

Tap in: WNBA Season is Approaching

Isiah Cowan, staff writer

Twenty-five years ago, former NBA Commissioner David Stern founded the WNBA on April 22, 1996, centered around the marketing campaign “We Got Next.” However, in the year 2021, it is safe to say the WNBA has got now. In celebration of the WNBA’s 25th birthday, the W (as the sport is referred to by fans) will introduce a new basketball, logo, and new Nike uniforms in their launch of the new marketing campaign “Count It.” WNBA Commissioner Cathy Englebert told ESPN, “We want to count all the accomplishments of the league, from a game perspective but also in a culture and society.”

Coming off momentum from the season’s 22 game “Wubble” (women’s bubble) experience at IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida, the WNBA season will return to a more normalized travel schedule for the season.

While in anticipation of the WNBA’s opening day on May 14, fans of the W had WNBA free agency to look forward to. In free agency, there was an unprecedented volume of player movement. Most notably the headliner was future Hall-of-Famer Candice Parker. Parker chose to leave the Los Angeles Sparks in favor of her hometown team Chicago Sky. Marquee names such as Sue Bird (Seattle Storm), Diana Taurasi (Phoenix Mercury), Seimone Augustus (Los Angeles Sparks), Chiney and Nneka Ogumike (Los Angeles Sparks), and Tina Charles (Washington Mystics) opted to stay put in their respective markets.

In terms of the WNBA’s draft, the league is full of new and exciting storylines. The Dallas Wings positioned themselves for a full-on youth movement by controlling one third of the first round (picks 1, 2, 5). With picks one and two, the Dallas Wings added to their Front Court of Satou Sabally by selecting the consensus number one pick prospect Charli Collier and Finland’s first WNBA player in 6-foot 5-inch Awak Kuier. Picks three through five were Aari McDonald (Arizona, Atlanta Dream), Kysre Gondrezick (West Virginia University, Indiana Fever), and Chelsea Dungee (Arkansas, Dallas Wings).

Samantha Hammer, an avid WNBA fan and former PVCC student, watched the draft with

admiration for the new league members. She said, “Performing at an elite college level while studying full-time and training for the WNBA is no easy feat. I’m excited to see these young players grow and evolve during their time in the league.”

Looking ahead to the 2021 season, Breanna Stewart, Jewell Lloyd, and Sue Bird look to propel the Seattle Storm to repeat as champions and overtake the Houston Comets and Minnesota Lynx in most titles won on their quest for championship number five. The Las Vegas Aces, last year’s runner-up, will attempt to avenge their finals loss to Seattle. The Aces bring back star power in the 2020 regular season MVP A’Ja Wilson alongside Liz Cambage and Kelsey Plum. Former MVP and 2020 DPOTY Candice Parker looks to propel the Chicago Sky from pretenders to contenders.

The 2019 Champion Washington Mystics are poised to compete as their do-it-all wing Elena Delle Donne looks to re-join her squad after sitting out the 2020 season for precautionary health concerns (Lyme Disease). Lastly, the 2020 WNBA number one pick and New York Liberty Guard Sabrina Ionescu looks to prove that both the pre-draft hype and the Kobe Bryant co-sign is worth the price of admission. This year Ionescu will look to showcase her talents after suffering a grade-3 ankle-sprain that forced her to miss the majority of the 2020 WNBA season.

With the WNBA’s 25th season set to kick off, fans can dive into the women’s game by purchasing WNBA league-pass for \$4.99. Viewers receive access to every game on-demand as well as statistical analysis. Additionally, supporters who are interested in purchasing the W’s new apparel can tap-in at the WNBA Store.

When asked about the new apparel lines, Hammer emphasized the Washington Mystic’s specifically, which honor racial, gender, and LGBTQ+ equality movements throughout history and includes the 19th Amendment etched into the fabric.

“The design of the new apparel as well as the important messages the line represent everything the WNBA has to offer — innovation, equality, new beginnings. I’ll be getting a jersey for sure,” Hammer said.