable over time.

Kelvin Washington 27:33

Well, mentioning pricing, I want to go back to you, Nichol, because you all with the Dodgers, you have the Dream Team, which serves 17,000 youth annually, and you've built over 68 Dream Fields. And we talk about that, you just mentioned Jason. Any parents in here? Raise your hand if you are. Sports, back in the day, you rolled a ball out and you said, "Go play." And you played on the local team at your school, and that was it. And there was always an AAU or a travel team, but not at the extent in which where we are now. So I want to come to you with this, Nichol, the challenge of—and you talked about this as well, Jason—if you look at baseball specifically in the '80s with African Americans, it was much higher, '70s, '80s. I mean, Jackie Robinson, he kind of got that thing rolling late '40s, and then there was a shift that happened. And so, I sit around all the baseball players when I'm doing a pre and post-game, and we talk about that, what's changed. So would you all are able to, and obviously there's a large Latino base clearly here in Los Angeles, but getting kids more active in baseball, participating, and those who may be priced out. Tell me about how that you're able to do so.

Nichol McKenzie-Whiteman 28:33

Yeah. So that's a huge part of our strategy and our approach with our Dodgers Dream Team program, as you mentioned. So we are supporting 17,000 young boys and girls across 156 locations throughout Los Angeles and Long Beach to be able to play baseball and softball, ages five to 18. We do that with about 20

different partners, so city entities, primarily rec municipal agencies or YMCAs or Boys & Girls Clubs. And it really is an opportunity to get kids in the game, kids who can't afford baseball and softball. When I got here 13 years ago, we actually commissioned an organization to do a study with us, and we went throughout Los Angeles. We did 200 on-the-ground interviews, and we talked to coaches and parents and anybody who had been involved in baseball and softball in their childhood or as a coach or any of that, and we just got sort of like, what are the challenges for why our young people and our young people of color and our young people in marginalized communities here in Los Angeles aren't playing baseball and softball. And we talked to people about the benefits that one could have from participating in a sport, right? Everybody's not going to be a Major League baseball player. We're not trying to create the next Mookie Betts or Clayton Kershaw, but how do you at least get kids to participate? Because we know the benefits of sport. And they answered with all the things we thought. There's no fields. It's too expensive. Baseball equipment, football equipment, all of the sports, right? I'm about to graduate a college baseball player who's been playing since he was three, so I get it, right? We spend a lot of money on this sport. But at the end of the day, parents needed the support. Communities needed the support. And so, if you could pay for all of the equipment and the uniforms as we do. If you could make sure that they not only have everything they need to play baseball, but they also have all of those supplements. I think Michele, and Jason put it excellently when we talk about comprehensive whole family approach. So we said it's one thing for a child to come to a baseball field or a softball field and get to participate in the game for free, great. But what happens when they leave that field? Their family is hungry. They don't have clothes. They don't have the right shelter. They don't have resources. Is that child going to college? Is he aware of even what his college options are? And so, we started to really wrap ourselves around all those wraparound services. So our program is baseball and softball, but it's a sports-based youth development program. And so, you're in it for the game, that's the hook, but you're going to get these education resources. You're going to get health resources. Your families are going to come to parks on Saturday mornings, and they're going to get health screenings and dental screenings and vision screenings. All for free. We don't take a dime because at the end of the day, it is really important for us to make sure that we're creating this next generation of fans in our cities, and they too are the fans. I say these are neighborhoods that are in the shadows of Dodger Stadium, and so they now, so many of them we've found over the last few years, feel so much more part of the family, right? They feel seen, they feel heard. And they're playing baseball, and the numbers are increasing. It's great. The Aspen Institute sports Project Play Summit is actually happening synonymously with this conference elsewhere, and people are excited about youth sports participation and how it is increasing, and I'm happy to say it's increasing in baseball and softball, so that's good to know. And here in the city, we're seeing those gains as well. But you have to be able to provide that exposure and that access and everything you said, the idea that we've got sponsors and team marketing partners who are on board with this Dodgers Dream Team program and are on board with helping us build Dream Fields in our city so that softball players and baseball players actually have places to play. All those partnerships come together, and they make it possible, and they make it free, which ultimately, I think is going to have the real impact.

Kelvin Washington 31:59

Well, you just mentioned getting more Dodger fans. I don't know if that's possible. I don't know if the Dodgers can have any more fans in Los Angeles.

