

# WNBA Draft

Thursday, April 10, 2025

**Curt Miller**

**Jeff Pagliocca**

**Jamila Wideman**

**Talisa Rhea**



THE MODERATOR: Thanks, guys, for joining us. We're going to jump right into question and answer immediately.

**Q. My first question is to Talisa. With three first-round picks in the 2026 draft, how does that impact what you guys do this year? Then my second question is can any team simultaneously be in win-now mode and compete for a championship as well as trying to set themselves up for the future with young players?**

TALISA RHEA: I think the first question, having those picks next year is not impacting our strategy this year and wanting to take the best player available at the 2 spot. We're really excited for talent that we're going to add, and I think we're in a unique spot to be able to add a player that will be able to contribute to a win-now mode.

I think as we went through free agency, we built a roster to try to win now while accumulating some draft picks for the future. We believe that at 2 we're going to get a player that will help us this year as well as the long term.

**Q. I'm curious, it's possible that there could be guards available when you draft who have played with your bigs in college at different spots. When you evaluate them, how much weight do you put in the fact that there may be a chemistry there, and how much leaning on your bigs do you do when trying to figure out -- get a scouting report on them?**

JEFF PAGLIOCCA: No, good question. We're always going to be looking for synergy between guards and bigs. It makes some sense, of course, when there's players available that could be in our range to get perspectives from players that they may have played with. We're always going to continue to make the best decision for the organization, but yeah, it matters because continuity means a lot when you're building a team.

**Q. There were a couple of prospects projected to go in**

**the first round to recently announce that they're going to return to college basketball. I was curious whether the uncertainty around who was going to be available was a factor in your willingness to part ways with the No. 3 pick.**

JEFF PAGLIOCCA: Good question. Been waiting for this one. I think that the decision to try to go get Ariel Atkins was an Ariel Atkins decision, not due to the strength of the draft, and if anything it just shows how much we're dedicated and how much we believe in her to move such a strong pick.

No, we probably didn't know more than anybody else, and obviously we made that deal quite a bit ago before some of these players made decisions.

But again, when we have an opportunity to add somebody that checks the boxes that we're looking for to get us closer to not only the playoffs but to get closer to a championship again, that's why we did what we did with Ariel.

**Q. I wanted to ask Talisa about international prospects. A lot of people have Dominique Malonga going second overall. I wonder if you could speak to the unique challenges in drafting an international player, and also, how do you feel like the WNBA needs to do a better job of attracting international players, especially with expansion coming up?**

TALISA RHEA: I think that there are quite a few really talented international players in this draft, Dom being one of them. I think the W is doing a great job of bringing over talent and making them want to stay here and making the W a priority. I think we're also seeing these international players growing up now with the dream to come play in the WNBA, and it's not just to stay over in Europe and play.

But playing in the WNBA is a priority for them. I think there's always challenges. There's a lot of uncertainty and kind of what's to come with our league over the next few years and with FIBA competitions. We know that some things are changing and our footprint is changing. We're expanding. There's a lot in motion right now. But I think what has been clear with a lot of these international players

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is they do want to play, and they want to make the W a priority. Wo we're excited for some of those changes.

I think it's an ongoing conversation with them and their time and availability for the WNBA.

**Q. A hypothetical: Let's say you guys do take an international player at No. 2. What are the conversations like leading up to this that confirm whether or not they'll be here by the start of training camp, by the start of the season, et cetera?**

TALISA RHEA: Yeah, there's conversations with the player directly. There's conversations with the agency and their team, just trying to understand what their current situation looks like. A lot of them are still playing overseas. What does that season look like and when could that potentially end, and then also what national team are they a part of and are there commitments with the European championships, with World Cup, with Olympics down the road.

It's a case-by-case conversation, but a lot of ongoing conversations with their teams.

**Q. What is you guys' assessment on NC State's Ta'Niya Rivers and Aziaha James coming into Monday's draft?**

JAMILA WIDEMAN: Yeah, just jumping in, I think the program at NC State and Saniya and Aziaha, great examples of the talent that I think Talisa referred to before in this draft. I think we watched that team really find some tremendous chemistry toward the end of the year. Both just really exciting players that I think example where the game is going. Both incredibly athletic, both able to get up and down the court and play with speed, both able to play a couple different positions.

