

WNBA First-Round Draft Pick: Impact on Attendance

A THESIS

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Economics and Business

The Colorado College

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Arts

By:

Laura Strenk

May 2025

WNBA First-Round Draft Pick: Impact on Attendance

Laura Strenk

May 2025

Business, Economics, and Society

Abstract

This paper explores the influence of the first-round draft picks on attendance in WNBA regular season games throughout the league's history. In professional sports, a first-round draft pick is extraordinary because it signifies the talent that will shape the future of a league. While there is extensive published research and dialogue on the relationship between NBA stars and attendance at games, there are not many written on women professional sports. Using a regression model adapted from NBA research, the study found although attendance decreased throughout WNBA history until the year 2023, from the years 2022 to 2024 the first-round draft pick had a significant and positive impact on attendance. Notably, Caitlin Clark's 2024 draft had a highly significant positive impact, while Aliya Boston's 2023 draft did not. This suggests that player popularity and media attention may influence the impact of draft picks on attendance.

KEYWORDS: (First-round draft pick, women's professional basketball, WNBA attendance)

JEL CODES: (L83, Z2)

ON MY HONOR, I HAVE NEITHER GIVEN NOR RECEIVED
UNAUTHORIZED AID ON THIS THESIS

Laura Strenk

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	II
List of Tables	V
List of Figures.....	VI
Acknowledgments	VII
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Literature Review	4
A. How does the WNBA drive attendance?.....	5
B. First-round draft pick.....	7
C. Superstars.....	10
D. Superstar impact on attendance.....	12
3. Theory and Methodology	13
A. Data Overview	14
B. Summary of Variables	14
C. Model.....	16
D. Hypothesis.....	17
4. Results and Analysis	17
A. Assumptions.....	24
B. Limitations.....	24
C. Recommendations for further research.....	25
5. Conclusion	26
Reference List.....	27

List of Tables

Table 1: Variables used in the model

Table 2: Team quality from first-round draft pick by year

Table 3: Regression analysis of attendance: (1997-2024)

Table 4: Regression analysis of attendance: (2022-2024)

Table 5: Regression analysis of attendance: (2022 to 2023)

Table 6: Regression analysis of attendance: (2023 to 2024)

List of Figures

Figure 1: First-round draft picks in the WNBA

Figure 2: Equation for team quality

Figure 3: Kelley's regression for attendance

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my incredible advisor, Lora Louise Broady, for her unwavering support and guidance throughout the journey of this thesis. I feel extremely lucky to have been her advisee, as her expertise and encouragement were instrumental in every step of the process. I also want to thank Yasmine Khaki for her assistance with developing the model and helping with Stata.

1. Introduction

The National Basketball Association (NBA) star Michael Jordan once said, “One person can make a difference. Everybody has a responsibility to make a difference” (Hehir, 2020). Many people believe that Caitlin Clark was the difference maker for the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA). Not only was she the number one pick in the 2024 WNBA draft, but she snuck into people’s heart during her college career at University of Iowa. She is the best player that division one women’s basketball has seen. Throughout her college career she had 3,951 points, 990 rebounds, and 1,144 assists (University of Iowa Athletics, 2024). She broke countless records with passion for the game and a smile on her face. Women’s basketball enthusiasts call her impact on the game the “Caitlin Clark effect.” The Caitlin Clark effect is defined as, “the drastic increase in game ticket sales and revenue for the University of Iowa and the other universities she travels to (Women in Leadership, 2024). This study examines how the “Caitlin Clark Effect” continued into the WNBA and how other first round draft picks like Clark have made an impact on attendance in the WNBA.

Although women’s basketball has amazing athletes that were picked as the first-round draft pick, the WNBA has been challenged with drawing attendance for games in their league. Attendance for sporting events is based on several different factors: accessibility, marketing, performance of the team, etc. Sports teams operate much like any other business: they rely on consumers to buy into their product, and attendance at games is essential to have a successfully running sports team. The number of tickets sold during a franchises season is a key indicator of the profit that is likely to be generated (Howard & Crompton, 2004). Pressure moments in games with a rowdy crowd can impact the performance of player or team dynamics. The audience

size causes a home field/court advantage that affects the performance of the team and individual players (Leota, et al, 2022). The WNBA has been working to achieve better attendance to be a profitable business and to have a home court advantage. The WNBA players want to grow their league and reach new fans. Diana Taurasi, a well-accomplished WNBA player who has spent 20 years with the Phoenix Mercury emphasized the importance of a large fan base: “The atmosphere in our arenas when they’re full is just something else. You can feel it. It pushes you through the tough moments. We want more people to experience this, to come out and see what we’re all about” (WNBA, 2022). Players in the WNBA like Diana aim to create an environment that energizes players during critical moments and fosters a deeper connection with its growing audience.

In 1996, The National Basketball Association (NBA) Board of Governors approved the WNBA concept (WNBA, 2002). The NBA to this day owns the WNBA and has been funding their league. Soon after the approval, the 'We Got Next' campaign was launched, leading to the signing of Tina Thompson as the first member of the WNBA (WNBA, 2002). Selecting Thompson as the first overall pick in the WNBA draft was a pivotal moment, as she became the benchmark for performance expectations during the league’s inaugural season. The first games in the WNBA started in 1997 with hopes of the league being the first successful women’s professional league in the United States (WNBA, 2002). The start of the WNBA was different from the way that they were portrayed in the media (Wearden & Creedon, 2003). The nascent league was not regarded as a serious professional organization capable of showcasing the world’s top female basketball talent. As a young league, the WNBA faced typical growing pains, exacerbated by intense media scrutiny.

The NBA, established on August 3, 1949, solidified its position as a growing business by 1997. The WNBA, a significantly younger league, is often compared to the NBA, despite the two associations being in vastly different stages of development. The WNBA, which began with eight teams, has expanded to thirteen, with the Golden State Valkyries set to debut in the 2025 season (WNBA, 2024). Additionally, two more teams are slated to join the 2026 season: one in Toronto and the other in Portland. This expansion has caused tension within the league, as the addition of the three teams will prevent player salaries from increasing, yet it also signifies the league's growth (Herhoops, 2023). This progress is not solely due to the "Caitlin Clark effect," but also a result of contributions from both past and current WNBA stars (Stephenson, 2024). Talented and media-crazed first round draft picks like Clark have shaped the league and will continue to drive it forward, solidifying its place in the broader landscape of professional sports.

