

Magic Johnson Partners With Uncle Bud's

- The basketball legend and businessman said he supports the NBA season's return this week.

BY RYMA CHIKHOUNE

"I think it's great," said Earvin "Magic" Johnson of the NBA season resuming on July 30 with new safety measures in place, after being on hiatus since March 11 due to the coronavirus pandemic. "It gives us a chance to watch live sports and get away from our everyday workload, or just allows us an escape."

Johnson welcomes "the distraction," he said. "Sports brings us joy. And then sometimes even pain when our favorite team loses, right?" he added with his familiar laugh.

Johnson recently revealed plans for a documentary on his life to be released. It'll focus on his legendary years with the Los Angeles Lakers in the Eighties – as a five-time NBA champion in a nine-year span and three-time MVP.

"It's coming," Johnson said of the film, which will follow the hit ESPN and Netflix coproduced Michael Jordan miniseries, "The Last Dance." "Ours will probably be a year from now. Kobe Bryant – rest in peace to Kobe – his will be coming out soon. I think Tom Brady announced his coming as well. And so, we'll be somewhere down the line, in a year or so. I'm really excited about it."

The documentary, developed by XTR, H.wood Media, NSV and Delirio Films, will

also showcase Johnson's transition from athlete to entrepreneur. After announcing his retirement from basketball in the Nineties and revealing in 1991 that he was HIV positive, his rise in business had its set of challenges.

"Here I am, [but] I got turned down a lot when I first got started," Johnson said of his early endeavors.

It's one of the reasons he connects with 23-year-old entrepreneur Garrett Greller, cofounder of CBD and hemp company Uncle Bud's. Johnson has turned his attention to the growing industry, joining the company as a partner.

"I believe in Garrett and his vision that he has for the company, and how they have built this incredible company," Johnson said. "What I like about the product line is [there's] no THC, which is really important."

He doesn't "endorse drugs," he said. In fact, he was unaware of the strain of marijuana on the market presumably named after him, Magic Johnson. "It is what it is," he said upon hearing the news.

He does approve of CBD, a component of medical marijuana that's derived from hemp. He was introduced to CBD by his masseuse, he said, and has been using Uncle Bud's products for pain relief.

"I'm 60 years old now," Johnson said. "When you get older, you have aches and pains a little bit more than when you were younger. The products help me with my sore knees, as well as my tight back."

Launched in California in 2016 and made entirely in the U.S., Greller created Uncle Bud's after being unable to find effective



Magic Johnson for Uncle Bud's

relief for his chronic arthritis pain. The brand is now found in 15,000 retailers, including Amazon and Walmart.

"We wanted to partner with Magic, because of his business savvy and his experience," said Greller's partner, Uncle Bud's cofounder Bruno Schiavi. "And he's an athlete. And he has aches and pains. We wanted somebody who actually uses the product. So, Magic is not just the brand ambassador, he's actually part of the company."

Past brand ambassadors include Jane Fonda and Toni Braxton, who both have a personal relationship with CBD and use Uncle Bud's, added Schiavi. "We only put out things that we truly believe in."

Along with pain relievers, the company's wide range of goods, priced between \$2.50 and \$35, include hand sanitizer, antiaging skin care,

bath and body products, as well as pet care.

"Every product we do, let me tell you, [Greller is] the guinea pig," continued Schiavi. The CBD is tested by a third party, FDA-registered lab. (The FDA has approved only one CBD product on the market, a prescription drug to treat severe forms of epilepsy.) "Because it has to work first and foremost for him – he has acute arthritis – to make sure it works for everybody else."

"We've created this trust with our consumers with the people we bring on board, whether it's Magic or Jane or Toni, as well as my story," Greller said. The company has grown more than 8,500 percent on e-commerce since the pandemic, he said. "Everyone is on this route to be more healthy and look for things that are better to put in and on their body."