

NBA Draft

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Brooklyn, New York, USA

Keaton Wagler



Q. Keaton, congratulations. A year ago you were just trying to make the rotation at Illinois. What led you to this moment and what got you here?

KEATON WAGLER: I think the biggest thing that got me here was the hard work that I put in. Just getting the trust from my teammates and coaches, proving myself throughout the whole year and showing everyone just how good of a player I am. Just continue to keep my head down and work, no matter good game, bad game. Staying level-headed throughout the whole season.

Q. What's your scope of what you're bringing to the Clippers, and what do you think you want that franchise to know about you when you step in there?

KEATON WAGLER: I think I'm going to bring a lot of versatility on the floor and being able to play on and off the ball alongside [Darius] Garland. When he has the ball in his hands, be ready to space and shoot the ball. When I have the ball in my hands, just being aggressive to make plays for myself and others.

Q. You're joining a team with Kawhi Leonard. What can you learn from playing with a player with as much experience as Leonard?

KEATON WAGLER: You can learn a lot. Like you said, he has a lot of experience. He's won championships and played in Finals and won a lot of games and played a lot of seasons. Just being able to learn from him and see what it takes to become that caliber of a player.

Q. You seemed confident you would go either 4 or 5. What were those conversations like with the Clippers? When did you know you would be going to L.A.?

KEATON WAGLER: When I went to work out with the Clippers, I was there for three days and I met with a lot of people. They were just super genuine with me and they just showed a lot of interest in me. They talked to me and my agents a lot. I think I'm just super excited to get out there. They have a great front office and coaching staff and players, and I just can't wait to get out there and get going.

Q. The Clippers haven't picked this high since Blake Griffin. How will you balance the excitement and pressure of this selection?

KEATON WAGLER: Just stay true to myself. Not put a lot of pressure on myself. Do what I've been doing throughout my whole life, just going out there and playing and playing free. When I do that, I feel like I'm at my best. I am just going to do that the whole time.

Q. A lot of your family played at Hutchinson Community College, and now you're in the NBA. What has your family meant to you throughout this process?

KEATON WAGLER: Yeah, they meant a lot. My parents have sacrificed a bunch for me to get here, taking me to all my AAU games all over the world. They have meant a lot.

And then looking up to my brother and sister, watching them play when I was young and seeing them both play in high school and middle school, it's super cool to make it to this level and have them alongside me when I do it.

Q. You're one of three top-five picks that's played at Illinois. You're going to have your jersey lifted to the rafters there. I know it's only one year, but what mark did that place leave on you and how do you feel you left your mark on them?

KEATON WAGLER: It was very special both ways. Being able to go in there and do what I did is remarkable, and having my jersey hung in the rafters is going to be super crazy. I've dreamed of having my jersey hung in an arena before, and it actually happening is awesome.

I think I left a good mark there, not just on the basketball but as a person. Just the type of person I am and just how I was throughout the whole season just as a person to my teammates and coaches.

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