

THE ECONOMIC CLUB

O F W A S H I N G T O N, D. C.

Executive Conversation

Paul Toboni and Jason Sinnarajah

Speakers

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**President of Baseball Operations
Washington Nationals**

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**President of Business Operations
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Interviewer

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President

Greater Washington, D.C. Bank of America

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LAWRENCE DI RITA: We are super excited to have the leaders of the Washington Nationals, one of our great institutions here in Washington, D.C.: Paul Toboni and Jason Sinnarajah, the two presidents of the Washington Nationals. And that brings me to the news of the day. And I want to be sure that – I don't know if everybody saw this today in The Wall Street Journal. It's in many other papers too, I'm sure. But this is the four presidents with the fifth president at the White House yesterday with the mascots, the team sponsors. And we'll talk a little bit about why they were there. But were you there too?

PAUL TOBONI: I was not there.

MR. DI RITA: You were not. Were you there?

JASON SINNARAJAH: Yeah, I was there.

MR. DI RITA: So, there were literally six presidents at the White House yesterday. [Laughter.] Is that the way to think about that?

MR. SINNARAJAH: No. [Laughter.]

MR. DI RITA: That's – [laughs] –

MR. SINNARAJAH: I was just honored to be there. So I'm glad they asked.

MR. DI RITA: OK, I just wondered. The president – the actual president didn't get confused either, I assume.

MR. SINNARAJAH: No. No, he was –

MR. DI RITA: There's a great picture of him trying to fist bump Teddy Roosevelt, it looks like kind of in the throat, but I think it's just the odd geometry. But, anyway, terrific. But while we're on that, what was the event? What was going on at the White House yesterday?

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yeah. I mean, we – you know, first, first off, thank you for having us. It's a great honor for us to be here and representing our organization. But, yeah, the White House reached out to us. I think they're celebrating National Youth and Sports Fitness Month. And yesterday was an event that the president was doing on the South Lawn. Bryson DeChambeau¹ was there. T.J. Oshie from the Washington Capitals was there. Noah Syndergaard,² Gary Player,³ a few other athletes. And they were celebrating fitness. They had a bunch of kids doing an obstacle course, putting, doing pull ups, et cetera.

MR. DI RITA: How many pull ups were you able to –

MR. SINNARAJAH: I did not do any, but Bryson DeChambeau did do 10. I watched that.

¹ Bryson DeChambeau is an American professional golfer who plays on the LIV Golf League.

² Noah Syndergaard, nicknamed "Thor," is an American professional baseball pitcher/free agent.

³ Gary Player is a South African retired professional golfer.

MR. DI RITA: Wow. That's serious business.

MR. SINNARAJAH: The president was there. But they were celebrating that. And they wanted to have our mascots, you know, because we're symbolic of the nation's capital, being here in D.C. And they invited us there. And it was awesome.

MR. DI RITA: That's fantastic. Well, thanks for doing that. So, I do want to introduce both of you as leaders of the baseball team, and to talk a little bit about – I want to talk a little bit about your careers. But the first thing I want to do, and I'll start with you, Paul, is to talk about your job. So, what is the specific set of responsibilities that you have as the president of the baseball operations for the team, and then for the baseball business we'll get to you, Jason. So, start with you, Paul.

MR. TOBONI: Yeah, sure. So, like Larry said, I'm the president of baseball operations. And essentially what that means is I oversee all strategy as it relates to the baseball team itself, right? So, roster management, you know, player development, the Major League Baseball draft, right? Signing players internationally. Basically, anything that has to do with the Washington Nationals performing on the field is within my purview. So, if the – you know, we look up five years from now and the Washington Nationals aren't a great team, you know who to blame.

MR. DI RITA: Well, I'll probably be talking to somebody else.

MR. TOBONI: [Laughs.] Yeah, exactly. And obviously the inverse is true too. [Laughter.]

MR. DI RITA: So, but just to be clear, if, if they were making a movie like "Moneyball," you would be played by Brad Pitt. That would be the person playing your role, is that?

MR. TOBONI: Yeah.

MR. DI RITA: Brad Pitt? OK.

MR. TOBONI: Yeah. It's funny you bring this up. Well, a couple things. One, many – I'm sure people in this room might know – the guy that just took over the Colorado Rockies was actually played by Jonah Hill in the movie, Paul DePodesta. So –

MR. DI RITA: OK. Fantastic.

MR. TOBONI: And, yeah, the whole – we were talking about it before – but I had a stint of time with the Oakland A's in 2014, I think it was. And I was always surprised by the fact that – I remember being in the room, the draft room, and looking around the room. And I kept thinking to myself, like, I know these scouts from somewhere. I can't – I can't figure out where, though. And then it hit me like a ton of bricks. They all played themselves –

MR. DI RITA: They played themselves in the movie.

MR. TOBONI: Yeah.

MR. DI RITA: That's interesting. We're going to talk about that too, actually, the stats versus scouting and all that stuff. So, we'll get to that.

Jason, if you can just give us a little sense of the job. And then, as I said, we're going to talk about how you got – both got there. But if you can talk a little bit about, like, what your responsibilities are.

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yeah. I mean, Paul, you know, is the product, if you will, right? And we're supporting there. So, we have a sales function, we have a marketing function, we have a finance function, HR – all the standard business stuff that you see at most companies. But I think people don't realize, you know, we're an event production company on a game day, we're logistics, we're hospitality, we're trying to market and sell, and then we have to run a business, just like all of you. So, all of that rolls up through me. And, you know, Paul and I work hand in hand to help guide the franchise forward.

MR. DI RITA: So, let's start. So, you talked about the business operations. You have a business background, University of Virginia, Darden School, MBA. But also, other businesses besides sports. So, talk a little bit about – Google and some others. Just give us a little sense of how you got to the – you know.

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yeah. I'll keep it short. You know, my background, about 10-plus years did corporate finance. I've done some banking. But then also worked at Google for five years building out their international business. I lived in Asia for three years and then ran search for a little while. Also did some media and private equity work. And then I've also done 10 years in the sports industry. So, this is my fourth team. Started with the Cleveland Indians, the team that Jonah Hill or the Paul DePodesta came from. So, I have a connection to that "Moneyball" too. Worked at the Buffalo Bills and Sabres, most recently the Kansas City Royals, and then started this job in January.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah. I want to come back to, and we will, so you were in hockey and football. So it would be interesting to get your take on sort of the distinctions among the games. But before we do that, Paul, so you have an athlete – you have a sports background of your own. I mean, player background. You played at University of California.

