



Brittany Spears, second from left, and teammates react to her selection in Monday's WNBA Draft.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



04/11/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: Phoenix Targets Spears' Hard Work, Skill

BOULDER - Brittany Spears' smile might last for several weeks. Those on her Colorado teammates' faces might fade a little sooner, but the memory of what she brought to CU women's basketball will be permanent. The moral to this story: Hard work pays off in huge dividends - and eventually in big smiles.

With her coaches, seven of her teammates, Athletics Director Mike Bohn and a handful of administrators monitoring Monday's 2011 WNBA Draft on a pair of flat screens in the Varsity Room of the Dal Ward Athletics Center, Spears watched and heard her name called in the second round by the Phoenix Mercury.

Spears had heard pre-draft chatter that the San Antonio Silver Stars might take her with the 20th pick in the second round. The Mercury outthustled them, choosing Spears with pick No. 19 and making CU's career scoring leader their only selection of the day. Phoenix didn't have a first-round

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pick and traded its third-round pick to Connecticut.

When the suspense ended, the room erupted with cheers, hugs and high fives.

"It's so exciting . . . we were here anticipating everything," said guard Chucky Jeffery. "We knew she was going to go. We're just so, so happy for her. She's one of the best players I've ever played with. I know she's going to do good things."

Monday was a day Spears envisioned since her childhood. She called it "a dream come true. I've dreamed about it since I was little, since the WNBA was started. I'm just really excited and looking forward to the opportunity. I still can't believe this . . . it's amazing. I figured if I worked hard enough I would get there."

"Working hard enough" has been second nature for Spears. During her time at CU, personnel at the Coors Events Center became accustomed to lowering one fly-away basket after all had been raised for volleyball practice because "Spears is coming in later to shoot." When the Events Center was used for mid-term or final exams, it wasn't rare for Spears to show up afterwards - sometimes as late as 10:30 p.m. - to get in a final hour or more of shooting.

In one of her first encounters with Spears, first-year CU Coach Linda Lappe was impressed with Spears' conditioning, recalling that Spears' sub-6-minute mile "blew everybody out of the water." That meeting offered a glimpse into Spears' work ethic. Said Lappe prior to CU's Senior Day: "She doesn't miss any workouts, she's there every single day when she doesn't have to be."

And her teammates took notice.

"They say hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard . . . but obviously she does have talent, too," guard Brittany Wilson said. "You see the type of effort it takes to be drafted to a great team."

Spears' work ethic and skill set are obvious to anyone who has watched her over the past four years. A 2011 All-Big 12 first-team selection, she became CU's career scoring leader (2,185 points), with her final-season point total (652) the second-highest in program history.

The 6-foot-1 Spears averaged 19.2 points and 8.1 rebounds as a senior, 17.2 and 7.9 for her career. She hit her career high of 36 points twice, the first time in 2008 against UMass, the second against Southern California in this season's WNIT.

She can be a prolific scorer in a number of ways but her pull-up jumper, Lappe noted, needs honing. That's where a work ethic accustomed to being in overdrive comes in.

"We've already talked about what it's going to take for her to make a team; it's not guaranteed," Lappe said. "But I think this is an amazing day, an exciting day. She's worked really, really hard to be in this position, to have a chance to try out for a team. She's got to enjoy this, definitely."

"But starting from here on out to May 15 (the opening of camp), she's going to continue to work and work on her weaknesses and keep getting better and better and better. If she shows in the two- or three-week period what she can do and what we know she can do, then I think she'll have a great shot."

The WNBA's 15th season begins on June 3, with regular-season play concluding on Sept. 11. The league's 12 teams have rosters comprised of 11 players each. Phoenix, coached by Corey Gaines, finished 15-19 last season and 13-9 in the Western Conference, second behind Seattle (28-6, 20-2). The Mercury roster features former UConn star Diana Taurasi, who recently completed her seventh WNBA season and is among the league's - if not the world's - most recognizable players.

"I know they're up-tempo and they run a lot . . . and they've got Diana Taurasi," Spears said. "I watched her a lot, especially when she played for UConn. I've been watching her play for a long time. So, it's going to be like kind of weird playing with her."

Spears arrived at CU with very few leadership skills and not many reasons to have developed any. Away from home (Pasadena, Calif.) for the first time, she spent a fitful start to a senior season at Notre Dame Prep School in Fitchburg, Mass. But she eventually settled in, sharpened her focus and came to CU primed for what would be a record-setting career.

Lappe had seen Spears play a handful of times before being named CU's coach a year ago and was aware of her talent. But how receptive she might be to a new coach and how she might progress in her final season were mysteries left unsolved until practice began.