One of the more noticeable focal points in the United States entertainment business and news has been women's sports, specifically basketball. The leaders in the WNBA are and have been activists demonstrating a commitment to diversity equity and inclusion and social responsibility (Lapchick, 2023). To solidify their commitment, "in 2020, the WNBA and the Women's National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA) signed a groundbreaking eight-year Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) that charts a new course for women's basketball – and women's sports overall – with a focus on increased player compensation, improvements to the player experience, expanded career development opportunities and resources specifically tailored to the female professional athlete" (NBA, 2024). In the same season, the WNBPA and the WNBA launched the "WNBA Justice Movement" with the mission to drive meaningful change and ongoing open discussions about critical

societal issues (WNBA, 2024). One significant issue for WNBA players is pay equity between women and men in their respective professions. This concern is particularly pressing, because their pay is drastically lower when compared to other professional sports (Suárez, 2023). The WNBA is not only advocating for themselves but also challenging the larger societal norms (Ettienne, 2019). Their efforts set a powerful example for the future of women's sports, and are attracting growing support for the future of the U.S.

The WNBA per game attendance rates have fluctuated throughout the years, but rates decreased each season on a year over year basis (Berri & Krautmann, 2013), although from the 2023 to 2024 WNBA season attendance was up 48% (ESPN, 2024). Could the reason be attributed to the popularity of those selected as the first-round draft picks in the years 2023 and 2024? That is the focus of this thesis. Women's basketball is growing and there is no time like the present to examine the individuals who have influenced the shift in WNBA attendance.

2. Literature Review

Attendance is driven by many things, one of which is the excitement generated by WNBA first round draft picks. This discussion begins by exploring the history of attendance in the WNBA and their efforts to increase the number of tickets sold. Next, the WNBA first-round draft pick is defined together with a discussion of general criteria to be the first pick. Additionally, this literature review also clarifies the distinct qualities of superstars and first-round draft picks. It highlights the importance of fan engagement and talent for superstardom and explores the impact of superstars on NBA attendance. Finally, the review investigates whether the same effect will be shown in the WNBA with first round draft picks.

A. How does the WNBA drive attendance?

After the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, there was a demand for more women's basketball. When the WNBA debuted in 1997, there was a lot of hype and excitement surrounding the launch of the first professional women's basketball league. Before anyone had been drafted or hired to be a coach, NBC, ESPN, and Lifetime Television had signed partnerships with the WNBA so their games could be broadcasted live (WNBA, 2004). It was decided that the league would be played in the summer, as the sports calendar was less crowded, increasing the likelihood of more people watching their games (WNBA, 2004). WNBA's first two seasons were a success in viewership, collecting more than 50 million viewers and the average peak attendance rate at 10,869 (WNBA, 2004). Despite strong initial viewership and attendance, the WNBA experienced a steady decline in attendance from 1998 to 2021 (Roy, 2023). The WNBA's first fourteen years were marked by expansion, relocations, and bankruptcies. Due to the lack of money generated by the entire league, the WNBA faces numerous limitations; to illustrate, WNBA teams can only have 12 players on their roster to prevent suffering from financial setbacks (Wakefield, 2018). The league needs loyal fans in seats, but what have they been doing throughout the years to try and increase attendance?

Strong advertising and marketing campaigns are vital for any businesses to build brand awareness, generate leads, and drive sales. When the WNBA first started advertising their league, they introduced themselves at popular NBA events. Since this was the first women's professional league, the players were set in motion to be new role models for women and girls. However, these strong, capable, aggressive, and competitive women were not seen as such because of the choice of images portrayed on commercials and in advertising during their games (Wearden &

Creedon, 2003). The advertisements, while offering a platform to challenge dominant gender politics, ultimately remained limited to portraying white heterosexual representations of women. The marketing strategies perpetuated regressive stereotypes around race and sexuality prevalent to contemporary U.S. sports, undermining the progressive message the WNBA aimed to convey (Rugg, 2021).

The WNBA's marketing efforts were also hindered by less frequent broadcasting compared to men's sports. One study found that more than half of two hundred and fifty-one on the three television stations did not cover any women's sports on several different occasions for three or four consecutive days (Messner, et al., 2003). If they were not being seen on television, they needed plans for other kinds of outreach. The WNBA created a website where fans could post and see the latest updates on the WNBA (WNBA, 2002). They also started to branch into their communities. They focused on three different initiatives: Read to Achieve, Jr. WNBA, and Sears WNBA Breast Health Awareness program (WNBA, 2002).

After the WNBA took a dip in consumption, they were looking for ways to improve their branding. In 2011 they hired Laurel Richie, who had a background in marketing, public relations, and corporate management (WNBA, 2011). They decided to invest and realized the importance of consumer demand on sports consumption. Game attractiveness, economic consideration, game promotion, and schedule convenience are the four consumer demand variables that have been found to have a significant positive relationship on attendance. (Braunstein et al. 2005; Byon, et al., 2010; Greenstein & Marcum 1981; Hansen & Gauthier 1989; Wang et al. 2019; Zhang et al. 1995; Zhang, et al., 2003). The WNBA now markets their games as a fan-friendly experience: engaging the fans with meet and greets, connecting with youth, hosting charity games, playing an all-star game, etc. (Big Marketing, 2024).

The WNBA also leaned into the social justice initiatives by incorporating new technology and content creation, enhancing ticket sales and fan satisfaction (Johnson & Bo, 2023). By highlighting its unique identity, the league successfully expanded its fan base. With all WNBA teams actively engaging across various social media platforms, the league has built a powerful presence to amplify its message and showcase the excitement of the WNBA experience.

B. First-round draft pick

The first-round draft pick is a significant advantage in any professional league, representing an opportunity for teams to secure top-tier talent that could transform their roster. The annual draft is a crucial process for professional leagues, as it provides a mechanism for acquiring new talent and maintaining competitiveness among the teams in the league (Caporale & Collier, 2015).

Not just anyone can qualify for the WNBA draft; there are certain eligibility rules that will qualify a player for the draft. One requirement of a draftee is that she needs to have had or will have her twenty-second birthday during the calendar year in which the draft is held (WNBA, 2024). Those with an extra year of NCAA eligibility must renounce their remaining intercollegiate eligibility by written notice to the WNBA by March 28th, or if still competing, forty-eight hours after her final game (WNBA, 2024). She is eligible to be selected in the draft once she has graduated or will graduate from a four-year college or university during the three-month period following such draft (WNBA, 2024). A player can enroll in the draft if she is an international player that had or will have her twentieth birthday during the calendar year in which the draft is held (WNBA, 2024).