I think both of them are examples of the kind of versatile outside talent that we're just beginning to see more consistently and spread across the NCAA, and we're about to watch that talent enter our league.

**Q. Jamila, with three of the top six picks, can you give us a sense of what you guys feel like you're targeting position-wise, and if you feel like there's any international players possibly for you guys in those picks that you'll have in the top six?**

JAMILA WIDEMAN: Yeah, I think we're really excited to be at 3, 4 and 6. I think it actually creates an opportunity for us to build strength in a couple of different ways. Obviously with just one pick, maybe you can do one thing at a time. But I think we have a chance to build depth. I

think we have a chance to build on strength positionally at the same time. I think we're really excited about bringing in a group of young players into an environment that we think will essentially inspire growth and development.

I would say not only in those young players but also more generally, just looking at our existing roster. I think we've got a great blend and some veterans who are also still looking to grow and improve their games. We look forward to welcoming that energy and that youth to be in that environment, as well.

**Q. Jamila, obviously 3, 4, 6 in this draft under the current CBA. It would seem these are not just rookies but rookies who will be at a lower salary structure than rookies are likely to be in subsequent years. I wonder if that changes the way you think of the value of those picks, and just related to it, whether because those three are valuable, how much you've given thought to potentially using them to trade up?**

JAMILA WIDEMAN: Yeah, I think to your first question, I think we look at the players who are available and essentially assess their value based on the talent that's coming in. I think we're all in a position of waiting to see how the CBA will land and also how any changes may impact contracts that are actually signed this year. So I don't have a firm sense or answer in terms of what will be true for the rookies who come out this year from a contractual standpoint, but we're all sort of waiting to see what that will ultimately be.

I think, as I said, in this year's draft for us, having that collection of picks has always been about looking at the opportunity to onboard a lot of talent at once, and so right now that's really what we see in the value of those picks.

**Q. There's several first-round caliber talents who have elected not to enter the draft and to stay in college. For Curt, curious what you see as the biggest factors driving those decisions in a broad sense and how those factors might change in the years to come.**

CURT MILLER: Yeah, I think it's all probably individualized decisions. We don't get privy to the whys on why those players returned, if they're chasing more of a collegiate experience or a championship or a different role, or if there's other factors. I don't think there's probably, for any of those players deciding to return, necessarily one way and one decision that they are making. But it'll be interesting to see how this plays out.

For us longtime people in the WNBA or that have worn the GM hat, we're ready for the COVID year to be over, and it just never seems to be over, so to truly know who's coming



in or not into the draft.

But we're always nimble as GMs in this league. You know you don't know who's declaring and coming into the draft until the very end. So you're always nimble. You're always preparing. You're always being very thorough. All 13 of our franchises are going to be very thorough.

**Q. It seems like part of it is the financial realities of what you can make now in the college game and what you can make in the pros, whether that's salary or whatnot. Do you feel that from your chair, and do you expect that to change at all?**

CURT MILLER: Just personally speaking, I think that the narratives out there are sometimes false, that most of these NIL deals, or endorsements more than anything, with these top players that are first-round picks, their endorsements are going to travel with them. So the narrative that they're not is frankly false. They're going to take those with them.

So unsure, but I think at times there's too much made about salary and too much made about what's going on in college. But again, we don't live in the shoes of the collegiate athletes and everything that's going on. But the top players that we're talking to, their endorsements are going to travel with them.

**Q. Hailey Van Lith reached the Elite Eight with three different teams in five years. She talked about being a winner and her ability to adapt. Heading into a draft and judging a player who has won in all those different kinds of ways, how do you weigh that going into a draft like this?**

CURT MILLER: Yeah, I'll be a little bit generic in terms of winner because it was such a big part of our free agency when we looked at free agency and building this '25 roster in Dallas. That was a big priority for us. So through our trades, we added numerous collegiate national champions, or at minimum, competed in the Final Fours at the collegiate level. We also added WNBA champions, or when you look at DiJonai Carrington or Ty Harris -- DiJonai her entire career has either been in the semifinals or the Finals in the WNBA and Ty Harris has now been back-to-back semifinals. They were the starting backcourt to a semifinal team in Connecticut. So winners are important to us.

So when you relate it to this draft class or in particular to Hailey, I think it resonates with all of us GMs, that we value winning. We want to add winning and competitiveness to all our locker rooms.

