

WNBA Draft

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Indiana Fever

Emily Engstler



Q. What does it mean to be part of a franchise that is obviously in rebuilding mode and has four picks in the first round, so you and some of your other draftees will be able to build this franchise back to where it needs to be?

EMILY ENGSTLER: Yeah, I'm really excited. I think that's an amazing opportunity for us. One, you get to go with three other girls who you've built these relationships the past couple days, who I previously knew. Secondly, it's close to Kentucky, which I've been at for a year, which I think is pretty dope.

But I'm super excited. I think rebuilding is okay. It has to be done, and I'm really grateful to be a part of it.

Q. When you look at who else Indiana has taken so far, NaLyssa Smith and Lexie Hull, what are you looking forward to about playing with them specifically?

EMILY ENGSTLER: I'm just excited. I'm excited to play with them. They're both good people. That's my number one thing. I got to know these girls a little bit. I think everybody here is dope people, so that will be awesome.

And they're just great basketball players. We're all here for that reason. So I'm excited.

Q. Do you find it almost poetic that you've now been drafted into one of the best leagues in the world in your hometown?

EMILY ENGSTLER: Yeah, I got a little emotional up there for a second because I think it all hit me at once. Yes, it is. This has been one of the most amazing experiences of my life. I'm super grateful, and I feel very blessed.

Q. You talked at the Final Four about your relationship with Coach Walz. Could you talk about how you're the third-highest draft pick in the history of the program, what that means to you and what this season has meant to you at Louisville?

EMILY ENGSTLER: Ooh, we need some more time.

Louisville meant everything to me. You've got to start with the fan base; it's just amazing. It's a rush when you walk on the court, and they're really genuine. The program is everything you can ask for in a program.

They took me in for one year and it really felt like a home. Coach Walz has meant the world to me. Coach (Stephanie) Norman, Coach Sam (Purcell), Coach JP (Jonneshia Pineda), everybody on the staff. My teammates were super great to play with, just the fiery-ness in all of them. You don't always get to find that when you feel like you have it in yourself, but I got to find it in them, and they brought out the best in me. I think that's what mattered the most.

Q. Angel McCoughtry and Asia Durr are the only two draft picks that are higher than you. What does that mean to you? You got to know the program.

EMILY ENGSTLER: Yeah, it's pretty cool when you think about it. I didn't even really think about that. But it means everything. Asia Durr and Angel McCoughtry are phenomenal basketball players. They support us. They've supported us all year. They've come back and I've gotten the pleasure to meet them. Dope people. It just means the world. I'm extremely excited.

Q. Being drafted by Indiana has not been a guarantee to stay there in the long term in the past few years, even for the highest picks. What makes you confident you'll be able to take root in Indiana?

EMILY ENGSTLER: Well, I'm really hardworking, and I'm extremely dedicated to staying in this league for as long as I possibly can. My start year will be at Indiana and I'm a very loyal person. I think that I'm going to do whatever I can to fit in the best that I can and build relationships with the organization staff and teammates. I'm going to do the best that I can. That's really all I can do.

Q. For this moment, they kind of mentioned that this happens 30 minutes from where you used to play on the park courts over on Roosevelt Island. What would you tell that young girl about the journey she was going to go on and ultimately ending up here?



EMILY ENGSTLER: Yeah, I would tell her what I've been saying for the past couple days now: Be yourself, keep playing on the courts with the guys and follow the right people and don't be afraid to let go of toxic relationships and keep your circle very small. Trust the process. I think a lot of people get lost and they need to put their feet on the ground and get grounded again.

I just think that people need to understand, basketball we play because we want to have fun. We forget that sometimes. So just love what you do.

Q. We talked about this a little bit at the Final Four, but just your defense as a game changer, would you take me through what, if anything -- how often that came up in your conversation with your new team and how much you think your ability to generate the kind of steals you did, north of four per game, is going to translate right away at the WNBA level?