MR. TOBONI: I did, yeah. I was one of those kids that sports was my life growing up. I come from a family of five. I was born and raised in San Francisco. And all – you know, all my siblings and myself were just really into sports from a young age. And I was fortunate enough to be able to play at Cal. Played there for four years.

MR. DI RITA: What position?

MR. TOBONI: I was a shortstop.

MR. DI RITA: Shortstop.

MR. TOBONI: Yeah. I've said it a couple times in some media interviews, but the shortstop in my recruiting class alongside myself was Marcus Semien.⁴

MR. DI RITA: Oh, yeah, no. And whatever happened to him? Yeah. [Laughter.]

MR. TOBONI: Well, so, yeah, like, the joke is, like, three weeks into being at Cal, he looked at me and he's like, I don't think you're going to be playing shortstop, buddy. [Laughter.]

MR. DI RITA: Hey, good to know you too, Marcus. [Laughter.]

MR. TOBONI: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. But bounced around the field a little bit. And, yeah, from there – you know, I actually –

MR. DI RITA: Did you think you were going to play professional baseball?

MR. TOBONI: I did, yeah. And that's actually what I was going to be getting to, is this was probably the naivety of a, whatever, 21-year-old going through college baseball, and that journey. But I got to my senior year. And I was like, oh, I'm not sure pro ball is going to be happening. I need to get my act together.

MR. DI RITA: No one's calling. Why haven't they called?

MR. TOBONI: Yeah, cellphone tower down?

MR. DI RITA: They know my number. [Laughter.]

MR. TOBONI: Yeah, exactly. And so, I had to figure out what I was going to do. I ended up going to graduate school, really as a way to buy time. And, different than Jason, like, I didn't have any work experience. So, I was really just trying to figure out –

MR. DI RITA: And you also studied business, though, right?

MR. TOBONI: Correct, yeah.

MR. DI RITA: Where'd you go to graduate school?

MR. TOBONI: University of Notre Dame.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah.

MR. TOBONI: And so, I was there. And I really just – I was trying to figure out, you know, should I be working in finance or, you know, whatever, whatever. And actually, through that I took a bunch of interviews and figured out that my passion really lied in baseball. I kept coming

⁴ Marcus Semien is a shortstop and second baseman for the New York Mets.

back to baseball. And from there, I took an internship with the A's, and then an internship with the Red Sox, and spent 11 years with the Red Sox, before hopping over here.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah. Fantastic. Jason, you mentioned that you had been at Google and overseas. And you said you ran search for a while, and that slipped by us, but that's Google Search, right? So that's kind of a big deal at Google. I think. I mean, I don't know their business model. [Laughter.]

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yeah. So, I ran Search Partnerships. So, if you type in "Washington Nationals," or you type in "the weather," or get that stuff, I'll build that product out about, I don't know, 14-15 years ago now, through partnerships. So, you know, it's cool, because it makes an impact on people's lives. And I remember when I was looking to get into baseball, I'd be talking to scouts, and I was just reaching out to people. And I remember one time I was at some event, because I lived in San Francisco. And a scout was looking up a player on the product. And I was like, hey, I actually helped, you know, work through that product. And he got so excited. And he actually talked to me for a little while. [Laughter.] But, yeah, no, that was – it was a good time. And, you know, Google at the time, from '07 to 2012 was – you know, we just bought YouTube. We bought Double Click while I was there. I helped integrate that. Spent some time in Tokyo and Sydney. So, it was a lot of fun.

MR. DI RITA: Let's do talk a little bit about – so you're now in baseball, and you were in baseball in Kansas City. From the standpoint of your responsibilities to kind of create the fan experience and really make this a worthwhile sort of I want to do this, and you're the face – what the people think about when they think about the Nats now. How does that differ, or does it, in terms of the NFL, the NHL, Major League Baseball? And specifically, the teams that you were involved with, I mean, how do you think about that and what translates?

MR. SINNARAJAH: Well, first off, I think the face of the Nats is the players and Paul's side. I think that's the most important thing. So there has to be a level of humility in our roles, that we're supporting that product. But, you know, in the NFL, because you have less games, right – and a market like Buffalo, I mean, it's huge. Every game is a massive event. So that has its own gravitas. That has its own unique challenges. You know, the NHL, Major League Baseball, a little bit more like real life. It's every day – certainly baseball is every day. And you have the trials and tribulations, you go ups and downs, there are some days that are bigger than others, et cetera. I personally gravitate to that. I think that's a little bit more applicable to real life. And it also creates more business challenges.

We have 162 games, 81 at home. That presents its own unique opportunities, I think, to sell and market that product. It also presents opportunities from content distribution, touching our fans, providing unique opportunities for all types of fans. And it's a pretty cool opportunity that way. Whereas in the NFL, like, it's just such a grandiose thing. And, quite frankly, the NFL is king in America, so it's the number one sport. And, you know, it's just different challenges.

MR. DI RITA: Let me just digress for a second. But you went – you grew up in Toronto.

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yes.

MR. DI RITA: Did the – Toronto and Montreal, they played each other regularly. There was a regular, the Pearson Cup. Were you thinking about – did you have any – you think – did you root for the Blue Jays or the Expos? Or did you – did you have a fan? I mean, because, obviously, the Expos then became the Nats, so.

MR. SINNARAJAH: Well, so I am from Toronto. I actually didn't like Montreal, specifically from the hockey perspective. [Laughter.] I'm a big Maple Leafs fan. So, you know, I didn't really watch or pay attention to the Expos. The only thing I cared about the Expos was that they had a Canadian player, Larry Walker, who was quite good at the time when I was growing up. So I followed that. But no, I was a big Blue Jays fan.

MR. DI RITA: Blue Jays fan? Yeah, OK. that's interesting. You also went to BC, right?

MR. SINNARAJAH: I did. I played baseball there for a very brief time.

MR. DI RITA: Oh, you did? What position were you?

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yeah. I was a pitcher, and then I hurt my arm. But so nowhere near as accomplished as Paul, certainly. But, yeah. The Boston College thing is near and dear to my heart. I'm glad Paul hired a manager who actually played there for four years.

MR. DI RITA: That's what I was going to ask. Did you – did you – he was a little bit after you.

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yeah. Yeah. He's a little bit younger than me. [Laughter.] I'm the older guy in this space.

MR. DI RITA: [Laughs.] He's, like – yeah, you're the only old man in the –

MR. SINNARAJAH: No, but Blake⁵ and I obviously knew some mutual friends. And then it was really a tremendous honor for us both to host the Boston College baseball team in March at our spring training facility. They actually happened to be playing in Miami and, I think, were ranked in the top 20. So, we rubbed some good luck on them.

