

WNBA Media Conference

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Tanisha Wright

Lin Dunn

Cheryl Reeve

Greg Bibb

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: To our media, thank you for staying with us, and we're now joined by Greg Bibb, Dallas Wings president; Lin Dunn, Indiana Fever general manager; and Tanisha Wright, Atlanta Dream head coach.

We hope to be joined momentarily by Cheryl Reeves, Minnesota Lynx president of basketball operations.

In the meantime, we'll get started with Greg, Lin, and Tanisha.

Q. Coach Wright, what kind of draft do you characterize this as? Is this a need draft or an immediate impact, or how do you see this draft this year?

TANISHA WRIGHT: Good afternoon. Thanks for being here. We really appreciate it.

What kind of draft would I categorize this as? I think for some people it'll be for need. For some people it'll be depth. For some people it'll look different.

Overall, I think there are some players that are going to be able to come in and have an impact, depending on the team that they get drafted to. Some players are going to be able to add to a team's depth.

I just think it's whatever specific teams may need at this time.

Q. Question for each of you, Greg, Lin, and Tanisha. How different has it been preparing draft boards and working on who is in, who is not in this draft, given how many moving parts? And I just related to it, how much are you looking forward to the end of the COVID year as a further complication as you guys do this work?

GREG BIBB: Good to hear from you. Thanks for joining us today.

It certainly adds an extra layer that you have to be aware of and track, but at the end of the day as we now sit a few days away from the draft, I think, for the most part, the players that we here in Dallas anticipated being in the draft, the players that we've been tracking for the draft, are a part of it. I think we're going to have yet again another great draft class for the WNBA.

LIN DUNN: I think similar to what Greg said, there were no real surprises with who is in the draft, and I think you have to be prepared for if they are, if they aren't.

We're excited about the depth of this draft. We were happy to hear that so many of the top players opted to join the draft, and we're excited about it.

TANISHA WRIGHT: Yeah, I agree. I think it definitely adds a layer to it. I know for me, I'm going to be glad when it's done so you know exactly who's coming in.

But it's just a part of it. I think teams learn to adapt and adjust and do that very quickly. But again, same thing. We're excited about this draft and the players that are opting in and ready to take their talents to this level.

Q. Building off of Howard's question, I was hoping that you all could just discuss whether you think -- obviously the COVID years won't be an impact longer term, but also taking into account new NIL rules and transfer rules at the college level, with the intersection of those three changes in the sport, how much do you think that could affect the league long-term or short-term wrinkles more or less that once the COVID year is done, it might be back to a more predictable pace?

GREG BIBB: Yeah, there's always going to be elements that change how you have to approach a part of your business, but I would say in general, I look at what's happening right now across the women's sports landscape, and particularly the women's basketball landscape, as really good things. Under the guise of, you know, rising tide lifts all boats. I think the weekend we just had here in Dallas (at the Final Four), I think everyone can agree was monumental. It was momentous, backed up by metrics to



support the fact that the game has never been better, has never been healthier.

And while that's specific to the women's NCAA game, I think it's a very quick path from there to the WNBA and making that connection, and I think we saw similar kind of growth last year in the W.

I anticipate that starting with this draft here next Monday that the 2023 season for the WNBA will be a record-setting one, as well.

THE MODERATOR: I believe we may have been joined by Coach Reeve?

CHERYL REEVE: Yes, I'm here.

Q. I have a question for Greg. In most of the mock drafts, Maddy Siegrist has been projected to be one of you guys' picks. What about your team makes you think that she might be a good fit for you, and what about her makes you think that -- what makes you think she fits well with you?

GREG BIBB: Just the fact that she's obviously one of the best college players in the country this season. Certainly, she's a proven offensive threat. I think she's a little underestimated in terms of her defensive ability and her overall athleticism. You can start there.

But for us in particular, she, like others in the draft, present a skill set that we're looking for, as we look to prioritize one or two things, as we evolve from a team that was in rebuild mode to a team that's looking to complement the core roster that we've built.

I think she is flat-out one of the best players in the draft, but I also think she has a skill set that translates well for a number of teams in the WNBA, including us.