EMILY ENGSTLER: Yeah, I played zone for a really long time. I also lost a lot of weight, which was giving me the ability to be faster. And when I got this Louisville program, they were very patient with me and taught me their man-to-man defense. I owe them a lot because it's one of the main reasons I'm up here today.

My defense has brought me a long way. I've really taken pride in loving to do it. I think some players like to do it, but a lot don't. It's a really fun thing to play defense, get a blocked shot and get a steal. I think in the previous NCAA Tournament, it was the definition of wins and losses. So I think that it'll translate to the WNBA perfectly.

I think a lot of teams in this draft have been speaking about wanting more defenders. I think I can bring that to the league, and I'm super excited to do so.

Q. As long as you've been following the Indiana Fever franchise, what was always your thoughts about them, and how does it feel to actually play for the team in your first season in the WNBA?

EMILY ENGSTLER: Yeah, I'm definitely still learning about the program. But following the WNBA as I was growing up, I think every team is unique in their own way. I knew that they needed some players, so I thought it would be pretty cool if I got picked up by them and I could help them out.

Q. This is a Fever frontcourt that is going through some retooling. I wonder how you can fit with NaLyssa Smith going forward and what type of defensive impact do you feel like you can have in year one?

EMILY ENGSTLER: Yeah, I think me and NaLyssa will actually work well together. She is an amazing player. She's hard to guard and she can play defense, which is dope. I think she has a motor. You want to play with girls who have motors, who want to be there. That will be very exciting, and I think we'll bring a lot to the program.

Q. Can you just talk about what the one year at Louisville meant to your development as a player and the raising of your draft stock all the way to No. 4?

EMILY ENGSTLER: Yeah, I'll be honest with you, it probably was raising my draft stock to No. 4. It was a very smart decision. I made it because I thought it was the best decision at the time in my life, and I'm very blessed. Going there has taught me so much on and off the court, and I'm going to bring that with me into the league.

Q. What are your expectations for the next season, and what are your goals that you've set for the next season?

EMILY ENGSTLER: I mean, my main goal is to get up there and get signed. We might have gotten drafted, but we didn't get a contract yet. That's my first step. I want to live in the moment. I think it's important for us to do that or it becomes a little too much.

My main goals after that would be just to be the best teammate that I can be and be at a program that is building but eventually win a championship. That's everybody's goal: win. I like to win, so I can help them out.

Q. I know you've made yourself into a significantly better three-point shooter, around 37 percent senior year. I'm wondering how much further you think you can get to and what, if anything, is a kind of goal you've set for yourself when it comes to three-point accuracy in year one in the W?

EMILY ENGSTLER: Yeah, I did. I have been working on my three-point shot. I think it's important for a versatile 3-4 player to have.

I think there's more to work on, for sure. I think that I can become a 45 percent three-point shooter, if I really just lock in and allow the game to come to me.

Q. Have you had any talks with current players or just coaches as far as how to make the adjustments, getting prepared for the league as far as the speed of the game, the intensity of the game and being able to be, like you said before, physically prepared but also mentally prepared?



EMILY ENGSTLER: Yeah, I've been talking to coaches, my Louisville coaches all year about that. They're just looking out for you, and I've been listening because it's important. The adjustment -- the college game is very different from the WNBA game. I think it's a little more physical, stronger, stronger women. Got to get in the weight room. You've got to do it. I'm excited to continuously work hard in the gym and get my body right and get my body right for the game.

Mentally, I think just again, what I said earlier, live in the moment.

Q. To follow up a little bit on your one year, you talked about the fans and how they are. Now you're not going to be very far away in Indianapolis. Have you even thought about that, that a lot of those fans do travel, this fan base, and you know how they are at Louisville, and what it would be like to now have those fans become Indiana Fever fans?

EMILY ENGSTLER: Yes, I have thought about it. All my stuff is in Kentucky, so it's definitely a way less far commute to move. Yeah, a hundred percent. I think our fans, they're so loyal. I think they'll follow me.

It also gives an opportunity for people in my program to come see me play and for me to go back as an alum and see my people play at Louisville. I think it's a really awesome situation, and I'm extremely excited.

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