MR. DI RITA: Fantastic. I'm going to ask both of you to answer this but, Paul, so you were in Boston for a while. You were at Oakland, other cities. You had, obviously, choices, and Washington is what you chose. What did you see about the club, the city, the opportunity that made you say that's where I want to be?

MR. TOBONI: Yeah. Well, I'll take you back. I think it was some point in the middle of September where I was solely focused on the Red Sox and making this playoff run –

MR. DI RITA: September of last year.

⁵ Blake Butera is the manager for the Washington Nationals.

MR. TOBONI: September of last year. We had this good team. And then my boss walks into my office and says, hey. You know, explains the Washington Nationals want to talk to you, so on and so forth. And I actually told him in the moment, I'm like – his name is Craig Breslow. I'm like, Bres, you know, I appreciate this, but I think there's probably a 10 percent chance that I'm going to want to pursue it. But let me go home, talk to my wife, Danielle, who's here today, and we can chat it over. Chat it over. And, like, you know, what? We agreed, hey, we'll take the interview and have the first conversation.

And from that point on, I just felt like it went from, like, you know, 10 percent in my first interaction with the ownership group, like up to 25 percent. And then the subsequent interaction with ownership it went to 50 percent, right? And so on and so forth. And what really hit me – a couple things. One was I always told myself if I was going to hop into a position like this, you want to be able to enact it in your vision and not feel handcuffed for, you know, whatever different reason, right? And what became abundantly clear to me through those interactions was that the ownership group was incredibly committed to doing it the right way, to building an organization the right way.

And that was very, very important for myself. Then, you know, the city was a big thing. And when I came down a few different times, I'd spent a time here before as well, I could really envision, you know, my wife and raising a family in this city. And I think it was just a testament to the people, the history, the culture, the food, everything right? But I also told myself, you know, if this moment ever came, I'm going to make sure that my wife makes a decision independently of me, because the truth is – and Jason would say the same – we spend a lot of hours working, right? And family has to be really excited about the opportunity as well. And so Danielle came down. And she was thrilled to have an opportunity to live in a city like this.

And before you know it – it happened quick. It was, like, two weeks later I was locked out of Fenway Park, and – [laughter] –

MR. DI RITA: [Laughs.] No badge swipe. It doesn't work anymore.

MR. TOBONI: Yeah, exactly. I was – it was honestly a weird feeling. Like, you're watching on ESPN –

MR. DI RITA: How long were you at the Red Sox? How long were you in Boston?

MR. TOBONI: About 11 years.

MR. DI RITA: Eleven years. Yeah, that's a long time.

MR. TOBONI: Yeah. I was saying, it was a weird feeling because you see them celebrating the clubhouse, clinching a playoff spot. You're watching on TV, like, for the first time wearing a Nationals hat. Combination of excited and also, like, oh gosh.

MR. DI RITA: And were you – you probably weren't, you were in the playoff run. Were you, like, paying attention to the Nats? Did you have a general – so you didn't play – or did the Sox play them last year? Was it –

MR. TOBONI: Yeah, we actually played them – played the Red Sox over July 4th. And, yeah. So I wasn't on the trip, so I didn't come down. But, yeah, you know, I think you follow all teams in the league, not to the extent that you do when you actually work for the club. But when I felt like it might be happening, I think there was a series left. I think the Nationals were playing the White Sox, if I recall correctly. And so, I was locked into those games a little bit more than I otherwise would.

MR. DI RITA: No doubt. Yeah. Jason, how about you? Same thing. You've lived everywhere, I mean, including overseas. You have choices where you could choose to bring your family and commit your career and talent and time. What was it about Washington that you found, like, this is where I want to be?

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yeah. I mean, I have a fourteen- and eleven-year-old. And my wife had actually lived here for five years between college and Darden, where we met. But, you know, for me it was, you know, knowing baseball a little bit, the business side, knowing the different markets, et cetera, I mean, this is a huge market with huge, untapped potential. And I look at this ball club, and I look at what we could do, the way we touch so many people, in a market that has such a global presence. For me and my wife that was really important having, like you mentioned, lived around different places, for us to raise our boys and have them do high school here, and so forth.

So that, from a personal level, was really, really compelling. But really, like, when I got the call in November – and just like Paul, you know, you have – they have to ask for permission, and so forth. You know, I was pretty excited to hear our ownership out, but I also thought it was going to be a low probability, candidly. I was very happy in Kansas City. My family liked it there. Very good ball club. We were trying to get a new stadium, all that stuff. But the more and more I talked to our ownership, which I think is, you know, an untold story, the passion, the care, the devotion to this community, I mean, it was unparalleled. And I've dealt with four different ownership groups, all very different, across my career. And to see that was really, really invigorating for me. And then to just see the market potential and where we're at and the kind of rebuild.

And, you know, I got to know Paul a little bit through our interview process. Obviously did due diligence on him. You know, I just started seeing – like, and then they hired Blake. We're almost like a startup, in the sense that we're all starting together. We're all in this together. It's a turnaround, so to speak, a little bit of the business and the baseball side, which is phenomenal, right? And that's a really cool experience. And it truly is a metamorphosis of what's going on here, with a very, very established ball club in this market.

MR. DI RITA: No, and there's no doubt that the owners have built a fantastic experience, a beautiful stadium. They brought a championship here. What more do you want? But now you guys take it to the next level. You mentioned Blake. You've talked to him a couple times –

about him a couple times. How much of a factor – and I’ve seen stories about it. It’s hard to avoid. You guys are young. You hired people younger than you to take some of these incredible jobs – general manager, manager of this club. And Blake’s 29, 30?

MR. TOBONI: Thirty-three.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah, something – OK. Young. How much of that is a factor? In other words, that you’re bringing a new generation of leadership and therefore different perspective. Is that how you think about it? It’s certainly how people are thinking about it on the outside.

MR. TOBONI: Yeah, what I would say to it is maybe the first couple days of spring training it was a thing, right? But then we have Miles Mikolas, who’s actually pitching today. He’s 37 years old, right? So he’s four years older than –

MR. DI RITA: Yeah. Ancient, Old guy, yeah.

MR. TOBONI: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. DI RITA: I don’t know how he gets around. [Laughter.]

MR. TOBONI: But I think if you asked him today about Blake, like, age wouldn’t really even factor into the equation. He just says, like, this guy is an unbelievable leader, the way he cares for people, his knowledge of the game, all these things. It’s nothing having to do with age, right?

