

WNBA Draft

Monday, April 15, 2024

Seattle Storm

Nika Mühl



Q. What was going through your head when you heard your name called, to have Geno next to you and your sister?

NIKA MÜHL: I mean, if you saw my face, I don't think anything was going through my head at the moment. I was so positively overwhelmed, and just having all of them around me, all my people in the stands, at the table, knowing that my family, my friends from back home are watching, it's surreal. It's why I'm here. Without them, I would never be here sitting and answering your questions.

I owe everything to them, and I'm just truly blessed and so grateful for Seattle to give me this opportunity.

Q. You wore No. 10 at UConn, same number as obviously legend Sue Bird. Now you're drafted to the same WNBA team that Sue Bird won four titles with. How cool is that, following in her footsteps, and what jersey number are you going to rock since No. 10 is retired now?

NIKA MÜHL: Thank you for your question. I love Sue. I love her so much. I remember watching her when I was a kid, trying to mimic her moves. Being at UConn after her has been a huge deal for me. Very, very humbling experience. She's one of the greatest.

To be able to have this opportunity again, I mean, it's a full-circle moment for me. I can't believe it. It's got to be some higher power, something else going on, because I have no words for this. It's a full-circle moment for me, and I'm just so blessed.

I honestly have no idea (about the jersey number). That's honestly the least thing on my mind. That's not what I'm thinking about, but when I find out, I'll find you and tell you first.

Q. You're going to a team that's similar to your play style at UConn, very dynamic playmakers. Tell us about how you will fit in as the point guard on this Seattle team.

NIKA MÜHL: Absolutely. I feel like going back to when I

had to make my college decision, UConn was a challenge, especially coming in with my class, Paige Bueckers, No. 1 player in the country, that was a huge challenge, but I took it. I feel like it paid off, and that's one decision that I'm so happy and proud that I made in my life because all of that led to this.

But to get back to your question, I feel like first and foremost, I obviously -- their roster, just looking at it, those are some iconic women. Those are some iconic basketball players, people that I want to learn from, that I want to listen to, that I want to get challenged by, that I want to get yelled at, everything, all of the above. I'm ready for it, and I feel like it's kind of like a similar thing for me going to UConn and going to this place. Obviously, this is the next level.

But I feel the same. I feel eager to learn. I feel eager to be challenged and eager to fail and rise up, and I feel like that coaching staff and that team will do it for me.

The one thing that I want to bring is being a good teammate. I want to create amazing relationships over there. I feel like that's what makes and helps teams win, and I want to be a part of that winning program because it truly is a historic winning program.

Q. By the end of your UConn career you were talking about how unbelievable a lot of things you were accomplishing were, but at what point did you think getting to the WNBA would be a realistic possibility for you?

NIKA MÜHL: Well, first and foremost, I feel like this was something that I didn't even dare to dream about, if I can say it that way. I always felt like it was such a reach. It was something far more beyond me and bigger than me. But luckily I had people around me, my teammates, my friends, my family, my coaches, everybody that made me believe in it, too.

I always trust my work ethic. I feel like that's my best asset, how hard I work, how I don't give up, how I learn from my mistakes.



Obviously I'm going to fail, and that's fine. But it's how you react to it. I'm ready for all the challenges. I'm ready for whatever is thrown my way. But I know I'm going to respond in a positive way and how a true competitor does.

Q. I know when we talked back in the fall, you talked about needing to improve your three-point shot and you end up shooting 40 percent on the season. Take me through what that work was, what you were doing with that UConn coaching staff and how much you feel like that helped you be sitting here at this table today?

NIKA MÜHL: Absolutely. Thank you for the question. I feel like as you grow, you learn and you mature. When I came in as a freshman, I didn't understand that you don't have to be in the gym all day. It's how hard you work for those 45 minutes, those 20 minutes, and how consistent you are with it. I feel how my coaching staff, especially Morgan Valley, my coach, she kind of helped me guide me through that. This last, my senior year, I spent 25 minutes before every single practice, even on the days that I didn't feel like it, even on the days that I was tired, and shot threes and shot mid-ranges.

That 40 percent that you mentioned is purely the testament to my hard work and dedication and her being in that gym with me every time. I'm so grateful to her. But I'm also very proud of myself and how I just remained consistent and proved to myself that consistency is the key, because hard work I already have it. Consistency was the key for me.

Q. Going back to the question about Sue, can you describe what your relationship has been like with her over the years? And then Seattle is a newer team, has newer players like Skylar Diggins and Nneka Ogwumike joining. Did you watch those players at all, and what excites you about being able to join forces with them?

