

# WNBA Draft

Monday, April 10, 2023

Atlanta Dream

Haley Jones



**Q. I know you listen to Lauryn Hill, so I wanted to know, what did you listen to before you got ready tonight?**

HALEY JONES: So before I got ready it was a mix of things. The makeup artist did not believe it was my own playlist. I did my favorite karaoke song ever to "Cause I Love You" by Lenny Williams, best song ever. We had some "Sweet Thing" by Mary J. Blige and some Anthony Hamilton. We had it all. It was a good pre-draft ready mix. Yeah, good vibes.

**Q. A couple weeks ago I asked DiDi Richards what advice she would have if she could redo her draft day, and she said she wish she would've vlogged the entire thing. You did that today. You brought a camcorder everywhere. How have you helped balance just kind of the up and down of an emotional day with also just kind of taking in the spectacle of this whole experience?**

HALEY JONES: Yeah, the camcorder was The Players' Tribune idea to kind of accompany the podcast. So it was really fun to have it all day. When I first pulled it out, I saw Aliyah first. Her room was two doors down. She was like, girl, what are we doing today? It took me like an hour to figure it out last night. I was looking at the blue screen. Took me a minute, but it was really cool. The girls all had fun with it.

And I think for me today I tried not to let the nerves get the best of me. It was really just trying -- I can't control what's going to happen and I'm trying not to control the uncontrollables. It was being able to enjoy the moment, have my family out there, the people who mean the most to me. Just kind of sink into the moments and have a good time.

**Q. What excites you most about joining the Atlanta Dream roster?**

HALEY JONES: A lot excites me. I think especially just it's a young group, and with good veteran pieces, as well, but I'm excited just to get to work. They have the new ownership group that's been in place the past few years,

new coaches. So I think they're building a really great team right now. They had a great season last year with that young group.

So I'm excited to join it. I think I can impact the team in different ways. So just getting to Atlanta, getting to it, it's a homecoming in a way. All of my mom's family is from Georgia. So, I know my phone is blowing up right now. Probably lots of missed calls. So I'm excited to get out there and just get to work.

**Q. I'm wondering how encounters like this are different for you having hosted the podcast and whether that feels different to you?**

HALEY JONES: Yeah, I'm used to being in charge with the questions, so not being ready for what you guys are going to say is a little nerve-racking, but I now see how my guests feel. But it's fun to be on the other side of things is what I started off doing.

**Q. To be at a team that has another Mitty player in Danielle Robinson, I just wonder what that means to you to be able embrace that tradition?**

HALEY JONES: It's amazing. Every day at practice in high school I saw D-Rob up on the wall. So now that I get join her on a team with a Mitty legend, it's hard to describe really. It's something that I looked up to. She was the first Mitty legend in the women's basketball program. So now to get to play alongside her is kind of amazing. I don't really have any other words to describe it.

**Q. You were sort of talking about how the Atlanta Dream is on the rise, they have new ownership. How are you looking to come into the league and look to sort of change the status quo as something that the Dream have prided themselves on?**

HALEY JONES: Status quo in terms of like basketball or just in general?

**Q. The status quo of how the league functions and how the league does things.**



HALEY JONES: I think I'm just looking to come in -- the way that I've grown a lot from my freshman year until now is I've become I think more outspoken. I like to advocate for things, just kind of be myself, be genuine, authentic. As I move into the league, I look to do the same things on the court, being open and honest with my teammates, being a sponge, ready to learn. Then off the court speaking up for what I believe in. If changes need to be made, I'm not afraid to say what I think, have the tough conversations, be in those rooms and push the league to the next level.

And I think everybody ahead of me has done an amazing job of blazing the trail now that now I get to be a part of. Just continuing to keep the torch flowing and push it on to the next generation behind me.

**Q. You came to Stanford with almost unfair expectations, but you ended up living up to all of them and then some. What particularly about your experience at Stanford do you think will help set you up for success as you enter your rookie season?**

HALEY JONES: I'm jealous it's still bright there on the West Coast. But I think at Stanford I went through a lot of different things. I had an injury my freshman year and then it was COVID season and we won. I've won three Pac-12 championships, two Final Fours. It's a lot of winning.

Just kind of having that be the standard, I think I'm going to be able to just bring that energy.

But I've learned a lot. I've learned how to work with different types of people, how to create relationships off the court, team chemistry, how to have tough conversations, get the best out of your teammates. I think I can bring a lot of different things, but I'm really excited to get to Atlanta, meet my new teammates and just get busy, I guess.

**Q. Did you have any expectations as to where you were going to go or any reaction to I guess being selected sixth in this draft?**

HALEY JONES: Just excitement really. I'm excited to join the league. I think that there's so much talent across the league already, and all the draftees. So just to get my name called sixth pick is amazing. It's just full of excitement. There weren't really any predictions on where I was going to go. I wasn't going to guess I was going to go someplace and be disappointed. I was just excited for whatever team called my name, and I'm going to take that and get to work there and give that organization all that I have.