MR. DI RITA: When you are at, like, league meetings with your counterparts, both of you, is it – does that – do you feel – I mean, is that a vibe? Is that –

MR. TOBONI: No, I honestly, I don’t really think about it. I don’t think Blake does either. But I think, like, what you’re getting at is, right, that, like, I think the narrative out there – this is a young bunch, a forward-thinking bunch, you know, analytics-oriented, all these things. It’s all true. But I think what I would layer on top of that is one thing that Blake and I really bonded over in the interview process was the fact that there are some traditional parts of the game, right, that still play very much today like they did in 1980. You know what I mean?

And the respect for those parts of the game, paired with a real forward-thinking mindset of, basically, what contributes to winning, is something that we really bonded over, because oftentimes it can be a pretty polarizing question. Like, oh, you’re either in the bucket of, like, the young, forward-thinking, little respect for some of the traditional parts of the game, right? Or, like, the, you know, old, grumpy, traditional guy that doesn’t care about analytics, right? And the truth is we care about what contributes to winning. And oftentimes, it’s a – most often it’s a combination of those two things.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah. So let me go back to “Moneyball,” because that’s what people sort of remember, but that was something of an inflection point, and it’s how people think about stats, and sabermetrics, and all that stuff. Is that still the way it’s thought about? I mean, there’s stats,

and then there's the scouting, and then there's all the other things. But it must by now be a whole different layer, a whole different level of – is that the –

MR. TOBONI: Yeah. I'll bring you through kind of the progression, then I'll maybe give a practical example. But I think, if you – I wasn't in the game in 1990, but I think what the game looked like then is the person in my position with the Yankees meeting up with the person in my position with the Dodgers at the hotel bar, and they're making a trade on the back of the napkin, right, based on just what they're seeing and. That was kind of a cool thing, right? "Moneyball" comes around. And it's, like, hey, instead of focusing on maybe batting average, or wins for a pitcher, or saves, or whatever it might be, we're going to start folding in these other metrics that maybe capture performance better. So, on base percentage, or slugging percentage, or whatever it might be, right?

You fast forward to today. I think a lot of these organizations more resemble almost like a financial firm, right, where you have models built out to basically come up with the most predictive valuation.

MR. DI RITA: So, outcome-based models.

MR. TOBONI: That's right, yeah. So maybe in practice, right, if you – if you're putting together the board and the draft, right, and you're figuring out what player you're going to take in the draft, right, having, you know, numerical figure attached to each player's name is really important, right? So instead of, like, just looking at the board and it being one, two, three, four, five, you're saying, OK, this player in the first spot we are valuing at 100 right? This person the second spot, this player in second spot, we're valuing at 75.

MR. DI RITA: And that's a metric that takes in a lot of different factors, and you've just now got an index, basically.

MR. TOBONI: And that's what I was going to get at. Having been in the position as a scouting director and you're overseeing the draft, it is – I don't care who you talk to – it is impossible to, for the 600 players, 700 players on your board, right, think in live time, OK, this person's, you know, performance in the SEC is this, he hit this many homeruns, he walked this much, he's six foot two, he's 180 pounds. This is what our scouting reports say. You know, like, and then you fold that all together and you're, like, OK, I think he should fit here. And then you run through the same exact process for the next player. OK, I think he should fit here.

And the question I would ask is, like, are you really telling me that you can, you know, with a degree of confidence, tell me that player 143 should be one spot ahead of player 144? I'm of the mindset that that's not the best way to do it, right? That we should have help in that regard. At the same time, I think the folks that are probably in highest demand now in baseball are the folks that have a really good understanding of evaluating the traditional parts of the game. They can go to a game, really understand what is going on, while also interacting with these models. Because the challenge and the journey that we are on is basically iterating upon these, right? And so the amateur model – amateur draft model that we're using next year is exponentially better than it was this year, right? And that comes from poking and prodding and

saying, hey, are we capturing this right? Because this player seems undervalued or overvalued. So it's this never-ending journey that, quite honestly, is probably – draws a lot of parallels to other industries.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah, no, it sounds that way.

Jason, in terms of where the franchise is now, based on what we've talked about, and they won the championship in 2019, the World Series. Haven't had a winning record since, obviously. So you're thinking about, OK, how do we get beyond that? Is it the same – you come – you know, you were at Google, one of really the world's great companies. Does the tools that are available in terms of how you think about the entire fan experience – not just the product on the field, of course, but the entire fan experience, we've got to keep them coming and we got to keep them wanting more – how have those tools evolved in your own career?

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yeah. I mean, very similar to Paul. I mean, on the business side, you know, there's a whole host of AI applications that are used to predict attendance, for instance, right? Today it's raining. We're playing the Twins. It's a Wednesday. There's all kinds of regression models and variables that are going into that, what we predict and what we think the demand will be, how we market against it, what kind of promotion we do, how we tell our content story, what do we put on social media, et cetera, right? And that has to be all coordinated. So that's a developing process that I think many teams across sports now are evolving. We certainly are as well. And we have a ways to go on that front.

But we're trying to connect with our fans, right? Message, tell our brand identity, tell what we stand for, and be an attractive place that everybody can come. And, you know, segment our ballpark and think about our ballpark experience differently for, you know, the hardcore fan that wants to score the game and knows all the players, to the families that come to the games on varying days, to our season ticket holders, to somebody who's a value-seeking customer, to somebody who wants just an event, to somebody who just wants a social experience. There's a lot of fans that come to baseball games; they don't even watch the game. They're just in the bar drinking or watching the game on TV. You see this across all of sports now, but especially baseball with the amount of games. So, we have to continually evolve our experiences at our ballpark.

MR. DI RITA: Are you able to talk a little about some of the ways you think about that? Like, what changes to the fan experience you might be looking at?

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yeah. I mean, like, this year, for instance, you know, we redid – when I got here pretty late in the game, but for the season, you know, we redid our entry process for season ticketholders. We actually have a dedicated gate now that's really been widely acclaimed by our fans online. I read the Reddit forums. Which is fun. But we did that. We actually introduced lower price – lower price beer options, because for a while here at the ballpark there was only one beer option. Now, unless you're planning on getting lit, which is fine, 25 ounces, you know, like, that can be a lot of beer, right? So, we wanted to offer something a little smaller. And our fans like that too. So, it's just, like, the little things that we can do across the ballpark.