NIKA MÜHL: Yes, thank you. I feel like us UConn players, we're a family. It doesn't matter if we played 30, 20, 10 years ago or even before that, or you're playing right now or you are going to play in the future. Everybody is connected. That's what the coaching staff does a great job of, creating that family atmosphere, that strong bond and connection that lasts forever.

That's how it is with Sue. She's been over to UConn so many times, whether that's like fun stuff or coming to watch our games or trying to help us and guide us and give us advice, because we all truly look up to her a lot.

I mean, I'll say it again, it's a full-circle moment for me. All the things that kind of led up to this, it's crazy. I can't believe it. But I'm just super grateful and I can't wait to see

her. I'm sure she's going to be of a great help, and my mentor and somebody that's going to guide me, and I want that.

But to get back to your other question. Absolutely, Nneka, Skylar, those women are incredible, on and off the court. I can't wait to learn from them, and of course I watched them. Skylar, I watched her so much. Nneka, I mean, she hugged me and I almost passed out over there. And obviously the rest of the team. When you look at the names, what they've done -- I always go back to not just on the court but off the court with the influence that they have. I can't wait to be a part of that. I can't wait to learn. I can't wait to just listen and sit back and try to get everything I can from such influential, iconic women. I'm super, super excited. I can't wait to meet all of them.

Q. Can you share with us what you remember about the WNBA growing up, and how do you think its perception in the popular culture has changed since then?

NIKA MÜHL: Yeah, I mean, that's a funny question because growing up, I didn't really have the opportunity to watch WNBA games. Even now in Croatia, people have to find their ways to watch those games. I feel like what I remember, I would sit in my living room with YouTube and find games or highlights or anything that I can. I remember watching Brittney Griner in my living room. It's just those little things that stick with me. But it was hard to find places and ways to watch these women.

I feel like seeing now especially with this draft class that I'm a part of, amazing athletes, amazing people that brought women's basketball to another level, and I always say, all the players before us that paved the way for us, they deserve their flowers, and they deserve to be recognized. I feel like we're moving toward that direction, and I never think it's too late. I always think there's time to be better and improve and grow, and I feel like we're on the right track.

Are we there yet? No, we can be so much better. But I feel like we are doing so much better, and that's what's important. As long as we keep doing it and keep giving the platform and the opportunity to these women to speak up and showcase their talents and how good they are, I feel like we're going to be amazing.

Q. What has it been like to share the last couple of days with Aaliyah and share these days with them and also have Paige and Azzi in the crowd, as well?

NIKA MÜHL: Yeah, Aaliyah has been there from the start. That's my sister. That's my family. I met her even before

we both committed to UConn. Can you guys believe how full circle -- it's so many full-circle moments I can't even fathom right now. We met before at NBA Academy, BWB, and I loved her instantly. Our bond is strong. We don't need no words. You can feel it. You can feel the energy. To be able to here with her and share this has been nothing but incredible, and something that I'll remember for the rest of my life because it would not be the same if she wasn't here with me.

I'm so proud of her. She's going to do amazing. She's going to do great. Everything that she did, she deserves. She put her head down and she worked. Even without all the recognition that she did deserve but she didn't get at times, she didn't care. She put her head down and she knew that something great will happen, and it did tonight. I'm so happy for her.

But to get back to the other question, Paige, Azzi, Aubrey, Caroline, all my teammates watching at home, I love them so much. I owe them everything, and I can't wait for my younger teammates and everybody that's coming back next year to have this moment, too, because I know they will. I'll be proudly watching and cheering for them, too.

I'm just so grateful to be able to call them my sisters and my family and have such great support even though I'm not home. This is my home away from home. They are my home away from home.

Q. Talk about how playing under a coach like Geno has prepared you for the WNBA and how you envision yourself on the biggest stage of women's basketball.

NIKA MÜHL: Yes, absolutely. I feel like I couldn't get more prepared than being at UConn, surrounded by all the coaches, but especially Coach. He's just a legend. When UConn called, I couldn't say no. That was the opportunity of a lifetime for me.

Every single thing in that culture that he built in that program aligns with me and who I am as a person and who I strive to be and get better at being.

But just the things I went through with him is so much, and he's my best friend. He's not just my coach, he's my best friend. He's been there from the start. When I failed, through the worst things, through the best things, he always stuck by my side and never left. I'll cherish that bond and that relationship that I have with him forever.

I'm so grateful and happy that he was there tonight, along with all my coaches, at the table and in the audience. They prepared me. They pushed me. They cussed me out when they had to. They yelled at me when they had to.

They praised me when they had to. They just did everything right.

So grateful because not just as a basketball player they have changed me, but they changed who I am as a person. They made me a better person and they make me want to be even better. I'm grateful for them.

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