For most girls that play competitive basketball, it is a dream to hear their name announced at the WNBA draft. Every April, the draft consists of three rounds, with each round consisting of twelve picks (WNBA, 2024). After the season is over, the WNBA holds a “Draft Lottery” which consists of the four teams that did not make it to the playoffs (WNBA, 2024). According to the WNBA rulebook, “The team that receives the first selection in the draft has the worst cumulative two-year record during the preceding two regular seasons. The other teams follow the same ruling meaning the fourth selection had the best record among the lottery teams during the preceding two regular seasons. After the first four in the round have been drafted the teams that participated in the playoffs select their players in inverse order of the standings at the end of the last season. If there is a tie between teams the commissioner would apply the WNBA tiebreak formula. For the second and third round of the WNBA draft the selections are once again made in inverse order of the standings of all teams at the close of immediately preceding season” (WNBA, 2024).

The first-round pick provides a significant upper hand advantage, as the player typically enhances the team’s play, therefore improving their likelihood of winning more games. Since having the first-round draft pick is such an extreme advantage in the WNBA, some teams will intentionally underperform at the end of their season so they will be in a good position for the upcoming draft (Gong, et al, 2022). Consequently, Gong (2022) suggested that teams that are out of playoff contention have been known to “tank their games” so they can secure a better draft pick in the incoming draft. Teams have some incentive to continue to lose on a “throw away” season which could give them the advantage in the end. The word “tank” comes from Price et al. (2010) where after the lottery system was put into place tanking is defined as when teams at the bottom of the standings intentionally try to lose basketball games

at the end of the regular season in order to get a higher pick. Teams that are not performing well in the league often use this advantage to rebuild their team.

When a team is selected to secure the first-round draft pick, it is an exciting time in their franchise. However, it can also be a stress-inducing decision for the teams, because they do not know what players will perform well in the professional league. So how do they seek out the players with true talent and skill? The players' selection order is correlated with their scoring totals, but not necessarily other factors like rebounding, steals, and assists (Harris & Berri, 2015). A similar study from Coates and Oguntimein (2010) reported that there is a statistical relationship between draft position and points scored, although it did not predict their performance when they got to the league. Both studies were written using NBA data; however, challenges exist when comparing the nascent WNBA to the established NBA because the leagues can be looking for different performance statistics (Agha & Berri, 2023). When getting drafted in the WNBA there are two factors that are important: the number of points during a college career and if one played for a team in the SEC, ACC, or Big East (Harris & Berri, 2015). By analyzing a player's scoring stats and the quality of their opponents, franchises can get a better sense of whether they are ready to compete at the highest level of women's basketball.

Figure 1 illustrates the WNBA first-round draft picks anticipated to contribute the most value to their respective teams by year.

Figure. 1 First Round Draft Picks in the WNBA

DRAFT YEAR	WNBA TEAM	PLAYER	SCHOOL
2024	Indiana Fever	Caitlin Clark	Iowa
2023	Indiana Fever	Aliyah Boston	South Carolina
2022	Atlanta Dream	Rhyne Howard	Kentucky
2021	Dallas Wings	Charli Collier	Texas
2020	New York Liberty	Sabrina Ionescu	Oregon
2019	Las Vegas Aces	Jackie Young	Notre Dame
2018	Las Vegas Aces	A'ja Wilson	South Carolina
2017	Atlanta Dream	Kelsey Plum	Washington
2016	Seattle Storm	Breanna Stewart	UConn
2015	Seattle Storm	Jewell Loyd	Notre Dame
2014	Connecticut Sun	Chiney Ogwumike	Stanford
2013	Phoenix Mercury	Brittney Griner	Baylor
2012	Los Angeles Sparks	Nneka Ogwumike	Stanford
2011	Minnesota Lynx	Maya Moore	UConn
2010	Connecticut Sun	Tina Charles	UConn
2009	Atlanta Dream	Angel McCoughtry	Louisville
2008	Los Angeles Sparks	Candace Parker	Tennessee
2007	Phoenix Mercury	Lindsey Harding	Duke
2006	Minnesota Lynx	Seimone Augustus	LSU
2005	Charlotte Sting	Janel McCarville	Minnesota
2004	Phoenix Mercury	Diana Taurasi	UConn
2003	Cleveland Rockers	LaToya Thomas	Mississippi State
2002	Seattle Storm	Sue Bird	UConn
2001	Seattle Storm	Lauren Jackson	N/A Australia
2000	Cleveland Rockers	Ann Wauters	N/A France
1999	Washington Mystics	Chamique Holdscraw	Tennessee
1998	Utah Starzz	Margo Dydek	N/A Poland
1997	Houston Comets	Tina Thompson	Southern Califo

Source: (NCAA, 2024)

C. Superstars

Not every first-round draft pick becomes a superstar, and not every superstar starts their journey as a first-round draft pick. A superstar is defined as, “a high-profile and extremely successful performer or athlete” (Oxford, n.d.). In the world of basketball, being a superstar -- often recognized as an All-Star, All-American, or MVP – requires more than talent; it demands relentless performance at the highest levels. These elite titles are given to top performing U.S. athletes in collegiate and secondary school in a specific sport over the past season (Britannica, n.d.). While the path to stardom often begins with standout performances in college, the journey to greatness hinges on an

athlete's ability to consistently rise above the competition and leave a permanent mark on the game.

Transitioning from college to the professional league is a big jump in skill and knowledge of the game. The first-year professional athletes face stronger, taller, and more athletic players; therefore, it is more difficult to maintain the "superstar" title in the league (Camerer, 1999). In the WNBA, post-season awards celebrate exceptional individual achievements, including Most Valuable Player (MVP), Rookie of the Year, Defensive Player of the Year, Sixth Player of the Year, and Most Improved Player. In the WNBA, these accolades represent the pinnacle of performance and impact during the season. Among them, the MVP award holds the highest prestige, recognizing a player who has consistently excelled above peers and teammates in every facet of the game. A prime example of an MVP superstar is the WNBA MVP player A'ja Wilson. She was given this honor a third time in 2024, and she is one of three people in WNBA history to win three MVPs (WNBA, 2024). Wilson was Las Vegas Ace's first-round draft pick in 2018 coming from the dominant University of South Carolina (WNBA, 2024). She is a dynamic 6'4 center that can do almost anything on the court; in her 2024 regular season she averaged 26.9 points, 11.9 rebounds, 2.3 assists, and 1.8 steals per game (WNBA 2024). Since her time with the Aces, she led them to two championship rings and several games in the playoffs (WNBA, 2024). In her seventh WNBA season she broke the single season record for average points and points scored with 1,021 total points. (WNBA, 2024). She is the best player in the WNBA and is projected to be at the top for a long time (ESPN, 2024).

