

# WNBA Draft

Monday, April 15, 2024

Los Angeles Sparks

Rickea Jackson



**Q. I feel like you're the most pro ready in this draft. What's the first thing you're looking for in L.A., and how do you feel about teaming up with Cameron Brink?**

RICKEA JACKSON: Yeah, I feel like I'm looking into them pouring into me, and I'm doing the same on and off the court.

I'm so excited to play with Cam. We're both competitive. We're young. We're feisty but we're still going to bring that game offensively and defensively. I know if I get beat off the dribble, Cam is swatting into the second row. So I'm ready for that, too.

**Q. As you transition to the league, what part of your game do you think will transition well, and what part do you think needs a little bit more work to help the transition become more seamless?**

RICKEA JACKSON: Yeah, I feel like I'm excited to bring my versatility, play at any position, taking advantage of whether it's a small guard on me or bigger or slower player. I'm excited about that. Then I just want to work on getting in tip-top shape after the injury. My conditioning was in the game trying to get back. I feel like when I'm in tip-top shape, world-class shape, that's when I'm playing my best both ends of the floor.

**Q. A lot of predictions had you going to Chicago. You end up going to Los Angeles. How excited are you about that? And after playing in the SEC for both Mississippi State and Tennessee, how did that prepare you for the league?**

RICKEA JACKSON: Yeah, I'm definitely excited. I'm just grateful that L.A. believed in me. They see something in me, and I see something in them, too. I had great talks with them prior to the draft, so I'm just grateful for it all.

Playing at Tennessee and Mississippi State, it's prepared me for this moment because life is just trials and tribulations, but how you get through those, and I feel like I've overcome a lot of adversity. I've continued to stay strong, and that's what got me to where I am today.

**Q. What was the process like going through the draft process with L.A., and what did you see that excites you about this upcoming season and your first rookie year here in Los Angeles?**

RICKEA JACKSON: Yeah, it's crazy to say, but I didn't even think about how the draft process goes. I thought you just show up to draft day and you kind of get drafted. I didn't know if they even speak to you prior to the draft. Really crazy of me.

When I was getting these calls, scheduling these meetings, I was just like, whoa, they're asking you questions, sometimes personal questions, and you know you've just got to sit there and answer them. It's a job interview.

I feel like just that in itself was pretty cool to experience. The whole draft process has been amazing, though. Honestly, it felt like recruiting out of high school. That's what it felt like to me, and that was the most crazy part, though.

**Q. What would you say is the most difficult challenge that you're ready to embrace in the WNBA, and is it safe to say with just everything that has transpired just in women's sports all around that this might be the golden era for women's basketball?**

RICKEA JACKSON: Yeah, I'll answer your second question first. Definitely. This is generational class. I feel like this class is just so different. I know this class is different. I feel like the viewership is peaking. Women's basketball is on an uproar. Everybody is tuning in. We averaged better than the men this year. Not to say we're in competition, but that just says a lot. I'm grateful to be a part of this draft class. I feel like we're just trending in the right direction.

What was your first question again?

**Q. My first question was what difficult challenge are you ready to embrace as a WNBA player?**

RICKEA JACKSON: Probably the pace of the game. I feel



like high school to college, it was a different pace, so I feel like it's probably going to be that same thing in the league, going up against the world's best players. I feel like that's going to be pretty tough. But I'm excited for the challenge.

**Q. You join a rich tapestry of Lady Vol players in the WNBA. You're one of 10 top 10 draftees out of Tennessee. What's it mean to join this legacy? And did you talk to any Vols alums while you are getting drafted, maybe Jordan or anyone?**

RICKEA JACKSON: Yeah, to be in the conversation with those greats is so crazy and mind blowing to me. I'm just grateful to have Candace come to our games sometimes, have Tamika Catchings, have Jordan Horston in my ear, and they continue to support me. Jordan texted me how much she was proud of me, texted me a little bit about the process. Tamika and I speak every now and then. She's just always pouring into me. I just call her my big sister. Just to have that contact with a Tamika Catchings, it's like, whoa.

She doesn't even know it, but when she came to our practice and she was acting like she knew me, you don't even know but I was over here like, girl, you're Tamika Catchings. That was pretty cool to experience, though.

**Q. What advice would you give to another young girl that looks like you that wants to follow in your footsteps?**

RICKEA JACKSON: I would give her advice of just be true to who you are. Problems are going to come, challenges are going to come, but the way that you handle it is what builds character. I feel like there's always a light at the end of the tunnel and just continue to just push, push, push. If she plays basketball, I would say repetition is everything. Get the fundamentals down, just work on the little things before -- this generation is a little more flashy, but the fundamentals are everything.

**Q. The Sparks are such a tradition-rich franchise in the league, winning championships with legendary players. Did you watch them growing up? Do you have a perception of all of that? What excites you about hopefully being able to be part of that new era of Sparks basketball?**

RICKEA JACKSON: Yeah, growing up I didn't like basketball at all. I just wanted to do girly stuff. I just wanted to be a ballerina and cheerleader. I didn't watch basketball growing up. But once I picked up a ball and I started to see how serious this could go, I really started tuning in a lot. I watched every WNBA basketball game. Even if I can't, I record it and then I'd go back and watch it.

I don't look at the score because I like to feel like it's still live. I like that excitement.

Just L.A. as a whole, I know they weren't where they wanted to be. Championships, everyone wants a championship. I feel like I'm just excited to be a part of this journey. I feel like we're going to be really good, just looking at the roster itself. I'm just excited. I've watched them play, so I'm kind of familiar of how they like to play, their style of play.

So that's pretty cool, and I feel like I'm going to fit in really well.

**Q. Before the draft, Raegan (Pebley) called their lottery picks foundational. Just to hear a GM say you're going to be a foundational piece of this franchise, what does that mean to you? And also, how excited are you to play with Zia Cooke again?**

RICKEA JACKSON: Yes, I'm so excited to play with Zia. It's so full circle. We grew up knowing each other. We played AAU together. We live like an hour away from each other, but that's my best friend, so we're still really close.

But I feel like basketball is just always bringing us back together in the craziest ways. We took our four visits together coming out of high school. I'm so excited to play with my girl. I feel like this is just going to reconnect us on that deep level again.

What was your first question?

**Q. The lottery picks to them are foundational. What does it mean to you to be considered a foundational piece of the Sparks moving forward?**

RICKEA JACKSON: Yeah, I'm honored, honestly, that she said something like that about Cam and I. I truly believe that, as well. I feel like what Cam and I bring is just foundational, like you said. I feel like we're willing to put in the work. We're willing to do whatever as rookies. So I feel like that's pretty, pretty good, and I'm just excited to get started.

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