

The NBA Is Banning “Ninja-Style” Headbands. We Have Some Questions.

The piece of headgear made popular last year by players like Jimmy Butler, De’Aaron Fox, and Mike Scott will no longer be allowed on the court due to safety concerns

By [Haley O’Shaughnessy](#) Sep 10, 2019, 2:15pm EDT



The NBA wants you to know that size and length matter. For headbands, anyway. On Monday, the league [announced in a statement](#) that the “ninja-style” headbands popularized last season by players like Mike Scott and Jimmy Butler will be banned for the upcoming 2019-20 season because of concerns “regarding safety and consistency of size [and] length.”

Players and fans alike were upset by the news. The style has long been worn in other sports, like tennis and soccer, and didn’t seem like any more of a safety issue than, say, NFL linebackers with luscious locks wearing their hair down. So why ban the ninja-style headbands, and why now? We have some questions:

Why Are They Being Banned?

The league says the ban is for safety reasons:

“The ninja-style headwear is not part of the NBA uniform and hasn’t been through the league approval process,” league spokesman Mike Bass wrote in a statement. “Teams have raised concerns regarding safety and consistency of size, length, and how they are tied which requires a thorough review before consideration of any rule change.”

It’s interesting that individual teams brought this to the league’s attention. But is it really a safety issue? In a tweet last Friday, Scott [said](#) he was told the headbands were “unprofessional.” It’s unclear who told the Sixers guard this, though he later [tweeted](#) to send complaints to the “folks in Oregon.” When asked to clarify, NBA spokeswoman Amanda Thorn George referred *The Ringer* to the original statement.

If the headbands were deemed “unprofessional” by the NBA, and that sentiment was relayed to players, that turns a simple (if slightly dramatic) safety concern into the league policing player style. Looking “unprofessional” was the reasoning former commissioner David Stern [gave](#) when he instituted the league’s notorious and problematic off-the-court dress code in 2005. That the headbands are worn on the court would make the “unprofessional” defense more ridiculous, as gym shorts, sleeveless jerseys, and sneakers are hardly business casual attire.

If They’re Unsafe, Why Didn’t the NBA Ban Them Last Season?

The NBA’s statement explains that “when some players began wearing them last season, we didn’t want to cause a disruption by intervening midseason, but we notified our teams in May that they would not be part of this season’s uniforms.” So maybe ninja-style headbands are unsafe, but not unsafe enough to ditch immediately. But if that’s the case, how unsafe could they *really* be?

Why Is Mike Scott Such a Big Character in All This?

Scott actually broke the news in a series of tweets last Friday, prior to the NBA’s statement:



He [called](#) for a petition to be sent to Nike, which almost made it seem like Nike was banning one of its own products. Had that been the case, the timing would've been terrible: Rafael Nadal was actively wearing one of the Nike-branded ninja-style headbands in the U.S. Open over the weekend. In Scott's defense, he's not used to breaking news. He also had an upcoming Eagles game [on his mind](#).

Which Players Are Affected Most?

Among the players who wore the ninja-style headbands were Scott, Butler, De'Aaron Fox, Jrue Holiday, Montrezl Harrell, Karl-Anthony Towns, and Jarrett Allen. While LeBron James has never donned the ninja-style headband in a real game, he did wear it [once in a game of pickup](#), and posted a Photoshopped picture on Instagram in July that depicts him wearing one in an actual game:

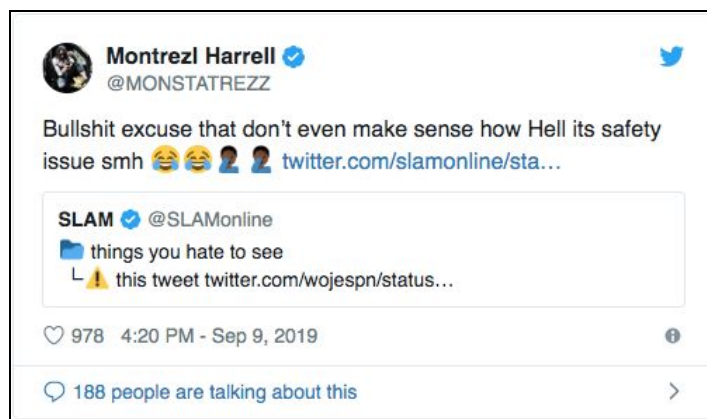


His caption: "Kung Fu King, Bruce Lee-Bron." Since that post went up months ago you may think it has nothing to do with the recent ban, but because teams were notified of the ban in May, LeBron may have known about it when he posted this. We all know LeBron isn't above a subtweet.