Nichol McKenzie-Whiteman 32:06

Always.

Kelvin Washington 32:08

You're going to have to get another Dodger Stadium 2.0 right next to it. You have so many fans. I want to come back to you, Michele and Jason. What are the challenges? Again, the Dodgers as an organization, you have Project Level, it's a group of folks. When you have the front-facing people—Sir Lewis Hamilton, LeBron—has there become a challenge with that? Because maybe it's the success of them. If they weren't winning at such a high clip. Does that change anything? Maybe political things. They've said something politically that people may agree or disagree with. And either of you can jump in on this, but is there challenges that come with that as well, being so prominent? "I'm LeBron James." "I'm Lewis Hamilton. I've said this, done this." And can that affect anything at all?

Michele Campbell 32:49

Absolutely. Yeah, go ahead.

Jason Arthur 32:53

I'm going to have to jump in. Lewis is additive to Mission 44, absolutely. His story is inspiring. Last year, I think he was voted the most marketable athlete in the world. So, people resonate a lot with what he has achieved and the extent to which they understand the barriers that he's overcome. That's obviously inspirational. And he's heavily involved. He helps with our strategy, with our fundraising, with policy influence. He meets with young people. So—we've got a bit of disco lighting here.

Kelvin Washington 33:27

I wasn't going to say anything. I know it's happy hour somewhere, but this turned into Club Milken. [Laughter] I didn't know what was going on. I thought the DJ was going to start pumping music, but continue.

Jason Arthur 33:39

Yeah, it's all kicking off. So, we draw so much strength from him. But there's a reason why Mission 44 is called Mission 44 rather than called the Lewis Hamilton Foundation. It's because he was really clear that he wanted the charity to be able to exist and to thrive and to have impact beyond him. So the 44 is a nod to him. For those of you who don't know, 44 is his race car number. But the way in which we operate is

always fundamentally, what's the impact that we're trying to have? How do we amplify the voices of young people when we are storytelling, when we're trying to make an impact? All of our grants at Mission 44 are done in collaboration with young people. There isn't a single grant that we make where a young person isn't involved in the decision-making process. When we're investing, we're trying to find organizations that are often led by people of color who are under-invested in. So he adds to what we do. He strengthens us, of course he does, but he's always been really clear that Mission 44 should not be about him. And so the people who support us, we've got some wonderful corporate partners. For example, I can see IBM are in the room. IBM have been wonderful supporters of Mission 44. We know that IBM have a link to Ferrari, of which Lewis is a driver. There's the benefits there. Of course, we're aware of that. But IBM, I don't believe, are supporting us because of Lewis. They're supporting us because they care about the future of work, about creating opportunities for underserved communities to be able to thrive and to take advantage of this AI revolution. And I would say across the piece, a lot of our partners are not ignoring Lewis, but it's because Lewis's story—although he's a unicorn, although he's unique—there are elements of his story that young people face and can align with around the world. That sense of not feeling as though you belong, about not being able to access education, about not knowing necessarily the right pathway to access the career that you want. So the support that we get is aligned to those elements, not just to Lewis as the founder and kind of celebrity that he is.

Kelvin Washington 35:47

Same question to you, Michele.

Michele Campbell 35:51

So the greatest thing that our foundation has is LeBron James. It was his commitment, his vision, his understanding of where he came from, to bring this work that is changing a community that has been counted out. No one talks about Akron. Everyone, "Oh, it's Cleveland." It's not. Akron's its own city. It's where he was born. It's where we have all decided to raise our family and call home. So people there have a chip on their shoulder, but to see that LeBron James has never forgotten that and never forgotten where he's come from gives so much pride to the children, the city, the families that love Akron and have chosen to make that their home. Where the challenge becomes is as he's working to change a way that a community looks and operates so everybody in that community has an opportunity to live out their dreams and not be run into policies and barriers that stop them because of how much money they make or what they look like or where they come from. The challenge has become, our biggest challenge is fundraising when you have LeBron James at the helm, because a lot of people are like, "Well, it's well-documented. He's a billionaire."

Kelvin Washington 37:16

"He's got it."