Q. There's been a lot of conversation about the challenge that's presented in making a roster in the WNBA, and given the depth of talent of the 2023 class and beyond, what's you guys' biggest concern if expansion isn't addressed, whether it be on rosters or with new teams in the league?

TANISHA WRIGHT: So, I think one of the biggest concerns is just losing some of the talent. There is a lot of talent that's out there, and being able to keep that talent here in the States. I think eventually -- I think the league will have expansion eventually. Nobody knows exactly when that'll happen, but I do think it'll come. And when it comes, we'll be able to give opportunities to the young ladies that are coming from college and all this energy

that's surrounding women's hoops right now. So, we'll be able to bottle that up and bring it to the W, and hopefully in the interim, start to get some college fans in support of the W because some of their favorite players are now translating to the professional league.

CHERYL REEVE: I think that we all want the same thing with regard to expanding our league, not only in teams but perhaps roster size. We think that's a healthy space for the situation you're talking about, and certainly life in the WNBA, as we've talked about in past years. When the time is right, that's going to happen. That's obviously higher than all of our pay grade that's on here now.

I think that if you look at -- and I've done this recently because the narrative was so strong about kind of -- we're kind of defenseless, some of the things that are being said about either opportunities in our league or when you get to our league what's available to you versus what they have in college.

I think that one of the narratives is I'm not sure that the percentage to make a team or be a professional is all that different than it is in the NBA. I think there's about a 1 percent chance in the men's game, if I'm not mistaken, in terms of what I've researched, and I don't think we're far off of that.

I think if you look at last year in the (WNBA) draft, I believe half the second round made a team, in addition to most first rounders. That's pretty significant. Whether that happens this year or not remains to be seen.

Q. I had a question specifically for Lin Dunn. Of course Aliyah Boston is projected to be the top pick in this upcoming draft. When you look at the things that she was able to do at South Carolina as well as her skill set, what about her and her game sticks out to you that you feel she would be successful as a WNBA player?

LIN DUNN: I think Aliyah Boston is a legitimate first pick option. I've watched her play very closely this year. Her size, her basketball IQ, her character, her leadership skills. She just brings an enormous amount to the table, and I really think she's going to have -- whether she's picked first, second or third, she's going to have an immediate impact on this league, and I'm just thankful - I think we all are - that she opted to come into the draft and didn't use her fifth COVID year.

It makes this draft a lot stronger, as well as the rest of the South Carolina players coming in.

Q. I'm curious about the tournament; who are some

players that impressed you and you feel like improved their draft stock with the way they played? If everybody could answer, that would be great.

TANISHA WRIGHT: I think somebody like Alexis Morris. I think she played well throughout the tournament. At times she carried her team. I think she's somebody who got significantly better throughout.

I think Zia Cooke is another one with South Carolina. In the last month and a half, two months, she really showed up for them and looked well at the tournament, as well.

Those are two specific players that I would say probably upped their draft stock.

GREG BIBB: Yeah, I think there were a number of players, too, but I'll mention one. I thought Jordan Horston at Tennessee had a really nice end of season and tournament run, and I think she demonstrated that she'll be a great fit for whatever team drafts her in the WNBA.

Q. Cheryl, I just wanted to ask about your impression of Laeticia Amihere when you coached against Canada in the World Cup semis, and what makes her an intriguing prospect in this upcoming draft?

CHERYL REEVE: Yeah, as you mentioned, I had the opportunity over in Australia to see Laeticia up close and personal, not to mention obviously all the times at South Carolina.

But it's always interesting to see a player outside of the college setting and into a national team setting and the different roles that a player would play.

I think probably the consistent thing that she does in terms of her energy, the way she approaches the game, I think she gets a lot of credit for being a very smart player who can play multiple positions.

What the skill set actually is, I think she's still sort of defining maybe who that's going to be as a player, but at minimum, I've seen her change games with her ability to be aggressive. She has no fear. She's ambitious in the way that she chooses to attack defenders and has a natural confidence there.

I think Dawn (Staley) used her heavily, as well as Canada in terms of her defense. That's a player who's got considerable length and athleticism, and she can really impose their characteristics on an offensive player that can really be disruptive.