While on-court performance is crucial, off court factors, such as social media and fan connections, can also elevate an athlete to stardom. One example of this is Angel Reese, a forward for the Chicago Sky. She graduated from Louisiana State University

in 2024 and although she is a star on the court, she also is a star in social media. She became famous in the basketball community during the 2023 season and was known as the Bayou Barbie (Reese, 2024). She brought her team to victory against Iowa University for LSU's first ever national championship. In her 2024 regular season, as a rookie she averaged 13.6 points, 13.1 rebounds, 1.9 assists, and 1.3 steals per game. (WNBA, 2024). On top of that, Reese has 4.4 million followers on Instagram with several partnerships with beauty brands and designer wear. Superstar athletes not only have to perform on the court but often feel the pressure to have a distinctive lifestyle (Carless & Douglas, 2013). The brand associations of effort, achievement, and style of play had a significant positive relationship with the athletes' on-court brand image, whereas the brand associations of fair play, impact, and skill did not show a significant positive relationship with athletes' on-court brand image (Kunkel et al., 2020; Braunstein & Zhang, 2005). Personal branding allows for fans to have a glimpse into a star's life, and it allows for fans and players to create a strong connection (Kunkel, et al., B 2020). This study also showed branding in their personal lives has a bigger influence on connection with the athlete rather than on court (Kunkel, et al., 2020). Reese gives her fans a view of her life and she allows herself to be vulnerable as a female athlete.

D. Superstar impact on attendance

Numerous studies have examined the influence of male superstars on attendance, so it is important to explore whether the stardom effect carries over from men's sports to women's sports. There have been many studies that have been specifically focused on the impact of stars on attendance in the NBA. One model examined the superstar effect of Larry Bird, Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, David Robinson, and Shaquille O'Neal by looking at the attendance rates of home and away games wherever the stars

would be (Humphreys & Johnson, 2020). This study includes other variables such as characteristics of each game, all other factors that affect attendance, and capacity of the arena that the home teams play in. It concluded that the player popularity and attendance rates are significant and positive (Humphreys & Johnson, 2020). Star power is just one factor in getting fans in seats, but the team generating wins is what drives the consumer demand (Schmidt & Berri, 2004). Star athletes make sure that they are strategically placed on the right teams with the right teammates; therefore, arguing that stars are typically on winning teams (Yang & Shi, 2011). The combined influence of the superstar effect and having a winning record has the potential to propel the franchise to success.

First round draft picks in the NBA are considered to be the next generation talent, the ones who will replace the legends of the league. NBA rookies, especially top draft picks, have the power to draw fans to games. By contributing to team success and showcasing their individual skills, these young stars can increase attendance by 150 to 190 spectators per game. (Kelley, 2021). Kelly's study proves that NBA rookies significantly impact game attendance, demonstrating their potential to drive fan engagement and revenue. While much of the existing research focuses on male dominated analyses of how star players impact attendance, this paper will shift focus to the WNBA, exploring the effect of first-round draft picks on attendance.

3. Theory and Methodology

This study tests the correlation between the selection of the first-round draft pick in the WNBA and the attendance rates at games throughout the following season. By analyzing the data on first-round draft picks and comparing it with game attendance statistics over multiple seasons, this study assesses the strength and direction of this relationship. It seeks to contribute to the understanding of how female player

prominence, for first-round selections, impacts fan engagement and the overall commercial success of the league. This study aims to determine if the “superstar effect” observed in the NBA applies to WNBA players.

A. Data Overview

The data used in this study spans from 1997 to 2024 in the WNBA, excluding the 2020 season due to COVID-19 restrictions. The dataset provides the attendance at games throughout the WNBA history, but it also includes the year, day of the week, date, time, game type, home team, away team, arena, city, state, and attendance of every WNBA game played. The study will additionally use Figure 1 from the WNBA’s website, which outlines the league’s first-round draft picks for each year. An additional variable that the study added to the dataset is the capacity of the WNBA arenas.

The study focuses on the impact of these picks on their respective teams’ attendance, specifically the years immediately preceding and following their draft year. The data is drawn from *Her Hoops Stats (2024)*, which compiles game-by-game records for each season, forming the foundation for evaluating team quality. To mitigate potential outliers in the dataset, the study concentrates on regular-season attendance. This enhanced dataset allows for a more nuanced exploration of attendance trends and the influence of the first-round draft pick.

B. Summary of Variables

The variables used in this study are described in Table 1.

Table 1: Variables used in the model

Variable Description	Variable Type	Symbol
WNBA attendance in the regular season	Dependent	Log_Attendance
Draft player in game	Independent	FRP_game
Capacity of arenas	Independent	Capacity
Home team quality	Independent	TQ_home
Away team quality	Independent	TQ_away
Weekend games	Independent	DayofWeek
Year of each WNBA season	Independent	Year

Source: (Strenk, 2024)

The dependent variable will be the attendance at the WNBA games through the years 1997-2024 during the regular season. The independent variables are draft player in game or not, capacity of the arena, team quality of home teams, team quality of away teams, weekend games, year of the WNBA. Tainsky's (2010) study on demand for National Football League contests provided an equation for team quality which will be helpful to use in this study because it will show what type of team the rookies are joining. The equation and description are provided below:

Figure 2: Equation for team quality

$$TQ = \frac{\left[\begin{array}{l} (\text{Lag Win}\% \times 82 - \text{Games Played}) + \\ (\text{Win}\% \times \text{Games Played}) \end{array} \right]}{82}$$

Source: (Tainsky, 2010)

In the above equation, there are several different variables to calculate the team quality: Lag Win % represents the win to loss percentage from a previous season. The number 82 represents the number of games in a full season for the NBA, but for the WNBA the number of games each season has varied. In its inaugural season in 1997, they played 28 games. In 1998 they increased to 30 games. From 1999-2002 the league increased to 32 games. From 2003-2019 they expanded the schedule to 34 games. During COVID-19, the 2020 season was reduced to 22 games. The year after covid the WNBA returned to 32 games, and from 2023 to the present the WNBA has adopted a 40-game schedule per season. The Games Played represents the games played during the current season. The win% represents the win to loss percentage in the current season.

