

WNBA Draft

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Atlanta Dream

Nyadiew Puoch



Q. Can you touch on the emotions of this moment for not only yourself, your mom was obviously there crying, as well, your whole family back home. Two, what does such a monumental moment like this mean to you knowing that you're representing not only Australia, but South Sudan and everywhere and everything that you've been a part of to be sitting in the seat you're sitting in right now?

NYADIEW PUOCH: Yeah, it's huge. Obviously traveling from the other side of the world or from Australia, it's a lot. Like I'm still jet-lagged and everything. I've still got emotions running through and I can barely sleep. But it's great.

It's great to just look back, knowing that my country back home, my family and my friends they're all proud of me and they're all supporting me, watching me, especially my mom. She's done so much for me, my family and stuff, making sacrifices for us. Growing up I didn't come from a big basketball sporty world, and just played it because I loved it and my siblings played it, and then to get where I am now, it's incredible.

Q. I'm curious if you can share with us what you remember about the WNBA growing up and how you think its perception in popular culture around the world has changed?

NYADIEW PUOCH: Obviously being in Australia, it's a bit difficult to watch the games and get to it and stuff, but I think as the years progressed, we started getting to know the game a bit more and obviously it's like a little sisterhood. We've got the WNBL now on our side and we've got the WNBA, so you get to know about it. And we've got Australians and grads that play in the WNBA, as well, so then you get to study that, as well.

You've got Lauren Jacksons that play, Penny Taylor and stuff. Growing up they're your idols. So you watch what they do, what they've done in the WNBL and in the WNBA, and it's like, I want to do that. I want to do that, as well. I've done what I wanted to do in the WNBL, so it's like, what's the next step I want to do?

Q. Obviously your defense is what put you on the radar of a lot of teams. Take me through just what that evolution is of your defense, why it's been so good so quickly, and whether that came up first and foremost in your conversations with Atlanta.

NYADIEW PUOCH: Yeah, well, growing up in juniors, I'd always be the scorer, attacking the rim, being an offensive player and stuff. But as I headed into the pro league, being young, there's already people doing all that. You have to make sacrifices. You need to learn the game a bit more, learn your other strengths. For me, it was defense. My length, being able to guard different positions, different players, being able to switch on to different people and just using my length, my ability, my quickness to kind of get around people.

For me, I think when I play defense and I play great defense, it brings my offense naturally. So it's like, it just comes to me, and I don't have to force anything. So that's probably why I do that.

Q. How do you envision yourself into the WNBA? And if you see Ezi Magbegor playing for the Storm, if she's a role model for you, how excited you are facing her in the WNBA?

NYADIEW PUOCH: I'm very excited. Obviously playing in a different league and then coming into another one is great. The lifestyle, the people you play against, what we learn in the game here is obviously a bit different, so getting to learn that, playing against people, taking things from them, what I can add into my game.

Q. Who are you looking forward to playing against once you get into the league?

NYADIEW PUOCH: All of them. All the WNBA players. It's so different back home. Again, like in the WNBL we do have imports that come and play, we had Tiffany Mitchell, Jordin Canada and being able to play against them and with them is huge, no matter whether they're guards or bigs, just playing against all of them and seeing the differences in how they all play and just -- yeah.



Q. What are your first impressions of Atlanta? And talk about what you're most looking forward to playing with the Dream this year?

NYADIEW PUOCH: I think it's amazing. Like I haven't been there before, but stories, everything I've heard about it, we've got fellow Aussies over there, as well. We've got Paul Goriss that's also there, as well, and he's been good to me, as well. He's talked to me then and there. He's been texting me and stuff, and Kristy Wallace. She's amazing, as well, on the court and off the court, as well.

But I think just getting to know everyone, getting the experience, the new lifestyle and just -- as well as the coaches and the staff and everything.

Q. Wondering what it will be like for you? You've played against Shaneice Swain and Jade Melbourne growing up, and now you're going to play against them on the other side of the world. Talk about that.

NYADIEW PUOCH: I think it's cool. It's amazing seeing fellow Australians in the WNBA, and they're achieving what you're achieving, as well. It's a privilege, honestly. It's such a great thing, and it's like -- I feel like it's just good that people can look at it and be like, wow, these Australians can play because I feel like that's one thing we don't really get sometimes, and we've had people like Lauren Jackson providing that for us.

I hope one day we can leave that kind of legacy to younger kids and everyone, as well, in this generation, as well.

Q. You're joining one of the most versatile rosters in this league. What's your day one expectations when you join training camp?

NYADIEW PUOCH: I'm not really having any expectations. Just going in there with an open mind, making sacrifices. It's going to be hard. I'm young. They're great professional players, talented athletes. It's going to be hard, and I'm coming from a different country, different environment and a new lifestyle.

Just taking it day by day, learning experience, talking to the vets, talking to everyone around there and just building that on to my game.

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