



AS IT IS

Florida's Coronavirus Numbers Go Up as NBA Prepares for Season

June 18, 2020

The number of coronavirus infections in the Orlando, Florida, area has increased in recent days. The National Basketball Association, NBA, hopes that is not important.

That is because the NBA plans to start the professional basketball season that had been postponed.

The NBA has spent weeks putting together safety requirements for basketball players to avoid spreading or becoming infected with the coronavirus. Twenty-two of the NBA's 30 teams are expected to play at a sports complex owned by Walt Disney near Orlando.

Basketball is almost back.

"No one is suggesting that this is going to be an infection-free, guaranteed environment," Michele Roberts told The Associated Press. She is director of the National Basketball Players Association. "Where else would we go," she asked, saying there is really no place in the country that is safe.

New safety rules were released this week. Players will be invited to wear what the NBA calls a "**proximity alarm.**" The alarm will go off when the person is within two meters of another person for more than five seconds. The idea is to get players to follow social distancing rules.

Players and officials also will be given **thermometers** and other devices so they can follow their health information and record it on the NBA's daily health website.

“I am **optimistic** about the NBA’s return-to-play policies,” said Denver coach Michael Malone. He found out in May that he had already had COVID-19 after taking an antibody test. “They are going to do whatever it takes to make this the safest environment as possible,” he said.

Malone added that there will still be a risk.

The NBA agrees that no plan can be perfect. The organization said players and fans might become infected.

But by following the rules, the NBA and the players hope the risk will be small. There will be a lot of testing. No one can leave the Disney area unless they agree to a **quarantine**. Visitors are not permitted, and families cannot come to the area until late August.

While he would prefer to be practicing near his home, Miami center Bam Adebayo said, “We’ll be happy to play basketball.”

The NBA’s arrival at Disney comes as the rate of coronavirus infection around the state of Florida is increasing. Officials such as Governor Ron DeSantis are hearing criticism for re-opening many parts of the state’s economy. In Orange County, which includes Orlando, the rate of infection has doubled in seven days.

As of early this week, state officials said that Orange County’s infection rate was 11.9 percent. That is almost 10 times the infection rate of 1.4 percent on June 3.

“It’s concerning but not surprising,” Roberts said. “I’ve watched this governor behave as if the virus is an **inconvenience**” and not a virus.

DeSantis has said the number of infections in Florida is rising because there is more testing.

The state’s head agriculture official, Nikki Fried, tweeted Tuesday that DeSantis “has lost control” of the virus in Florida.

DeSantis is a Republican; Fried is the only elected Democrat to hold a statewide office.

I’m Susan Shand.

The Associated Press reported this story. Susan Shand adapted it for Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.

Words in This Story

proximity - *n.* nearness

alarm - *n.* a buzz or siren that alerts people that something is wrong

thermometer - *n.* a device used for taking a person's temperature

optimistic - *adj.* to look at the good possibilities

quarantine - *n.* the state of isolation for a person with a contagious disease

inconvenience - *n.* a minor interruption in one's routine
