

John Cook, executive vice president of corporate affairs, Walt Disney Co.; Gary David Goldberg, television writer and producer; and Oprah

Winfrey, television talk show host. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Honoring the 1995 National Hockey League Champion New Jersey Devils July 10, 1995

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the White House. Governor Whitman, thank you for coming. Governor Byrne, it's good to see you back there. Congressman Menendez. I've been waiting—there are several Members of Congress who are trying to get here, and I was trying to wait for them. But I think we should start, and when they come in, especially if Senator Bradley is the first one, we'll notice them all. [Laughter] And we'll be glad to acknowledge them. I thank those who—are they here? Senator Lautenberg, welcome. Senator Bradley, thank you.

I welcome you all here to the White House and congratulate the New Jersey Devils' first Stanley Cup victory in their 13-year history. I identified with you because you were cast as classic underdogs. But your determination and teamwork paid off.

It occurred to me as we were preparing for this that hockey is a lot like what goes on around here. [Laughter] You get behind; you get ahead; you never know if you're going to win until the last minute. It's more often a contact sport than it ought to be. The difference is here we don't have a penalty box, and sometimes the referees back there pile on, too. [Laughter] But the most important thing is the teamwork.

You know, the Stanley Cup is the oldest professional athletic trophy in North America; it's 102 years old. I'm glad we have it in the White House today again in a place of honor. I noted that it hasn't always enjoyed a place of honor. The Stanley Cup was once forgotten on a roadside, and once it was actually kicked into a frozen canal.

Coach Lemaire has accomplished quite a lot in his first 2 years, I would say. In the first year, the Devils had a record 106 points, 19 more than in any previous year. And of course, this year you won the Stanley Cup. Martin Brodeur has had a busy 2 years after being a rookie of the year last year—I like this nickname—"The Kid" continued to be an outstanding goalie this year. I also want to congratulate Claude Lemieux on his outstanding performance and on being named the Conn-Smythe trophy winner.

Let me congratulate all the players and thank those who have come here. Hockey is becoming an American sport: the teams now are more widely placed across the United States; more and more people understand it and watch it on television; and thanks to television, we are coming to understand it, those of us who live in places where there's never any ice. And I must say, I was very, very impressed and I really got into the Stanley Cup finals this year, so I'm delighted to have all of you here.

I'd like to now ask the NHL commissioner, Gary Bettman, to take the microphone and introduce the team, the players, and do whatever else he would like to do.

Mr. Bettman.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:07 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Christine T. Whitman and former Gov. Brendon Byrne of New Jersey.