

NBA Stars Rally Around Jason Collins, First Openly Gay Player

Jason Collins received an outpouring of support from the sporting world on Monday after announcing he was gay.

The decision to reveal his homosexuality in an interview with *Sports Illustrated* made the 12-year National Basketball Association veteran the first active player in a major men's North American team sport to announce he was gay.

The news sparked a near-instant outpouring of support from a wide range of public figures including politicians, musicians, actors and, perhaps most notably, his peers in the sports world.

"Proud of @jasoncollins34. Don't suffocate who u r because of the ignorance of others," five-time NBA champion Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers tweeted.

"Really hope people will RESPECT Jason Collins for his decision to come out. Just glad he can now relax and not be afraid to be who he is," tweeted Tony Parker, a five-time All-Star point guard with the NBA's San Antonio Spurs.

Collins, 34, a free agent who ended last season with the Washington Wizards after being traded by the Boston Celtics in February, also drew the support from his most recent teams.

"We are extremely proud of Jason and support his decision to live his life proudly and openly," Wizards President Ernie Grunfeld said in a statement issued on behalf of the team.

"He has been a leader on and off the court and an outstanding teammate throughout his NBA career. Those qualities will continue to serve him both as a player and as a positive role

model for others of all sexual orientation.”

“I am extremely happy and proud of Jason Collins,” Celtics head coach Doc Rivers said in a statement. “He’s a pro’s pro. He is the consummate professional and he is one of my favorite ‘team’ players I have ever coached.”

The NBA community was not the only league to support the decision by Collins as many individuals from the other North America professional sports leagues voiced their support.

“Big kudos to @JasonCollins34. Living proof that your sexuality has nothing to do with your athletic ability,” tweeted Chris Kluwe, a punter with the National Football League’s Minnesota Vikings who has repeatedly spoken out in favor of same-sex marriage.

“I will always support people for being who they are. Happy for @jasoncollins34 that he can lead an honest life,” tweeted Nick Swisher, a outfielder/first baseman with Major League Baseball’s Cleveland Indians.

Martina Navratilova, one of the greats of women’s tennis who came out herself in 1981, was another top name voicing her support.

“Hey Jason Collins-you are now an activist!!! And trust me, you will sleep a lot better now- freedom is a sweet feeling indeed!,” Navratilova tweeted.

But not everyone was initially supportive. NFL wide receiver Mike Wallace of the Miami Dolphins tweeted:

“All these beautiful women in the world and guys wanna mess with other guys SMH,” Wallace said.

“I’m not bashing anybody don’t have anything against anyone I just don’t understand it.”

Wallace later deleted his comments and apologised for his

early postings.

“Never said anything was right or wrong I just said I don’t understand!! Deeply sorry for anyone that I offended.”

Click [here](#) to read Charisma News editor Jennifer LeClaire’s response.

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