And every day, we're offering different concessions. We're trying to figure out how do we adjust, you know, everything that we do in the ballpark, what our retail is. You know, we started – Paul was great as a partner. We wear navy on Friday, city connect – our city connect jerseys, which are very popular, on Saturdays, and red on Sundays. So, coordinating that with our store, so our fans can buy that way so we're telling that story, is a way we connect with the local community. Very much like the Caps did their Rock the Red Promotion that I'm sure you guys saw. So. I think doing things like that, if we can get better every day, it'll add up.

MR. DI RITA: How did the city connect jersey – how did you think about that? Did you have a say in how that came out? You had one two years ago which had a whole different vibe than this one.

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yeah. So. this way the city – so no, because the city – way city connect jerseys are done, this is the second year of this iteration, those are done a few years in advance. And there's a lot of coordination with Nike, Major League Baseball, our marketing team, obviously, et cetera. So no, I did not. So hopefully like it still. But no, but in a few years, you know, we'll evolve around that. But, again, the purpose of the city connect jersey – if you're not familiar with it – is really, truly to connect to a city, right? And be emblematic. So. some teams, like in Boston they have a green one. They have a yellow one to represent the Boston Marathon. So we're trying to do the same and make sure we –

MR. DI RITA: You had the cherry blossoms on it too.

MR. SINNARAJAH: We did the cherry blossoms, yeah.

MR. DI RITA: Where do you think you are on the building of the talent? In other words, you made some very bold moves in the beginning of season, MacKenzie Gore and others. How do you think about where you stand with the talent and, you know, what you're looking for? You got great young talent. The question is are you building around it? I mean, you can tell us how you're thinking about that.

MR. TOBONI: Yeah. I guess, just to back up, I think there are basically two ways to create a really good baseball product, right? And the first way is just to outspend everyone, right? The second way is to create competitive advantages regarding how you're acquiring and developing players, right? Regardless of where we fall in bucket number one, right, bucket number two we have to dominate, right? And it has to align well with a very coherent, long-term strategy that everyone in the organization is aligned on, OK? Having said that, when we talk about a timeline and when we're going to make the playoffs and all those things, I'm very skeptical of doing so, not because I have my thoughts, but mainly because there are many things like that, you know, acquisition and development of talent, that we have control over, right? There are also things that we don't have control over. You know, who gets to our pick in the draft, right? How strong the draft class is, whatever it might be, right?

And so a lot of the conversations I've had with the ownership group, with the coaching staff, with the front office is around, hey, let's just worry about every six months looking back and saying, the organization is now in a much healthier spot than it was six months ago. And we

can take our best guesses of, like, when we're going to be not only winning, but set up to win over a sustained period. In my opinion, the best way to go about it is building a very, very strong foundation, so a foundation of talent, right, so that we're winning at the major league level, right, but then we're pumping out player after player after player, graduating from the minor leagues to the major leagues, so that we don't slow down over time.

When that's going to be, that's difficult to tell. You know, it's like you –

MR. DI RITA: Yeah, but how are you feeling about the system? I mean, the – I saw I think it was a Nationals – an Athletic article recently about how you're – in the top three levels of your farm team you're actually well ahead from last year, for example. Do you feel good about the depth in the – in the system?

MR. TOBONI: I feel about – I feel good about how we're – how we're trending, right? I just think we need a little bit more time. And some of that, you reference it, like, some of that requires really tough decisions. You talk about MacKenzie. MacKenzie is obviously – he's playing well in Texas. On the other side of that we have a couple players that are really – like, our best player in A ball right now has been a kid named Yeremy Cabrera, who came over in that trade. Probably our best player in high A right now is a kid named Devin Fitz-Gerald, who came over in that trade, right? And then the two guys that were considered two of the best players are injured right now, but we have very high hopes for them –

MR. DI RITA: Dylan Crews, is he one of the ones you're thinking about?

MR. TOBONI: Dylan wasn't part of that trade, but he's trending great too in AAA as well. So really, what we're trying to do is create this environment where we're realizing the best version of these guys in the minor leagues or the major leagues. And then when the time is right and we feel like they're ready to roll, we're bringing them to them.

MR. DI RITA: Is there, like, you know, so many clubs when they're building for what you're building for, which is another championship, have that sort of like gray eminence in the clubhouse. And I know for you guys, that's a whole different vibe, because it could be – could be somebody who's 33. But, I mean, is it – is there somebody that you have – that you would think about bringing in as an anchor, veteran anchor? You've got – you already mentioned Mikolas, but, I mean, there may be some others that you're – is that important to how you're thinking about building the team?

MR. TOBONI: Yeah. We do. Yeah. And we have one of the youngest teams in Major League Baseball. I don't think that's a mystery to anyone. Really, what we're trying to create, though, is an environment in the clubhouse that we talk about a lot, it's a winning culture. And players are not only holding themselves accountable but holding each other accountable. And it just so happens that oftentimes veteran guys are able to do that well, right? We have a few of them. And not just, you know, Miles, or Zak, or Trevor Williams, who's injured right now, but others as well. What I've learned over time, though, is oftentimes that leadership can come from players that, you know, aren't veterans, right, but have the respect of the clubhouse and go about their job the right way, so on, so forth.

MR. DI RITA: So just another reference back to my favorite movie, “Moneyball.” But there’s that scene where Jonah Hill’s character has to let Carlos Pena go. Who did that with MacKenzie Gore?

MR. TOBONI: That was yours truly. Yeah. Yeah.

MR. DI RITA: Talk a little bit about that.

MR. TOBONI: Well, so I think it’s a – it’s a really interesting topic. Like, I tell myself all the time, you have to have a lot of these conversations, right? We are – just yesterday we took a player off the roster, right? And when you’re in a position like mine, you can get programmed into having so many of these conversations that you almost lack empathy, right? It’s just like, oh, it’s just another day on the job for Paul. So, I’m going to have this conversation, tell the player that he’s taken off the roster, or traded, or whatever it is.

MR. DI RITA: That was the Brad Pitt approach, like, call this number, they’ll take care of you. Then get a ticket to get the hell out of here. That’s not your style, is it?

MR. TOBONI: Right. No, well, I mean, what I remind myself of is, you know, it – I don’t think this is, you know, any sort of exaggeration or hyperbole – like, oftentimes, that is the worst day of a player’s life, right, and career. And so actually handling it with empathy, and, you know, really getting them to understand, like, hey, yeah, this is a business, all those things. But at the same time, in my opinion doing it right means communicating to the extent that you can well in advance, right? So, in MacKenzie’s case: Hey, MacKenzie, it’s the start of the offseason. I don’t know the way this is going to shake out, right? But I’m just telling you, this is a possibility. And if at any point over the course of the next month, two months, three months you have questions about it, give me a ring and let’s chat about it.