I enjoyed seeing her on the world stage, and to see her

confidence going against some of the best players from other countries, I thought that she was a player that changed things for South Carolina in a number of games this season, as well.

Q. I'm thinking of two specific players. It seems like even first-round picks are not guaranteed to make a roster. Where does that leave potential second- or third-round picks like Michigan's Leigha Brown and Emily Kiser entering this draft?

CHERYL REEVE: As I sort of mentioned, I think the second-round big, if that is indeed where these players land, I think it's more about not what number you're drafted but where you're drafted in terms of the positional opportunity, to be able to have a chance to compete for a roster spot. That's what it's all about.

I had mentioned earlier in Annie's question about -- I think the question was about opportunities much like this, that in men's basketball, over half a million high school players, only 3.4 go to college, only 1.2 percent of those college players get drafted by the NBA.

In the women's game it's 443 high school players, 3.8 play in college; .9 percent get drafted.

So then you take that percentage, and obviously it's even lower than that in terms of making an actual roster.

It doesn't mean that it can't happen. We have a number of success stories, particularly here in Minnesota in the second round. As a matter of fact, the No. 16 pick has been a good pick for us.

I think it's really just a matter of a team's vision for the opportunity there, and then the reality for some others in the second and third round is that you're just coming there to show well and hopefully see this as a process. It's the first step, and maybe you go overseas and fine tune some of your skills and maybe get a chance -- if you show well in preseason games, et cetera, you get a chance to come back and do it again.

There's just no way around this. This is not limited to the WNBA. This is just reality in professional sports.

Q. I wanted to ask Cheryl and Greg about Jordan Horston. Obviously, a big part of her game is affecting multiple parts of the game. How do you see that translating to the WNBA, and what kind of role do you see her having as a rookie?

GREG BIBB: As I mentioned before, I think she's, quote-unquote, WNBA ready. I think her size will allow her

to be a versatile player in our league and play multiple positions. I think the athleticism is unquestioned. Having an opportunity to chat with her recently, she presents herself very well; definitely a competitor.

I think the competitor you need to be in this league of the best 144 players on the planet is there. I think she would be the first to probably tell you she needs to get better at consistency with shooting the basketball, especially the three-ball. But I think she's a player that's going to come into our league and be in our league for a long time.

CHERYL REEVE: Yeah, I thought that was well said by Greg. I think he covered everything there. It's a hungry player. It's a player who's very confident. She sees herself in this league, that kind of knowing that she belongs, and she'll continue to get better in the areas that Greg talked about.

But I would echo all those sentiments in that this is a player you could see in our league for a long time.

Q. I was wondering in the short amount of time, how was Stephanie Soares able to elevate her draft stock in the short amount of time she played, and then Monika Czinano from Iowa, has she put herself in a position to possibly be drafted?

LIN DUNN: I'm a fan of both Stephanie and Monika. I thought Stephanie in a short period of time showed us some real skills for a 6'6" player, face-up game, low-post game, has huge upside, I think. Unfortunate she got hurt. But I'm sure she'll recover and be a part of the WNBA in the future.

I'm a big Monika fan. I thought she was one of the people I would have mentioned whose stock went up during the tournament. No fear, physical, strong, high energy. The thing for Monika, she just needs to get selected by the right team that has a spot open for her.

It's all about which team picks you. It's not really first or second round. It's like, is there a spot there for you. But I think both of those have WNBA potential.

Q. Tanisha, when you're looking at this draft class and draft classes ahead, obviously they've been talked about a ton; just where the league is at and where it's growing and how pace and space continue to ramp up, what kind of things are you looking at? Obviously I know you're focused on the coming year, but when you're looking ahead trying to get out ahead of any changes or developments that could happen as the league continues to grow and skills continue to change?

TANISHA WRIGHT: I mean, I think when you start looking at players and you're trying to figure out what suits your system and different things like that, I think obviously people that can space the floor is important, especially with the way that the league is going and how much pace the league is playing with. I'm always looking at people that can defend at high levels, that are versatile defenders, that can defend multiple, multiple positions.

I think those are things in general that coaches are looking at, and then coachable kids. I think that's always one that you need to pay attention to, especially with everything that's going on at the collegiate level with the players and the transfer portals and all these different things. Looking for kids that are coachable and want to come in and play hard.

