



Brittany Spears ready to jump from Colorado to the Phoenix Mercury

By [Scott Mammoser](#), Phoenix Women's Sports Examiner

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After a record-setting college career at the University of Colorado, 6-foot-1 forward [Brittany Spears](#) will take her talents to the next level, as the [Phoenix Mercury](#) made her the 19th selection in the [WNBA Draft](#) Monday.

"It's something I always wanted to do," said Spears, who began playing basketball at age eight. "I'm looking forward to it."

Spears, originally from Pasadena, Calif., joined the likes of Brittney Griner and Danielle Adams on the Big 12 Conference first team after averaging 19.2 points and 8.1 rebounds (17.2 and 7.9 for her career). She said playing in such a physical conference prepared her for the league, and she is ready to run in the fast-paced Mercury system.

"It seems like they're free-spirited kind of people," Spears said of speaking with Mercury coaches on the phone. "I just need to get into the best shape I can, shooting, knocking down open shots and scoring. You have to bring your best every game; there are no off days."

Colorado coach Linda Lappe, who just completed her first season directing her alma mater, said she has been prepping Spears for the WNBA.

"She knows she has to go in every day," Lappe said. "She has to go extremely hard. Two things we've been preaching are her attitude and effort. We've talked about what it takes to succeed at this level.

"Brittany can bring a lot of athleticism in her length defensively. She plays much longer than she is on the defensive side, against both post players and guards. She reads the defense really well and runs screens well. She can be a very dynamic rebounder."

Spears was the go-to-player in Boulder, starting every game on her way to becoming the Buffaloes' all-time leading scorer with 2,185 points – that is seventh in Big 12 Conference history. She dropped a career-high of 36 in her final game – a loss to USC in the WNIT quarterfinals.

"It means a lot because there are a lot of great players who came through here," Spears said of being the scoring leader.

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Lappe said Spears will have to work on her passing skills because her whole life she was the player her teammates looked for to take the big shots. Now she will need to locate Diana Taurasi and Penny Taylor in crunch time.

"When you're counted on to be the big scorer on your team for four years, you don't get to find other scorers as much as she should," Lappe said. "It doesn't mean she has to be the best player, but somebody the organization wants to keep around."

Spears is the only draftee the Mercury will have this season, after it traded its third-round pick, Tahnee Robinson of Nevada, to the Connecticut Sun. Spears will compete for one of 11 roster spots with free agents such as Amanda Thompson (Oklahoma), Alexis Gray-Lawson (California), Lauren Ervin (Arkansas), and Erlana Larkins (North Carolina), all of whom graduated from college in the past few years.

She is the first Colorado player to be drafted since Mandy Nightingale went 37th overall to the Portland Fire in 2002.

Spears said she was watching the draft with teammates and coaches at a vestibule at the university and wants to use her sociology degree to help children once her playing days are finished.

The Mercury opens training camp May 15, and its season begins June 4 at Seattle, the defending champions that drafted University of Arizona forward [Ify Ibekwe](#) Monday.

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