MR. DI RITA: Interesting.

MR. TOBONI: And then you go through the offseason. And there are times, honestly, a week before the trade, where, you know, I could have called McKenzie and said, like, I think there’s probably a less than 5 percent chance that you get traded, right? But then there are times where it can escalate pretty quickly. And, you know, what I’ve learned is players, I think they just want to be communicated with. They want to be in the know when they’re in a position –

MR. DI RITA: And respected, I’m sure. I mean, who doesn’t?

MR. TOBONI: And respected. Because they all understand that trades happen, right? Players are taken off the roster. It’s just the communication and the understanding that it’s a tough time for them at times, I think, is appreciated.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah. No doubt. Jason, the Nats won the World Series in ’19. Three months later, the entire country was shut down, COVID. How much of an impact do you think that had on, you know, just that’s – you know, you want to be able to sustain – it’s no baseball that year,

or baseball with fake people in the stands or whatever it turned out to be. Did that stall the momentum of a championship team, do you think? I mean, you weren't here, but I just wonder how you think about that.

MR. SINNARAJAH: Look, when you win, right, especially in the three sports – the NHL, NBA, Major League Baseball – the halo effect is usually felt the following year, right? So if you're thinking about business cycles with all your businesses, right, you generally – you have this event, it leads to momentum for the following year. And you plan for that – season ticketholder growth, single game tickets, more interest in the club, national games, et cetera. Unfortunately, this team, right, did not get to experience that, right?

So, whether it hurt it or not, I don't really spend a lot of time thinking about that. But, I mean, I don't think it's crazy to think that that probably had a massive impact on where this could have been. And you saw that in the other leagues – I know when I was in Buffalo we played with no fans that year. You know, it was a tough time. But these industries, you know, are really very cyclical. And obviously winning helps, right? And, again, I always go back to the product. What people want to talk about is really the baseball setting, which is where they should be.

MR. DI RITA: We talked about where Paul thinks the team is in terms of, like, the building process. You also have mentioned a few things you're instituting. But where do you think you are in the fan experience process? And in the – you mentioned you want the team to stand for something, and you want to be seen for standing for something. In three or four years, when you guys have been able to work your skills, what do you think – what do you want us to think about the Nats?

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yeah. I mean, so I had this experience in Cleveland when I joined the Indians in 2012. You know, we were not as successful on the field, and we were able to turn around. And what I learned through that experience, which is very much how Paul and I work together, is, you know, we're building together, right? We need to put the business infrastructure in place so as the team continues to grow, you know, we can continue to grow on the business side as well, and really maximize, you know, revenues and so forth.

But in terms of the fan experience, right, that means fundamentally looking at the fan experience, doing focus groups, understanding what our fans want, and hearing them, listening to them, and then collectively pulling that together to come up with better improvements, or improvements that we want to better the experience. And that'll happen over a series of years here. That hopefully will coincide with as the team gets better on the field, more people will come. They'll enjoy it even more, and they want to come back. And now it becomes a snowball effect.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah. How about you? And, I mean, it'd be nice to think in three or four years you could be talking about the World Series. But, I mean, is that – when you think about what you want the league and the teams and the players to think about the Nats, they're tough – they're a tough team, I don't ever want to go to that stadium? And what's your thinking about that?

MR. TOBONI: Yeah. I said it the other week, which is, you know, regardless of, like, this series with Minnesota, we obviously didn't play great last night, but whether we win three, Minnesota wins three – I guess can't win three at this point in time – but win two, win one, whatever it is, that Minnesota's leaving, you know, Nats park at the end of the series, like, man, those guys are really tough to play against.

MR. DI RITA: I don't want to do that again.

MR. TOBONI: Yeah. If I'm being completely candid, there have been moments this year where we have definitely been that. I think if you ask the Brewers the first time around, like, hey, you know was that the feeling, I think it would be a resounding yes from their manager, from their players, so on and so forth. But then there have been times this season where that hasn't been the case. And I think part of that is just, once again, we have a really young team. I think, really growing into understanding what it means to be consistent from series to series.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah. I'm going to take questions from you in just a second, so have them ready, please. If you have questions. Turn the lights on there. But I did want to ask, this is a big year in Washington, in the country, for the America 250. How do you guys think about that? You got four presidents and two more here. I mean –

MS. TOBONI: [Laughs.] Well, I mean, look, I think we already do a lot in this community, right? We have 50-plus programs every year celebrating the military. So that was ongoing always. I think this is the number-one team, you know, in all of sports to celebrate the commitment of service, what the military is, the 17 and 18 installations that we have in the local area. But all branches of the of the military are celebrated. We have a Navy, we have a Coast Guard, we have an Army, Air Force Day at the ballpark. So, you know, we're already doing that. We're kind of doubling down on that this year, though, with America 250, from the script – which is the American Revolution script – you see players names written on, to, you know, opening day when we celebrated the, you know, rich history of baseball with the African American community, the rich history of women's baseball, going back to the '40s. You know, we had one of the players that played in that league during World War II.

So, you know, we're leaning into that. And I think it's really, really important. Fourth of July will obviously be a very, very special day. Traditionally, we've had the simulcast with our base in Qatar during the Fourth of July. I don't know how that's going to play out this year with, obviously, global situations and what's going on. But that is something that's really near and dear to our heart. And it's not just this year. It's every year, really, because we've been so ingrained in the community on that.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah. Fantastic.

Let's see if there's any questions out – I got a couple hands up. And Jeffrey and Jamie are taking mics. Oh, Sam, yes, right here.

Q: Hi, guys. This was great. I'm Sam Feist with C-SPAN.

I have a question of each of you. Before I was at C-SPAN, I was at CNN. And this morning the legendary CNN founder, but also Atlanta Braves owner, Ted Turner, passed away. And Ted Turner, he was a tough owner. He one day put on the manager's uniform after he fired the manager because he didn't like how the manager – and who among us hasn't at least thought we could manage a game better than the manager at any given moment. [Laughter.] I'm curious, Paul, how you – do you give feedback to Blake about managing after a game? Or is that – you just let him to it?

And then a completely unrelated question for Jason is, just talk a little bit about your contract – your television contract. We with no due respect – with all due respect to David Rubenstein, the Nationals have now gotten a full divorce from the Orioles MASN.⁶ And MLB produces the games. How's it going? How does it affect the bottom line? And are you going to keep doing that?

MR. DI RITA: And it's not too late to think about C-SPAN for –

Q: C-SPAN is always available if you need a new broadcaster. We're good. [Laughter.]

MR. DI RITA: Yes. You're welcome, Sam.