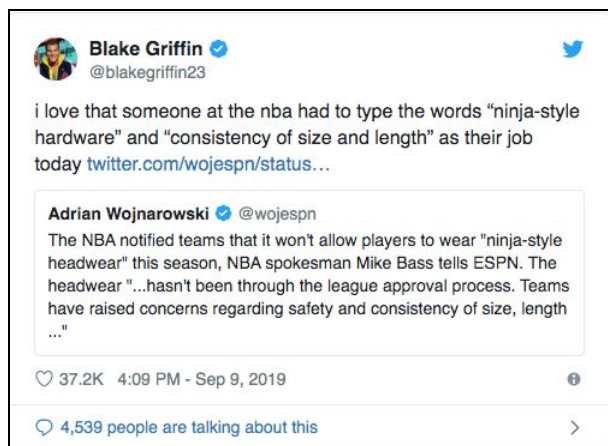
I have to say it: Of that group of first-year ninja-style headband-wearers, four—Fox, Holiday, Harrell, and Allen—had career years last season.

Have Any Other Players Said Anything About This?

Harrell wasn't happy:



And Blake Griffin thought it was hilarious:



If there's any upside to taking away one of the better trends in on-court fashion, it's knowing someone somewhere had to dedicate time to workshop the term "ninja-style."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think of the claim that the headbands are a “safety issue”?
2. Mike Scott was told that they were “unprofessional.” Do you agree?

VIDEO: NBA Dress Code

1. Why did the NBA put in place a dress code in 2005?
2. How did players respond to the dress code when it first was put into place?
3. How have players adjusted to the dress code over the 14 years since it was put in place?

Bang and LOL: The Present and Future of Broadcasting at the NBA Finals

Mike Breen is bringing his all-caps cool to Warriors-Raptors, while ESPN is experimenting with a telecast that feels a lot like living-room banter

By [Bryan Curtis](#) Jun 6, 2019, 1:53am EDT



You can tell a lot about a play-by-play announcer by the way they deal with excitement...

Breen, who is calling his 14th NBA Finals, is sometimes an easier announcer to admire than he is to love. The way to love him, I think, is to love the way he controls a game. Marv Albert suppressed his inner mad man by [learning to speak in italics](#). Breen has a different trick: He makes his voice bigger without getting much louder. “Curry, corner three—IT’S GOOD. ... Leonard for three—KNOCKS IT DOWN. ... Green for three—BANG.” Breen talks in all-caps without resorting

to exclamation points.

A key to Breen’s sense of control is that you don’t feel that many details will slip by him...

Breen has a command of facts and numbers, and an even better way of easing in one or two just as a game is drifting into commercial...

Breen’s sound is tuned to the energy of the modern NBA, but his language can be strangely, charmingly old-fashioned...

* * *

ESPN thinks about 12-year-olds all the time. They’re the hypothetical customers of the network’s post-cable future.

Full Court Press, which was available on the ESPN+ app, was an alterna-cast. The hosts were Katie Nolan, Jay Williams, Snapchat *SportsCenter* host Gary Striewski, and YouTube videomaker Mike Korzema. The foursome’s heads were shown below the action at the bottom of the screen. It was like *Mystery Science Theater* except their faces turned toward us, so we could watch them watch the game.

ESPN’s way of appealing to teens was to make the Finals look more like a video game. Graphics popped up on the court: a wagging finger after a block, waving foam fingers after a made basket. There was a mostly naked, flossing emoji named “Undie Van Gundy.”

All that’s fine. But the cool thing about alternative telecasts is they allow us to question whether the “real” telecast is tricked out enough. Using Second Spectrum technology, Full Court Press could anticipate players’ passes with white dotted lines. When Boogie Cousins guarded Kyle Lowry on the perimeter, the word MISMATCH hovered above them. When Iguodala hoisted his big 3-pointer, the number 36 appeared just as he released the ball—Iguodala’s shooting percentage from the spot. These felt less like gestures to teens than the data generation of NBA fans...