**Q. There are a lot of people talking about your game and focusing on what you can't do. What message do**

**you have for anyone who questions the impact you can make at this level?**

HALEY JONES: A lot of people did talk about what I can't do, downsides of my game, whatever it may be. I think that I just kind of took that and there are so many other things that I bring to the game, but it's also something that I don't feel like I have a lack of. I think it just wasn't really my role and where I was. But if that's something that's going to be asked of me, I'm going to do what I've always done and make the best of my role and impact the game in every way that I can, which I think is in all facets, whether I'm rebounding and running, I'm playing off the block, playing off the wing, setting the screen, coming off the screen, whatever it may be. So I think if that's going to be asked of me, I've been working, I'm prepared to get there to the league and shake things up.

I think people are going to pick and choose what to focus on, but I know what I bring to the table, and I'm excited to get to Atlanta and show them why they picked me.

**Q. How would you describe the feeling of being drafted to the WNBA, which is something that you've worked hard for since your days being younger and your days being national champion at Stanford, even though it was a few years ago and actually playing in the WNBA?**

HALEY JONES: Yeah, I'm really excited. I feel like it's something that I've worked for all my life. I'm really excited to carry the torch that my cousin DeLisha had, next one in the family to get to the league, and I'm going to try to make my impact in whichever I can.

I'm really excited to get there and learn. There's so many amazing veteran players. The Dream staff is very experienced and they have a lot of wisdom that they are going to pass down to me. I'm excited for training camp. I'm sure I'm going to be tested. I'm sure there's going to be a reality check there, but I'm just going to take it in stride and pick up any ounce that I can to just get better.

**Q. Laetitia just came in here and talked about how she's from a winning culture, she wants to bring that winning culture to Atlanta. You guys have both won National Championships. What's it mean to not only come in with her but just to bring that National Championship winning energy to the A?**

HALEY JONES: Yeah, Laetitia said it best. We both come from winning programs and a standard of excellence, and I think that the Dream is putting that into place right now. So for us to bring our collegiate experience of winning to the next level, it's going to be great. We have a



lot to learn, as well, but I think we can bring some pieces of knowledge and just kind of bring the same work ethic that we had in college and just boost that to be even greater, it's really exciting.

You mentioned Laeticia, we've been rivals for like four years now. So we ran into each other in the photo room. So we're excited to finally get to play together, throw on the same jersey, and I think we'll be quite the duo to throw up with people like Naz Hillmon, Danielle Robinson, Rhyne Howard. The list goes on and on. I'm excited to get there and play with everyone.

**Q. You have been an amazing all-around player for four years at Stanford. You won the title and MOP. At some point it realized you were the obvious choice for the second pick but the narrative changed and revolved around your three-point shooting. What do you think happened and how impatient are you to prove your doubters wrong?**

HALEY JONES: I mean, I don't really pay very much attention to the projections and things. I was just kind of excited to get to the league.

But to your point about three-point shooting and things of this sort, I'm just excited to get to the next level and show what I've been working on. I think at Stanford it wasn't really my role to three-point shoot, it was to play-make, rebound and run, facilitate, run the offense, play out of the high post. And I think when that was my given role, I played it to the highest extent that I could. We did a lot of great things doing that.

Now I was a great three-point shooter in high school, and I think now it's just kind of bringing that back to the arsenal. I don't think it ever really left, it's just bringing it back to the forefront. It's been on standby for a while.

I'm excited to get to the A, bring it there, and you know, just kind of prove people wrong in a way, I guess.

But that's not really me focus. My focus is on getting to Atlanta and winning basketball games.

**Q. In a first round that was full of Dallas picks, what were your thoughts immediately when you heard Atlanta, and also you talked about this young core there in Atlanta. What do you think you bring to the table that is Haley specific, whether it's on the court or off the court?**

HALEY JONES: Yeah, when I heard ATL and they said "Haley Jones," I was like, let's get it, that was kind of my attitude about it. I was like, let's get to it. Give my family

the hugs, I'm excited to get there.

But with the young core, I think they bring a lot of different things, but I think what I can bring on the court, people always talk about my versatility, so I think that's going to be big at the next level. Being a 6-1 point guard is huge. The vision that you have, the mismatches that you can exploit in a variety of ways, I think being able to rebound the ball and push it and not look for an outlet gives a different look to the game.

I think off the court I try to just be myself and people usually describe that as compassionate, a lot of times goofy, maybe clumsy, but I think I'm going to bring an authenticity about myself. I'm never going to apologize for who I am. The way that I am, I'm proud of who I've become. I'm just going to bring a confident energy, one that's going to look to have fun, make the game fun because that's what it should be. That's why we all play. I'm excited to bring that big ol' personality that I have to Atlanta.

**Q. You mentioned before that your phone is probably blowing up, you have a lot of missed calls. One of those is from your new coach, and she tweeted, "Hey girl, just trying to reach you to congratulate you on coming to the A. #pickyourphone."**

HALEY JONES: Oh, my God. Hopefully she's listening or going to see this interview. I'm so sorry. I literally got called. Didn't even think to grab my phone. I hugged my mom and dad, my brother. So when I get to my phone I will call her back immediately. That is like the worst first impression to have is missing a call from your new boss.

The second I get to my phone, no matter how many missed calls I have, missed texts, calling her immediately. But I hope she knows how excited I am to get to the A, make an impact, get to training camp, just get ready to work. I will tell her profusely all of that as soon as we get on the phone.

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