C. Model

A regression model was used to explore the theory of whether first-round draft picks for the WNBA impact attendance rates in their first year. The regression model used in this study is adapted from Kelley (2021) which examined the impact of NBA rookies on attendance. The equation and description are provided below:

Figure 3: Kelley’s regression for attendance

$$\text{ATTENDANCE} = \alpha_0 + \beta T' + \gamma G' + \delta TS' + \theta TR' + \pi H' + \rho A' + \omega S' + \varepsilon$$

Source: (Kelley, 2012)

In the equation mentioned above, T' is a matrix of team-level control variables including home and visiting team quality, the difference between teams' quality to proxy outcome uncertainty, and variables indicating whether teams had won the

previous season's championship. G' is a matrix of game-level controls, including a weekend indicator. TS' represents the traditional star in the NBA, which will read as the first-round draft pick in this paper's study. Home and visiting team fixed effects are included in H' and A' as are season fixed effects in S' .

This paper developed its own version of Kelley's equation and input it into Stata as shown below:

```
regress Attendance capacity TQ_Home TQ_away FRP_game Year, vce(robust)
```

The regression model was adapted from Kelley (2021) with the addition of arena capacity as a control variable to assess its impact on attendance. The previous season's championship winners were excluded because the team with the first-round draft pick finished among the league's bottom four teams.

D. Hypothesis

The null hypothesis (H_0) is that there will be no correlation between the WNBA first round draft pick and attendance trends throughout the history of the WNBA. The alternative hypothesis (H_1) is that there will be a significant correlation between the WNBA first-round draft pick and the attendance of their first regular season after being drafted.

4. Results and Analysis

The study ran the team quality equation for every single team in the WNBA over the years, focusing on those that remained consistent contributors to that equation: the first-round draft pick teams. The results below reflect their team quality:

Table 2: Team quality from first-round draft pick by year

Year	Team	Team Quality
2024	Indiana Fever	-0.175
2023	Indiana Fever	-0.4735789474
2022	Atlanta Dream	-0.294
2021	Dallas Wings	0.000888888
2019	Las Vegas Aces	0.03
2018	Las Vegas Aces	.412
2017	Atlanta Dream	-0.147
2016	Seattle Storm	-0.235
2015	Seattle Storm	-0.353
2014	Connecticut Sun	-0.324
2013	Phoenix Mercury	-0.235
2012	Los Angeles Sparks	0.147
2011	Minnesota Lynx	0.176
2010	Connecticut Sun	-0.029
2009	Atlanta Dream	-0.353
2008	Los Angeles Sparks	-0.118
2007	Phoenix Mercury	0.205
2006	Minnesota Lynx	-0.294
2005	Charlotte Sting	-0.353
2004	Phoenix Mercury	-0.265
2003	Cleveland Rockers	-0.1465882353
2002	Seattle Storm	-0.156
2001	Seattle Storm	-0.499

2000	Cleveland Rockers	-0.25
1999	Washington Mystics	-0.4838709677
1998	Utah Starzz	-0.4479310345
1997	Houston Comets	0.643

Source: (Strenk, 2024)

The team quality of the home and away team is important to include in the attendance regression, because fans enjoy watching high-quality basketball. Table 3 presents the results of the regression analysis, testing the hypothesis that first-round draft picks in the WNBA have a significant impact on attendance.

Table 3: Regression analysis of attendance: (1997-2024)

Linear regression		Number of obs	=	5,725
		F(6, 5718)	=	310.33
		Prob > F	=	0.0000
		R-squared	=	0.2914
		Root MSE	=	.38656

log_Attend~e	Coefficient	Robust std. err.	t	P> t	[95% conf. interval]	
Weekend	.0940568	.0105162	8.94	0.000	.0734411	.1146724
capacity	.0000419	1.66e-06	25.31	0.000	.0000387	.0000452
Year	-.0094887	.0009658	-9.82	0.000	-.0113821	-.0075953
FRP_game	.0276075	.0150509	1.83	0.067	-.001898	.057113
TQhome	.3113185	.0198988	15.65	0.000	.2723094	.3503276
TQ_away	-.0156015	.0202929	-0.77	0.442	-.0553834	.0241803
_cons	27.19377	1.955595	13.91	0.000	23.36006	31.02748

Source: (Stata, 2024)

The model as a whole is statistically significant since the p-value is 0. When looking to find if the first-round draft pick makes an impact on attendance from the years 1997 to 2024, the results conclude that having a first-round draft pick is not significant. The first-round draft pick p-value was above 0.05 proving the null

hypothesis. The independent variables that were correlated with attendance in the model were weekend games, capacity of the arena, year of the game played, and the team quality of the home team. The R-squared value was 0.2914 meaning 29.14% of the variation in attendance is explained by the independent variables. To increase the R-squared value, the model could have used some observed factors that were not taken into account in this study

While the initial results did not support a significant impact of first-round draft picks on WNBA attendance, there was an important nuance to address. Since attendance has increased by 48% from the years 2023 to 2024, the study ran another regression looking at the years 2022 to 2024 to provide more data points and to examine the years when the attendance started to increase for the WNBA. The study is specifically looking at the first round-draft picks from the years 2023 and 2024. In 2023 Aliyah Boston was selected as the first-round draft pick, and in 2024 Caitlin Clark was selected as the first-round draft pick. This regression looks at their combined impact that they made on attendance during their rookie years, as depicted in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression analysis of attendance: (2022-2024)

```
regress log_Attendance capacity TQ_Home TQ_away FRP_game Weekend Year if filter_2022_2024, vce(robust)
```

Linear regression	Number of obs	=	696
	F(6, 689)	=	220.87
	Prob > F	=	0.0000
	R-squared	=	0.6371
	Root MSE	=	.32601

log_Attend~e	Robust				
	Coefficient	std. err.	t	P> t	[95% conf. interval]
Weekend	.0837326	.0249032	3.36	0.001	.0348372 .1326279
capacity	.0000566	2.12e-06	26.78	0.000	.0000525 .0000608
Year	.2844634	.0167035	17.03	0.000	.2516675 .3172593
FRP_game	.1913308	.0551978	3.47	0.001	.0829547 .299707
TQhome	.5362768	.0488871	10.97	0.000	.4402912 .6322624
TQ_away	.1224323	.0380892	3.21	0.001	.0476475 .1972172
_cons	-567.5009	33.79196	-16.79	0.000	-633.8485 -501.1534

Source: (Stata, 2024)

In this regression, all of the p-values for the independent variables were significant. The adjusted R-squared value has increased in this regression resulting that 63.71% of the variation in attendance is explained by the independent variables in this model. FRP_game is shown to be significant when the p-value is 0.001. This means that attendance increased by 19.13308% when first round draft picks are playing. In this regression from 2022 to 2024, the alternative hypothesis is proven to be true; there is a significant correlation between the WNBA first-round draft pick and the attendance of their first regular season after being drafted.

