



WNBA Players Get Compensation and Benefits Boost in Groundbreaking Deal

Insights

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The Women's National Basketball Association and the union representing its players recently agreed to tentative terms of a new collective bargaining agreement, which will revamp players' salary and benefits this season and apply through 2027. While the tentative terms of the CBA leave room for improvement when compared to the opportunities for wages and benefits of NBA players, the components of the new compensation structure for WNBA players announced on January 14 demonstrates the league's acknowledgement of the needs of working mothers. It also displays encouraging progress in the fight for pay equity.

Terms of the CBA

The tentative terms of the CBA, which is the fifth CBA in the history of the WNBA, will increase players' wages and incentive bonuses, as well as expand the scope of their benefits, as summarized below:

- Annual base salary of the league's highest-paid player increases from \$117,500 to \$215,000, with the ability to earn more than \$500,000 in total cash compensation.
- 2020 salary cap increases from \$996,100 in 2019 to \$1.3 million.
- Average cash compensation for players will exceed six figures, averaging nearly \$130,000, resulting in an increase for all players, including for rookies.
- Minimum of \$1.6 million in off-season league and team marketing agreements that recognize top performance and highlight the diversity of the league, and create up to \$300,000 in additional annual cash compensation for select players.
- Increased cash bonuses for performance awards (such as for WNBA MVP and Rookie of the Year), and cash bonuses (such as for each player named to the WNBA All-Defensive First Team).
- Players will receive full salary while on maternity leave, an annual childcare stipend of \$5,000, guaranteed two-bedroom apartments for players with children, and workplace accommodations for nursing employees.
- Improved quality of life benefits, including better flight conditions and individual hotel rooms for players during work travel, improved mental health benefits and resources, expanded offseason career opportunities, and counseling and education concerning intimate partner violence.

- Reimbursement of up to \$60,000 in expenses for veteran players to cover fees for adoption, surrogacy, or fertility-related treatments.
- Starting in 2021, potential for 50-50 revenue sharing split between the league and players, based on the achievement of revenue growth targets involving broadcast agreements, marketing partnerships, and licensing deals.
- Minimum of \$750,000 in prize money for special competitions beginning with the 2021 season.

Timing and Next Steps

The terms of the CBA, which await ratification by the league's Board of Governors, are expected to be finalized soon, and the WNBA reports they will increase players' total cash compensation by 53%. "We approached these negotiations with a player-first agenda, and I am pleased that this agreement guarantees substantial increases in compensation and progressive benefits for the women of the WNBA," said WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert. The intentional and strategic focus on both compensation and quality of life benefits appears to display both the league's and athletes' commitment to the future of the WNBA and the well-being of its players.

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