

NBA Draft

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Brooklyn, New York, USA

Aday Mara



Q. Aday, I wanted to hear more, you're obviously drafted to the Thunder and you're going to play with Chet Holmgren. How does it feel knowing you're on a team like the Thunder, who are contenders and are likely going to be competing against Victor Wembanyama? How does it feel going into that on day one?

ADAY MARA: That's exciting. Obviously after winning the Championship with Michigan, you want more. So it's great to be in a contender team like OKC. But excited. Excited to be there to start working and help the team as much as I can.

Q. Go Blue. You're one of the best passing individuals in this draft at your size. Who taught you that skill set and how to play in that level at that capacity?

ADAY MARA: That's my dad's fault. I talk with people that played with him, they told me he was smart. He knew how to pass the ball. I guess that's a thing that I took it from him. But also, I have fun finding cutters, finding wide open people.

So for me, it's like really fun to play -- to look for teammates and make them look good. It's like a mix, you know.

Q. I just saw a tweet after you got drafted from Jake Fischer and he said that you're potentially being billed as a Victor Wembanyama stopper. What's your reaction when you hear that, and how about those matchups coming up against Wemby?

ADAY MARA: Obviously it's not a bad thing to hear. I think it's going to take time for adjustment, but I'm excited. I'm excited to play against him. Obviously to play in the NBA. But I feel like I'm going to play against him a lot. If it's not NBA, it's going to be on the national team. So I'm excited get ready to play against him.

Q. You participated in the Basketball Without Borders event twice and you were named an All-Star. Can you speak to your experience doing that? And last year, the NBA broke a record for the most international players, 135 across 43 different countries. How does it

feel to add your name to that list and play amongst those guys, as well as the other competition in the league?

ADAY MARA: I think, first of all, Basketball Without Borders, I think is a great thing to have if you're an international player. Because if you go there, it means that you're one of the best players outside the U.S. They can watch you play, practice, and they can look at your game. Because being in Spain, for me, maybe was a little bit harder or they had to use international scouts.

So being there in person, I think is great. Also you have a feel of how is maybe the NBA, how the workouts go or things like that.

So I think it's great for international players to have this Basketball Without Borders.

And the second question, I would say, is it's great to be on that list. I think international basketball, European basketball, is getting better and better. We saw that every year that these really good players on a high level from different countries. So I'm very happy that that is happening and I'm excited to be on that list, too.

Q. You're joining a franchise that's known for careful, savvy roster construction. What do you think it says about you, and what have they told you that they see in you and how they are expecting to use you?

ADAY MARA: Well, first of all, I'm super happy to be in this organization. If they are there, it's because of something, because something they did do something well. So I'm excited to get there and adjust to the league, to practices, to life, NBA life.

But I think it's going to be great playing against top players every day. That's going to help me a lot. So I can't wait to get there tomorrow and just meet everyone.

Q. I would like to ask you about influence of Coach Simovic on you and your path from Spain?

ADAY MARA: Ivo?

Q. Yeah. And also your commitment to Spanish

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national team in the future, do you think you're going to -- now you're in the NBA, and Summer League and all the other things will happen in the summer. Are you still committed to play for the Spanish national team in the future?

ADAY MARA: With Ivo, I have a good relationship with him. We know each other from a couple years ago. And I went to Toronto to do the workout. So I meet him again. He also speaks Spanish. He was in Spain. So I have a good relationship with him. But, yeah, I don't know, we've been talking a lot through the process. He's been helping me.

And then about the national team, I always think the same thing. Playing for your national team is one of the biggest things that you can have in basketball, just to represent your country.

So, yeah, hopefully I can play as many games as I can with the national team. I think we have a great generation coming up. So I'm excited to play with the national team, too.

Q. You were selected 12th overall, becoming the highest-drafted player from Spain since Ricky Rubio was selected 5 in 2009. So it has been some time. What does it mean knowing this information, knowing who you are as a person, to your culture, your heritage and your family history?

ADAY MARA: It means a lot. It's an honor to represent my country. Obviously you get into a list with really good names, I'm happy for that, too.

I think it's great for Spanish basketball. I'm just super happy that I got to the list of being with those players and getting drafted high.

Obviously it's important, but I don't think it's how high you can go or not. It's just the team, the program, so that's why I'm really excited to be with OKC because I think it's a great program. But yeah, I'm happy. Yeah.

Q. You were the 2026 Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year. You're going into a team that was the regular season best defense in the league in Oklahoma City. How do you feel like your skill set is going to be able to elevate the team even more?

ADAY MARA: Well, I think just trying to do whatever the coach says, trying to help the team as much as I can. And just try to get better and better every year or every month or whatever.

But I think being able to play with Chet, I think we can play together, and I think that can be great for the team just in talking about rim protection.

But obviously defense in my game these first years, I feel is going to be super important. So I'm looking forward to get there and just know how they play, how they do so I can just adjust to the team and be as good as I can the first year.

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