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Fever head into draft with no sense of urgency

Concerns already addressed in offseason with additions of All-Stars Sam, Sutton-Brown

By David Woods

It would be only a slight exaggeration to declare today's WNBA draft irrelevant to the Indiana Fever.

The Fever made their moves earlier. Oh, if Purdue's Katie Gearlds is available at No. 9, the Fever might draft her. "We think she'll be a tremendous pro," said Kelly Krauskopf, the Fever's general manager and chief operating officer.

But the Fever already have a roster of all-pros. During the offseason, they added two players from the defunct Charlotte Sting, former All-Stars Tammy Sutton-Brown and Sheri Sam. The Fever return All-Star forwards Tamika Catchings and Tamika Whitmore, plus point guard Tully Bevilaqua, a member of Australia's world champions.

The Fever have such depth that other teams were trying to acquire 6-3 center Kasha Terry -- and Terry wasn't even on the Fever's playoff roster last season. Moreover, new acquisition Ann Strother will be in a battle to make the opening-day roster.

"We're pretty loaded," Krauskopf said. "It's the first year that I feel very good about our roster -- the depth, experience. We've filled every position.

"Now, it's just a matter of putting it together on the floor."

Training camp starts April 22. The Fever's first preseason game is May 5 against Seattle at Conseco Fieldhouse, and the season opener is May 19 at home against Minnesota.

This will be the first time in the franchise's eight seasons that a starting lineup comes back intact. Yet that lineup is due to change again.

That's because the 6-4 Sutton-Brown -- a genuine center who signed as a free agent -- will leave 6-2 Ebony Hoffman coming off the bench. Sam might share time at shooting guard with last year's starter, Anna DeForge, and Tan White.

The mix of players gives coach Brian Winters multiple options.

"The core group that's coming back is excited," Krauskopf said. "They see it. They see the opportunity."

Bevilaqua does. She has been sending e-mails to Krauskopf about what's ahead for the Fever.

Bevilaqua and Sam were teammates on Seattle's 2004 WNBA champions. Bevilaqua has been on an amazing run over the past 18 months, winning Commonwealth Games and world gold medals and earning playoff MVP honors in leading Canberra to the championship of the Australian WNBL.

"Wouldn't that be fantastic if the Fever were to win the 2007 WNBA title?" Bevilaqua said in a question-and-answer session posted on the Fever's Web site. "With the players that management has recruited, there is no reason why we can't, if we put it all together every single time we step out onto the court."

WNBA teams will operate under a \$728,000 salary cap this season. Teams can keep up to 13 players (11 active). The Fever intend to go with 12.

The Fever have 12 on the roster now, so a rookie would have to displace someone such as Strother, K.B. Sharp or Linda Frohlich.

Krauskopf said the Fever likely would select an athletic player or a shooter in the draft. The team has the ninth, 22nd and 35th picks.

Draft prospects

Beech Grove's Katie Geraldts is among 22 top prospects invited to attend today's 2007 WNBA draft.

<u>Name, Pos.</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Height</u>
Alison Bales, C	Duke	6-7
Cori Chambers, G	Georgia	5-9
Jessica Davenport, C	Ohio State	6-5
Nare Diawara, C	Virginia Tech	6-6
Jessica Dickson, F	South Florida	5-11
Shay Doron, G	Maryland	5-9
Katie Gearlds, G/F	Purdue	6-1
Chrissy Givens, G	Middle Tennessee	5-11
Gillian Goring, C	N.C. State	6-7
Lindsey Harding, G	Duke	5-8
Kamesha Hairston, F	Temple	6-0
Tiffany Jackson, F	Texas	6-3
Ivory Latta, G	North Carolina	5-6
Camille Little, F	North Carolina	6-2
Bernice Mosby, F	Baylor	6-1
Eshaya Murphy, G	USC	5-11
Armintie Price, G	Mississippi	5-9
Noelle Quinn, G	UCLA	6-0
Kathrin Ress, F	Boston College	6-4
Brooke Smith, F	Stanford	6-3
Sidney Spencer, F	Tennessee	6-3
Carla Thomas, F	Vanderbilt	6-3