

WNBA Draft

Monday, April 11, 2022

Washington Mystics

Shakira Austin



Q. Shakira, you have an opportunity to play alongside proven veterans such as Natasha Cloud and Elena Delle Donne. How does that feel for you and what do you think you can learn from them?

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: I feel like I got lucky. To be in a position to learn from vets and people who you just look up to as role players, it's just an amazing feeling. I feel like this opportunity is going to bring the best out of me, and I'm ready to just start a career in D.C., back home. It's just an honor.

Q. I'm just curious, in your conversations with Washington, were there any kind of discussions about your role, the four versus the five? I know that's a big part of the game you've worked on. I wonder how you see yourself fitting in at the next level, as well.

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: Yeah, we haven't discussed much about if I'm going to play a specific position. For me it's just about maintaining my energy coming into the pros. I'm really just focused on my defense. I'm pretty sure that's going to be able to translate easier than my offense, and that's going to get me time on the floor and that'll build my confidence as well.

Just not expecting too much from myself is really where I'm headed mentally, but also knowing that I'm playing for somebody who understands my game, and it doesn't matter if I'm at the five or the four, it's just about getting that time on the floor.

Q. We've talked a lot this year about your journey and you betting on yourself. What does this moment mean to you, especially coming back home to play professionally?

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: It's just amazing, just knowing that the work that I've put in, to finally get to this moment and to be able to play back home but knowing that my slate starts over, I'm back at zero. Just remaining humble, continuing to work and believing in the work that I put in, and knowing that the journey that I got here was because of the work that I put in. That's just where I'm headed.

Q. Most people who are drafted in your position are coming to a team that needs a lot of immediate help, but you're kind of stepping onto a team that's already built with some veterans and very much expect to be in the playoffs and contend. I'm curious what's that like coming to a team where you're not going to be expected to do a whole lot of heavy lifting initially? And part two, what's a part of your game that you don't think you get enough credit for?

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: Yeah, so for part one, I think my role at Ole Miss, I carried a lot. It was a lot of stress, but it was the role that I asked for, being that player that everybody needs to show up at every moment, every second, being that player who their energy controls the team. It was a lot, and I feel like coming into the pros, that's a heavy role to have as a rookie. So, to be coming in to a team that is established and has those vets that are able to teach me and help develop me, for me to be able to just kind of coast and ease into that role, I feel like that's the best opportunity for me.

I'm going to have a long career, a successful career, and coming into the Mystics I feel like it's just the best opportunity possible for me to learn and take my time but also learn from the best. That's a championship-level team, and that's where I'm meant to be.

Q. Speaking of that, what's it going to mean to you to be coming back to D.C. and to be a part of the Mystics' organization in an area that you grew up in that you have so many ties to?

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: It means a lot. My dad, my family, I have my mom, who wanted me to go to Atlanta, my dad pushing for D.C., so I think my dad's prayer worked a little bit more. But we're just excited, like I said, just for this opportunity to be able to learn and to really grow and to be able to help a community that I've been playing in, that I'm familiar with, the DMV. That's my home. To be able to bring a championship there is now my next goal.

Q. Just wanted to ask you, your adjustment to getting into the WNBA, what is that adjustment going to be like for you moving forward, as it pertains to just getting



accustomed to that style of basketball and getting the speed of the game and so forth?

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: Yeah, I think there's going to be plenty of adjustments. There was an adjustment going into the SEC. I think for the league it's going to be physicality. It's not going to be my motor. The little things that I paid attention to in college, I'll be able to transition into the pros. I've focused on my nutrition, I've focused on recovery, I've focused on putting in work, and those things as you know are the fundamental pieces for being successful in the league.

I think over time my offense will come, and I feel like people who play like me in the league right now who are 6-5 and versatile, they're successful. They're in All-Star Games.

Just staying true to myself, continuing to believe in myself. I think the turnaround will happen pretty quick.

Q. A minute ago you were so confident, "I'm going to have a long career, I'm going to have a successful career." Would you mind sharing kind of what you envision when you think about that?

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: Yeah, I mean, kind of just how I mentioned. The people in the league right now who are big-time stars, they're built like me. They're tall, they're lengthy, they're versatile, they're not strictly limited to back to the basket or post moves. I think just watching the game and watching how the different players have spotlighted over the past couple years, that's why I feel like I'm going to be successful. I know that my mentality going in is going to be great. I've really focused a lot on my mental health and just staying levelheaded and knowing that your mental plays a big part in your success. Just knowing that that part is right and knowing that I also put in the work, there's only a few things that can really go wrong.

Q. I think there's also an opportunity because of where the WNBA is in the sports landscape to also make an impact in a community that you call home; have you given any thought to that and what you'd like your role to be in that way?

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: Yes. Just when we've kind of realized that it might be a possibility of me going back home, we've been nonstop talking about ideas. I'm thinking camps, I'm thinking AAU teams, I'm thinking facilities, just a lot of things that are bigger than me. I have a lot of things that I want to do off the court, and I feel like being back home and being able to really impact the community is something that I've always wanted to do, and me being able to play there is just really lining up for me to be successful there.

Q. When you look back at your time at Ole Miss and going over there, what will be the kind of biggest factor that kind of helped you become prepared to play for this moment and how did Ole Miss help you get ready for that do you think?

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: I mean, Ole Miss prepared me in the best possible way that they could. I think it was more so off the court, which allowed me to really tune into being a professional, that I really was able to learn from.

I think me being the star player, me being somebody who had to show up every day is definitely a role that I never had to experience before. So, it was just a new phase, a new journey that I'm able to learn from, just being at Ole Miss. My teammates, they're just super excited. They're calling me, and just the impact that I'm able to have on them and hopefully the program, I'm praying that it continues to level up. I'll be excited to come back and know that it might be in good hands.

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