Those are always going to be mainstays as the league grows and as women's basketball grows, I believe.

Q. Lin, with the 7th and 13th round picks, how do you approach those, and are there specific needs you're looking to address for those? And with regards to Grace Berger, what is your assessment of her and do you think she is the type of player who could make immediate impact at the professional level?

LIN DUNN: Multiple questions. Okay, just a second. Let me think here. (At) 7 and 13, I'm looking for, first, the best player available, and does it fit the need that we have based on who we took with the first pick.

So I'm looking best available and I'm looking for need. It's great if a great player is available and she fits our need at both 7 and 13.

Grace Berger has had a tremendous career and Teri (Moren) has done a great job with that program at IU. One of the things I love about Grace is her ability to play three positions. She can play the 2, the 1, the 3, if you need her she can play the lead guard. She's physically strong, tough. Stayed for that fifth year, got better. I think she is a potential first-round pick, and so she's one of the people that I've definitely got on my list.

Q. Obviously you mentioned before about the recent stock-raisers, but I'm wondering both domestically and internationally which players have your scouts' and your opinions changed the most on from when you started approaching this class until now?

CHERYL REEVE: I think the season always kind of brings you maybe a starting point for a player as you go into it, and you maybe watch them as a freshman, sophomore,

junior and then you have a starting point and then there's the journey of a senior year.

And I don't know that necessarily your opinions change, but you go much deeper into your prospects, into their strengths and weaknesses and just gather as much intel as possible.

I think probably I would throw into that category a Maddy Siegrist, a Lou Lopez Senechal, players like that. The others, you know, what did they get better at. You probably feel like you have a really good handle.

But I would say those couple players, and maybe a Stephanie Soares, even though the time was limited, just to kind of look at the opportunity for a player to be 6'5", shoot the three, block shots, et cetera, what her value could be.

And then also for a team that maybe isn't necessarily in need of a player right now, I think Stephanie's value and thoughts on her I think were at the forefront of quite a few teams in the first round.

TANISHA WRIGHT: Yeah, just to piggy-back off what Coach just said, I think everything she said I agree with. I think I would throw maybe a Dorka in there, as well. Being able to watch Dorka for the last two years, I think her skill set and what she brings to the table, I think that she's somebody who I would say probably changed a little bit from my side, as well.

That's one of the players that I would add.

Q. For Cheryl but anyone is welcome to add in if you feel inclined. I wanted to ask about Diamond Miller and what it is about her game that has allowed her draft stock to stay so high after even having an injury last year and missing some time in her junior season?

CHERYL REEVE: Well, I think being an injury free for a season, much like she was in her sophomore season, where she was outstanding, and then obviously the injury-riddled junior year she was able to physically get into a good place once the season was underway.

She missed the South Carolina game, the first game, and then I think she's been able to have some consistent play and adapt to a new team, as has been chronicled numerous times with regard to transfers, et cetera. I think a player who appears to be pretty coachable, and I just think she's got a lot of confidence.

I think that's what separates a lot of these players. The really good ones believe they can do anything, and that's

something that I think is enjoyable to coach. It's enjoyable to kind of dive into from a player development standpoint.

Diamond has the physical gifts that I think we all look at and go, wow, she's legit 6'3", has some length, athleticism, real abilities. But there's a long road ahead for her, too, in terms of wherever she goes, however high she goes. There's not a guarantee of immediate success. There's I think quite a bit for each of these prospects that they're going to go through, as every year.

But I think if they're coachable and they don't think that they're really special when they come into the WNBA, if they understand that this is not an easy league and if they're humble, then they have a chance.

We've had players like that, like a Napheesa Collier who just was a sponge and had that humility that was necessary to kind of go, I don't know a whole lot about this league, and you're open to listening and being coached. That'll give Diamond Miller and others a great chance to maximize their talent and find success.

THE MODERATOR: To our media, thanks for joining us. The draft will take place on ESPN Monday night, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Eastern and on Saturday morning, 11:30 a.m. Eastern on ESPN2 with a re-air at 6:00 p.m. Eastern, will be the pre-draft special.

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