

WNBA Draft

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Greg Bibb

Cheryl Reeve

Marianne Stanley

James Wade



THE MODERATOR: We have joining us from the Dallas Wings, president Greg Bibb. From the Minnesota Lynx, general manager and head coach Cheryl Reeve; from the Chicago Sky general manager and head coach James Wade; and from the Indiana Fever, head coach Marianne Stanley. Welcome, everybody.

Q. I'm curious, what are you guys' thoughts on Louisville guard Dana Evans, just her as a draft prospect? Could she be potentially a top five pick, and did her shooting slump during the month of March and through part of the postseason have any impact on her draft stock or what you guys think of her?

MARIANNE STANLEY: I think Dana has had a very good career at Louisville. She's shown a lot of versatility playing both the point guard and the two-guard positions. She's had a lot on her shoulders, and I think she's someone who's demonstrated that she's not afraid of a big shot or a big moment, and that's something that all the very good players have in their arsenal. They rise to the occasion.

So I think from that standpoint she's done a really good job. She's one of the better guards in the draft. Quality guard for sure.

Q. About Aari McDonald, how much is her size a concern at the next level? And do you think she'd be better behind an experienced point guard or on a really young team?

GREG BIBB: Sure, I think Aari McDonald is an exceptional player who has gotten better each year, and I think she's a player who has a knack for playing her best in the biggest games, and I think we saw that in the recently completed NCAA Tournament. I think in terms of whether she'd be better served playing on a good team or a young team, first of all, as a young team, I hope those aren't mutually exclusive adjectives, but I think the league is a hard league to transition into no matter what kinds of backgrounds you

have in college and what kind of success you have. It's less than 140 players each year in terms of total in the league, and there are very few roster spots.

I also think any time you have the opportunity to kind of sit back and watch and learn, that's a lot easier to do than to learn on the fly.

In terms of her size, obviously size is always a consideration in the game of basketball, but I don't think it is ultimately a negative factor that is going to determine the outcome of someone's career. I think Cheryl [Reeve] in Minnesota proved that with Crystal Dangerfield this past year. Crystal played unbelievably well and was named Rookie of the Year.

Q. Either Greg or Marianne, do you see Rennia Davis as a top five pick or would you be surprised if she dropped out of the top five? What do you like about her game and what are some things you think she might need to improve upon at the next level?

MARIANNE STANLEY: Yeah, I think Rennia handled her college career really well in the sense of there was a coaching change and she stayed with the University of Tennessee and showed her ability to adapt, which is a real plus in any situation.

All these college seniors are now faced with coming into a whole new environment, new team, new coaches, new schemes, and I think one of the things that's interesting about Rennia is she can do that already and done it successfully.

I think her role changed a little bit, and it was interesting to see that, as well.

She's someone who is really good at a lot of things, so she's someone that can add value in different places on the court.

Obviously having the length that she does is something that's desirable, as well, so I think she's got very good draft stock.



Q. I'm curious, I know scouting is something that you guys do over several years. This isn't the first year you've seen any of these players. But through the lens of knowing what these college athletes did over the past year, do you view their performances differently in any way?

CHERYL REEVE: I think from our experience of being in the bubble, the challenges that went with that in terms of not being able to see families except over an extended period of time, you had to come differently. You had a lot of mental challenges I think through this, and so I think it was even harder for college teams.

And so I think that in terms of performances, I think all of us -- certainly if a player in the draft has a great junior year and not as good of a senior year, you certainly could understand why.

But then your comment that we have seen them, so I know that probably most of us view kind of the complete package through the course of the time that they entered college all the way through to the end.

I give them a lot of credit, because as we know from our WNBA season, it was really challenging.

Q. My question is primarily to Greg. I was wondering what your thoughts might be on Awak Kuier. She's obviously a bit younger. Would that put you off sort of using one of your top picks on her? Or would that be more of a benefit because there's more room to grow in a professional setting?

GREG BIBB: I think the thing about any draft is there's not an exact science. There's always a little bit of unknown and you're always hedging your bets on some level or degree of potential. I think the younger the player, certainly the larger that bet.

Awak is 19 years old playing in her first professional season in Italy. Obviously anyone can look at her and watch her play and can imagine what her potential could lead her to in our league or any league in the world.

I think the size is a given. I think her ability to handle the basketball for her size is exceptional for her age. I think her ability to shoot the basketball is above average for her size and age.

Obviously I think she's going to have to get stronger to become a contributing member of a WNBA team, but the potential with her is off the charts. It's just a matter of what that potential turns out to be in terms of reality down the road.

Q. Has Arella Guirantes separated herself as the best guard in this class, and does she project to be a future starter in the coming years?