The results from the regression for the years 2022 to 2024 provided valuable insights, which warranted a deeper dive into the question: Could we determine the individual impact Boston and Clark had on the attendance? To further explore the impact of individual players, the study conducted a deeper analysis of the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 seasons, focusing on the contributions of Boston and Clark. This

allowed for a thorough examination of shifts in attendance. The regression equation and the findings are presented in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Regression analysis of attendance: (2022 to 2023)

```
regress log_Attendance capacity TQ_away HomeTeam_enc FRP_game Weekend Year if filter_2022_2023, vce(robust)
```

Linear regression	Number of obs	=	456
	F(6, 449)	=	54.96
	Prob > F	=	0.0000
	R-squared	=	0.3579
	Root MSE	=	.39855

log_Attend~e	Robust		t	P> t	[95% conf. interval]	
	Coefficient	std. err.				
capacity	.0000458	3.42e-06	13.40	0.000	.0000391	.0000526
TQ_away	.0793414	.0566418	1.40	0.162	-.0319745	.1906573
HomeTeam_enc	.0067134	.0023518	2.85	0.005	.0020915	.0113353
FRP_game	.1082928	.0843114	1.28	0.200	-.0574012	.2739867
Weekend	.1116983	.0379108	2.95	0.003	.0371937	.1862029
Year	.1809452	.0383657	4.72	0.000	.1055466	.2563438
_cons	-358.0678	77.59338	-4.61	0.000	-510.5591	-205.5765

Source: (Stata, 2024)

Table 6: Regression analysis of attendance: (2023 to 2024)

```
regress log_Attendance capacity TQ_away HomeTeam_enc FRP_game Weekend Year if filter_2023_2024, vce(robust)
```

```
Linear regression          Number of obs   =      480
                          F(6, 473)       =     166.78
                          Prob > F         =     0.0000
                          R-squared        =     0.5965
                          Root MSE     =     .31307
```

log_Attend~e	Coefficient	Robust std. err.	t	P> t	[95% conf. interval]	
capacity	.0000595	2.76e-06	21.56	0.000	.0000541	.000065
TQ_away	.0825709	.0456716	1.81	0.071	-.0071735	.1723153
HomeTeam_enc	-.0034409	.0017713	-1.94	0.053	-.0069215	.0000398
FRP_game	.2726787	.0441051	6.18	0.000	.1860125	.3593449
Weekend	.0585588	.0290436	2.02	0.044	.0014883	.1156293
Year	.3520501	.0292889	12.02	0.000	.2944977	.4096025
_cons	-704.2562	59.26668	-11.88	0.000	-820.7148	-587.7976

Source: (Stata, 2024)

These two regressions provide interesting results. The adjusted R-squared values from 2022 to 2023 indicate that only 35.79% of the variation is explained by the independent variables in this model. In comparison, the adjusted R-squared value from 2023 to 2024 indicate that 59.65% of the variation is explained by the independent variable. While in both regressions as a whole are statistically significant when looking at the Prob > F, the regressions show different results for the impact of the first-round draft pick. When looking at the years 2022 to 2023 even though the attendance is increasing for the WNBA, the p-value of 0.2 is not significant, therefore the first-round draft pick for the 2023 was not increasing attendance. However, when examining the years 2023 to 2024 the p-value for FRP_game is extremely significant. The results indicate that the first-round draft pick in 2024 increased attendance by 27.256787% when looking at regular season games. To conclude, the results show that from 1997 to 2024 the null hypothesis is proven to be true, indicating that there is

no correlation between the WNBA first round draft pick and attendance trends throughout the history of the WNBA. Although when the study isolated the years when attendance started to increase in WNBA regular season games, the alternative hypothesis was true. On further examination of which year the first-round draft pick was more impactful, the results showed that the 2024 draft pick was statistically significant while the 2023 first-round draft pick was not. This means that Caitlin Clark had a significant impact on attendance from her first year in the WNBA.

A. Assumptions

To check for the key assumptions, the study conducted several tests to ensure the regression was a reliable model. The Durbin-Watson test was used to check for autocorrelation which shows that the residuals were independent of each other. To address heteroscedasticity detected in the model, robust standard errors were used. To ensure the normality of residuals, Stata produced a histogram of residuals. The last assumption the study checked was multicollinearity. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) in the regression did not have a multicollinearity result above ten, so therefore there is no multicollinearity.

B. Limitations

While the study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Several factors suggest that the models could be further expanded for greater accuracy and relevance. The adjusted R-square value was lower than a study would want. The model should have added more variables to take into account. The variables that could have been considered are the economic conditions, marketing budgets, and player popularity. These variables could potentially increase the adjusted R-square value. A limiting factor of the study was the exclusion of the year 2020, when COVID-19 prevented fans from attending the WNBA games. Another

limitation of this study is that there are not many studies conducted which focused on female athletes or superstars impacting attendance. Study findings on female and male leagues will do not typically translate to one another due to structural differences. In the WNBA there are smaller sample sizes, because the league has fewer teams, games, and seasons compared to other leagues. The study also included some data limitations; a study found that some WNBA teams were giving away tickets for free to try and increase attendance at games. This creates inconsistencies in the data, because it does not measure the actual reasoning to go to the game. These limitations highlight the need for future research in underrepresented leagues like the WNBA and pave the way for more targeted strategies to increase game-day engagement.

