

Silver Stars had expressed plenty of interest in Syracuse standout

On one level, being drafted in the first round still seems somewhat surreal to Alexander, who only began playing basketball in Grade 7 — after being dragged to a team tryout by a friend and not showing a ton of ability right away — and didn't think about competing at the university ranks, much less professionally, until well into high school. "Is this (being drafted) still hard to believe? Yes and no. Yes because I started late, but no because I feel I've been working towards this for the last 10 years. It's incredible," said the Syracuse standout, who recently finished her university career as the school's top all-time scorer (2,024 points), as well as the career leader in blocks (350), field goals (736), free throws made (552) and games played (140). She scored a team-high 17.9 points a game this season in guiding the Orange to a 24.8 overall record (program's best winning per-

centage in the NCAA era) and its fifth-ever NCAA Tournament appearance.

A projected first rounder by most prognosticators, Alexander wasn't all that surprised about her draft destination, given that San Antonio was one of the teams that had expressed particularly strong interest in her over the past several weeks.

"They called me a number of times and there was always an honesty and openness that I really appreciated," said this year's top Canadian pick, who was excited to be part of the first WNBA draft to be televised, adding that this speaks to the growth and increasing respectability of the league.



Kayla Alexander

"I just got a good feeling from them."

That cuts both ways, at least if Silver Stars head coach and general manager Dan Hughes' post-draft comments are any indication.

"One of the things we wanted to do was look for players that could develop into good pros and could also meet a need with this team. We accomplished that and were also able to get quality people that will understand and add to the Silver Star culture."

Feeling that she's become a more well-rounded player over the past year or so, Alexander may have added opportunity to earn real playing time with San Antonio right out of

the gate, with veteran forward Sophia Young still nursing a knee injury (sustained during the semifinals of the Chinese Basketball Association championships in late January) and likely to miss the early stages of this coming season.

Of course the Silver Stars prospect isn't taking anything for granted.

"I've got to go into camp in shape and ready to keep improving on my skills," said Alexander, who plans to teach social studies once her playing days are over. "I've got to keep adding to my game. You can't be complacent... ever."

The Milton cager won't have long to savour her new draftee status, as she heads down to San Antonio camp in early May.

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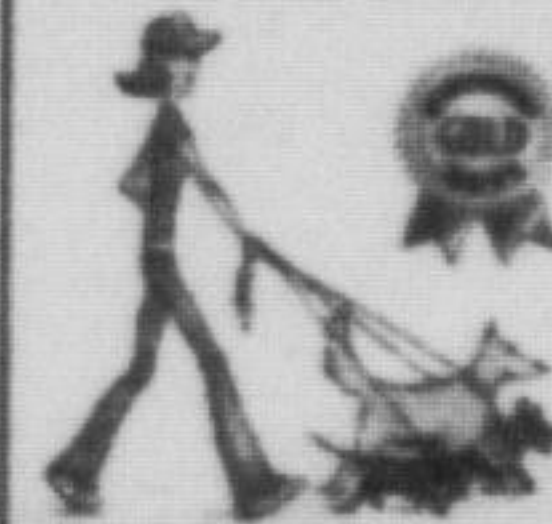


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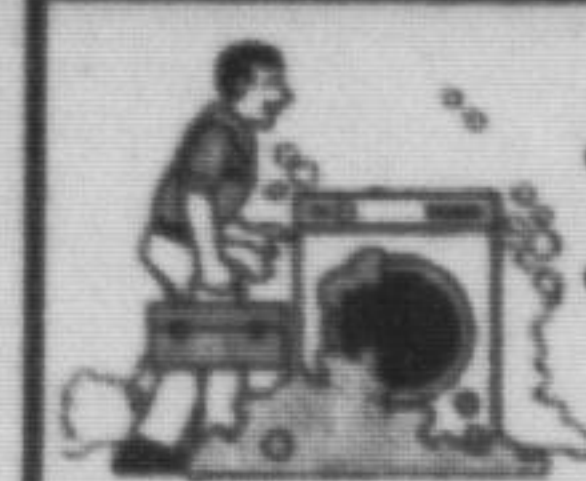
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