JAMES WADE: I don't know if she's separated herself. I think when you talk about big guards, you can mention Davis in the same breath. I think it's more of what you're looking for and how they kind of fit into your team and the players that you have.

I do think that she is a high-quality guard because of all the things that she can do, her strength, the fact that she can create her own shot.

I think she has certain qualities that separate her from the bunch, but at the same time it depends on what you're looking for, versatility defensively or versatility offensively, which I think she has a lot of offensively.

But it's going to be an adaptation for everybody, so I think she's a top-end draft prospect. Like I think she'll be in the top half of the first round. If you call that separation, then I guess you could say that.

Q. Two things: Do you think Charli Collier's draft stock has slipped with her production in the NCAA Tournament, and then also in the Big 12 Tournament? And what's the likelihood of the No. 1 pick going to an international player?

GREG BIBB: Yeah, I don't put a lot of value on specific slotting of players. I think that's a really hard thing to do. I think it's more about the response, kind of groupings of players, and I think Charli Collier has been in that top group of players and continues to be in that top group of players.

I think obviously there were some games this past year that I would assume would be disappointing to her in terms of her performance, but you have to remember, too, there are always multiple aspects to performance, it's not just the individual output.

There's aspects relative to the opponents, there are aspects relative to the game plan, there are aspects relative to the matchups. So I don't really look at a particular player sliding from one specific spot to another. I look at them in terms of groupings, and for me she is in that top group.

Q. This question is for Coach Stanley. You may not be able to kind of mention a specific player, but in terms of what you're looking to add, is there a specific attribute or skill set you'd like to add through the

draft? And would you like that player to come in and make an immediate impact or do you want to kind of ease that player into a specific role?

MARIANNE STANLEY: Yeah, we want somebody who's extremely competitive and has a winning mindset, has a championship mindset. Someone that is willing to go head-to-head on a daily basis to compete for minutes, compete for what they're able to add to the team.

There's a number of good players, okay. I think Greg said it best. There's a grouping of people, grouping of players that all bring something valuable to the table, but for me the most important thing is to understand that every one of these college players is about to embark on a new whole journey in a league that is exceptional from top to bottom, is challenging.

The rigors are there, and you have to have not only talent, but you have to have a big heart, and then you have to want to compete. You can't shy away from competing.

I think we're looking for somebody who fits what we are building here as a championship culture and a mindset that says, we're in every game, and you bring something to the table that adds to what we have.

Q. I don't know who would be the best to answer this, if any of you have watched a lot of Marquette this season and if any of you think that Selena Lott with her athleticism could translate to the WNBA?

JAMES WADE: I mean, I've talked to her -- the coaching staff and I have scouted her a little bit. I just think with the numbers the way they are, like having -- I think not more than 137 players that are going to actually make the WNBA this year.

I'm not going to say it's out of the realm of possibility, but she's going to be challenged, especially if you don't see a player that ends up in the top 16 of the draft. Right now I don't see her as a top-15 choice, but that's just my point of view. The other coaches may think something else.

But I think it'll be hard although not impossible to make a roster this year.

Q. I was just wondering, this is more of a general question that any of you can answer, but when scouting players, how much weight do you put on performance in a tournament setting when there may be pressure in competition versus the larger sample size of the rest of the season?

CHERYL REEVE: I'd say that again, it's about a body of

work in most instances, but certainly you can get a little more excited when it's on the biggest stage and a player really rises up. But it can't be just a one-time thing. You have to see those attributes throughout when there's ebbs and flows to a season.

But certainly it's a little more exciting when it's the biggest stage and you see them embrace the moment. I think that gives us a lot of confidence in that prospect.

Q. How much complexity has the extra year of eligibility and draft opt-in process added to your draft process?

GREG BIBB: I would say certainly an additional layer of consideration in the process, but I think as we mentioned before on this call, we've been watching the majority of these players for a multitude of years, and I at least went about it with the assumption that the top 15 or 20 or 25 players in my opinion would actually move forward and opt in for the draft.

I can't think really of any player that I was seriously scouting over the last couple years that when it got time to start crystallizing who's in and who's out this year that I had any question about.

Q. I was just wondering with the acquisitions you've made over the offseason, what are you looking to add to your roster through this draft?

JAMES WADE: I mean, we've added -- I think we've added at every position. The only positions that we haven't firmly added to, we've added a training camp contract with Brittany Boyd, but we need a point guard, so we want to evaluate her.

But our eighth spot is probably going to go to a point guard. A lot is dictated off the last two years where the separation of 'Sloot [Courtney Vandersloot] on and off the court was separated even further. I think last year she was like -- her point differential last year was like a .29, so we definitely need to address that.