C. Recommendations for further research

To build upon this study, several recommendations can be made to further explore the evolving dynamics of women's basketball. A comparative analysis of the 2020-2021 and 2022-2024 seasons could provide valuable insights into the changing dynamics of the WNBA. What was the real impact of COVID-19 on WNBA attendance? One recommendation is to continue this study, because women's basketball is growing and marketing factors like image and likeness are becoming more important to superstar athletes. For example, next year's projected first-round draft pick, Paige Bueckers, is an extreme public figure with 2 million followers on Instagram and a sponsorship from Nike. Another suggestion is to include the more independent variables and find a way to measure fan engagement throughout the history of the WNBA. These recommendations offer a foundation for future studies that could help marketing professionals or analysts understand the impact of the first-round draft pick on the WNBA.

3. Conclusion

In investigating the largely uncharted realm of the WNBA, this paper explores the first-round draft pick influence on attendance. This study is contributing to the sparse literature written on women's sports. As women's sports continue to gain popularity it is critical to understand the market dynamics. Understanding whether the first-round draft pick makes a heavy impact is just one factor of what contributes to the attendance of WNBA games. The WNBA's different approach on marketing, strategically using the global events to help them grow as a league is working. Throughout the history of the WNBA, attendance at games has been decreasing until the years of 2023 and 2024. Players and franchises are working to build a sustainable and profitable WNBA. It has been proven in several studies that male superstar athletes increase the attendance at games for their sport.

When narrowing the focus on whether a WNBA first-round draft pick makes an impact on attendance during the regular season, the results conclude that from the years 1997 to 2024 the first-round draft pick is not a significant indicator of attendance. Since there has been a spike in attendance in the last few years the study tested to see if there was an effect. The results indicated that when a first-round draft pick plays in a game, the attendance grows. The study concluded that Caitlin Clark had a significant impact on the increase in attendance at her games, while the 2023 draft pick, Aliyah Boston's impact was not significant even though the attendance for the WNBA was growing. Indiana Fever went from averaging 4,066.8 fans a game in 2023 to averaging 17,035.75 fans a game in 2024. The Caitlin Clark effect is real. She not only has had an impact on the court, being one of the greatest that has ever played, but she has impacted her franchise and long-term future success of the WNBA.

References

- Agha, N., & Berri, D. (2024). Demand for Basketball: A Comparison of the WNBA and NBA. *International Journal of Sport Finance*, 18(1), 35–44.
- Angel Reese Instagram. (2024). *Angel Reese*.
<https://www.instagram.com/angelreese5/?hl=en>
- Angel Reese stats, height, weight, position, draft status and more*. WNBA. (2024a).
<https://www.wnba.com/player/1642291/angel-reese>
- Berri, D. J., & Krautmann, A. C. (2013). Understanding the WNBA on and off the Court. *Handbook on the Economics of Women in Sports*.
<https://doi.org/10.4337/9781849809399.00015>
- Braunstein, J. R., & Zhang, J. J. (2005). Dimensions of athletic star power associated with Generation Y sports consumption. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 6(4), 37-62.
- Byon, K. K., Cottingham, M., & Carroll, M. S. (2010). Marketing murderball: the influence of spectator motivation factors on sports consumption behaviours of wheelchair rugby spectators. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 12(1), 71-89.
- Camerer, C. F., & Weber, R. A. (1999, January 1). The econometrics and behavioural economics of escalation of commitment: a re-examination of Staw and Hoang's NBA data. *JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC BEHAVIOR AND ORGANIZATION*, 39(1), 59–82.
- Caporale, T., Collier, T.C. Are We Getting Better or Are They Getting Worse? Draft Position, Strength of Schedule, and Competitive Balance in the National Football League. *J Labor Res* 36, 291–300 (2015).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12122-015-9206-z>
- Carless, D., & Douglas, K. (2013). Living, resisting, and playing the part of athlete: Narrative tensions in elite sport. *Psychology of sport and exercise*, 14(5), 701-708.
- Charania, S., Philippou, A., & Philippou, A. (n.d.). *Sources: WNBA MVP A'ja Wilson, nike reach 6-year extension*. ESPN.
https://www.espn.com/wnba/story/_/id/43023233/sources-wnba-mvp-aja-wilson-nike-reach-6-year-extension
- Coates, D., & Oguntimein, B. (2010). The length and success of NBA careers: Does college pro-duction predict professional outcomes? *International Journal of Sport Finance*, 5, 4-26.
- Draft rules*. WNBA. (n.d.-a). <https://www.wnba.com/wnbadraft/2022/draft-rules>
- Encyclopedia Britannica, inc. (2024, December 16). *All-America Team*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/sports/All-America-team>

- ESPN Internet Ventures. (n.d.). *WNBA touts 48% attendance jump; over 2.3m fans attend games*. ESPN. https://www.espn.com/wnba/story/_/id/41477940/wnba-touts-48-attendance-jump-23m-fans-attend-games
- Ettienne, Lerae. (2019). It's time to pay up, the justification for higher salaries for wnba players: an analysis of the wnba's success and employing mediation between the wnba and nba to leverage future success. *Pepperdine Dispute Resolution Law Journal*, 19(2), 175-200.
- Golden State valkyries unveil brand identity - WNBA*. Official Home of the WNBA. (n.d.). <https://www.wnba.com/webview/news/gs- Valkyries-2025-identity>
- Gong, H., Watanabe, N. M., Soebbing, B. P., Brown, M. T., & Nagel, M. S. (2022). Exploring tanking strategies in the NBA: an empirical analysis of resting healthy players. *Sport Management Review*, 25(3), 546-566.
- Harris, J., & Berri, D. J. (2015). Predicting the WNBA Draft: What Matters Most from College Performance? *International Journal of Sport Finance*, 10(4), 299–309.
- Hehir, Jason. (2020). *The Last Dance* [Film]. ESPN Films & Netflix.
- History of the WNBA*. WNBA. (2004). <https://www.wnba.com/news/history-of-the-wnba-2002>
- History*. WNBA. (n.d.-a). <https://www.wnba.com/history#:~:text=On%20April%202024%2C%201996%2C%20women's,world's%20best%20women's%20basketball%20talent.>
- Howard, D. R., & Crompton, J. L. (2004). *Financing sport by Dennis R. Howard and John L. Crompton*. Fitness Information Technology.
- Howard, D. R., & Crompton, J. L. (2004). *Financing sport by Dennis R. Howard and John L. Crompton*. Fitness Information Technology.
- <https://hawkeyesports.com/>. (2024, October 1). *Caitlin Clark*. University of Iowa Athletics. <https://hawkeyesports.com/sports/wball/roster/season/2023-24/player/caitlin-clark/>
- Humphreys, B. R., & Johnson, C. (2020). The Effect of Superstars on Game Attendance: Evidence From the NBA. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 21(2), 152–175.
- Johnson, L. M., & Bo, H. H. (2023). Exploring Consumer Demand in Women's Professional Basketball. *Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness*, 17(3).
- Kelley, E. J. (2021). Buying the hype? Assessing the impact of top-drafted rookies on spectator attendance in the NBA. *Applied Economics Letters*, 28(15), 1306-1309.

