

# WNBA Draft

Thursday, April 15, 2021

## Michaela Onyenwere



**Q. Talk to me a little bit about what went through your mind just as the picks were going on and then to hear your name, what was that initial feeling really like?**

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: Yeah, I mean, I was really excited for the other picks. I know this is what people dream of. You work so hard to get to the pinnacle of your career, and this is it. I was just really happy for the other picks.

My agent was kind of telling me, We might go here or here or here. So I was kind of expecting New York a little bit. But it still doesn't compare to actually hearing your name, the rush you get and just the excitement from all my family and friends.

It definitely is a cool feeling. My legs were shaking for a while after. It might be because of these heels, but I'm just going to stay with my excitement.

**Q. I heard you talk about that you are very close with Kylee Shook. What has she told you about what the Liberty is all about, and can you tell us a little bit of what your impressions are of the coaching staff over there?**

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: Yeah, so Kylee and I actually played AAU basketball for about two years on the New Mexico Heat Elite. We were really good. We had a great time just being teammates, so her and I did become close. I was able to see her career at Louisville and see what she was able to do in the league in the bubble last year. Yeah, she just told me she really likes New York, and she gave me a little bit of insight.

We haven't talked too much about New York, honestly, but her experience was a little different because she was in the bubble. She didn't feel like she got the full WNBA experience, so it's kind of new again for her this year. I'm just excited to play with her, see a familiar face in Kylee and I'm just really grateful that she's going to be by my side in this process.

**Q. How did you feel about the coaching staff when you talked to them beforehand?**

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: I really, really liked Walt

[Hopkins]. I also spoke with Dustin [Gray] and Shelley [Patterson], and I really liked all of them. We had great conversations. I think Walt is a great guy. That's what I've heard also from Kylee, that he's a really good guy.

I'm really excited to get to work with him, to be coached by him. I think it's going to be a great experience with the whole coaching staff.

**Q. When you look at the Liberty as they're constructed right now, they're heavy on their guard play. They were very high on youth but they made some strong veteran acquisitions this year in Betnijah Laney and Natasha Howard and Sami Whitcomb. How excited are you to partake in this basketball revolution, and what can you learn from an interior presence like Howard after displaying an interior presence yourself out in Los Angeles?**

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: Yeah, I can learn so much. I mean, just what they've been able to do. I saw Natasha and Sami on Seattle and saw what they could do. Sami being able to shoot the three-point shot, being an elite three-point shooter, and then Natasha being so versatile. Adding Laney, the Most Improved Player from last year, just super excited to be part of, like you said, the revolution. It's definitely going to be a different team than obviously last year.

So I'm excited to implement myself in any way I can, whether that's being the best teammate I can, scoring, rebounding, whatever I can do. I'm super excited about that. I think it's going to be a great year. I'm excited to contribute in any way I can. So yeah, I'm just excited for the opportunity.

**Q. How excited are you to be able to play with Sabrina Ionescu?**

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: Yeah, it's nice not having to go against her anymore. Definitely had our battles in college with her being out in Oregon. I'm really excited to have her, a great player and kind of get to know her off the court. Obviously, I don't really know her off the court.



So yeah, I'm really excited. Excited for her crazy passes and just having another just really great basketball player alongside of me.

**Q. When you think through your role on this team, obviously it's a team that's very three-point heavy. I know that's been a point of emphasis for you. Where do you feel your three is at this point and is that kind of the next step to be finding that in volume in the course of the New York offense?**

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: Yeah, I think so, definitely. I think I was able to really increase my three-point percentage just in general over my four years and especially my senior year. But there's obviously definitely room for improvement in that, especially if I'm going to have to be playing on the perimeter more.

And as you said, the offense is very motion oriented, so when you have open shots, you have to take those open shots and you have to make those open shots. I think that's just going to be paramount in that offense, just being able to knock down those three-point shots.

**Q. Aside from basketball, you mentioned that shopping was a passion. Which ballplayer's shoes do you always wear and what brand would you like to collaborate with, and getting your own out there?**

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: I'm a Kyrie girl. I love wearing Kyries. I think his shoes are so comfortable, and he just has so many different kind of looks that I love. If I had to partner with a brand, it would definitely be Nike. I think it's just so versatile as far as just the clothes, the shoes, just really everything, and I love what they stand for. Super, super grateful and hopefully that happens in the meantime.

**Q. You played for a great coach, Cori Close. What would be one thing that you say that you got from your college coach that you think is going to help you in the WNBA?**

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: When I left UCLA, she would always say in the course of my four years, after all of these years and games, it's really not about how many points you score and how many championships you won or whatever. It's really about who you impact and what your legacy is going to be. So I think moving on to this chapter, I'm going to continue to kind of continue that, what she said. I think it's so important.

Obviously, we're going to play a lot of games and I'm really excited to be in the league. But at the end of the day, who you impact and who you become is two of the most important things you're going to take with you in your life.

I'm looking forward to bringing that on the court but off the court, as well.

**Q. Throughout the offseason, the buzzword for coach Walt Hopkins and the GM Jonathan Kolb has been character, which I'm sure you heard a lot when you were talking to them in the pre-draft process. Looking ahead to training camp, how do you define that in terms of fit on the basketball team on the basketball court?**

MICHAELA ONYENWERE: I think character is your true self and who you are when things kind of -- you kind of see your true character when things hit the fan and you're kind of going through adversity. I think that's kind of the best way to test out who you are as a person and how you handle things, and that kind of shows who your true character is. I would like to think that I do have high character. That's something I do pride myself on. Hopefully I can bring that to New York and kind of fit in as much as I can.

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