

Nike's 'connected jersey' aims to put NBA fans front and center

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Los Angeles Clippers' Blake Griffin wears one of the new league jerseys representing a new partnership between Nike and the NBA, in Los Angeles, California, on September 15, 2017

Sporting a favorite player's number can now be more than a declaration of faith, thanks to smart jerseys unveiled this weekend by Nike as part of its new partnership with the NBA.

A tap of a smartphone to a label on the jersey allows the wearer a real-time look at Kevin Durant's statistics, Blake Griffin's post-match press conference, or even the music playlist an NBA star uses to get motivated before a game.

The high-tech kit was unveiled on Friday night in a show featuring rapper Travis Scott, Golden State Warriors superstar Durant and Los Angeles Clippers standout Griffin.

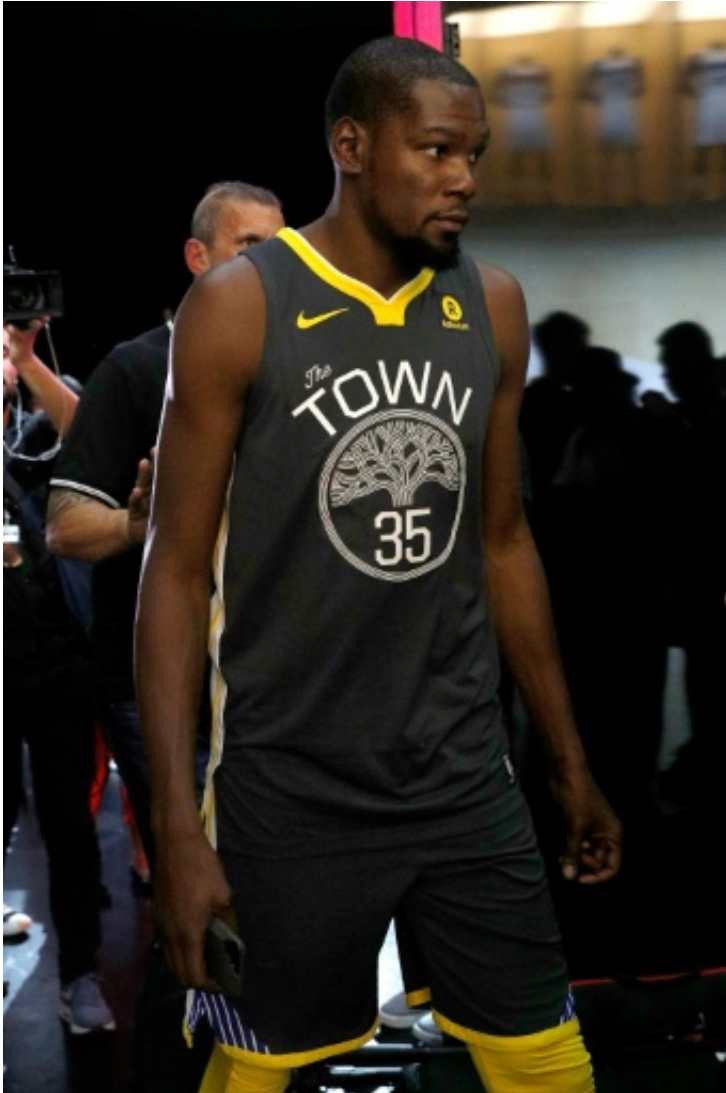
Frank Ntilikina, the French sensation who is poised to launch his first NBA campaign with the New York Knicks, was also on hand to tout the technology that will be available worldwide on September 29.

Stefan Olander, Nike vice president in charge of digital innovation, says the jerseys, embedded with a NFC (near field communication) chip will bring customers closer to the game than ever.

"We have access to content that cannot be found elsewhere, and we bring this unique added value to our customers with this jersey," Olander said.

US sports apparel giant Nike becomes the official supplier to the NBA and its 30 teams in the 2017-18 season, which starts on October 20, replacing Adidas.

Signed in June 2015, the mega-contract covers eight years and while the terms have not been officially announced industry experts put its value in the region of \$1 billion.



Kevin Durant of the Golden State Warriors debuts the new jersey during the unveiling of the New NBA Partnership with Nike, in Los Angeles, California, on September 15, 2017

'Expand to other sports'

The deal puts the Nike swoosh on the jersey of the reigning champion Golden State Warriors, the Cleveland Cavaliers of LeBron James, and such iconic teams as the Los Angeles Lakers and New York Knicks.

Nike also has access to exclusive content produced by the NBA and its partners, including videos, match sequences and locker room video—which fans will now be able to access through their "connected jerseys".

"We use NFC technology, the same that allows remote payment in store with Apple Pay or that serves for metro cards.

"Each shirt has its chip that allows the experience of each buyer to be fully customized" said Michael Hailey of Nike Innovation.

Information won't just flow one way through the smart jerseys and their associated apps. Nike will know who bought specific players' jerseys and where they are when they scan in.

Players can use them to send social media-style messages specifically to those fans who bought their jerseys.

The connected jersey will be available in two editions, one priced at \$110 and one at \$200—part of Nike's package of four jerseys for each team.

And there's no reason to think the technology will be limited to basketball.

"There is no reason to think that we can't extend this experience to other sports, because in the end, what we do is bring more value to the experience of our customers," Olander said.

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