I think we've kind of toed the line the last two years in doing that, and this year I think we just have to address that as much as possible.

Q. Greg, how do you feel about having the first picks in the 2021 NBA Draft?

GREG BIBB: I'll be better able to answer that a year from now, but it's always good to have options. We are a couple years into a multiyear strategy in terms of resetting or flipping our roster, so last year we worked to aggregate

picks, and it's an early sample size, but I feel good about that draft class; we'll try to replicate that success this year.

Whether we keep all the picks or not, who knows. We have a better part of a week to go yet. But it's always good to have options, and like I said before, it's not an exact science, so the more swings of the bat you get, the more base hits you probably hit.

Q. Looking back on the 2020 draft, it was a lot of hyped players at the top of the draft, but at the end of the day it was Crystal Dangerfield that walked away with Rookie of the Year. Are there any prospects in this year's draft that are maybe flying under the radar that could make an immediate impact next year?

CHERYL REEVE: I can speak on someone like Crystal. And really Napheesa Collier the year before that. We didn't set out for Napheesa Collier to be somebody that would be a major contributor. We had just signed Karima Christmas-Kelly who was going to be our starter. Things just sort of worked out where she got an opportunity.

Same thing happened with Crystal Dangerfield. I was concerned we wouldn't have very many minutes for her, though I knew that we liked her ability, just saw her more of a future prospect.

And so I think if you look at kind of who might be -- look at those teams that maybe have positions that are a little bit apparently unsettled and if they draft in that position, you have a couple injuries, et cetera, next thing you know, that player is playing.

I do think that most of the players drafted in the first round, maybe a little bit beyond that, if given an opportunity to play meaningful minutes, could be successful.

Also understand Crystal Dangerfield's year, Chennedy Carter was injured and was a high draft pick. So a lot of things sort of fall your way. Missed a little bit of the season, just a 22-game season.

So it's hard to do. I don't know that we can expect anybody from this class to replicate that from the second round, but I certainly think that if the opportunity is presented, a lot of these players should be successful.

Q. My question is about Tiana Mangakahia and how she performed pretty much before her breast cancer diagnosis. Is that taken into consideration when looking to draft a player like her who probably didn't come back the way she wanted to when she returned?

MARIANNE STANLEY: First of all, the fact that Tiana

came back and stuck with it says a tremendous amount about her character and what kind of grit and fight she's got inside of her, and of course I think Cheryl said it best, you look at the complete body of work of a player. You don't base your decisions or your evaluations on one game or one season or one set of circumstances. You kind of look at everything in its totality, and she's somebody who understands how to play this game, clearly has a love for the game and has a huge heart, and all those things are valuable.

So again, I think for Tiana, if she wants to play, then she's going to be like all these other first-year players, come in and fight for a spot on the team. I think all of us have alluded to the fact that this is going to be a tough year for very many players to actually make a roster. All of us have full rosters of players, so it's coming in with a mindset, coming in with an energy and fight and a skill set that allows you to compete because that's what it's about, competing with the very best in the world.

When you consider that I think James said 137 -- somewhere between 137 and 144, that's going to be it. I think she's somebody whose passion for the game and love for the game and skill set gives her a chance.

Q. Could you talk a little bit about what makes Chelsea Dungee stick out, what makes her special and would give her an opportunity to play at this level? And then also maybe discuss a little bit about Destiny Slocum and whether you see her with a spot in this league?

JAMES WADE: Okay, so I'll go in order. Chelsea, I think the thing that Chelsea -- you get someone who has a knack for scoring, and that's a skill that's going to always be valuable in our league. You saw how much offense raised last season and how important it was, so you could always have room for a player that can get to the free throw line, that can create their own shot, and you've seen a level of maturity each year that she's come back to play.

So I think she has a future in the league. What that entails as far as a starter or a role player, I'm not sure. I think that's going to -- that will be a wait-and-see type thing, but I think in the right situation she could be really good.

As far as Destiny, we've gotten a chance to absolutely look at her a lot, gotten a chance to talk to her, as well, and she's someone that has learned to be a pro as she's matured, how she dedicated -- the way she acted on the floor, like her maturity on the floor and being open to playing off the ball, playing on the ball, doing whatever the coach needed, how she dedicated time to her fitness level, and you can see the difference in her freshman year and where she is now.

Also her being around a pro in Kelsey Plum this year kind of helped out a lot, as well, so she got to see it first hand and Kelsey took her under her wing a little bit.