"At the beginning of the year I wasn't quite sure (this day would come)," Lappe said. "I knew she'd be playing a lot of basketball after her days at Colorado, but I didn't exactly know if she'd be in the position she's in now. I felt like over the course of the year she stepped up in a lot of different ways. She really did everything we asked her to do as a coaching staff . . .

"Her leadership was much better this year. Through the course of the year it became evident that she might have a shot (at the WNBA), she might be able to do that. She kept going, she kept getting better and better, and by the end of the year I really felt that this day would happen. I'm just so happy that it did."

Spears will report to the Mercury's camp next month with no illusions. "I've still got a lot of work to do," she said. "I've got to go in there and perform and do all the little things."

But that's what she's addressed for the past four years at CU - the little things as well as the big ones. She's been a model worker for her teammates, and to see it rewarded as it was Monday "means a lot," Wilson said. "She's worked hard for what she accomplished. Her motivation is something that's rubbed off on us all."

The legacies of other former CU players have included more wins, but being renowned for hard work is a good way to be remembered. Spears' teammates said Monday they had never seen her happier. Bet on her working hard enough over the next month to make it last.

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CU's Brittany Spears drafted by WNBA's Phoenix Mercury

Forward is just fourth Buffalo ever selected by WNBA team

By Joshua Lindenstein Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 04/11/2011 02:47:32 PM MDT



Based on the indications she'd received, Colorado forward Brittany Spears thought it was the WNBA's San Antonio Silver Stars who had the most interest in drafting her on Monday, likely in the second or third round.

So as the Silver Stars' second pick -- the 20th overall -- approached, the buzz in the Varsity Room at the Dal Ward Athletic Center picked up, with the Buffaloes' all-time leading scorer on the basketball court sitting front-and-center surrounded by her teammates, coaches and athletic department personnel.

All watched the WNBA draft on a big screen TV as the Phoenix Mercury beat San Antonio to the punch. The Mercury -- winner of two of the last four league titles -- took Spears with the 19th pick.

It probably wouldn't have mattered which team called her name; Spears couldn't stop smiling.

"I'm just really excited," said Spears, who averaged 19.2 points and 8.1 rebounds in leading the Buffs to the WNIT quarterfinals as a senior. "I'm looking forward to the opportunity, and I still can't believe it. It's an amazing feeling right now."

Spears became just the fourth Buff to be drafted by the league, which is entering its 15th season. She follows Isabelle Fijalkowski (1997), Raegan Scott (1997) and Mandy Nightingale (2002). Only Fijalkowski, Scott and Tera Bjorklund have played in the WNBA.

Spears was the third Big 12 player taken of five overall. San Antonio -- which had taken Oklahoma guard Danielle

Robinson with the sixth pick -- dipped back into the league with the 20th selection to take Texas A&M All-American forward Danielle Adams. Texas A&M guard Sydney Colson was taken three spots ahead of Spears by Connecticut, and Atlanta took Iowa State's Kelsey Bolte with the 32nd pick in the 36-player draft.

"I think this is an amazing day and an exciting day," CU coach Linda Lappe said. "Brittany's worked really hard to be in this position and to have a chance to try out for a team."

Making the squad, of course, will be no small task.

WNBA teams are allowed 15 players in training camp, which begins May 15. They must trim their rosters to 11 by the start of the regular season in early June.

"It's not guaranteed," Lappe said. "If she shows in that two-week period, three-week period, what she can do and what we know she can do, then I think she'll have a great shot."

Phoenix -- which won titles in 2007 and 2009 before going 15-19 and falling in the Western Conference finals last season - has eight players signed to 2011 contracts already.

Phoenix general manager Ann Meyers-Drysdale said Spears' versatility to play inside and out both on offense and defense made her attractive to a squad that likes to run and shoot the 3.

Meyers-Drysdale said the decision on roster spots ultimately rests with coach Corey Gaines. But while the GM acknowledged the difficulty Spears faces in making the team, she said the rookie's chances are as good as any of the team's offseason acquisitions who will be trying out.

"It's up for grabs who gets it," she said.

Spears will be the only drafted rookie in Mercury camp. Phoenix didn't have a first-round pick this season and traded away third-round pick Tahnee Robinson of Nevada to Connecticut for a third-round selection next year.

Spears wore a walking boot on her right foot Monday as she nurses an injury sustained late in the season. But after taking a week off following the Buffs' WNIT quarterfinal run, she has been working out ever since in preparation for tryouts.

"I've still got to go in there and perform well and do all the little things," Spears said. "So I still have a lot of work to do."

Spears said the prospect of playing alongside former UConn and Olympic team standout Diana Taurasi was exciting.

Spears' own status now, though, in turn provides plenty of pride and also incentive for her Buffalo teammates, who were on their way to work out after the draft.

"We knew she was going to go, but we're just so, so happy for her," sophomore guard Chucky Jeffery said. "I know she's going to do good things."