Michele Campbell 37:17

"He's got it." Well, when you're trying to change a community and create change that can then ripple to the rest of the cities across this country, and it's—one man cannot sustain that. So our biggest challenge is working through that, and we've found great success in that now. Because of his leadership, many people wanted to be involved, and understanding that are they involved for the right reasons? Are they involved because they really believe in what's happening in Akron, Ohio, and how we can create a blueprint for the rest of the country, or do they want to be involved because he's a pretty cool guy on and off the court? Ooh, it just got really dark—

Kelvin Washington 37:55

I know, it got really intimate. Let's just share this moment. *[Laughter]*

Michele Campbell 38:01

But what we do now is to get involved, to understand our work and understand what this means. People, you come to Akron, and you come for two days, and you learn what this I PROMISE ecosystem is, and you learn if you want to be a part of it. Because we need people for the long term to create change, and the change that we're creating is nothing that happens in one school year. It's a lifetime of change. So we've been able to combat our hardest fundraising challenge because of his name and what people believe by doing that.

Kelvin Washington 38:38

I know you've got a follow-up, Jason. Thank you.

Jason Arthur 38:39

Well, I was just going to say, I really resonate with that. Lewis isn't a billionaire in the same way as LeBron, but still, people will ask, why does Mission 44 necessarily need their money? "If you've got Lewis, and Lewis has put \$20 million in, can he not keep doing that?" But like you, I think what we have found has resonated is to say, given the complexity of the challenges that we're trying to address, no one single individual has the knowledge, the expertise, the resources to be able to address that, to be able to operate with a kind of long-term focus and be able to draw on the different perspectives and abilities and networks that are needed to create opportunities for young people. And so, Lewis is always really clear when he's talking about Mission 44. It's, "Come alongside me. Let's work together. Let's partner," because complex problems need collective impact. And so I'm doing my bit, you're doing your bit. We'll be stronger together if we work together, and if we're then empowering these community leaders to be able to make change

happen where they're at. And I think when we articulate it in that way, I think then partners get it, right? That they're joining forces to something which is bigger than any one individual or organization.

Jason Wright 39:59

Can I follow up on something Michele said?

Kelvin Washington 40:00

Yeah, absolutely.

Jason Wright 40:00

And I think you nodded at, Jason. You said something about, are people involved for the right reason? And I think that's really profound. I think—when I was the president of the Commanders, we were so desperate to turn that place around and fix it and get the right culture and all that, I almost didn't care about their motivations. I was just like, "Let's just get you in. I know where I'm headed. I know what organization I'm building. I know where we're headed. I'm going to get us there." But I do think this is really important, and Melody Hobson, the founder of our fund and co-CEO of Ariel, is big on this. When we are going out in women's sports, and we are a for-profit entity, no bones about it. We expect to raise many more multiples beyond the \$250 [million] we've raised and make real money for our LPs. Even with that, when we align with an owner that we decide to invest alongside or investing in a youth sports business, the values alignment is critical. Otherwise, whether it's private equity or a philanthropic effort, it can go sideways. Something fractures when you don't have that values alignment. Call it spiritual, call it actual misdirection or whatever it is, but that is really critical, and I think it's really important that you called it out. And it's hard to pass on an opportunity or turn down a donor or whatever it is to maintain the integrity of values alignment as you see it and feel it in your gut. But I think our outcomes, whether it's for the people impacted in the program, for our returns and the success of our businesses, and the benefit to girls and women that come from our portfolio, it comes when we hold discipline to who we align with.

Kelvin Washington 41:33

Well, you brought up something there, Jason. You've mentioned it a couple of times, your work that, first of all, you were a running back in the League for years, then you transitioned to running the Commanders, now you're transitioning here, being part of this fund. A lot of folks, aside from the LeBrons and the Lewis Hamiltons, we don't look at that oftentimes for athletes. We kind of pigeonhole them. "This is what you do, and then maybe you'll do a little TV here or there." But what's that like been for you, that journey? And I would imagine, whether you know it or not, people are watching you. And they're saying, "Wow, this is amazing." People, the former players who know you, just kind of watching your footsteps, and you're

blazing a trail. Just tell me a little bit more about that journey and how you've been able to do that. And I would imagine it hasn't been easy, but you seem to be doing it very well.