Q: Thank you, Larry.

MR. TOBONI: Sam, thanks for the question. So, I think this relates to Blake, but it relates for everyone in the organization. We've made this commitment to building an organization within baseball ops, but also on the business side, where there are four values that we hold sacred. It's joy. We talk about a lot about joy. Talk a lot about humility. We talk a lot about integrity. We talk a lot about competitiveness. OK? When I talk about humility, to me one of the best ways that you can display humility is in your ability to receive feedback, right? Blake, I'm not just saying this because he's the manager, I think he does it better than anyone in the organization.

What I would also say, though, is if I'm doing my job well, there is never a feeling on Blake's end, like, I can't give Paul feedback because of how he's going to react to it, right? And so the question of, like, whether I actually give him feedback after the games, heck yeah, I do. But the conversation is, like, it's a conversation, like, two really good friends just, hey, tell me how you thought through this one. And then almost always he has a very well-articulated response, right? But this is why Blake's so special.

What it has turned into is – you know, for instance, last night after a really tough loss, like, he comes walking into his office and his eyes are like – you can tell he's just frustrated, right? Because we didn't play great. But right away it's, like, hey, how would you have handled X, Y, and Z? And the fact that he's just asking it, right, I think is a huge display of humility. And it means that, hopefully it's a signal that we've built a relationship that is really genuine and

⁶ Mid-Atlantic Sports Network is a regional sports network owned by the Baltimore Orioles.

built on giving each other feedback. Because if you don't have anyone giving you feedback, like, it becomes really tough to improve, in my opinion.

MR. SINNARAJAH: I think I got the tougher question of the two. [Laughter.] OK. So, first, I mean, Ted Turner was an icon, right? And it's very sad that he passed away today. If you think about CNN, and by default the Braves and how they've grown as a fandom, you know, across all the country, really, through TBS, it was on the backs of the cable industry, right? And some of you guys in the crowd may be a part of the cable industry and the media industry. And for years, for about a 30- to 40-year time period, the bundle of the cable package that you bought included sports rights, ESPN, TBS, et cetera, TNT, and teams were able to distribute it through that, including MASN.

Over the last 10 years, especially last five years, certainly after COVID, as cord cutting, and really, quite frankly, YouTube contributes to this, right, among others, that bundle has eroded. And so, the whole idea of the media bundle and traditional distribution through MASN or whatever channels is the value proposition has eroded. And that's not me saying that. That's just the consumer saying that. So, what do you do, right? We can sit around and cry about it, wallow in that. You can go through the history of MASN, so forth. I'm not going to talk all that because I wasn't here for that.

But going forward, where the consumer wants, where fans want, how do we distribute the game is through direct-to-consumer, right? And so, Major League Baseball, to their credit, has come up with a very, very viable product that they produce. The production quality, to your point, is very, very good. It allows us to be able to have our own broadcasters, which is an awesome experience. We have a little bit more control on that experience, which is great for the fan. And we're able to introduce things like the wire cam. We're able to introduce drones, which obviously we have – in this market, we have to be a little bit limited, for obvious reasons. But we're able to have in-game, in the dugout interviews with players. You couldn't do that before. So, there's more innovation and technology for the consumer that we've already seen positive feedback on.

For the impact on the bottom line, long term this will be very much like the media industry, the way – hopefully it'll be like what Ted Turner built – but, like, something of that sort will build over time, because we'll have a direct relationship with our consumers. You still have the cable bundle, right for those that want to watch on Verizon or Comcast. RCN was brought up to me on Reddit forums. [Laughs.] But, you know, I think the direct-to-consumer model we're very confident is the right move. Nationals.tv has been a great thing. And we've already seen some very, very positive feedback, including we're exceeding MLB's expectations with the number of subs that we have in this market. So, I don't worry about the MASN. I don't worry about other teams. I really focus on ourselves. And I think long term that's where it's going to be, because that's where the puck is going, right? If I use the Wayne Gretzky analogy.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah. It's a super exciting vision, actually. Other questions?

Q: Good afternoon, gentlemen. My name is Jeff Krilla. Thanks so much, Paul and Jason, for sharing with us today. Larry, great questions.

So, I have a just two-part question. One is about – both of you played college baseball before the era of NIL.⁷ And I'm just wondering how NIL impacts your industry these days. And then as a – possibly a lighter question, fantasy baseball. Is there any impact? Are players playing it? Are they allowed to play it? And then, on a side note, did either of you play fantasy baseball when you were younger, and were you particularly good at it? [Laughter.]

MR. TOBONI: That's a lightning round.

MR. SINNARAJAH: He had a real playing career. So, you can answer the NIL one.

MR. TOBONI: Yeah. So, whether it's fantasy – I'll answer your second question first. So, I think fantasy baseball, fantasy football – fantasy baseball I no longer do. I did it. I was addicted to it for a big stretch of my life. Fantasy football, I am all about. And what I often tell people is it sounds silly but a lot of the mechanics of my job and going through, you know, utilizing the waiver wire and turning over a roster, right, like you learn by really being connected to a roster in fantasy baseball, or fantasy football, or whatever it might be.

Regarding your first question, NIL actually impacts us less than you would think, I think, at least on the baseball side. But typically, where it does is as it relates to Major League Baseball draft. And, you know, oftentimes, if you are – if you are getting ready to sign a high school player, let's say, at the start of the second round, typically the slot bonus for the 35th overall pick, let's say, is \$2 million, right? Back in the day it was you're either paying the player \$2 million or he's going to the University of Southern California and getting a free education, right?

Now, it's you're either paying the player \$2 million, or he's going to USC, getting the free education, and also getting 750K, or whatever it is, right? Or even in the later rounds, like, if you're talking with a player from LSU who's a relief pitcher, and he's in the sixth round, and you're, like, hey, we have \$300,000 for you as a signing bonus. He might say, I got \$250,000 from the car dealership in Baton Rouge, right? So, it actually has reared its head less than you would think, but it no doubt has some level of impact.

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yeah. I think on the business side, I mean, I think that's more of an agent question. And I think I think the – to Paul's point, the players growing up now are more aware. I have a 14-year-old son. He plays travel baseball and basketball. And I got exposed to NIL as a parent at seventh grade because he was looking at an EYBL⁸ team. And they were talking – they brought an NIL agent. So, you know, I don't even think about it now, professionally, but, like, personally it's crazy, right? So, things are changing.