The Full Court Press crew seemed to understand that good TV chat isn't a conversation—not exactly. It's a collection of solo acts where everyone tries to get jokes in; where the mood is determinedly light; where the participants are reluctant to be nerdy unless nerdery is specifically asked for. In the second quarter, Nolan told Williams, "Say something smart about the game, Jay."

It was a great contrast to Mike Breen. There are people you admire because they're perfect and people you love because they're *you*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you look or listen for in a sports broadcast?
2. What are networks doing differently to appeal to younger audiences?
3. Which do you prefer? Mike Breen style commentating or crazy graphics/casual conversation?

Teen YouTubers who faked a pregnancy apologize & offer bad sex ed advice

BY MORGAN SUNG
APR 18, 2019

Two teenage YouTubers were the subject of concern this week after they announced they were expecting a baby and had gotten "married" in Las Vegas. After dragging their followers through a four-part, monetized series, they revealed that it was just a "prank" and issued a very YouTuber non-apology for coming off as insensitive.

Danielle Cohn, who goes by Dani, is 15 years old. Her boyfriend and fellow influencer, Mikey Tua, is 16. After dropping cryptic hints throughout the weekend, Mikey posted a hidden camera video of the couple telling their families that Dani was pregnant.

They raised eyebrows when the two posted a later video of their "wedding" in Las Vegas — which Dani's mother clarified in a statement to BuzzFeed as only the two making a "promise" since Dani is too young to be legally married, even with parental consent. In the third installment, they visited a questionable doctor's office for an "ultrasound" to find out the sex of the hypothetical baby and listen to Mikey's father lecture them on responsibilities.

But as their most recent and final part of the series reveals, it was all a predictable, inconsiderate prank.

The two teenagers recorded themselves gathering friends and family for a gender reveal party. After releasing pink party streamers and popping a balloon full of pink confetti, Dani and Mikey interrupted the celebrations to read a note that had fallen out of the balloon.

"You've been pranked!" they read from the note. "I'm not actually pregnant, OK?" Dani told the party attendees.

It's bad, but it gets worse. In another segment of the video, Dani and Mikey tell their viewers that they "didn't mean to offend anyone."

"If you got offended, or if you looked at it in a wrong way," Dani starts, gearing up for a classic YouTuber non-apology. "That's definitely not what we were trying to do. We were just trying to make a fun video ... We've always seen pranks on YouTube, we thought it would be fun to prank you guys."

She then explains that they "didn't think it was going to go as far as it did," which seems naive considering she has 3.5 million Instagram subscribers and Mikey has 608,000.

Mikey tried to spin it as a public service announcement, taking direction straight out of Logan Paul's playbook after the disgraced YouTuber faced backlash for filming a victim of suicide for content. Like the way Logan dropped a last minute PSA intending to "raise awareness for suicide and suicide prevention," Mikey noted that "teen pregnancy is extremely serious" and told followers, "it's something that no one should take lightly."

If faced with a possible teen pregnancy scare, he and Dani suggested talking to parents — Planned Parenthood recommends "an adult you trust" — and then rambled about various birth control methods without once using the words "birth control."

"There's a lot of situations you can get in off of doing those kinds of things without protection," Dani says, vaguely referring to sexually transmitted infections. She also alludes to fertility tracking and "rhythm" apps, which OB-GYNs are extremely cautious of because there's so much room for mistakes.

While it is admirable that Dani and Mikey remind their young followers to use protection when engaging in sexual activity, even telling their audience that you don't need to be an adult to buy condoms at convenience stores, both teenagers come off as uneducated themselves. They're hardly in a position to educate others on sexual health.