Jason Wright 42:14

I think you got to have a lot of luck. Be in the right places at the right time. I think maybe three things, and certainly everybody on stage exemplifies this and the people they represent, from the folks at the Dodgers to LeBron and Sir Lewis. I think when you are a professional athlete, you have honed that skill. For me, I retired when I was 30. I had done that every year. It had dominated my life since I was age seven, so 23 straight years of nothing but American tackle football being what I oriented myself around, and my family was oriented around. You become the deepest kind of expert in anything. It is a deep technical skill, mentally, physically, and emotionally. And then whatever you jump into next, you feel like the biggest novice. Because everything at the professional level hinges on just miniature mistakes are which keep you from winning or losing or a podium position or last or did not finish. When you get into the next profession, you take that same mindset of perfectionism, when in reality, that's not how it works in the rest of the world. Sports are the closest thing we have to a meritocracy. Business in the rest of the world is not a meritocracy. It is about who gives you the opportunities. It's about the way you articulate your transferable skills, the way you talk about yourself and your positioning while you learn in the process. It is actually a very different skill set. I think many of us struggle to transition because we think we have to be as deep and knowledgeable with as much expertise as we spent on the sport into going into what's next, when in reality, we need a humble heart, an open and learning mind, and to attach ourselves to people who believe in us, and then you can take off. And I got lucky in that over that time period. And then putting yourself in some hard situations where you have to flail a little bit.

Jason Wright 44:07

Probably my biggest transition was from the NFL to University of Chicago to get my MBA, where within three months, I was competing for internships with people that had been investment bankers and consultants and all that, and I'd never opened PowerPoint in my life. It was tough. I felt like I was flailing. But that crucible then gets you to a place where you realize, "Oh, I can do this." I was an entry-level associate at McKinsey at age 32. The other associates were 10 years younger than me. I got kids. You have to humble yourselves in those moments. But while I might have been a weird day-one associate, I was a great partner when I got elected partner at McKinsey and then went to the Commanders. So, I think the athletes that do it take that approach, and it requires some real inner work to do it. But you know who does it really well? Female athletes. Women do this incredibly well. Why? They were never compensated well enough in the first place. They had to develop a broad set of skills in order to make that transition. They have been more fluent across topics and people groups, making connections wherever they can so that they can monetize and build a life around their sport. And so, they're much better at it, which is also why those of us who invest in the space see way more sponsors coming to female athletes and women's sports because they're safer. They're not going to mess up in the same ways that the guys did when I was doing disciplinary issues with the Commanders. And they are more trusted and polished because they understood this, and they had to do that over the course of their high school and college careers. It's also

why 95 percent of all women in the C-suite in America were high school or college varsity athletes. 95 percent—

Kelvin Washington 45:47

That's a powerful stat.

Jason Wright 45:49

High school or college varsity athletes. It's the resilience, it's the depth, it's the cross-cultural learning, and it's the ability to transition between groups that make them amazing leaders.

Kelvin Washington 46:01

I feel like I want to tell you to get out my home because you describe my wife. I come home and I was like, "Man, how did I score this? I don't know how I got her. Okay. I don't know how that worked out." Nichol, you mentioned something that—as someone who lives in Los Angeles, I witnessed it. We know a little over a year, year and a half ago, the fires. For those of you who maybe aren't in Los Angeles, but of course you saw it, it was a major—it was massive. And you really can't put a scale or scope on it if you weren't here to see the devastation. I had people calling me from Michigan, where we're originally from, and they would say, "Oh, it seems bad." It's like, no, you can't fathom. Because in other places, if a store or maybe a home or two were on fire, that'd make the news. That'd be a big deal. Here, we lost over 16,000 structures. 16,000. So, with that, I come back to the Dodgers, and I witnessed how you all, from the players jumping in, obviously the Dodgers Foundation, just what was that like? Because we've gone through wildfires, if you live here, it's part of life in California. That was something that we hadn't seen before. Tell me just about that process.

Nichol McKenzie-Whiteman 47:04

Yeah. Imagine your team's won a World Series two months prior? Maybe two and a half months prior?

Kelvin Washington 47:10

Yup.