I think she has a future in the league, too. I don't know what her range is, whether it's first round or second round or anything like that, but each player has -- both players have progressed a lot in their maturity and the way they approach the game, playing for a coach that gives them a lot of freedom and that plays a WNBA style of play. I think it'll only help their progression.

Q. This is a question for Coach Stanley. Selena Lott has been linked to you guys for a while now. What do you see as her greatest strength as a player and that would fit with the Fever?

MARIANNE STANLEY: Well, I'm not really aware of whatever link you're talking about. Could you reference that for me, please?

Q. It was just in one of the mock drafts.

MARIANNE STANLEY: Okay, I was wondering where you were getting that.

First of all, I think Selena is somebody who can score the basketball. She's also a two-way player. I think she demonstrated that she can get up and guard people a little bit. I think it's going to be tough at the next level to break in and make your mark. She's got a shot like everybody else, but I think this is a situation where you've got to bring it every single time.

There may be situations where at one end of the floor she can really give you what you need. At the other end of the floor she's got a little work to do. But every single player -- I look at the whole list of players coming into this draft and everybody has got something to work on, and she's no different.

But I think she has come from a program with a coach that has a good mind for basketball and has allowed some freedom there, and to James' point, that's really valuable. She's certainly in the pool of people that will be looked at on draft night. I think she'll get drafted. Where that's going to happen, I'm not really sure.

Q. My question is a fill-in-the-blank so I'm hoping I can get as many answers as possible. When you come away from this draft, the one skill you'd most like to see basketball-wise on your roster is?

GREG BIBB: Rebounding.

MARIANNE STANLEY: Well-rounded.

JAMES WADE: Un-turnover-able.

CHERYL REEVE: Versatile.

Q. My question is for James. You played and coached overseas and your wife is a GM in France, so I want an opinion about my fellow countrywoman Iliana Rupert. What do you think about her game, and do you think she'll be available at the eighth pick?

JAMES WADE: Well, I think she'll be available. She's a good player. I think she has to get stronger, but she has touch, she has maturity, and I know her on a little bit of a personal level. She's someone that had to grow up really quick. She moves well.

I think the one thing that is going to be a big adjustment for her is the physicality and the athleticism in the WNBA because she's more of a cerebral player, which will help, but it's another level that she'll probably have to do, have to get. She can shoot. She's going to be a good three-point shooter. Doesn't shoot a lot of them yet, so I think if someone is going to be patient and help her develop, they'll get a good player, for her.

One of the more interesting things is how -- I know she wants to play in the WNBA, but when it comes to the French National Team, it puts you in a difficult situation because they're very committed to the French National Team, and the French Federation is probably one of the federations that put a lot of pressure on them to do that more often than not. I think that's the question that's going to have to be answered, but I think she's definitely a good prospect to have in the WNBA for sure.

Q. James and Greg, I was wondering as you are talking to these players that you are interested in these past couple weeks leading up to the draft, what certain things are you looking for from them for this season that would kind of -- you've already seen how they are on the court. You've watched their development for the past four years. What are you looking for in their character that would sort of push that over the top and say, yeah, we definitely want to draft that person?

GREG BIBB: I'll start with the fundamentals because somewhere along the line the fundamentals have gotten a little loose, and when I say fundamentals, I mean how does the player approach the interview, how serious, how important is it to them, are they in their car, are they driving their car, are they on time, are they prepared, do they know anything about your organization, what do they know about

the league.

And then it's more about them as a person off the court, because we've watched them on the court so much. Where we have a limited amount of time with them is off-the-court topics: Talking about background, what they're studying in school, what they want to do when they're done with their basketball career, what their interests are outside of basketball, a little bit about what kind of teammate they are, how do they feel like they'll handle the transition from college to pro because they may not be the star player playing 30 minutes a night with the ball in their hand every game.

It's those kind of questions at least for me, and it's far less about basic basketball because we've seen the basketball a lot over the past few years. We haven't had the opportunity to engage and talk with them as a person. That's where I spend most of my time in the pre-draft interviews.

Q. Looking at Crystal Dangerfield as an example, given her success last season, when it comes to the second- and third-round picks, what are the qualities you're looking for, given the difficulty of making a WNBA roster?

CHERYL REEVE: I think always a formula that's worked is identifying what that player -- what one thing do you know they're going to do for you. What is it? What skill set is it? And is it something that's translatable to our league because that's going to give them the best chance. So if there's a translatable skill that they can really hang their hat on, they become appealing, and then when they get the opportunity, they have a chance to be ready when their number is called.

I think overall, all of us are looking for the basic talent level for the game, but I think if you look at the analytics of it, what are the translatables, and does that player have one of those.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much to all of you for your time. We wish you the best of luck next Thursday night.

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