It's funny, Paul and I have – we never talked – we've talked about this. I didn't know you did fantasy football. But, like, we're the same – I'm the same way. I've been doing a

⁷ NIL is Name, Image, and Likeness, referring to the NCAA rules and state laws that allow college athletes to legally profit from their personal brand through endorsements, autographs, and sponsorships.

⁸ Nike Elite Youth Basketball League

fantasy football league for 20-plus years. I did fantasy baseball quite a bit. I actually used to play fantasy baseball with about four members of the Nationals organization, from 2015 to 2020 quite a bit, and got to know them that way. [Laughs.] I've outsourced that now to my kids who have fantasy teams. [Laughter.] So, I'm the president of our fantasy team, but they're the general manager, and I threaten to fire them every week. [Laughter.]

MR. DI RITA: Any others out there? One more?

Q: Yeah. Joe Maloney. I lead a trade advocacy organization called the Sports Betting Alliance, which is the largest legal, regulated, online sportsbooks. But don't worry, my question is not about sportsbooks or gambling. [Laughter.]

Larry, terrific job. One topic that didn't come up is this is also an important year for Major League Baseball because the collective bargaining agreement is set to expire. So, I'm just curious, and a question for each of you – and I know you can't opine on the state of that negotiations, because Valerie, the best communicator in town, probably gave you the ins and outs of what not to say.

MR. DI RITA: I told them I wouldn't ask it too, so. [Laughter.] No, I'm just – go ahead.

Q: You know, I think you both play an interesting role in a world where there's a work stoppage. Jason, particularly as you think about it with respect to fan engagement. So just curious about how you're thinking about some doomsday scenarios as it affects the business. And, Paul, obviously, if you believe press reports, there's topic of a salary cap. So not asking you to opine at all about the negotiations, but do your peers around the league think about roster building in an era of an actual salary cap? And what thinking, if anything, is ever put against that? Because in some far recess of your brain and the capacity that you have, I got to think you think about these things, or you have staff or members of your team that might think about these things in some corner of the building. So, appreciate any response.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah. Thanks, Joe.

MR. SINNARAJAH: Yeah. I'll take the first part. I mean, I think, look, without commenting directly on that, we're business leaders. And, I mean, Paul is running a business too on the baseball side. We're thinking about every scenario. So whether it's reported, not reported, et cetera, we wouldn't be doing our job, and our owners probably wouldn't be happy with us, if we're not thinking through every scenario that's out there – whether it's next year, year after, macroeconomic conditions, I look at the inflation reports, like all that kind of stuff. So we're always thinking about everything, not directly answering your question on that purposely, but I think there's always a series of business conditions that we have to plan for, because good organizations work together on both sides, but also are planning six, 12, 15, 18, 36 months out to be effective on how we want to grow to where we need to go. And it's – again, it's a process-oriented element. And that's part of – that's an important part of the process to really be thinking about every situation that could come up.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah. Good. Anything you –

MR. TOBONI: I'm not sure I have a ton to add to it, honestly, my response would have been the same except just on the baseball side. Yeah, I think any great organization is thinking about these things, right, planning accordingly, and trying to figure out a way, like, how it influences your long-term strategy. So, love to talk about it a ton more, but I'm also, like, getting ready for the slap on the hand for –

MR. DI RITA: Yeah, it's a hypothetical. Thanks, Joe. [Laughter.] Well, we won't talk about it. Don't even get me started.

MR. SINNARAJAH: Can I just say one thing? The state of the game, like the product on the field, is amazing. So, I think hopefully that's not lost here in the next little bit.

MR. DI RITA: Yeah, well, and I will end there by saying, you guys have a great product. And that's a World Series champ. We're very excited about the Nats. We're excited about your leadership, along with the ownership group and the players themselves. So, we really appreciate it. Welcome to Washington, D.C. And thank you very much for being with us today. [Applause.] I think we have a gift for you too, so.



Paul Toboni
President of Baseball Operations
Washington Nationals

Paul Toboni was named President of Baseball Operations on Oct. 1, 2025.

Widely regarded as one of the best young executives in baseball, Toboni brings a fresh voice to the organization, providing valuable experience in scouting and player development to build around the Nationals' talented core of young star players.

Toboni comes to the Nationals from the Boston Red Sox, where he most recently held the title of senior vice president, assistant general manager. In his time with Boston, Toboni oversaw player development at the Major and Minor League levels as well as the MLB First-Year Player Draft and was one of the key voices in the organization's larger baseball operations strategy.

Toboni is credited with modernizing Boston's Draft and player development process, integrating traditional scouting and coaching with data-informed decision-making. From 2022-23, he served as the Club's vice president of amateur scouting and player development, during which time he oversaw the selection and development of Roman Anthony, Marcelo Mayer and other top prospects. During his time in Boston, Toboni led the Red Sox's farm system from being ranked 30th to first overall by *Baseball America* and MLB Executives.

Toboni rose rapidly through the ranks in Boston, having joined the Red Sox as a baseball operations intern in 2015 before he moved into the position of area scout in northern Texas and northern Louisiana. He served in the capacity of assistant director of amateur scouting from 2017-19 and was named director of amateur scouting in 2019 at just 29 years old.

A native of San Francisco, Toboni received a bachelor's degree in political economics at the University of California Berkeley, where he played baseball and was a member of the Bears' 2011 College World Series team. He earned a Master of Business Administration from Notre Dame with a specialization in finance and analytics.

Toboni resides in Washington, D.C. with his wife, Danielle, and their four sons: J.C., Patty, Sonny and Mickey.



Jason Sinnarajah
President of Business Operations
Washington Nationals

The Nationals hired Jason Sinnarajah as the Club's President of Business Operations on January 6, 2026. Sinnarajah oversees all business-related aspects of the franchise.

Sinnarajah's appointment marks an important milestone in building the next generation of the Nationals organization, aligning the Club's business and baseball operations under a new generation of leadership.

Sinnarajah comes to Washington from the Kansas City Royals, where he served as senior vice president and chief operating officer. During his tenure in Kansas City, he led a revitalization of the stadium experience, including the implementation of cutting-edge fan entry technology and a reimagined concessions program.

Prior to the Royals, Sinnarajah served as senior vice president of business administration for the Buffalo Bills (2020-23), where he played a key role in the development of the team's new stadium project and led ticket sales and marketing. His career also includes tenures with the Cleveland Guardians and five years at Google, where he led global media and sports partnerships, and worked to scale Google's business operations across the Asia-Pacific region.

A native of Toronto, Canada, Sinnarajah earned a Master's of Business Administration from the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business and a bachelor's degree in finance and marketing from Boston College. He and his wife, Jessica, have two sons, Taylor (14) and Matthew (11).

