

# WNBA Draft

Monday, April 10, 2023

Los Angeles Sparks

Zia Cooke



**Q. You're here with your freshies, your coach. Explain that feeling that you're feeling right now.**

ZIA COOKE: It's a beautiful feeling. I wasn't able to watch the whole draft, but I know my teammates got drafted. So huge testament to Coach for being able to bring all these great girls together and make history and now we're all living our dream. I'm excited and I can't wait to see what the future holds for all of us.

**Q. What was the hardest lesson you've learned in the four years at South Carolina that leads you to this point now?**

ZIA COOKE: To find the beauty in your struggle and embrace your journey. I think once I was able to do that, things started to open up for me in the best way possible. I was able to maintain. I was able to stay consistent. I was just happy me. Definitely finding beauty in my journey and just embracing it.

**Q. You throw love at Toledo at every turn --**

ZIA COOKE: Yes.

**Q. And you are a long way from Rogers High School court. I would love to hear you talk about your journey from northwest Ohio.**

ZIA COOKE: Yes, Toledo, Ohio, huge "thank you" to you guys for supporting me. My city is behind me. They are behind me. I'm going to be so far away, but I know in my heart they're going to be so close. So thank you to Toledo, Ohio. Thank you to Toledo Rogers for leading the way for me and just sticking behind me. It's not over with, Toledo. We're still in it. So let's continue to do what we do.

**Q. Remember when I talked to you after you won the national championship, you said you'd dreamed of that moment since you were around my age. After being drafted tonight, is this as much of a dream come true for you, and if so, what message do you have for your younger self?**

ZIA COOKE: This is definitely a dream come true. This is

something that I've prepared myself for since I was six years old. I would tell my younger self, I would actually congratulate her. I would tell her how proud I am of her for listening to her parents, number one, for not being a follower, being a leader and being very hardworking. I never quit on myself. I'm definitely very proud of myself.

**Q. What do you know about the Sparks organization? And what are you looking forward to bringing to us out here in L.A.?**

ZIA COOKE: I definitely know that they're rebuilding a little bit. I got a chance to talk to the staff, and I fell in love with their staff at first sight. Head coach is amazing. Coaching staff is amazing. So I can't wait to get a chance to go out there. They got some good vets there that I know are going to put me under their wing. I'm ready to learn. I'm ready to win and just do whatever I can do to help the team succeed and do what we can do.

**Q. I was talking to Laeticia earlier and I was asking her playing against each other, what are those emotions going to be?**

ZIA COOKE: Yeah, that's going to be crazy. My teammates are a lot bigger than me, so they spared me a lot. But I know when they're playing against me, they won't spare me. In practice I got spared, but I think playing against them, they're definitely going to show me that they're there. I probably won't be guarding them. So I'm going to make sure my teammates lock them up, because it won't probably be me.

But I'm excited for all of us. Everything we've been able to accomplish. I know the sky's the limit for all of us.

**Q. Training camps are always really competitive in the W, so what do you hope to bring to the Sparks to earn your spot as they go through this rebuilding process?**

ZIA COOKE: I know that hard work won't be a problem for me. What it'll be for me is just make sure I'm asking questions and taking pride in it. I'm going to be a rookie, but I definitely want to use the vets in the best way possible by learning from them, asking them to watch film with me,

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asking them to work out with me and just taking it all in for those two weeks.

Of course I want to make the team, but I definitely want to get as much knowledge as I can. Hopefully when it's all over, I'll be on the team for sure.

**Q. You've often talked about the impact that Dawn has had, and I remember talking to Destanni Henderson about the fact that when she's out there, Dawn's voice is always in her head. Do you expect that to be the same thing, and what parts of Dawn do you expect to take into the league with you?**

ZIA COOKE: I won't even have to keep her in my head because I know she's a call away. So if I'm feeling anything, I know I can call her and cry. I know I can call her and express how I'm feeling. I know she's going to always be here for me. I'm definitely excited to know that I was coached by somebody that will be here for the rest of my life, and I love her for that for sure.

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