

WNBA Draft

Monday, April 10, 2023

Indiana Fever

Grace Berger



Q. In terms of how you think you fit into the Indiana offense, can you take me through that? And also where was Walnut when this happened and what was Walnut's reaction?

GRACE BERGER: So I'll answer the Walnut question. Walnut is my dog. He's getting boarded right now. So he's not very happy that he wasn't invited to New York with me, so I'll have to buy him some Fever gear to make up for it.

I mean, in terms of what I can bring to Indiana, I just feel like I don't know what skills necessarily are going to translate anything like that, but I do know that my passion for the game, my competitiveness, my grittiness and my willingness to do whatever the team needs on any given night will be there and that will translate. I'm excited to get there and see what my coaches want from me and do that to the best of my ability.

Q. You were a player that decided to take your COVID year and what I'm curious about is, what do you think you were able to accomplish at Indiana for this extra year, and how do you think it's going to serve you well in the WNBA?

GRACE BERGER: Yeah, I mean, first off, as a team we were -- the first No. 1 seed ever for our team. We won the most games and everything like that. So we were just, I think, set the program up for a lot of really good success in the future, which means a lot to me.

I think as an individual, I was just able to kind of become more mature in my skill set. I played a lot at the point guard this year, which I hadn't in previous years. So I think I was able to just fine tune some of those skills, the leadership aspects, the handling the offense, really having the ball in your hands a lot.

I think it was the right decision for me.

Q. How would you describe the feeling of being drafted into the WNBA, which is something that you dreamed about from when you were younger?

GRACE BERGER: Yeah, I didn't really know what it would

feel like. I knew it would be amazing, but I think I was just more -- just really grateful and full of emotion when I heard my name called, especially being there with my dad, who had been taking me to Indiana Fever games since I was six, seven, eight years old. It was just two hours up the road from Louisville, Kentucky, where I'm from. We got to go to those games and watch Tamika Catchings, watch Katie Douglas, watch them win that championship.

To get called was surreal but to get called by a team you've been going to with your dad since you were really little, I think just made it that much more special.

Q. I'm guessing you know the Fever have been having some hard times the past couple years and you know about the glory days. What would it mean to restore Indiana to what it was when you were there as a fan and a younger kid?

GRACE BERGER: Yeah, I think it would mean a lot to me. I think I was able to win a good amount in college, so I can bring some of those characteristics over, but I really think looking at that roster, some of the young talent on it, that's super exciting. You obviously have Aliyah Boston, who we all know is amazing and going to have a great impact on the team. And then NaLyssa Smith, Queen Egbo, Destanni Henderson. The list goes on and on. To be able to play with that much talent, that much young talent and come in with them and learn from them and grow with them, I think it's something that I'm really excited about.

Q. Can you expand on some of the memories you have going to Fever games and even throughout this process, was there an inkling that maybe they'd select you and was there an extra level of excitement just because you grew up watching them?

GRACE BERGER: Yeah, I mean, I think I knew the Fever were interested, but you never know until draft night obviously happens. I wasn't getting my hopes up or anything like that. Was just keeping an open mind.

I knew the Fever were a team that obviously just playing in Indiana for the past five years, the community is so special for me. The community is so excited about women's



basketball. I was really sad to leave Indiana, but now obviously I'm staying here, so I'm super grateful for that.

Like I said earlier, my dad would take me to probably four or five games every summer of the Fever. So I think just to be able to see those strong women, like I mentioned, Tamika Catchings, Katie Douglas, Briann January, see how hard they competed, how tough they were, how much passion they had for the game, I think I modeled myself off of them and it was huge and very instrumental in the development of my own game.

Q. With Teri Moren accompanying you in New York, what has that experience been like with Teri and being able to share it with her?

GRACE BERGER: I mean, it was unbelievable to have her here. She means the world to me. She means so much to me, and I can't even begin to state how much of an impact she's had on obviously the player I am but the person I am, the woman I am to where I feel really prepared entering this next phase of my life because I've had five years under the best coach, the best leader, the best strong woman that I could possibly look up to.

To be able to share a night with her, it was just really special.

Q. The extra year that you came back to IU, what part of your game gained the most from having this past season to play?

GRACE BERGER: Yeah, this was the first year that I was the main point guard on the floor. I had the ball in my hands the most. I was running the offense, getting my teammates where they needed to be. Then obviously just the leadership aspect on both ends of the floor that comes with that.

So I think just fine tuning those point guard skills, using my voice, getting my teammates where they need to be and really being that extended coach on the floor were the main things.

Q. You've talked about what it means to you personally to be back playing for the Fever and having grown up going to their games but there's a lot of fans of IU women's basketball and fans of the Fever. What's it mean to be back playing in front of those same fans?

GRACE BERGER: Yeah, I think one of the things that was the most special to me in my five years at Indiana was just to see the excitement in the community of women's basketball grow, to where I'm at now, and it just seems like

obviously people are crazy about basketball in Indiana, but they're crazy about women's basketball in Indiana.

We were able to kind of build that fan base at Indiana that was so special to me, and then obviously at the professional level I think that excitement just takes a next step up.

Hopefully we have a lot of Indiana Hoosier women's basketball fans there now during the summertime, huge Indiana Fever fans.

Q. You mentioned earlier some of your new teammates at the Indiana Fever. How do you see yourself fitting into the team next season?

GRACE BERGER: Yeah, first of all, as a point guard, who wouldn't want to have Aliyah Boston to pass to in the post? That's about as much of an automatic bucket as you can get. I've played with her before at USA Basketball, and I think obviously we all know what she can bring on the court, but just the person that she is off the court, how much she loves the game, how genuine of a person she is, how kind of a person she is. I just couldn't ask for a better person to go on this journey with.

To say I'm excited to be her teammate is definitely an understatement.

Q. I know how hard you worked on finishing at the rim, and I just wonder how much you think that made the difference to help you get to where you are today as a first-round pick, and also if you kind of reflected on those hours in the gym over the course of the last couple of days?

GRACE BERGER: Yeah, I mean, obviously the mid-range is my favorite shot. Anybody that watches me knows that. But I think a part of my game that I've always known I could be good at is finishing at the rim. I worked countless hours with Coach Box, our assistant coach at Indiana, on different finishes, getting to a spot and finishing over bigger, stronger, quicker defenders. Obviously you can't be a one-dimensional player at the next level.

So me getting all the way to the rim in addition to my mid-range and my three is just going to hopefully serve me well in terms of making a roster and contributing.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.