

# WNBA Draft

Monday, April 14, 2025

Chicago Sky

Hailey Van Lith



HAILEY VAN LITH: Hello, everybody. First off, I would just like to begin with thanking Chicago. I'm so grateful for this opportunity. All I have asked for is an opportunity my whole career, and I couldn't be more honored and blessed that they were the team that gave me the opportunity.

First and foremost, I would just like to thank that organization for taking a chance on me.

**Q. Angel Reese has already tweeted how she's excited to run it back with you. What does it mean to be reunited with her and what are you looking forward to joining forces again?**

HAILEY VAN LITH: Yeah, Angel has maintained contact with me this whole past year since she's been in the league and I transferred. I really appreciate her. We have a very mature relationship, a very -- a mutual respect relationship where we both have respect for each other's game and also the character and the person we are off the court.

Mostly I'm just excited to get to be around her again. I think we have a lot of similarities about how we carry ourselves and our mindset on what's important to us. She's a dog, man. She turns up the intensity of everybody around her.

I'm excited to be in that environment with her again where she can pull more out of me than I think I have.

**Q. What are you looking to bring to Chicago when you go there?**

HAILEY VAN LITH: Yeah, first and foremost, I'm wanting to bring a toughness, a resilience. Whatever my role is, whatever my opportunities are, I think I just want to contribute to the culture of tough, selfless, hardworking players that I think that they're looking to join to the program.

That's what I am looking to bring. It's more of an attitude, a mindset than anything, and I think I'm more than capable of doing that.

**Q. Commissioner Engelbert said before the draft that**

**they're trying to do things to help combat the vitriol that you guys all face on social media. You've been very vocal about your getting mental health help. How important is it to hear that the commissioner is trying to help you guys combat the negativity that obviously I'm sure you've seen on social media towards basketball players like yourself?**

HAILEY VAN LITH: Yeah, it feels good to join a league that is not only concerned about our level of play but also how we're functioning as humans. So that was encouraging. At our rookie orientation that we had here, they showed us an app that they're partnering with that will help filter hate comments off of our channels. I think that's important not only for us as the players to not see that but also young women and young boys who are following us. They don't want to see that on our page, either, when they look to us for inspiration. We don't need to expose them to that.

I think that's what's most important is the next generation that is looking to us as inspiration. They don't need to know that that is something that you go through. I think that it's amazing that the WNBA is putting support behind it.

**Q. Obviously big narrative is your reunion with Angel, but that being said, there are plenty of players in the league that you have faced in college, as well. Are there any particular players that you're looking forward to playing against in the W, whether you've played with them or against them in the NCAA or not?**

HAILEY VAN LITH: Yeah, there's so many players in the league that are great. The WNBA is so unique with how powerful the talent is because it is so small. So I would be crazy to sit up here and pick one.

I'm excited to just see how I stack up against this level of play. I think it's a competition that I'm ready to embrace, that I'm excited to embrace.

I think it's too hard to pick one. I'm just excited for every day in training camp. That's my concern right now.



**Q. You said on the pre-draft show that you were glad you stayed in college as long as you did because it helped you grow both physically and mentally. Can you tell us how you've been able to manage, navigate and strengthen your mental health through not only college but representing America and building your brand and character?**

HAILEY VAN LITH: Yeah, sure. I think, one, the work that I've done with my sports psychologist Derick Grant, he's actually here today to support me. That's how close and how instrumental he has been to my career. I wanted him here, no question.

But the work I've done with him on how to control my inner state of being, in reducing the effect that external factors have on that inner state of being, has been the most important thing because that impacts confidence. That impacts quality of life. That impacts reads I make in the pick-and-roll, believe it or not. It goes that deep.

Mental health for me is so important to my game. I'm such a mental player. I'm so passionate. I love basketball. I want to be the best that I can, so mentally naturally where my mindset is is pivotal to my performance on the court. So the work I've done with Derick to improve and enhance that mindset and streamline it to where I'm experiencing less lulls has been the most important thing.

**Q. I have two questions for you. You mentioned a lot of your friendship with Angel Reese. What about on the court? Why do you guys work together on the court?**

HAILEY VAN LITH: Yeah, on the court we both are just tough dogs on the court. She's willing to do things that aren't pretty to win. I'm talking about aggressive rebounding, defense, things that we call it sexy basketball. She's willing to execute those things to get a win. I think that I share that character trait with her.

Ultimately something about Angel that I think isn't talked about enough is that she's out there to win, regardless of what that means for her role, her stat line that game. Whatever a team needs from her, that's what she's going to provide. I think I, too, have that persona about me, that it doesn't matter what the team needs from me. If it's going to result in a win, I'm willing to lay it out there and try to provide that.

It's more of a toughness, resilience, grittiness to our game that I think that aligns with each other.

**Q. This past season it's no secret it's been essentially a revenge tour for you. After transferring to TCU,**

**essentially rebuilding your stock, finding success in the tournament, what does it say about your character, your spirit as a player and just the type of player the Chicago Sky is receiving?**

HAILEY VAN LITH: Yeah, I think really in my eyes, it shows that I didn't care enough to call it a revenge tour. Nothing that ever happened in the past or the events that took place at previous schools, that never hit me deep enough to where I felt like I had to get my lick back or any of that.

The Lord put me in situations that I needed to go through to grow as a basketball player and a human being, and that's not something that I was ever mad about. I accepted that. I worked through it with my sports psychologist. We understood together, like hey, this is something that you can grow from. This is an experience you should embrace. You should run toward this.

I think what it says about me is really that I didn't care. That was not something that was keeping me from sleeping at night. That shows somebody who really believes in themselves, and at the end of the day, the next level was all about who believes they can.

If I can carry that over to the next level, I think I'm setting myself up for success.

**Q. The WNBA is a league that is known for advocacy in many different lanes and about different social issues and even on mental health. I'm curious how you want to continue to be an advocate as a pro, if it is about mental health.**

HAILEY VAN LITH: Yeah, I think that is something that I'm still figuring out. The first thing was to get drafted to a team, and before today I didn't know if that was going to happen. So now that we know that that has happened, I can start to really address that.

But I have been thinking about that. I think I have a unique platform where I'm popular on social media but I don't supply or I don't put myself out there as much as some others. I think it provides me a unique lane to be super authentic and connect with me.

I'm not really sure how that'll happen yet. But I'm a woman of God, and I think that God will make that path very known when it comes the time. I have faith that however He needs me to touch people, He will provide the avenue for me to do that. In college, that was through media. In the NCAA Tournament, when all the eyes were on women's basketball. So I'm not sure what that looks like for me in the league, but I have faith that it'll happen.