**Q. Jamila, I'm curious, can you share a little bit now that you've gone through free agency and tweaked the roster and made your moves through trades how you've evaluated Shakira Austin and where she stands with the franchise as someone who was a high pick, is still kind of on her rookie contract, even though getting toward the end? Kind of just her stance as far as with the future of the franchise and how y'all see that impacting what you may do in the draft.**

JAMILA WIDEMAN: Yeah, thanks. I think we're generally excited about the folks that we have returning on our roster, and certainly including Shakira. I think we all really enjoy the unique opportunity to watch players on our teams during the offseason, whether that was overseas or during Unrivaled. The Mystics happened to be a bunch of folks playing down in Miami, and it was really great to see that group on the court and healthy and I think gaining some confidence, having the opportunity just to be in a different moment and a different setting, which I think is always good and refreshing for folks. So we were really excited to see both just the skill improvement for all of our players, quite frankly, in the offseason, both here and also abroad.

**Q. I know there was a combine-style event down in Tampa this year. I'm curious what everyone thought of that, and understanding that the logistics would make it very difficult, if there's been any push for a more formal combine process before the draft like they have in the NBA.**

CURT MILLER: I'll take it. I appreciate the question. Certainly appreciated the turnout at this year's combine All-Star Game. I thought it was well represented by numerous players that we'll hear their names on Monday night.

I personally loved the fact that we could look at data, simple heights, but their reach and their wingspan and their hand size, a lot of metrics that we don't always get or have to ask specifically to athletic trainers of individual teams.

So I think that information is all very, very valuable. As GMs across our league, we're all in an eyes, ears, numbers mindset. Our eyes tell us what we see, then playing the numbers and the deep dive of analytics or just expanding for our league, and then it's the ears.

So the more and more data, the more and more opportunity that we have with these players is a benefit to all of our franchises. We appreciate that it continues to grow. I personally hope that it continues to be an evolving, developing part of our game going into drafts.

**Q. Question for Curt Miller. Curt, I got to see Aneesah**

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**Morrow when she was a freshman at DePaul. Not only was I taken with her skills, but I thought she had a really good feel for the game. Whoever drafts her, will they be better suited to letting her be who she is or trying to transform her into a three-point shooting guard?**

CURT MILLER: Yeah, I think whichever franchise is fortunate to end up with her is getting a really talented player, first and foremost. I personally, in my decade in this league, think that rebounding has translated, and players that rebounded in college ended up rebounding in the pros.

One of the things that you have, that just pops off the chart when she leads the nation in rebounding, is she goes and gets the ball. She's undersized, so it talks about tenacity, it talks about desire. Rebounding is a big hustle statistic.

Systems, coaches will determine what they want her to do at the pro level and whoever ends up with her. But I think using the term in a good way, all of us are looking to add dogs to our locker room. I think we all believe that she'll be a dog in a locker room.

**Q. Curt, obviously you've been asked a lot about the first overall pick, but I want to ask you about your two picks following that, the 12th pick and the 14th pick. Just talk about is there a specific position you're targeting with those picks, or what are you looking for as you get to those two picks following the first overall pick?**

CURT MILLER: Yeah, really excited about those picks. Intentionally as we constructed the roster, we created an opportunity for 12 and 14 to make our opening-day roster. That's not the case around the league with some late first-round or second-round picks. You would want to hear your name if you're in that range for Dallas because there is absolutely a legitimate chance for 12 and 14 to make our opening-day roster. That was intentionally done through our free agency.

So we're excited. We've invested a lot of time on preparing to pick 12 and 14, and we're excited about it.

First and foremost, it's always going to be culture for us, and Coach Chris, it's going to be adding great people. I think people wins over talent any day. Chris and I have been a part of a lot of successful teams in the WNBA, and we truly believe that's started always in the locker room and doing it with great people. So that will be our focus.

There's obviously skill sets that Dallas and we looked in the offseason to address. We wanted to add three-point

shooting. We wanted to add defense. We wanted to become a better rebounding team and more depth in the post, knowing when I took the job who potentially was not coming back. Those have been started to be addressed but continue to be addressed in the upcoming draft, and 12 and 14 are very important to us.