Nichol McKenzie-Whiteman 47:11

And you're starting the new year. Your plan looks completely different in January than on January 6th, the two different parts of the city are going to break out into major fires. We had a plan. The team had a plan. Dodgers Foundation had a plan. We quickly pivoted. Those moments show you who's going to show up. And I think that in that moment, it also helps solidify people's acknowledgement that the Dodgers Foundation shows up. We are not practicing for tragedies. We're not practicing for these natural disasters. But unfortunately, COVID, five years prior, gave us all a great blueprint, a template for what to do. The secret sauce for us was really partnership, and the fact that we really, really pride ourselves on partnership, and we don't do this alone. I say to my team all the time, "We're not experts in anything." We are conveners, and we have this ability, as sports does, to bring people together in such a unique way to do something. And if that winning is off the field, then let's use it to do that. And so, we had a moment in time in that January period where we had our players who were in between their homes and spring training, who we got to come back to Los Angeles and do some work. We had our team in the off-season, so a few more hands available, if you will, because we were not in the middle of our home team games. We had resources and a lot of people who basically, we picked up the phone literally that night or that morning as the news was breaking and things were happening, "Would you show up with us tomorrow if we did this? Would you show up with us this week if we did this?" And we brought people together, and we figured it out. And we had hundreds of thousands of people bused to Dodger Stadium for distributions. We went out into Altadena, we went out into the Palisades, and we still haven't stopped. We're actually breaking ground on two Dodgers Dream Fields in Altadena, another place where fires were significant, where we did two fields last year because we also know that sport has the power to bring people back together. People are rebuilding. There's 1,300 homes under construction in Altadena. And at first, it was this whole notion of are people going to come back? Are they going to rebuild? But it's happening, and so they're going to need libraries and schools and education and health resources and sports and all of these things, and we get to be a part of that. And so, as a leader in this city and a sports team leader and a sports team foundation leader, it's our responsibility, frankly, to show up. These are fans that have been showing up for the team over and over and over again. And so, in those moments, I call it doubling down. We really do say this is a moment when we have to show up even greater and more than we did before.

Kelvin Washington 49:42

Love it. We're running low on time here, so I want to go back down the line here and just give me anything that you can say what's next for your organization who you represent. So Jason, I'll start with you. What's next?

Jason Arthur 49:54

So, as you said at the start, Mission 44, operating in the UK, increasingly in the US, so really prioritizing the Grand Prix cities, so Austin, Miami, and Las Vegas and São Paulo. We want to continue to go deeper in those countries, and I suspect in the US, once we've really got a footprint within those three cities, we may look to go beyond them. Lewis has a personal kind of love affair attachment to Brazil, and he's really keen to give back to a country that's really taken him into their heart, so we want to go deeper there, too. But over the next five years, we'll be looking at expanding into sub-Saharan Africa and how we can deepen our impact there. And as we release our next five-year strategy, which is going to be in October, we want to

be even clearer, the impact for us is not the number of grantees that we have or the amount of money that we've invested, but actually, when we are celebrating our 10th birthday in 2031, how many young people are in jobs in STEM because of Mission 44? How many young people are studying it at higher education and further education because of Mission 44? What's our impact been on the people around those young people and those systems, whether it's the number of teachers from diverse backgrounds or the policies that we've influenced, the number of role models within our schools and our communities who are equipping those young people with the skills, the resilience, the grit, the confidence in order to be able to thrive. So, for us, actually being pretty bold and putting some markers in the sand about what impact is, is going to be even more important.

But beyond what we're trying to achieve, we're pretty passionate about who we are as an organization and how we work. So we want our grantees to be able to feel as though they have grown, that they're more sustainable, that they are having a deeper impact because of the level of support that we have given them. That when it comes to policymakers, we're able to point to how their priorities have shifted in a way that feels as though young people have been at the heart of that shift. And so, really deepening our work with our youth advisory board and young people more broadly is going to be pretty critical to us. We care about the actual makeup of our team itself. So one of the things that I'm most proud of is—there's something called the Foundation Practice Rating. It assesses grant makers in the UK and it's assessed about 500 grant makers, national, local, over the last five years. We are the only grant maker in the UK that has had a AAA rating, and one of them is for diversity. Because we think if we're going to be supporting diverse communities, the team itself needs to reflect those communities. And then in the principles in the way we work, how we're embracing the perspectives of our grantees and young people into how we work, that that's what's going to enable us to then be more effective as well. So what we do, how we do it, and who we are, we want to be pretty laser-like on the key principles of being inclusive, being diverse, being impact-focused. And then fundamentally—we're pulling that all together—stories. We absolutely believe that grant-making will deliver impact with our partners and the young people who benefit from those programs. But if you really want to drive change, actually, it's the stories that we tell ourselves about who we are, the world that we want to see, and how we get there. That's what then sparks action. And so my hope is that Mission 44, with Lewis, with young people, with our partners, we become even better storytellers, that we're able to channel the impact that we are generating and delivering so that the story that our partners and wider stakeholders are telling themselves about what is possible continues to evolve in a way that benefits young people from underserved communities.

Kelvin Washington 53:49

Love it. Michele.