- Kratz, J. (2024, April 26). *Leveraging the caitlin clark effect for women and Allies*. SC Women In Leadership. <https://scwomenlead.net/leveraging-the-caitlin-clark-effect-for-women-and-allies/>
- Kunkel, T., Biscaia, R., Arai, A., & Agyemang, K. (2020). The Role of Self-Brand Connection on the Relationship Between Athlete Brand Image and Fan Outcomes. *Journal of Sport Management*, 34(3), 201–216.
- Las Vegas Aces' A'ja Wilson unanimously wins 2024 KIA WNBA most valuable player award*. WNBA. (2024, September 22). <https://www.wnba.com/news/2024-mvp-kia-aja-wilson>
- Leota, J., Hoffman, D., Mascaro, L., Czeisler, M. E., Nash, K., Drummond, S. P. A., Anderson, C., Rajaratnam, S. M. W., & Facer-Childs, E. R. (2022). Home is where the hustle is: the influence of crowds on effort and home advantage in the National Basketball Association. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 40(20), 2343–2352. <https://doi-org.coloradocollege.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/02640414.2022.2154933>
- Messner, M. A., Duncan, M. C., & Cooky, C. (2003). Silence, sports bras, and wrestling porn: Women in televised sports news and highlights shows. *Journal of sport and social issues*, 27(1), 38-51.
- NCAA.com, A. S. |. (2024, April 15). *Every WNBA draft no. 1 overall pick, and where they went to college*. <https://www.ncaa.com/news/basketball-women/article/2024-04-15/every-wnba-draft-no-1-overall-pick-and-where-they-went-college>
- Our leagues*. NBA. (2024, October 24). <https://careers.nba.com/our-leagues/#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20the%20WNBA%20and,player%20experience%2C%20expanded%20career%20development>
- Oxford. (2024). <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/superstar#:~:text=superstar-,noun,made%20her%20an%20international%20superstar>.
- Portland, Oregon awarded WNBA's 15th franchise*. WNBA. (n.d.-b). <https://www.wnba.com/news/portland-15th-franchise-announcement>
- Price, J., Soebbing, B. P., Berri, D., & Humphreys, B. R. (2010). Tournament incentives, league policy, and NBA Team Performance Revisited. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 11(2), 117–135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527002510363103>
- Quotes from WNBA All-Star Practice Media Availability*. WNBA. (n.d.). <https://www.wnba.com/news/quotes-from-wnba-all-star-game-media-availability>
- Richard Lapchick, C. W. (n.d.). *WNBA, NBA set standard for diverse, equitable, inclusive hiring*. ESPN. https://www.espn.com/espn/story/_/id/37728606/wnba-nba-set-standard-diverse-equitable-inclusive-hiring

- Roy, G. (2023, April). *Homes away from home: Sports analytics group at Berkeley*. Homes Away From Home | Sports Analytics Group at Berkeley. <https://sportsanalytics.studentorg.berkeley.edu/articles/homes-away-from-home.html> <https://sportsanalytics.studentorg.berkeley.edu/articles/homes-away-from-home.html>
- Rugg, A. (2021), "Mixed Messages: Examining the Early Marketing of the WNBA", Bowes, A. and Culvin, A. (Ed.) *The Professionalisation of Women's Sport (Emerald Studies in Sport and Gender)*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Leeds, pp. 89-104. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80043-196-620211006>
- Tainsky, S. (2010). Television broadcast demand for National Football League contests. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 11(6), 629-640.
- Team, E. (2024, May 9). *WNBA marketing strategy 2024: A case study*. TheBigMarketing.com - Marketing Insights to Keep You Ahead of the Curve. <https://thebigmarketing.com/wnba-marketing-strategy/#:~:text=The%20WNBA's%20marketing%20strategy%20for%202024%20and%20beyond%20presents%20promising,position%20in%20the%20sports%20industry.>
- The formation of the WNBA*. WNBA.com. (n.d.). https://www.wnba.com/archive/wnba/history/makingthewnba_timeline.html
- Schmidt, M. B., & Berri, D. J. (2004). The Impact of Labor Strikes on Consumer Demand: An Application to Professional Sports. *The American Economic Review*, 94(1), 344–357.
- Stats, H. H. (n.d.). *WNBA salary cap summary by Team*. herhoopstats.com. https://herhoopstats.com/salary-cap-sheet/wnba/players/salary_2024/stats_2023/
- Suárez, J. (2023). Inequality in Sports: Outlining the Disparities Between Men and Women Portrayed by Media and Society. *Journal of Student Research*, 12(3). <https://doi.org/10.47611/jsrhs.v12i3.4597>
- Wakefield, M., Orr, T., Barclay, A., & Arvidson, M. (2018). Marketing Techniques involved in the Women's National Basketball Association. *Recreation, Parks, and Tourism in Public Health* 2(1), 115-124. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2979/rptph.2.1.08>.
- Wang, J., & Lv, B. (2019). Big data analysis and research on consumption demand of sports fitness leisure activities. *Cluster Computing*, 22, 3573-3582.
- Wearden, S. T., & Creedon, P. J. (2002). "We Got Next": Images of Women in Television Commercials during the Inaugural WNBA Season. *Culture, Sport, Society*, 5(3), 189–210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713999865>
- WNBA*. (2011). *Laurel Richie. MYSTICS: Laurel Richie*. https://www.wnba.com/archive/wnba/mystics/laurel_richie.html

WNBA expands to Canada with Toronto selected as the league's 14th team. WNBA. (n.d.-d). <https://www.wnba.com/news/expansion-toronto-2026-announcement>

WNBA Social Justice. WNBA. (n.d.-e). <https://www.wnba.com/social-justice>

Yang, Y., & Shi, M. (2011). Rise and fall of stars: Investigating the evolution of star status in professional team sports. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 28(4), 352-366.