Beat: Sports

NBA begins process to strip Donald Sterling of LA Clippers

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USPA News - The National Basketball Association (NBA) on Monday initiated the process to terminate Donald Sterling`s ownership of the Los Angeles Clippers, accusing the businessman of damaging the league and its teams through racist comments that were captured on tape and made public. A statement issued by the league said Sterling, 80, engaged in conduct that has damaged and continues to damage the NBA and its teams by "disparaging" African-Americans and directing a female acquaintance not to associate publicly with African-Americans or to bring African-Americans to Clipper games.

"Mr. Sterling`s actions and positions significantly undermine the NBA`s efforts to promote diversity and inclusion," the league said. It also said Sterling`s actions had damaged the NBA`s relationship with its fans, harmed NBA owners, players and Clippers team personnel, and impaired the NBA`s relationship with marketing and merchandising partners as well as government and community leaders. "All of these acts provide grounds for termination under several provisions of the NBA Constitution and related agreements," the NBA said on Monday. The statement also accused Sterling of issuing a "false and misleading" press statement and other misconduct, which the league did not specify. Under the NBA`s Constitution, Sterling will have the opportunity to respond to the charge no later than May 27. The businessman, whose net worth is estimated to be about $1.9 billion according to Forbes magazine, also has the right to appear and make a presentation at a special meeting of the NBA Board of Governors on June 3. After the hearing, it will require a 3/4 vote by the NBA Board of Governors to terminate Sterling`s ownership of the LA Clippers. Sterling`s lawyer, Maxwell Blecher, said he had no comment after Monday`s charge by the league. Pierce O`Donnell, a lawyer representing Sterling`s estranged wife, Shelly, who has vowed to fight to keep her 50 percent share of the team, said he was still reviewing the charges and would respond later. Sterling has been at the center of outrage after he was caught making racist remarks during a recorded conversation with his friend V. Stiviano, who had posted photos online that showed herself with black people. "It bothers me a lot that you want to promo[te]... broadcast that you`re associating with black people," Sterling said in the recording, asking Stiviano not to bring black people to his games. In an interview aired by CNN last week, Sterling said he had been "baited" into making the racist remarks by his long-time friend, claiming he was jealous Stiviano was seeing black people. "When I listen to that tape, I don`t even know how I could say words like that, and I`m so sorry. I`m so apologetic. I`m sorry that so many people are hurt," he said in the interview. The NBA`s charge comes about three weeks after NBA Commissioner Adam Silver concluded Sterling had violated league rules through his expression of "offensive and hurtful views." Silver banned Sterling for life from any association with the Clippers or the NBA, fined him $2.5 million and urged the Board of Governors to exercise its authority to force a sale of the Clippers.

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