Michele Campbell 53:52

I do not know what's next at this moment, and the reason for that is long ago, many years ago, we had a strategic plan, and we tore it up and threw it away. Because what is next is whatever our families tell us they need. And that is how our ecosystem has grown. We started a school. I never thought we would start a housing complex until we learned they needed housing. I never thought we'd have a village where we

have our homeless population. I never thought we'd open a job training center or a medical center. I know nothing about doing any of that. But much like you said, Nichol, bringing around the right partners. So what is next is whatever our families tell us they're fighting against, barriers they're facing, and that's where we'll go next.

Nichol McKenzie-Whiteman 54:40

I love that. Wow. I will say something big, and I say that because, again, I feel like I work for the best sports team brand in the world, and ultimately, we are forever reinventing and reimagining ourselves. And to have a pretty phenomenal ownership group led by Mark Walter, who recently purchased the Lakers, and to have the Lakers, Dodgers, Sparks strength in the city of Los Angeles and more, I think there's a lot of opportunity for us to be able to show up even greater in Los Angeles. So, to see our ultimate vision of every Angeleno being, and really having that opportunity to thrive, I think is what's next and what will continue to be next. Yes, we will increase our Dodgers Dream Team program to 25,000 youth, over 17,000, over the next three or four years. We'll have 75 Dodgers Dream Fields in the city. We'll continue to invest in nonprofit organizations, who have been just amazing partners in our programs and outside of our programs. And we'll focus on those who need us the most, which I think is going to be most important, especially as we think about all the challenges that our city is facing, and yes, our country is facing, and our world is facing, but LA has some unique challenges, and I think that we have to focus on that as what's next.

Kelvin Washington 55:51

Love it. And Jason.

Jason Wright 55:53

Yeah, I think for us, we are still in fundraising mode, and with the amount of interest in the fund, we've moved to monthly closes. And so ideally, by the middle of this summer, we will have doubled our first close, which was at \$250 million, and then keep going from there. But really get another substantive chunk, which allows us to do so much more around the whole ecosystem of women's and girls' sports. See our Denver Summit FC team through to a great finish to the season. Not just on the pitch, but we have a chance in our first year as an expansion team to be number one or number two in the league in revenue. And why that's important is not just money-making for us and the other owners of the team. One of the missions we have is to show that women's sports is a profitable enterprise when you bring best practices to it, and that the narrative that they need to lose money or break even, and then you get a good exit because it's hobbyist or whatever, is false, and it's been created by gatekeeping the best capabilities over in men's sports. We are breaking that wall down, and our first investment is showing that to be true. So we want to finish strong to prove the case there and make sure this investment stays very positive. Looking forward to the launch of our third investment. I already mentioned League One Volleyball, which is doing really well, but the NFL Professional Flag League, that will launch next year. It's a men's league and a women's league. I am substantially more excited about the women's league. It is a chance we get to

underwrite NFL IP. That's a once-in-a-generation opportunity as an investor. We're very grateful to be there alongside only five other institutionals that got into that. But this is going to be the women's NFL. And so, we are excited to see that grow and support that however we can. And then from there, we hope to be in the WNBA soon. We're looking at European football. There's a couple analytics companies that can be catalytic for the growth of profitability in women's sports that we would want to invest in—bring over from men's sports, and bring it over. And start to see this whole flywheel that we envision growing this into something really special happen. So we're going to be on little sleep. Mellody and I are going to continue to run around the world and make this happen, but it's really exciting.

Kelvin Washington 58:03

Well, you know what? Look at that, 90 seconds left. Anybody got one quick question anybody want to ask? Anybody? If not, I'm going to say thank you. Please give a round of applause to our panel here. [Applause] Jason, to Nichol, to Michele, Jason as well. I appreciate your time. I appreciate all that your organizations are doing. As we all discussed here, doing amazing work. And the best part about this, I think we can all agree, is that it's not surface level, that the work is being done, as you mentioned, Jason, at the root to really have changes in communities and make impacts. And so that's the part that I think, if I speak for most people, we're most appreciative of, is the depth of the work that you all are doing. So again, thank you so much. I appreciate it. One more time for them. [Applause] And I think that is it. Thank you so much. We appreciate your time. I know it's late, but we appreciate it, and thank you so much. Enjoy the rest of your evenings.

Announcer 58:53

We hope you enjoyed the discussion. The next panel will begin shortly.

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