

Houston's Griner is WNBA #1 Pick

Written by Yolande Y. Lezine
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Houston native and former Baylor star Brittney Griner was selected as the #1 pick by the Phoenix Mercury in the 2013 WNBA Draft held at the ESPN Studios in Bristol, Connecticut.

Griner, who left an indelible mark on women's college basketball, finished her career as the second all-time scorer in women's NCAA history, with 3,283 points. She is the top shot-blocker ever, shattering both the men's and women's college marks with 748. She also had a record 18 dunks- including 11 this season.

"It's a dream come true, I'm like a little kid in Disney World the first time meeting all the characters," Griner said. "Sitting at the table they said 15 seconds and my heart started beating so fast. I was grabbing the tablecloth underneath."

Griner becomes the second consecutive Houston product to be picked No. 1 overall. Cy-Fair graduate Nneka Ogwumike was selected first in 2012 by the Los Angeles Sparks. She joins a very talented Mercury squad that was plagued by injuries most of last season. Olympian Diana Taurasi played in only eight games and Penny Taylor missed the entire year while recovering from an ACL injury. Candice Dupree also missed 21 games because of a knee injury.

"I'm ready to get there and ready to learn from Taurasi", Griner said. "I got to play with her a little bit at USA Basketball. I'm ready to feed off her and give all I can to the Phoenix Mercury."

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Phoenix had the second-worst record and a 28 percent chance of getting the first pick. Washington, which had the worst record in the league picked fourth. The Mercury had the first pick in the draft two other times, including 2004 when they drafted Taurasi.

"We have a team of All-Stars already," Mercury president Amber Cox said. "To add Griner to the mix solidifies us for a long time. When Phoenix comes to town it will be must see basketball."

Brittney Griner has sold out arenas throughout her career, with just plain basketball fans coming to bring their daughter's just to see her play. She has had a huge following and a wonderful support staff of family and friends.

Griner had a very eventful day prior to the draft during various interviews, posing for pictures, meeting Tony Hawk, among other things. The suit that she wore during the draft was designed by one of the stylist from the Ellen Degeneres Show.

The city of Houston was set to have three players who played their high school ball here drafted and that held true. Former Dulles High School and Texas A&M star Kelsey Bone was also drafted in the first round in the fifth spot by the New York Liberty. And although many looked for former Fort Bend Bush star Carolyn Davis of Kansas name to be called it wasn't; however, Houston still received their third pick in the third round when former Westbury Christian star Waltia Rolle from North Carolina was selected as the final pick by the Minnesota Lynx.

The city of Phoenix is estatic about having Griner become a member of the Mercury. At a reception after the draft, the Mercury presented her with a personalized longboard, and showed her pictures of a hotel dedication held in Phoenix, Arizona where a hotel put a life-sized photo of her dunking on the side of the building. The city even renamed one of the streets "Brittney Griner Street".

The best is yet to come for Griner who is still scheduled to do quite a few interview appearances throughout the remainder of the week, including being on "Good Morning America" on Wednesday morning.

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