Athletes have always played a significant role in politics. They often appear at campaign events for politicians, in hopes of helping to sway voters by showing their support for a candidate. Athletes' political actions, such as Colin Kaepernick's kneeling protests, become national news because of players' notoriety and thus the influence they have. Just last week, Bill Belichick and Tom Brady were being forced to address allegations that they expressed to Donald Trump their support for his presidency.

Donald Trump's presidency likely won't affect the sports industry as a whole. It's simply too large and too wealthy. But his presidency will affect the way athletes, whose sports consist largely of minorities, view the presidency, particularly when it comes to visiting the White House.

Since Calvin Coolidge welcomed the World Series champion Washington Senators in 1924, there has been a rich tradition of presidents welcoming winning teams from the four major sports leagues as well as some winning college teams (UConn Women's Basketball visited the White House five times during Obama's presidency).

There has also been a rich tradition of players bowing out of White House visits, often due to their own political beliefs. George W. Bush famously joked that Manny Ramirez's grandmother "must have died again" when Ramirez didn't join the Red Sox when they visited the white house in 2008, referencing Ramirez's excuse for missing the team's visit in 2005. Though Ramirez never said it, it was assumed that the real reason he skipped out was because he wasn't a huge fan of President Bush.

This tradition of declining the commander in chief's invitation, followed by many athletes — most notably Baltimore Ravens center Matt Birk and Boston Bruins Goalie Tim Thomas, will likely spike in a way never seen before under President-elect Trump.

LeBron James, arguably the most prominent figure in American sports, recently visited President Obama at the White House with the NBA Champion Cleveland Cavaliers. But it didn't take long for him to voice his discomfort with the idea of visiting President-elect Trump, should his team win a championship sometime during the next four years. James, who appeared at a Hillary Clinton rally in Cleveland, said he didn't know and that he'd have to "cross that road" if he got to it.

Former NBA player and current ESPN analyst Jalen Rose believes that this will evolve into a trend amongst NBA athletes.

"Don't be surprised when multiple athletes decline the opportunity to visit the White House," Rose said about White House visits under President-elect Trump, according to SportingNews.com.
And why would it stop at basketball? According to Sports Business News, almost 30 percent of players on 2015 MLB opening day rosters were Latino, a group that Trump has made countless offensive remarks about. Why would they want to be honored by a man who has called Hispanic people “bad hombres?” All I’m saying is, you probably wouldn’t have seen David Ortiz selfie-ing with Donald Trump.

It’s possible athletes could forget and forgive Trump’s comments if he softens his views on minorities in coming years. But can the 70 percent of NFL players who are African American really forget that he was a candidate supported by the KKK?

White House visits are something enjoyed by players and fans alike. They’re typically a fun way for the president to celebrate a team’s hard-fought victory. But can they be as enjoyable with half the team absent?

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