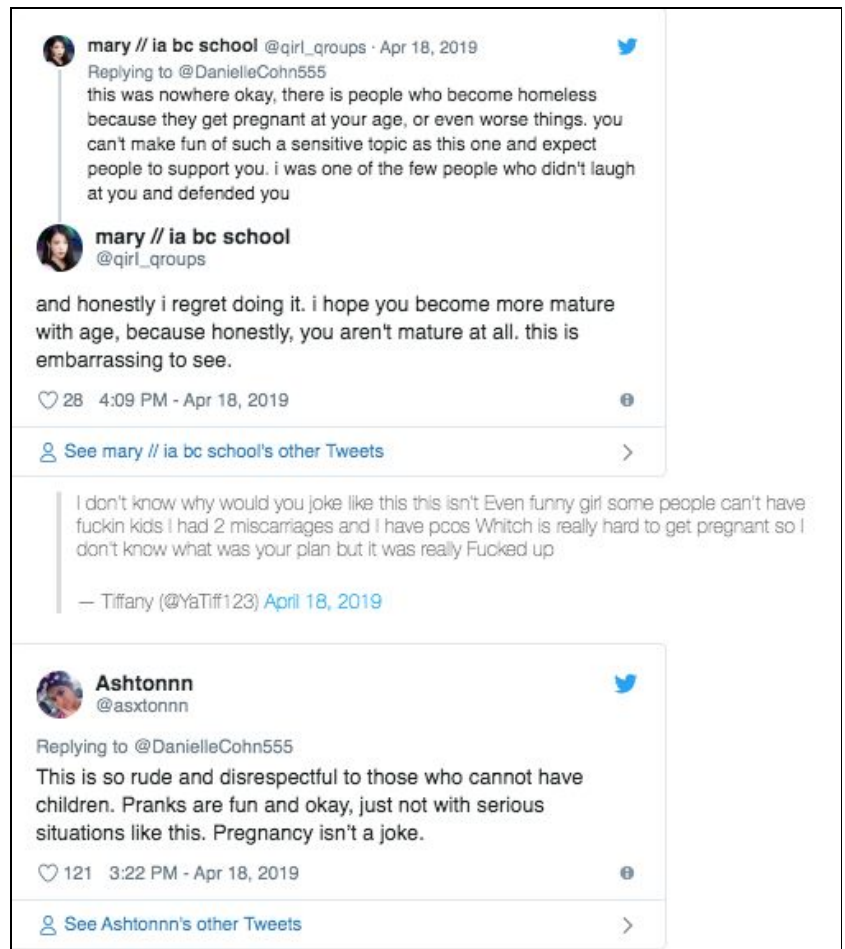
"It is not a joke," Dani says in what appears to be a last minute third segment. "I'm sorry if this offended you ... I hope you guys still love us the same you did before."

She also dropped that a portion of the video's profits would be donated to Planned Parenthood.

Dani's followers were not amused by the "joke" and expressed their distaste in her comments.



As many disappointed commenters noted, faking pregnancies or miscarriages is deeply inconsiderate to those struggling with fertility. And joking about teen pregnancy, especially when your audience skews younger, is completely misguided.



But that criticism appears to have gone over Dani and Mikey's head, because she concluded the fake gender reveal video with some classic sponsored content from an energy drink company.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think about their “prank”?
2. Can someone with 3.5 million followers reasonably expect to prank people and NOT have it blow up like it did?
3. Why were some people disappointed with the prank and how they handled themselves once they were found out?

VIDEO: Outrage Grows over Instagram Influencer’s ‘Surprise’ Sponsored Proposal

1. Why were people upset about IG influencer Marissa Fuch’s June proposal scavenger hunt and wedding?
2. Do you see any problem with what Fuchs or her now husband did?
3. Do you think influencers have a responsibility to be honest and real with their followers? Why or why not?

Ash Ketchum is FINALLY a Pokémon League champion and fans are going bonkers

BY ADAM ROSENBERG
1 DAY AGO

Ash Ketchum is finally a winner.

After more than two decades of struggles and near-misses in the Pokémon League, Ash finally scored himself a championship trophy. It happened in the latest episode as the Alolan League came to a close, more than 1,000 episodes into the long-running anime.

The race to the championship led Ash into a showdown against his friend, Gladion. Their dramatic match-up pitted two Lycanroc Pokémon against one another, and Ash pulled out a win in the end.

Ash has been a loser so many times, fans have just come to expect a downer outcome every time he steps up to compete. So as you might image, Pokémon fandom lost their collective shit over the weekend as it sunk in that Ash is finally a winner.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever played, collected, and/or watched Pokemon?

2. How have fans responded to Ash's win? Why are fans so excited about it?