**Q. Curt, I guess general question, do you think that this rookie class will mark a new era in the WNBA or a new stage or just a continuation of last year's boom?**

CURT MILLER: In terms of popularity? What angle are you asking me?

**Q. In terms of popularity, interest, where the league is at in its lifecycle, how we'll reflect on it.**

CURT MILLER: Yeah, I'm excited. Obviously in great position. When I took the job we were in the draft lottery but hadn't won the draft lottery, so those videos probably still exist of me losing my mind that night. But excited about this draft class, bringing energy, continuing the momentum, where our league is at and where women's basketball is at. For us that have been a 35-year guy in the profession between Division I and the WNBA, I've always believed that we've had an incredible product. It was just how do we continue to get more and more eyes on our game and more and more people through the turnstiles to get into those games.

It's so popular right now, so it's at a really good place. I'm excited about this draft class, keeping the momentum going and what is really, really special about our league.

I like the depth of this league. I think the challenge that the four of us on this call have is someone picked 20 might have a longer and more successful career when we look back at it years from now than someone that might get drafted in the middle of the first round. There's been a lot of evaluation going on for all our franchises, and it's nerve-racking, but it's exciting at the same time.

We're hoping, like we did with DiJonai, with a later second-round pick, so arguably if you redrafted that '21 draft class to be the No. 1 pick overall. So excited for not only No. 1, obviously, but our other picks, also.

**Q. The one player that I probably expect to be somewhere in the first and maybe second round was Makayla Timpson. I wondered your evaluation on her and what she brings to the table as a big.**

JEFF PAGLIOCCA: We've got a lot of respect for Timpson's game. Measurables are very, very good. I think the wingspan was multiple inches more than her height,





and again, when you can find a player and an athlete whose wingspan exceeds their height, you've got to start paying attention because those types of factors will absolutely translate to our league on both ends of the court, whether it's offensively, defensively.

I think she was right around 17 and 10 this year, so there's a lot there at 6'2", 6'3", at the 4 position, at the 3 position. Yeah, it's going to be exciting to see where she lands.

**Q. Curt, I'm wondering when you saw Caitlin's progression last year, I'm wondering if you took any lessons that you all can use with Paige this year, and not just talking about on-the-court stuff but the off-the-court attention, which obviously we expect will be similar for Paige and for your franchise going forward this season?**

CURT MILLER: Yeah, I think that's a good question. I think obviously Caitlin had an unbelievable impact on the court, and her adjustment was quick and very, very productive. You saw how hot Indiana and how dangerous they were late in the year, and a lot of that was a credit to Caitlin's quick adjustment, which is not always easy in this league because there is that adjustment.

But I think the other thing that we all took notice of around our league is something as simple as security for our players and how to navigate the increased viewership, the increased fandom and how our players deserve to be protected and amplified at the same time, really taken care of.

It's a players-first league. Our job all around the league is to create an incredible environment for these players, and that's obviously taking shape across the league with practice facilities, playing facilities, everything that these players have worked so hard for and deserve, from charters -- I got in the league, you had to be a six-year veteran or you were still sharing a hotel room.

So to watch the improvement to how we handle the players and try to create these incredible experiences for them, we just keep looking at best practices. Caitlin's arrival into the league, we can look at a lot of best practices to Indiana's credit that they did, and we will all be implementing with our own players.

**Q. For Jeff, now that you have Ariel Atkins, Vandersloot and the addition of Rebecca Allen, your guard group is in a pretty solidified spot. When you look at people you want to add into that forward group to join Michaela and Angel, who are some people that have stood out to you within the draft, like a Saniya Rivers or a Maddy Westbeld, and how would you**

**evaluate this overall forward group that is in this draft class?**

JEFF PAGLIOCCA: Yeah, I think the draft class has a lot of depth to it. We added a lot of shooting, a lot of wings in the offseason, and we're always keeping an eye out for shooting 4s. No secret, but we want to keep adding athletes and length.

To your question about Saniya, yeah, she could probably handle 1 through 3, a little bit of 4 at times. She's got a lot of length. Maybe the best athlete, overall athlete in the draft, and she's got a lot of length, too. She's proven she can guard multiple positions, which always matters in our league, because with length you can cause some problems with point guards and wings. So you've got to pay attention to players like that.

