

# WNBA Draft

Monday, April 13, 2026

New York City

Toronto Tempo

Kiki Rice



KIKI RICE: Hi, everyone, first off, want to say thank you all for being here and for covering us and this sport. It means a lot.

Super excited to get to Toronto. This was a really special moment for me. And can't wait to meet the organization. Meet my teammates. I want to thank my family. Thank everyone else for getting me to this point and can't wait.

**Q. Kiki, have you been to Toronto before? And when people talk about Toronto Tempo basketball in a few years, what do you want them to say?**

KIKI RICE: I have not been to Toronto before. I've heard really great things about it. But I haven't been there. My uncle's actually Canadian, though, so I've been to Canada but just not to Toronto.

And I think in a few years I just want people to say that this is a really high-quality organization and it starts with the leadership from the players, from the staff. And I want people to say that this is one of the most well-run places, that we compete at a high level. That we have really great values. And, yeah, I'm just excited to get there.

**Q. Obviously you bring a broad base of skills and analytics folks have loved your game for a long time. I'm just wondering what it means to you to go to a place like Toronto where Monica [Wright] and Eli [Horowitz] and there's such an analytics drive there, how much do you think they really were able to see your complete game before picking you?**

KIKI RICE: I mean, I had a great conversation with them before the draft. I think they really emphasized their values. I feel like they've been able to really appreciate a lot of things I do in my game. I can tell they've studied me a lot. They know the player they're getting in me. So that's something that I really appreciate and I'm excited about.

Just to be in an organization, to step into an organization with really high-level leadership is something that's super important. I think if a team doesn't have good leadership, it's hard regardless of the quality of the players for them to

be successful. So you can just tell from every interaction that I've had, from everything that I've heard, that Toronto's going to be a great organization, really well run, and it starts at the top.

**Q. I'm just curious about how you were keeping track of what was going on with the CBA, and also how much did you understand about what life was like in the WNBA before this transformational CBA?**

KIKI RICE: Yeah, I feel like throughout this season I was definitely keeping an eye on it. I was trying not to focus on it too much because at the end of the day it's out of my control. I was really focused on competing at a high level, playing for my teammates, winning a national championship. Obviously, I didn't want the CBA to be my main focus but again knowing that I'd be stepping into this league, it was something that was important throughout this weekend, I feel like, or before this weekend I feel like I had a pretty high-level knowledge of what the CBA was.

Obviously, the biggest thing I knew about was the pay increase, but I think after this weekend, we heard from a lot of, you know, league leadership and we heard from the PA and we had a lot of great conversations. They kind of expanded on all the little details of the CBA and what the benefits are and the small things that an everyday person might not know, and I think there's some really, really important, you know, things that players are receiving. The level, the quality of the treatment of players in the WNBA is only going to get better from here.

So just grateful for the PA to be able to come to the agreement and just continue to grow the league.

**Q. You've been like the highest-ranked recruit since day one. Now that you're leaving college as a champion, how has your definition of leadership changed since your freshman year?**

KIKI RICE: Honestly, I think freshman year I didn't know a ton about what it meant to be a leader at a high level. I think each year in college I've been able to grow on that end. And by the time I've graduated, I'm leaving UCLA, I



feel very confident in my voice and what I'm stepping into, and what it means to be a leader, I think it starts with leading yourself, being able to show up every day at a high level.

And then from there it goes on to being able to inspire, to motivate and to bring up others with you. And I think that's something that I take pride in. I take pride in being able to elevate my teammates. Being able to help in any way I can, being a solid, consistent teammate, and that's something I plan to do at the next level.

**Q. First team ever to have five first-round picks in the WNBA draft. Just what that sort of means in your place in history now. That 2002 UConn team was considered one of the best teams ever. You surpassed that now. What's that feeling like?**

KIKI RICE: I think it definitely demonstrates that being a selfless team that maybe giving up individual stats for team success, that you can win with that formula. You can still be successful. You can win at a high level as a team but you can also achieve individual goals.

We knew we all wanted to go to the WNBA. We all wanted to be pros, but that wasn't the only focus during the season. It was winning, it was giving to each other, it was how can we be the best team possible. In the process of doing that, we still got the results that we wanted to at the end of the day, and that's something that is really special. That's something that I think in this era of college sports you don't always see often. People want to just be the star, they want to go to the school that will give them the most opportunity, maybe pay them the most, but I think at UCLA we've really built a strong culture and that starts with our Coach Cori [Close]. That starts with our coaches and her staff, and I just really appreciate the environment that they were able to create.

**Q. You're in a unique situation where your team is in its rookie year, you're going into your rookie year. Does it mean anything different to you that not only are you making your first impact on to the W but so is your team?**

KIKI RICE: This is a really special opportunity, incredible to be joining a team in its inaugural season. Obviously, there will be a lot of learning from my standpoint, but I think it's also really cool that I'm stepping into a place that has a lot of experience in terms of the people that are already there. The players, the roster, the coaches. There's a ton of experience, a ton of experience winning at a high level.

For me to be able to step into that and learn from the people around me is something that I'll value, I'll take pride

in, and it will obviously be a growth process, but I think, you know, we have a lot to compete with from day one and excited to get that process started.

**Q. Working with Toronto, you'll be working with a former backcourt name in the W, a current backcourt coach in Sandy Brondello. What have your initial conversations been with Coach Brondello, and when you're on the practice floor with her, what's the first question you're going to ask her when it's time to take the floor?**

KIKI RICE: Yeah, no, really excited to meet her in person and get up to Toronto. She's a really experienced, really veteran coach. I think I'll just value the mindset that she brings to the game and just be willing to learn everything I can. I think that's the biggest thing as a rookie, be a sponge, learn from the people around you.

We have a lot of great leadership there that the coaches are really strong, and I think just conversations and how she can help me, how she wants me to perform and how she wants me to just help the team in any way I can will be really important and excited to start that relationship.

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