"That just motivates all of us to just keep working hard to get where she's at."

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THE DENVER POST

Colorado's Brittany Spears picked 19th by Phoenix in WNBA draft

By The Denver Post

Posted: 04/11/2011 03:45:09 PM MDT

Updated: 04/11/2011 11:23:14 PM MDT

Brittany Spears, Colorado's all-time leading scorer, had her basketball career extended Monday when the Phoenix Mercury picked her in the WNBA draft.

Phoenix drafted Spears in the second round as the 19th overall selection.

"I'm really excited, looking forward to the opportunity," Spears said. "I just know they're up-tempo and they run a lot. And they have Diana Taurasi."

Connecticut star Maya Moore was the No. 1 pick overall, going to the Minnesota Lynx.

Spears became the fourth CU player to be selected in the WNBA draft, following Isabelle Fijalkowski (1997 first round, Cleveland Rockers); Raegan Scott (1997 third round, Utah Starzz); and Mandy Nightingale (2002 third round, Portland Fire).

Spears, a 6-foot-1 guard and forward from Pasadena, Calif., set the Buffaloes' career scoring record with 2,185 points. She was a starter in each of her 127 games at CU, also a school record.

"This is a dream come true, since the WNBA

started," Spears said. "(I hoped) if I worked hard enough, I would get there. I still have a lot of work to do. I still have to go in there and perform."

Phoenix, coached by former Nuggets guard Corey Gaines, was only 15-19 in the WNBA last season but advanced to the Western Conference finals in the playoffs.

"She's going to continue to work," CU coach Linda Lappe said of Spears. "If she shows what she can do, and what we know she can do, she'll have a great shot."

Australian star Elizabeth Cabbage was drafted second overall Monday by the Tulsa Shock. Gonzaga's Courtney Vandersloot, the only player in women's college history with at least 2,000 points and 1,000 assists in a career, was drafted third by the Chicago Sky.

Xavier's Amber Harris (Minnesota) was the fourth pick, and Ohio State's Jantel Lavender (Los Angeles Sparks) went fifth.

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Mercury take Colorado's Spears in second round

Posted 19h 31m ago |

PHOENIX (AP) — The Phoenix Mercury, who led the WNBA in scoring for five years straight, selected Colorado career scoring leader Brittany Spears in the second round of Monday's draft.

Spears, a 6-foot-1 all-Big 12 Conference forward who averaged 18.1 points and eight rebounds in her senior season for Colorado, was taken with the 19th pick overall. Phoenix had previously traded its first-round pick to Tulsa.

"We needed a player for the wing spot who could score and could run," Mercury coach Corey Gaines said. "At 6-1, she has some good size. That should help."

Spears scored 2,185 points in four years at Colorado, averaging 16.9 points per game for her career, seventh-best in Big 12 Conference history. She is also first on the Buffalo career list in field goal attempts. She is second in school history in scoring average, minutes, field goals made and 3-point attempts.

"I think I bring shooting and some offense," Spears said from Boulder, Colo. "But I'll work hard on whatever I need to do."

In the third round, Phoenix picked 5-foot-9 guard Tahnee Robinson from Nevada.

The Mercury, who won the WNBA championship in 2007 and 2009, traded its first-round pick and post player Nicole Ohlde to Tulsa last season for 6-foot-6 center Kara Braxton. Braxton subsequently signed a contract extension with the Mercury on Aug. 20. Tulsa used the seventh overall pick on Monday to draft Stanford's Kayla Pedersen, who starred at Red Mountain High School in suburban Mesa, Ariz.

Going without a first-round pick limited the Mercury's options, Gaines said.

"Second-round pick — it's tough, we tried to do the best we could with it," he said. "Best available. We have a lot of bigs coming into training camp so we definitely want Diana (Taurasi) and Penny (Taylor) to have some form of rest in training camp."

Phoenix, which lost to eventual champion Seattle in the Western Conference finals last season, signed 6-foot-4 veteran Nakia Sanford during the offseason to go with Braxton and 6-2 Candice Dupree.

Robinson, the 31st pick overall, averaged

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22.2 points a game and shot 42 percent from outside the arc for Nevada, earning all-Western Athletic Conference honors as a senior.

The Mercury traded their 2010 first-round pick for point guard Tameka Johnson so they haven't had a first-round selection since choosing DeWanna Bonner No. 5 overall in 2009. Bonner has been named Sixth Woman of the Year in both of her WNBA seasons.

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Phoenix Mercury take Colorado's Brittany Spears in WNBA draft

by [Odeen Domingo](#) - Apr. 11, 2011 04:08 PM
The Arizona Republic | [azcentral.com](#)

It's going to be a battle from the beginning.