Yeah, Westbeld, a pick-and-pop 4, someone that can face up a little bit. You've got to pay attention to players like that, too, who were on great teams and had to sacrifice at times than being two, three, four option where maybe they could have been No. 1 and still have a lot of weapons. But up until the season before the injury, Westbeld I think was hanging around 35, 36 percent from three, so there's not a lot of players at her size that shoot the ball as well as she does. Yeah, we're paying attention to everybody. I think it has a lot to do with my peers on the call with what we'll see at No. 10. But we've got a plan; we're going to stick to it.

CURT MILLER: Just tell us who's you're taking at 10 so us at 12 knows what the heck we're doing. Come on.

JEFF PAGLIOCCA: I think last year I saw Curt at a game, and he said, you tell me who you're taking and I'll tell you who I'm taking, but that was the order. So I'm glad I didn't say anything then.

That was my first interaction with my newfound friend. But we're still going to hold tight because we're trying to figure out what everybody else is doing.

JAMILA WIDEMAN: Jeff, when you told me you were going to tell me, GMs just pass that on year to year?

JEFF PAGLIOCCA: Yes, yes, and I still may if you call me and give me a little bit of help because you're determining quite a bit for us at 10.

**Q. What are your expectations for Lou Lopez-Senechal for this upcoming season? She had kind of a struggle last year. Also talking about Tyron Roberson, the Mexican who is going to be on your coaching staff in this upcoming season. What are your expectations for both?**

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CURT MILLER: Yeah, great question. Excited about Lou and her future. She has elected to take this season off, and that has been publicly announced. So we'll retain her rights going into the 2026 season. But Lou is having a tremendous season over in Spain, almost a 50/40/90 efficiency over there. Just really appreciate the kind of year that she had and the honesty that she's going to sit out the year and be back with us in the future.

You're stealing our thunder. We haven't quite announced publicly our hire of Tyron. But Ty is joining us as our new video coordinator, coming from Mexico City and the G League. Can't be more excited about his addition, which now you broke the news, but we'll go a little bit public this week.

**Q. I'm wondering, now that you're in an executive position, there are so many coaches that were in the carousel after one year like yourself in L.A. Now that you have Chris on the sidelines for Dallas, how do you allow that space for him to help develop this team that's brand new versus the results that you're expecting in the climate that it is for coaches across all the four major sports?**

CURT MILLER: Yeah, great question. The excitement for us, after a really thorough search and landing on Chris is the synergy, that it brings from our front office through the coaching staff. Obviously, Chris and I were partners for eight years between the Connecticut Sun and Los Angeles, and he truly became the voice of running our defense through the years. I got a firsthand seat to see how talented of a coach he is, the best teacher of the game through film that I've ever been around, and he originally started as our video coordinator. So really, really excited that Chris is in that head coaching seat.

But it's the synergy -- Travis Charles is one of the longtime assistant GMs in the league, and when I took the job, a big attraction was that he was going to remain as an assistant GM. And then Jasmine Thomas, who was Chris and I's starting point guard for her last eight years of her career in the W and was our coach on the floor for all those years, also is going to be an assistant GM. Just made the synergy; we're so connected through that.

Chris went out and hired coaches that I was familiar with as his assistants. So there's just an incredible synergy and a power throughout the organization in Dallas that I think it's really, really a positive time.

With that said, Chris is going to be himself. As good of a combo that we made in the successes that we had in the Finals or semifinals, he coaches completely different than I

do. He has a demeanor that frankly resonates with the players of today probably more than grouchy Curt Miller. I see him relationship build with players and staff, and I just think he's going to be an unbelievable communicator with these players.

He's going to do it his way. It is not going to be a mini-me kind of scenario here in Dallas. It is truly his era and his time. I can't wait to support -- my role is to help get him what he needs to be successful on the court, and that's staff, that's players. I'm serving him and his staff and doing the best we can to provide everything that would allow him to put a productive and successful product on the floor.

THE MODERATOR: I want to say thank you to Jamila, Talisa, Jeff, Curt. Tomorrow we will announce the players who are invited to attend the draft on Monday night in person. We will at 12:00 noon eastern begin rolling out the names one at a time over 15-minute intervals. That's 12:00 eastern, WNBA social media. We'll announce the names one at a time over 15-minute intervals. When that is completed, don't hold me to my math, but that's about 2:30-ish, we will put out a compilation press release.

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