For Colorado forward/guard Brittany Spears, who the **Mercury** selected with the No. 19 overall pick in the second round of Monday's WNBA draft, the celebration of being drafted will be a short one.

The Mercury don't have many spots left in their 11-player regular season roster, so the work to get ready for the start of **training** camp (May 15) begins today. The team has eight players signed to guaranteed contracts. It's a group that doesn't include last season's backup point guards Ketia Swanier and Taylor Lilley, both of whom played significant minutes in 2010 but will have to battle with Spears for a roster spot.

"It's tough for any second-round pick (to make a team)," Mercury coach Corey Gaines said. "And even some first-round picks won't make it on some teams, too. That's just how it is in the WNBA. You have to come in and play hard. Do what you do. Maybe it's a good thing to come in with no expectations, and the coach sees you and you just wow them."

Spears has the skills to do just that. She was an All-Big 12 Conference first team selection her senior season and Colorado's all-time leading scorer.

"We needed a player for the wing spot who can come in who can score and run," Gaines said.

Mercury President and General Manager Ann Meyers Drysdale likes Spears' versatility.

"She can shoot the 3, get to the basket, and is a terrific rebounder," Meyers Drysdale said.

The Mercury did not have a first-round pick; it traded that pick last July to the Tulsa Shock in a deal that sent veteran 6-foot-6 center Kara Braxton, a projected starter heading into the season, to Phoenix.

Tulsa used that pick, No. 7 overall, to select Stanford forward Kayla Pedersen, a Fountain Hills native and former Mesa Red Mountain High star.

The Mercury also drafted Nevada guard Tahnee Robinson at No. 31 overall in the third round but traded her rights to the Connecticut Sun for the Sun's third-round pick in 2012.

Spears knows the hurdles that await her.

"I just have to go in there and work hard," Spears said, "do what I have to do to get some time on the court."

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Brittany Spears selected in WNBA draft

NewsCore

Updated Apr 11, 2011 11:36 PM ET

BRISTOL, Conn.

Worried fans of Britney Spears can rest easy -- the pop princess hasn't traded in the microphone for a life of slam dunks and three-point bombs.

In a move likely to cause confusion and amusement for years to come, the Phoenix Mercury on Monday picked the lesser known Brittany Spears as their second round pick (19th overall) in the WNBA draft.

The University of Colorado guard's name is so similar to the more famous pop star's that it is already causing trouble in the fast-paced

world of Twitter

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The topic #brittanyspears was already trending late Monday -- but it didn't seem to be basketball fans sending the twittersphere into a frenzy.

User briannarutledge said: "#itssadwhen a trending topic is #brittanyspears. and they dont even speell her damn name right."

While charl_collier said, "Why is #brittanyspears trending? I'm sure her name is #britneyspears."

ElizabethxxAnne also weighed in, "the fact that #brittanyspears is trending is sad...you all spelled Britney wrong..."

Most users of the social networking site appeared completely oblivious to the case of mistaken identity.

Seemingly referring to a new track released by the non-basketball playing Spears, brittt143 said: "Love @brittanyspears and @rihanna s&m remix."

While dneilmo @peplemag wrote, "I think #brittanyspears should stay away from #rhiana to keep her image clean."

The situation may take a while to sort out, with a quick search on online resource Wikipedia providing little help by redirecting inquiries about "Brittany Spears" to "Britney Spears."

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WNBA Draft 2011: Brittany Spears Drafted By Phoenix Mercury

by **Russ Oates** • Apr 12, 2011 11:22 AM MDT

On Monday, the WNBA held its 2011 draft, and if anyone knows anything about women's basketball on any level it's probably Maya Moore, the top player in the nation. The former UConn Huskies player went first overall to the Minnesota Lynx. Not to slight these athletes and their abilities, but none of them is a household name.

However, CU students and followers may know about Brittany Spears, one of the top players in school history. She went to the Phoenix Mercury with the seventh pick of the second round, 19th overall. According to [CU's release](#), Spears is just the fourth player from the school selected in the WNBA draft and the first since 2002. Those other players are: Isabelle Fijalkowski (2nd overall, 1997), Raegan Scott (3rd round, 1997) and Mandy Nightingale (3rd round, 2002).

★ ★ ★

She holds the school record for points in a career with 2,185. Her 17.2 points per game is second in school history and one of 13 other top 10 records that she holds at CU.

If the 6-foot-1 forward makes the Mercury's roster, Spears will play with one of the top WNBA talents in Diana Taurasi.

For more on the WNBA, visit [Swish Appeal](#) and for the Phoenix Mercury [SB Nation Arizona](#) has you covered.

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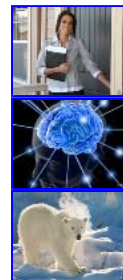
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